

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

*1087  
Submittal  
Required*

<b>RECEIVED</b>
AUG - 1 1999
NATIONAL REGISTER, HISTORY & EDUCATION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1. Name of Property

historic name Gate School

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number NW corner of 4th & Texas not for publication N/A  
city or town Gate vicinity N/A  
state Oklahoma code OK county Beaver code 007 zip code 73844

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

*B. Wade*  
5-26-99

State or Federal agency and bureau

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO

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):     

*Beth Boland*

*9/10/99*

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>  1  </u> buildings
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
<u>  2  </u>	<u>    </u> structures
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
<u>  3  </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

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6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>EDUCATION</u>	Sub: <u>school</u>
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u>	<u>sports facility</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Recreation and Culture</u>	Sub: <u>Museum</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

other: WPA Standardized Style

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

walls CLAY TILE

BRICK

CONCRETE BLOCK

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)

EDUCATION  
ARCHITECTURE  
ECONOMICS  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1937-38  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1937-38

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

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Vahlberg, Walter T., architect  
Works Progress Administration, 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: Gateway to the Panhandle Museum

=====  
10. Geographical Data  
=====

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	405820	4079100	3	—	—
2	—	—	—	4	—	—

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet). Lots 1-8 and 12-24 of Block 11, Town of Gate

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) Bordered on east by Texas Street, on the south by 4th street, on north by city limits, on the west by the Community Center.

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

name/title Wayne and Mary Lewis, committee chairpersons and Ernestine Maphet, pres.; ed. By Jim Gabbert, Architectural Historian, SHPO

organization Gateway to the Panhandle Museum date April, 1998

street & number Main Street telephone 580-934-2004

city or town Gate state OK zip code 73844

=====  
Additional Documentation  
=====

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.)

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

name Gateway to the Panhandle Museum

street & number PO Box 27 telephone 580-934-2004

city or town Gate state OK zip code 73844  
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Section 7 Page 9

Gate School  
name of property  
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DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

The Gate School, located on the north edge of the town of Gate in Beaver County, Oklahoma, is a single story, yellow brick building rebuilt in 1937-38 by the Works Progress Administration. Facing south into town, the footprint of the building is roughly "L" shaped; the gymnasium forming the base. There are three distinct elements of the building: The main body of the building consists of classroom and office spaces rebuilt in 1937-38 out of an earlier, two-story building. The gymnasium was built at the same time by the WPA using clay tile walls faced with matching yellow brick. At the north end of the building, a concrete block addition was added in 1959. A small, clay tile and stucco building stands to the east of the Gate School. This building was constructed in 1947 as a manual arts shop. Marking the entrance to the school grounds are two yellow brick piers, erected during the reconstruction of the Gate School by the WPA. Although the windows of the building were replaced in the 1980's, the Gate School still stands as an excellent example of a WPA standardized designed school building.

DESCRIPTION

Sited at the northwest corner of 4th and Texas Streets on the north edge of the town of Gate, the Gate School faces south into the heart of the small town. Behind the building, to the north, the schoolyard looks out over a sweeping vista of rolling fields. To the west of the Gate School is a community building, formerly a gymnasium built next to the school in the 1960's. To the east are a few scattered houses and the town's grain elevator.

The walls of the school are primarily faced with large, rough-textured yellow brick-like masonry units laid in a running bond. At the base of the walls run nine courses of slightly darker brick capped with a header course. A concrete cap covers the top of the walls, hiding behind a small parapet the flat roof of the school building. The attached gymnasium has a barrel-arch roof. The face brick covers an interior brick salvaged from the original building. The body of the original, red brick building that makes up the rear half of the present Gate School has been covered with a natural colored parget coat of cement.

The south facade of the building features a central, recessed entry. Inset approximately four feet are paired, aluminum-framed glass doors with a single, fixed transom above. These doors replaced older, wood-framed doors in the early 1980's. Above the recessed entry is a small, bronze shield reading "USA 1937-1938 WPA." To the west of the entry are two large window openings. Originally utilizing windows salvaged from the original school building, the openings now are enclosed with paired, aluminum sash, double hung windows with 1/1 panes. East of the entry, off center, is a single 1/1 window. The sills of the window openings are poured concrete, painted red. At the far east corner of the south facade there is a rectangular hole in the yellow face-brick. Originally intended for a cornerstone or plaque, the hole was never used. Exposed in the hole are the original red bricks of the former second story of the Gate School, salvaged and re-used in the construction of this building by the WPA.

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The west side of the Gate School consists of three sections. The southern third is faced with the same yellow brick as the facade and has three window openings. Unlike the south facade, these openings have large, multi-pane windows. Each set consists of three, six-part tiered lights, the bottom pane being hung and moveable. The upper four tiers are embossed with blue film for ultra-violet light protection. The center third of the west wall is the original building. Its red brick walls are covered with a cementitious parget coat. A slightly corbeled row of header bricks, uncoated, caps the wall. Piercing the cap and extending approximately three feet above the parapet are three square, brick piers. There is one at each corner of this third of the wall and one centered in between. A concrete string course runs the length of the wall matching the corbeled header course at the brick portion of the wall and incorporating the sills of the windows. There are two distinct ranks of windows, consisting of five individual windows in each rank. These match the form of the windows on the southern third of this wall. The final third of the west wall is the concrete block addition added in 1959. The walls of the addition are much lower than the original building, reflecting the lower ceiling height and the below-grade floors. There are four sets of steel sash, six pane, awning type windows with concrete sills. A wooden fascia board supports aluminum gutters at the eave.

The rear, or north wall of the original building rises above the low pitch of the gabled addition. It is a blank, white-painted parget surface. The rear wall of the addition is of concrete block with a steel security door centered. The eave of the slight gable is marked by a plain fascia board.

The east side of the Gate School has a different appearance than the west side. The rear third, the concrete block addition, mirrors its western counterpart. The middle third, the original core building, is slightly different than the west side. It has the same cementitious parget coating, but there are four sets of triple, six-part tiered windows. These are symmetrically placed. The final third of the east wall is where the gymnasium projects outward, forming the "L" of the footprint.

The walls of the gymnasium match those of the front facade. The yellow and orange, rough textured face brick covers hollow clay tile in the gymnasium. Both the north and south walls of the gymnasium have eight, symmetrically placed, six-part tiered windows. These windows do not have the UV coating that the classroom windows have. There is a wooden fascia board at the eave. The white, rubberized surface of the barrel-arch is visible rising above the parapet. The east wall of the gymnasium has two egress openings, each approximately five feet from each corner. The southern opening has a plain, steel security door; the northern opening is boarded up and shows evidence of a former addition that once connected there.

At the front of the Gate School, flanking the sidewalk leading from the street to the entrance, stand two brick piers. Each is seven feet high and two feet square. The yellow brick piers are capped with a flat, four inch thick concrete slab. These piers were erected by the WPA at the same time as the building.

Standing east and north of the gymnasium is a small gabled building. Used as a shop and manual training classroom, it was built in 1947 and was originally connected to the gymnasium's east

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side by a series of covered walkways and the Prairie Dell school building that was moved to the site in 1947. These additions have since been razed, leaving only the manual arts building standing. The building is oriented on a north/south axis. It has a corrugated metal roof, rough textured stucco walls, and three steel sash casement windows on each side wall. There is an offset steel door on the north gable end. The south gable end is an exposed interior wall, left open to the weather when the additions were razed. A wooden paneled door is offset.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

In the 1980's, all of the windows and the front entrance of the WPA Gate School were replaced. The rear concrete block addition was added in 1959. It retains its original windows. In 1946, the Prairie Dell School building was moved to the Gate School grounds and connected to the east side of the gymnasium. A new manual arts shop was constructed and attached to the former Prairie Dell building. When the Prairie Dell addition was razed in the 1980's, the shop building was left standing and is currently used for storage.

The interior of the Gate School is essentially untouched since the WPA reconstruction. New gas heat replaced the coal boiler. Items such as furniture and wall lockers were removed when the school was consolidated with Laverne. The building is currently used as an extension of the Gateway to the Panhandle Museum. A collection of school-related artifacts have been collected and displayed there. In addition, former classrooms have been leased as office space and the gymnasium is used for occasional auctions and recreational sports.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Gate School building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The building is historically significant as an example of the work undertaken by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the town of Gate, Beaver County, Oklahoma. The work relief provided by the WPA allowed many local people to survive the trying times of the 1930's while also stimulating the local, and therefore state and national, economies. The building is an excellent example of the WPA Standardized style as applied to school buildings.

BACKGROUND

Gate, Oklahoma, is located 3 miles west of the 100th Meridian on U.S. Highway 64. Although a post office was recorded for the town of Gate as early as 1886, the town, as known, formally began in 1912. The town relied heavily on the surrounding agriculture community for its economic mainstay. Wheat was the main crop as individual farmers began to fence in the once open, free range. The Wichita Falls & Northwestern Railroad passed by the town in 1912, necessitating a move of the former townsite to the location of the tracks. The access to the railroad allowed the community to grow beyond its simple, clustered beginnings. The site was surveyed and platted and lots sold in early 1912 and the new town began to grow. The town continued to thrive during the 20's with numerous businesses including a hardware store, drugstore, general merchandise store, barber shop, hotel, bank, two grain elevators, a telephone system, at least two cafes, a blacksmith shop, 2 auto agencies and a newspaper. Gate was incorporated in the 1940's

The old town of Gate was located across the section northeast and moved to the railroad at the present location in 1912. A wooden grade school building was built at that time. By 1917, a larger, two-story red brick building was constructed to serve the growing community. Consolidations took place in the following years, adding Wells, Pleasant Valley, Union Center, Prairie Dell, Zelma, Riverside or Berends, and the Glenwood school located north of the Cimarron River. The present Gate School building was created in 1937-38 when the Works Progress Administration remodeled the former two story building. In 1972 the high school classes were transferred to the Laverne School district and the grade school followed in 1992. The new gymnasium and lunch room were acquired by a Community organization. The school building was purchased by the Gateway to the Panhandle Museum.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The "Great Depression" of the 1930's devastated economic and social conditions nationwide. Oklahoma, heavily dependent on agriculture for economic survival, suffered bitterly through the decade-long depression. Particularly hard hit were Oklahoma's more rural counties such as Beaver. The Panhandle counties of Oklahoma, Cimarron, Texas, and Beaver, were at the heart of the "Dust Bowl," the drought-stricken plains of the prairie midwest. Reliant on the devastated industry of agriculture these counties lost residents at a tremendous rate. Those who stayed were frequently in need of local, state and national relief efforts to subsist.

Gate was in the main part of the Dust Bowl of the 1930's which devastated farming conditions.

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During the three year period of 1936 to 1938 alone, 500 to 600 hours of "sun-obscuring dust" ravaged the southern plains. This community had few tenant farmers but even the land owners abandoned or lost their farms during this period. The reduction in farm income left them little choice but to resort to the relief system or migration out of Oklahoma.

In an effort to assist citizens in distress and stimulate the national economy, the administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt legislated twenty-nine different acts between 1933 and 1939. The bills were structured to sustain various parts of the economy. The majority of acts sought to provide some type of relief for the unemployed. Believing that "work rather than direct relief should be the keystone of Federal policy with respect to needy employables" the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 authorized a program of federal relief employment. Using this act, Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in May 1935 to provide jobs for the unemployed. In 1939, the Federal Works Agency incorporated the Works Progress Administration, renaming it the Works Projects Administration. The WPA continued in operation until 1943, at which time the economic stimulus provided by the war time industries lessened the need for the WPA and the federal monies allocated to the WPA were required elsewhere.

The WPA, aimed specifically at employing the jobless on worthwhile public work projects, was particularly effective in aiding the economy. WPA projects, through the payment of wages and purchase of material, had the immediate effect of aiding destitute families, as well as bolstering the local, state and national economies through the latter half of the Great Depression. The WPA also contributed a major boost to Oklahoma's educational and local government efforts. The buildings constructed by the WPA provided necessary, improved facilities for thousands of children and local governments.

Although a federal work program, the WPA only facilitated public works projects nationwide. As part of its basic criteria, the WPA restricted construction projects to those that served a permanent and useful community function and had a "tax-supported public body" sponsor. The project sponsor provided partial monetary support, usually in the form of land and material, as well as engineering and architectural plans and specifications. Ownership of the project then belonged to the sponsor upon completion. Prominent among the construction projects was the erection of schools and education-related buildings. Schools easily fit the criteria as they provided expanded educational and social opportunities for the community for a limitless amount of time, as well as generally had the sponsorship of the district Board of Education or County Superintendent of Schools.

The WPA's participation in the construction of these school was critical. Without the economic assistance provided by the WPA, the majority of school districts could not raise the money necessary to build or remodel a building. By the mid-1930's, most Oklahoma school districts were at the limit of their bonded indebtedness and the assessed values of their property had dropped due to the depression. As of April, 1937, 1/5 of all WPA schoolhouses built in the USA are located in Oklahoma. According to the "Dallas Farm News" in 1939, "The prairie, once home of the deer, buffalo, and antelope, is now the home of the Dust Bowl and the WPA."

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The WPA was active in Beaver County from the beginning. A quarry was established in the center of the county that furnished building stone and aggregates for other WPA projects. There were park improvements in Beaver, the county seat. Curb and gutter and culvert construction projects improved roads and streets. But, the most far-reaching projects involving the WPA were the schoolhouses.

In 1937, after two years of particularly dry weather and poor agricultural yields, the WPA released funds specifically aimed at rural school projects in Beaver County. A large number of small projects were scheduled for the numerous school districts. These projects ranged from simple repairs to the construction of privies to the erection of new buildings. The Gate School was targeted for one of the WPA funded projects.

Because the WPA paid only for labor costs in order to maximize the relief benefit, many projects were creative in their use of materials. The Gate School made extensive use of salvaged materials from the original building. Labor was readily available; local farmers and ranchers were desperately in need of additional cash, and the thirty-four dollars per week that a man could earn on the WPA rolls went a long way to keeping families together and viable.

Local men around the town of Gate were employed in the reconstruction of the Gate School. The roll of men working on the project varied. The WPA did not guarantee permanent work, only temporary work to supplement income. So, laborers came and went as needed, learning new skills that could lead to more permanent employment and supplementing the dwindling income from yet another bad harvest. It is unclear the total number of workers employed on the job.

The foreman of the Gate School project was a local man named Alvin Means. He supervised the demolition of the second story of the original school and the construction of the new Gate School. Idle farm workers and townsmen were employed to do the labor, much of it without benefit of machinery.

Using standardized plans created for the WPA by Walter Vahlberg and working under the tutelage of the head carpenter, D. Maphet, the building began to take shape in the spring of 1938; the demolition of the original building having started the previous fall. Clay tiles and face brick were brought in from elsewhere and the sand for the cement and mortar was obtained from a pit just west of the building. The building neared completion as the 1938-39 school year approached. The desks were moved in on September 2, in time for the beginning of the school year.

The students who attended the Gate School during the reconstruction of their building were scattered all over town. The elementary students met at local churches while the high school classes met in local store buildings. Completion of the new building meant much to them, as well. The "Herald-Democrat" in Beaver quoted a senior in its September 15 edition: "We are proud of our new school building and as the first graduating class in the new building, we set our goals high and hope to reach them." The fathers of a number of students were proud of the building as well; the money earned in its construction helped keep food on the table and a roof over their heads. While smaller WPA projects were undertaken in the Gate vicinity, it was the Gate School that was the centerpiece, the most important and lasting project.

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The harvest of 1938 was good. The next year was better. Farm workers and ranchers returned to their traditional roles. In Gate, the men returned to the fields, but frequent visits to the Gate School to attend basketball games, plays, and community meetings reminded them that the building represented a bright spot in the darkest period of their lives. The Gate School stands as a prime example of what W.S. Key, WPA administrator, wrote in his report "Accomplishments: Works Progress Administration for Oklahoma" in 1937: "Buildings constructed under the Works Progress Administration in Oklahoma will stand for generations as symbolic monuments to a people that refused to be conquered by economic depression."

The Gate School remains as a visible reminder of the trying times of the "Dust Bowl" years. Its simple form and restrained style belie the importance of the building to the community. The creation of the building, the laying of each brick, brought dignity and pride to each man who partook of the endeavor, as well as putting food on the plates of his family. The Gate School is significant as the best local representative of the work of the WPA in eastern Beaver County, Oklahoma.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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*Dallas Farm News*. Dallas, Texas. September, 1939

*Herald-Democrat*. Beaver County, Oklahoma. 1937-1938

A History of Beaver County. (Beaver, OK: Beaver County Historical Society). 1971

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Worster, Donald. Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s. (New York: Oxford University Press). 1979



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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description  
Lots 1-8 and 17-24 of Block 11, Town of Gate

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the property currently and historically associated with the Gate School.

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 99001087

Date Listed: 9/10/99

Gate School  
Property Name

Beaver  
County

OK  
State

Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*Beth Boland*

Signature of the Keeper

*9/16/99*

Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

The school is significant under National Register criteria A and C, in the areas of architecture and economics. The Criterion C box was left blank, but is the criterion corresponding to "Architecture." "Economics" is the applicable area of significance for criterion A; the current documentation does not support eligibility in the area of "education," which is hereby deleted from the list.

This was discussed with Jim Gabbert of the OK SHPO staff.

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DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)