

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JUL 5 1985

date entered AUG 5 1985

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

1. Name

historic J. Coody Johnson Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Southeast Corner of Cedar and Wewoka Streets
(124 North Wewoka Street) N/A not for publication

city, town Wewoka N/A vicinity of

state Oklahoma code 40 county Seminole code 133

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" 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 Langley Management Company

street & number 103 East First Street, P.O. Box 1261

city, town Wewoka N/A vicinity of state Oklahoma 74884

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of County Clerk

street & number Seminole County Courthouse

city, town Wewoka state Oklahoma 74884

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Oklahoma City state Oklahoma 73105

7. Description

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The J. Coody Johnson Building is a two-story, 24' x 60', commercial building with running bond brick finish on three sides and common bond with header course on rear. It has a parapeted sloping roof. The building is situated at the southeast corner of Cedar and Wewoka Streets and is adjoined on the south by a one-story commercial building and an alley lies to the rear.

The front, or west side, of the building has five large fixed pane display windows and a glass door in the first floor. A metal awning spans the front above first floor level. The second floor contains three 1/1 double hung metal windows. Above the second story windows is a smooth masonry inset with inscription: "J.C. Johnson 1916."

The north side first floor contains six openings. A large display window is located near northwest corner. To the east of it are three small, square-shaped openings, two of which have fixed panes and the other is filled with a wood panel. To the east of these three windows are two large openings which have been bricked, one of which has door opening filled with wood panel. Near the northeast corner is a service door opening with shed type roof and porch with four steps. The opening has been enclosed with wood panels. The second floor of north side has eight 1/1 double hung metal windows.

The rear, or east side, has three openings in first floor. The two window openings are covered with boards. The center opening is a wood door. The second story contains two openings, one of which is a 1/1 double hung wood window and the other is covered with boards.

The south wall is attached to a one-story commercial building. There are no openings in second story above the adjacent structure.

Decorative elements are modest. They include a continuous cement sill which runs below second story windows of west and north sides, corbelled brick at cornice level, segmental brick arch over rear door, and brick sills below rear windows.

Alterations include replacement of original wood framed display windows in facade with new metal framed display windows, replacement of original wood framed windows in second story of facade and north side with new metal framed windows, two large openings in north side have been bricked in, service door opening near northeast corner has been enclosed, and repointing of bricks. All of these alterations have been made during the last twenty years.

The building currently houses an antique store in the first story and apartments in the second floor.

Though altered, the building still conveys a sense of its historic significance and is the best remaining resource associated with the productive life of Johnson.

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 type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) (Ethnicity)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1916-1935 **Builder/Architect** Witherspoon & Woods

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The J. Coody Johnson Building, erected in 1916, is historically significant because of its association with J. Coody Johnson, one of the most influential individuals in the black history of Oklahoma.

Following the Emancipation Proclamation, black freedmen in Indian Territory were allotted land (ranging from 40 to 160 acres) by their former owners, the Five Civilized Tribes. The Johnson family, former slaves of the Creek Nation, was allotted land north of Wewoka, capital of the Seminole Nation. J. Coody Johnson, grandson of a former slave, was able to acquire additional acreage through purchase from his Seminole neighbors during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Born at Fort Gibson in 1863 and having received a law degree from Howard University in Washington, D.C. in the 1880s, Johnson established a law practice in Wewoka and represented Seminole Indians in several land cases argued before the United States Supreme Court. He also served as interpreter for both Creek and Seminole Councils.

During the period prior to statehood in 1907, Johnson served as President of the Negro Protection League of Oklahoma which assumed an active role in civil rights issues of the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention of 1907. In 1907, he chaired the Suffrage League Convention held in Muskogee where blacks from across the territories met to protest the "Jim Crow" clauses proposed for the new state constitution. Johnson headed a delegation to Washington, D.C. to urge President Theodore Roosevelt to veto the proposed state constitution because of its provisions for segregated schools, limitation of franchise for blacks ("grandfather clause"), and other discriminatory features. Johnson's efforts were to no avail because Roosevelt did not want to delay statehood for the Twin Territories.

Johnson continued his fight against segregation and inequality for blacks through his law practice in Wewoka. In 1916, he constructed a new two-story building on Wewoka Street to house his law office and later the Black Panther Oil Company. Ironically, Johnson invited white attorneys to share office space in the new building.

At approximately the same time that the new building was constructed, Johnson launched the first state fair for blacks. His objectives were to promote agriculture and livestock raising among the state's black inhabitants. Moreover, the fair boasted of carnival rides and race track similar to the state fair for whites in Oklahoma City.

In 1923, the Wewoka Pool of the Greater Seminole Oil Field was opened. Johnson's extensive landholdings north of Wewoka were a productive part of the Wewoka discovery. As a result of the oil discovery, he organized the Black Panther Oil Company, the first black-owned petroleum company in

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Wewoka East, OK

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

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

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 1, Block 21, Original Townsite of Wewoka, Oklahoma.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bryan C. Brown Supervised by Dr. George O. Carney

organization Department of Geography date December, 1984

street & number Oklahoma State University telephone 405-624-6250

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 C. E. Metcalf date 6/21/85

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

William B. Bushong date 8/5/85
for Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Oklahoma, with offices in the Johnson Building. The name "Black Panther" was derived from the fact that his Creek masters were members of the "Panther Clan" and Johnson upon becoming a freedman was known as the "Black Panther". From his royalties, Johnson financed construction of the Black Panther Hotel in Wewoka and sponsored various recreational activities for the black community of Wewoka including the Black Panther baseball team of the 1920s. After Johnson's death in ca. 1935, the Johnson Building was occupied by various businesses including an abstract office, grocery and meat market, pet shop, and its current occupant, an antique business.

All other properties associated with Johnson including the Black State Fair Grounds, Black Panther Hotel, and his residence in the 200 block of Park Street in Wewoka have either been razed or significantly altered making the J. Coody Johnson Building the best remaining historic resource associated with his career. His productive years as an attorney, president of the Black Panther Oil Company, and Director of the Black State Fair are intimately connected to the nominated property.

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Major Bibliographic References:

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Wewoka Daily Times Democrat, July 28, 1933.

Teall, Kaye M., Black History in Oklahoma: A Resource Book. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma City Public Schools, 1971, pp. 178-180, 184.

Franklin, Jimmie Lewis, The Blacks in Oklahoma. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980, pp. 16 and 41.

_____, Journey Toward Hope: A History of Blacks in Oklahoma. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982, pp. 42, 112, and 171.

Personal interview: Sammy and Minnie Myers, July, 1984.