

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JUL 25 1988
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Works Progress Administration (W. P. A.) Public Buildings, Recreational Facilities
and Water Quality Improvements in Northwestern Oklahoma, 1935-1943 (Thematic Resources)
and/or common

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheets for data on individual properties not for publication

city, town _____ vicinity of _____

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Various--see continuation sheets

street & number _____

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. See continuation sheets

street & number _____

city, town _____ state _____

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Oklahoma Comprehensive Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1985 _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local _____

depository for survey records Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society

city, town Oklahoma City state Oklahoma

7. Description

See continuation sheets for data on individual properties.

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This thematic nomination deals with a portion of the physical legacy in Northwestern Oklahoma of the Works Progress Administration, later renamed the Works Project Administration. The Franklin Roosevelt administration created the WPA in May, 1935 as one of its New Deal programs to give work to employable persons made destitute by the economic depression then gripping the United States as a whole and Oklahoma in particular. By the end of 1940, the "useful" projects of the agency produced a host of public structures and improvements noted for their architectural type, style, materials and workmanship. This nomination relates only to WPA constructed public buildings, recreational facilities and water quality improvements in ten northwestern Oklahoma counties (Alfalfa, Ellis, Grant, Harper, Kay, Major, Noble, Woods, and Woodward), previously designated by the State Historic Preservation Officer as Comprehensive Planning Management Region 2. The physical legacy of other depression era work programs such as the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the National Youth Administration (NYA), the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) and the Public Works Administration (PWA) have not been included because of basic philosophical and methodological differences with the WPA.

The geographical area included in the nomination encompasses some 10,314 square miles, or 15 percent of the land surface of the State of Oklahoma. It extends in a 57 mile wide strip just south of the Kansas border west from the Arkansas River to the 100th meridian. The terrain ranges from rolling prairie to high plains, while the vegetation consists primarily of short and mixed short and tall grasses but with some blackjack oak woodlands in river bottoms in the eastern portion of the region. Predominant economic activities in the 1930s included wheat farming, cattle ranching and petroleum and natural gas extraction. Agricultural was hampered seriously in that two-thirds of the soils were sub-marginal and suffered serious sheet and wind erosion.

The nomination area had and has homogeneity beyond economy and geography. It is co-extensive with the boundaries of the old Cherokee Outlet, a tract assigned by treaty to the Cherokee Nation in 1828 to provide access to buffalo ranges, utilized extensively by white cattlemen (the Cherokee Strip Livestock Association) in the 1870s and 1880s, and opened to white settlement by a dramatic land run in 1893. These common historical traditions, its mid-western sub-culture characteristics, and its Republican politics, give the region an observable social cohesion. Demographically, in the 1930s the area differed only in magnitude from the general trend in the rest of Oklahoma. While the state as a whole registered a population decline of some 2.6%, the ten northwestern counties decreased by some 5.4%. By the end of the decade the 192,639 residents of the old Cherokee Strip constituted 8.2% of Oklahoma's total population.

The physical, economic and cultural environment of the nomination area in the 1930s shaped the building program of the WPA. Within this general context, however, three considerations were most important. First, the project had to be "useful" in terms of the needs of a particular community. Second, projects had to be sponsored by public bodies such as school districts and city, county, state or federal governments, which would contribute part of the total cost, usually in construction materials. And third, at least 90% of the project workmen had to come from employable persons then on the relief

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rolls. Not all but certainly most workers, therefore, were of the "unskilled" variety, and most projects were labor intensive. Given these three considerations and the physical, economic and cultural context of Northwestern Oklahoma, WPA building programs had definite and obvious parameters.

This was especially apparent in the types of structures completed by the WPA. The criteria of usefulness and community sponsorship produced large numbers of structures used for educational purposes. In northwestern Oklahoma these ranged from school buildings of one, two, three, four or more rooms, to gymnasiums and/or auditoriums, and to vocational agricultural buildings. Buildings used for various community and governmental purposes were also constructed. Among these were city halls, jails, libraries, multi-purpose community buildings and agriculture buildings. State National Guard armories constituted another type of useful structure as did those associated with health care, conservation and water quality activities.

In addition to public buildings, WPA workers also constructed numerous outdoor recreational facilities. Athletic fields and stadiums constituted one type of this genera of work. Park pavilions, bandshells, bathhouses, swimming pools and horse race tracks represented five others.

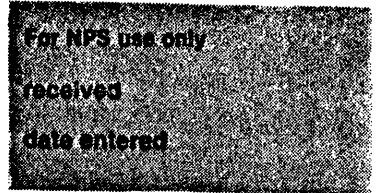
A third category of WPA construction types included cemetery improvements. Among these were fences, pavilions and water storage facilities.

The parameters of using supervised but unskilled, relief roll workers and of pursuing projects that were labor intensive impacted the architectural style of structures completed by the WPA. Specifically they had to be simple in design and uncomplicated in construction technique. In the case of most school buildings of four rooms or less, for example, sponsors selected free construction plans and specifications from a catalog provided by the School House Planning Division of the Oklahoma State Department of Education. (Samples of catalog descriptions and floor plan sketches provided by the Division are included in Appendix A.) Since the range of options was limited, completed school buildings, wherever their location, were similar, if not identical, in style. Classroom facilities were one story, generally rectangular structures constructed of brick or of uncut or cut native stone. They generally had hipped or gable roofs. Recessed entryways were centrally or laterally located depending upon whether the structure was one, two, three or four rooms. Wood sash windows were arranged by fives or sixes, with openings that extended to the eaves. Gymnasiums and other educational facilities were constructed according to catalog plans as well, and with the same results. (For sample plans see Appendix A.) National Guard armories had similar if not identical styles: a central drill floor section with a high ceiling and arched roof and a single story extension on one or both sides covered by a flat roof with parapets. Other WPA projects produced structures identifiable as to style but more for their architectural features than their commonality of design.

In general, WPA buildings were vernacular in architectural style, although there were allusions to or imitations of academic forms. Drawn from catalog plans, rural school

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buildings of four rooms or less frequently referred to Richardsonian Romanesque themes with rough cut stone, smaller window openings and arched entryways. This preference for previous styles, however, was relevant in northwestern Oklahoma only in those counties bordering the forest cover in the eastern part of the state. Elsewhere and especially on the "treeless" plains, school buildings more often alluded to modern, futuristic art deco styles in angular roof extensions, pilasters, incising, poured concrete or brick construction materials. These features were particularly apparent in bathhouses, one agricultural building and a hospital, as well as in National Guard armories. Northwestern Oklahoma WPA architectural styles, therefore, reflected the physical environment instead of an urban-rural dicotomy. On the fringes of the woodlands near the eastern border of the region they were heavier and more oppressive, while elsewhere on the open plains they tended to be lighter and more upbeat.

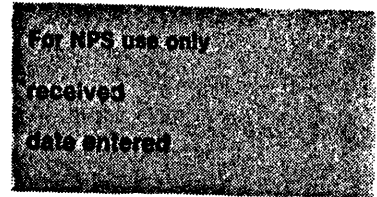
The parameters of the program also dictated the scale of WPA structures. At any one time sponsors of projects had to supply from 10 to 25 per cent of total construction costs, a stipulation difficult to meet regardless of amount given the depressed economic conditions in Northwestern Oklahoma. Moreover, WPA national guidelines limited the amount of federal participation to some \$52,000, a limitation occasionally circumvented by approving an application for an "annex" to a project previously approved or already under construction. Both factors meant that the scale of most construction projects was generally modest. Largest in size were the National Guard armories. Most common were school classroom buildings, although few of the latter because of subsequent alterations are a part of this nomination. Yet in any given community, the WPA building of whatever type could easily be one of the largest.

If external factors determined scale, style and type, they also enjoined the nature of building materials used on WPA projects. Sponsors generally contributed their portion of construction costs in the form of materials (the agency supplied the labor and supervision). Since most had very limited resources, these were often of local origin and valued by the WPA in such a way as to meet the required match. Native stone was frequently used as a construction material in the northwestern counties, generally quarried in the vicinity of a particular project by WPA crews. At the building site, the stone was dressed and employed in uncut or cut form. If the latter, the blocks were usually rusticated. More often native stone was not available because of the geological structure of the plains, other materials such as used brick salvaged from a pre-existing building were available, or sponsor funds were sufficient to pay for other types of construction materials such as new brick, concrete or wood. The state, for example, utilized brick manufactured at the prison in McAlester. In northwestern Oklahoma brick was as common to WPA structures, especially school buildings and armories, as native stone, a characteristic that made the region unique relative to the rest of Oklahoma.

Because laborers had to be drawn from those on relief rolls, workmanship on projects was affected. Destitute agriculturalists and oil field workers had few skills as masons, carpenters or quarry workers. Despite the best efforts of skilled supervisors, workmanship in the early stages of the program or in remote areas at any time tended to be crude, especially the masonry. The school building at Dayton in Grant County and the

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armory at Tonkawa in Kay County are but two examples. At these locations the stones were cut into uneven blocks and were laid with little regard to line or course. Over time, significantly, workmanship improved. Stones were uniformly cut, rusticated and placed, visual relief being provided by different sized and colored stones. The school at Red Rock in Noble County and the Crystal Beach bathhouse and bandshell at Woodward in Woodward County reflect the more mature and higher level workmanship. In structures of uncut and undressed native stone, usually of the later period, one finds on the part of masons a sense of play or delight in doing. This quality is achieved by careful placement of stone according to size and color. Daniel's Athletic Field and Stadiums at Perry in Noble County is an excellent example of this type of "art work." Improvement in masonry skills is also apparent in brick construction, although the nature of the building materials makes it less observable.

According to one sponsor, workmanship on WPA structures was much "better than anticipated." Two factors explain why. First, quality improved as unskilled laborers gained experience on any one job and from job to job. Second, given depressed economic conditions, the WPA program was less concerned with productivity than "useful" employment. This translated into time, time for the workers to do their construction jobs right—to make the rock fit perfectly and bricks run smoothly or to tear down a wall that was not plumb and to build it again. With some exceptions, therefore, WPA workmanship in Northwestern Oklahoma was of remarkable quality.

In the nomination area, therefore, a distinctive WPA architecture is readily identifiable. It is primarily associated with structures of public usefulness such as school buildings, community and recreational facilities, armories and water quality improvements. These facilities are almost always of modest size and monetary value, constructed of native stone or recycled brick and of better than average workmanship. WPA architecture differs from other depression era architecture primarily in terms of scale, materials and type of worker. The Public Works Administration (PWA) funded larger projects of more than \$100,000 in value, utilized materials imported from beyond the local community and used both contract supervisors and laborers. It also produced buildings with clear reference to academic architectural styles, especially art deco. The PWA was designed to stimulate business, while the WPA was organized to feed the hungry by providing useful work. The former produced an architecture of the well-to-do; the latter an architecture of the poor.

The survey of the nomination area was conducted in May, June and July of 1985. The two surveyors were W. David Baird, Professor of History, and Thomas Franzman, a graduate student in history, both at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. In advance of the survey itself, Franzman reviewed the National Archives microfilm edition of the "Index to Reference Cards for Works Project Administration Project Files, 1935-1942" to identify specific projects in the ten county region. The substantial list that resulted was refined by reference to the "Community Improvement Appraisal Reports" on the work of the WPA conducted in 1938 and housed in the Documents Sections of the Edmon Low Library at Oklahoma State University. Only after the completion of this research work did the actual field survey begin.

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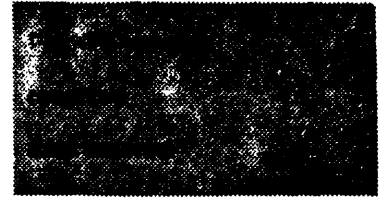
Every site in the ten county area to which there had been a reference of a WPA building was visited. That effort enabled Franzman to determine whether a structure or facility remained extant, and if it did to document its current condition. Additional structures were often identified by residents of the community; those too were visited and evaluated. Doubtlessly some sites were missed, but there probably were not many. Because most of the original photographs were of unacceptable quality, Baird toured the region, took additional photographs, and spot checked the initial survey. Altogether at least 152 properties were surveyed and assessed.

The survey also involved investigation of many WPA construction sites of other than public buildings, recreational facilities and water quality improvements. The agency's massive employment program produced in the state at large 2712 bridges and viaducts, 50,306 culverts, 585 miles of curbs, and 68 miles of gutter. Its laborers built 236 miles of malarial control ditches, 94,644 sanitary privies and a whole host of water and sewage facilities. A fair number of all of these were located in Northwestern Oklahoma, a sizeable proportion of which the surveyors visited. Even though the largest percentage of WPA labor was assigned to the construction of these and similar projects, they are not included in this nomination. To have done so would have made the nomination unmanageable. Also most structures or facilities of these types have outlived their usefulness, excepting some of the bridges and culverts along county roads and curbing and guttering in smaller communities. Thus, the more prosaic legacy of the WPA has been excluded while its most obvious one has been included: public buildings, recreational facilities and water quality improvements.

But not all structures a part of the "obvious" legacy are included within this nomination. Of the 152 properties surveyed and assessed, 139 were not considered suitable for inclusion on the National Register. Most of these were in ruins, a decayed condition or altered. Thirteen properties containing some seventeen WPA structures, however, were deemed sufficiently significant to be nominated. The latter retained their structural and architectural integrity and were at least in a good state of repair. Within the local community they were unique in terms of architectural types, frequently with regard to construction materials and generally in terms of quality of workmanship. Often they were distinguished because of architectural features unusual for WPA structures. No building or group of buildings, however, was excluded merely because it or they replicated or were identical to other buildings within the survey area. IN such cases the structures in question were almost always integral parts of different communities, even though they might be located in the same county.

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	<u>Resource Type</u>	<u>Number</u>
Contributing Resources:	Bldgs.	12
	Site	None
	Structure	5
	Object	None
Non-contributing Resources:	Bldgs.	None
	Site	None
	Structure	None
	Object	None

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1935–1943

Builder/Architect

See continuation sheets

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

WPA constructed public buildings, recreational facilities and water quality improvements in Oklahoma's ten northwestern counties are major cultural resources significant economically, socially, educationally, militarily and architecturally. Construction of them eased economic distress within the region, salvaged the self-esteem of destitute and unskilled workers, inaugurated an educational renaissance and reformation, enhanced the military preparedness of National Guard units soon to see action in World War II, and gave expression to a distinct vernacular architectural style recognizable by type, style, scale, materials and workmanship. In sum, WPA-constructed public buildings, recreational facilities and water quality improvements, although somewhat ordinary in appearance, possess extraordinary local historical/architectural importance.

In Northwestern Oklahoma, most WPA structures, facilities and improvements were constructed principally between 1935 and 1941. This period, notes Jerry L. Rogers, Associate Director, Cultural Resources and Keeper of the National Register of Historical Places, in a letter to State Historic Preservation Officers dated May 16, 1986, constitutes a historically "discrete era for which resources typically share elements of historical and architectural significance resulting from similar historical patterns." Rogers's conclusion is sustained by a large body of scholarly literature that documents and evaluates the significance of depression era architecture and that demonstrates the exceptional importance of the WPA as a producer of that architecture. At the same time, most WPA resources are less than 50 years old. Are they, then, ineligible for the National Register unless they are exceptionally significant? To determine that they are ineligible, Rogers's wisely insists, "would be unnecessarily arbitrary." Presumably, therefore, depression era cultural resources, including WPA resources, not yet 50 years old are eligible for listing without documentation of "exceptional significance."

Surprisingly, there has been no comprehensive, scholarly study of the WPA and its work in Oklahoma. Indeed, the construction program of the agency has been virtually neglected by historians and other students. To provide an evaluative context for the importance of that activity for the purposes of this nomination a variety of sources were used, ranging from materials in the National Archives to documents and special resources depositories and libraries in Oklahoma. Most important was a comprehensive field survey of existing WPA resources in the state's ten northwestern counties. From this data base it was then possible to make an evaluation that WPA public buildings, recreational facilities and water quality improvements were of exceptional significance. In Northwestern Oklahoma as in the nation as a whole the program changed the built landscape, provided economic security to tens of 1000s of destitute workers, and produced social reforms still evident in the region. Put simply, from 1935 to 1941, the course of history in the nomination area changed because of the WPA construction program. The essay that follows provides a more detailed exposition of this

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property _____ See continuation sheets
Quadrangle name _____ Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheets

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. W. David Baird, Professor of History, and Thomas Franzman

organization Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey date June 15, 1985

street & number 502 Math Science Bldg. telephone (405) 624-5678

city or town Stillwater, state Oklahoma 74078

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 *Blake Wade* date *7/12/88*

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

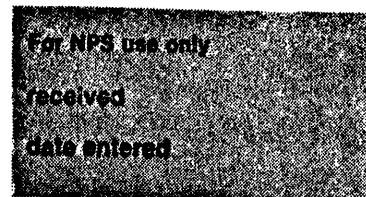
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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conclusion.

Oklahoma in general was especially hard hit by the depression. Within the state and over time the northwestern counties probably suffered as much or more than others. Several factors accounted for this condition. By 1930 some 34 percent of all farms in the region were tenant operated, up by 9 percent since 1920. During the same decade farm income fell 46 percent, from \$3844 to 2053. Actually the northwestern counties fared better in these areas than the rest of the state, but the economic downturn was no less devastating. But after 1936 conditions in the region were far worse than elsewhere: the searing heat that had produced drought conditions across the United States in the early 1930s settled upon the southern plains in 1936, 1937, and 1938 and tortured it with 500 to 600 hours annually of sun-obscuring dust. As the land blew away, agricultural activity virtually ceased to exist. The decrease in oil and natural gas production--major income producers in the region--by some 30 percent statewide only compounded the economic distress. Unexpectedly more than 38,000 persons, not heretofore ruinously affected by the depression, were in desperate need of economic assistance at the onset of the Dust Bowl.

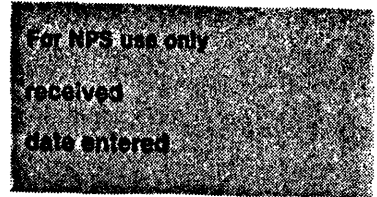
With this crisis the residents of the northwestern counties coped fairly well--at least until 1936. By the end of 1935, only 9.4 percent of all families in the area were on relief rolls, compared with 17.3 percent statewide. Of all Oklahoma families statewide dependent upon relief, only 4.7 percent were in the northwestern ten counties despite having 8.2 percent of the total population. Moreover, the governments of those counties between July 1931 and July 1935 had expended an average of \$2.97 per capita for relief purposes, whereas statewide that expenditure was only \$1.89. Of the five counties in Oklahoma that spent the most for relief per capita, three (Alfalfa, Grant and Kay) were in the northwest.

What accounted for this admirable response? Despite the significant decline in incomes due to falling agricultural prices, residents in the survey region were relative to those elsewhere in the state better off economically. Farm income was twice that anywhere else. A more important factor was attitudinal in character. Midwestern in origin, Republican in politics, strongly committed to free enterprise and an ethic of self-help, residents had an aversion to economic relief. Those who accepted it were presumably weak, shiftless and lazy. "The general feeling," said the superintendent of schools at Jet in Alfalfa County, was that relievers "had never had steady employment and had never known a trade" and that they "were on relief...because they had always been on relief of one kind or another." Few requested economic assistance in the northwestern counties, therefore, unless they were ready to admit that they were failures--or that circumstances beyond their control necessitated asking for it.

The three years of extreme drought and blowing dust were just such circumstances. Yet even then residents in the northwestern counties sought aid reluctantly. A social worker responsible for certifying relief applicants remembered that in Southeastern Oklahoma the economically needy were the "hungriest," while those in the northwest were with the greatest degree of hurt pride. There, among the destitute, morale was lower than anywhere in the state--because of the disgrace associated with poverty.

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But when you are hungry and your family is hungry, one swallows one's pride and looks for help. Fortunately, the Works Progress Administration was in a position to afford timely assistance. Created on May 6, 1935, the WPA was a program of the federal government designed to provide employment at useful work for employable persons on public relief rolls. The agency's initial allocation was \$1.2 billion; through June 1943 it received some \$10.75 billion. Of the latter amount more than \$185 million was expended in Oklahoma. In the state as elsewhere the WPA sponsored a number of different programs for the unemployed. Among these were the Federal Art Project, the Federal Writer's Project, the Historical Records Survey, the Federal Music Project and the Federal Theater Project. Additionally, the WPA had programs for adult education, nursery schools, school lunches, library services, seamstresses, housekeepers and hospital aides. Few of these, however, were designed to provide employment for unskilled agricultural laborers, that class of persons who made up the largest percentage of the relief rolls in Oklahoma and its northwestern counties. For such individuals the WPA organized a massive construction program of public buildings and facilities. Because of its size of operation, the character of work it performed and its 75 percent share of the total budget, the latter benefitted more of Oklahoma's unemployed, had a greater impact socially, and left a physical legacy more apparent than sister programs. The construction program of the WPA is the particular focus of this nomination.

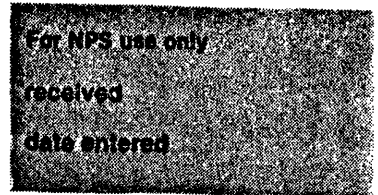
The WPA in Oklahoma was entirely a federal government operation. Organized into one statewide, eight district and fourteen area offices, it was administered by officials who answered directly to supervisors in Washington, D. C. The agency determined eligibility of persons seeking employment, selected workers of the type needed, set the wage scale to be paid, and saw to it that Federal Treasury checks were issued for work accomplished. Construction projects undertaken by the WPA were planned and sponsored by local governmental units, which also shared in the costs—an average of 25 percent statewide by 1940. Although there were exceptions, in general sponsors of these activities provided materials while the agency supplied a supervised labor force. National guidelines dictated that particular projects be "useful" and limited in cost to \$52,000 exclusive of local matching funds or equivalencies.

Between 1935 and 1943, when the agency was abolished, the WPA public works program in Northwestern Oklahoma undertook a myriad of state and locally sponsored projects. Most numerous were those involving construction of roads and streets, bridges and culverts, and sidewalks and curbs. Equally impressive were those relating to sanitation and public health, especially sanitary privies and water treatment and delivery systems. Other projects included conservation and flood control dams, pasture terraces and gully control work, and airports and runways. More visible, although requiring a smaller percentage of the total labor force, were public buildings, recreational facilities and water quality improvements. Aside from sidewalks and culverts, these latter projects today are the ones most generally associated with the work of the WPA.

Symbolically and concretely, the significance of this legacy can hardly be overestimated. The public buildings, recreational facilities and water quality improvements suggest the economic importance of the total WPA construction program in Northwestern Oklahoma. When employable persons had no jobs and faced the spectre of starvation, the WPA

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provided meaningful work and some financial security. The \$31.20 per month paid unskilled workers was not much, but it was the margin between life and death. And it was just as important for the community collectively. Of the 51,292 monthly average of WPA workers employed in Oklahoma between 1935 and 1941, at least 6 percent resided in the northwestern counties. Their collective salaries poured almost \$175,000 a month into the local economies. "The payroll," said the chairman of the Covington town board in Garfield County in a classic understatement, "was a great support to local merchants."

There was economic benefit beyond wage payments. In its public building program the WPA utilized unskilled workmen as masons and carpenters. Over time they learned the crafts and at a later date entered the employed work force as skilled laborers. "The morale of the laborers was raised," noted the Covington official, "due to the fact that they learned they could do things they had never tried before, and several were able to get a better job because of the training...."

The structures included within this nomination are also significant from a social/humanitarian perspective. In 1935, according to one observer in Enid in Garfield County, "the morale /of the people had/ been lowered due to a series of events over which they had no control." The ex-mayor of Perry in Noble County noted that many "workers were undernourished," while an official in Blackwell in Kay County reported that unemployed workers were so distressed that they were willing to attend a meeting of Communist agitators. Early depression programs of the Franklin Roosevelt administration had sought to address the economic devastation, but those had relied on so-called doles or payments for work of the leaf-raking variety. Residents in Northwestern Oklahoma had greeted these programs with disdain. The WPA, however, offered some economic security through meaningful labor on useful projects. The different approach had marked results, especially after the dust storms of 1936. Even though not all that many were involved compared to other areas of Oklahoma, the mayor of Perry observed that the program had led to "better morale" and had kept the unemployed "from loitering around pool halls." The mayor of Billings in Noble County remarked that the WPA program had been "constructive," that it had encouraged the people to make "improvements in the appearance of the little town," and that "the average person would rather work...than accept charity." A city councilman at Red Rock in the same county put it more directly: the program, he said, had been a "life saver."

If the WPA work program itself had social/humanitarian implications, so too did specific projects. The recreational facilities, for example, provided Northwestern Oklahoma with relaxation opportunities previously unavailable. Swimming pools especially gave them an antidote to the relentless heat. Stadiums and athletic fields enabled residents to enjoy sport events as major social occasions. The Mooreland hospital supplied needed health care in an isolated region. And water supply and quality projects assured plentiful water in a thirsty land, always before a major annual problem. That these facilities remain in use suggest their continuing social significance.

Those properties included in this nomination are especially significant educationally. As the chairman of the Perry school board observed in 1938, the WPA enabled his district to replace a condemned building with a thoroughly modern structure. The problem was that, like

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Perry, most school districts had reached the limit of their bonded indebtedness; and further issues were impossible because assessed valuations of property had declined with the onset of the depression. The WPA school building program, therefore, was a "Godsend" to educational systems. Said the mayor of Fairview in Major County of his community's new grade school: it "will stand as a monument to education for many years." Not only were physical facilities improved, but new buildings inspired new interest in education and accommodated the teaching process. School attendance increased, patron support improved, and student performance levels climbed. Designed to admit light, to supply uncontaminated water, and to provide sanitary toilets, the new school plant aided both learning and health. In the rural areas new "teacherages" enabled the district to attract and retain quality instructors. In the northwestern counties where one room schools predominated in 1935, the WPA building program also facilitated consolidation by expanding or constructing regional schools that could accommodate students from adjacent or weaker districts. The influence of the program remains in that in many locations the buildings are still in use.

Among the public structures constructed by WPA labor were National Guard armories, six of which—including the third largest constructed in the state (Enid)—are included in this nomination. Those structures had and many continue to have military significance. Built in 1935 and 1936, they provided meeting, training and storage facilities to different units of the 45th Infantry Division. Without question the armories enabled the guard to achieve a greater degree of military efficiency and readiness. Indeed, Adjutant General Charles F. Barrett marveled at the improved efficiency, higher level of training, lower property losses, better drill attendance and increased morale and esprit de corps of the guardsmen. Five years later the 45th was nationalized and saw highly decorated service in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Several of the structures still house units of the guard and contribute directly to the Nation's military preparedness.

WPA public buildings, recreational facilities and water quality improvements in Northwestern Oklahoma have considerable architectural significance. Throughout Oklahoma 1010 new schools were constructed during the life of the WPA, 12.5 percent of all of those constructed nationwide. South Carolina had 715 schools constructed, but all other states had less than one-half of the Oklahoma total. In the old Cherokee Strip counties there were proportionately fewer schools constructed than elsewhere in the state, but their number was still significant. The Oklahoma WPA also constructed twice as many playgrounds and athletic fields as any other state, some 2178 altogether—a substantial portion of which were in the nomination area.

Type, style, scale, materials and workmanship also make the structures unique when compared to the rest of the built environment. They are public buildings or facilities of modest size constructed by unskilled laborers of cut and uncut native stone or of recycled or new brick. When native stone was utilized, the rock occasionally is so colorful and the masonry is so exceptional that a wall becomes a work of art. With allusions to either Romanesque or art deco style, the latter almost always associated with brick buildings, the structures are immediately recognizable as WPA sponsored projects. To that extent they are set apart from less permanent and less substantive buildings dating from other eras and emanating from more normal economic conditions. Buildings constructed of brick are less

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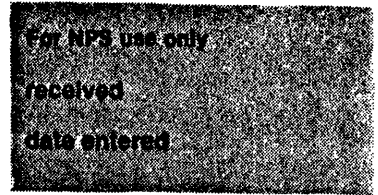
distinctive--especially school buildings--but in the case of armories carved white stone caps on top of pilasters provide a discernable stylistic touch.

The public buildings, recreational facilities and water quality improvements included in this nomination are significant architecturally because they are still in use or could again be put in use. They are so sound structurally that despite style changes and increased space requirements replacement is economically indefensible. The 1938 prophesy of the superintendent of the Love County schools in southcentral Oklahoma has proved correct. Speaking of his county's new WPA buildings, he said: "These buildings will stand for countless years, like monuments pointing skyward to the great recovery program of WPA...." Surely the same could be said of WPA facilities in Northwestern Oklahoma.

An official publication of the state agency noted in mid-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." It is the symbolic dimension that lends such significance to the public buildings, recreational facilities, and water quality improvements constructed by the WPA in Northwestern Oklahoma. They constitute monuments to a program of public works that for many was the margin between life and death, that changed the face of education and military preparedness, and that produced structures noted for a particular architecture. It is the inestimable legacy of the buildings and structures that justifies the present nomination.

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APPENDIX A

1. One Room School (Plans 1E020)
2. One Room School (Plans 1N013)
3. Two Room School (Plans 2E023)
4. Two Room School (Plans 2E017)
5. Two Room School (Plans 2N01)
6. Three Room School (Plans 3E07)
7. Gymnasium (Plans G04)
8. Gymnasium (Plans G08)

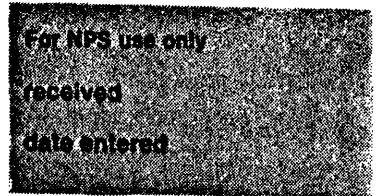
From School Buildings, Mineature Plans and Perspectives.
Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Department of Public Instruction,
Division of Schoolhouse Planning, 1937

9. Two Teacher School (Plans 2E03)
10. Two Teacher School (Plans 2EArl)
11. Six Teacher School (Plans 6NR1)
12. Six Teacher School (Plans 6NA1)

From For Better Schoolhouses. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma
Department of Public Instruction, Division of Schoolhouse
Planning, n.d.

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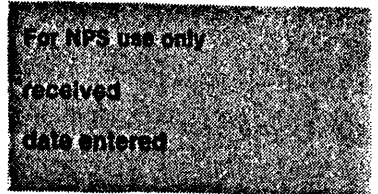
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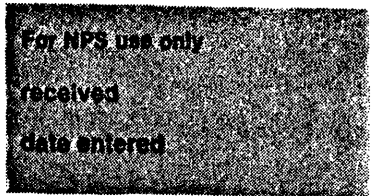
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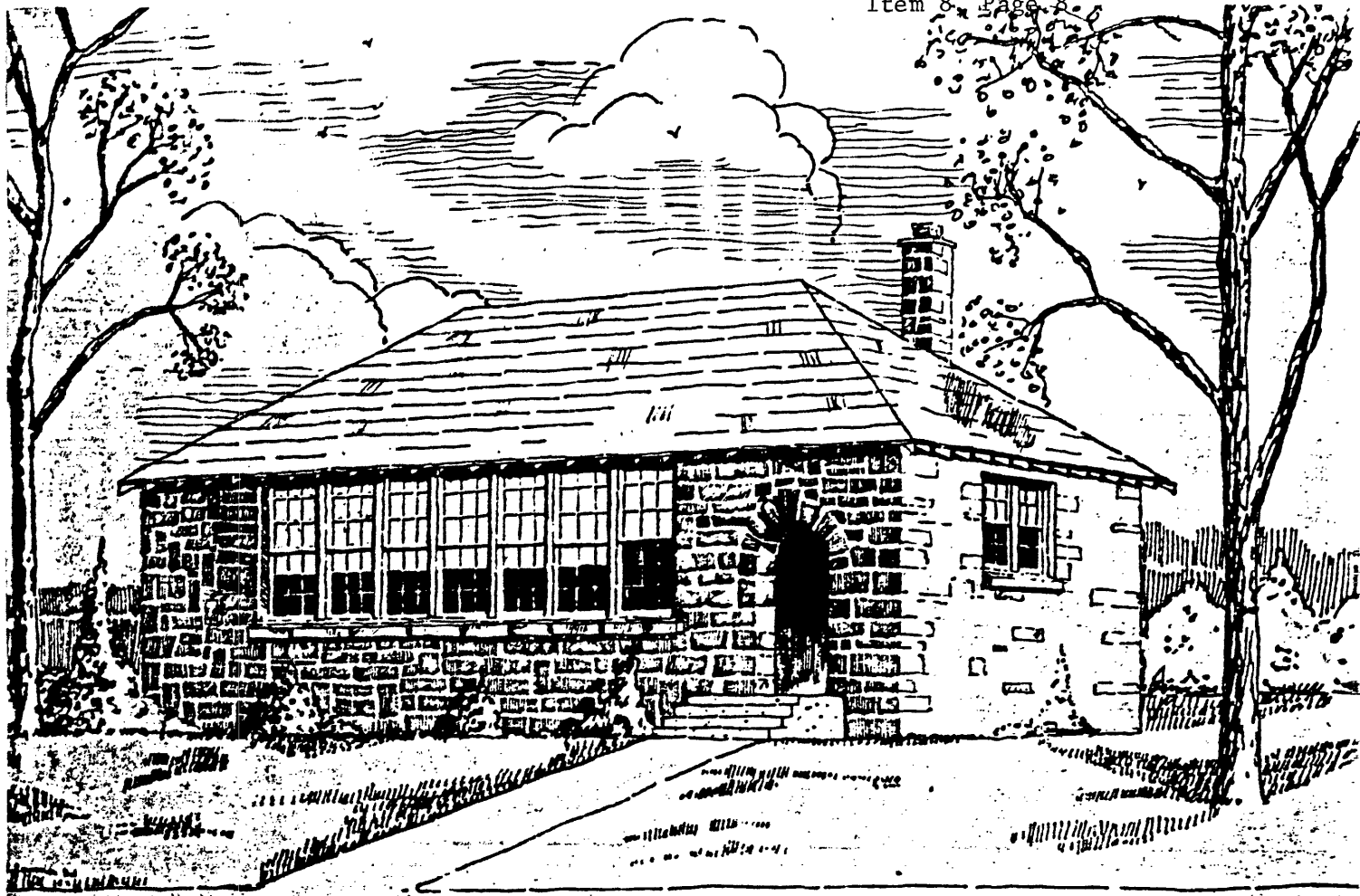
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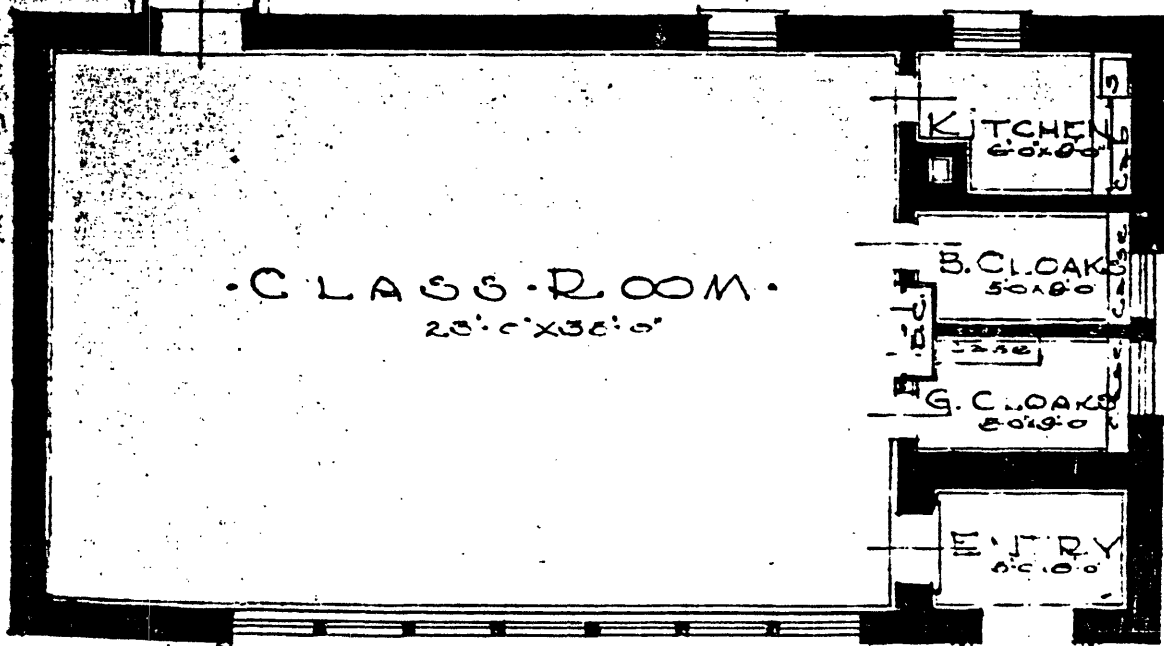
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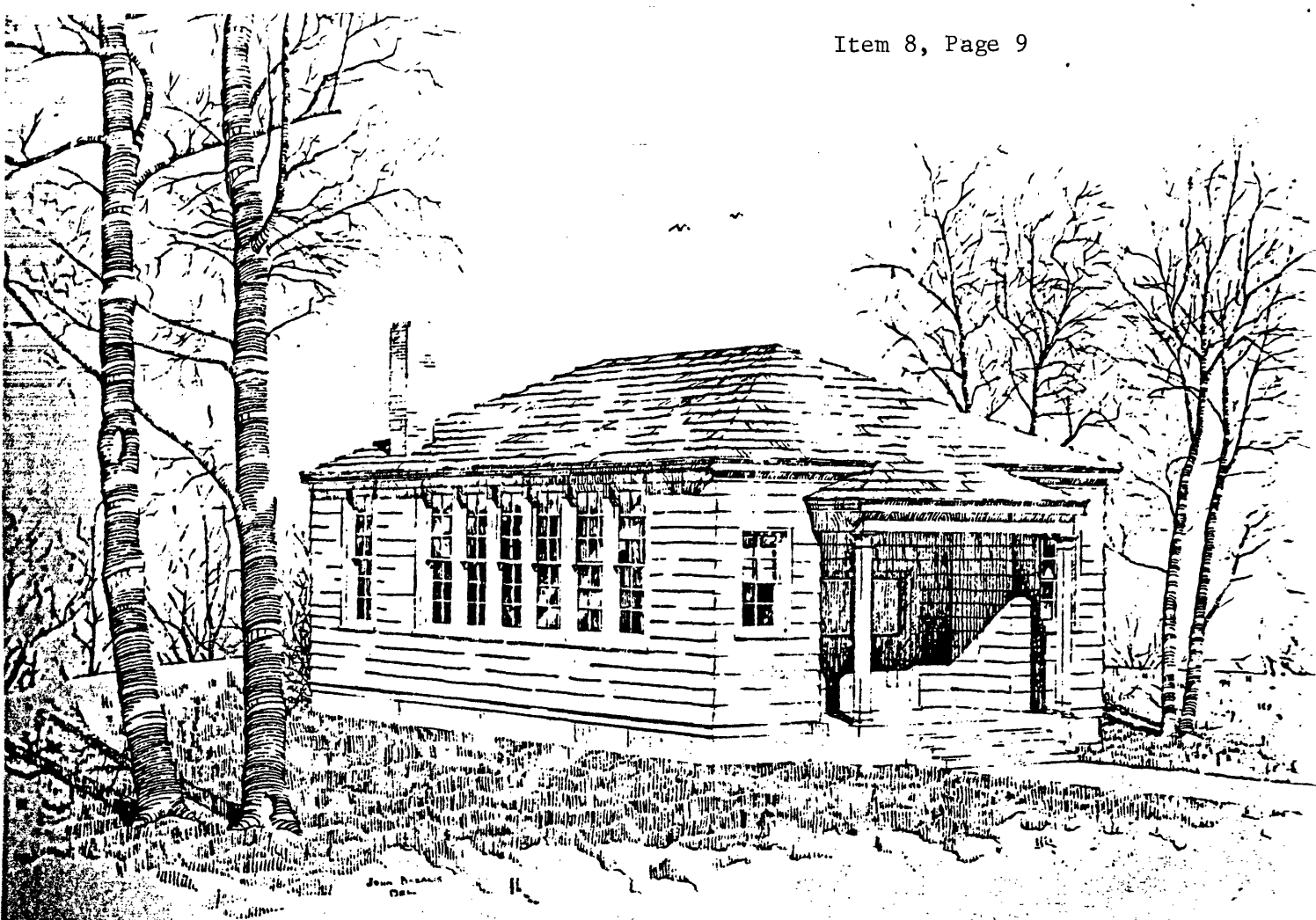
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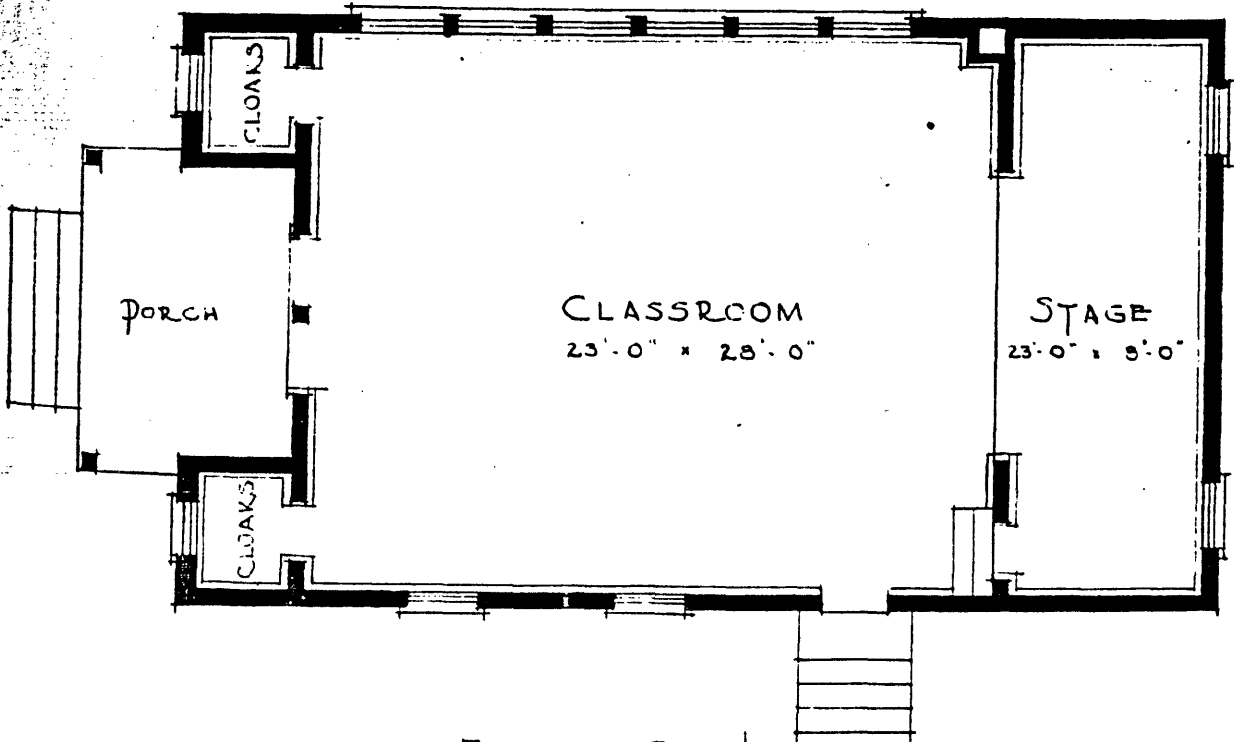


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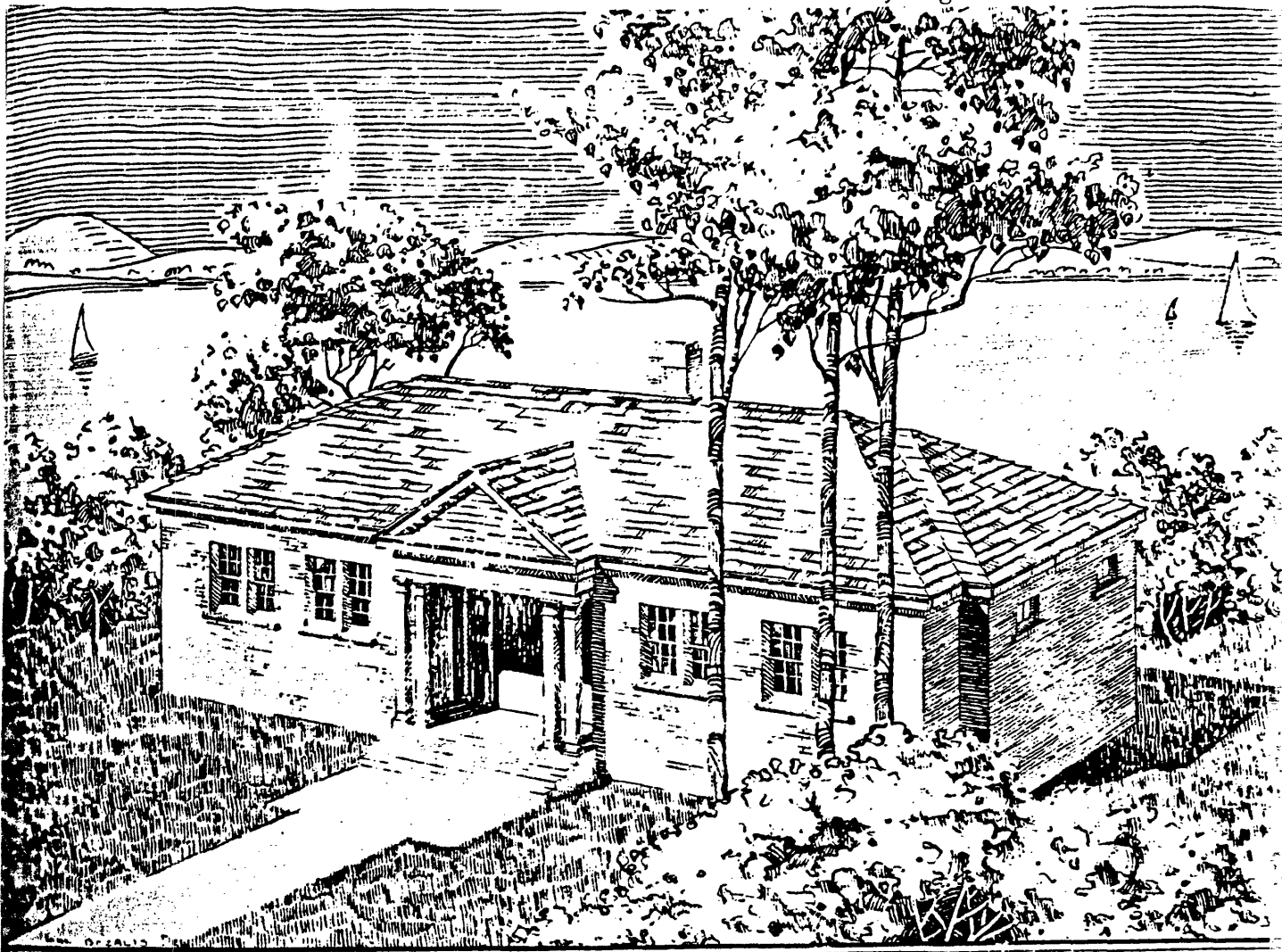


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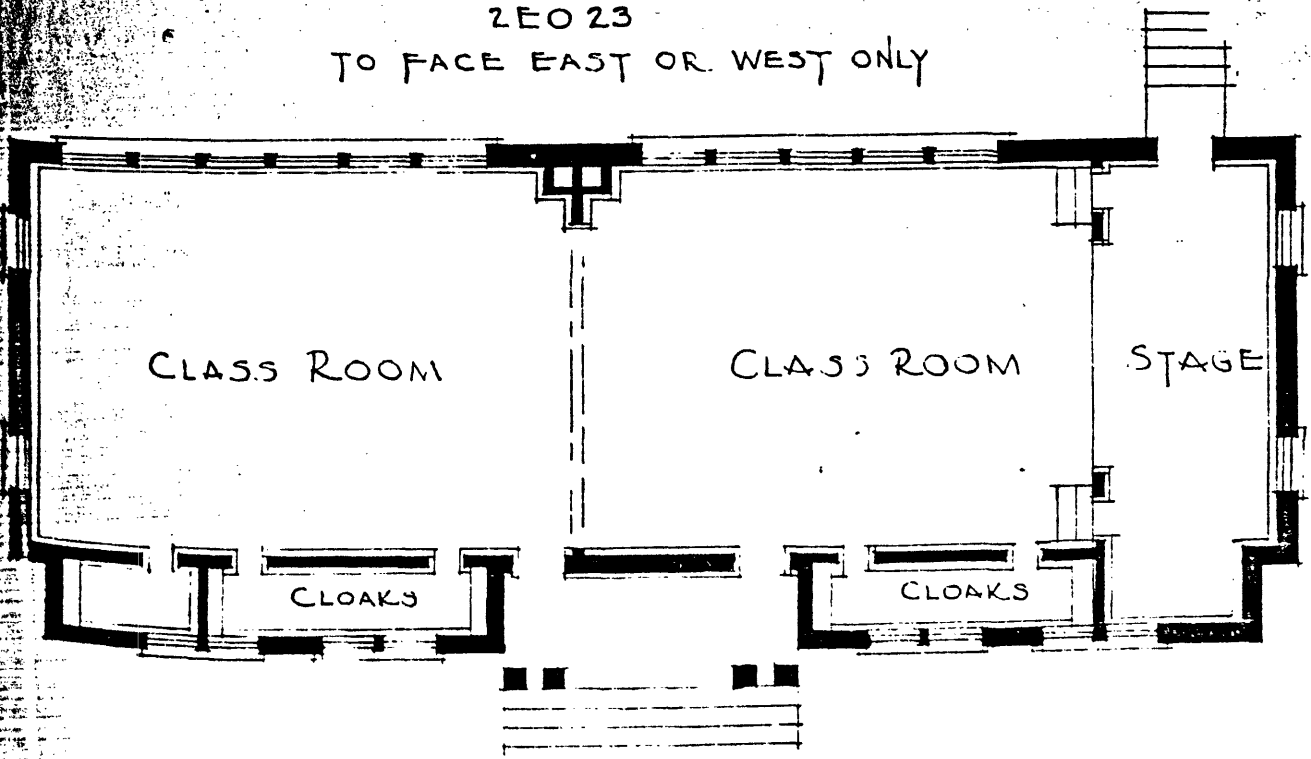
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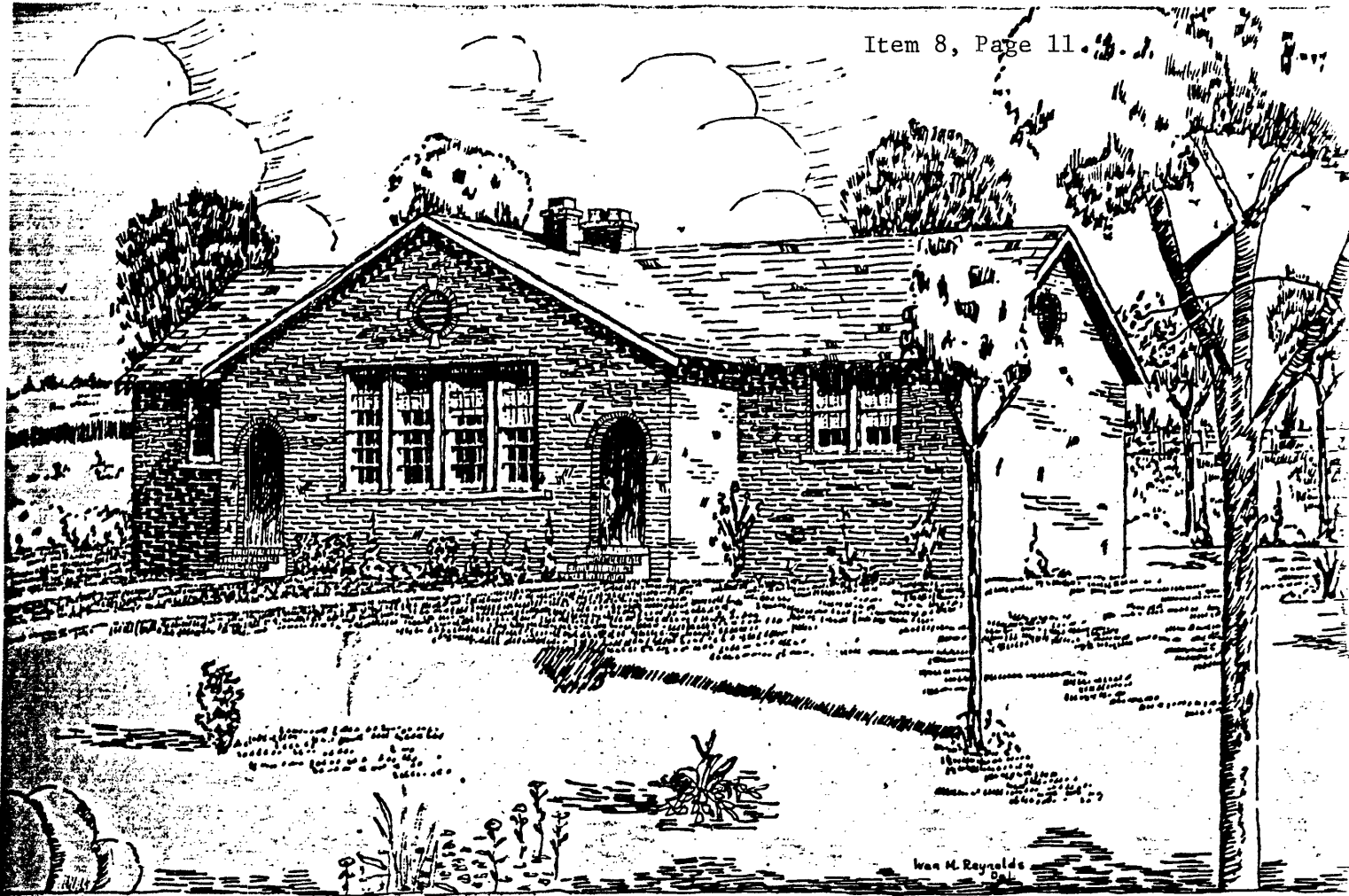


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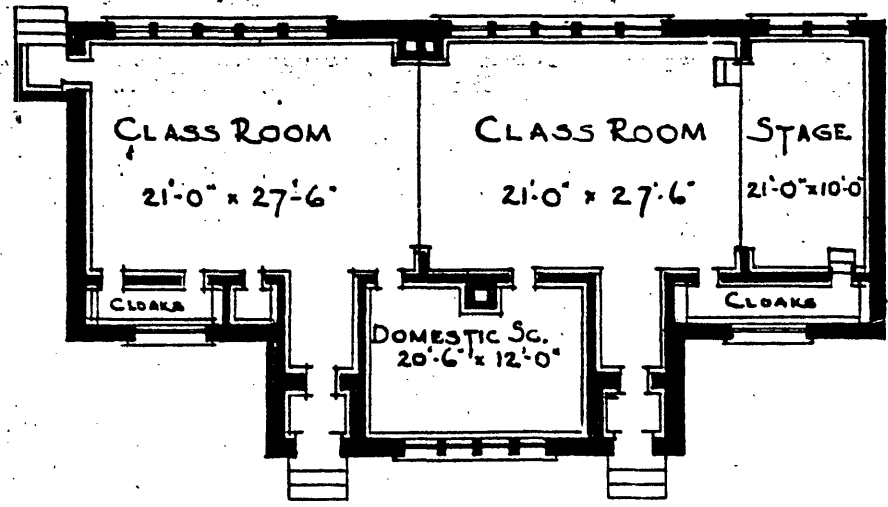


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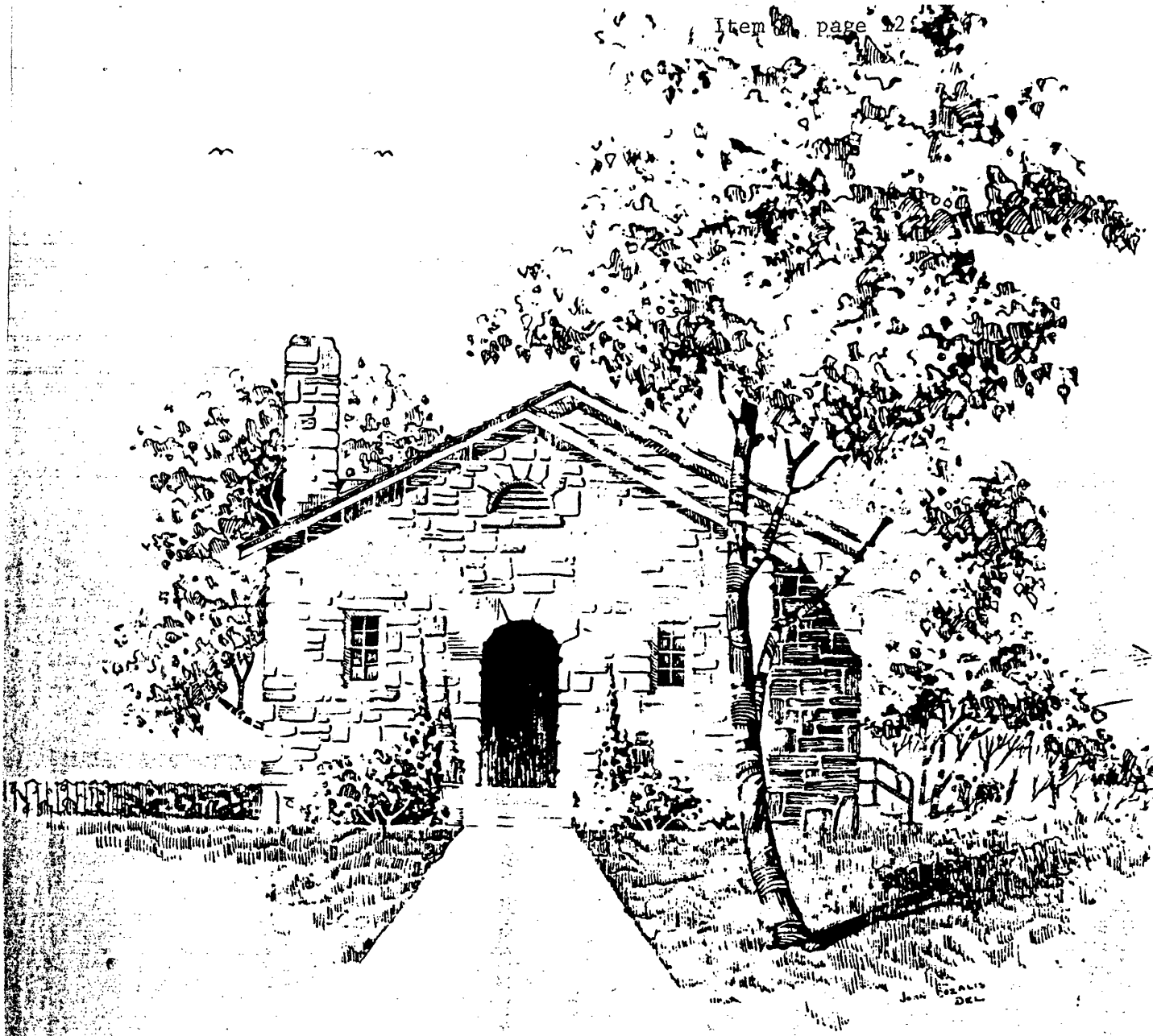




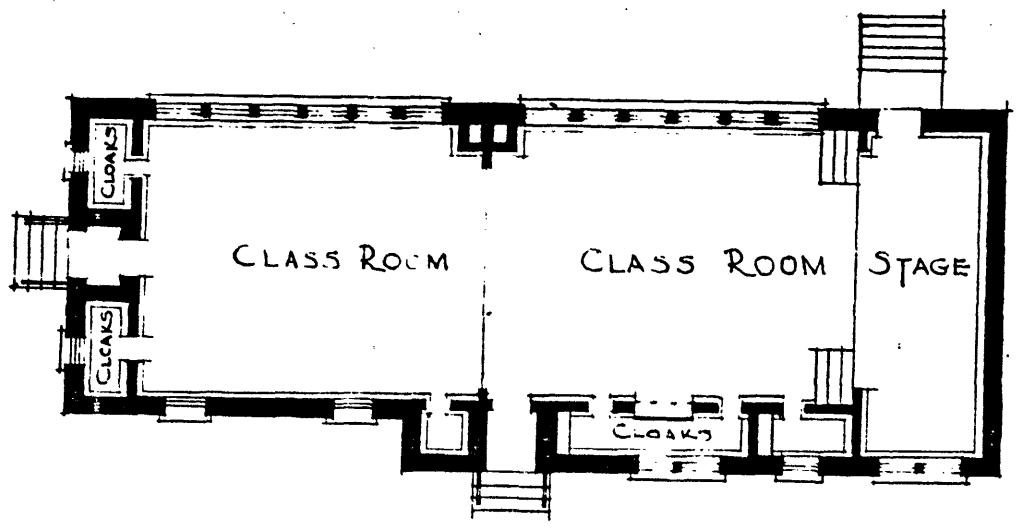
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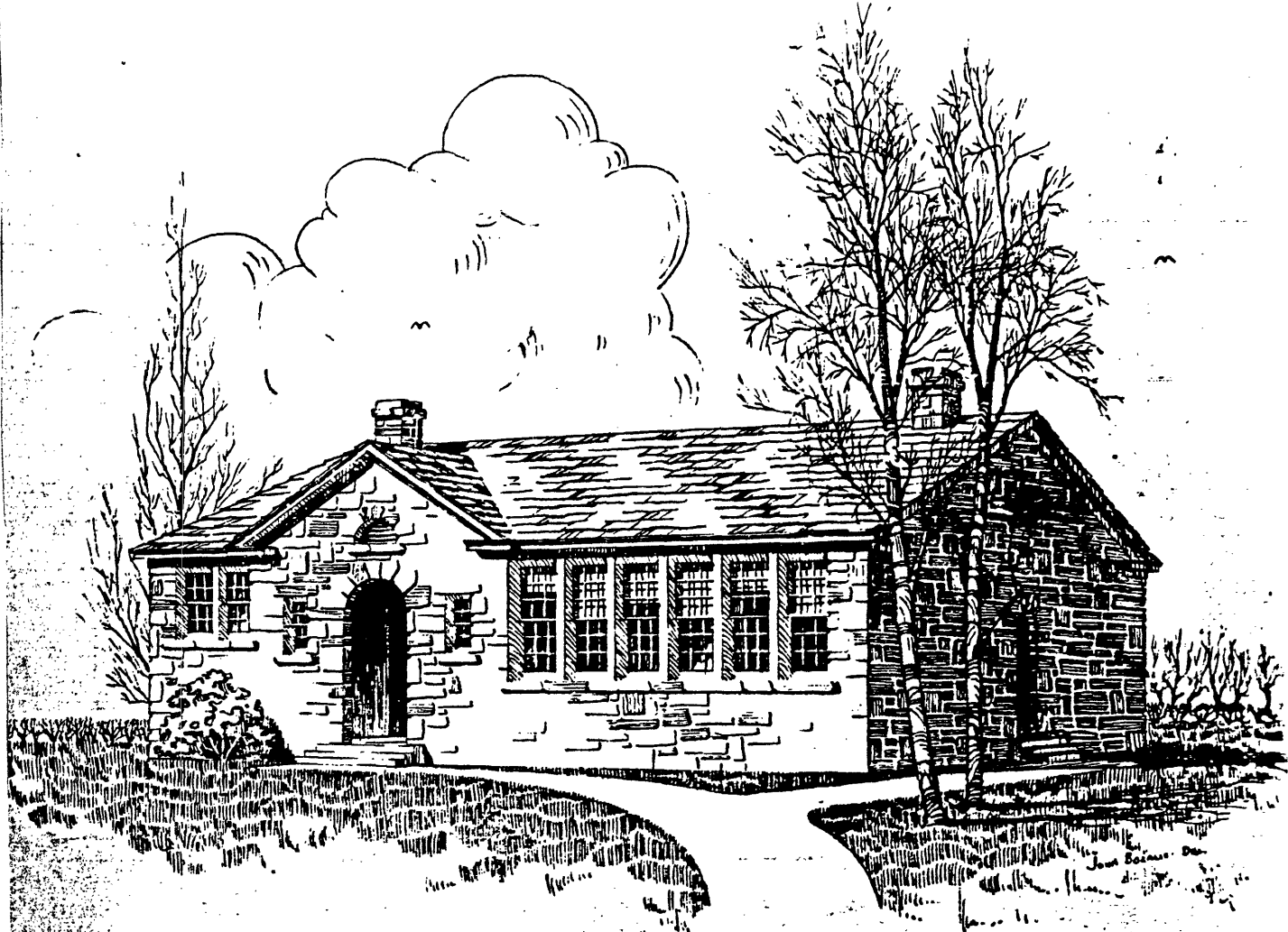


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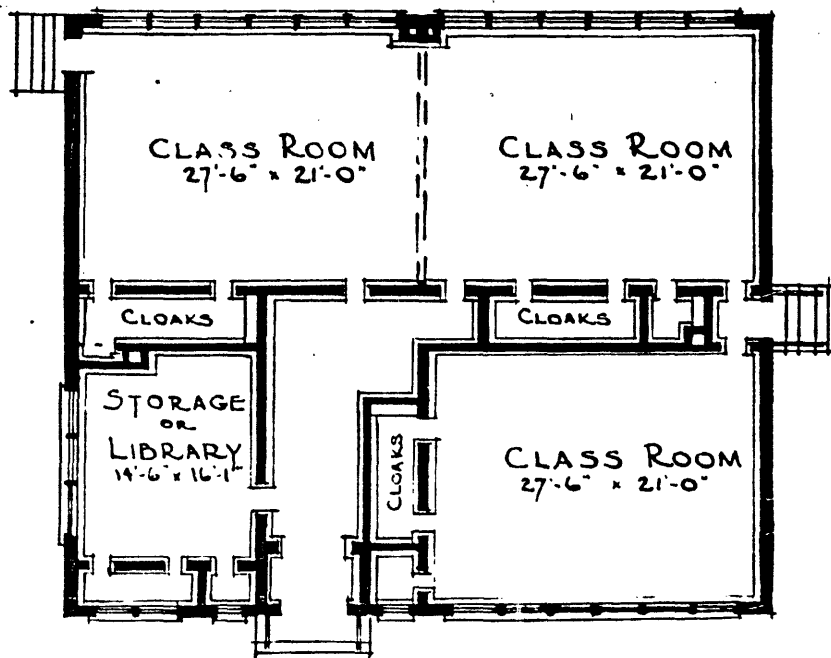


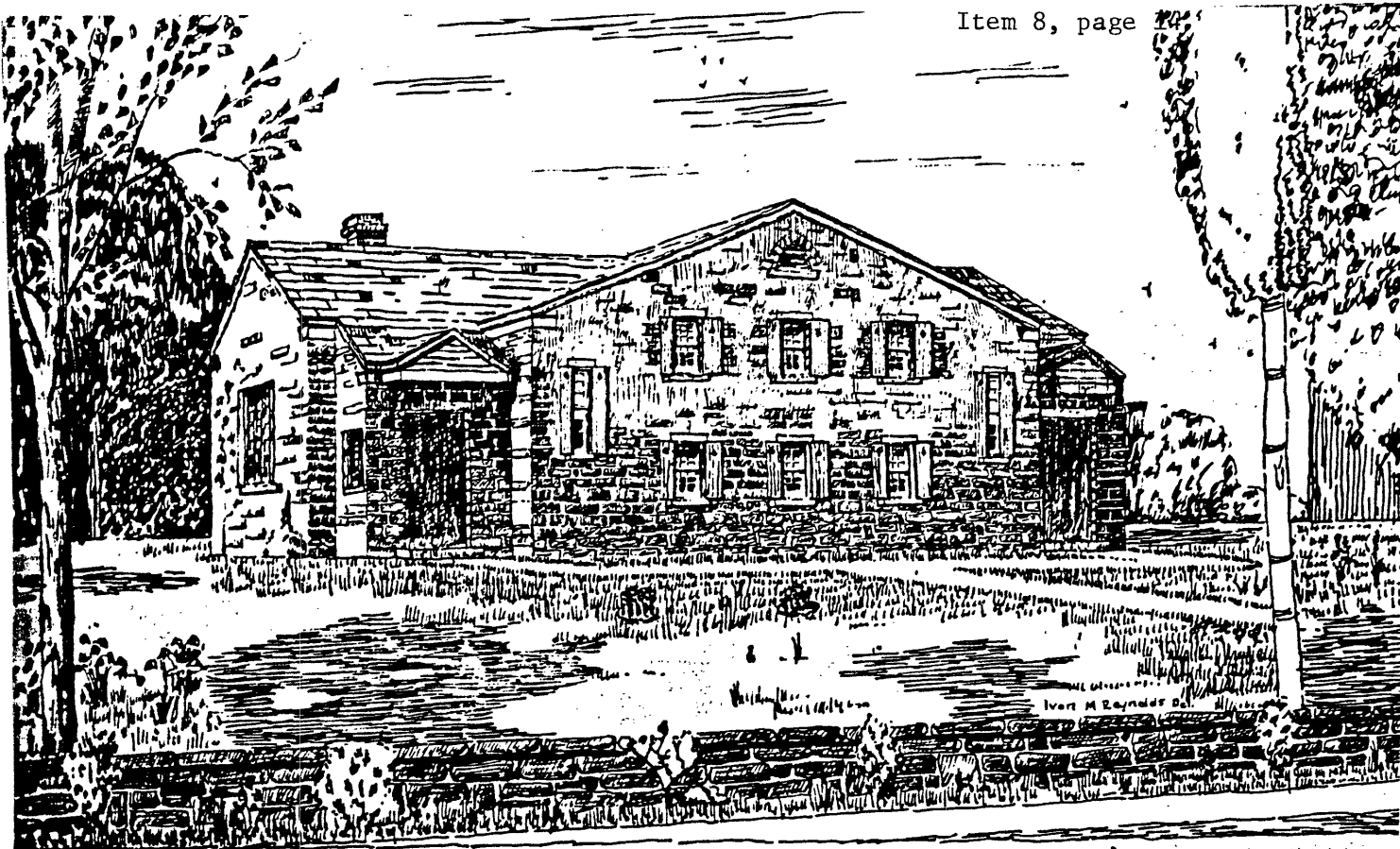
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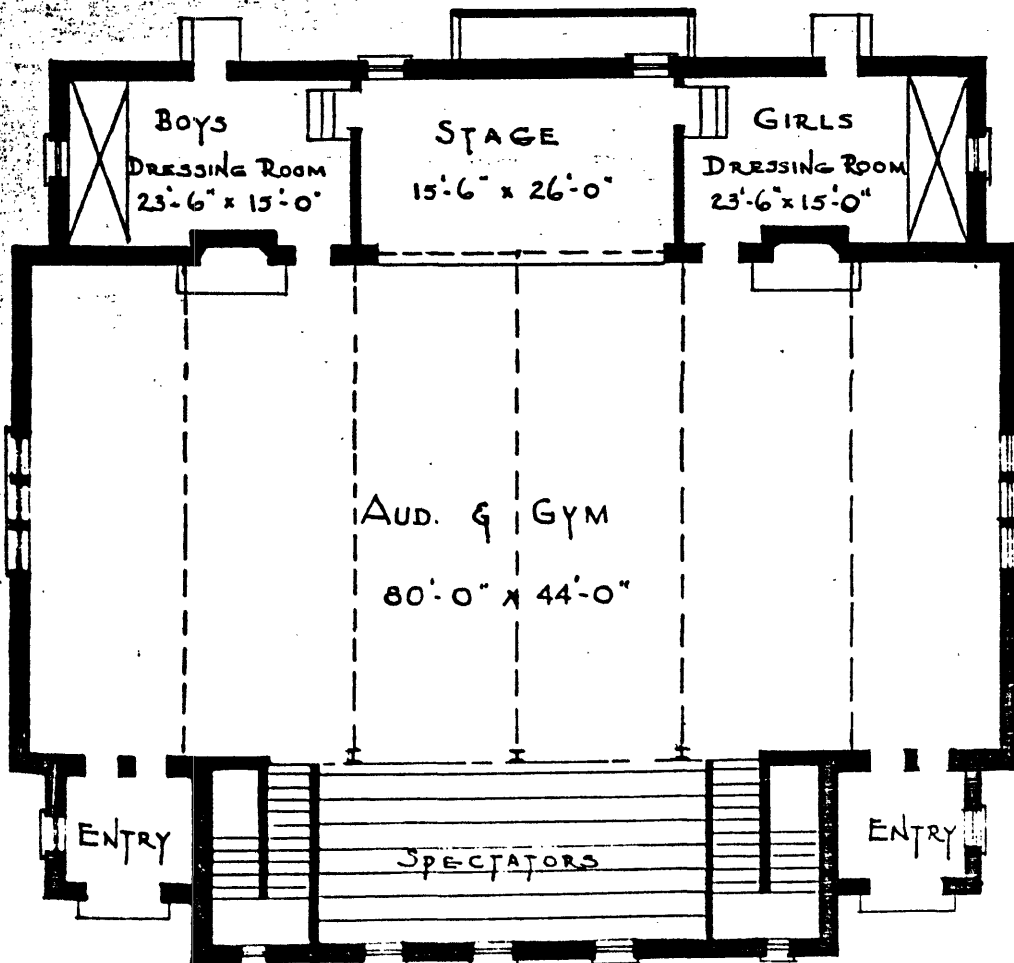


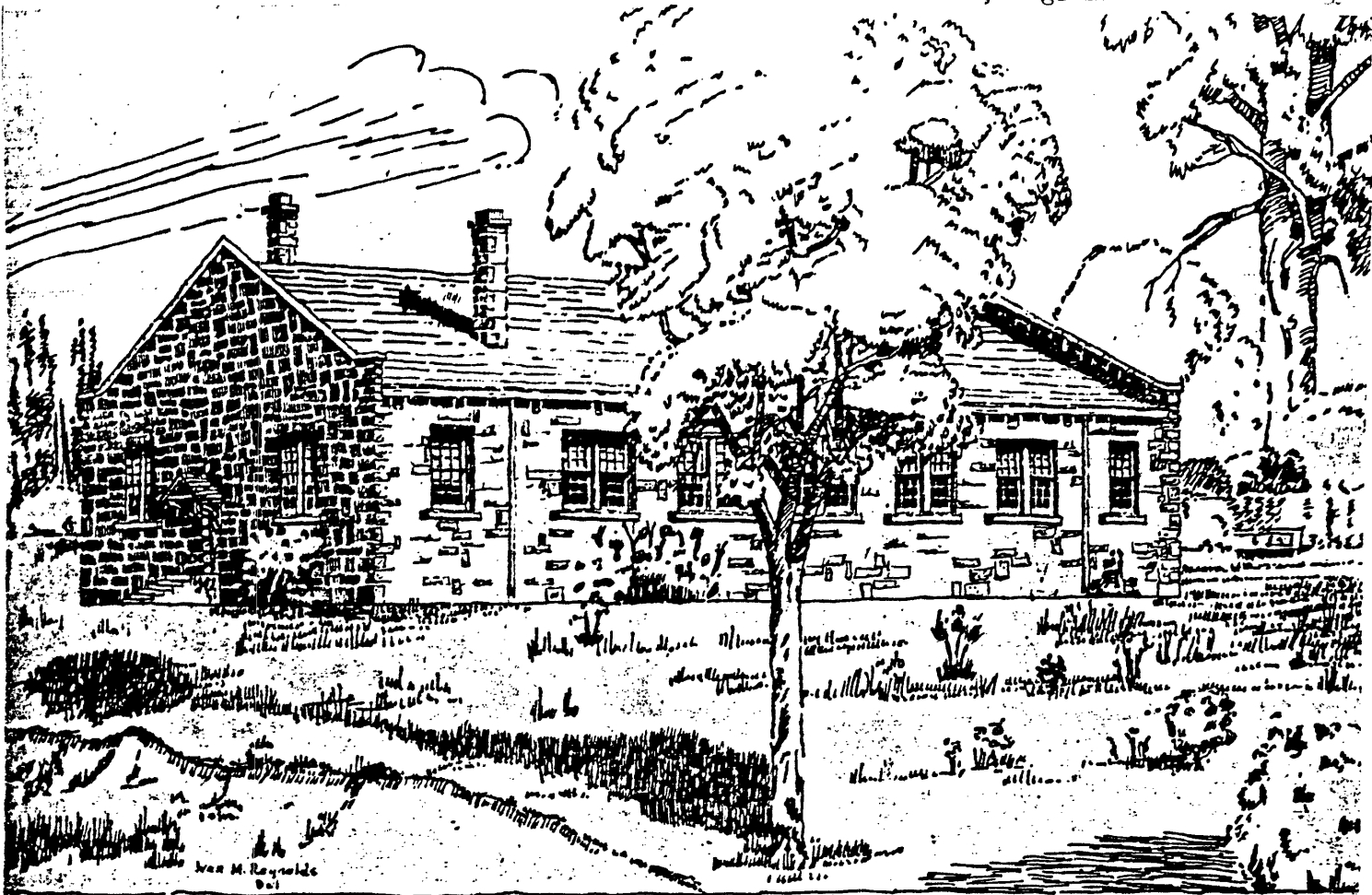
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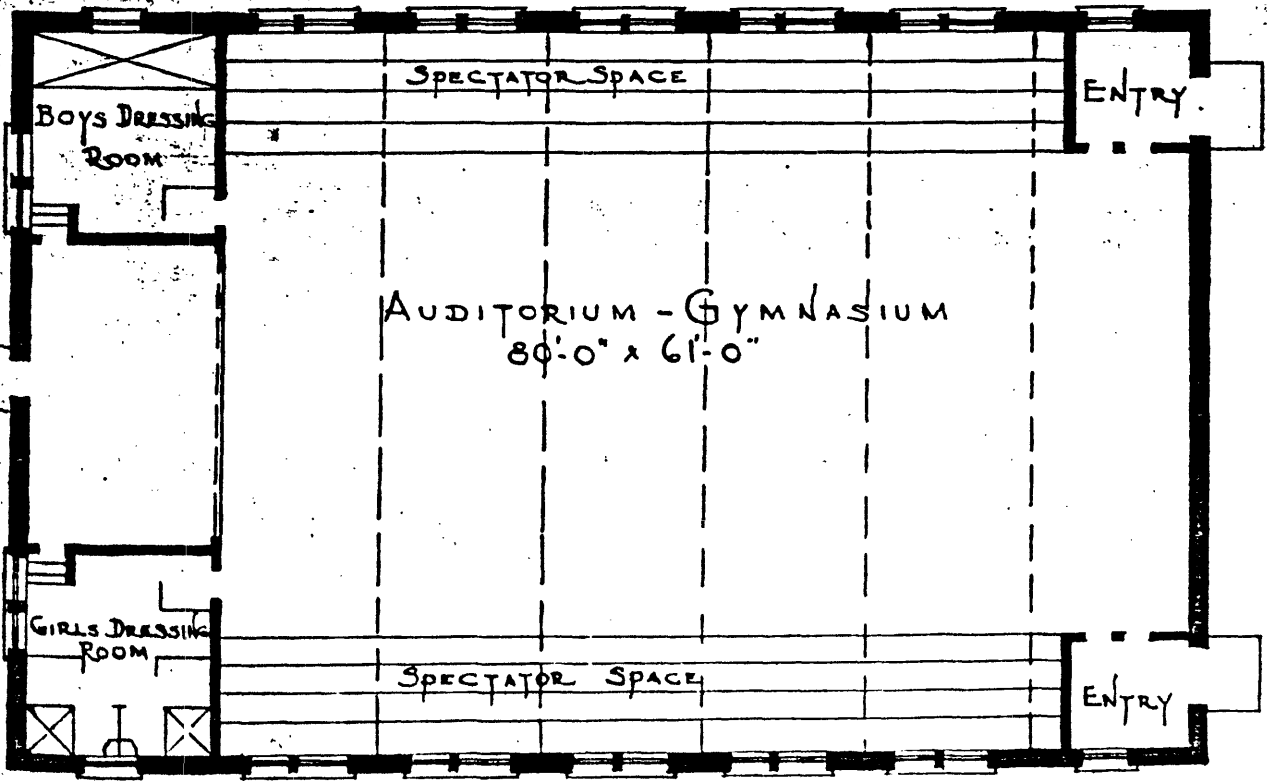


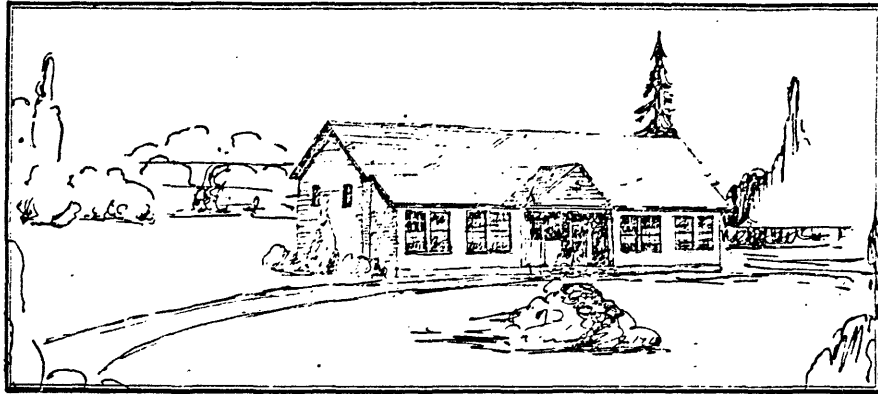
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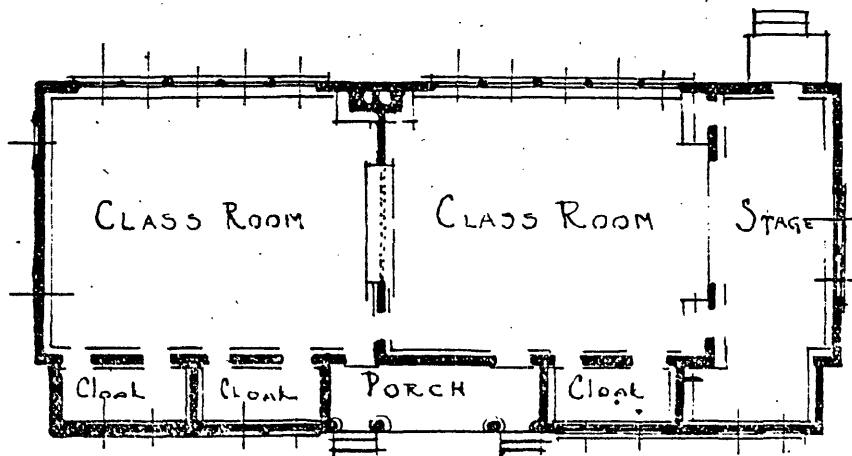
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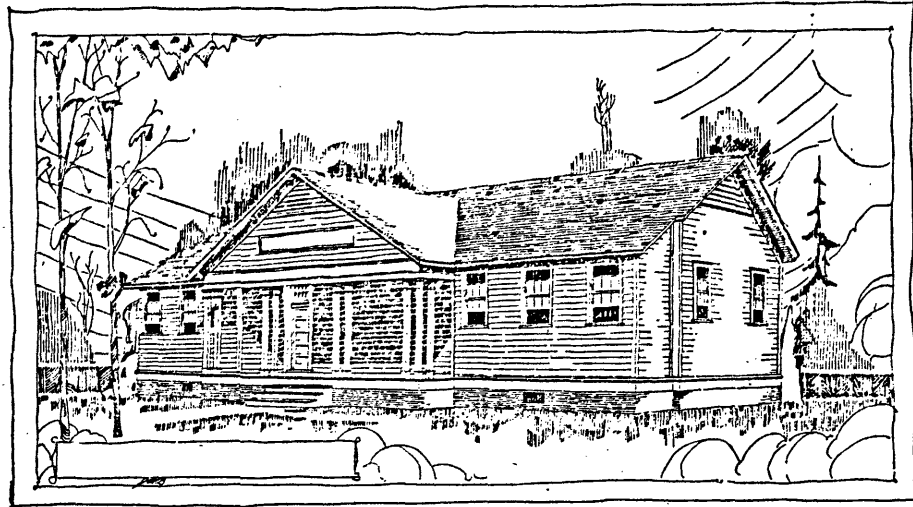
TWO TEACHER SCHOOL BUILDING

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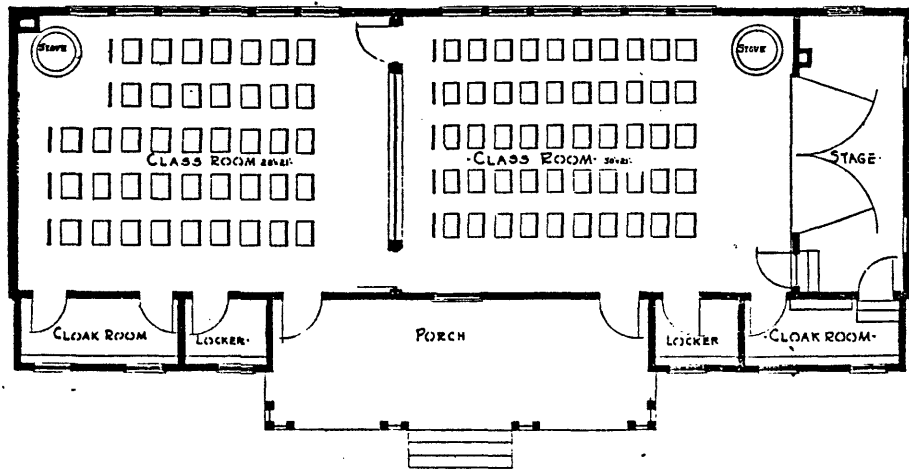
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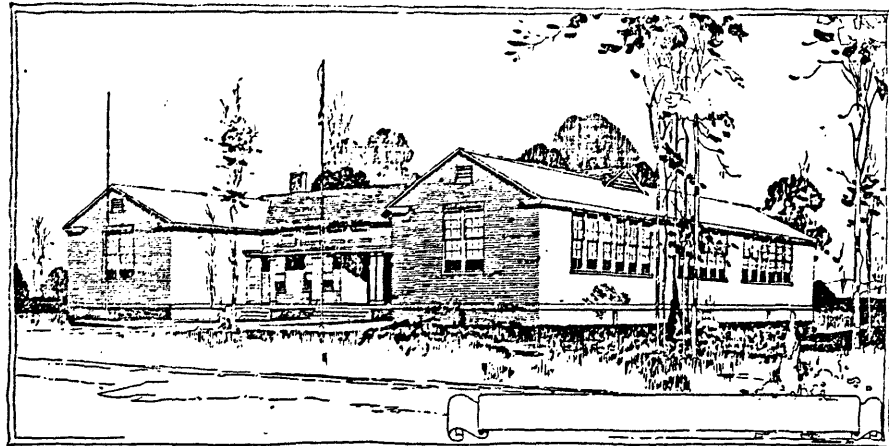
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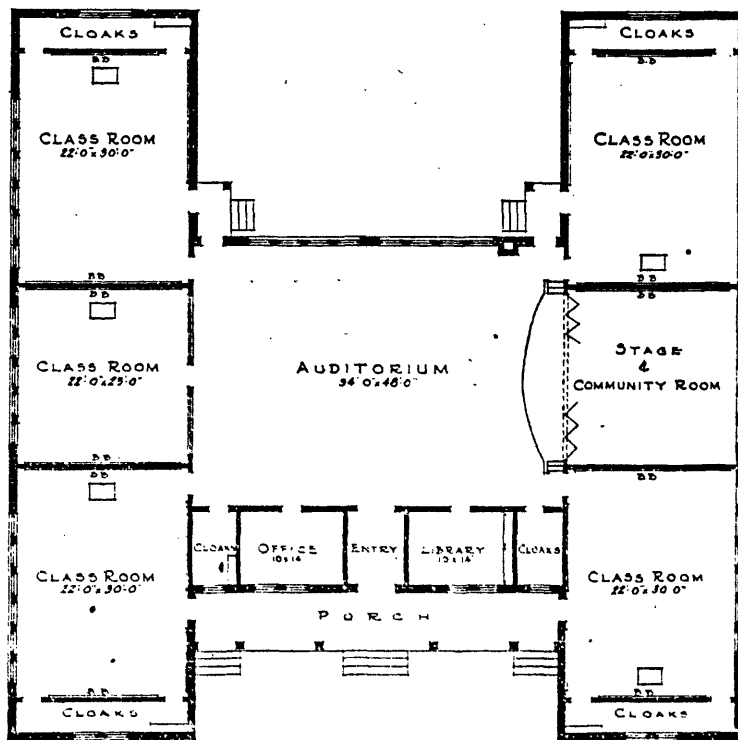
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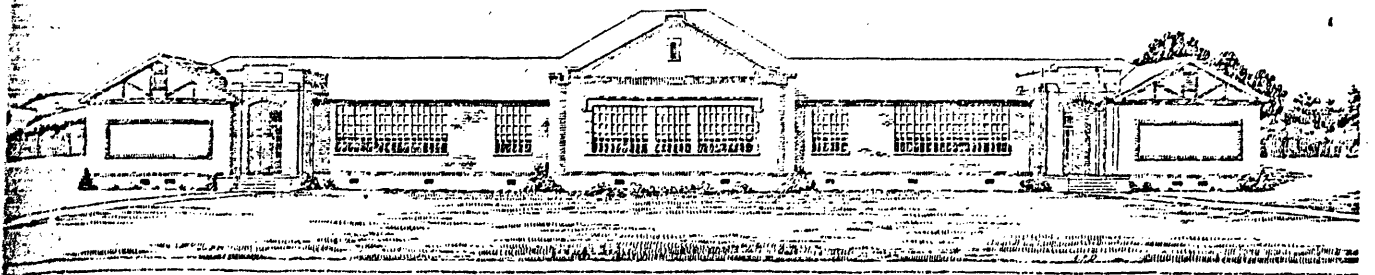


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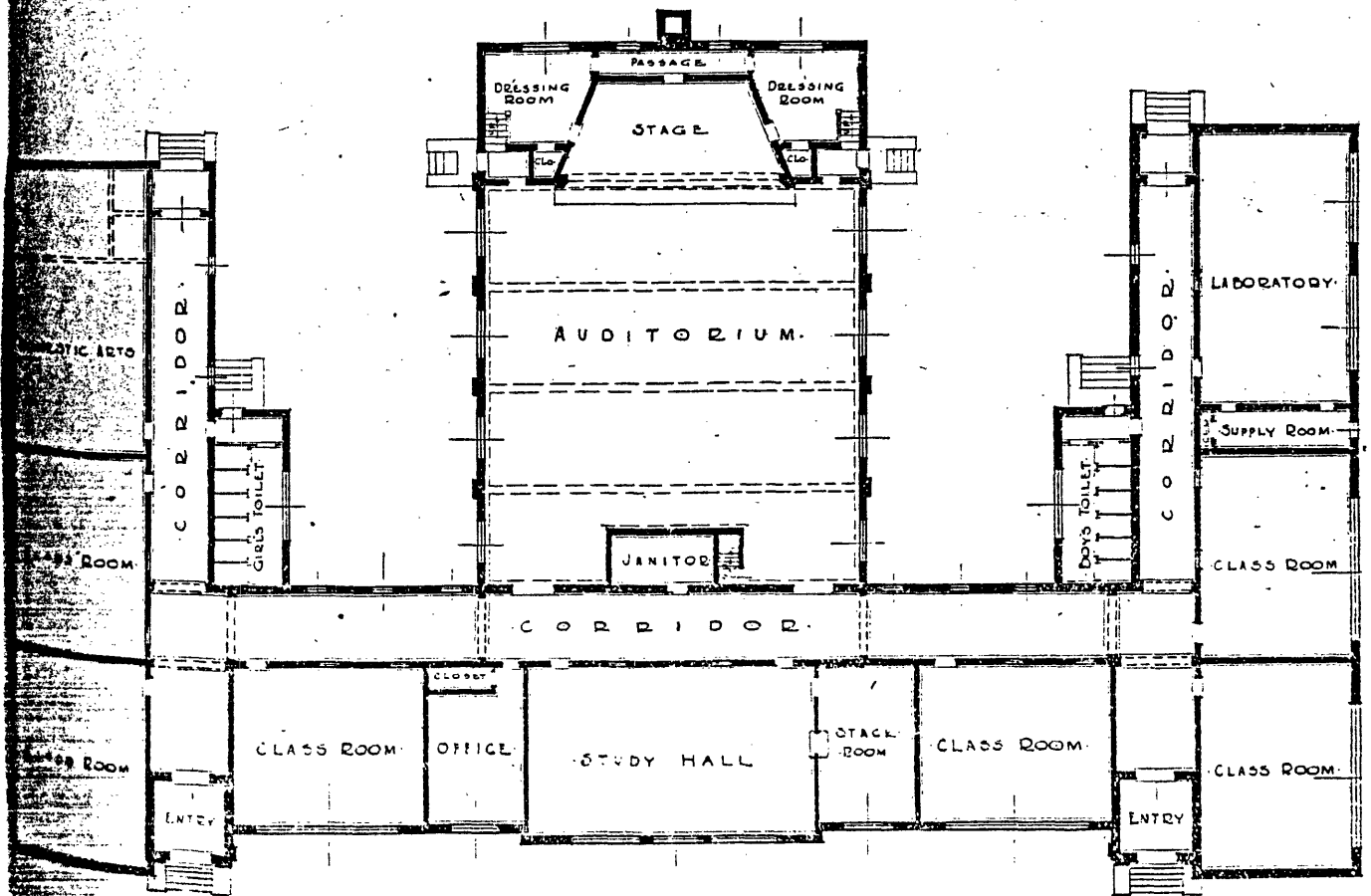


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SIX TEACHER SCHOOL BUILDING

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name WPA Public Bldgs., Recreational Facilities and Water
Quality Improvements in Northwestern Oklahoma, 1935--1943 TR
State Alfalfa County and others, OK

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

Cover

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

1. Cherokee Armory

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

2. Enid Armory

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

3. Dayton School

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

4. Medford Bathhouse and
Swimming Pool

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

5. Buffalo City Park Pavilion

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

6. Blackwell Armory

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

7. Blaine Stadium and Fieldhouse

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

8. Newkirk Water Purification Plant

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

9. Tonkawa Armory

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

10. Perry Armory

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 09-8-88

Attest

7/25/88

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National Park Service

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

WPA Public Bldgs., Recreational Facilities and Water

Name Quality Improvements in Northwestern Oklahoma, 1935--1943 TR

State _____

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

11. Rein School

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carey D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

12. Alva Armory

Substantiva Review

Keeper

Carey D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

13. Woodward Crystal Beach Park

Substantive Review

Keeper

Carey D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88001359-83001371 Date Listed 9/8/88

Property Name	County	State
Various		OK

WPA Public Buildings, Recreational Facilities and Water Quality
Improvements in Northwestern Oklahoma, 1935-1943 TR
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.

Cornel Shull

9-8-88

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

All of the individual resources included with this multiple property nomination can each be counted as one contributing building with the following exceptions: Medford Bathhouse and Swimming Pool (one contributing building and one contributing structure), Buffalo City Park Pavilion (one contributing structure), Blaine Stadium and Fieldhouse (one contributing building, one contributing structure), and Woodward Crystal Beach Park (one contributing building, two contributing structures). This is consistent with the total multiple property resource count of 12 contributing buildings and 5 contributing structures listed in the nomination cover form. This information was confirmed with Melvena Heisch, Oklahoma Deputy SHPO, during a 9/8/88 telephone conversation.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)