

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Creek National Capitol

and/or common Creek Council House

**2. Location**

street & number Sixth Street and Grand Ave.

not for publication

city, town Okmulgee vicinity of

state Oklahoma

code 40

county Okmulgee

code 111

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of Okmulgee (c/o Councilhouse Board current chairman: Cleo Wallace)

street & number (Ms. T.A. Sunshine King, Director, Creek Council House Museum)

city, town Okmulgee

vicinity of

state Oklahoma

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk

street & number Okmulgee County Courthouse

city, town Okmulgee

state Oklahoma

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved <input type="checkbox"/> date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Creek National Capitol is located on a pleasantly landscaped square city block in downtown Okmulgee, Oklahoma. The two-story, rectangular structure measures approximately 100 by 80 feet. Exterior walls are constructed of quarry-faced sandstone in a coursed ashlar pattern. Quoins accentuate the corner angles: paired brackets, the cornice. Piers divide each elevation into bays. A square wooden cupola crowns the hipped roof, which is also pierced by four chimneys.

The main entrances, centered on the north (front) and south elevations, are identical. Each is covered by a simple bracketed porch with a balcony above. A multi-pane, rectangular transom and sidelights frame double doors on the ground floor and a single door on the second story. Additional entrances are located in the side elevations. Windows throughout the building are 6-over-6, double-hung sash. Bars have been installed inside those on the lower floor.

The interior of the structure is divided by a central stairhall. On the east side of this hall are two exhibit rooms and a gift shop; for the structure currently serves as a local museum. Three more exhibit rooms and a library are located on the opposite side of the hallway. The second-floor plan is similar, with a large meeting room (The House of Warriors) set up on the eastern side of the building and a smaller meeting room (The House of Kings), the Supreme Court Room (now used for museum displays), and another small exhibit room on the western side. Refer to the accompanying sketch for a clarification of the floor plan.

Constructed in 1878, the building was originally used as a council house for meetings of the Creek Indian Council. Later, with the creation of a Supreme Court, the judicial branch of the government was also housed in the building. The cupola and porch are probably original and thus the present exterior of the structure is probably very similar to its late 19th century appearance. From 1907 to 1916, this Indian capitol building was converted for use as the Okmulgee County Courthouse. When the structure became the property of the Creek Indian Memorial Association, the administrators of the building concentrated on the restoration of the interior to its original appearance. This emphasis continued when the building became the property of the city (administered by the Council House Board). The ground floor rooms, now used for museum displays, a library, and gift shop, probably originally served as office space. Although at the present time the museum contains a variety of articles of local interest (antiques, paintings by local artists, Indian artifacts, old photographs, paintings, etc.), the current administrators feel that one of their main objectives should be an emphasis on the interpretation of Creek history. To that end, chairs, desks, etc. have been set in appropriate places in the two historic rooms (the House of Kings and the House of Warriors) on the upper story in an attempt to recreate the atmosphere which must have existed when the building was used for council meetings and official Creek activities. The room which once housed the Supreme Court now serves as a display area as does the adjoining chamber.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social/
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	commerce	X exploration/settlement	philosophy	theater
X 1900-1907	communications	industry	politics/government	transportation
		invention		X other (specify)
			Native American	culture

Specific dates 1878-1907

Builder/Architect

Unknown

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Situated on a square city block in downtown Okmulgee, the Creek National Capitol is a two-story sandstone structure which served as the council house for meetings of the Creek Indian Council from the time of its completion in 1878, until 1907 when Oklahoma became a State. The structure stands as a symbol of the resourcefulness and flexibility of the Creeks, one of the so-called five "civilized" tribes who, despite years of injustice, assimilated aspects of American and European culture while not losing their own identity.

## History

The first Creek contact with Europeans occurred in 1540 during Hernando de Soto's expedition. At that time, the Muskogean speaking Creeks occupied much of present-day Georgia and Alabama. In the 18th century, when the Creeks became well-known to Europeans they were the dominant group of the Creek confederacy which also included some other Muskogean speakers and some non-Muskogean. The confederacy probably consisted of some 50 or 60 towns in the 18th century, and may have had a population as large as 20,000. The towns were the central political units of the confederacy and served a social purpose as well; for the inhabitants of scattered villages and homesteads surrounding each of the towns often gathered at the town plazas for important occasions, especially the annual busk or greencorn ceremony: Creek subsistence was based on maize-squash-bean agriculture, supplemented by hunting.

In the colonial period, the Creeks occupied a crucial position between English, Spanish and French settlements, and they began to rely heavily upon European trade. By the beginning of the American Revolution, the Creeks were most closely allied with the British, and it was not uncommon for the British traders to live among and intermarry with the Creeks. The confederacy remained loyal to the British during the Revolutionary War, for the natives had become dependent upon European goods.

In their initial relations with Americans, the Creeks signed a treaty in 1790 ceding some of their land and recognizing the sovereignty of the United States. During the late 18th century, the confederacy was modified and strengthened with the creation of a legislative body known as the National Council. Some changes became evident in Creek life-style as the Creeks began to adopt certain European/American customs such as agricultural practices, Negro slaveholding, house types, loom weaving, etc.

These acculturative processes were not to continue without clashes, however; for the rich agricultural land owned by the Creeks became greatly desired by Americans for cotton plantations. The increasing power and expansionist policy of the United States led to demand for more land cessions by the Creeks. When a group of Creeks rose up against the Americans and massacred some 300 soldiers and settlers at Fort Nims in 1813 in an attempt to resist these pressures for their land, they were decisively defeated in 1813-1814 by Andrew Jackson. By 1820, the increasing pressure of white settlers on the remaining Creek lands had led the U.S. Government toward a policy of favoring the removal of the Creeks (and other Southeastern tribes) from their homeland and their

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet. Item 9

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property about 1 acre

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

### UTM References

A 

1	5	2	3	0	8	5	0	3	9	4	5	9	7	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

# 11. Form Prepared By

Original NSHSB form by Robert Utley, (1958) used in Statement of Significance.

name/title Francine Weiss, Archeologist, Landmark Review Project

organization HSS, HCRS

date Visited November, 1975

street & number 1100 L Street NW

telephone 202-523-5465

city or town Washington, D.C.

state \_\_\_\_\_

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national     state     local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

date

Attest:

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

At the present time, the building is in good condition. In the recent past, some the lime plaster of the walls had disintegrated, but this condition has been stabilized. The Council House Board has been made aware of the reasons for the deterioration of the 98-year old structure and has taken steps to preserve and maintain it. The Board has provided funding for such activities as general conservation of the building and its contents, prevention of deterioration around the windows and doors, removal of shrubbery next to the building, and strengthening of the foundation. The grounds surrounding the structure are likewise well-maintained. Two square posts marking the entry path, a hedge surrounding the front yard, and several historic trees located on the city block which the building occupies provide a setting for the structure. The sidewalks and parking meters the surrounding the building are within the landmark boundary but obviously do not contribute to the national significance of the property.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

relocation in the West. In 1830, acting upon President Andrew Jackson's recommendation, Congress passed a bill establishing Indian removal as a Federal policy. Many Creeks saw their homes burned as attempts were made to force them to leave, and many were deprived of their land by fraudulent schemes. When some of the Creeks rose against these injustices in 1836, they were again defeated, and the "removal" began in earnest. Accompanied by the Army, most of the Creeks left their homeland between 1836 and 1840, and it has been estimated (Green, 1973) that some 40 percent of the population died during or immediately following the relocation.

Despite this tragic beginning, the Creeks set out to rebuild their Nation in their new western land. Although there were factional divisions which had their roots in earlier differences, by 1860 the Creeks had rebuilt settlements, had created a General Council which met annually on a hill between the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers, and had written a code of laws and a constitution.

During the Civil War, the Creek loyalties were divided; and in 1867 the factions met to reestablish unity and draw up a new constitution. Modeled after the U.S. Constitution, the new document provided for executive, legislative, and judicial branches. It called for the election of Principal and Second Chiefs and for the creation of a Supreme Court and a National Council composed of a House of Warriors and a House of Kings similar in nature to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, respectively. Okmulgee was selected as the new capital; and the first capitol building, erected in 1868, was a two-story hewn log structure with a breeze-way separating the two legislative chambers. In 1878, the permanent National Capitol Building was completed and served as the meeting place for the National Council until Oklahoma became a State in 1907.

The Creeks also led in attempts to unite the Five Civilized Tribes and to bring peace and order to Indian territory by influencing Plains tribes (unsuccessfully, as it turned out) to settle down and unite politically with the sedentary tribes. The Intertribal Council, composed of delegates from most of the tribes residing in Indian Territory, met periodically at the Creek National Capitol Building to discuss their problems. When delegates began to talk of devising a system of self-government, complete with constitution, the U.S. Government dampened their ardor by making it known that it would continue to exercise supreme authority in the Territory.

The latter part of 19th century was characterized by a division among the Creeks between those attempting to retain their old culture and those who were becoming assimilated into the mainstream of American culture. These factional differences occasionally resulted in violence. During this period, educational opportunities for the Creeks increased, and Christianity became the dominant religion, but they still retained some of their native customs.

A railroad was constructed across Creek lands in 1872; and the following decades saw the opening to white settlement of portions of what is now Oklahoma and the creation of the Oklahoma territory. The "Civilized Tribes" fell under U.S. Government pressure to accept individual land allotments and to dissolve tribal government. In 1906, over the

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3

protest of the Creeks and other Indian groups in the area, Creek sovereignty was abolished by the United States Government, and Oklahoma became a State in 1907. The tribal government was still allowed to exist, but without any coercive power, and from 1907 to 1971, tribal chiefs were not elected by the Creeks but were appointed.

In the 20th century, new laws (the Wheeler-Howard Act of 1934 and the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act of 1936) encouraged tribal cultural and economic development and gave the Creeks the right to incorporate, to establish cooperatives, and to borrow money to accomplish these goals. Despite years of injustice, the Creek culture survived. They began to incorporate their towns and rebuild their squares, for the basis of their old political, social and cultural system had not died.

In Oklahoma and in out-of-State localities Creeks earn their livings in various ways. However, certain customs and traditions have survived, and Creeks still gather in the town squares for their traditional festivals such as the Green Corn Dance. The Creek National Capitol Building stands as a symbol of the Creek's ability to keep important aspects of their culture and heritage alive while adjusting to the changing circumstances thrust upon them by European arrival on the continent.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

9

Page

1

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Debo, Angie, The Road to Disappearance, Norman, Oklahoma, 1941.

Foreman, Grant, Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians, Norman, Oklahoma, 1932.

\_\_\_\_\_, The Five Civilized Tribes, Norman, Oklahoma, 1934.

Green, Donald E., The Creek People, Phoenix, 1973.

Utley, Robert, "Creek National Capitol," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings form, ms., 1958.



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

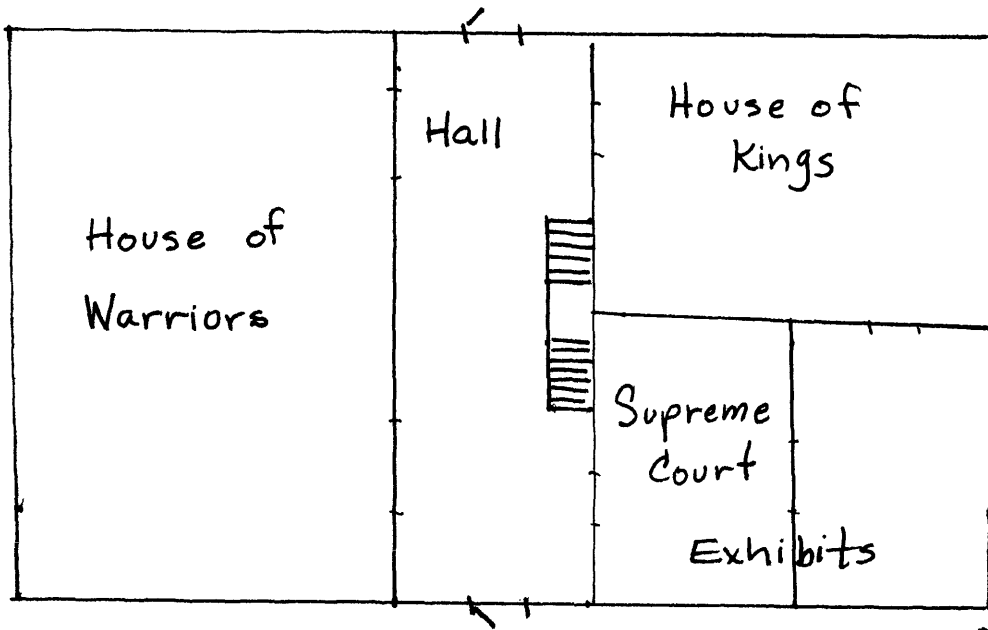
Item number 10

Page 1

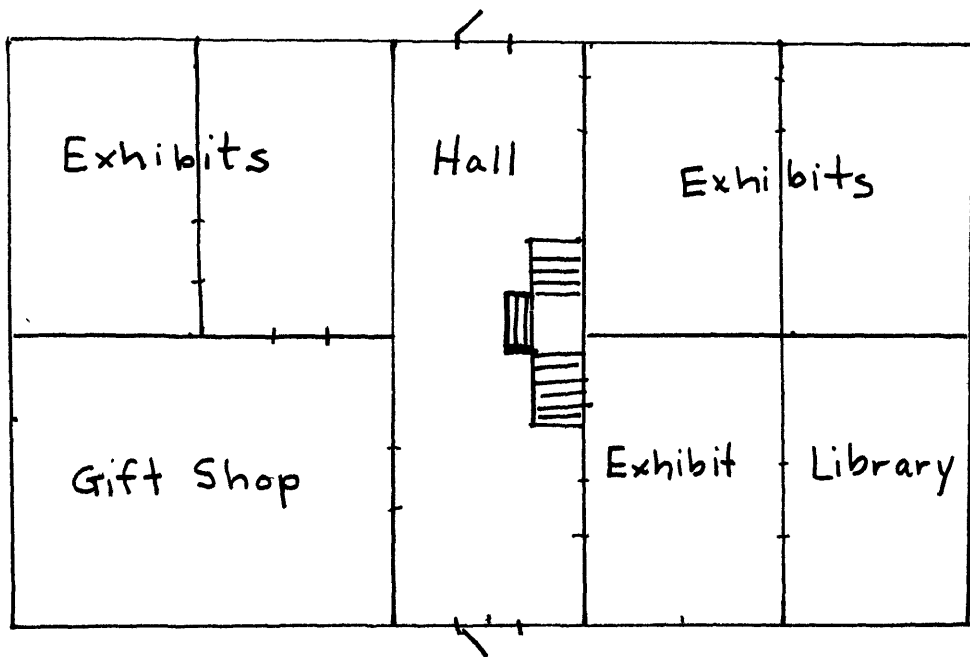
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Refer to the accompanying maps A, B, and C (USGS-7.5-Okmulgee South, Oklahoma, Quadrangle; City of Okmulgee, Oklahoma; for a clarification of the boundary description. The landmark is a city block bounded on the north by the south curb of the Sixth Street, on the east by the west curb of Grand Avenue, on the south by the north curb of Seventh Street, and on the west by the east curb of Morton Avenue. . . . all of Block 139.

The Creek National Capitol stands alone on this block and is surrounded by trees. Today, the commercial structures and residences of Okmulgee surround this block, and the landmarks boundary thus encloses this feature - the Capitol building itself and the open lot on which it is situated.



2<sup>ND</sup> Floor



Ground floor

# Creek National Capitol - Floor Plan - Sketch

N↓ (not to scale)