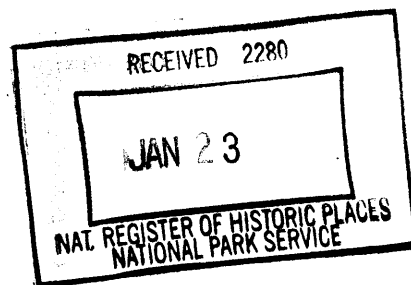


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Ardmore Municipal Auditorium

other names/site number Heritage Hall

=====

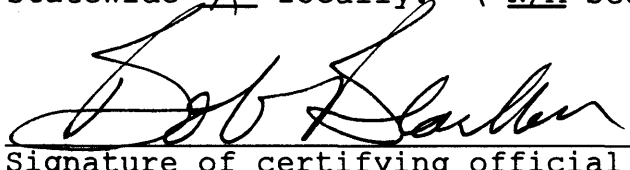
2. Location

=====

street & number 220 West Broadway not for publication N/A
city or town Ardmore vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Carter code 019
zip code 73401

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. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



1-19-06

Signature of certifying official

Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

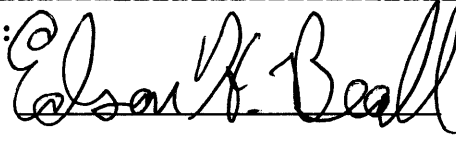
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

 3/8/06

other (explain): _____



Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: auditorium

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: auditorium

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Moderne

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
roof ASPHALT
walls BRICK
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)

Economics
Architecture

Period of Significance 1941-1943

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

Significant Dates _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
_____ N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation _____ N/A _____

Architect/Builder _____ White, J.B., architect _____
_____ Works Projects 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: _____

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

Acreage of Property Less Than One Acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>672310</u>	<u>3782850</u>	3	_____	_____
2	<u>N/A</u>	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>		4	_____	_____

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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

name/title Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian, for City of Ardmore

organization ARCH Consulting date July 2005

street & number 364 CR 1230 telephone 405/459-6200

city or town Pocasset state OK zip code 73079

=====
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.)

name City of Ardmore, Mayor Martin Dyer

street & number P.O. Box 249 telephone _____

city or town Ardmore state OK zip code 73402

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

SUMMARY

The Ardmore Municipal Auditorium, located at 220 West Broadway in Ardmore, Carter County, Oklahoma, is a two-story, blond and red brick, Art Moderne style, rectangular building. The two street elevations are blond brick with the two secondary walls being red brick. The building was constructed in 1941-1943 by the Works Progress Administration and incorporated the existing Convention Hall into the new construction. While greatly expanding the building, much of the existing, red brick, east and south walls of the first building were utilized in the new building. An important change between the buildings was that Convention Hall faced north onto West Broadway and the existing Municipal Auditorium faces west onto C Street Northwest. The Municipal Auditorium was designed by local architects J.B. and Ben White, who also designed the WPA fairground project at the same time.

The Municipal Auditorium has a combination flat and low-pitched barrel roof with a parapet and a concrete and brick foundation. There are three, double, glazed slab entries on the facade and one matching entry on the east side. All four entries have transoms currently covered by cloth awnings. The first floor windows are metal, three-pane, combination projecting (the top pane is fixed, the middle pane is awning and the bottom pane is hopper). The front triple windows have cloth awnings matching those above the entries. The second floor windows on the facade are small, round, metal, multi-pane, fixed, while the north side second floor has large, metal, fixed, multi-pane windows. Both corners of the facade are rounded with wraparound bands of glass block alternating with brick. The northeast corner of the building is similarly treated, except it is squared, rather than rounded.

Decorative details include the word "Auditorium" inscribed on both the west and north elevations; cast stone, octagonal ornaments with fluer-de-lis motifs; rectangular, cast stone and brick tables above the round windows; a double, brick stringcourse at the first floor sill level; two projected, brick bands over the second floor windows; and, a cast stone coping encircling the building. A modern marquee sign has been hung off the northeast corner of the building which has "HH" in a circle above a vertical "Heritage Hall," the current moniker for the building. Projecting away from this, is a horizontal sign area for changeable letters used to announce upcoming events. Other changes to the building include replacement of the doors with modern, glazed slab, the cloth awnings and two metal penthouses on the roof. The sign and awnings were added in 2000 as part of an improvement program by the Ardmore Tourism Authority utilizing a grant from the Noble Foundation. Other

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 10

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

improvements made to the building at the time also include installation of new HVAC units, roof repair and interior renovations. None of these changes compromise the ability of the building to convey its historic significance.

The building is located one block off Main Street, on the southeast corner of intersection of C Street Northwest and West Broadway. The setting remains a mixture of commercial and religious buildings. There is a parking lot located to the direct east of the building, as well as a parking lot across the street to the west.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

Ardmore's Municipal Auditorium is a striking, Art Moderne, two-story, blond and red brick building. The roof is flat with a barrel vault over the center section of the building. The foundation is concrete on the west and north elevations and brick on the back elevations. Above the concrete foundation on the west and north elevation is a decorative row of soldier bricks. The building is rectangular shaped and covers an unusually large lot located in Block 327 of the Original Townsite. Since its construction in 1941-1943, the building has been continuously used as the city auditorium. Various events have been held in the building, beginning with the American Legion's Bond Rally Boxing Show in January 1943.

The main elevation of the building faces west onto C Street Northwest. The low-pitched barrel roof is visible above the cast stone coping wrapping around both corners of the facade. The roof is not readily visible from any other elevations. In addition to the concrete coping, other horizontal decorative details on the facade include two projected, brick bands along the upper wall and the double brick stringcourse at the first floor sill level. The upper wall brick bands extend the full length of the facade. The lower brick stringcourse does not extend along the projected center section of the west elevation.

The facade is symmetrical and divided into five sections. The outer two sections, consisting of the rounded corners, have a roofline set slightly below that of the remaining facade. The corners are also recessed from the other sections of the front elevations. The corner sections have four bands of glass block windows, consisting of three sets of ten glass blocks, which wraparound equally on each side. The next matching sections of the facade are a wider expanse of rectangular brick, ornamented with evenly-placed, rectangular, cast stone and brick tables above the upper wall horizontal brick bands. Below this

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 11

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

and the brick bands are single, round, fixed, multi-pane windows with a double closer brick outline. The wall is smooth below the round windows to the top of the first floor triple windows. The windows are currently topped with a continuous cloth awning. The windows are metal, three-pane, combination projecting with rowlock brick sills. The next sections of the facade are narrow, projected sections which are unornamented except for the upper and lower wall brick bands.

The center section of the west elevation is projected slightly away from the flanking sections. The frieze area of the center section is simply decorated with the inscribed word "AUDITORIUM." Centered below this at grade level are three entries. Each entry consists of a double, glazed slab door with a transom covered by a cloth awning. The entries are set into tall recessed segments the width of the entries. Around these segments is a slightly projected, narrow surround which extends above to the bottom brick band of the upper wall. The remaining wall of the center section is flush with the upper wall and creates four identical pilasters. Only the segments containing the entry have any ornamentation, except for the two brick bands along the upper wall which extend the full length of the facade. Above each entry is a stylized metal light. Above the light is a large, cast stone, octagonal ornament with fleur-de-lis motifs.

The north elevation faces onto West Broadway. This wall is longer than the west elevation and is almost symmetrical. The north elevation is also nearly identical to the facade in terms of decorative detail. This includes the cast stone coping, two projected brick bands along the upper wall and the double brick stringcourse at the first floor window sill level. Notably, the north elevation is not stepped like the west elevation. While the outside sections of the north elevation are slightly recessed, the remainder of the wall is nearly even. The outside sections of the north elevation both have four bands of glass block windows, alternating with brick bands. Each glass block band is composed of three ten-block sections. The corner sections are dropped slightly below the level of the other sections of this elevation. Notably, the west corner of the north elevation is rounded and the east corner is squared. The next section of the north elevation are wider and decoratively treated to match the wide inside sections of the west elevation. This includes the cast stone and brick tables in the frieze area, the round windows on the second floor and the triple windows on the first floor. One difference between the north and west elevations, is that the first floor windows do not have cloth awnings.

The large central portion of the north elevation has the word "AUDITORIUM"

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 12

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

stretched over much of the frieze area. Below the frieze and double band of projected brick are five, equally spaced, metal, multi-paned, fixed windows on the second floor. Directly below this are octagonal, cast stone ornaments matching those on the west elevation. Under the cast stone ornaments, on the first floor are single, metal, three-pane, combination projecting windows, except in the middle segment. In the middle section of the center portion of the north elevation there is a double, glazed slab entry with a transom and cloth awning matching the west elevation. The windows and entry are very slightly recessed, creating a narrow pilaster on either side.

The east elevation is red brick with the majority of openings being infilled with similar brick. The infill, however, is historic as this wall was originally part of the earlier Convention Hall. The brick pilasters with cast stone bases which originally divided the wall remain evident, as do the brick tables with cast stone corners dividing the first and second floor windows. The tall brick chimney also remains in place on the south corner of the east elevation. The south section of the roofline is taller than the rest, partially blocking the view of the southeast corner HVAC shed. The roofline than drops several feet down and remains level just past the northeast corner penthouse. The roofline drops slightly before extending to the north corner of the squared northeast wraparound section. The coping is cast stone except for the far south section which has a wider metal coping. All of the openings on the second floor have been infilled, except for the far south one which has been covered with metal siding. There is a short, flat awning above the metal-covered window. At the first floor level, off-center to the north is a large, wood, paneled door used to move props into the building. To the south of this is a small, one-story, brick, shed-roofed projection. The projection appears on the 1948 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Off-center to the north of the projection is a single, wood, paneled, pedestrian door with a single, fixed, metal, six-pane window to the south. On the far south edge of the east elevation is a single, fixed, metal, six-pane window located just below the historic brick table which divided the first and second floor windows.

Located off the alley dividing the block, the south elevation is a combination of blond and red brick. The cast stone coping extends across the even roof until reaching the southeast penthouse, at which point the roofline goes up with a metal coping matching the east side. The far west section of the building continues the design, material and decorative details of the primary west and north elevations. The rounded wraparound corner gives way to a slightly projected, wide section which features the two projected brick bands on the upper wall and the round fixed window with a double closer brick

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 13

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

outline. The wall is unadorned to the first floor, where there are triple, metal, three-light, combination projecting windows. The double, projected, brick stringcourse at the first floor sill level continues to the end of the blond brick section. East of the blond brick section, the wall is red brick with at least part of the east side of the wall having been the rear elevation of the earlier Convention Hall. Along the second floor, there five windows which match the second floor windows on the north elevation. Visible from the interior auditorium, these windows had to match the north side windows. On the far east side of the second floor, there are two smaller windows which are identical to the first floor windows on the other elevations. The first floor of the south elevation has two loading doors. There is an above grade, wood, paneled, loading door located towards the east side. Below this are several metal vents. West of this door is a single, metal, three-pane, combination projecting window. West of this is an at-grade, metal, double door. West of this are two metal, three-pane, combination projecting windows.

ALTERATIONS

The Ardmore Municipal Auditorium retains a high degree of integrity. Changes to the building include the addition of two metal penthouses on the roof, cloth awnings on the public entries and front windows, addition of the marquee sign on the northwest corner of the building and replacement of the public doors with modern, aluminum, glazed slab doors. The most notable modification is the addition of the marquee sign which is more Art Deco in style than Art Moderne. The sign, however, does not interfere with the ability of the building to convey its significance. Overall, the auditorium retains a notable degree of integrity, including location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 14

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

SUMMARY

The Ardmore Municipal Auditorium is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its historic association with the Depression-era Works Projects Administration (WPA) in Ardmore. Constructed in 1941-1943 by the WPA, the building was constructed during the waning days of this make-work program. The WPA not only bolstered the local, state and national economies through much of the Great Depression but also contributed a lasting legacy to Oklahoma's built environment. The auditorium is also eligible under Criterion C as an excellent example of a WPA, Art Moderne style auditorium in Ardmore.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Like numerous towns in Oklahoma, Ardmore came into existence as a result of railroad expansion in the late nineteenth century. In 1884, two subsidiaries of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (Santa Fe) Railway Company began building rail lines in Indian and Oklahoma territories. By 1887, the companies were joining their lines to form a north-south line across the Twin Territories with stations scattered along the line. One of these stations, located between the Arbuckle Mountains on the north and the Red River Valley on the south in Pickens County, Indian Territory, was called Ardmore after a railroad official's hometown of Ardmore, Pennsylvania. Trains began their regular runs along the line in late July 1887 and by October of that year, a post office had been formally established at the Ardmore station. The presence of the railroad continued to be a major factor in the economic development and well-being of Ardmore for many years.¹

The town of Ardmore quickly began to take shape with Main Street being laid out in July 1887. Rapidly becoming a center for the surrounding agricultural community, Ardmore experienced few growing pains. Located in the Chickasaw Nation of Indian Territory, individual ownership of the land was restricted, even within the city limits. However, Euro-Americans flocked to the area, attracted by the rich farmland and abundant grasslands. In addition to some sharecropping, settlers also leased land from the Chickasaw Nation. One of the primary crops raised in the area was cotton. As such, Ardmore soon gained

¹Mac McGalliard, Pioneer Spirit: The Centennial History of Ardmore, The Chronicles of Oklahoma 65 (Spring 1987), 76. See also Arrell Morgan Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries 2nd Ed. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 160.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 15

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

standing as the largest inland cotton market in the world. From the late 1880s through the first couple of decades of the twentieth century, cotton was a major economic force within the community. Following the collapse of the cotton market in the 1920s, agriculture still remained important to the local economy; however, other cash and livestock crops replaced King Cotton.²

Ardmore also benefitted from another primary Oklahoma industry, oil. In 1905, oil wells were drilled northwest of town. Seven years later, the Healdton Oil Field was discovered in the western part of Carter County. This large field is credited with helping "...Oklahoma achieve national oil leadership..." by 1920. Reportedly, the Healdton wells provided fifty percent of all oil used by the Allied powers during World War I. It is noteworthy that it was during the same decade as the Healdton discovery that Ardmore experienced its greatest population boom of the twentieth century. According to the 1910 census, the community's population was 8,618. By 1920, Ardmore's population had risen to 14,181, an increase of over 5,500 residents. The next largest increase occurred in the 1950s when Ardmore's population went from 17,890 in 1950 to 21,225 by 1960, a change of 3,335 persons.³

In the mid 1920s, United States Highway 77 was constructed from Kansas through to Texas. Importantly, this north-south route linked Oklahoma City and Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas with Ardmore located at the mid-way point. This was followed by the completion of the east-west United States Highway 70 through Ardmore. Auspiciously located on two major thoroughfares as automobile travel replaced rail transportation as the dominant means of passenger travel, Ardmore was set

²The History of Carter County (Fort Worth, Texas: University Supply and Equipment Company, 1957), n.p. See also McGalliard, Pioneer Spirit, 77; Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, Final Survey Report: Architectural/Historic Reconnaissance Level Survey of Certain Parts of the City of Ardmore, (Available at the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 1993), 93; and, John Dexter, Ardmore Builds and Grows (Available in the Ardmore Vertical File at the Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 4 July 1954), n.p.

³Gibson, Oklahoma, 271. See also O.H.P.S., Final Survey Report, 102 and McGalliard, Pioneer Spirit, 84.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 16

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

to benefit from this significant economic development.⁴

In addition to being an economic center within south central Oklahoma, Ardmore throughout its history has also been a political mainstay. Within three years of the founding of the town, Ardmore was named one of three federal court towns for Indian Territory. At that time, the federal court system in Indian Territory had jurisdiction over all criminal cases except those which carried a sentence of hard labor or death and civil cases if at least one hundred dollars and one U.S. citizen was involved. Increasing the importance of the federal court system, the Curtis Act of 1898 abolished tribal courts and declared Indian law unenforceable in federal court. With the advent of statehood for the Twin Territories in 1907, the United States District Courts replaced the Territorial District Courts but Ardmore remained a federal court town. Statehood also resulted in the naming of Ardmore as county seat of the newly designated Carter County.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Like all Oklahoma communities, Ardmore experienced hard times during the 1930s as the Great Depression devastated economic conditions nationwide. During this period, local factories and three of the five local banks closed, as four of the five oil refineries in Ardmore also shut down. Compounding these local losses was the statewide crisis in both the oil and agricultural industries. Generally by 1940, Ardmore's economy was showing signs of improvement. The city population showed a modest increase, going from 15,741 in 1930 to 16,862 by 1940. While excessive drought and a lack of oil activity continued to retard substantial merchant gain through early 1940, the city itself experienced a \$26,000 cash surplus for the year 1939-1940.⁵

Aiding in the economic recovery of Ardmore were several building projects completed under the auspices of President Roosevelt's New Deal agencies, including the Works Projects Administration (WPA). New Deal-era building

⁴The Daily Ardmoreite, (Ardmore, Oklahoma), 28 July 19??, (Available in the Ardmore Vertical Files, Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma).

⁵Mac McGalliard, Pioneer Spirit: The Centennial History of Ardmore, The Chronicles of Oklahoma 65 (Spring 1987), 83-84. See also The Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), 7 January 1940 and 4 June 1940.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 17

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

projects in Ardmore include the building of Ardmore's National Guard Armory by the WPA in 1936, construction of the Ardmore Municipal Building by the Public Works Administration (PWA) in 1937 and the 1938 construction of Lake Murray State Park on the east edge of Ardmore by the WPA and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). In addition to a soil conservation project in Carter and Johnson County, the WPA also undertook construction of a drainage ditch project on the east side of Ardmore and a new high school gymnasium and office building in late 1940. With the majority of the money being expended on the conservation project, the federal government was boosting the local economy by nearly \$140,000 on these three projects alone.⁶ As in many other communities in Oklahoma, WPA street improvement projects were also on-going in Ardmore during the late 1930s and early 1940s. More visibly, the city, aided by the WPA, initiated an ambitious building program in 1940 that included construction of a new municipal auditorium and a permanent fairgrounds building, an addition to their 1905 Carnegie Library and improvements to the local airport to meet national defense requirements.

The Works Progress Administration originated in May 1935 when the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 replaced the 1933 Federal Emergency Relief Act. Believing that "work rather than direct relief should be the keystone of Federal policy with respect to needy employables," the 1935 act authorized a new program of federal relief employment, building upon earlier New Deal programs such as the Civil Works Authority and the work program run by the Federal Emergency Relief Act. 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 wartime industries lessened the need for the WPA and the federal monies allocated to the WPA were required elsewhere.⁷

During its eight year existence, the WPA worked on two principal types of projects: service projects and engineering and construction projects. Numerous projects of both categories were undertaken in Oklahoma and Carter County. Service projects employed clerical, technical and professional workers of both sexes. Types of programs undertaken by the WPA as service projects included adult education, nursery schools, library services, recreation programs, museum projects, music projects, art programs, writers' projects,

⁶The Daily Ardmoreite, 2 December 1940.

⁷Final Report on the WPA Program, 1934-1943 (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 7.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 18

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

theater programs, research and public records projects, sewing projects, school lunch projects, among various other social service projects.⁸

Engineering and construction projects, however, comprised the majority of WPA employment, about seventy-five percent until the spring of 1940. Construction projects were selected on the basis that they provided "useful work to the unemployed at a given time and place," the end result was of functional use to the community and that a sponsor be available. The construction of public utilities, recreation facilities and public buildings account for about a third of all engineering and construction projects. Public utility projects included water and sewer systems and sewage disposal plants. Recreation facility projects primarily consisted of work undertaken on city parks and included construction of numerous swimming and wading pools with related bathhouses across the state. Public building projects involved WPA labor on education and recreation buildings, hospitals, military and naval buildings, prisons and state, county and city government buildings. Nationwide, the WPA constructed and improved numerous airports and airways, city halls, courthouses, libraries, community buildings, municipal and school auditoriums, highways and streets, parks, cemeteries, armories, schools and natural resource conservation facilities as a part of their engineering and construction projects.⁹

The WPA work force was drawn from the unemployed living within the project area. Workers were qualified to work on WPA projects by the local Public Welfare Department, working through the National Reemployment Service. WPA employment was restricted to only one family member, usually the head of the family. Initially, the age requirement for workers was set at sixteen years, however, this was raised to a minimum of eighteen years in 1938. Although there was not a maximum age limit, agencies generally did not hire persons over sixty-five years of age due to their eligibility for Social Security. Congress made no restriction on the employment of non-US citizens during the first year of the WPA's existence. Following several acts which progressively restricted the employment of aliens by the WPA, in 1939, Congress prohibited the employment of aliens on WPA projects and each worker was required to sign an affidavit affirming their US citizenship. A hiring preference was not instituted until the ERA Act of 1937 which gave preference to the employment of veterans, which was reinforced in 1941 with the added requirement that the

⁸Ibid., 59-71.

⁹Ibid., 47-48, 50-52.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 19

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

spouse of unemployed veterans and unmarried widows of veterans be given the same preference as veterans. Due to conflicting reasoning, preferential employment based on need was not instituted until 1939. At that time, the WPA established two types of needs: those with no income and those with insufficient income to exist at a subsistence level.¹⁰

The WPA paid a flat "security wage," which was slightly higher than direct relief payments but lower than comparable private employment pay. By 1937, the average pay in Oklahoma was thirty-six dollars a month for unskilled labor. Skilled and semi-skilled workers received higher wages depending on the skill required and the experience of the workman. During its first four years, the WPA offered continuous employment as available within the region. Subsequently, the WPA enforced an eighteen month ceiling on employment. However, the worker was eligible for reemployment after thirty days and a recertification of need.¹¹

WPA projects were designed to maximize the number of laborers and the length of employment. Thus, the maximum amount of relief was obtained through every project. To facilitate this goal, WPA workers labored continuously on every aspect of the project from clearing the site to manufacturing furnishings. In Oklahoma, the use of native stone for WPA buildings kept project costs low and employed many quarrying and dressing the stone for use. Other materials necessary, such as wood bracing and roof material, were usually obtained locally so as to stimulate the local economy as much as possible.

Although a federal work program, the WPA only facilitated public works projects nationwide. The WPA did not initiate or undertake projects by itself. WPA guidelines required that a "tax-supported public body" sponsor the project which had to result in a permanent and useful addition to the community. The sponsors could be federal, state or local agencies. The majority of projects were developed by county, city, town and village governments and agencies. The project sponsor provided partial monetary support, usually in the form of land and materials, as well as engineering and architectural plans and specifications. The WPA had no fixed percentage of the project cost which the individual sponsor was required to pay. On the average, the cost to the sponsoring agency fluctuated between twenty and thirty percent of the total

¹⁰Ibid., 17-21.

¹¹Ibid., 21. See also The Farmers Weekly Stroud (Oklahoma) Democrat, 19 February 1937.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 20

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====
cost. Notably, the sponsor completed the project if the WPA was unable to and maintained and operated the finished project. Ownership of the project belonged to the sponsor upon completion.¹²

The WPA handled the administration of the project and provided the majority of funds to meet wages. WPA regulations capped federal funds for any one project at about \$52,000 to avoid competition with other Depression era programs, especially the Public Works Administration (PWA). Another New Deal public works program, the PWA did not concern itself primarily with aiding the jobless as the WPA did; rather, the PWA's goal was to stimulate business. In order to circumvent this monetary restriction, WPA projects often received several rounds of funding under the guise of additions to the original project. Other projects, for a variety of reasons, also exceeded the WPA allowance.¹³

In August 1940, an advisory committee of 25 leading Ardmore citizens scheduled a meeting with the city commissioners to "...launch a program to build a new convention hall and additional permanent buildings at the county fairgrounds." These amenities were to enhance the available facilities in Ardmore to attract larger conventions and events, which in turn would boost the local economy. By October, the proposed plan had grown to include \$25,000 (later \$15,000) for fire equipment, \$20,000 to enlarge and improve the Ardmore airport and \$5,000 to erect an extension on the library building. All but the fire equipment bond called for participation by the WPA which would almost double the total value of the projects to \$200,000. The city scheduled a special election for November 26, 1940, to vote on the five bond issues.

The largest bond issue was \$60,000 for the purpose of building a new municipal auditorium to hold meetings, conventions, cultural features, entertainment events and rallies. Ardmore's existing Convention Hall was built in about 1916. The two-story, red brick, modest Italian Renaissance style building had a hip roof with a brick parapet; double, twelve-over-one and eight-over-one, hung windows; multiple, double, wood, glazed paneled doors; and, flat metal awnings over the main entries.

¹² Questions and Answers on the WPA, (Available in the Vertical Files, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: December 1939), 6-7, 16. See also Final Report, 9-10.

¹³ Final Report, 9-10. See also Questions and Answers, 10-12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 21

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

Only twenty-four years old, Convention Hall measured just 84 feet by 128 feet with a floor space of 10,572 square feet. The new auditorium was slated to be 110 feet by 146 feet, boosting total floor space to 16,060 square feet. Although only increasing available seating from 3,000 to 3,500, the new auditorium would have better visuals and acoustics with its arena-type seating arrangement. As the roof of the new auditorium was to be supported by steel girders, there would be no need for interior columns obstructing the view. Additionally, the new building called for the removal of the existing wood balcony which was supported by iron columns. Besides the balcony being a fire and safety hazard, the columns supporting the balcony also obstructed the view of the stage from the lower floor. Along with the promise of a safer, fire-proof building, voters were tempted with the incentive of proper heating in the winter and an air conditioning service in the summer.¹⁴

Cold weather cast a pall over the bond issue election with early reports noting that at mid-day less than 200 votes had been cast. By the end of day, more than a 1,000 voters exercised their right and all bond issues were passed with more than fifty percent of the total votes in favor. Of the five bond projects, the new auditorium ranked fourth with 629 voting in favor and 403 opposed, leaving a majority of 226. In contrast, the new fire equipment garnered a much larger majority of 686 with 862 supporting the bond and only 176 opposed. It was expected that the County Election Board would quickly certify the vote so the city could begin advertising the bonds by Friday of the same week. Moving rapidly, it was anticipated that the bids would be opened by 12 December 1940 and the money for the projects would be in-hand by mid-January 1941. However, much work remained to be done in finishing the plans and specifications for the two larger construction projects and, importantly, making an application to the WPA.¹⁵

The need to "...have all specifications and details whipped through in record time..." was largely due to the uncertain future of the WPA. Increasing war-related activities were eroding the demand and available funding for the make-work program. Within two weeks of the election, the city commissioners engaged the services of J.B. White, local architect, and his son, Ben, to prepare the design and specifications for the auditorium, fair grounds building and library addition. Although a contract was not signed at that time, it was

¹⁴The Daily Ardmoreite, 24 November 1940.

¹⁵Ibid., 26 November 1940 and 27 November 1940.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 22

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

"...understood..." that the Whites would be given the work.¹⁶

The following week, the selling of the bonds for the Ardmore projects established a new state record for low interest rates for municipal bonds. At a rate of 1.73, the bonds for the municipal auditorium and fairgrounds building were sold to Fenner-Beane of Oklahoma City. Following preparation of transcripts of the sale and printing of the bonds, the matter would then be submitted to the Attorney General for approval. A required thirty-day protest period would then have to elapse before the bonds were delivered to the buyers and the money available to the city. Before construction activity could begin, the city still had to receive WPA approval of the projects to complete the funding.¹⁷

The plans and specifications for the auditorium were submitted to the state WPA office by mid-February 1941. Although the fairgrounds project was approved at the national-level of the WPA in late February 1941, approval of the auditorium did not occur until early April 1941. At that time, the on-going WPA projects in Ardmore, including the drainage ditch, street improvements and construction of the high school gym and office, absorbed all available WPA labor through at least July. With decreasing resources available nationwide for the WPA program, the city was urged to consider choosing one building project to start with.¹⁸

In mid-June 1941, the district WPA administrator, Charles Tompkins, indicated that not all the specifications for the auditorium had been received by the state WPA office. Allowing for the required review process by the state office, the auditorium project would be delayed at least an additional thirty to sixty days. Although the fairgrounds building was cleared to start by 1 August 1941, the plans for the auditorium were still pushed to allow construction to start on it first. The city commission unanimously voted the convention hall as their first choice at a meeting in late June 1941. A shortage of WPA labor was still anticipated to prevent both projects from

¹⁶Ibid., 6 December 1940.

¹⁷Ibid., 13 December 1940.

¹⁸Ibid., 18 February 1941, 27 February 1941, 21 March 1941, 7 April 1941 and 5 June 1941.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 23

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

commencing at the same time.¹⁹

In a somewhat unexpected turn of events, on 1 August 1941, Clarence Harris, Ardmore city manager, announced that the work orders for both the auditorium and fairgrounds building were on hand with a 7 August 1941 start date for both projects. Within days, the Ardmore WPA office issued work orders to 170 men; 60 men were instructed to begin demolition of Convention Hall and 110 men were sent to dismantle the old fairgrounds grandstand and begin preparation of the fairground building's foundation. True to the WPA's maximization of resources, the workmen were instructed to "...salvage every possible bit of material that can be saved" from the Convention Hall and the lumber from the grandstand was to be used as form material for the fairground building's foundation. As planned, ground was broken on the auditorium project on 7 August 1941 with Clarence Harris and Mayor Quinn Wicker doing their part to dig up the site.²⁰

Work on both buildings progressed nicely through early September 1941. The opening of bids for some materials and work on both buildings at that time revealed that actual construction costs were running ten to twenty percent higher than the original estimates. By October 1941, the citizens of Ardmore were again asked to vote for a bond issue to complete the city building program. Increased material costs due to war-time demands were blamed for a shortfall of \$22,000 for the auditorium and \$12,000 for the fairgrounds building. Additionally, \$58,000 for the construction of a large indoor arena at the fairgrounds was included. With less than one thousand citizens casting a vote, the new bond issue passed with a majority of 154 votes for the auditorium and just 22 on the fairgrounds project. Moving quickly, the bonds were sold by the end of October 1941.²¹

News of the construction project was largely eclipsed in December 1941 with the United State's formal entrance into World War II. Nonetheless, work on the auditorium building continued through 1942. Throughout the year, the WPA

¹⁹Ibid., 17 June 1941, 18 June 1941, 19 June 1941, 23 June 1941, 24 June 1941 and 27 June 1941.

²⁰Ibid., 9 July 1941, 1 August 1941, 5 August 1941 and 7 August 1941.

²¹Ibid., 3 September 1941, 9 September 1941, 12 October 1941, 13 October 1941, 15 October 1941, 16 October 1941 and 30 October 1941.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 24

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====
program itself was reduced and increasing pressure brought to bear on non-defense related projects. In December 1942, President Roosevelt ordered the liquidation of the WPA as work relief was no longer deemed necessary. Projects which were not federally-sponsored were to be closed out by completing "...useful units..." and/or by turning the project over to the sponsor for completion. The WPA was to shut down by 1 February 1943 in order to divert all possible funding to defense-related programs.²²

Unlike the fairgrounds building which was heavily delayed by the arena addition, the city auditorium was nearly complete before the WPA's terminating deadline. By early January 1943, finishing touches to the building were in-progress, including installing curtains, drapes and other stage equipment. One feature of the building that was apparently delayed until the end of the war was an amplifying system. Just weeks before the WPA's final demise, the auditorium was accepted for use by the city. The first event held in the new city auditorium was the American Legion's Big Bond Rally Boxing Show on 26 January 1943.²³

The Ardmore Municipal Auditorium is historically significant for its association with the WPA, a critical component of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal-era program. Nationally from its inauguration in 1935 to its termination in 1943, the WPA expended more than 10.75 billion dollars on a diversity of projects. An additional 2.8 billion dollars was provided by various sponsors on WPA projects. Almost eighty-nine percent of the WPA expenditure was used for wages, with seventeen percent of the sponsors' funds spent on labor costs. Approximately 8.5 million individuals nationwide benefitted from WPA employment at one time or another. At the peak of WPA employment in Oklahoma, January 1936, 94,821 persons were toiling on approved projects. By March 1937, 2,971 projects had been approved with 2,581 of those projects being undertaken by the WPA. At the end of the program in 1943, Oklahoma had received over 185 million dollars from the WPA for a multitude of projects statewide. Sponsors statewide expended almost another sixty million dollars. Combined, the Oklahoma economy was boosted by over 232 million dollars in eight years. The projects represent an investment of more than 415 million hours of manpower earning a total of over 140 million dollars in wages

²²Ibid., 4 December 1942.

²³Ibid., 4 January 1943, 20 January 1943, 21 January 1943, 22 January 1943, 24 January 1943 and 26 January 1943.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 25

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

for the state of Oklahoma.²⁴

The infusion of this much-needed work and money into hard pressed communities relieved the pressure of the unemployed on local, state and national economies. The WPA undertook a number of projects in Ardmore and Carter County, over seven projects with a value of nearly \$350,000 being in various stages in 1940-1941 alone. The buildings constructed by the WPA, such as the Ardmore Municipal Auditorium, remain as architectural testimony to the social ills and remedies of the 1930s and early 1940s. These buildings represent the local and national efforts to resist the debilitating effects of the worst depression in American history with a certain fortitude and style.

As required by the federal guidelines, all WPA projects were to result in a "permanent and useful addition" to the community. The Ardmore Municipal Auditorium exemplifies this requirement. The auditorium was deemed necessary by the community to enhance available facilities to attract larger conventions and events. Learning from their pre-depression mistakes, Ardmore was diversifying its economic base with amenities that would not only serve residents but also aid the Ardmore economy by bringing non-residents to the community. The auditorium has proven a useful addition to the city as it continues to function as originally intended.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Ardmore Municipal Auditorium is also architecturally significant as an excellent example of a brick, WPA, Art Moderne style auditorium in Ardmore. The building is highly distinctive within downtown Ardmore. The scale and style of the building distinguishes it from much of the surrounding construction. While only two stories tall, the building is longer than the majority of other buildings in downtown Ardmore. The atypical length of the building was achieved by facing the building onto a secondary east-west street, rather than the typical north-south orientation of the majority of buildings in downtown Ardmore.

There are other Modern Movement style buildings in downtown Ardmore, such as the Art Moderne style YWCA Building located at 27 West Broadway and the Art Deco style Ardmore Municipal Building, located at 23 South Washington. All three buildings were constructed within a six-year time period from 1937-1943.

²⁴Final Report, 101, 115, and 124.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 26

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

As mentioned earlier, the Ardmore Municipal Building was constructed in 1937 as a PWA project. The 1938 erection of the YWCA Building was privately funded. None of these buildings are exactly alike, although they share certain common features, such as the use of light-colored brick for building material and some ornamental detail. Comparatively, the YWCA Building lacks the monumental scale inherent to the public buildings. While the city hall is similar in size to the auditorium, it is clearly a compartmentalized building; although an office building, there is a strong similarity to a school building in massing, decorative detail and fenestration pattern. The auditorium is unmistakable due in large part to its specialized function which is reinforced by the stylistic features of the building, as well as the fenestration pattern.

The Ardmore Municipal Auditorium is also a relatively sophisticated example of WPA construction. Typically, WPA buildings in the state were constructed of native stone, such as used at the Hardy Murphy Coliseum (the fairgrounds building and arena) and the National Guard Armory in Ardmore (built 1936). The use of native stone fulfilled two primary requirements of the WPA: critically, the stone was readily available at an affordable cost; and, use of the stone was highly labor intensive, thus elongating the length of employment available on the project and the number of workers needed. However, there was no requirement that stone be used and, if the sponsors were able to pay for other types of materials, construction materials of wood, brick or concrete were acceptable and, in fact, utilized for an unknown number of WPA building projects. Doubtlessly lowering the cost of brick for the auditorium and a guiding principle of the WPA, was the re-use of two walls and other salvageable material from the previous Convention Hall.

In all, the WPA constructed 2,045 buildings in Oklahoma and remodeled an additional 3,465. Most of these buildings favored simplification in architectural style, resulting in a style loosely categorized as the WPA Standardized style. This was, in part, due to the limited construction experience of many of the project laborers, as well as the use of standardized plans for many of the reoccurring building types constructed by the WPA, such as schools and armories. Under the program guidelines, sponsors of WPA projects were allowed to retain architectural firms and architects were generally hired for larger buildings to ensure the quality and viability of the building's design. Buildings with project architects also tend to present a more stylized design, as evident in the Ardmore Municipal Auditorium.

Among the large, individual, WPA-constructed buildings in Ardmore, including the auditorium, Hardy Murphy Coliseum and National Guard Armory, the auditorium

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 27

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

clearly stands out. Both the coliseum and armory are native stone, WPA Standardized style buildings. Both reflect the rustic fortitude that has come to typify WPA-built architecture. The auditorium, in contrast, reflects a more refined, modern, stylistic appearance, befitting its purpose as the city auditorium.

Overall, the Ardmore Municipal Auditorium occupies a unique niche in Ardmore's built environment. The striking Art Moderne style of the building sets it apart from the majority of downtown Ardmore, as does its monumental size. The building is also representative of the more refined, brick, Art Moderne, WPA buildings. Historically, the building is also significant for its association with the WPA program in Ardmore. The building is an excellent, tangible example of the WPA's efforts to stimulate the local economy during the Great Depression.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 28

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Daily Ardmoreite. Ardmore, Oklahoma. 24 November 1940; 26 November 1940; 27 November 1940; 2 December 1940; 6 December 1940; 13 December 1940; 18 February 1941; 27 February 1941; 21 March 1941; 7 April 1941; 5 June 1941; 17 June 1941; 18 June 1941; 19 June 1941; 23 June 1941; 24 June 1941; 27 June 1941; 9 July 1941; 1 August 1941; 5 August 1941; 7 August 1941; 3 September 1941; 9 September 1941; 12 October 1941; 13 October 1941; 15 October 1941; 16 October 1941; 30 October 1941; 4 December 1942; 4 January 1943; 20 January 1943; 21 January 1943; 22 January 1943; 24 January 1943; and, 26 January 1943.

The Daily Oklahoman. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. 7 January 1940 and 4 June 1940.

Dexter, John. "Ardmore Builds and Grows." Available in the "Ardmore" Vertical File at the Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 4 July 1954.

The Farmer's Weekly Stroud (Oklahoma) Democrat. 19 February 1937.

Final Report on the WPA Program 1934-1943. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946.

Gibson, Arrell Morgan. Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries. 2nd Ed. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

The History of Carter County. Fort Worth, Texas: University Supply and Equipment Company, 1957.

McGalliard, Mac. "Pioneer Spirit: The Centennial History of Ardmore." The Chronicles of Oklahoma 65 (Spring 1987), 76-89.

Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey. "Final Survey Report: Architectural/ Historic Reconnaissance Level Survey of certain Parts of the City of Ardmore." Available at the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1993.

"Questions and Answers on the WPA." December 1939. Available in the Vertical Files, Oklahoma Historical Society, Research Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 29

Ardmore Municipal Auditorium
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 1, Block 327, Original Townsite, Ardmore, Oklahoma.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries include all the property historically associated with the Ardmore Municipal Auditorium.