

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name Central Park Bandstand

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number SW intersection of West Main and E Street SW in about the middle of Central Park

not for publication N/A

city or town Ardmore vicinity N/A

state Oklahoma code OK county Carter code 019

zip code 73401

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bob Daepfler

10-25-06

Signature of certifying official

Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.

___ determined eligible for the
National Register

___ See continuation sheet.

___ determined not eligible for the
National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain):

Edson H. Beall

12-6-06

for

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE
RECREATION AND CULTURE

Sub: music facility
Sub: monument/marker
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE
RECREATION AND CULTURE

Sub: music facility
Sub: monument/marker
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
roof N/A
walls STONE:limestone

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation
Architecture

Period of Significance 1928-1956

8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

Significant Dates 1928

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Boze, E.S., architect

McIntyre, Hugh, builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property Less than 1 Acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>671960</u>	<u>3782800</u>	
2				

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian, for City of Ardmore

organization Architectural Resources and Community Heritage Consulting date June 2006

street & number 346 County Road 1230 telephone 405/459-6200

city or town Pocasset state OK zip code 73079

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Ardmore, Mayor

street & number P.O. Box 249 telephone _____

city or town Ardmore state OK zip code 73402

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

SUMMARY

The Central Park Bandstand, located in Ardmore, Carter County, Oklahoma, is a limestone bandstand constructed in 1928 in the near-center of Central Park. Located southwest of Main Street and E Street SW, Central Park is situated in the heart of Ardmore, just off of downtown in a mixed residential and religious area. The bandstand was designed by local architect E.S. Boze and erected by local builder Hugh McIntrye. Intended to be fireproof, the structure was constructed of stone, concrete and metal materials only. Built of limestone quarried in Carthage, Missouri, the bandstand is an excellent, striking example of quarry-faced, random ashlar masonry. The bandstand has a half-circular stage area and, to the rear of the stage area, a rectangular storage room. The storage room, roughly measuring about 10 feet by 16 feet, originally held the "immense" Orthophonic Victrola acquired for the community by members of Ardmore's Chamber of Commerce. The foundation of the bandstand is quarry-faced limestone. The stage area has a concrete floor and no overhead covering. To the front sides of the stage, there is a decorative, original, cast iron pole light on each side. Encircling the backside of the stage area are two smooth limestone colonnades. The colonnades have three large, Tuscan columns connected by a limestone balustrade and a simple, unadorned, limestone entablature. The outside edge of each colonnade is marked by a quarry-faced limestone pier topped by a short, smooth, limestone Tuscan column. On the front of both piers there is an original bronze tablet which lists the names of armed service personnel from Carter County killed in World War I. Immediately to the inside of the limestone piers, there are concrete steps providing access to the stage area. Additional sets of concrete stairs are located on the backside of the stage area, adjacent to the storage room. The storage room is fully enclosed. The roof of the storage section is flat with limestone parapets and copings on all four sides. It has two single and one double set of metal paneled doors. The double windows on three sides are metal, six-pane, casement with obscuring metal screens welded to them. The windows have smooth limestone headers and sills.

The bandstand maintains a high degree of integrity. The structure has been modified by the welding of heavy, metal screens to the windows, removal of the lights along the top of the colonnades and addition of various electrical boxes to the rear. The screens are old and were likely added to deter vandalism of the bandstand. The screens do not notably affect the ability of the structure to convey its historic significance. The removal of the lights on the colonnades occurred at an unknown time and do not significantly alter the overall integrity of the structure. The electrical boxes are newer and attached to a piece of wood. Due to their rear location, they do not impact the integrity of the bandstand.

The bandstand is located on a slight slope nearly in the center of Central Park. The park is located just off of downtown Ardmore on Main Street. There are historic churches located across the streets on the north and south sides, modern commercial buildings to the east and historic houses to the west behind commercial buildings facing Main Street. Fairly recently, a playground of modern equipment has been added to the west side of the park and elaborate landscape beds have been created to the east and north. As these elements have no historic association with

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 10

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

the bandstand, they have been excluded from the boundaries of this nomination. A concrete sidewalk extends from the southeast corner of the park, around the front of the bandstand and mid-way along the west side, separating the historic bandstand from the newer landscape beds and playground area. This sidewalk, which includes a large grassy segment in front of the bandstand, was used to define the best boundaries for the nominated property. Within this area, and directly to the south of the bandstand, is a noncontributing comfort station. Constructed in 2005, the building has a metal roof, limestone walls and metal slab doors. Due to insufficient age, the building is noncontributing. Although efforts were made to make the comfort station compatible with the historic bandstand, including similar building material, the restroom does not convey the refinement of the original structure.

DESCRIPTION: BANDSTAND

The performance area of the bandstand sits nearly three feet above the ground. The tall foundation is quarry-faced limestone, carefully laid in a random ashlar pattern to match the rest of the structure. In front of the foundation, there is a narrow landscape bed which matches the shape of the stage area. The half-circular stage area, covered in concrete, is broken on either side by concrete stairs, consisting of four steps on each side. Just inside both sets of stairs are two original, decorative, cast iron, outdoor pole lights. The decorative lights are shorter than typical street lights and have been recently painted, as evidenced by overspray onto the surrounding concrete. Additional lighting for the structure was provided through globes set atop each of the Tuscan columns of the colonnades. These lights were removed at an unknown time after 1940. (See photographs 1 and 2).

To the outside of each set of concrete stairs on the front of the performance area are two large limestone piers. The quarry-faced piers have a smooth limestone cap topped by a short, Tuscan, smooth, limestone column. Prominently located on the front of each pier is a bronze tablet which lists the names of the Carter County men who died in service during World War I. Underneath a patriotic emblem, both tablets read "IN HONOR OF THE MEN OF/CARTER COUNTY, OKLAHOMA/WHO SERVED IN THE WORLD/WAR AND IN MEMORY OF/THE FOLLOWING WHO/GAVE THEIR LIVES." Below this on each side is a double row list of names of Carter County soldiers. Towards the bottom of the west tablet is the list of Carter County sailors killed in action under a separate heading of "NAVY." Securing the tablet to the piers are bronze rosettes. One of the top rosettes on the west tablet has been replaced with a large screw. (See photographs 6 and 7).

Extending south from each of the limestone piers are limestone colonnades which frame each side of the stage area. On each colonnade there are three columns. Matching the short columns on the piers, the colonnade columns are smooth limestone and in the Tuscan order. The columns are connected to each other by a short, smooth, limestone balustrade. Each limestone baluster is short, smooth and bell-shaped. Between each Tuscan column are a set of four balusters, connected by a wide limestone railing. The balusters adjacent to the outside pier are truncated into the pier. The smooth, limestone, Tuscan columns have an unelaborated, connecting, smooth, limestone entablature. On the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 11

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

back corners of the colonnades, adjacent to the central rectangular storage area, are additional sets of concrete stairs providing access to the stage area. As with the front of the stage area, around each side of the stage area is a circular, concrete-outlined, landscape bed. (See photographs 2, 4 and 5).

Centrally located on the south side of the structure is the limestone storage area. The storage room is a rectangular space designed to hold the city's Orthophonic Victrola. The bandstand was expressly designed to hold this community record player which was paid for by private citizens and donated to the city of Ardmore in 1927. The floor of the storage area is concrete with painted walls. Currently, the storage room is empty save for a few plastic Christmas Carolers and other odds and ends. The storage area has three metal paneled doors. Flanking the center, double, folding doors are two single, metal, paneled doors with square lights. The hardware on the east door is missing and has been replaced on the west door. Separating the doors are painted, cast iron columns. The center double folding door is composed of two paneled sections on each side. A single handle on the inside east door opens the area. Sheltering the doors is a flat, painted, concrete roof. Supporting the roof are five wedge-shaped, concrete brackets. Between each bracket is a round light of indeterminate age. Flanking the central doorway are tall, quarry-faced, limestone piers with smooth limestone caps. Differing from the original design, the storage area has a flat roof with stepped parapets on each side. The original conception for the storage area called for a steep, ceramic tile, hipped roof that likely was discarded due to increased costs. The quarry-faced limestone parapet has a wide, smooth, limestone, stepped cap and smooth, limestone, shaped corner pieces. Centrally located on the front parapet is a smooth limestone name table. The table reads "S.M. & C.B./1928." The bottom inscription obviously refers to the year of construction, while the initials stand for "Soldiers Memorial and Community Bandstand." (See photograph 2).

The east, south and west walls of the storage area are identical except for the dimensions and the electrical boxes. While the east and west walls are evenly sized, the south elevation is longer, matching the front elevation and creating a rectangular-shaped storage area. Each side of the storage area has quarry-faced, limestone, projected piers marking the corners. The tall, subtly, projected foundation of each wall matches the height of the stage area foundation. The upper wall is recessed between the columns and above the foundation. Centrally located on each wall is a double, metal, six-pane, casement window. The windows have been covered by obscuring metal screens which have hinges in the corners to allow them to swing out. The screens are original, likely deemed necessary to prevent vandalism or unauthorized use of the city Victrola. Each set of double windows has a continuous, smooth, limestone sill and a slightly arched, smooth, limestone header. The limestone parapet on each side elevation matches the parapet on the facade, except for lacking the smooth limestone name table. On the east side, there is an electrical meter box towards the south side, almost obscured by a large bush. Underneath the window on the south side, there are multiple electrical boxes mounted to a piece of wood. These are obviously not original, particularly the wood board on the otherwise fire-proof structure. Towards the east side of the south elevation, there is an original, metal-covered opening in the foundation which provided access to the underside of the structure. (See photographs 3, 4 and 5)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 12

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

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DESCRIPTION: COMFORT STATION

Less than ten feet from the back of the bandstand is located the noncontributing stone restroom. Constructed in 2005 as an Centennial Project of Ardmore's Rotary International, the restroom is officially called the "Central Park Comfort Station." The restroom has a limestone foundation with a concrete floor and sidewalk to the front. The roof of the building is hipped, metal with wide, boxed eaves. Under the eaves, on the front of the building, are several flush lights. While the restroom matches the bandstand in the use of light-colored stone and random ashlar pattern of masonry, the stone is not quarry-faced and the overall stonework is notably not as refined as the stonework of the bandstand. (See photograph 8).

The comfort station has no openings on the west, north and east sides. On the south side of the building there are three metal slab doors set into a central, rectangular opening under the principal roof. The central door leads to the maintenance area. The east door provides access to the men's room and the west door to the women's restroom. Small plaques, noting the intended gender, are located on the outside of both the restroom doors. To the west of the opening, located roughly at eye-level, there is another, larger, metal plaque. This plaque reads "CENTRAL PARK COMFORT STATION/Rotary Centennial Project 2005/Ardmore Rotary Club/Arbuckle Sunrise Rotary Club/Southern Oklahoma Memorial Foundation - The Charles B. Goddard Foundation/Community Activities, Inc - Community Foundation of Ardmore/Ardmore Parks and Recreation Department - City of Ardmore, Oklahoma/Friends of Charlene Kern - Lumpkin and Associates Architects." (See photographs 5 and 8).

A concrete sidewalk extends along the front side of the comfort station from the sidewalk which curves along the sides and front of the bandstand. To the direct west of the building, and just off the north side of the walk, there is a modern, metal water fountain. Due to the insignificant scale of the water fountain and its obvious connection with the comfort station, it is not considered a separate noncontributing resource.

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS

The Central Park Bandstand has been minorly altered by the addition of the electrical equipment on the west and rear side, the welding of metal screens on the windows and removal of original lights on the colonnades. This changes are all relatively inconsequential and do not interfere with the bandstand's ability to convey its historic significance.

The most notable modification to the bandstand has been the alteration to its setting. To the immediate rear of the bandstand, a modern comfort station has been erected within the last year. The north side of the park has been elaborately landscaped with matching landscape beds to the east side. The landscaping includes various statues and lights. Towards the south end of the west side, a modern playground with three separate pieces of equipment has been developed. As none of these features enhance the bandstand's feeling or association, the boundary for the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 13

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

structure has been confined to the park area devoid of most of the modern features and equipment. Due to its proximity to the bandstand, the comfort station was included within the nomination boundaries as a noncontributing resource. The comfort station is barely visible from the front of the bandstand and is not attached in any way to the historic structure. Thus, it has no impact on the bandstand's identifying historic characteristics. Despite the alterations to the setting, the bandstand maintains a remarkable degree of integrity, including location, design, workmanship, materials, feeling and association.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 14

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

SUMMARY

The Central Park Bandstand, located in Ardmore, Carter County, Oklahoma, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with leisure time activities in Ardmore in 1928. The bandstand was erected to serve as an outdoor community center for social, cultural, political and recreational events. Foremost initially among the entertainment opportunities available at the bandstand was the playing of records on the Orthophonic Victrola that citizens purchased for the city of Ardmore in 1927. The giant record player was temporarily housed at the Carter County Fairgrounds and Ardmore's Convention Hall before occupying its permanent home in Central Park. Notably, the construction of the bandstand was delayed for several months due to objections of many residents to the placement of bandstand with the Orthophonic Victrola in Central Park. Known for its serenity, many feared that erection of the bandstand and installation of the Orthophonic Victrola would disrupt area residents, including several of Ardmore's historic churches. In addition to the noise issue, many believed that other resources would be erected in the park which would soon lose its bucolic qualities.

The bandstand is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for its architectural significance as an excellent, unique, limestone, Classical Revival structure in Ardmore. The bandstand is without peer in the community. The period of significance for the bandstand extends from 1928, the year of construction, through 1956, the current National Register fifty-year mark. While the Orthophonic Victrola was removed at an unknown time, the bandstand continued to function as originally intended for decades. It provided a convenient, picturesque location for social, cultural and political happenings, as well as various entertainment events.

Because the bandstand is nominated for its primary historic and architectural significance in providing leisure time activities for the local community and not its commemorative function as a World War I memorial, Criterion Consideration f is not applicable. Efforts to memorialize the "Great War" were reaching their height when the Central Park Bandstand was constructed. Among other resources, memorial construction included the erection of numerous multi-purpose buildings that usually included space for local American Legion chapters or other war-related groups, structures such as the Central Park Bandstand which prominently displayed the names of local boys who did not make it home and objects like the legion of "Dough Boys" statues placed on courthouse lawns or at prominent intersections which portrayed the valiancy of men in service. While the inclusion of the memorial into the bandstand was compatible and broadened the appeal of the proposed structure to the community-at-large, it was not the principal intent of the bandstand to be a commemorative property. The bandstand was instigated by private citizens and constructed using public monies to provide a permanent entertainment-related venue means for the community which, although enjoying community sings and other events at the park for years, would reach new heights with the durable stone bandstand and its amenities, including a large stage area and the community piano and Orthophonic Victrola.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 15

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Like numerous towns in Oklahoma, Ardmore came into existence as a result of railroad expansion in the late nineteenth century. In 1884, two subsidiaries of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (Santa Fe) Railway Company began building rail lines in Indian and Oklahoma territories. By 1887, the companies were joining their lines to form a north-south line across the Twin Territories with stations scattered along the line. One of these stations, located between the Arbuckle Mountains on the north and the Red River Valley on the south in Pickens County, Indian Territory, was called Ardmore after a railroad official's hometown of Ardmore, Pennsylvania. Trains began their regular runs along the line in late July 1887 and by October of that year, a post office had been formally established at the Ardmore station. The presence of the railroad continued to be a major factor in the economic development and well-being of Ardmore for many years.¹

The town of Ardmore quickly began to take shape with Main Street being laid out in July 1887. Rapidly becoming a center for the surrounding agricultural community, Ardmore experienced few growing pains. Located in the Chickasaw Nation of Indian Territory, individual ownership of the land was restricted, even within the city limits. However, Euro-Americans flocked to the area, attracted by the rich farmland and abundant grasslands. In addition to some sharecropping, settlers also leased land from the Chickasaw Nation. One of the primary crops raised in the area was cotton. As such, Ardmore soon gained standing as the largest inland cotton market in the world. From the late 1880s through the first couple of decades of the twentieth century, cotton was a major economic force within the community. Following the collapse of the cotton market in the 1920s, agriculture still remained important to the local economy; however, other cash and livestock crops replaced King Cotton.²

Ardmore also benefitted from another primary Oklahoma industry, oil. In 1905, oil wells were drilled northwest of town. Seven years later, the Healdton Oil Field was discovered in the western part of Carter County. This large field

¹Mac McGalliard, "Pioneer Spirit: The Centennial History of Ardmore," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 65 (Spring 1987), 76. See also Arrell Morgan Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries 2nd Ed. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 160.

²The History of Carter County (Fort Worth, Texas: University Supply and Equipment Company, 1957), n.p. See also McGalliard, "Pioneer Spirit," 77; Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, "Final Survey Report: Architectural/Historic Reconnaissance Level Survey of Certain Parts of the City of Ardmore," (Available at the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 1993), 93; and, John Dexter, "Ardmore Builds and Grows" (Available in the "Ardmore" Vertical File at the Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 4 July 1954), n.p.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 16

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

is credited with helping "...Oklahoma achieve national oil leadership..." by 1920. Reportedly, the Healdton wells provided fifty percent of all oil used by the Allied powers during World War I. It is noteworthy that it was during the same decade as the Healdton discovery that Ardmore experienced its greatest population boom of the twentieth century. According to the 1910 census, the community's population was 8,618. By 1920, Ardmore's population had risen to 14,181, an increase of over 5,500 residents. The next largest increase occurred in the 1950s when Ardmore's population went from 17,890 in 1950 to 21,225 by 1960, a change of 3,335 persons.³

In the mid 1920s, United States Highway 77 was constructed from Kansas through to Texas. Importantly, this north-south route linked Oklahoma City and Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas with Ardmore located at the mid-way point. This was followed by the completion of the east-west United States Highway 70 through Ardmore. Auspiciously located on two major thoroughfares as automobile travel replaced rail transportation as the dominant means of passenger travel, Ardmore was set to benefit from this significant economic development.⁴

In addition to being an economic center within south central Oklahoma, Ardmore throughout its history has also been a political mainstay. Within three years of the founding of the town, Ardmore was named one of three federal court towns for Indian Territory. At that time, the federal court system in Indian Territory had jurisdiction over all criminal cases except those which carried a sentence of hard labor or death and civil cases if at least one hundred dollars and one U.S. citizen was involved. Increasing the importance of the federal court system, the Curtis Act of 1898 abolished tribal courts and declared Indian law unenforceable in federal court. With the advent of statehood for the Twin Territories in 1907, the United States District Courts replaced the Territorial District Courts but Ardmore remained a federal court town. Statehood also resulted in the naming of Ardmore as county seat of the newly designated Carter County.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

On August 10, 1927, the local newspaper notified the citizens of Ardmore that the "Orthophonic is to be Installed in Central Park." Orthophonic was a term of the Victor Talking Machine Company and referred to the use of electrical recording methods to produce phonographic disks. The Victor Talking Machine Company, organized in 1899, started releasing records using orthophonics in 1925. The electric method of recording on the disks produced a better sound than the previous method of acoustic recording. The introduction of the Orthophonic Victrolas initiated the "...so-

³Gibson, Oklahoma, 271. See also O.H.P.S., "Final Survey Report," 102 and McGalliard, "Pioneer Spirit," 84.

⁴The Daily Ardmoreite, (Ardmore, Oklahoma), 28 July 19??, (Available in the "Ardmore" Vertical Files, Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 17

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

called Orthophonic era, from late 1925 to 1929 or so...”⁵

Mid-way through the Orthophonic era, Fred E. Tucker, president of the Ardmore Chamber of Commerce, indicated that the necessary funds, almost \$7,000, had been raised to purchase a Orthophonic Victrola and construct a suitable building to permanently hold the instrument. The fund for the “...special Orthophonic Victrola...” was raised through the local chamber of commerce. Notably, “...aside from those directly interested, few were aware that such a movement was under way.”⁶

Described as “special,” “immense” and “giant,” Ardmore’s Orthophonic Victrola was apparently a commercial-grade Auditorium Orthophonic Victrola. Victor designed the Auditorium Orthophonic Victrola for use in parks, large auditoriums, skating rinks and hotels and it produced sound that could “...be heard for great distances.” The nearly six foot tall phonograph “rack equipment” could be custom installed into traditional phonograph cabinets. As noted in both the local paper and The Daily Oklahoman of Oklahoma City, Ardmore’s Auditorium Orthophonic Victrola was the eighteenth machine of its kind in the United States. A few months after Ardmore’s Auditorium Orthophonic Victrola arrived, one was installed at the Skirvin Hotel Café in Oklahoma City. According to The Victor Data Book, a total of thirty-five Auditorium Orthophonic Victrola’s were shipped in 1927, the first year of production. The number of shipments nearly doubled the following year to sixty-six before falling for the final year of production in 1929 to fifty. When the machine arrived at the Luke Music Store in Ardmore, H.F. Mickel with the Victor Talking Machine Company also arrived “..to put the machine in operation.”⁷

The Orthophonic Victrola arrived in Ardmore just over a week after its acquisition was first announced in the second week of August 1927. It was to be temporarily placed at the fairgrounds, in front of the grandstand. Plans at that time called for construction of a permanent structure in Central Park following the fair that fall. The structure was to be made of brick, donated by Hugh L. Sturm, and designed by an unspecified architect. The Orthophonic Victrola was to be put to immediate use following its installation with a concert of sacred music the Sunday following

⁵Ibid., 10 August 1927. See also “A Chronology of Phonograph History,” The History of Sound Recording Technology, <http://www.recording-history.org/HTML/phonochrono.htm>, retrieved 29 June 2006 and R.J. Wakeman, “Victor’s Orthophonic Credenza – the King of Machines?,” <http://www.garlic.com/~tgracyk/credena.htm>, retrieved 25 June 2006.

⁶Ibid., 10 August 1927.

⁷Ibid., 10 August 1927. See also The Daily Oklahoman, (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), 12 August 1927 and 24 November 1927; Robert W. Baumbach, The Victor Date Book, (Los Angeles, California: Mulholland Press, Inc., 2003), 332-333.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 18

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

installation and another show, this one of popular music with some classical thrown in "...for the benefit of those partial to th(at) class of music..." at the scheduled community meeting the following Tuesday. Folks attending the second concert on Tuesday were asked to "...refrain from starting their motor cars during the progress of the concert" as "This disturbance caused annoyance Sunday and interfered with the program."⁸

The records for the first two music programs were provided by the Luke Music Store. The A.B. Rawlins Furniture Company furnished the records for a third concert on September 1, 1927. Additionally, a fourth "...exceptionally good..." concert was scheduled for the following week for "...the colored people of the city." In order to build a "music library" for the community record player, the Chamber of Commerce decided to "...let citizens of the city donate records of their own choosing." It was believed records would quickly stack up "...under this system,...as everyone seems to be taking an interest in the new instrument." Residents were cautioned to contact the Chamber of Commerce to ascertain if the record was already in the files. Additionally, the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, Charles Van Vleck, noted that the Chamber would also accept cash donations toward the library with the Chamber deciding which records to purchase.⁹

The need for a permanent home for the Orthophonic was emphasized at the third concert held at the fairgrounds. A heavy rain cut the program unexpectedly short. With only one exit from the grandstands, "Hundreds were heard to complain over the delay..." in leaving. While several alternative exits were proposed, the local newspaper recorded no mention of the obvious safety hazard one exit presented.¹⁰

Shortly after the third concert, F.M. Dudley, Carter County Attorney, was informed by the Oklahoma Attorney General that the Carter County Excise Board had the authority to reduce the estimated allotment of funds for construction of the city jail and increase the fund for the city park. The Attorney General did caution that no item should be increased until after the legally required advertisement. Prompting these actions was a petition presented by Fred Tucker to the city commissioners calling for a redesign of the proposed city jail with the resulting surplus money to be used to construct a bandstand in Central Park. The original plans for a brick structure were obviously discarded but for unknown reasons. In response to the petition signed by 125 local citizens advocating a smaller jail and construction of a bandstand, the city commission held an open hearing. The hearing was attended by "...several prominent businessmen..." who were in favor of the proposition. "Thinking that (they) were acting in accordance with the public will..." the city commissioners granted the petition and passed a resolution on September 20, 1927 asking

⁸Ibid., 18 August 1927 and 25 August 1927.

⁹Ibid., 25 August 1927 and 1 September 1927.

¹⁰Ibid., 2 September 1927.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 19

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

the County Excise Board to move nine thousand dollars from the general fund to the park fund. In addition to constructing a building for the Orthophonic Victrola, the money would be used to erect a stage and settings for outdoor concerts to be held during the summer months. Additionally, it was about this time that the concept apparently expanded to include a memorial for the servicemen from Carter County killed in action during World War I. However, no public announcement was made of the intent to combine the memorial with the bandstand. With the County Excise Board approving the budgets for the cities and townships of Carter County days later on September 25, 1927, the work on the bandstand was "...referred to Mr. Dyer (Ardmore City Manager) to be taken up with a group of representative citizens sponsoring the project to prepare plans and specifications mutually satisfactory and report back to the commission."¹¹

By early February 1928, the city manager and citizens group had readied the plans for presentation to the Mayor and city commissioners. However, a group of ministers and lawyers attended the February 9, 1928 city commission meeting to register a protest against the proposed civic building. The protest committee, consisting of Reverend Joseph Carden, rector of St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Reverend George W. Davis, pastor of the First Methodist Church, and local attorneys J.T. Coleman and H.H. Brown, appeared before the city commissioners to declare "...that the building proposed would be an imposition on property owners in the locality and the churches adjacent to the park." They further stated "The noise and disturbance created would be intolerable,...., and if the city permitted the erection of such a structure it would be the entering wedge for other buildings to be located at the park, which eventually would destroy its beauty and deprive people of a convenient place of recreation." The protest was apparently unexpected as no proponents of the building were on-hand to refute the committee's predictions. As such, the mayor and commissioners agreed to postpone any action until the next commission meeting at which time both sides could submit their arguments.¹²

At the February 23, 1928 meeting, the city commissioners unanimously voted to "kill" the proposal. Notably, it was apparently between the two meetings that the proposed World War I memorial aspect became broader public knowledge. The newspaper articles previous to this do not make any mention of the proposed structure serving as a memorial to local service men killed in the Great War. The headline of the February 23, 1928, article citing the move of the city commissioners reads "Memorial in Central Park Loses." Appearing in support of "The memorial arch and platform" was John R. Dexter. Chamber president, Fred Tucker, the "...prime mover in the project..." was unavailable. Prior to the vote, Dexter engaged the opposition, headed by James T. Coleman and Reverend Joseph Carden and including "...a number of citizens..." in "...a lengthy controversy...". On behalf of those

¹¹Ibid., 2 September 1927, 11 September 1927, 20 September 1927, 25 September 1927 and 29 February 1928.

¹²Ibid., 9 February 1928 and 29 February 1928.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 20

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

opposed to the project, Coleman stated that all legal means would be exhausted before they acquiesced to a building in the park. In voting against any plans to erect any building in the park, the Mayor and commissioners felt that, although "...the city had a legal right to spend money to erect the proposed building.....it was harmony that the city commissioners desired." As such, "...they would do nothing but what the people wanted as they were merely the people's servants."¹³

Within days of the city commission meeting, advocates of the bandstand launched an effort to reinstate the project. Charles Van Vleck, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, submitted an editorial titled "Don't Kill Ambitions of Those Who Are Willing to Sacrifice Their Own Interests in an Effort to Better City." John F. Easley, local publisher, also penned an open letter to the people of Ardmore. In the letter, Easley recounts the efforts of the previous years in staging community gatherings at the park during the summer months. While never allowing the sale of merchandise or speakers with a cause to proselytize, the park assemblies which had been going on since about 1923 were intended to provide only "...entertainment and wholesome instruction." The first year, a city piano was hauled from Convention Hall with various car dealerships providing a truck and men to do the required heavy lifting. As the "...novelty of doing the hauling passed away..." and the piano suffered damage in the shuffle, the Christian Church offered their piano and grounds for the assemblages. Use of the Christian Church facilities continued for two years, despite the loss of many books and damage to the property caused by "...rough usage...". After this, "...a stand was erected and a piano house built and a piano purchased to be kept in the park." As the summer of 1928 approached, the "...unpainted, unsightly community platform..." had been removed, along with the piano house. The "... old, unsightly bandstand..." was also slated to be demolished. With the community meetings in jeopardy due to a lack of facilities, the Christian Church again extended an invitation for use of their property "...in this emergency..."¹⁴

More substantially, proponents circulated a second petition to have the project constructed in Central Park and prevent attempts to move the project to Whittington Park in southeast Ardmore. Visiting the signers of the first petition against the construction, advocates indicated that many had signed "...under a misunderstanding of the facts in the case." In addition to beliefs that the new structure would be "...far too large..." "...ungainly..." and cause a disturbance, other misconceptions included that the bandstand would be "...solely devoted to the housing of the phonograph (sic)" and that its construction would "...increase taxes materially." By February 26, 1928, champions of the project acquired the signature of all but two of the property owners immediately adjacent to the park, as well as fifteen members of the First Methodist church board and five of the nine members of Saint Philip's Episcopal church vestry. Additionally, the business and professional men of the town came together to commend the community

¹³Ibid., 23 February 1928.

¹⁴Ibid., 26 February 1928.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 21

Central Park Bandstand

name of property

Carter County, Oklahoma

county and state

gatherings and expressly oppose “...anything that would end them.”¹⁵

For the first time, a public description of the bandstand was also offered at the end of February 1928. Local architect E.S. Boze designed the bandstand which was

...to be roughly triangular in form with a raised stage or platform to the front surrounded on three sides with imposing limestone pillars, each pillar topped with huge spherical light globes. The rear side of the platform opens onto the room which will house the orthophonic as well as a piano used in the weekly community meetings held. There will also be ample room for storing chairs and other devices. The whole memorial is to be built of hewn stone and follows a Grecian design. On the front, at either corner are to be rectangular bronze tablets set horizontally in the stone. On these tablets are to be inscribed the names of the war veterans of Ardmore who died in service overseas – in compliance with a promise made to the ex-service men. The entire building will not occupy space to exceed 40 feet square and will face north and east somewhere near the center of the park. The old bandstand will be torn down, the makeshift stage used in the past for the community meetings will be obliterated and grass will be planted to hide the place of being.¹⁶

The following day, Mayor George, along with the majority of city commissioners, announced that they were merely responding to the outcry against the project and, if the public desired it, they were in favor of the new bandstand in Central Park as well. Furthering the cause for construction of the structure was the passage of a resolution by the local George R. Anderson Post No. 65 of the American Legion. Carefully noting that the project was not a Legion project, the resolution “...deplor(ed) the temporary defeat of the movement(,) express(ed) the opinion that it was blocked by misleading propaganda with selfish benefit in view and urg(ed) a better community spirit.” Approving the resolution at “...one of the largest (meetings) in some time...,” were about ninety World War I veterans. Subsequently, the Kiwanis also came out in favor of the bandstand.¹⁷

By the end of February, obviously tired of the swirling controversy, Mayor George suggested that the matter be brought to a vote. However, the city commissioners instead set a date for another public hearing at 9 a.m. on Monday, March 19, 1928. Adding to the confusion was another petition in favor of the bandstand signed by fifty of the 147 signers of the original petition against the project. A sketch of the “Soldier’s Memorial for Central Park” was

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 27 February 1928 and 28 February 1928.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 22

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

finally published in the local newspaper on March 18, 1928. At that time, the Mayor, city commissioners and city manager urged all interested citizens on either side of the proposition to come to the public meeting the next day. To aid in clearing up lingering confusion about the project, several points were succinctly clarified: the cost of the project would not exceed \$6,000; the bandstand would be built in Central Park; it would serve the dual purpose of a memorial to the war dead and as a community center for outdoor gatherings in the warmer months; it would be located in the near center of the park, replacing the old bandstand which would be demolished; it would be built as durable as "...the ancient structures of old Rome...;" and, the size of the structure would not overwhelm the park but rather enhance the site.¹⁸

The two hour public meeting, unfortunately, did not result in resolution of the matter. The opposition contended that the "...memorial part of the proposition (was) being dragged into the matter merely to camouflage the efforts to build a house for the Victrola..." which they felt would be "...continuously and insisently played to the discomfort and inconvenience of the..." neighborhood residents. Proponents of the project retorted that to "...the contrary, the present popularity of the Orthophonic was being used to bring about the building of a suitable memorial to the soldier dead of the late world war." While the majority of those attending the meeting were in favor of the project, the opposition again threatened legal action to stop construction. Providing foundation for legal action was an article in the state constitution which prohibited tax money from being collected for one purpose and used for another.¹⁹

At their regular meeting on March 22, 1928, the city commissioners unanimously voted to proceed with the project. Requiring no discussion, the resolution asking that the funds be transferred was introduced by M.M. Griffith and seconded by Clint Dove. The remaining members acquiesced with R.S. Hendon suggesting that the matter proceed "...at the greatest possible speed."²⁰

The opposition to the project, however, was not finished. At the April 6, 1928, meeting of the County Excise Board, J.A. Coleman again stated the case against construction of the bandstand. Because County Attorney F.M. Dudley had "...not had opportunity to delve deeply into the legal phases of the matter..." and Coleman wished to have additional allies present, the excise board postponed final action until the next Monday. Coleman once again indicated the matter would be taken to court if the project continued. This threat caused many bandstand advocates to declare that postponement of the project until July 1, and the start of a new fiscal year, would probably be best. At that time, a

¹⁸Ibid., 18 March 1928.

¹⁹Ibid., 19 March 1928.

²⁰Ibid., 22 March 1928.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 23

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

specific appropriation for the bandstand could be made, leaving no possibility of legal recourse.²¹

Despite vocal objections by Coleman, as well as Harry Harts, former park commissioner, and H.H. Brown, another attorney, the County Excise Board voted in favor of transferring the money. Following this, the matter appeared to finally be settled. The city commissioners put the contract out for bid with the expectation to let the contract in mid-May 1928. At the special meeting to let the contract on May 15, 1928, no action was taken because both the Mayor and city attorney were absent. Complicating the matter was that both of the bids were higher than the allotted amount. Hugh McIntyre and T.E. Snelson submitted the bids. The rise in cost of materials, including the price of bronze, steel and building stone at the quarries, were blamed for the too-high bids. By the end of the month, local contractor Hugh McIntyre received the project with a bid of \$6227, exclusive of the bronze tablets bearing the soldiers' names.²²

Construction on the bandstand finally got underway the first week of July 1928. At that time, changes to the design of the structure were also noted. The bandstand was to be completely fireproof with all elements being steel, stone or concrete. The design of the roof was also changed from the ceramic tile, hipped roof in the original plans to a flat roof. Although work was finally commencing on the long-awaited projected, the battle over the bandstand was not yet finished.²³

As the foundation was being laid with the rougher material already on-site and the finished stone ordered, an injunction was filed before the district judge, Judge John B. Ogden, by Guy P. Cobb, trustee, through the law firm of Brett and Brett. The injunction asked for a temporary restraining order to stop construction work on the bandstand. The judge refused the injunction, setting a hearing for the next day, July 11, 1928. The petition cited several wrongdoings. Foremost, the petition charged that the money to construct the bandstand was not legally appropriated. Second, it declared "...that the memorial building is being designed to house the so-called "Municipal Orthophonic victrola." This was wrongful because the petition contended "This device,..., will cause much additional noise and confusion in the neighborhood." Lastly, the injunction alleged that "The building of the memorial is contrary to the dedicated purposes of the park..."²⁴

²¹Ibid., 6 April 1928.

²²Ibid., 9 April 1928, 13 May 1928, 15 May 1928 and 21 May 1928.

²³Ibid., 3 July 1928.

²⁴Ibid., 10 July 1928.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 24

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

After hearing the testimony and arguments, Judge Ogden took the case under advisement with a final decision to be rendered the following day. He was also provided with "...the mass of legal citations used by (the) plaintiff and (the) defendant...". The principal issue remained the city's authority to transfer money from the jail fund to the bandstand fund. The other "...side angles..." were eliminated in conference and in demurrer hearing. Represented by Russell Brown, the city sought to show it had the right to transfer the money and cited legal precedents "...along similar lines." The plaintiff argued the city lacked constitutional right in the transfer, that the bandstand was "...not a public necessity essential to the welfare and health of the community..." and that the city did not have precedent in transferring the money. As a complete record of the hearing was made, it was anticipated that the matter would proceed to a higher court before being finally resolved.²⁵

Although Judge Ogden refused the injunction, he issued a temporary restraining order halting construction of the bandstand in order to allow Cobb to appeal the case to the Oklahoma Supreme Court. The judge then refused to make the order permanent. He also overruled the motion for a new trial with the plaintiff filing a notice of intention to appeal. The attorney representing the city sought to have the supersedeas bond set at \$8,000 which the plaintiff's attorney, Rutherford Brett Jr., "...vigorously opposed...". The court then set the plaintiff's bond at \$3,000. Cobb was required to post the bond within twenty-four hours. He then had fifteen days to "...prepare and serve casemade..." with just thirty days to file an appeal. Judge Ogden amended the court order stopping construction to allow the contractor to unload a car of stone. Tempers flared at the end of the hearing as Brett "...attempt(ed) to read certain statements into the record which did not meet with the court's approval." Judge Ogden "...ordered Brett to be seated declaring the hearing was over." Brett then "...insisted on completing the record by a general objection (to) all procedure."²⁶

Unexpectedly, the legal drama ended with the local hearing. Cobb did not post the \$3,000 bond the following day as required by law, . When the appointed hour elapsed, the court inquired as to Cobb's intent and was informed that the plaintiff had decided against appealing the case. Thus, the contractor was advised that "...the pathway had been cleared for resumption of work on the building."²⁷

Work on the bandstand was nearly complete by the second week of October, 1928. On October 9, 1928, the city commissioners inspected the structure and "...were highly enthusiastic over its beauty and permanence." Although the city formally approved the bandstand at that time, two tasks remained to be done. The bronze tablets

²⁵Ibid., 11 July 1928 and 12 July 1928.

²⁶Ibid., 12 July 1928.

²⁷Ibid., 13 July 1928.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 25

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

immortalizing the names of Carter County servicemen killed during World War I had yet to arrive and the city's Orthophonic Victrola remained in storage at Convention Hall. Both jobs were anticipated to be finished within days of the city's acceptance of the structure.²⁸

Taking slightly longer than anticipated, the large bronze plaques arrived in Ardmore in mid-October and were installed on October 19, 1928. At the same time, the Orthophonic Victrola was moved to the bandstand. Interestingly, it was also at this time that the city formally acquired title to the phonograph. Previously, the Chamber of Commerce retained ownership. The Victrola was made city property "...in order to facilitate its operating expense handling." Plans were also underway for a "...monster..." ceremony to dedicate the bandstand with a tentative date of Armistice Day which had been declared as November 12, 1928 as the 11th fell on a Sunday that year.²⁹

Although an event was held at Central Park on Armistice Day 1928, no mention is made of the dedication of the bandstand. Later recollections of the period indicate that a controversy arose over whether the American Legion was in charge of the dedication events or not. As a result, the proceedings were brief that year with just thirty minutes scheduled for the formal Armistice Day observation at the bandstand. The following year, the Armistice celebration was more elaborate. With all the businesses closing down except for a few cafes and newsstands, the townsfolk turned out for a "...spectacular..." parade. The parade concluded with a short ceremony at the bandstand. The holiday events continued with a football game and "...holiday fight card..." that evening.³⁰

²⁸Ibid., 10 October 1928.

²⁹Ibid., 19 October 1928.

³⁰Ibid., 8 November 1928, 9 November 1928, 10 November 1928, 14 November 1928, 10 November 1929 and 11 November 1929. See also The Daily Oklahoman, 26 July 1959.

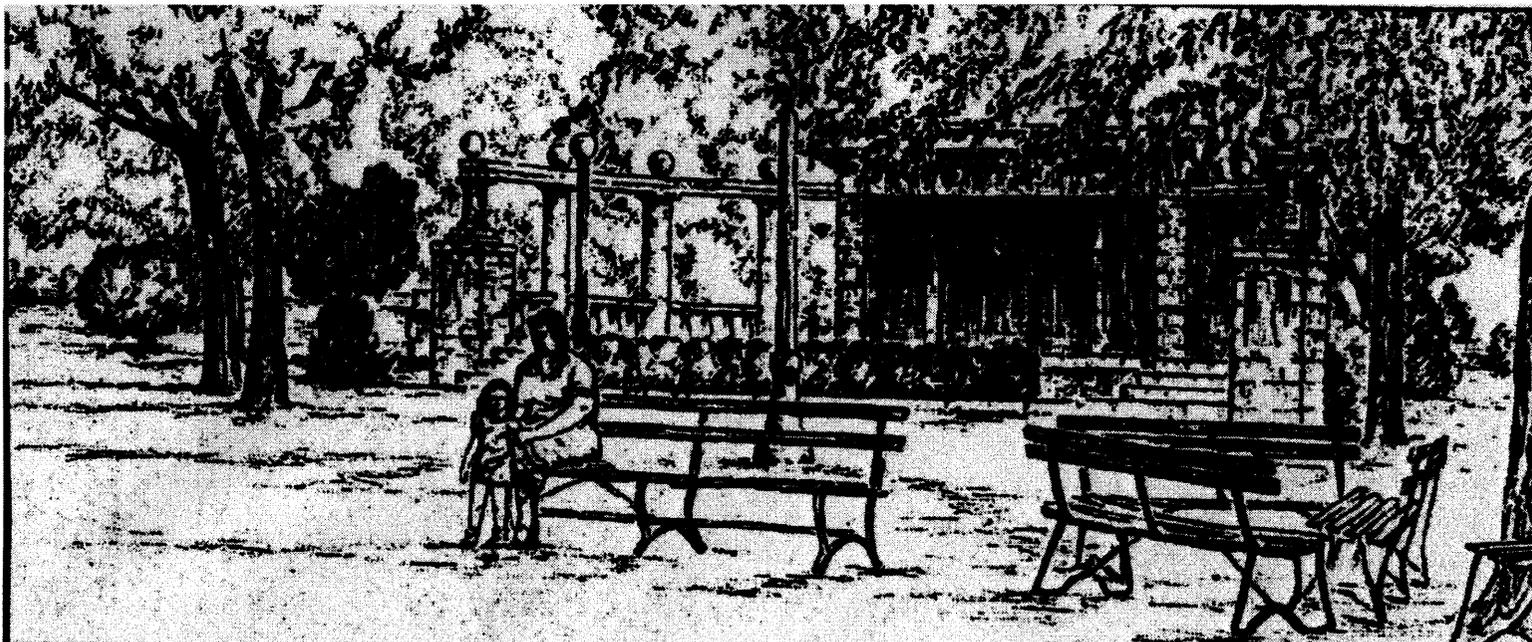
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 26

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

The bandstand continued to be a focal point for social, cultural and entertainment events for decades. For example, the celebration of the paving of the entire stretch of United States Highway 77 through Oklahoma was celebrated in Ardmore in early December 1930 with public addresses at the bandstand, among other . In 1940, an article about the town in the Oklahoma City newspaper carried a sketch of the bandstand (see below) along with a caption that partially read “For 17 summers, on each Tuesday night from May to September, public programs have been given here. They range from symphonic concerts to old-time fiddling concerts, spelling bees and amateur nights. Average



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attendance is 3,000.” The community gatherings, which were intended for residents from “...the Ardmore area....,” were discontinued for several years during World War II but the meetings were resumed the summer of 1946 and continued for at least several years after that. For decades and particularly in the 1950s, Ardmore’s annual birthday celebrations typically involved musical and other events at the bandstand. In 1952, at the annual town birthday bash, a wedding performed on the bandstand stage provided for some “...unusual...” entertainment.³¹

³¹The Daily Oklahoman, 5-7 December 1930, 8 September 1940, 9 June 1946, 29 August 1948, 29 July 1952, 28 July 1953 and 28 July 1972.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 27

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

The Central Park Bandstand is historically significant as a tangible element of the leisure activities enjoyed by citizens of Ardmore for decades. The community gatherings at the park were well-attended in the years before televisions confined Americans to their homes. From listening to records on the giant Auditorium Orthophonic Victrola to speeches by respected locals and outsiders, the bandstand provided a visible, elegant, permanent location for the area residents to congregate. The public controversy over the bandstand reveals the value the locals placed on the structure at the time of construction and the impact it would have on their lives for years to come. As a focal point of outdoor social, political, cultural and entertainment events, the bandstand occupied a significant place in the recreational events of Ardmore.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Central Park Bandstand is architecturally significant as an excellent example of a limestone, Classical Revival bandstand in Ardmore. The structure is without parallel within the community. The use of stone, particularly limestone from Carthage, Missouri, is noteworthy. Bandstands were frequently constructed of wood, such as the preceding bandstand in Central Park, and were not nearly as durable as the existing Central Park Bandstand. The stonework of the bandstand is especially fine and contributes significantly to the elegant statement of the structure. The Classical Revival style of the bandstand reveals the eloquent aspirations of the community to create an enduring haven in the park for democratic events. At the time of construction, the Classical Revival style, with its Roman and Greek connotations, was at the height of popularity. The design of the bandstand is also unusual with the large, uncovered stage area and storage room to the rear. While being conducive for a variety of events, the design was heavily influenced by the desire to have a permanent home for the community Orthophonic Victrola. Overall, the Central Park Bandstand is a significant element in the built environment of Ardmore. The bandstand maintains its position in the heart of the town and is evocative of community gatherings of a by-gone era.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 28

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 29

Central Park Bandstand
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the concrete sidewalk located just north of the northwest intersection of E Street SW and McLish Avenue SW, go along the sidewalk around the bandstand for approximately 984 feet to the concrete sidewalk extending from the front of the comfort station, then proceed 88 feet straight south to McLish Avenue SW. The south boundary extends along McLish Avenue SW to the intersection of E Street SW. Part of Block 373, Original Town, Ardmore, Oklahoma, SE 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of Section 30, Township 4 South, Range 2 East.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries creating a long horseshoe shape around the bandstand. They include the portion of the park which retains its historic feeling and association with the bandstand. Due to proximity to the bandstand, the new comfort station is also included within the boundaries. The boundaries exclude the large, nonhistoric landscaping beds with various statues and other elements on the east and north sides of the park and the nonoriginal playground equipment on the west side as these areas and resources do not contribute to the historic character of the bandstand.