

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

RECEIVED 413
FILE NO. 1024-0018

APR 2 | 1994

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1. Name of Property

historic name Watonga Armory

other names/site number Watonga National Guard Armory

2. Location

street & number 301 West Main not for publication N/A
city or town Watonga vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Blaine code 011
zip code 73772

=====

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Blake Wade February 22, 1994
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

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4. National Park Service Certification

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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

Entered in the
National Register

 other (explain):
Edson H. Beall 5-20-94
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> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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: DEFENSE Sub: arms storage

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DEFENSE Sub: arms storage

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Works Progress Administration

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

walls BRICK

CONCRETE

other N/A

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)

ECONOMIC
MILITARY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1935-1937

Significant Dates 1937

=====
8. Statement of Significance (Continued)
=====

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Nolen, Bryan W., Supervising Architect
Works Progress Administration, Builder

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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(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: N/A

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10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property Less than one (1) acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>552775</u>	<u>3966610</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

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 Dianna Everett, Research Associate

organization State Historic Preservation Office date January 15, 1993

street & number 621 N. Robinson, Suite 375 telephone (405)521-6249

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73102

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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
=====

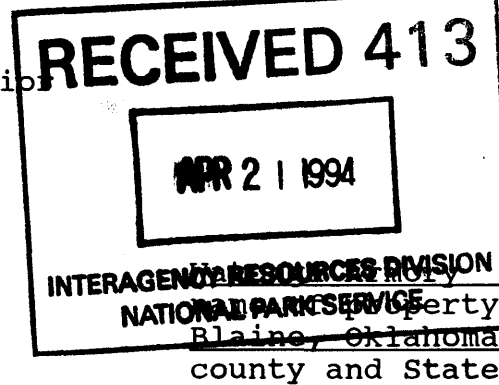
(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name State of Oklahoma/Oklahoma Military Department
street & number 3501 Military Circle Northeast telephone 405-425-8000
city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73111
=====

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9



SUMMARY:

The Watonga Armory (Watonga National Guard Armory) is a self-contained, horizontal, two-story building constructed of red brick with cast concrete detailing. The building measures 140 feet (north to south) and 125 feet (east to west). A local project of the Works Progress Administration in Oklahoma, it was constructed between 1935 and 1937. The armory property is located at 301 West Main Street in a commercial district. The armory's main entrance faces north. The floor plan of the Watonga armory is typical of WPA-built armories, in that the building comprises two distinct sections: A south section, with barrel roof, contains the drill area, while a flat-roofed north section comprises offices, supply and arms rooms, on the second floor, and a garage area on the ground floor. The building exhibits decorative brickwork and cast concrete detailing, all exemplifying the best of WPA architecture and construction philosophy in Oklahoma. Though the massing is strongly horizontal, several architectural details give the building a vertical emphasis and suggest Art Deco influence: the stepped entrance bay; tall corner buttresses and pilasters topped with stepped concrete caps; the panel of vertically laid brick over each window on both floors; and narrow, vertical steel-framed multiple-light windows in all facades. Other decorative brickwork includes three-row header pattern segmental arches over each garage door on the north facade and in the recessed entry. With the exception of one vehicle door in the south facade, all wood panel-type overhead vehicle doors and pedestrian doors are original, as are the steel-frame windows. As it is essentially unaltered, the Watonga Armory retains appropriate integrity to enable it to exemplify WPA-type military architecture in Oklahoma.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The Watonga Armory (Watonga National Guard Armory) is a self-contained, horizontal, two-story building constructed of red brick with cast concrete detailing. The building measures 140 feet (north to south) by 125 feet (east to west). A local project of the Works Progress Administration in Oklahoma, it was constructed between 1935 and 1937 of red brick manufactured in McAlester, Oklahoma, at the state penitentiary. The armory property is located at 301 West Main Street, in a commercial district. It is bordered by Main on the north, by a bank building on the west, by Leach Avenue on the east, and by an alley on the south, separating it from a fenced parking compound.

As with many WPA armories in Oklahoma, the building is designed to have two principal facades that each give pedestrian and/or vehicular access to a street. The Watonga Armory has two principal facades, one accessing West Main Street (the south, or main entry), and one accessing Leach (on the east). These walls are characterized by outwardly projecting pilasters that enframe window/door bays. The south facade's main focus is an elaborate door surround

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 10

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

with stepped and castellated parapet and with tall shallow pilasters that enframe an entry consisting of second-story strip windows and a compound segmental arch. The east facade is divided by shallow pilasters into two parts, one being the administrative section, characterized by its multiple windows in two stories, and the drill hall section, characterized by its first-floor door/window arrangement. Cast concrete detailing is an important visual aspect of the two primary facades. The secondary facades, on the south and west, have almost no decoration, though the administrative section (north part) of the west facade resembles its counterpart on the east side.

As with most WPA-built armories, the roofline of the Watonga Armory indicates that the building comprises two distinct sections: A south section, with barrel roof, comprises the drill area, while a flat-roofed north section comprises offices, supply and arms rooms, and garage. The north section consists in a two-story central block enframed by one-story wings. (Historically and presently), the drill hall roof is covered with roll roofing, while the north section's roof is tar and gravel overlaid in some areas with white foam roof sealer. The roofline of the Watonga Armory gives the building a fortress-like aspect. In both sections the roofline is generally horizontal, though in the south section's east and west walls the parapet angles upward toward the center, giving the appearance of being a very low pitched "gable." The roofline of both stories of the north section exhibit an elaborate castellated parapet topped by a cast concrete coping. The embrasures (indentations) of the battlements occur over every window, with the merlons (raised portions) generally occurring over the pilasters, between window pairs, and over the center of unpierced bays. The north roofline gives the entire facade a stepped appearance: the east and west one-story wings enframe a central block, where two-story pilasters flank a stepped parapet that projects upward in the center.

A slightly castellated parapet gives the armory a medieval flavor. Though the massing is strongly horizontal, several architectural details influenced by the Art Deco style give the building a vertical emphasis: the stepped parapet of the entrance bay; one- and two-story pilasters topped with stepped concrete caps; vertically-laid strips of brickwork over each window on both floors; and narrow, vertical steel-framed multiple-light hopper-opening windows in all facades. Original metal downspouts are in place on the south, west, and east facades.

One of the distinguishing architectural features of the Watonga Armory is its sophisticated and complicated decorative brickwork, exemplifying the best of WPA architecture and construction philosophy in Oklahoma. On the north and east facades (street sides), "layered" or compound, multi-level pilasters enframe the bays. At the northwest and northeast corners of the north section, and at the northeast and southeast corners of the south section, these pilasters appear to be "compound" setback buttresses: That is, several (often

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 11

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

seven or more) vertical "shafts" or "layers" of brick actually make up the corners of the buttresses, and these applications make the building's corners appear to be almost rounded. Other decorative brickwork includes three-row rowlock-pattern segmental arches over each garage door on the north facade and in the recessed entry. In addition, over each window opening, in both stories, there is a wide panel of brick in which the bond runs vertically from the window header to the top of the parapet. Cast-concrete decoration is another feature of the building: these consist of the window sills, the parapet coping, all buttress caps, a concrete drip-mould at the base of the north and west walls, and decorative diamond-shaped and rectangular insets in the north wall.

Windows and doors are character-defining elements of the Watonga Armory. Each facade exhibits regular openings that indicate the function of the interior space. All of the steel-framed windows are original. Glazing patterns include combinations of two or three lights set in four, five, or six rows (4/2/4/2, 3/6/3, 3/6/3/3, 6/3/6/3, usually with one or two sets of vertical center-pivot windows and a bottom row that opens in hopper fashion). The NORTH facade consists in seven bays (seven on ground level, three in second story). The two-story central bay contains the compound segmental-arched, recessed entrance, containing original wood double doors. A four-step concrete porch leads to the doors. The entrance is flanked by pairs of original wood panel-type overhead vehicle doors under brick arches. The second story in the central block, is marked by three narrow, multiple-light nonopening windows in the center, over the entrance (illuminating the stairwell). These are flanked by pairs of 3/6/3 windows. The east and west facades of the second-story central block each have four regularly spaced 3/6/3 windows. On the ground floor, the EAST facade, divided into drill hall and garage sections, is marked by (south to north): a 3/6/3 transom atop an original wood pedestrian panel door; a triplet of 6/3/6/3 windows; an original wood overhead vehicle door; and a triplet of 6/3/6/3 windows, all in the drill section; and a 3/6/3 transom atop an original pedestrian door, a single 3/6/3 window, a pair of 3/6/3 windows, an original wood overhead vehicle door, and one 4/2/4/2 window, in the garage section. The SOUTH facade has, west to east, a 3/6/3/3 window, two pairs of 6/3/6/3 windows, two central pedestrian doors topped with 3/6/3 transoms, a single 6/3/6/3 window; a new steel overhead vehicle door, and a pair of 6/3/6/3 windows. On the WEST, the north (garage) section has (north to south) a 4/2/4/2 window, a pair of 3/6/3 windows; and a triplet of 3/6/3 windows; the south, or drill hall, section has a single 3/6/3/3 window. Some lights have been painted to block sunlight.

Two WPA markers identify the building. Above the main entrance is a small metal shield inscribed "USA/1936/WPA." At the corner of the northeast wall there is a cornerstone containing the inscription: "State Armory/Built by Works Progress Administration/1936/W. S. Key/State Administrator."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 12

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

With the exception of one new steel overhead vehicle door in the south facade, all of the wood vehicle doors and pedestrian doors are original, as are steel-framed multiple-light windows. A window-type air conditioning unit has been installed in an upstairs window in the north facade. A new steel flagpole and a wooden sign identifying the building as a National Guard facility sit at streetside outside the main entrance, and a new diamond-shaped red and gold metal sign, symbol of the 45th Infantry Division, is attached to the second-story wall over the main entrance. There are no other exterior alterations.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION/ALTERATIONS:

The Watonga Armory exhibits a rectangular plan that was standard for WPA armories. The building is divided into two functional sections, a drill hall area on the south, and a multi-story administrative/garage section on the north. The first-floor garage extends the width of the building, while the second-floor office area extends only over the central block of the garage area.

The 86' by 125' south section, or drill hall, was and is characterized by a very high vaulted ceiling with exposed sheet metal roofing panels and steel truss system. The stage and dressing rooms, in the west end, are intact; under the stage, basement area rifle range is accessible but has been condemned; doors to backstage dressing rooms and rifle range are original wood panel type. The interior wall between the drill room and the garage section is brick (load-bearing), and one set of the original pedestrian doors is still in place; one of two original wood panel-type overhead interior vehicle doors has been replaced with a steel door. The interior walls exhibit shallow pilasters of brick, and two of these flank the stage. The entire drill room, from ceiling to floor, was painted silver and red in the 1970s. The original 1937 wood-block floor in the drill room was removed in the 1960s and replaced with concrete. In the north section, ground floor, all interior walls are brick. The original floor plan remains. There are no major divisions to this area, as the entire section is a garage (with four vehicle entrances in the north wall). In the southeast corner of the garage area there are two small storerooms, and in the north center, under the stairs, is a small supply room. The original concrete ceiling is visible in this area.¹

On the second floor, all interior walls are also brick. Original brick walls still divide the area into five rooms off a central hallway; two on the east side (one having a built-in closet and bathroom, and one having a large fireproof vault for arms storage) and three on the west. In the 1970s the rooms in the northeast corner and in the northwest corner were divided in half with wood-framed walls to make offices, half of the west-center shower/latrine was converted into an office with bathroom, and a drop ceiling was added in all

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 13

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

of the second-floor rooms and in the central hallway. No original walls were removed in this process.²

The Watonga Armory is essentially intact and unaltered, retaining more than adequate integrity of location, setting, exterior design, materials, and workmanship to convey its significance as the embodiment of WPA-type architecture in Oklahoma.

ENDNOTES

1. Sgt. Monte Creps, 1-C 189th Field Artillery, interview by Dianna Everett, Watonga, Oklahoma, December 11, 1992.
2. Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 14

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

SUMMARY:

The Watonga Armory (Watonga National Guard Armory) is significant within the economic context of Works Progress Administration projects in Watonga, Oklahoma, 1935-1937, within the military context of national defense requirements of the Oklahoma National Guard's local unit in the era between the two world wars, and within the architectural context of WPA building style and methodology locally and in Oklahoma. The armory was constructed between 1935 and 1937 by local men who were qualified for work relief under WPA guidelines. The project brought \$51,307 into the economy of Watonga, Oklahoma, by employing an average of 36 previously unemployed, unskilled workers for more than sixteen months. The armory also filled a longstanding military need for an adequate, secure drill hall and arms storage building for the Headquarters Battery and Combat Train, 189th Field Artillery, 45th Infantry Division of the Oklahoma National Guard, which previously had no permanent armory. The Watonga Armory is significant architecturally as an excellent, intact example of WPA architecture. The exterior materials, Oklahoma-made brick, and craftsmanship evident in the masonry, reflect both the goals of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma and the potential for overcoming the problems of using unskilled labor to construct large public buildings. The armory is one of three remaining WPA buildings in Watonga. As it is essentially intact, the Watonga Armory is able to convey appropriate feeling and association within these three contexts.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Oklahoma suffered severely during the initial years of the Great Depression, 1929-1933, but here, in a predominately rural state, where in 1930, 65.7 percent of the population lived in rural areas, and twenty-seven of the state's seventy-seven counties had no "urban" areas, or towns of more than 2,500 persons, drought, general agricultural failure from 1932 through 1938, and a downturn in the petroleum industry exacerbated the general economic depression. Rural communities, towns, and cities, which functioned as agricultural or petroleum service centers, consequently foundered.

Oklahoma's state and local governments were unable to provide much help for citizens, whether urban or rural. Limited relief offered by counties did not alleviate the suffering, nor did meager annual appropriations by the state legislature. No public funding was available to maintain the existing infrastructure, and private charity failed to create or to support relief initiatives. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration, established in May of 1934 by the Roosevelt administration, provided some direct relief, in terms of food, clothing, and small stipends, but until the inception of the Works Progress Administration in 1935 only a few Oklahomans received adequate assistance. The urban unemployed and displaced farm families combined to create a situation in which 33 percent of all Oklahoma families were on the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 15

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

direct relief rolls by the time that Roosevelt created the WPA by executive order in May, 1935. By July 1935, there were 127,416 jobless men certified in Oklahoma.¹

The inauguration of the Works Progress Administration in 1935 stands as one of the benchmarks of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" for the United States. The program was designed to assist in lifting the nation from the depths of severe economic depression. Make-work projects provided work-relief for literally millions of individual citizens whose lives had been devastated by the near-collapse of the American economy. The infusion of cash into projects all over the state made a significant economic impact on hundreds of communities. During the seven-and-one-half-year life of the WPA, more than \$10.75 billion were expended, of which Oklahoma received more than \$185 million for projects ranging from school lunch programs, flood control, and archeological excavations, to major construction projects such as armories, highways, bridges, schools, stadia, and museums.²

Localities competed for WPA funds from the outset. Chambers of Commerce and planning committees drew up specifications to meet three major criteria established by the administration: 1) projects must meet a well-defined community need; 2) each project must be sponsored by a public body, such as a city or county government or school district, which was required to provide from 10 to 25 percent of the project cost in cash and/or materials; and 3) 90 percent of those hired must be unemployed employable workers who were carried on the relief rolls. Compensation was to be based on 130 hours of work for \$21 (later \$23) per month for unskilled labor.³ In June of 1935 Oklahoma WPA Director (Gen.) William S. Key estimated that there were already "70,000 employable unemployed" ready to work on his agency's projects throughout the state; by November of that year, 67,973 people were at work for the WPA, and by January of 1936 WPA rolls reached an all-time high of 94,281.⁴

Armory construction was the first major thrust of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma. By mid-1937, 126 armories had been constructed throughout the United States, and 51 of these projects were located in Oklahoma. When the WPA ended its program in 1943, 54 armories had been built and 53 others "reconstructed" in the state. The new construction had infused \$3.5 million into local economies.⁵

Blaine County, in western Oklahoma, had been opened for settlement by "land run" in 1892. The economy of the county was based on agricultural production--primarily wheat--and on gypsum mining--in 1910 Blaine County had five of Oklahoma's eight gypsum mills. Watonga, platted before the land opening, grew rapidly after 1902, when the completion of two rail lines

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 16

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

connected the town with regional markets for agricultural products and locally mined gypsum. Boasting a 1930 population of 2,228, Watonga served as county seat and as a major service and shipping center for the region.

Severe drought and general economic decline devastated Watonga and the surrounding area in the early 1930s.⁶ By September of 1934, 1,110 families, comprising 22.7 percent of the county population, were on direct relief. More than nine hundred relief clients had been certified to the WPA's district office by July of 1935. By September of 1935, due to federal relief efforts the number of families on relief had been reduced to 639, or 14 percent of the county population. In November more than three dozen were at work on the new armory. In September of 1936, 377 persons were at work on WPA projects in Blaine County.⁷

By mid-summer of 1935 the Watonga City Council had submitted several proposals for WPA projects, including a new school building, a swimming pool/playground, improvements and new buildings for the fairgrounds, and an armory building, which was projected to cost \$30,000. An armory site on West Main Street was purchased with funds from a bond election.⁸ Thus, the city's share of the cost of the armory was provided in land.

WPA crews began clearing the armory site on November 7, 1935. A short project expanded into a long one, however, and crews began working staggered shifts (two per day) in order to expedite the process. Nevertheless, in November of 1936 the armory was still unfinished. Work continued into 1937, and on January 28, the day of dedication, the wood-block floor was not completely finished.⁹ On January 28, three thousand people celebrated the opening of the armory, with Gen. Key, state WPA director, and many other dignitaries present to participate in the laying of the cornerstone. The guests enjoyed an afternoon program including a military band concert and concluding with a dance in the new armory.¹⁰

WPA projects in 1935-1937 propped up the sagging rural economy of Blaine County. By May of 1936 the WPA had expended \$125,524 throughout the county. The WPA's cost on the armory project was \$51,307.40 (with the city contributing only the site). With the exception of the farm-to-market road project and the new school, the federal government invested more in the armory than in any other building project in the county.¹¹ In human terms, tens of thousands of person-hours of labor went into the armory's construction. The project employed from thirty to fifty men, working staggered shifts (two six-hour shifts per day), in order to provide maximum employment and to expedite the job. These figures testify to the labor-intensive nature of WPA projects, which were designed to provide as much work as possible for those on relief rolls. Most of the hours were consumed in hand labor (bricklaying and pouring concrete), and in installing a wood-block floor in the 86' by 125' drill room (more than 100,000 wood blocks were cut, primed, set in asphalt, sanded, oiled,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 17

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

and polished in patterned sections). A concrete floor would have sufficed, but ample time and labor were available to create a complicated design.¹²

Upon completion, the Watonga Armory became the home of the Headquarters Battery and Combat Train, 189th Field Artillery, 45th Infantry Division, Oklahoma National Guard.¹³ Reorganized under the National Defense Act of 1920, the Guard was an integral part of United States military preparedness. Since 1920, approximately five-sixths of America's military strength lay with "citizen soldiers"--National Guard divisions and Reserve divisions in nine corps areas across the nation. Each corps area had one Regular Army division, two National Guard Divisions, and three Reserve divisions. Oklahoma, along with New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado, formed one division of National Guard within the Eighth Corps. Despite inadequate training facilities, the Oklahoma National Guard provided service during numerous natural disasters and civil disturbances during the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴ Because the Guard paid its members a monthly stipend, which they spent locally to feed and clothe their families, Oklahoma communities actively competed to secure local Guard units during these years. In January of 1923 Watonga was selected as home of the Headquarters Battery of the 189th Field Artillery. By 1937 the unit included two officers, eighteen non-commissioned officers, and forty-three enlisted men.¹⁵

The National Guard received only one-tenth of the War Department's budget in the interwar years, and equipment was surplus from World War I. Many units needed permanent training, drilling, and storage facilities, as Guard members were required to meet 48 drills per year. Units without permanent armories usually rented space in facilities that often lacked proper security. Four hundred new armories created by the cooperative effort of the federal and local governments helped correct this serious deficiency.¹⁶ The Watonga National Guard unit had previously kept its equipment in three different buildings,¹⁷ including the auditorium at the fair grounds, over a fourteen-year period.

The new Watonga Armory provided permanent housing for the unit. The new facility was more than adequate for the detachment's needs. The building was divided into areas serving specific functions. On the ground floor, the entire south section housed the drill hall, comprising the stage and the drill floor. Underground, beneath the stage, was a rifle range. The north half of the building comprised two stories. The ground floor included a garage, armory, machine shop, tool room, supply room, and caretaker's office. Space on the second floor provided offices and quarters for officers and men, including locker rooms and a club room. Thus the building provided for virtually every training need, except for field training exercises.

Due in large measure to the WPA armory-building program, the 45th Infantry Division was able to achieve a level of military efficiency and readiness that prepared it to be among the first four National Guard divisions federalized in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 18

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

late 1940 by President Roosevelt. After the United States entered World War II, the 45th saw action in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy.¹⁸

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The Watonga Armory typifies WPA armory architecture in Oklahoma. In the mid-1930s two armory plans were developed by Major Bryan W. Nolen, an Oklahoma City architect and National Guard officer selected in 1935 to serve on the staff of WPA administrator Gen. William S. Key. Nolen planned for every armory to have a drill hall section, usually having a high ceiling and either a barrel or a flat roof, and also a flat-roofed, single-story extension on one or both sides, the number depending on the number of units (one, two, or four) to be housed in the building.¹⁹ Design was flexible, allowing for the orientation of the building to various avenues of egress and to site of property. In the case of the Watonga Armory, the standard plan was altered somewhat to provide for a second story in the armory section, rather than an extension on the other side.²⁰ The WPA preferred to use locally purchased building materials, and therefore armories were constructed of native stone, usually quarried locally, or brick, manufactured locally or within the state. The Watonga Armory used brick manufactured at the state penitentiary at McAlester.²¹

WPA architectural philosophy prohibited ornate features, intricate design, and elaborate trim; therefore, WPA armories tend to be straightforwardly utilitarian. They have a strong horizontal massing, a fortresslike quality, which is often relieved only by vertical Art Deco detailing or by virtue of being a provincial interpretation of a romantic high style, such as Tudor.²² The stepped parapet over the entrance, the slightly castellated parapet around the three walls of the administrative/garage section, and the layered pilasters/buttressed corners give the Watonga Armory a Medieval English appearance, while the cast concrete caps on the parapet and on the buttresses show an Art Deco influence. While WPA military architecture usually reflects minimal funding for design and materials, as well as the use of unskilled labor as bricklayers, stonecutters, and so forth, the Watonga Armory reflects the best of the masons' craftsmanship. As David Baird notes in his survey of WPA resources of Oklahoma, WPA buildings are "the architecture of the poor," "mute reminders of the emotional distress and physical pain many Oklahomans suffered during the 1930s and of the enlightened relief effort by the federal government that alleviated much of the suffering."²³ Although WPA armories may not be architectural masterpieces, they served the WPA's purpose--to make work, and to provide secure space for national defense units. WPA armories exemplify the New Deal's practical determination to "do something--and do something now." The armory is one of three WPA buildings remaining in Watonga. In type, style, scale, materials, and workmanship, WPA armories, of which the Watonga Armory is an excellent example, are unique when compared to the rest of the built environment, both in Watonga and across the state.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 19

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

ENDNOTES

1. C. Roger Lambert, "Dust, Farmers, and the Federal Government," Hard Times in Oklahoma: The Depression Years, ed. K. E. Hendrickson, Jr. (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1983), 71-72, 78-79, 81; W. David Baird, "Final Report: WPA Structures Thematic Survey (Phase III)," Stillwater, Okla.: Oklahoma State University, 1987), 5; Guthrie (Oklahoma) Daily Leader, July 9, 1935.
2. Baird, "Final Report," 10; "Final Report of the Oklahoma Work Projects Administration, February 27, 1943," Archives of the Work Projects Administration and Predecessors, 1933-1943, Series One: The Final State Reports, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1987), 1; "Building Construction Report, February, 1943," *ibid.*, 5-6; Daily Oklahoman, March 12, 1936; Baird, "Final Report," 10.
3. "Questions and Answers on the WPA [brochure]," (Washington, D.C.: Work Projects Administration, December 1, 1939), Vertical File, Oklahoma Historical Society; Baird, "Final Report," 11; Kingfisher (Oklahoma) Times, July 9, 1936.
4. Guthrie (Oklahoma) Daily Leader, June 23, 1935; *ibid.*, November 13, 1935; Daily Oklahoman, September 12, 1937.
5. "Accomplishments: Works Progress Administration for Oklahoma, July 1, 1935-March 1, 1937," (Oklahoma City: Works Progress Administration, 1936), 38; "Building Construction Report," 5-6.
6. John W. Morris, "The Smaller Cities," Cities of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1979), 11, 16; Their Story: A Pioneer Days Album of the Blaine County Area (n.p.: Heritage Book Committee, 1977), 2-3, 58, 61; Donald E. Green, "Beginnings of Wheat Culture in Oklahoma," Rural Oklahoma, ed. Donald E. Green (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1977), 63-66; John W. Morris, "Nonmetallic Resources," Drill Bits, Picks, and Shovels: A History of Mineral Resources in Oklahoma, ed. John W. Morris (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1982), 163, 166.
7. Daily Oklahoman, September 29, 1935; Watonga Republican, July 18, 1935; Daily Oklahoman, September 12, 1937.
8. Watonga Republican, July 18, 1935; *ibid.*, August 1, 1935; *ibid.*, October 3, 1935.
9. *Ibid.*, November 7, 1935; *ibid.*, November 28, 1935; *ibid.*, February 13, 1936; *ibid.*, March 5, 1936; *ibid.*, January 14, 1937; *ibid.*, January 28, 1937.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 20

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

10. Ibid., February 4, 1937.
11. Ibid., July 18, 1935; *ibid.*, May 7, 1936; *ibid.*, January 28, 1937.
12. WPA Project No. 228, "Index to Reference Cards for Work Projects Administration Files, 1935-1942," (Washington, D.C.: WPA, c. 1942), Micro T-935, reel 54; Watonga Republican, February 13, 1936; *ibid.*, January 28, 1937.
13. "Accomplishments," 44.
14. Guy Nelson, Thunderbirds: A History of the 45th Infantry Division (Oklahoma City: 45th Infantry Division Association, 1970), 6-9; Kenny Franks, Citizen Soldiers: Oklahoma's National Guard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 38, 40, 49.
15. Historical Annual: National Guard of the State of Oklahoma, 1938 (Baton Rouge, La.: Army and Navy Publishing Company, 1938), 228, 233.
16. Nelson, Thunderbirds, 6-9; Franks, Citizen Soldiers, 38, 40.
17. Watonga Republican, January 28, 1937.
18. Nelson, Thunderbirds, 12.
19. "Accomplishments," 38, 40; Historical Annual, 18.
20. Watonga Republican, November 7, 1935.
21. *Ibid.*, November 28, 1935.
22. Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43 (Washington, D.C.: G. P. O., c. 1943), 52; Baird, "Final Report," 15, 21, 23.
23. *Ibid.*, 17; *ibid.*, 2.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9, 10 Page 21

Watonga Armory
name of property
Blaine, Oklahoma
county and State

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"Index to Reference Cards for Work Projects Administration Files, 1935-1942." Washington, D.C.: WPA, c. 1942. Micro T-935, Reel 54.

Watonga Republican, June 20, 1935-February 4, 1937.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Lots 1 (one), 2 (two), and 3 (three) of Block 68 (sixty-eight), Original Town, now City, of Watonga, Blaine County, Oklahoma, a property measuring approximately 165 feet north-south and 150 feet east-west.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The legal description as recorded in Book 64, page 221, Deed Records, Blaine County, Oklahoma, includes Lots 1, 2, 3, 11, and 12 of Block 68. The Armory sits on Lots 1, 2, and 3; lots 11 and 12, a fenced area serving as a parking compound, are separated from the Armory by a 12-foot alley and thus are not contiguous and are not included in the Verbal Boundary Description.