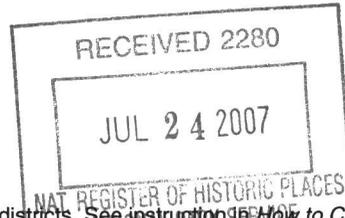


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



918

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instructions on how to complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Will Rogers High School

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 3909 E. 5th Place [N/A] not for publication

city or town Tulsa [N/A] vicinity

state Oklahoma code OK county Tulsa code 143 zip code 74112

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date 7-23-07

Oklahoma Historical Society
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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
determined eligible for the National Register
determined not eligible for the National Register
removed from the National Register
other, explain

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 9/6/2007

Will Rogers High School
Name of Property

Tulsa County, Oklahoma
County/State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Concrete</u>
walls	<u>Brick</u>
	<u>Stone: limestone</u>
roof	<u>Asphalt</u>
other	_____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Will Rogers High School
Tulsa, Tulsa County, OK



Photo 1. Will Rogers High School, South Elevation

SUMMARY

LOCATION AND SETTING

Will Rogers High School is located approximately one and three-fourths mile east of downtown Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma. East of the University of Tulsa campus and just north of 11th Street (Route 66), “Will on the Hill” could be seen from the downtown area before residences and trees obscured the view. Constructed on the edge of town where cattle still grazed, the school is now well within the City of Tulsa which has nearly expanded to fill the entire county limits.

Shown in the Figure 1 topographical map, the school sits on its original 26.894 acre site in a residential neighborhood. Mr. and Mrs. Fred Turner owned the tract of land the school district purchased and is in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 4, Township 19N, Range 13E. The site was chosen because of its relationship to feeder elementary schools and residential housing starts which were spreading east of the downtown area during the 1920s and 30s. The building occupies central/eastern portion of the school grounds which are surrounded on the north by East 4th Place South; on the east by South Pittsburg Avenue East; on the south by East 5th Place South; and on the west by Turner Park. There is a “U” shaped drive from East 5th Place South which provides access to the school’s entrance.

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Will Rogers High School
Tulsa, Tulsa County, OK



Figure 1. Will Rogers High School Site, USGS Topographical Map, Tulsa Quad.

ARCHITECTURE

Will Rogers High School is one of the best examples of Art Deco high school architecture (New Deal Public Works Administration project) in the United States. The massing of the building complements the topography of the site and the front of the school is long and horizontal with two large wings. The original building plan, nearly symmetric in a triangle of stepped blocks (see Figure 2) was completed in 1939, with 200,000 square feet of space. The 1949 building addition to the east classroom wing added 21,016 square feet of floor space for a new shop, home economics department science labs and classrooms. The 1964 addition added four levels of classroom space to west classroom wing, and a one-story girl's gym, showers, and locker rooms and the building footprint now covers 2.56 acres. The school has a raised Bedford ashlar square-cut limestone foundation or basement level, brick walls laid in a pattern of five rows of English bond separated by a row lock of alternating headers and stretchers, and terra cotta spandrels, panels, and trim. The flat roof of built up asphalt/tar and gravel is of different heights depending upon the part of the school. The school's walls are variations of buff-colored brick, the Bedford limestone is gray, and the terra cotta is gray-green, buff or light colored.

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Will Rogers High School
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The school block is three stories at the main façade including a raised basement level which becomes more exposed as the building site drops to the north and west (see topo). The school's south elevation is asymmetric and from east to west has an auditorium block, secondary entry tower, central office/library/classroom block, main entry tower, and gym block (photo 1). There is a courtyard behind the office/library/classroom block which is used now for parking and the yard has one gated drive access from the north. Figure 2 shows the plan today, with the 1949 and 1964 additions, and the location of the courtyard. Elevations are numbered on the plan to correspond to the architectural descriptions

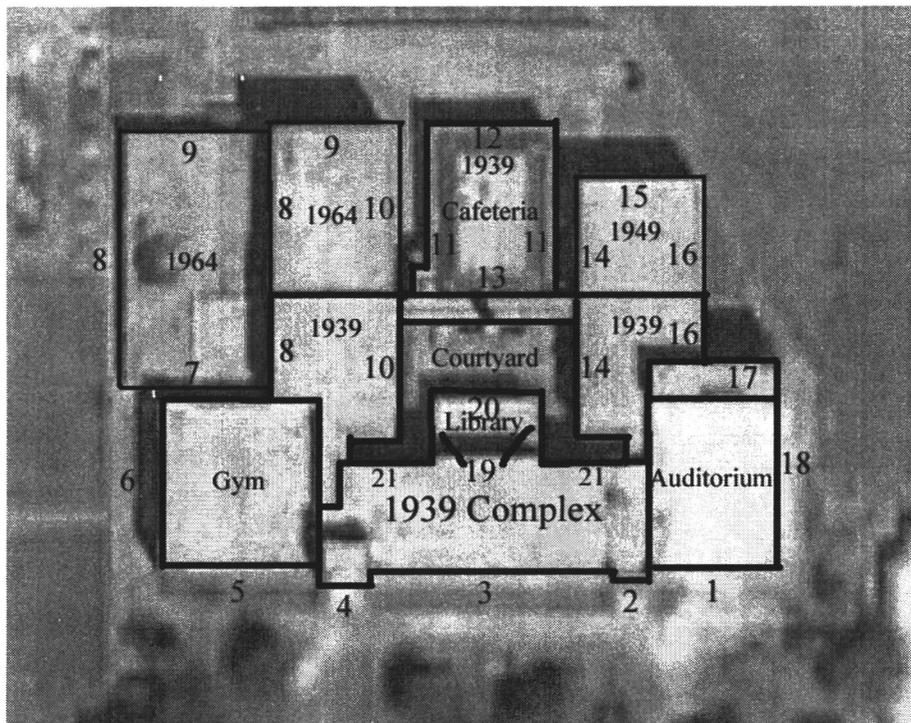


Figure 2. Will Rogers 1939 Plan with 1949 and 1964 Additions with Façade Numbers (Google Earth Aerial Photo).

South Elevation – Auditorium (1)

The three story auditorium block (photo 2) has an “A, B, B, B, A” bay pattern. The raised basement is Bedford limestone and at its junction with the brick wall has a narrow limestone fluted belt course. The symmetric “A” bay towers flank the entrance “B” bays and have small first level six-pane metal combination two awning and

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Will Rogers High School
Tulsa, Tulsa County, OK

one hopper windows with terra cotta sills.¹ The “B” bays, created by the stepped brick pilasters, are further divided by narrow vertical terra cotta dividers which commence above the entry doors and divide the paired “B” bay windows. The “B” bay entry level has three sets of paired metal entry doors. Four-pane ribbon windows are above the entry doors, and are separated and surrounded by fluted light colored metal trim. The entry doors have multi-pane windows with clipped corners in the top panes. The entry doors are surrounded by layered flat, quarter-round, zigzag patterned, beveled and dented terra cotta trim molding (photo 3).



Photo 2. Auditorium Block, South Elevation.

¹ These windows are Donovan Awning windows from Truscon Steel. Board of Education of the City of Tulsa, State of Oklahoma; “Minutes of the Meeting for October 19, 1937,” 488. At this meeting, fiberboard is noted as the acoustical treatment for ceilings.

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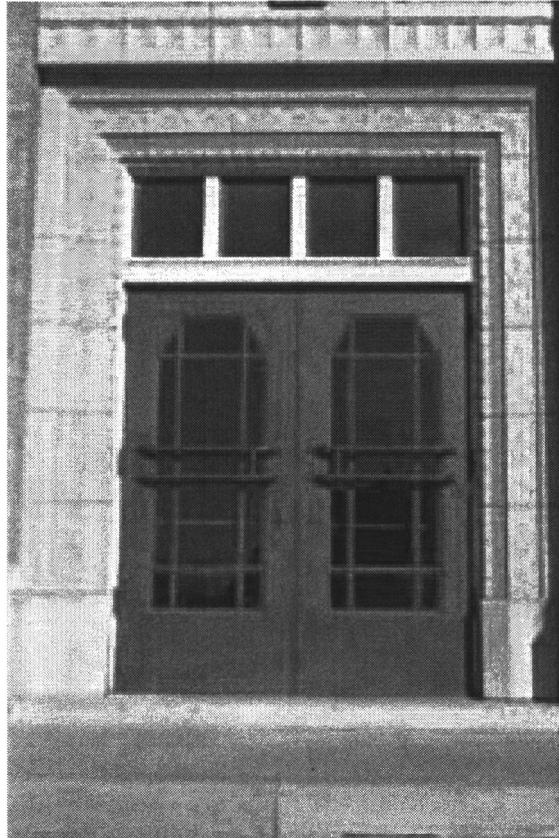


Photo 3. Auditorium, South Elevation. Door Trim.

Buff terra cotta bas relief spandrels in each “B” bay rest on a narrow band of fluted terra cotta, and separate the main auditorium doors from the second level’s paired metal twelve-pane windows which have three awning and one hopper window. The spandrels are finished with a dentil course with a window sill above (photo 4).

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Photo 4. Auditorium, South Elevation. Bas Relief Terra Cotta Panels.

The second and third levels in the “B” bays are separated by gray-green bas relief terra cotta spandrels (photo 5) topped with a dentil course and window sill for third level, and paired nine-pane metal windows with two awning and one hopper window which access a room under the auditorium’s interior loge tier. Large buff bas relief terra cotta panels complete the central entrance bay from the top of the third level windows to the parapet wall, and all of the pilasters are finished with rounded buff terra cotta trim capitals which project through the parapet’s decorative terra cotta trim band and coping (photo 6). A decorative floral and zigzagged fan terra cotta belt course in the “A” bays runs at the height of the third level windows. The decorative treatment of the buff terra cotta spandrels and trim is stylized leaf, swirls, vertical lines, chevrons, half circles and floral treatment with fans and fountains. The gray-green bas relief terra cotta panels have fans, florals and swirling leaves. The auditorium entrance is approached by steps with Bedford limestone flanking stepped half walls topped by tall narrow lanterns (photo 7).

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Photo 5. Auditorium, South Elevation. Gray-Green Terra Cotta Panels.



Photo 6. Auditorium, South Elevation. Buff Terra Cotta Bas Relief Panels,
Pilasters and Capital Detail, Parapet Trim and Coping.

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Photo 7. Auditorium, South Elevation. Lanterns.

South Elevation – Secondary Tower Façade (2)

A projecting tower façade (photo 8) separates the auditorium from the central block and is a significant entry point, though not the school's primary entrance. This three-story secondary tower is narrow with tall columns, and projects through the parapet with stepped pilasters topped with terra cotta trim capitals, which are the same as the auditorium's. The effect is strongly layered vertical lines. Verticality is emphasized by a half-diamond brick bead in the tower corner columns that rise to the tower's rounded terra cotta capitals. The tower's visual effect divides the horizontality of the rest of the building and helps create the school's distinct functional parts. The tower's metal doors repeat the auditorium doors with multi-panes, and clipped corners windows. The two sets of paired entry doors are separated by buff-colored fluted strips of terra cotta molding, although the door moldings are less elaborate than those around the auditorium doors. Four ribbon windows above the doors are separated and trimmed with narrow fluted light metal trim. Directly above the entry doors, there are two terra cotta panels which slant back slightly for ease of pedestrian reading with "Will Rogers" and "High School" incised in gold colored letters. Above these letter panels are two large octagonal bas relief panels in spandrels with floral motifs with a boy in one and girl in the other, with books and other education symbols – a protractor, torch, and globe (photo 9). Also, Tulsa's history is referenced in the panels' background with oil derricks, an airplane, and Tulsa's skyline of skyscrapers including the Philtower, the Thompson Building, the Exchange National Bank with its cupola and lantern (now Bank of Oklahoma Building), and the Christian Science

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Church. A small brick, half-diamond shaped vertical terracotta trim with a decorative base rises from the top of the entry doors, separates the bas relief panels and the two sets of paired windows above. This terra cotta trim rises nearly to the top of the tower and is finished with a pointed terra cotta cap. The second level windows are paired six-pane metal combination of two awning and one hopper and above these are two terra cotta bas relief spandrels, which are similar to the spandrels in the auditorium in their decorative flourishes, and are finished with a dentiled terra cotta window sill for the third level windows (photo 10). The windows in the third level are large, paired ten-pane windows combination metal, three awning and one hopper window, stretching the tower upward. These windows at top have clipped corners, repeating a pattern in the entry doors. The tower is finished with another large pair of bas relief terra cotta panels which are have design patterns that are similar to the auditorium's (photo 11). These finishing panels are separated further by narrow, vertical dividers of terra cotta pointed at both ends, which project slightly at the roof line. This building entrance is approached by Bedford limestone steps and stepped flanking walls. Large metal and glass light fixtures are mounted on each side of the entrance.

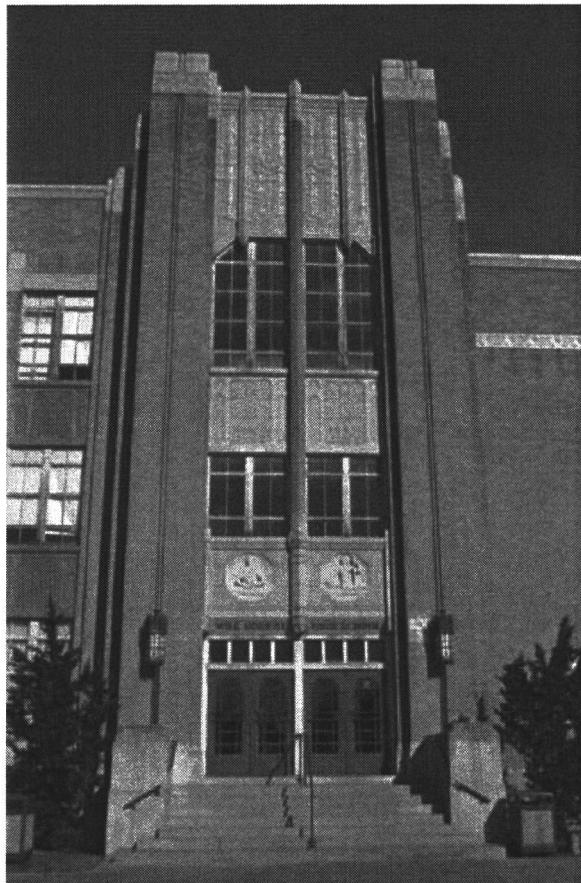


Photo 8. Secondary Tower Projection, South Elevation.

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Photo 9. Secondary Tower, South Elevation. Entry Panel Details.



Photo 10. Secondary Tower, South Elevation. Terra Cotta Spandrels.

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Photo 11. Secondary Tower, South Elevation. Tower Details.

South Elevation – Office/Library/Classroom Block (3)

This horizontal block (photo 12) contains office space and student services on the first level, a library, and classroom space on two levels above. This block is slightly taller than the auditorium block. The basement level continues at the same height from the auditorium and is Bedford limestone. There is a narrow fluted limestone belt course at the junction with the brick wall. The first, second, and third floors repeat patterns both vertically and horizontally in this block. A series of eight bays is created by flat stepped brick pilasters with terra cotta bases which spring from the limestone belt course, and which rise between paired sets of windows. The pilasters project slightly above the parapet wall and are capped with trim strip of terra cotta and rounded terra cotta capitals. The paired windows rest on a terra cotta tile panels and dentiled ledges. The eight bays are further divided by narrower brick pilasters separating the paired windows, and project only slightly above the third floor windows. They are finished with small terra cotta capitals. The paired windows are eight-pane metal with a combination of three awning and one hopper window. Several window panes have been replaced with room air conditioners. Two bands of gray-green terra cotta bas relief spandrels separate the three floors in horizontal lines and are decorated with similar motifs found in smaller gray-green spandrels in the auditorium block, but with bas relief small floral octagons, elongated octagons flanking a central floral panel (photo 13). These spandrels are finished with dentiled window sills above. The third floor windows are completed at the top with a belt course of zigzagged floral fan terra cotta trim, which continues a line from the auditorium block but at a higher level, and the parapet wall is finished at the top with the buff decorative terra cotta band and coping (photo 14). The spandrels in every other bay have one which covers a vent. This block is distinguished

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by its regular patterns of vertical and horizontal space, created by the pilasters, spandrels and window groupings.



Photo 12. Office/Library/Classroom Block, South Elevation.



Photo 13. Office/Library/Classroom Block, South Elevation. Gray-green Spandrel Detail.

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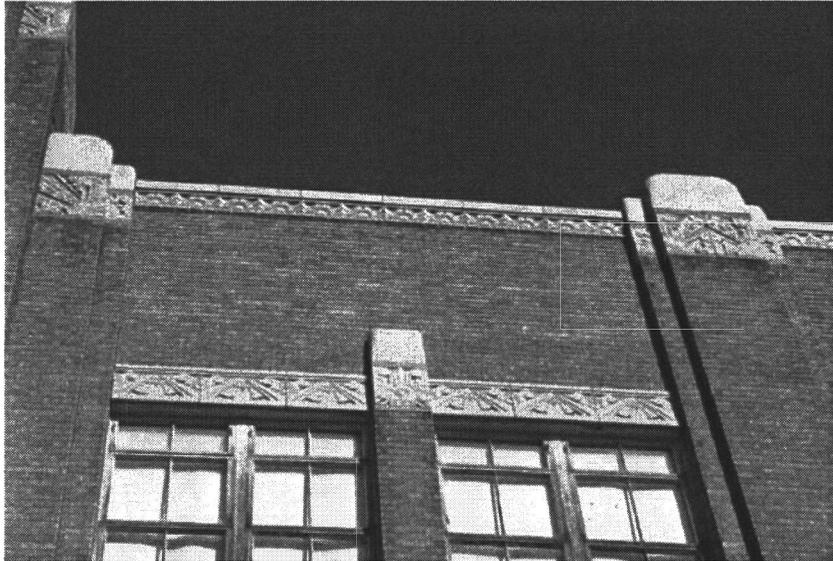


Photo 14. Office/Library/Classroom Block, South Elevation. Parapet Treatment.

South Elevation – Main Entrance Tower (4)

The school main entrance is within a large tower (photo 15). The tower effectively separates the office/library/class room block and the gym. It is the highest and most eye-catching focal point of the school, more than three stories, narrow, and vertical, projecting through the parapet height with stepped columns and pilasters topped with terra cotta capitals. The layers of columns and pilasters create verticality and define the size of the entrance. Verticality is also emphasized by a half-diamond brick bead that rises from small elaborately trimmed terra cotta single pane windows on the tower corner columns to the tower's rounded terra cotta capitals (photo 16). The tower's metal doors repeat the auditorium and secondary tower metal doors with multi-panes, and clipped window corners. The two sets of paired entry doors are separated by light colored fluted strips of terra cotta molding, and stepped door trim molding. Above the paired doors are four ribbon windows separated and trimmed with the light metal trim. Directly above the entry doors, there are two light colored bas relief terra cotta panels with classical lamps of learning (photo 17). Above these panels are four openwork grills of swirled light-colored metal work. Buff-colored terra cotta panels, larger than in the secondary tower façade, surmount these, and slant back slightly for ease of pedestrian reading and contain "Will Rogers" and "High School" incised in gold colored letters. Above these letter panels are two large octagonal bas relief panels which hold images of Will Rogers (photo 18). Rogers is portrayed with an airplane, polo pony, movie camera, and radio microphone in one panel, and in the other a hilly background setting, his horse, with Rogers holding his hat and rope in a smiling pose. The octagonal panels are surrounded by floral terra cotta design. A small brick and half-diamond vertical terracotta trim with a decorative base rises from the top of these panels, separates the bas relief spandrels, and the two sets of second level paired ten-pane metal

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windows are above with a combination of three awning and one hopper window. This vertical trim rises nearly to the top of the tower and is finished with a pointed terra cotta cap. Above the second level windows are two buff terra cotta spandrels, which share the same design found in the gray-green panels in the central block (photo 19). These are finished with dentiled terra cotta window sills for the windows in the third level. The remaining two sets of paired fourteen-pane third level metal windows are large and stretching the tower upward. The tower holds a tower room whose side and rear windows can be seen from the south elevation. The windows at top have clipped corners in the upper panes, mirroring an established pattern. The tower is completed from windows to the parapet with another large pair of bas relief terra cotta panels divided by narrow terra cotta vertical trim pointed at each end and these project past the parapet terra cotta trim and coping. The design emphasizes verticality in lines, swirls, florals, circles, and the panels rest on a horizontal zigzag floral fan motif. This main entrance is approached by Bedford limestone steps and stepped flanking half walls which are lighted by the same tall metal lanterns flanking the auditorium steps. The tower sides reveal layered pilasters topped with terra cotta capitals, giving depth and decoration to this main entrance from various views (photo 20).

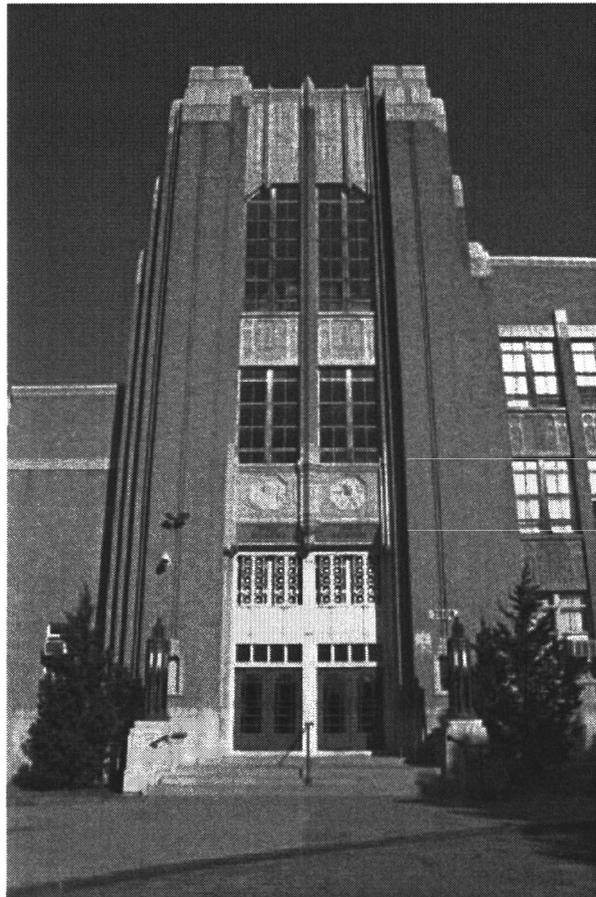


Photo 15. Main Entry Tower, South Elevation.

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Photo 16. Main Entry Tower, South Elevation.
Detail of Window, and Trim and Lanterns.

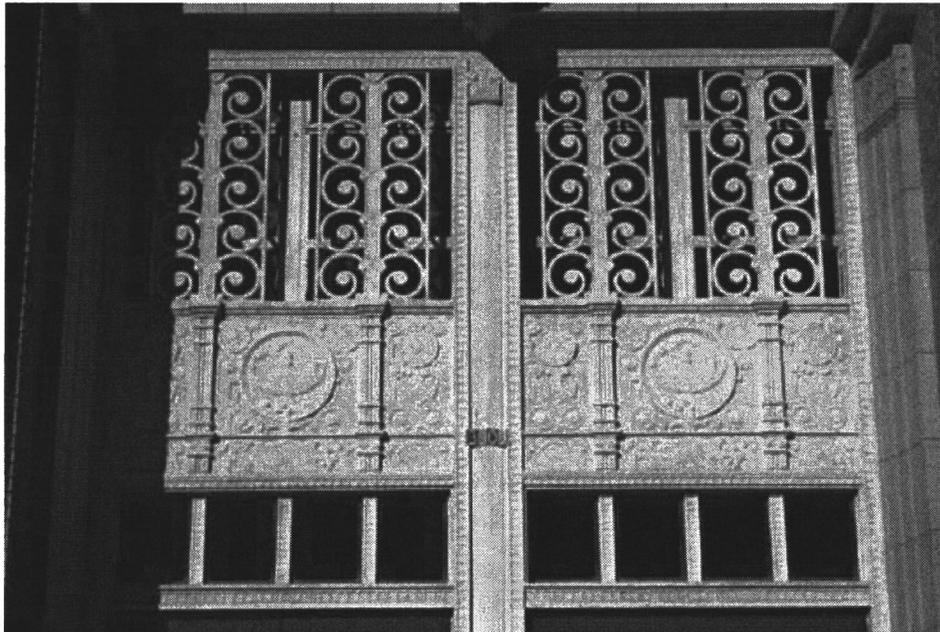


Photo 17. Main Entry Tower, South Elevation.
Detail of Educational Bas Relief, Grill.

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Photo 18. Main Entry Tower, South Elevation. Will Rogers Panels.



Photo 19. Main Entry Tower, South Elevation.
Crop Main Entrance Bas Relief Spandrels.

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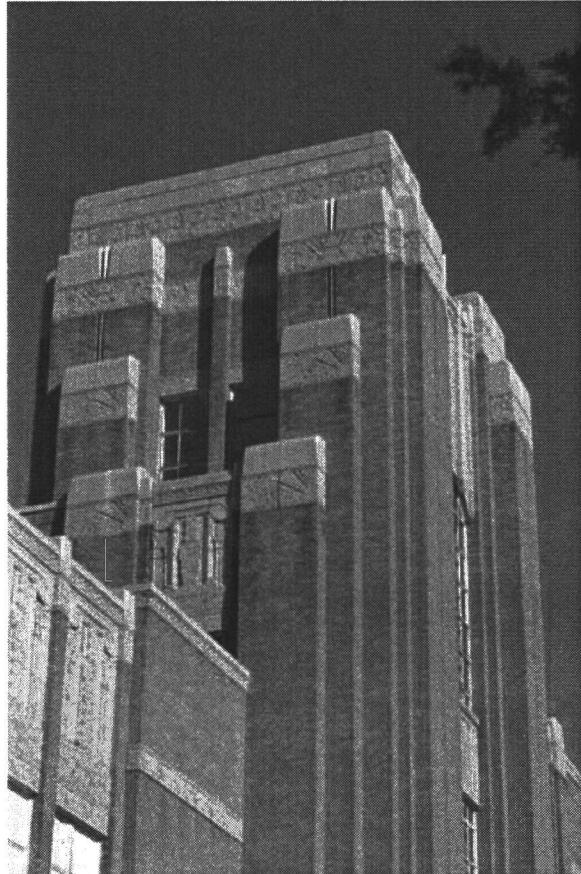


Photo 20. Main Entry Tower, South Elevation.
Decorative Detail.

South Elevation – Gym (5)

The square gym block (photo 21), has the boys' gym, and below the gym is a boys' swimming pool, locker room and showers. This is a two-story block above the pool and the elevation is set back slightly from the main entrance tower. The foundation is a continuation of the raised Bedford limestone, finished with a narrow belt of fluted limestone trim at the junction with the brick wall. The topography has fallen to the west and north so there is room in the basement level for single or paired nine-pane metal windows. The middle three panes in all but one gym basement levels windows have been removed and replaced with air conditioners and other panes have been covered with opaque material. One hopper and one awning window remain in place. The gym is multilayered inside with floor and raised seating on the sides.

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The gym block has an “A, B, B, B, B, A” bay configuration. The “A” bay towers flank the decorative “B” bays which contain the windows and bas relief terra cotta spandrels and panels. The “A” bay adjoining the main tower has one small twelve-pane window, now with an air conditioner replacing six center panes. The “B” bays are defined by their stepped pilasters with decorative terra cotta bases and capitals which spring from the limestone belt course. The capitals project past the parapet’s terra cotta decorative band and coping. Each “B” bay is further divided by narrow brick pilasters which divide the paired large ten-pane metal awning windows. The windows rest on large, simply designed terra cotta spandrels framed with decorative molding surrounding a small inset. These panels are finished with dentiled terra cotta sills for the windows above. The large banks of windows are surmounted by large buff terra cotta panels (photo 22) which differ again in design from other panels on the South Elevation. There is a zigzagged fan and floral terra cotta belt course in the “A” bays which runs above the height of the gym windows.



Photo 21. Gym Block, South Elevation.

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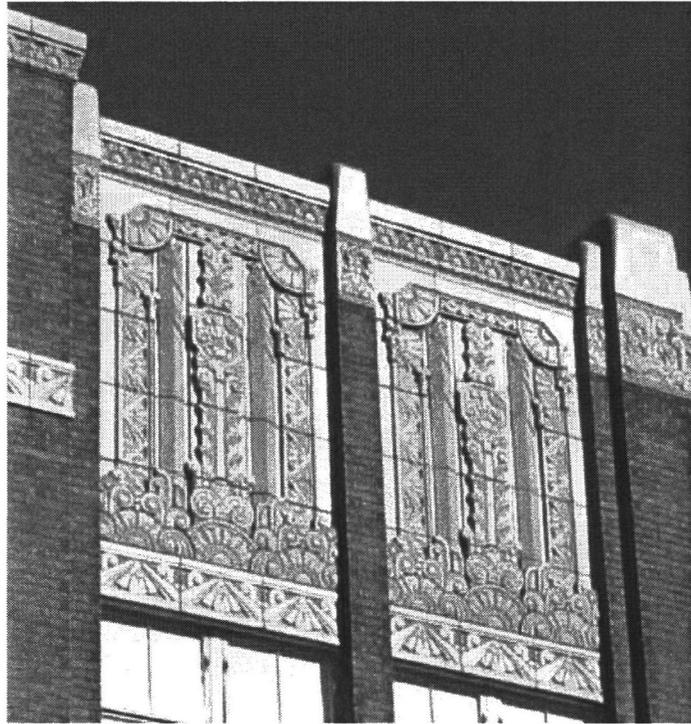


Photo 22. Gym Block, South Elevation. Panel and Parapet Detail.

West and North Elevations – Gym Block (6)

The gym is square and therefore the west elevations of the building repeats the south elevation details with an addition of a metal panel door in the basement level on the west which has three ribbon windows above. The foundation has similar windows in single and paired patterns. There are nine window openings on the west elevation which were once nine-pane windows; five are now covered and vented, two have three or five panes covered with opaque material, one has a room air conditioner, and one has a combination of covered panes and a vent. . The north elevation repeats the south elevation in details, although “A” bay is abbreviated as it intersects with the office/library/classroom block. In the limestone foundation wall, there were five windows which are now covered with opaque materials or have large vents replacing the windows. A small walk or paved court separates the gym block from what was once the child development laboratory and now also the 1964 single story addition.

North Elevation – 1939 Child Development Lab and 1964 Addition (7)

The 1939 child development lab, now being used for offices, has one six-pane metal windows with two awning windows, and two six-pane windows which now have vents and air conditioners. Above the windows there is a row of soldier bricks and a separate entry door which facilitated the area’s use for children who came and went

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from the lab. Part of the 1964 addition was added to the west façade of the child development lab. The parapet wall is slightly higher than the 1964 roof of the addition, and has a stepped brick belt course which runs at the height of the 1964 roof line and terra cotta coping. There is a sailor/soldier/header belt course which is at the height of the 1964 roof coping. The 1964 elevation is plain, with only six small metal plates and bolts protruding from the brick and the parapet coping is stone.

West Elevation – 1939 and 1964 Additions (8)

The 1939 west class room wing, which is four stories (or basement and three levels), is now connected to a one and two story 1964 additions (photo 23). The 1964 one-story flat-roofed asphalt/tar and gravel addition is a girls gym, locker room and showers, has no windows and only a pair of metal entry doors on the west elevation flanked by brick half walls. There is a soldier brick belt course which separates the basement and first levels and breaks up an otherwise plain wall. The one-story addition obscures the classroom west wing's basement level. The addition has a short stone-capped parapet wall and the roof is drained by two rain collectors and down spouts; next to one downspout there are two sets of two small metal plates and bolts protruding from the brick, and there are six other such plates and bolts on this elevation.

The 1939 west classroom wing is detailed with stepped pilasters which divide façade into four bays, in an “A, B, B, A” pattern. The “B” bays are further divided by narrower flat brick pilasters. All pilasters end below the parapet roof line with the larger ones slightly higher than the smaller. All are finished with decorative terra cotta bands and capitals. The “A” bays have a triple eight-pane metal combination of one hopper and three awning windows on all levels above the foundation, and the “B” bays have paired eight-pane metal combination of one hopper and three awning windows. The two-story 1964 addition is complementary in character, although the windows differ from the 1939 classroom block and the parapet coping is stone instead of terra cotta. Both the 1939 and 1964 portions have a row of sailor/soldier bricks at the top of the parapet wall below the coping. The 1939 wing is also taller in height, which creates a separation in both look and detail. The 1964 addition has an “A, B, B, B, A” pattern of bays, which are defined by stepped pilasters. The “A” tower bays have no decoration or windows, and the “B” bays are further divided by narrower pilasters which pair the eight-pane combination of one fixed window, one hopper and two awning windows. The large and small pilasters are finished with plain terra cotta capitals, project slightly at the parapet roof coping and are nearly the same in height (photo 24). They also continue a visual line with the pilasters height from 1939.

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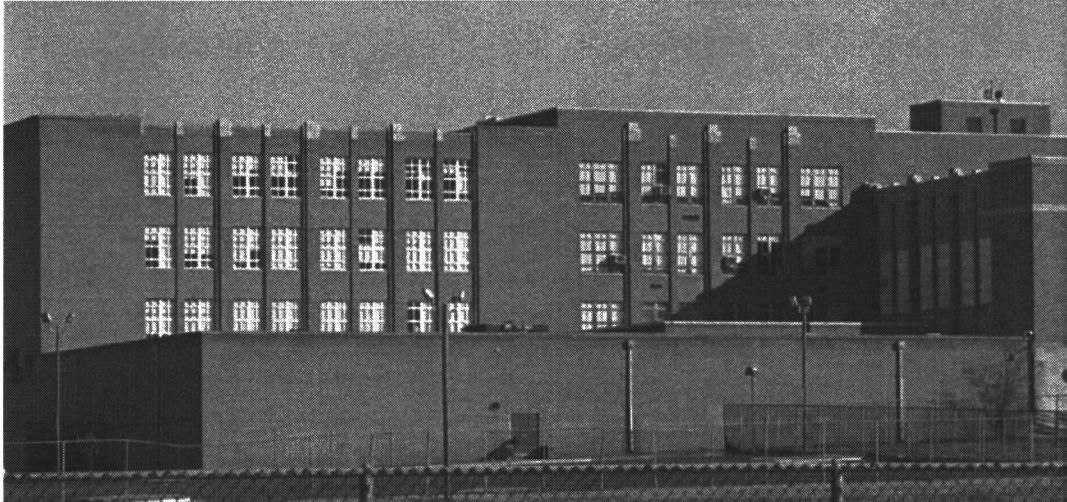


Photo 23. West Classroom Wing, West Elevation.
1939 Block and 1964 Classroom Additions.

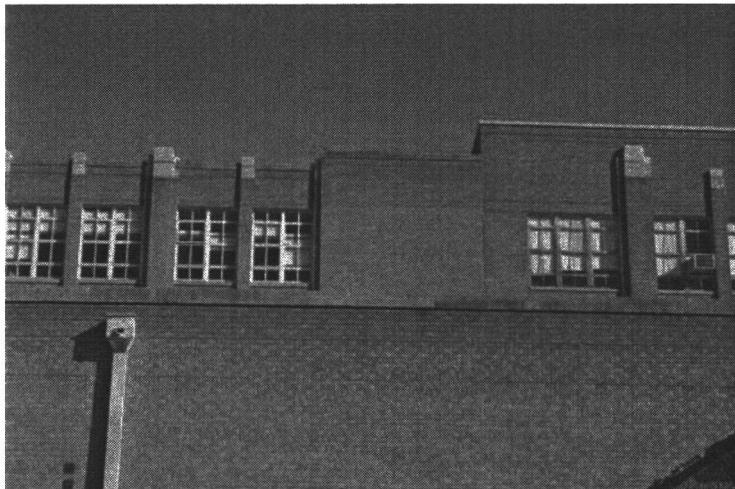


Photo 24. West Classroom Wing, West Elevation
1939, 1964 Details.

North Elevation

The north elevation of the school is irregular, composed of blocks, from west to east, the west classroom wing (1939 and 1964), a cafeteria block (1939), the library directly behind the cafeteria, is attached to the main office/library/classroom block (1939), and east classroom wing (1939, 1949). Compared to the public and primary south elevation, the rear of the school is much simpler in decorative details.

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North Elevation – 1964 Addition (9)

The north elevation of the basement and three-level 1964 addition is nearly devoid of decoration. The elevation has buff-colored brick laid in five rows of English bond separated by a row lock of alternating headers and stretchers which intersects with the concrete foundation at the ground, and the parapet wall is finished a header/solder brick belt course and stone coping. The soldier/brick belt course present on the west elevation wraps to this elevation on the one-story portion and continues across the classroom portion, and a similar decorative belt course also present just above the entrance. The one-story portion of the 1964 addition has four small metal plates and bolts protruding from the brick (photo 25).

Above the 1964 classroom block entrance is a stepped vertical brick inset in which there are paired eight-pane windows at each level which provide light into the halls. The entry is the main decorative element. It is an exterior, one-story, enclosed, flat roofed portico composed of layered corner towers and stepped pilasters capped with terra cotta band and capitals. This appears an exterior entrance restored possibly from the original 1939 north elevation before new construction in 1964 (photo 26). There are limestone steps to the paired metal entry doors with multi-pane windows, and the entry steps are flanked by a brick half wall finished with stone. The entry doors have a three ribbon window transom area above and doors and windows have narrow metal trim. Similar features on this entry are found on the south elevation towers include the half-diamond vertical bead which emphasizes height in the entry columns. The terra cotta capitals are the same as found on the towers, but to scale. The metal multi-paned entry door is recessed under an overhang highlighted by thin vertical strips of terra cotta trim. The brick and trim rest on a band of zigzagged fan and floral terra cotta trim and the overhang is capped with terra cotta trim and coping. The entry is flanked by small wall lighting sconces. Other ornamentation on this elevation is at the top of the entry, a belt course composed of rows of sailor/soldier/header bricks. Directly behind the 1964 one-story portion there is a detached brick wall almost one story in height, which hides utility equipment. Bands of spaced horizontal header and sailor bricks provide wall decoration. Parapet coping is stone.

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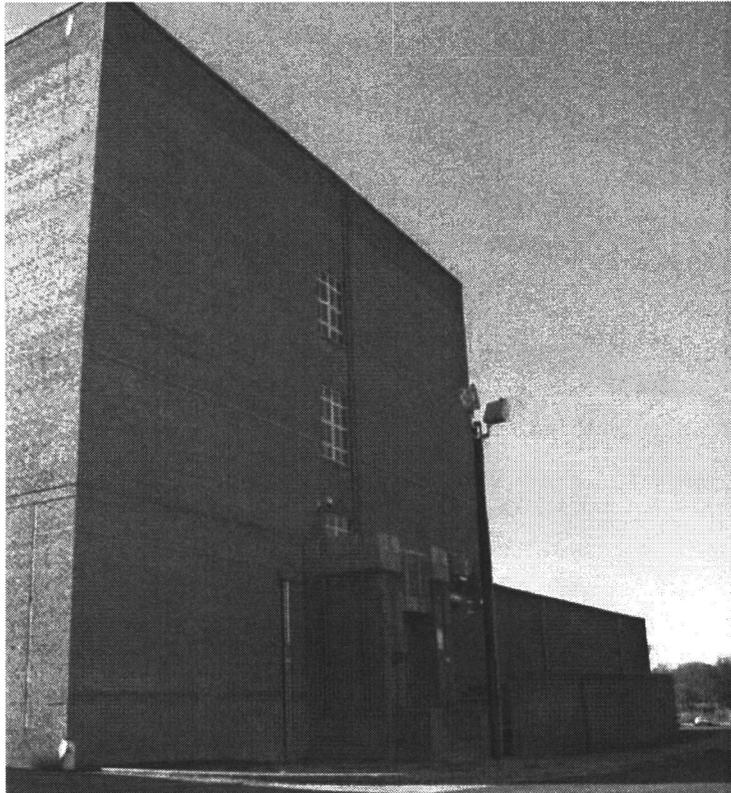


Photo 25. 1964 Classroom Wing and Gym Addition, North Elevation.

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Photo 26. 1964 Addition, North Elevation. Entry Door Detail.

East Elevation – 1939 Classroom Wing and 1964 Addition (10)

The east elevation of the four story 1964 addition has floors with windows that are similar to those on the west elevation, but they are not grouped by pilasters. There are paired eight-pane metal combination of one fixed, two awning and one hopper window at the basement level and the three floors above. Two single six-pane bathroom metal windows are one above another on each level at the far left side of the elevation. The sills and parapet coping are stone and there are soldier bricks for window headers and one decorative terra cotta accent near the top right of the elevation. The decorative belt of sailor/soldier bricks at the parapet continues on this elevation as does the header/soldier/header belt course which wraps from the north elevation (photo 27).

This elevation is broken by a two-story south facing courtyard wall which connects this classroom wing to the cafeteria block (photo 27). This is the only drive entrance into the courtyard from the north and the large entrance door is metal and overhead. The 1939 classroom wing is only visible from the courtyard (photo 28). The east elevation of the 1939 portion has an “A, B, B, B, C” bay configuration from left to right. The “B” bays are defined by their simple brick pilasters which rise from the terra cotta belt course. Each “B” bay is further divided by narrower brick pilasters. All pilasters end at the same height, just above the third floor

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windows and are capped with simple rectangular terra cotta capitals. The "A" bay has triple eight-pane metal combination three awning and one hopper windows at levels one, three and four. The second level has six-pane metal windows, three of which are awning. The "B" bays have six paired eight-pane metal windows with three awning and one hopper window with terra cotta sills at levels one, three and four. Level two has paired six-pane two awning windows. The "C" bay has a pair of eight-pane stair windows and two smaller six-pane single windows at the second level connecting corridor to the cafeteria. The ground level is set apart from the stories above by a terra cotta belt course which rests above the ground floor line of windows. There are header/soldier/header bricks just above the fourth floor windows, soldier bricks above other windows and the top of the parapet wall is finished with a row of sailor/soldier bricks and terra cotta coping. This west classroom wing is connected to the office/library/classroom block only by recessed windowed halls which visually separates the wing from the office/classroom block.

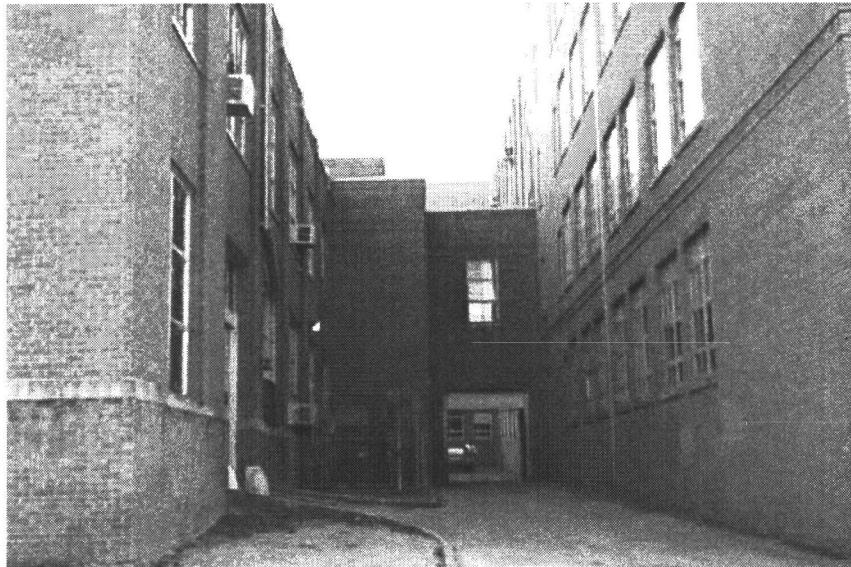


Photo 27. 1964 Addition, East Elevation.
Connecting Halls to Cafeteria,
West Elevation of Cafeteria, Entry to Courtyard.

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Photo 28. 1939 West Classroom Wing, East Elevation.

Cafeteria Block – 1939 (11,12,13)

The 1939 cafeteria block is nearly a separate building. It is accessed by two-story long connecting halls from the east and west classroom wings. These two story halls provide access east and west wing access to and from the cafeteria. These connecting halls also allow access from the north side of the building complex into the courtyard (photo 27). As described, this north elevation of a hall wall has a large metal overhead door. The cafeteria building has a hipped copper roof with a flat deck and is two stories. The ground level is storage and the wood working shop. The cafeteria block is nearly the same on three sides, with the courtyard side differing. The basement level is brick and intersects the concrete foundation and the ground. At the intersection of the basement wall with the first level, there is a narrow fluted limestone belt course. The pilasters create seven or eight similar bays with an “A, B, B, B, B, B A” or “A, B, B, B, B, B, B, A” pattern on the east and west elevations. The stepped brick pilaster bases in the “B” bays engage at the ground, and rise the full height of the cafeteria to just above the parapet wall and end in rounded capitals (photo 29). Window headers are soldier bricks and sills are terra cotta. The parapet is finished with sailor/soldier bricks and terra cotta coping. The

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“A” tower bays have paired six-pane metal windows with three awning windows on the first and second levels. The stepped pilasters which separate the “A” from “B” bays begin above the stone belt course between and “A” and “B” bays or at the ground, and end at the parapet which is finished with a row of sailor/soldier bricks and terra cotta coping. The pilasters are finished with a terra cotta coping which serve as capitals. Above the “A” bay second level windows is a framed chevron brick pattern which ends at the parapet. The “B” bays have triple six-pane metal awning windows on both stories. A distinctive element of the cafeteria is the number of windows which provide light from three directions. The east and west elevations (11) of the cafeteria vary only in that there is an glazed wood entry door and a large metal overhead door in the first “B” bay of the west elevation with six ribbon windows above which provides an entrance to the ground level.

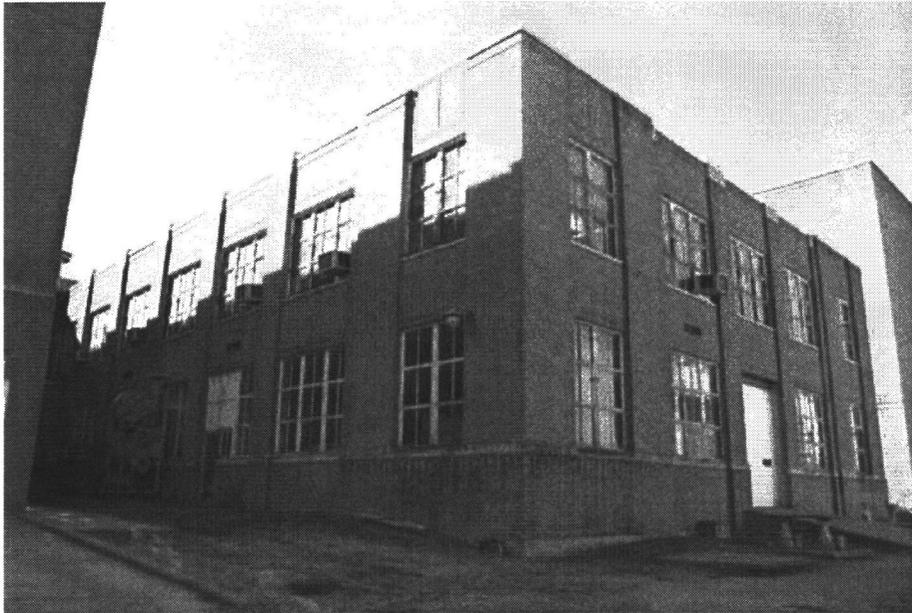


Photo 29. Cafeteria Block, North and West Elevations.

The north elevation (12) of the cafeteria has an “A, B, B, B, A” configuration. The bays are configured in the same patterns as the east and west elevations with the exception of the center “B” bay on the basement level, which has an overhead segmented metal door approached by a ramp, and this door is similar to the basement door in the west elevation, only it is slightly taller. This accesses a woodworking storage area.

The south courtyard elevation (13) of the cafeteria is dominated by an exterior centered brick incinerator stack. It intersects with the ground, and rises above the terra cotta belt course which sets the basement level off from the cafeteria floor above. The stack rises with pilasters on all sides which have simple terra cotta flat capitals (photo 30). There are paired stylized short pilasters on the column and stepped horizontal layers at the top of the stack. The stack is also decorated with simple terra cotta trim and corner blocks. The south courtyard elevation holds the connecting halls which provide access from both west and east classroom wings and to the

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cafeteria. This “A, B, C, C, B, A” wall of slightly differentiated bays has a concrete foundation which the brick walls join at ground. There is a terra cotta belt course which separates the foundation wall from the windows. First floor windows, which are paired eight-pane metal three awning and one hopper, have headers of soldier bricks, and sills of terra cotta. The second floor windows, which are paired or single four-or six-pane hopper and awning, have terra cotta sills and have a header course consisting of a header/soldier/header bricks which span between pilasters. The “B” bays project slightly through the parapet wall with a chevron brick pattern. The east “A” bay has a ground level entry door with three ribbon windows above. There is a small one-story square trash building (1940) in the courtyard which is flat topped and vented with grills with an entry door.

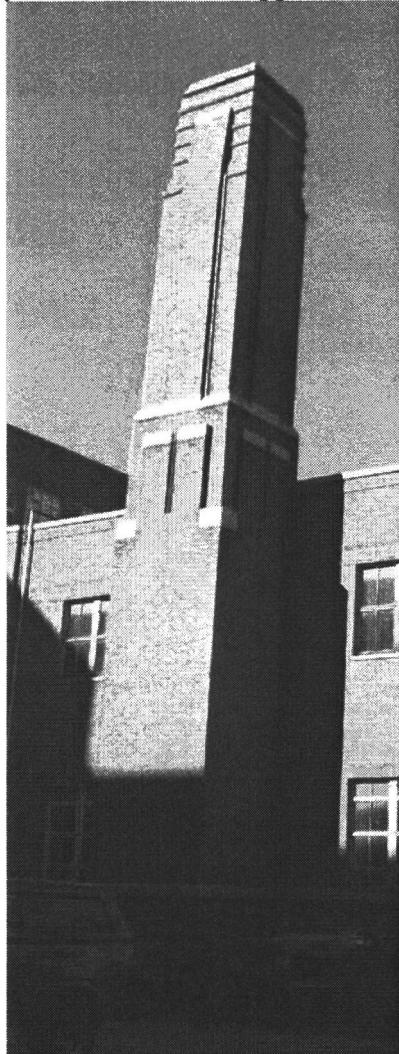


Photo 30. Cafeteria Block, North Elevation. Incinerator Stack.

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West Elevation 1939 and 1949 East Classroom Wing (14)

The west elevation of the 1939 east classroom wing is within the courtyard and architecturally identical to the east elevation of the 1939 west classroom wing except three levels – a basement level and two stories (10).

The west elevation of the 1949 classroom addition is outside and north of the courtyard connecting corridor between 1939 classroom wings. The 1949 west elevation is nearly identical to the 1939 west elevation but the bay configuration is “A, B, B, B, B, B, A”. The “A” end bays have no windows and the “B” windows paired eight-pane metal combination of three awning and one hopper windows and the pilasters are of equal width, rather than the alternating narrow and wider ones on the 1939 wing (photo 32) and they extend from the limestone belt course. The windows are identical in arrangement, look and materials otherwise. This east classroom wing is connected to the office/library/classroom block only by recessed windowed halls which visually separate the wing from the office/library/classroom block (photo 33).



Photo 31. 1939 East Classroom Wing, West Elevation.

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Photo 32. 1949 Classroom Wing, West Elevation.

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Photo 33. East Classroom Wing and Office/Library/Classroom Block
Recessed Hall Connection Looking Southeast.

North Elevation 1949 Classroom Wing (15)

This elevation is three stories in height in an “A,B,A” configuration (photo 34). The brick wall joins a concrete foundation at the ground level. The brick wall intersects with the concrete foundation at the ground and there is a narrow belt course of fluted Bedford limestone which separates the basement level from the level above. The ground level is distinguished by the one-story enclosed entry portico, which is similar to the 1964 portico on the west classroom wing (photo 35). This portico is also composed of layered and stepped pilasters capped with terra cotta trim and rounded capitals. There are steps to the paired metal entry doors flanked by a brick half-

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wall finished with limestone. The entry doors have a three window transom above and are framed in metal. The repeated half-diamond vertical bead found on other elevations emphasizes height in the entry towers. The terra cotta capitals are the same as found on the towers, only to scale. The multi-paned entry door is recessed under a portico overhang which has bricks in a chevron pattern separated by thin vertical strips of terra cotta trim. The brick and trim rest on a band of zigzagged fan and floral terra cotta and the overhang is capped with terra cotta trim and coping. The entry is flanked by small wall sconces. There is a single twelve-pane metal three awning and one hopper windows to the right of the portico which has a header of soldier bricks and a sill of limestone. There are single twelve-pane windows with three awning and one hopper in the second and third levels of the left "A" bay, and one in the right "A" at the first and third levels. These windows have terra cotta sills and headers of terra cotta trim and are framed by raised sailor bricks from the limestone belt course to the top of the third story windows. The "B" bay is a narrow bay slightly recessed over the entry portico with paired twelve-pane metal five awning and one hopper windows, or paired eight-pane four awning and one hopper windows that provide light into the stair halls above. These windows have terra cotta sills and headers of terra cotta trim. There is a decorative panel of chevron bricks in the "B" bay at the parapet wall which is separated by brick and terra cotta vertical trim and the trim projects through the parapet. The parapet wall is finished at the coping with a sailor/soldier bricks and there is a similar header/soldier/header belt course which spans the elevation at the height of the third floor windows.



Photo 34. 1949 Addition, North Elevation.

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Photo 35. 1949 Addition, North Elevation. East Classroom Wing. Entry Door Detail.

West Elevation 1939 and 1949 Classroom Wing (16)

This three story elevation has four window bays of the 1939 wing and the seven window bays of the 1949 addition (photo 36). The foundation is concrete and the brick wall meets the foundation at the ground. The basement level is separated from the second and third levels by a narrow belt course of fluted Bedford limestone and the pilasters rise from this belt course. When compared to the east elevation of this wing, the auditorium fly loft replaces some classroom area in this elevation.

The two building periods are distinct visually. The 1939 portion shows four window bays separated by pilasters of two sizes which project through the terra cotta coping and are capped by terra cotta capitals.. The windows are paired in these bays and are eight-pane metal combination three awning and one hopper windows. The window headers are a header/soldier/header row and there is a sailor/soldier brick row just below the parapet coping. The 1949 addition is nearly identical except that there are seven window bays, and the pilasters are of equal size. The roof treatment, window headers, coping and terra cotta trim is the same in both periods. The window sills at the basement level are stone; the sills at the second and third levels are terra cotta. Several of the hopper windows in the 1939 and 1949 portions at level one have screens.

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Photo 36. 1939 and 1949 Addition. East Classroom Wing, East Elevation.

North Elevation 1939 Fly Loft (17)

This elevation of the four story auditorium fly loft has a full story Bedford limestone basement level which is finished at the junction with the brick wall with a narrow fluted limestone belt course. There are bays in an "A,B,A" configuration (photo 37). This basement level has three nine-pane metal combination two awning and one hopper metal windows, one in the left "A" bay and two in the "B". Two of these windows have had the upper three panes are filled and vented. The left "A" bay is distinguished by paired shallow stepped pilasters which spring from the limestone foundation line and are capped at the parapet with flat terra cotta capitals. This bay also has a single emergency exit door with a terra cotta header, but with no stair access. The right "A" bay is similar but intersects with the classroom wing at the third floor. The "A" bays have each have a centered and slightly recessed area with twelve-pane metal windows at the third level. The header and sills and window aprons are terra cotta. The "B" bay is an undecorated brick wall, but all the bays share a belt course of zigzagged fan and floral terra cotta which runs at the height of the fourth story windows. The parapet wall is finished also with a fan and floral terra cotta band of decorative trim and coping.

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Photo 37. Auditorium Fly Loft, North Elevation.

Auditorium East Elevation (18)

The east elevation of the auditorium has an "A, B, B, B, A, C" pattern of bays (photo 38). The "C" bay is four stories and is the stage fly loft. This bay has the same appearance as the north elevation of the fly loft bay "A" previously described although it has no entry door. The basement level for this east auditorium elevation is Bedford limestone, and at the junction with the brick wall, has a narrow fluted belt course. The symmetric "A" bays are columns which flank the "B" window bays. These "A" bays have single first level sixteen-pane metal two awning and one hopper windows with terra cotta sills. The "B" bays are defined by stepped pilasters and further divided by narrower brick pilasters which end just above the parapet wall and coping and create the window openings. The "B" bays hold two levels of paired windows. The windows above the foundation single sixteen-pane metal combination of two awning and one hopper window, and are framed by terra cotta molding. Tripartite buff terra cotta bas relief spandrels separate first level windows from the large auditorium windows above (photo 39). These large auditorium windows are metal, forty-eight-panes with four awning windows, have sills and headers of terra cotta and are surmounted by large buff-colored bas relief terra cotta panels which finish the wall from the windows to the top of the parapet wall. These are the same design as the large bas relief terra cotta panels above the gym windows. The parapet wall is finished with a decorative terra cotta band and terra cotta coping. All pilasters spring from the terra cotta bases at the Bedford limestone belt course, and

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are finished with rounded buff terra cotta decorative trim and capitals. The elevation is trimmed with a zigzagged fan and floral terra cotta belt course in the "A" bays which runs at the mid-height of the large spandrels above the auditorium windows. The decorative treatment of the buff terra cotta is stylized leaf, floral treatment with fans and fountains.



Photo 38. Auditorium, East Elevation.

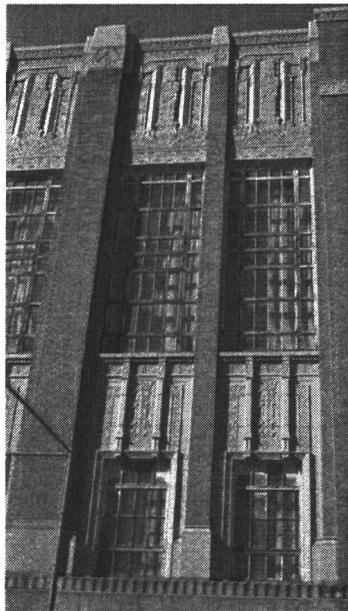


Photo 39. Auditorium, East Elevation.
Window and Bas Relief Spandrel/Panel Details.

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Courtyard Library East and West Elevations (19)

The east and west elevations of the library block are identical. The library is situated over a basement level swimming pool. The library foundation is concrete and the brick wall of intersects it at the ground. The swimming pool level is separated from the library level by a terra cotta belt course. The swimming pool windows are covered. The three window bays are separated by pilasters which begin at the ground, have terra cotta bases at the belt course and rise to just below the parapet coping. These are finished with simple narrow terra cotta flat capitals. These bays contain windows for the library that are paired eight-pane metal combination three awning and one hopper windows. Window headers are soldier bricks and sills are terra cotta. The parapet wall is finished with a row of soldier bricks and terra cotta coping.

Courtyard Library/Swimming Pool North Elevation (20)

The north elevation for the library (photo 40) varies from east and west in width and number of bays. Instead of three, there are five in an A, B, B, B, A configuration. The "B" bays have triple windows instead of paired windows which are in the "A" bays. The "B" swimming pool windows are also covered and there are no window openings in the "A" bays. Other pilaster, coping and trim descriptions are the same as the east and west elevations.



Photo 40. Library/Swimming Pool, North and East Elevation.

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North Elevation, 1939 Office/Library/Classroom Block (20)

The four-level elevation for the office/library/classroom block, which can be seen only from the courtyard, is simply finished compared to more publicly seen elevations (photo 41). For example, the walls have no pilasters. The foundation is concrete and the brick basement walls join the concrete foundation at the ground. The basement level is separated from the floor above by a belt course of terra cotta. The ground level has single metal nine-pane two awning and one hopper windows; the second single or paired eight-pane three awning one hopper windows; and third level has triple eight-pane metal combination three awning and one hopper windows. Some windows on levels two, three and four are filled with room air conditioners. Window headers are soldier bricks and the sills are terra cotta. The parapet wall is finished with a row of sailor/soldier bricks, and terra cotta coping. Windows over the library at the third level in the block are paired eight-pane metal combination three awning and one hopper windows. A belt course of header/solder/header brick spans the elevation just above the third story windows.



Photo 41. Office/Library/Classroom Block, North Elevation
Library/Swimming Pool West Elevation.

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INTERIOR FEATURES

While the exterior of Will Rogers High School is significant architecturally, the interior is finished in the main public spaces with fine Art Deco details. The entries in the towers for example, are elaborate constructions of Chinese mandarin red terra cotta, brass grills and highly detailed fans and floral trim at the wall/ceiling junction (photo 42).

Tower Entry Foyer



Photo 42. Tower Entry Foyer. Terra Cotta and Brass Grill Detail.

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Auditorium and Foyer

The main entry to the auditorium is detailed with terra cotta, from the stairs and walls to the ticket offices. The ceiling trim is again elaborate fans and floral molding (photos 43 and 44).



Photo 43. Auditorium Foyer. Stairs to Loge Level.

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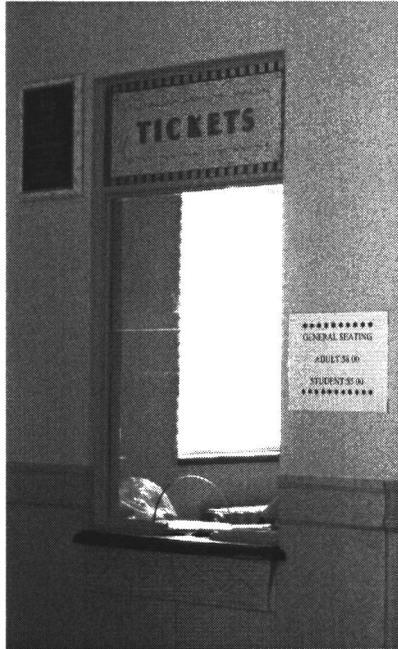


Photo 44. Auditorium Foyer. Ticket Window.

The balconied auditorium is a very detailed and sophisticated theater (photos 45, 47, 48)). The stage is curved with an elaborate stepped stage proscenium (a Mesoamerican style corbelled or false arch) which outlines the stage opening. It is striking in its degree of detail with curved and fluted gold insets of a fan and floral designs are in terra cotta red, brass, gold leaf and tan (photo 46).

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Photo 45. Auditorium. Stage.



Photo 46. Auditorium. Detail of Proscenium.

False balconies add to the theatrical atmosphere and the plaster ceiling is ornate, decorated with painted cast plaster beams (photo 49).

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Photo 47. Auditorium. Grill Detail and False Balcony, Wall Trim.

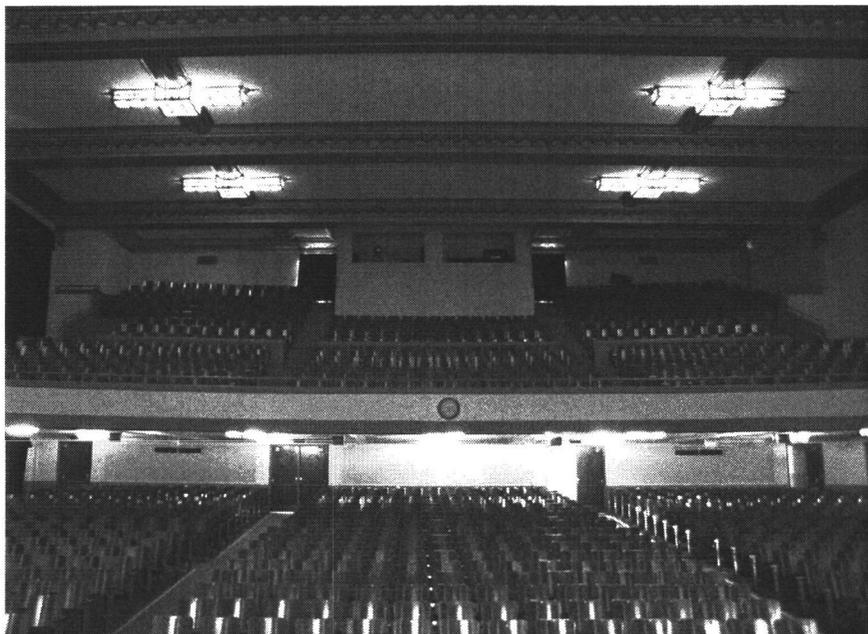


Photo 48. Auditorium Rear. Detail of Loge, Lighting, and Decorative Plaster Beams.

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Photo 49. Auditorium. Decorative Beams, Plasterwork.

Dominating the west wall is a mural painted by Alexander Rindskopf (photo 50). The panel contains a poem by James Greenleaf Whittier about westward expansion and is illustrated with figures of pioneers and Indians.



Photo 50. Auditorium. Decorative Mural.

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Almost every element in the auditorium has detail. The auditorium seat frames are detailed with geometric design, and the seating rows have their lettered tags skewed at an angle to make reading them easier for those searching for seating (photo 51).



Photo 51. Auditorium. Detail of Seat Framework.

Main Hall

The main hall of the school has terra cotta sheathed walls and terrazzo floors (on a sand cushion). It is a masterpiece of terra cotta trim with 9,892 terra cotta tiles just in the main hall area. The tile colors are Chinese Mandarin red, pinkish beige, with gold, brown and beige in the trim. The lights are original to the 1939 construction (photo 52).

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Photo 52. Main Hall

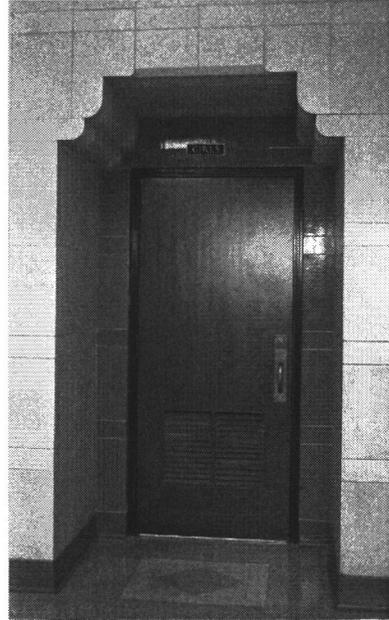
The main hall has large recessed rolled motif doorways with Mesoamerican style corbelled or false arches of terra cotta. These arches are at the ends of the hall which frame the interior central office/library/classroom block (photos 53 and 54). The ceiling molding is elaborate and fluted and layered with dentil row, fans and diamond shapes (photo 55).

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Photos 53 and 54. Main Hall. Examples of Hall Doors.

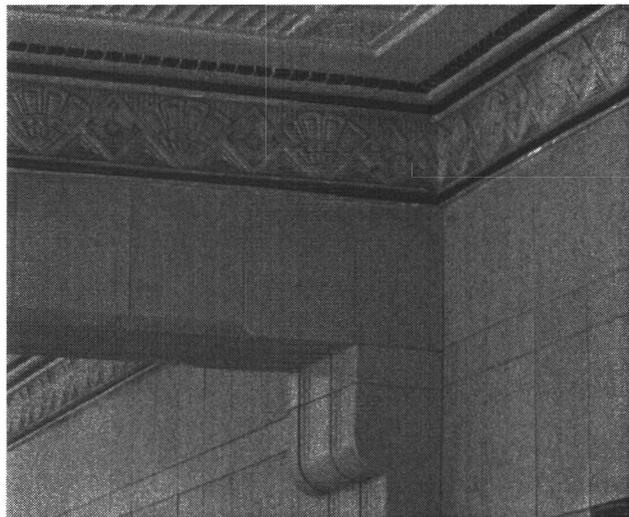


Photo 55. Main Hall. Finish Details.

Brass and glass lights were designed in Kansas City and trophy cases, added in the 1950s, bring a staging area for items of school pride (photo 57).

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Photo 56. Main Hall. School Namesake Will Rogers and Dedication Plaque.



Photo 57. Main Hall. Trophy Cases and Wall Details.

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Library

The library is in nearly original condition and layout (photos 58, 59, 60, 61, 62). Although the walls were originally light tan and now are blue, the trim is still warm beiges, brown and gold. Every element was designed in the library from the walnut stained bookcases lined in Chinese Mandarin red, to the elaborate doorways and trim.

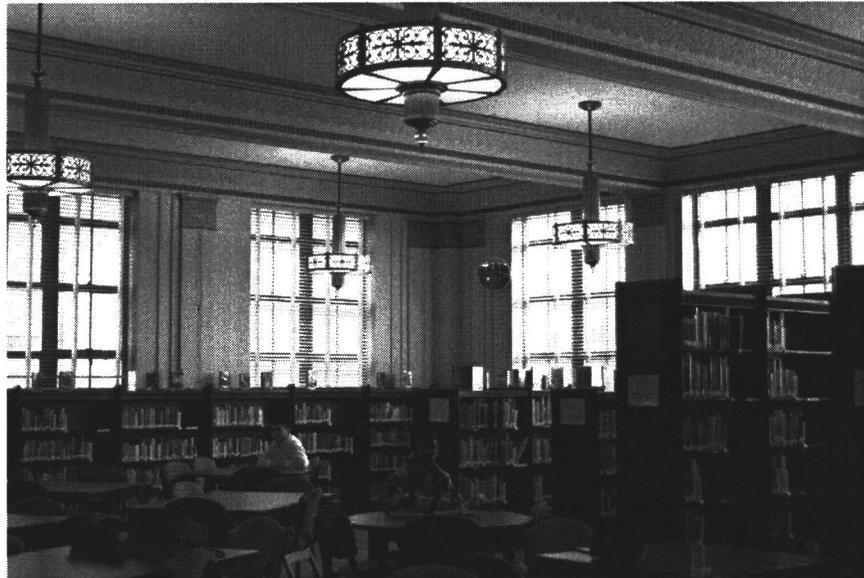


Photo 58. Library. Lights, Ceiling Trim, Bookcases.

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Photo 59. Library. Detail of Doorways and Trim.

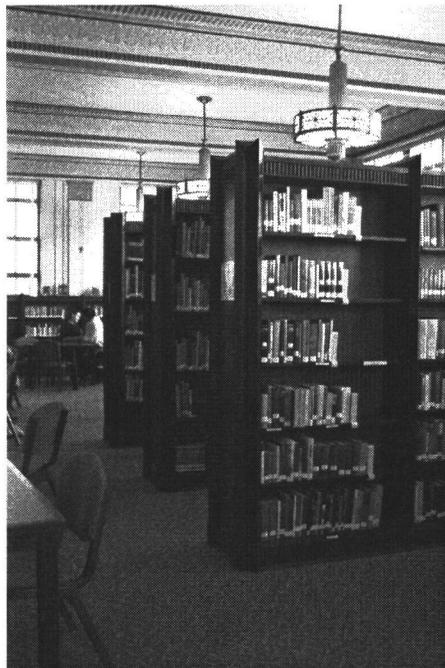


Photo 60. Library. Detail of Bookcases.

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Will Rogers High School
Tulsa, Tulsa County, OK



Photos 61 and 62. Library. Details

ALTERATIONS

Will Rogers High school is notable in its integrity and condition. It has been in continuous use since construction and has had two major alterations – a 1949 addition to the 1939 East Classroom wing, and a 1964 one story gym and extension to the 1939 West Classroom wing. The additions to the building are distinguishable from the original building and the 1949 addition has gained its own historic integrity. The 1949 addition was designed by Joseph R. Koberling, and it is sympathetic, complementary yet distinguishable from the 1939 building. The 1964 additions are complementary to the 1939 design patterns as well, have little impact on the main façade of the building and do not detract from the integrity of the design or the workmanship of the original building details. Some exterior original windows such as those on the south elevation of the gym and auditorium have been painted from the inside, but the windows are original to their periods of construction. The girl's swimming pool under the library is currently not in use but is in near original condition. In 1954 and 1959, Koberling designed trophy cases for the main hall, and in 1971, the school seal was donated by the graduating class and located in the main tower entrance floor.

CONDITION

A lightning strike caused minor damage to the trim on the main entry tower's south façade. The building is in excellent condition with the exception of the windows, which need restoration.

Will Rogers High School
Name of Property

Tulsa County, Oklahoma
County/State

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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance

EDUCATION: 1939-1955

ARCHITECTURE: 1939-1949

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Senter, Leon B.; Atkinson, Arthur M;
Koberling, Joseph R., architects

Nickolaus, Louis Engelhart, designer

Ridskopf, Alexander C., artist

Manhattan Construction Co., builder

Tulsa Rig Reel & Manufacturing, builder

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Oklahoma Historical Society/SHPO

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Will Rogers High School
Tulsa, Tulsa County, OK

SUMMARY

Will Rogers High School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, as one of the best examples of Art Deco school architecture (New Deal Public Works Administration Grant OKLA-1062-1-DS) in the United States. It is significant under Criteria A & C educationally as well, for its significance as a model “progressive school” whose physical form reflects the educational philosophy of the movement. Designed by Oklahoma architects, Leon B. Senter, and Joseph R. Koberling, its architecture is also associated with well-known craftsmen and designers from Chicago including Karl Kolstad and John Sand, artists and craftsmen with Northwestern Terra Cotta company, Percy Prossor designer with Ornamental Plaster Company; and Alexander C. Rindskopf, interior decorator and artist with a Chicago business. The school’s overall design is specifically significant because it is a direct result of the “progressive” educational movement, which educators in the 1920s and ‘30s promoted to perpetuate democratic ideals and better citizens through real-life educational experiences. Progressive educational values, which evolved from the rapid urbanization of the nation from the 1880s to the 1930s, were the nation’s first attempt to transform common schools into ones that met the needs of a highly diverse and increasingly urban student population. These new educational objectives, which moved from traditional teacher-centered and content-driven education to progressive or learner-centered and process-driven education, created new school plant designs. Nickolaus Louis Englehardt, nationally recognized school planner, construction consultant, and professor at Columbia Teacher’s College in New York City, advised the Tulsa School Board on integrating a progressive school program with the school plant design. Once completed, the school was nationally recognized for integrating progressive education’s goals into a high school building, Will Rogers High School was featured as an ideal school in a major educational study, and promoted as a model school in Time and Life Magazines. Today, the school’s architecture is featured in books on the Art Deco period. It is an especially fine example of this architectural style which resulted from a New Deal Public Works Administration grant. The levels of significance chosen are national and state. It is nationally significant under Criterion C, for its educational and stylistic design merit. Its form represents cutting edge progressive educational philosophy and was so noted in periodicals of the time. Its style, Art Deco, has achieved its own notoriety over the years. Will Rogers High School is consistently recognized as one of the nation’s best examples of Art Deco stylization and ornament. It is also significant statewide as a model progressive school.

BACKGROUND

Tulsa Education (1870s to 1906)²

Tulsa’s early history and the development of first schools are aligned with the displaced Native Americans emigrants who arrived in the area from states such as Florida and Alabama in the 1830s. The Creek rebuilt their traditional communities in the Tulsa area and one community they reestablished was Tallasi, a settlement along the Arkansas River, which eventually became the city of Tulsa. By 1878 a post office was established in “Tulsey” Town. Tribal schools were established among the Creek Indians before the Civil War, and the earliest

² Some historical background is from National Register Nomination “Riverside Historic Residential District,” authored by Cathy Ambler. On file at the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. 2005, 58-62.

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Will Rogers High School
Tulsa, Tulsa County, OK

Creek neighborhood or tribal school recorded after the Civil War (1880-81) had thirty students. With the arrival the railroad in 1882, Tulsa began to grow as a ranching community that included residents who were not only Creek Indians, but also mixed blood and white. During this early period of community history, Tulsans shipped thousands of cattle eastward on the Frisco Railroad. Though still a settlement community in nature, the town was platted in 1897 and incorporated in 1898. The original town plan was skewed to align with the Frisco tracks. Within six months of incorporation, Congress passed Curtis Act which terminated all tribal governments and provided for the disposal and control of all their adopted western lands.³ As land ownership changed hands from Native Americans to others, the cow town phase of Tulsa's history also ended.⁴

Early non-Indian schools in Tulsa were founded on subscription basis but could not be sustained. Tulsans then appealed to the Presbyterian Board of New York for help and the mission board founded a school in the community in 1884, located at Fourth and Boston Streets.⁵ The board agreed to build the school on a tract of land granted to them to use by the Creek Council, with the understanding that it be used for church services, and that Tulsans would pay what they could toward the cost of building construction. Attended by both Creek and settler students, it has been called the "mother" of public education in Tulsa. Because property could not be owned by non-Indians until the passage of the Curtis Act, funding was continued under the mission-subscription method until the fall of 1899. The city also levied a tax on personal property, and these school warrants were payable before any others as the city tried to keep the school supported financially. The city elected a school board in May 1899, but paying for and keeping children in school and was discouraging. Most students lived north of the railroad tracks so there was opposition to expanding the Presbyterian school which many parents considered too far south. In 1899 the Tulsa Banking Company loaned the city school board money to purchase the Presbyterian school building, and 1911 the city purchased the school land from the Creek nation.⁶

With school property in city ownership, a second story was added to this all-grade school. With an ever increasing number of students, however, this school's space was quickly inadequate and two more schools were constructed in 1905. In 1906 alone, from May to the fall, the population of nearly eighteen hundred students increased to almost twenty-three hundred. A rivalry between the north and south sides of town for the location of two more new schools was resolved in 1906 when Sequoyah Grade School was built at North Boston and Easton Streets to please north side residents, and a new high school building constructed at the existing Fourth and Boston Streets site, which pleased the south side parents.⁷

³ Goble, Danney. Tulsa: Biography of an American City (Tulsa, OK: Council Oaks Books, 1997), 26-37, 46; also see Cynthia Savage, National Register Nomination "Yorktown Historic District." On file at the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 2002, 91.

⁴ Debo, Angie. From Creek Town to Oil Capital (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 85.

⁵ Other mission schools were built by the First Methodist Episcopal Church at North Main and Brady (1888-1899), and by the Methodist Episcopal Church South (1895-1898). These schools, while organized for the education the Creek Indians, also opened their doors later to non-Indian settler children.

⁶ "1997 Tulsa Historic Preservation Resource Document," City of Tulsa Historic Preservation Commission, 22. Also see "Report of the Superintendent, Tulsa Public Schools, Independent School District, No. 1, Tulsa County, Oklahoma," 1976, 4-6. The report is from files at the Tulsa Board of Education's Education Service Center, 3027 S. New Haven referenced November 2, 2006.

⁷ Report of the Superintendent, 7.

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The most important event in Tulsa's history was the discovery of oil in 1901. The town was a small community of about 1,390 residents in 1900, but the first oil well, located in Red Fork was across the Arkansas River from Tulsa, put the town in the center of the oil boom. In 1905, the Glenn Pool strike added to Tulsa's significance as *the* centralized business location where one could get leases, obtain bank loans, hire drillers and find equipment for the oil fields. The Missouri, Kansas and Texas (Katy) (1903), Midland Valley (1903), Frisco (1904), and Atchison Topeka and the Santa Fe railroads (1905) all had tracks into Tulsa which connected to all parts of the country, and the city flourished, as the oil companies did.⁸

Tulsa's population in between 1900 and 1910 exploded with the arrival of more and more people seeking riches in the old fields. Even by 1904, the town had outgrown its original plan and to reach the oil fields in Red Fork and west Tulsa, a toll bridge was constructed over the Arkansas River.⁹

Tulsa Population Figures¹⁰

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
~1390	18,182	72,075	141,258	142,157

Tulsa Growth and Educational Challenges (1907-1920).

After statehood in 1907, the Oklahoma State Constitution changed the governance of schools to boards of education organized by districts and a district board then over saw the education of Tulsa's children. In 1908, school ownership also transferred from city to the school district, thus assuring citizens that their schools would not be converted to some other purposes.¹¹

Statehood had locked-in legally segregated education in Tulsa, and the first black school was constructed in 1908 for grades one to eight and another grade school was constructed in 1913. Carver Junior High followed and the first Booker T. Washington High School, built in 1913 as a four room frame building. Other black elementary schools were eventually built – Bunche, Johnson and South Haven. Financing for these schools came from a county-wide levy which was limited and far less than the levy size allowed for Tulsa's white schools.¹²

⁸ Goble, 58.

⁹ Debo, 84, 87. Also see Report of the Superintendent, 8.

¹⁰ Morris, John W, Charles R. Goins, and Edwin C. McReynolds. Historical Atlas of Oklahoma, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 83.

¹¹ Report of the Superintendent, 8.

¹² Vaughn, John. State Superintendent of Education, The Thirteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Tenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Education for Oklahoma, (Oklahoma City, OK: State of Oklahoma), 1930, 75.

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The population figures tell a significant story about educational needs in the city. The city had a hard time building enough schools to keep up with more and more students. Between 1908 and 1912, the city built eight schools in addition to those already existing and many handled all grades. In the year 1913 alone Tulsa built six more schools, and between 1915 and 1919 another three. As the population continued to spiral upward, neighborhoods spread in almost every direction and therefore new schools were scattered among new neighborhoods.

Tulsa's first schools were practical in design. Some were built on a "unit" system designed by school board member, O. H. McClure. Faced with the need for constant need for expansion, McClure proposed a practical method of adding space by building schools as units on a block. The first building could be constructed, and then additional units added as necessary around a central play yard. At least six of Tulsa's schools in the 1910s were constructed in this sensible way to expand in conditions of high demand.¹³

Tulsa's School Building Decade (1920-1930)

During the 1920s, Tulsa increased the number of new elementary schools again, building almost two per year.¹⁴ The schools were organized on a 6-3-3 system of grades, with elementary, junior high and high schools. Besides new elementary schools, the school board and voters funded new junior high schools between 1925 and 1928. It took bonds to fund so much building and between 1907 and 1927, fourteen school bond elections passed issuing a total of \$6,297,500 with one of the largest, two million dollar bond election in 1924, funded an ambitious building program. The district also grew by annexation. In 1927, the Red Ford area of Tulsa County, with a junior high and five elementary schools, joined the district, as did the Franklin School district.¹⁵

As Tulsa's reputation as an oil town grew, the succession of community leadership groups continued in their efforts to bring other oil company interests into the community. Companies such as Texaco, Gulf Oil, Prairie Oil (a J.D. Rockefeller company), Standard, Sun, Sinclair, and Skelly, and a host of others of various sizes such as Roxana (a branch of Royal Dutch and Shell) were involved in the state's oil industry building pipelines, or as suppliers or producers. Families associated with these companies moved to a logical place associated with the industry – Tulsa – which declared itself to be the oil capital of the world. Success within a community draws new residents, and Tulsa's success attracted people from all over the United States; especially those who believed they could improve their lives.¹⁶

In a period when cities grow slowly, it is difficult to grasp not only the demand for schools, but also the demand for housing in the 1900s and 1920s. Tulsa's "1977 Historic Preservation Resource Document" provides statistics which help us realize this demand. For example, of the new residential plats filed between 1900 and

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "1997 Tulsa Preservation Historic Resources Resource Document," Appendix K, K-1 to K-3. Lincoln school is not listed in this appendix, but was constructed in 1909.

¹⁵ Report of the Superintendent, 9.

¹⁶ Goble, 91.

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1949, about 16% were filed between 1900 and 1910, and about 80%, were filed between 1910 and 1930.¹⁷ With such a swell in residential areas, is easy to understand how by 1930, Tulsa had become the second largest city in Oklahoma.¹⁸ In 1938, Tulsa Public Schools operated 47 school buildings for both black and white students with an enrollment of 32,858.¹⁹

The first building just for high school students, Central High, was constructed in 1917 downtown at Sixth and Cincinnati Avenues, and this building served all but black students until the construction of Daniel Webster (1938 - 1919 W. 40th Street in West Tulsa) and Will Rogers (1939 - 3909 East 5th Place) High Schools.²⁰

Tulsa citizens, feeling a local college would also increase the livability of the community, found what they were looking for in Kendall College, a Presbyterian school located in Muskogee. Determined to see the school move to Tulsa, private citizens raised \$100,000 by selling chances on residential lots at \$300 each and used the money to buy tracts of land for the school. Seduced by land and a permanent endowment, the college relocated in 1907 to Yale and Eleventh Streets, and changed its name to Tulsa University. Significantly, the college stimulated the development of residential areas surrounding it and residential growth continued on the "tracts of prairie land" in east Tulsa.²¹ New houses here just added too to the need for more neighborhood schools. The location of Will Rogers was chosen because of the feeder schools that would send students there and the attendance boundary for Will Rogers High School was set with Lewis Avenue as the west boundary.

Access to Tulsa University and the residential area that surrounded it was aided by trolley transportation. Tulsa Street Railway developed a trolley line to the university which traveled along First Street from Peoria to Lewis Avenue. It ran south on Lewis until it reached Seventh Street and then east until it terminated at the university. An important element in subdivision development was availability of transportation from subdivision or outlying areas to city core. While Tulsa's trolley system started in 1907 and continued to thrive through the early 1920s, competition from jitney cars, taxis, and the private automobile led to its decline and a replacement with busses in 1935.²²

Public transportation aided the development of subdivisions in and around Tulsa University, but one good paved road helped as well. One of the most important streets in Tulsa was Eleventh Street (U. S. Highway 66), and Will Rogers High School was only three blocks to the north. When the school was built, students used a footpath from this street to reach the school. Traffic on the Eleventh Street was so heavy in 1928, that the Twenty-first Street Bridge across the Arkansas River was constructed to help relieve congestion. While the

¹⁷ Land annexations the City of Tulsa has made have not been listed or mapped, but the number of plats per decade helps demonstrate the rate of suburb expansion.

¹⁸ Savage, 92.

¹⁹ Tulsa Public Library vertical files on Will Rogers High School. Single page, published probably as School District information since it shows the cost per child to educate a student in Tulsa Public School.

²⁰ Daniel Webster is featured in Public Buildings: Architecture under the Public Works Administration, 1933-39, Vol. 1, (1939) by C. W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown. Will Rogers was not completed at the time of publication.

²¹ Roberson, 81-82.

²² "1997 Tulsa's Historic Preservation Resource Document," 25. Also see Federal Writers' Project (Okla.). Tulsa, A Guide to the Oil Capital. Tulsa, OK: Mid-West Print. Co, 1938, 40.

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original Route 66 was along Admiral, Eleventh Street remained one of the most important through ways to and from the Eleventh Street Bridge. Eleventh Street became the official Route 66 in 1933, and it was paved from Harvard west to the bridge by 1927. Transportation routes and public transportation helped make the area east of downtown attractive to residents and set the stage for the selection of a high school site in this area.

The district's last bond issue passed in 1928 before the onset of the Great Depression. Another bond vote would not occur again until 1936.²³

Education during Great Depression (1930-1939)

The Great Depression affected Tulsans as it did others in the nation. When oil was discovered in Texas and elsewhere, Tulsa also had a significant economic issue because of its one industry dependence. With an oversupply from wells in both Oklahoma and other states, prices fell in 1933. Residents in working class neighborhoods suffered the most during these hard times such as those in West Tulsa, or in the black community. Without jobs in the troubled oil economy or in jobs as butlers, porters, yardmen, maids, nannies, and laundresses for the white community, many families lived in troubled conditions.

The depression caused problems with the supply of oil, and low prices did bring regulation to the oil industry. Working with President F.D. Roosevelt, oil producing states finally agreed to extract oil based on projected need, and that they would pro-rate oil production among various oil companies. This agreement stabilized the oil market between 1934 and 1940 and kept overproduction from financially ruining the industry. While some families associated with the oil companies fared better toward the end of the '30s after the production agreement was completed, some left the oil business and the population of Tulsa stopped growing. By 1941, Tulsa had remain has almost the same number of residents that it did in 1930 – 142,157.

The effect of the depression on Tulsa school construction is evident with a near cessation. The district grew only through annexation of schools from existing districts in Turley, part of Sand Springs, and only one new elementary school was constructed during the 1930s.²⁴ The need for additional high schools had become evident to Tulsa during the 1920s, however. Central High School downtown and Clinton High School (annexed and west of the Arkansas River) could not contain all the students moving through so many elementary and middle schools. Central High was built to house 2,500 students and in 1938-39, the enrollment was 5,107.²⁵ The push of students ready for high school at the time of the depression had been building during the 1920s, and the school board fully aware of the needs, resolved in to request a Public Works Administration grant for two new high schools, and funds to add space to twelve elementary schools.²⁶

²³ Report of the Superintendent, 12.

²⁴ Report of the Superintendent, 14.

²⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁶ Board of Education of the City of Tulsa, State of Oklahoma, Minutes of the Meetings February 4, 1935 to October 26, 1937, 191.

The board first applied for a grant in 1935, however applied again when school bonds were passed in 1936 to provide the local portion of funding. PWA provided 55% of the funds for the school; the rest was paid by the bonds.

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ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The locations needed were on both the east and west sides of time. Temporarily called “Westside” and “Eastside”, Will Rogers was chosen as a name for the east side school in 1936 as a tribute to Rogers shortly after his untimely death.²⁷ Arthur M. Atkinson was hired as a supervising architect (he was also a registered engineer) for all school board construction projects, W. C. Roads was the Mechanical Engineer, and Leon B. Senter and Joseph R. Koberling were chosen as architects in June 1936.²⁸ Atkinson was a well-known architect in Tulsa, designing several of Tulsa’s well-known buildings including some of Tulsa’s Art Deco treasures. Senter is regarded by the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture as the Dean of Oklahoma Architects. Senter was issued License # 1 when the licensing law went into effect in Oklahoma in 1925.²⁹ Koberling and Senter were not in a firm partnership, but were regarded as associates on the school project. Koberling, at age thirty-five did designing of what he called “101 features that we hoped would make an attractive as well as functional building,”³⁰ and Senter at fifty-six was the older experienced architect who did the specifications.³¹ Senter and Koberling today are considered major contributors to significant buildings not only in Tulsa but significant buildings in other Oklahoma cities. Will Rogers High School, is considered significant nationally by as an outstanding example of PWA Art Deco architecture by authors such as Michael D. Kinerk and Dennis W. Wilhelm, who wrote Rediscovering Art Deco U.S.A. with Barbara Capitman.

In September 1936, the board purchased 26.894 acres of land for Will Rogers from Mr. and Mrs. Fred Turner. The site, located in the SW1/4 of Section 4, Township 19N, Range 13E was considered still out in the country. Cattle grazed on the grass around the school site and only a footpath led north from Eleventh Street to the building.³²

²⁷ Daniel Webster, the “westside” school began first and the school was completed in 1938.

²⁸ Koberling later noted in an interview that he felt he got the job because he knew Merle Prunty. Prunty was Superintendent of Tulsa Schools, 1929-1934. Tulsa Art Deco Collection, Will Rogers High School Folder University of Tulsa McFarlin Library Special Collections, unpaginated material.

²⁹ Tulsa Foundation for Architecture, <http://www.tulsaarchitecture.com/Architects/Senter.htm>, and <http://www.tulsaarchitecture.com/Architects/Koberling.htm>.

³⁰ Tulsa World, Midtown Section April 28, 1999, 6.

³¹ Claudia Doyle interview with Joseph Koberling, January 3, 1980. Tulsa Art Deco Collection, Will Rogers High School Folder, University of Tulsa, McFarlin Library Special Collections.

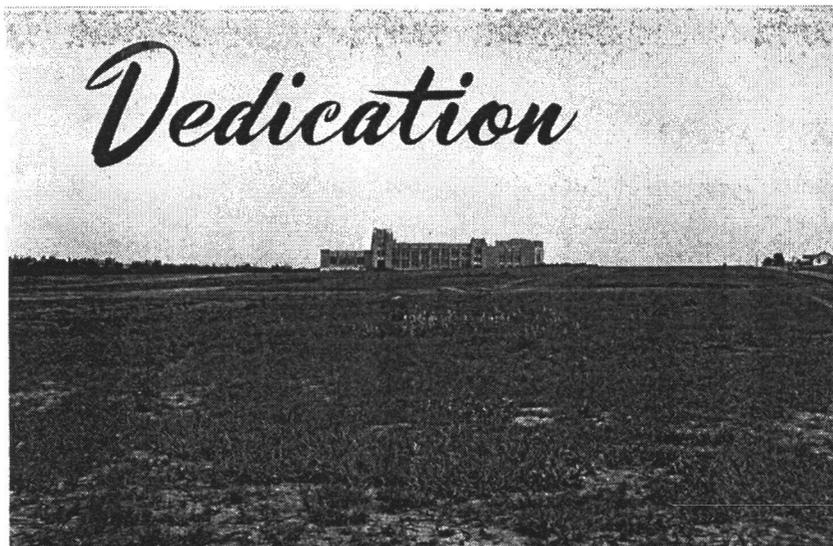
³² Tulsa Tribune, September 12, 1988.

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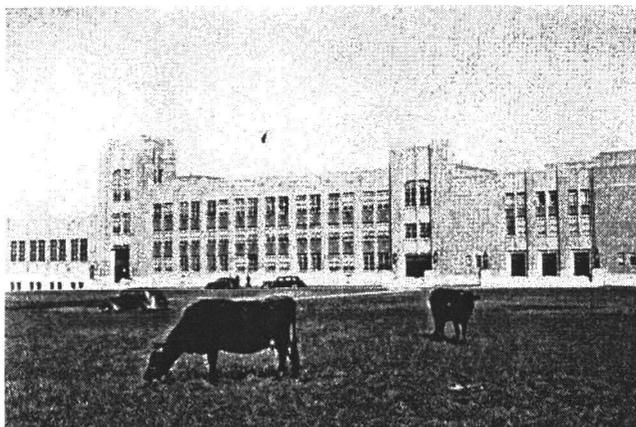
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1939 Photo from the 1949 Lariat Yearbook, Will Rogers High School



1939 Photo from the 1949 Lariat Yearbook, Will Rogers High School

To facilitate the design of Will Rogers the school board brought in a building consultant in October 1936, Nickolaus Louis Englehardt, from Teachers College, Columbia University New York City, to advise the board on trends in school building designs. Englehardt was a well-known and recognized expert and professor of education who over his career was an educational adviser on school buildings in twenty-six states.³³

³³ Several articles mention that "school planners were sent from Kansas City to design the floor plan." What they did exactly or who sent them is not clear. Outside this reference, there is no further mention of who they were or any work they produced for the project. There is no mention of any payment to them in School Board minutes either. See Free Press and Greater Tulsa Reporter, Vol. IV, No. 10, Mid-October to Mid-November 1998, and Tulsa Art Deco Research Archives, Will Rogers High School Folder, University of Tulsa Special McFarlin Library Special Collections.

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It was highly significant that the board brought in Englehardt. Writing and advising on how to integrate goals for student education into plant design was his expertise. Englehardt authored approximately two hundred articles, books and pamphlets, directed eighty-nine school surveys in multiple states, and advised hundreds of school districts on school building designs.³⁴ His presence signaled the trend in educational changes across the United States, especially in secondary education curriculum. Englehardt was a symbolic figure of the “progressive” education movement and deeply engaged in recommending school building design to fit the movement’s curriculum needs for space. A professor at Columbia University Teacher’s College, which was educating teachers to reach the poor, migrant and inner-city children of New York, Englehardt was in a perfect academic base for those believing in education as a means by which society would become more equitable.³⁵

The concept of “progressive” frequently refers to the “progressive era,” a period associated particularly with the last quarter of the 19th Century. During this period, the nation was in the middle of a shift from a farm economy to an industrial one, and new ideas about how to best serve the masses was at issue. Urbanization stimulated private and governmental efforts to improve rather than just enlarge social institutions and services and labor activism, women’s suffrage, child labor laws and settlement houses for the poor grew during this period. The gap between “haves” and “have nots” widened during this period, the abolition of slavery which created a disadvantaged group certainly not as well off as most whites, and a discussion of how to educate both the elite and lowly in a democratic nation spawned new thoughts on the role of public education.

It was the nation’s first attempt to reform the “common school” once envisioned by Horace Mann, into mass elementary and secondary education for highly diverse student populations, John Dewey and William H. Kilpatrick were two men who had great influence over the evolution of “progressive education.” Dewey, at the University of Chicago, believed that schools could be a tool of social reform, and Kilpatrick at Columbia Teachers College believed that teaching of all subjects and subject matter should become real and related to the lives of students.³⁶

While oversimplified in the following, certain ideas are associated with the movement:³⁷

1. “Traditional” learning was teacher centered and content driven; progressive education is learner centered and experience driven.
2. Rote memorization of isolated and fixed bodies of information should be replaced by critical thinking and problem solving. A natural link should exist in complex situations that simulate real life; between school work and real work or between school life and real life. Teaching through experiences, projects and problems, or hands on learning, is better than step-by-step methods of traditional schooling. Separate academic areas, such as humanities, sciences, expressive arts, should be integrated and taught as overlapping material.

³⁴ Englehardt’s biographical sketch was provided as a courtesy of librarians at Gottesman Libraries, Teachers College, Columbia University.

³⁵ Norris, Norman Dale. The Promise and Failure of Progressive Education. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education, 2004), 47.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 31-33.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 17-25.

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3. The functions of schools should be aligned with the ideals of a democratic society. Educated people vote, and can learn to agree to disagree.
4. Students should be taught *how to think* not *what to think* – independent thinkers are capable of learning whatever they need to or want to learn to make their lives successful.

Tulsa Public Schools, beginning in 1933, began participating in the “Eight Year Study”, conducted by the Progressive Education Association (PEA). Founded in 1919, PEA invited thirty school districts across the United States to become part of this eight-year study which looked at how progressive education affected student’s college success.³⁸ The Tulsa School District was one of thirty studied and was freed from meeting the conventional pattern of college entrance requirements and permitted to modify traditional course content to reorganize the curriculum to “introduce more functional experiences into their [students] lives.”³⁹ Tulsa teachers were able to experiment with the content of curriculum without considering “traditional” requirements. For several years, groups of Tulsa secondary school teachers had worked on curriculum changes with the PEA curriculum staff. During the summer of 1936, teachers from the thirty schools in the PEA study met in Ohio to work on individual school problems, in 1938 teachers could attend a similar workshop in Bronxville, Denver and Oakland, and teachers met again in 1939 in Bronxville, New York. Staff from Tulsa was involved at these workshops every summer.⁴⁰

Figure 3 represents the essence of curriculum thought for progressives. All education is related with the student who is at the center of all.

³⁸ Progressive ideas and PEA were featured in Time Magazine, October 31, 1938 with a cover of Frederick L. Redefer, executive secretary of PEA. Time revisited progressive education in November 25, 1940 and November 10, 1941 as well.

³⁹ Young, Alice Manson. “The Development and Administration of the Progressive Education Experiment in the Lowell Junior High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma.” Master’s Thesis, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1940, 1. This thesis outlines how Tulsa staff developed their ideas about progressive education and how they expected to put them into practice. Young cites Dr. Englehardt as a reference. Also see, Thirty Schools Tell Their Story, Adventure in American Education, Volume V, (New York; NY: Harper and Brothers, 1943), 638-659. This book has a description of Tulsa’s participation in the Eight Year Study written by the school district.

⁴⁰ Young, 8. The work done on secondary curriculum and the Eight Year Study is mentioned in the “Report of the Superintendent, Tulsa Public Schools, Independent School District No. 1, Tulsa County, Oklahoma 1967, 19.

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Will Rogers High School
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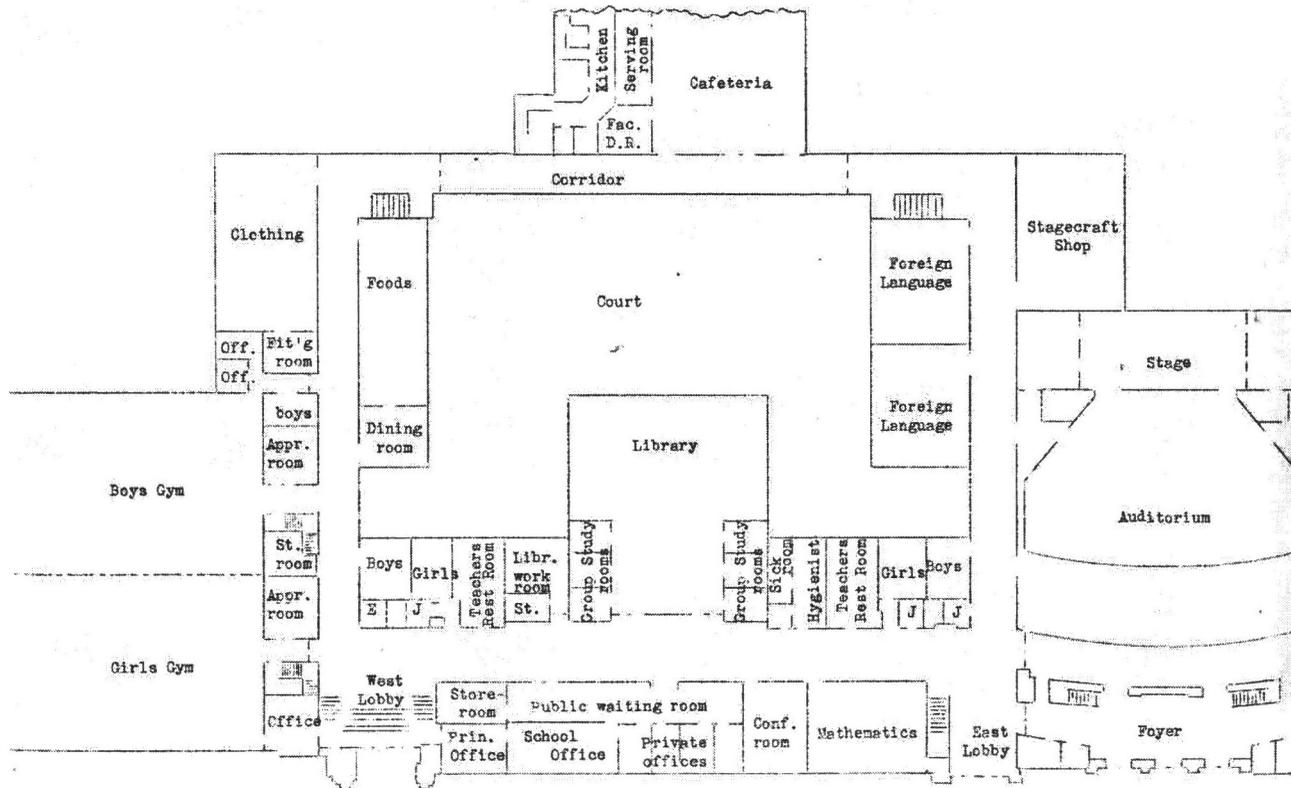


Figure 5. Will Rogers High School First Floor

The second floor rooms (Figure 6) were mixed with many classrooms for commercial training as well as those for liberal arts classes such as history and English.

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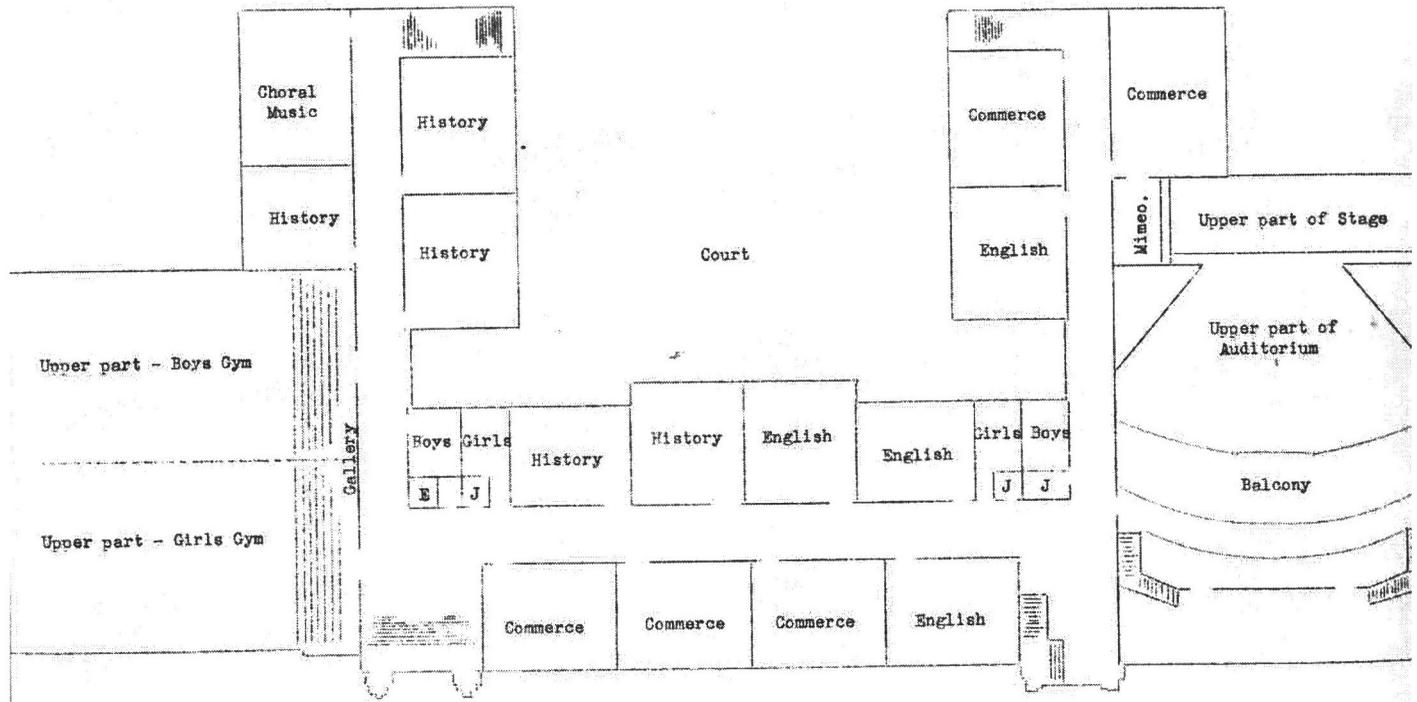


Figure 6. Will Rogers High School Second Floor

The third floor classrooms (Figure 7) were for physical and biological sciences, and more English and art.

The school reflects the progressive emphasis on “hand-on” real life educational experiences.⁴⁵ Students were expected to study, choose and get a job, get along with one’s family, solve the problems of sex, marriage, food, clothes, houses, government – “the meaning of life.”⁴⁶ Space to teach such classes held nearly as much space as traditional courses in math, sciences, history and English. Most aspects the progressive educational philosophy represented in Figure 3 (Venn Diagram) are represented by space in Will Rogers High School.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ In Evelyn Osborn’s Master’s Thesis, “Cooperative Business Education in Will Rogers High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma,” Colorado State College of Education, Greeley, Colorado, 1944, Osborn carefully outlines how progressive educational ideals were carried out as business education was merged with practical experience in a business office. Couched in terms of how business education and practical experience could help in a democracy, she argued the cooperative approach with school and practical in-office experience, created successful employees, 21.

⁴⁶ *Time Magazine*, Monday February 1942, website <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,766413,00.html>

⁴⁷ The dilemma for many school districts was how to update existing buildings for the new progressive curriculum. J. W. Dillard, in his Master’s Thesis, West Texas State Teachers College, goes into detail in “A Survey of the Flexibility of School Architecture,” 1939, 4. He discusses the new needs for physical education, audio-visual education, clinic rooms, sewing rooms, mechanical drawing rooms, forge shops, woodworking shops, lumber rooms, bookkeeping rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, fitting rooms, lunch rooms, book rooms, bicycle rooms, faculty dining rooms, general offices, private offices, board rooms, and teacher’s offices. Dillard thesis cites references by Dr. Englehardt, which helps demonstrate the breadth of Englehardt’s influence in school design.

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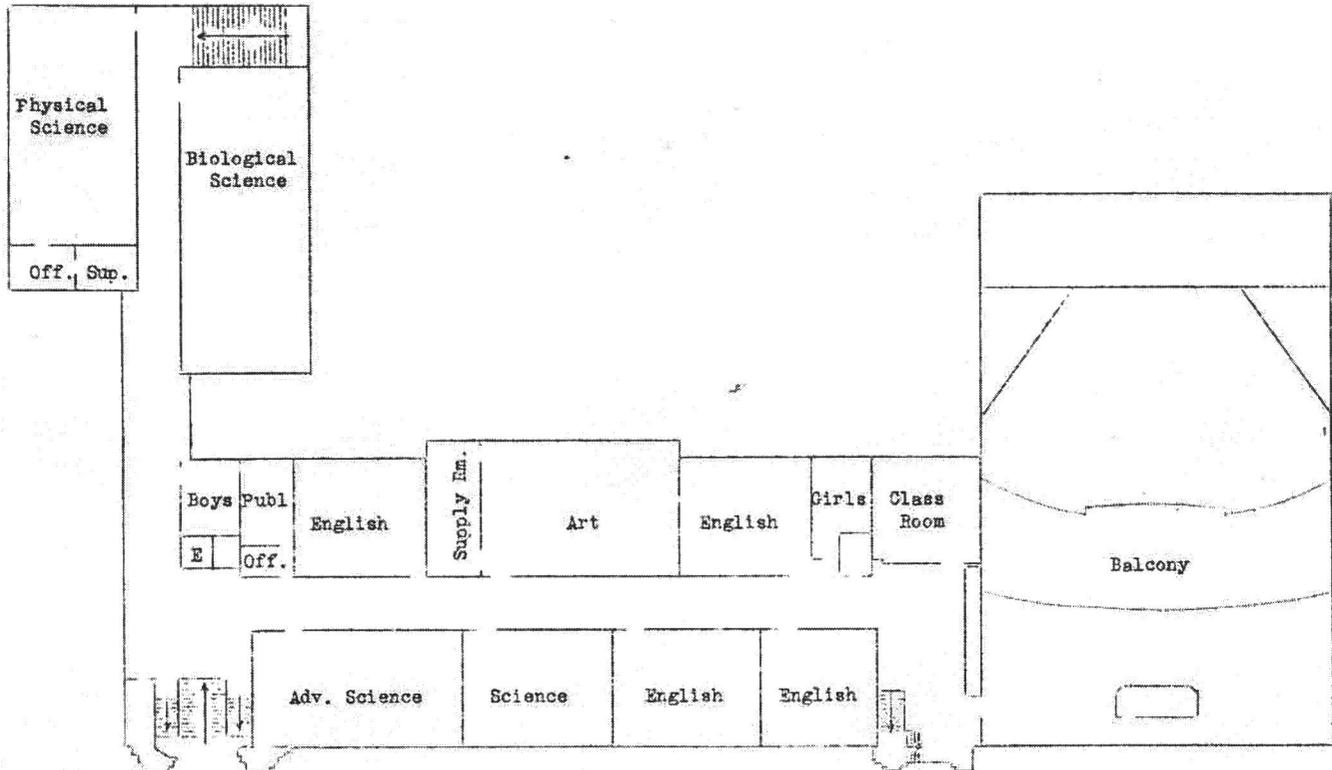


Figure 7. Will Rogers High School Third Floor

The Tulsa School District was successful in drawing attention nationally to its progressive curriculum. At the end of the Eight Year Study, Tulsa's high schools were singled out among the thirty schools districts that participated in the study as one of the most progressive school systems among all others. Based on data about students entering college, the study claimed that high school students coming from progressive curriculums were better equipped to be successful college students and contributing adults than those that had only a prescribed high-school curriculum.⁴⁸

Designed to hold 1500 students, Will Rogers school construction was well underway in late 1937.⁴⁹ Traveling to Chicago, the location of Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, and to Forth Worth to visit with the PWA state administrator, Senter, Koberling and Atkinson remained involved in detailing construction materials. Many of the school's suppliers were from Tulsa, which was typical of the PWA's desire to use local labor and businesses, but companies such as Metropolitan Scenic Studies of Omaha, Nebraska and Chicago Apparatus provided specialty equipment. The ornamental iron work came from W. S, Ornamental Iron in Kansas City, the

⁴⁸ *Time Magazine*, *ibid*.

⁴⁹ As Koberling later noted in an interview, the purse strings were loose enough for this construction project so that the architects could design a monumental building. This comes from a DVD recording where Koberling is visiting the school and talking about the project. There is no identifying information, but he attended the school's 50th anniversary celebration, which is likely the setting for his comments.

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metal doors and trim from Metal Door and Trim Company, LaPorte, Indiana, marble and slate from Henry Marble Company in Chicago, the windows from Truscon Steel in Youngstown, Ohio, and auditorium seating from Peabody Seating of North Manchester, Indiana.

Not only was the school designed for the progressive curriculum that Tulsa teachers developed, but also decorative details like paint colors were chosen to enhance the learning process. The classrooms were painted in pastels, color-keyed to learning and to produce moods correlating to the subject. Stimulating colors were employed for mathematics and science, and quiet colors used for the library. Five different colors made up the color scheme, which was later adopted through out the school system.⁵⁰

The elaborate building was designed to instill pride, not only in the school itself by its design, function and beauty, but by its reference to an important native son, Will Rogers. Roger's images, set in backgrounds of Oklahoma countryside and Tulsa's downtown, brought together local, state and national points of pride of which students could be proud.

Koberling noted of the architecture, "We emerged from classicism ... to express our own times."⁵¹ The spandrels of the building contain ornament but no symbolism. He also noted of the terra cotta details on the elevations that they were "just design from the end of my pencil." Koberling's designs were executed by craftsmen at Northwestern Terra Cotta Company in Chicago. One of particular note was Karl Kolstad. Kolstad was the nephew of Kristian Schneider, the chief modeler for Louis H. Sullivan. Kolstad executed the designs for the spandrels and prior to their installation, were on exhibition at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago in 1938.⁵²

John Sand, Jr. (1903-1984), attended art schools in Europe before emigrating from Luxembourg to the United States in 1920 to work as a sculptor for the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company.⁵³ Sand modeled the Koberling-designed plaques of Will Rogers at the main entrance and the plaques of the boy and girl at the secondary entrance. The plaques appeared in several Northwestern Terra Cotta company catalogues.

Alexander Rindskopf (1886-1975), with a decorating business in Chicago (his home was in Wilmette) was noted in 1938 as a nationally known interior decorator was in charge of decoration of the school auditorium, library and entrance vestibules. Rindskopf's previous work included painting the murals in the Hall of Religion

⁵⁰ Tulsa Art Deco, (Tulsa, OK: Tulsa Foundation for Architecture, 2001), 128.

⁵¹ "Art Deco" is not a term used when the school was constructed, rather it was considered "modern" architecture of its day. The term "art deco" was introduced in 1968 in the United States in Art Deco by author Bevis Hillier. Other terms have been used to refer to the period of architecture which so influenced Koberling such as Moderne and Streamline.

⁵² Free Press and Greater Tulsa Reporter, *ibid.* The Historical Chicago Tribune in 1938 mentions this exhibit but provides little detail. This information provided by the Chicago History Museum Research Center on January 6, 2007 by e-mail with the author. The center noted in the same correspondence that records of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company have yet to be processed at the Chicago History Museum.

⁵³ A book by George A. Berry III, and Sharon Darling, Common Clay: A History of the American Terra Cotta Corporation 1881-1966 (Chicago, IL: Publisher Unknown, 2004) provides this information about Sand. The Chicago History Museum Research Center provided this citation on January 6, 2007 in e-mail with the author.

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at the Century of Progress (1933-34), and murals in hotels, theaters, civic buildings throughout the Midwest and east.⁵⁴ He was the one who chose the color scheme for the auditorium of tan, terra cotta red, ivory, and gold, with blue stage drapes. For the library he chose colors of light tans, warm grays and gold with walnut finished bookcases, lined in Chinese Mandarin red. The vestibules and foyers were to be Mayan red terra cotta with a series of horizontal lines and silver metalwork and were constructed according to these designs. He proposed the mural for the auditorium wall and suggested that a Native American artist, Acee Blue Eagle, be contacted to paint such, but later when the school board requested proposals for the mural, Rindskopf was the only artist who responded with a proposal. He later painted a mural of westward expansion and the poem of John Greenleaf Whittier.

We cross the Prairie as of old
The pilgrims crossed the sea.
To make the West, as they the East.
The homestead of the free.

We're flowing from our native hills
As our free rivers flow:
The blessing of our Mother-land
Is on us as we go.

We go to plant our common schools
On distant prairie swells.
And give the Sabbaths of the wild
The music of her bells.

Little is known about another contributor to the building, Percy Prosser, with Ornamental Plaster Company, who did the decorative ornamental plaster work. Koberling noted that Prosser was a sculptor, and his contribution to the high school was to make a clay cast of a design that could be repeated for hundreds of feet.⁵⁵

By the 1940s, school population was continuing to shift to the east side, and new space was needed to serve students and their parents who were moving further and further to the east.⁵⁶ A new 21,000 square foot addition was added to the east class room wing and was designed by Joseph R. Koberling, one of the school's original architects. The design is less exuberant, but materials, massing and style are compatible

⁵⁴ Rindskopf also redecorated Sacred Hart Cathedral in Davenport, Iowa in 1929, and the lobby ceiling at 520 N. Michigan Avenue Building in Chicago. Information provided by Joel Dryer, Director of the Illinois Historical Art Project, November 1, 2006, in e-mail correspondence with the author. Also see Tulsa Tribune, December 1, 1938, where Rindskopf was interviewed.

⁵⁵ Tulsa Art Deco Research Archives, University of Tulsa McFarlin Library Special Collections. Folder Will Rogers High School. unpagged material. From a personal interview by Sharon Meels with Joseph Koberling, November 6, 1979. The records of Northwestern Terra Cotta Company at the Chicago History Museum are unprocessed.

⁵⁶ Tulsa Tribune, December 30, 1947.

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Will Rogers held its first classes September 1939 and the school was dedicated November 3, to correspond closely with the sixtieth anniversary of Will Roger's birth. With the new school, secondary curriculum and commendation by the Eight Year Study, Tulsa School District's progressive education curricula received notice nationally. Time Magazine, February 16, 1942, wrote about the effect of progressive curriculums on those going to college in a discussion about the Progressive Education Association's Eight Year Study results. Tulsa's schools were singled out as models, with Will Rogers being specifically mentioned and the article featured a photo of the school.⁵⁷

Life Magazine in April 1942, ran a seven page photo article on Tulsa's progressive schools and included Central High, Daniel Webster and Will Rogers, "Tulsa High Schools: They Are Making Progressive Theories Work." The article called Tulsa School District one of the most progressive public school systems in the country. Will Rogers was singled out again as a model educational plant "proving the modern contention that next to a sound mind in a sound body, favorable surroundings are most conducive to efficient learning."⁵⁸

Concepts of progressive education were at their peak during the depression years, but they made a lasting impact on education worldwide. The child-centered curriculum emerged as a result of the movement as did ideas that learning process is gradual and cumulative. By the 1940s much progressive ideology and rhetoric had become conventional wisdom in American classrooms and PEA disbanded in 1955. Challenged in the 1950s as insufficiently patriotic, the curricula were also held responsible for the perceived lag in student preparation for scientific careers, which the Sputnik crisis created in 1957.⁵⁹ Educational goals are ever in flux among educational theorists, but when constructed, Will Rogers exemplified an integrated package where building and educational needs were merged; merged in an outstanding example of Modern (Art Deco) architecture created during the PWA period.

The Art Deco architecture has gained in national significance, and Will Rogers High School is featured in many books on the style. Tulsa Foundation for Architecture published Tulsa Art Deco, as a showcase for local Art Deco resources; Will Rogers High School is showcased. Nationally, one of the most influential books, Rediscovering Art Deco U.S.A., stimulated a nationwide survey of Art Deco architecture with its publication in 1994.⁶⁰ Authors Michael D. Kinerk and Dennis W. Wilhelm have testified to the national significance of the school after surveying eighty-four other schools with Art Deco architecture:

⁵⁷ <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/printout/0,8816,766413,00.html>.

⁵⁸ Life Magazine, April 13, 1942, 79-85. National notice continued when the school received the Bellamy Award in 1957. An award in honor of the writer of the Pledge of Allegiance, Francis Bellamy, it recognized the accomplishments of alumni and merits of the faculty in stressing citizenship and patriotism to students (Tulsa World, September 5, 1957). The award garnered congratulations from President Eisenhower, Vice-President Nixon, Oklahoma's Governor Raymond Gary, among others.

⁵⁹ PEA disbanded in 1955.

⁶⁰ Capitman, Barbara, Michael D. Kinerk and Dennis W. Wilhelm. (New York, NY: Viking Studio Books, 1994), 38, 201. This book was begun in part by Capitman who was a primary force in the preservation of Miami Art Deco. She also was one of the founders of the Congress on Art Deco which met for the first time in 1990 in Miami, Florida. Capitman died before the book was completed, but her years of research are part of it.

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Will Rogers High School in Tulsa is a world class example of the most highly decorated and elaborate expression of the Art Deco style of design. This WPA era school stopped us in our tracks back in 1992 when we walked in while researching our book, Rediscovering Art Deco U.S.A. (Viking Studio Books, 1994). What becomes immediately apparent is the quality of materials and design used on the interior of this 1938 project.

The luxurious highly detailed terracotta glazed tile throughout made quite an impression. We'd never seen anything like it even in expensive commercial buildings of the era. This was Art Deco of the French style, common in the 1920s but unheard of in the 1930s due to the financial constraints imposed upon architectural projects by the Great Depression.

Having cataloged Art Deco structures in 30 major cities in preparation for the book, we were well aware how rare an example is the Will Rogers High School. We remarked to each other how well the school had been maintained (many had not been) saying it was obviously held in high esteem by the community.

We found the imagery unusual and unique amongst all the schools we had seen with a striking combination of Native Meso- and North-American with French Art Deco themes common in the 1925 Paris exhibition from which Art Deco derives its name. And of course the entire complex a heartfelt tribute to native son Will Rogers.

Our favorite interior space was the auditorium. With its excellent floor to ceiling murals striking and imaginative lighting fixtures and bold organ grilles near the proscenium of the stages, it was far beyond most school auditoriums.

We visited and photographed many High Schools in our travels across the country but only one or two could equal the Tulsa Will Rogers High School in quality of design, detail, materials used and maintenance through the years.

Will Rogers was one of the few that we singled out by name in the first chapter of the book which covered the most important and popular building typologies found throughout the entire country. This school is indeed one of a kind and part of what makes Tulsa a destination that is mandatory for any serious scholar or aficionado of twentieth century architecture in the world.⁶¹

New books on the style continue to include the school, such as the recently published American Art Deco which features both the school's interior and exterior.⁶²

Will Rogers High School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, as one of the best examples of Art Deco high school architecture in the United States. The school's design is specifically

⁶¹ E-mail correspondence with the author November 16, 2006.

⁶² Breeze, Carla. American Art Deco (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003), 178-179.

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significant because it is a direct result of the progressive educational movement ideals spawned to promote democracy through real-life educational experiences for high school students. Recognized nationally for its design, Will Rogers High School was featured as an ideal school in a major educational study, and promoted as a model school in Time and Life Magazines. Today, the school's architecture is featured in books on the Art Deco period. It is an especially fine example of this architectural style which resulted from a New Deal Public Works Administration project.

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Koberling, Joseph. DVD Interview. No Date (likely 1989 at the school's 50th anniversary celebration.). DVD provided by Rex Ball.

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Michael D. Kinerk, and Dennis W. Wilhelm, provided statement on national significance of Will Rogers High School in e-mail correspondence with the author November 16, 2006.

Will Rogers High School
Name of Property

Tulsa County, Oklahoma
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.27

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 15 236135 4994766
Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing [] See continuation sheet

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 Cathy Ambler, Ph. D, Preservation Consultant

organization _____ date March 2007

street & number 1129 E 8th Street telephone (918) 584-3566

city or town Tulsa state OK zip code 74114-6131

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Tulsa School Board

street & number 3027 South new Haven telephone (918) 746-6800

city or town Tulsa state OK zip code 74114-6131

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BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION cont.



Will Rogers High School Site Plan
Google Earth Aerial Photograph

Justification

The original 26.894 acre site bounded on the North by East 4th Place South; East by S. Pittsburg Avenue East; South by East 5th Place South; and West by Turner Park and outlined here in white lines which indicate these boundaries, contains the Will Rogers High School with subsequent additions, a 1972 separate classroom building, the 1990 addition of a track, baseball field and football field, and a 2006 completed field house. The football field and track are also a storm retention area. The original site has also been modified over time with the addition of parking lots and tennis courts along with the changes noted above such that the integrity of the original site has been compromised. Therefore, the nomination only includes the 1939 Will Rogers High School with subsequent additions. The boundary includes the school and is bounded by the sidewalks which surround the school on the west, south and east facades, and goes to the curb of a driveway which skirts most of the north façade.

Description

The east façade school boundary commences 320' feet west of the center of S. Pittsburg Avenue East and 208' from the center of East 5th Place South. Here the boundary proceeds west along the south façade for 425' feet. The boundary then proceeds north for 335' for along the west façade of the school. It then turns east to proceed along the north façade of the school 425' feet. Here the boundary turns south for 335' along the east side of the school to the point of beginning.

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PHOTO LOG:

Will Rogers High School, Tulsa County, Tulsa, Oklahoma
Digital Photo Disk, Oklahoma SHPO

Subject	Direction Looking	Date	Number	Photographer
Will Rogers High School, South Elevation	NW	11/22/2007	1	Cathy Ambler
Auditorium Block, South Elevation	NNW	11/22/2007	2	Cathy Ambler
Auditorium, South Elevation. Door Trim	N	11/22/2007	3	Cathy Ambler
Auditorium, South Elevation. Bas Relief Terra Cotta Panels	N	11/22/2007	4	Cathy Ambler
Auditorium, South Elevation. Gray-Green Terra Cotta Panels	N	11/22/2007	5	Cathy Ambler
Auditorium, South Elevation. Buff Terra Cotta Bas Relief Panels, Pilasters and Capital Detail, Parapet Trim and Coping	N	11/22/2007	6	Cathy Ambler
Auditorium, South Elevation. Lanterns	N	11/22/2007	7	Cathy Ambler
Secondary Tower Projection, South Elevation	N	11/22/2007	8	Cathy Ambler
Secondary Tower, South Elevation. Entry Panel Details	N	11/22/2007	9	Cathy Ambler
Secondary Tower, South Elevation. Terra Cotta Spandrels	N	11/22/2007	10	Cathy Ambler
Secondary Tower, South Elevation. Tower Details	N	11/22/2007	11	Cathy Ambler
Office/Library/Classroom Block, South Elevation	N	11/22/2007	12	Cathy Ambler
Office/Library/Classroom Block, South Elevation. Gray-green Spandrel Detail	N	11/22/2007	13	Cathy Ambler
Office/Library/Classroom Block, South Elevation. Parapet Treatment	N	11/22/2007	14	Cathy Ambler

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Main Entry Tower, South Elevation	N	11/22/2007	15	Cathy Ambler
Main Entry Tower, South Elevation. Detail of Window, and Trim and Lanterns	N	11/22/2007	16	Cathy Ambler
Main Entry Tower, South Elevation. Detail of Educational Bas Relief, Grill	N	11/22/2007	17	Cathy Ambler
Main Entry Tower, South Elevation. Will Rogers Panels	N	11/22/2007	18	Cathy Ambler
Main Entry Tower, South Elevation. Crop Main Entrance Bas Relief Spandrels	N	11/22/2007	19	Cathy Ambler
Main Entry Tower, South Elevation. Decorative Detail	ENE	11/22/2007	20	Cathy Ambler
Gym Block, South Elevation	NNE	11/22/2007	21	Cathy Ambler
Gym Block, South Elevation. Panel and Parapet Detail	NNE	11/22/2007	22	Cathy Ambler
West Classroom Wing, West Elevation. 1939 Block and 1964 Classroom Additions	E	11/22/2007	23	Cathy Ambler
West Classroom Wing, West Elevation 1939, 1964 Details	E	11/22/2007	24	Cathy Ambler
1964 Classroom Wing and Gym Addition, North Elevation	SW	11/22/2007	25	Cathy Ambler
1964 Addition, North Elevation. Entry Door Detail	S	11/22/2007	26	Cathy Ambler
1964 Addition, East Elevation. Connecting Halls to Cafeteria, West Elevation of Cafeteria, Entry to Courtyard	S	11/22/2007	27	Cathy Ambler
1939 West Classroom Wing, East	NW	11/22/2007	28	Cathy Ambler

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section __ Page 82

Will Rogers High School
Tulsa, Tulsa County, OK

Elevation				
Cafeteria Block, North and West Elevations	SW	11/22/2007	29	Cathy Ambler
Cafeteria Block, North Elevation. Incinerator Stack	NW	11/22/2007	30	Cathy Ambler
East Classroom Wing, West Elevation	E	11/22/2007	31	Cathy Ambler
1949 Classroom Wing, West Elevation	SSE	11/22/2007	32	Cathy Ambler
East Classroom Wing and Office/Library/Classroom Block Recessed Hall Connection Looking Southeast	ESE	11/22/2007	33	Cathy Ambler
1949 Addition, North Elevation	S	11/22/2007	34	Cathy Ambler
1949 Addition, North Elevation. East Classroom Wing. Entry Door Detail	S	11/22/2007	35	Cathy Ambler
1939 East Classroom Wing and 1949, East Elevation Addition	W	11/22/2007	36	Cathy Ambler
Auditorium Fly Loft, North Elevation	SW	11/22/2007	37	Cathy Ambler
Auditorium, West Elevation	NW	11/22/2007	38	Cathy Ambler
Auditorium, East Elevation. Window and Bas Relief Spandrel/Panel Details	W	11/22/2007	39	Cathy Ambler
Library/Swimming Pool, North and East Elevation	SSE	11/22/2007	40	Cathy Ambler
Office/Library/Classroom Block, North Elevation. Library/Swimming Pool West Elevation	S	11/22/2007	41	Cathy Ambler
Tower Entry Foyer. Terra Cotta and Brass Grill Detail	W	02/16/2007	44	Allen Ambler
Auditorium Foyer. Stairs to Loge Level	NW	02/16/2007	45	Allen Ambler
Auditorium Foyer. Ticket Window	SW	02/16/2007	46	Allen Ambler
Auditorium. Stage	N	02/16/2007	47	Allen Ambler
Auditorium. Detail of Proscenium	N	02/16/2007	48	Allen Ambler

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section __ Page 83

Will Rogers High School
Tulsa, Tulsa County, OK

Auditorium. Grill Detail and False Balcony, Wall Trim	W	02/16/2007	49	Allen Ambler
Auditorium Rear. Detail of Loge, Lighting, and Decorative Plaster Beams	S	02/16/2007	50	Allen Ambler
Auditorium. Decorative Beams, Plasterwork	NNW	02/16/2007	51	Allen Ambler
Auditorium. Decorative Mural	W	02/16/2007	52	Allen Ambler
Auditorium. Detail of Seat Framework	W	02/16/2007	53	Allen Ambler
Main Hall	W	02/16/2007	54	Allen Ambler
Main Hall. Examples of Hall Doors	N	02/16/2007	55	Allen Ambler
Main Hall. Examples of Hall Doors	N	02/16/2007	56	Allen Ambler
Main Hall. Finish Details	NW	02/16/2007	57	Allen Ambler
Main Hall. School Namesake Will Rogers and Dedication Plaque	NNW	02/16/2007	58	Allen Ambler
Main Hall. Trophy Cases and Wall Details	S	02/16/2007	59	Allen Ambler
Library. Lights, Ceiling Trim, Bookcases	NW	02/16/2007	60	Allen Ambler
Library. Detail of Doorways and Trim	SW	02/16/2007	61	Allen Ambler
Library. Detail of Bookcases	W	02/16/2007	62	Allen Ambler
Library. Details	NW	02/16/2007	63	Allen Ambler
Library. Details	SE	02/16/2007	64	Allen Ambler

Photo numbers 42 and 43 were not used

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section _____ Page _____

=====

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 07000918

Date Listed: 9/6/2007

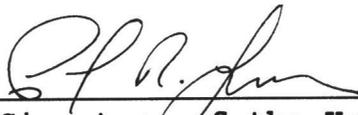
Will Rogers High School
Property Name

Tulsa
County

OK
State

N/A
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.



Signature of the Keeper

9/6/07

Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Geographical Data:

The correct U. T. M. Coordinates should read: 15 236135 4004766.

These clarifications were confirmed with the OK SHPO office.

DISTRIBUTION:

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

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Will Rogers High School
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: OKLAHOMA, Tulsa

DATE RECEIVED: 7/24/07 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/13/07
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/28/07 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/06/07
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 07000918

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT _____DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Will Rogers High School is nationally significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Education and Architecture. Completed in 1939, the richly detailed brick and terra cotta school is an extremely well preserved example of early twentieth century Art Deco-style design. The building's high quality materials and distinctive plan were the work of a collaboration of talented local and regional architects, artists, craftsmen, and educational planners, with the result that the completed school lay beyond the standard scope of PWA/New Deal/Depression era commissions. Owing in large part to the building's envisioned role as a model progressive school, the design was intended to create a world-class example of modern educational design, which was widely recognized in contemporary literature as well as in later architectural studies. The building's physical form and curriculum reflected the educational philosophies of the "progressive" educational movement, which educators in the 1920s and 30s promoted as an alternative to the static educational systems of the nineteenth century. The Tulsa school system served as an important test lab for implementing and evaluating progressive movement programs during the period and the Will Rogers High School was held up as a nationwide model for integrating progressive school programs with school plant design.

RECOM. /CRITERIA Accept CRITERIA A+C

REVIEWER PAUL R. LUSIGNAN DISCIPLINE HISTORIAN

TELEPHONE 202-354-2229 DATE 9/6/07

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments (Y) see attached SLR (Y) N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

**Will Rogers High School
Tulsa, Tulsa County, OK
Criterion A and C, Education/Architecture**

The Will Rogers High School is nationally significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Education and Architecture. Completed in 1939, the richly detailed brick and terra cotta school is an extremely well preserved example of early twentieth century Art Deco-style design. The building's high quality materials and distinctive plan were the work of a collaboration of talented local and regional architects, artists, craftsmen, and educational planners, with the result that the completed school lay beyond the standard scope of PWA/New Deal/Depression era commissions. Owing in large part to the building's envisioned role as a model progressive school, the design was intended to create a world-class example of modern educational design, which was widely recognized in contemporary literature as well as in later architectural studies. The building's physical form and curriculum reflected the educational philosophies of the "progressive" educational movement, which educators in the 1920s and 30s promoted as an alternative to the static educational systems of the nineteenth century. The Tulsa school system served as an important test lab for implementing and evaluating progressive movement programs during the period and the Will Rogers High School was held up as a nationwide model for integrating progressive school programs with school plant design.

While high-style Art Deco architecture is widely associated with the "art" of the skyscraper age in America, among the subsets of Art Deco-designed buildings completed during the early twentieth century, schools represented a significant resource type, particularly those associated with the public construction programs of the New Deal. The Will Rogers High School represents a mature, highly decorative Art Deco design that compares favorably with a limited number of other period examples at the national level. Particularly noteworthy in both the exuberance and preserved condition of the interior and exterior decorative terra cotta detailing, the school building displays the highly regarded work of Chicago's Northwestern Terra Cotta Company who were responsible for much of the finest detail work in terra cotta in the Midwest.

Within the narrowly defined context of Art Deco *educational* architecture, there exists sufficient-if limited-scholarly appreciation for an assessment of the national design significance of this property. Further scholarly evaluations and research might be necessary to strengthen and support this building within the broader context of nationwide (all property types) Art Deco design. With regard to educational significance, a stronger discussion of the impact of the Will Rogers "model" on subsequent schoolhouse design would be necessary to support national significance.



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#1



Will Rogers H.S.,
Tulsa County, OK

#2



Will Rogers H.S.

Tulsa County, OK

#3



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#4



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#5



Will Rogers H. S.
Tulsa County, OK

#6



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#7



Will Rogers H.S.,
Tulsa County, OK

#8



WILL ROGERS

HIGH SCHOOL

Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#9



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#10



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

11



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#12



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#13



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#14



WILL
ROGERS

HIGH
SCHOOL

3909

WILL ROGERS
HIGH SCHOOL

Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#15



Will Roger H.S.,
Tulsa County, OK

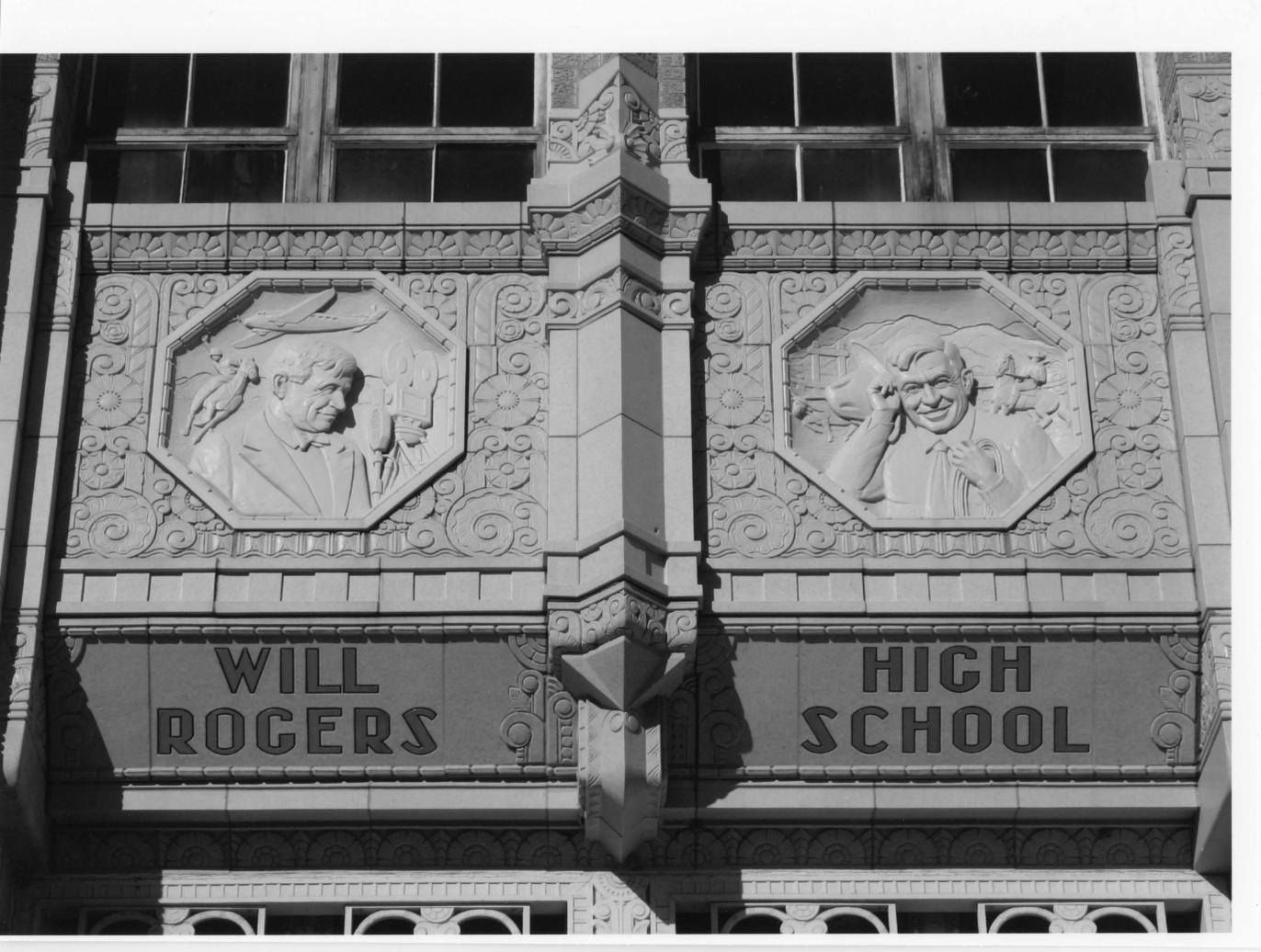
#16



3909

Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#17



WILL
ROGERS

HIGH
SCHOOL

Will Rogers H.S.,
Tulsa County, OK

18



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

19



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#20



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#21



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#22



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#23



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

24



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#25



DRUG FREE
GUN FREE
SCHOOL ZONE
NO GUNS OR OTHER WEAPONS
PERMITTED

Please Do Not
Open To
Strangers

Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

26



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

27



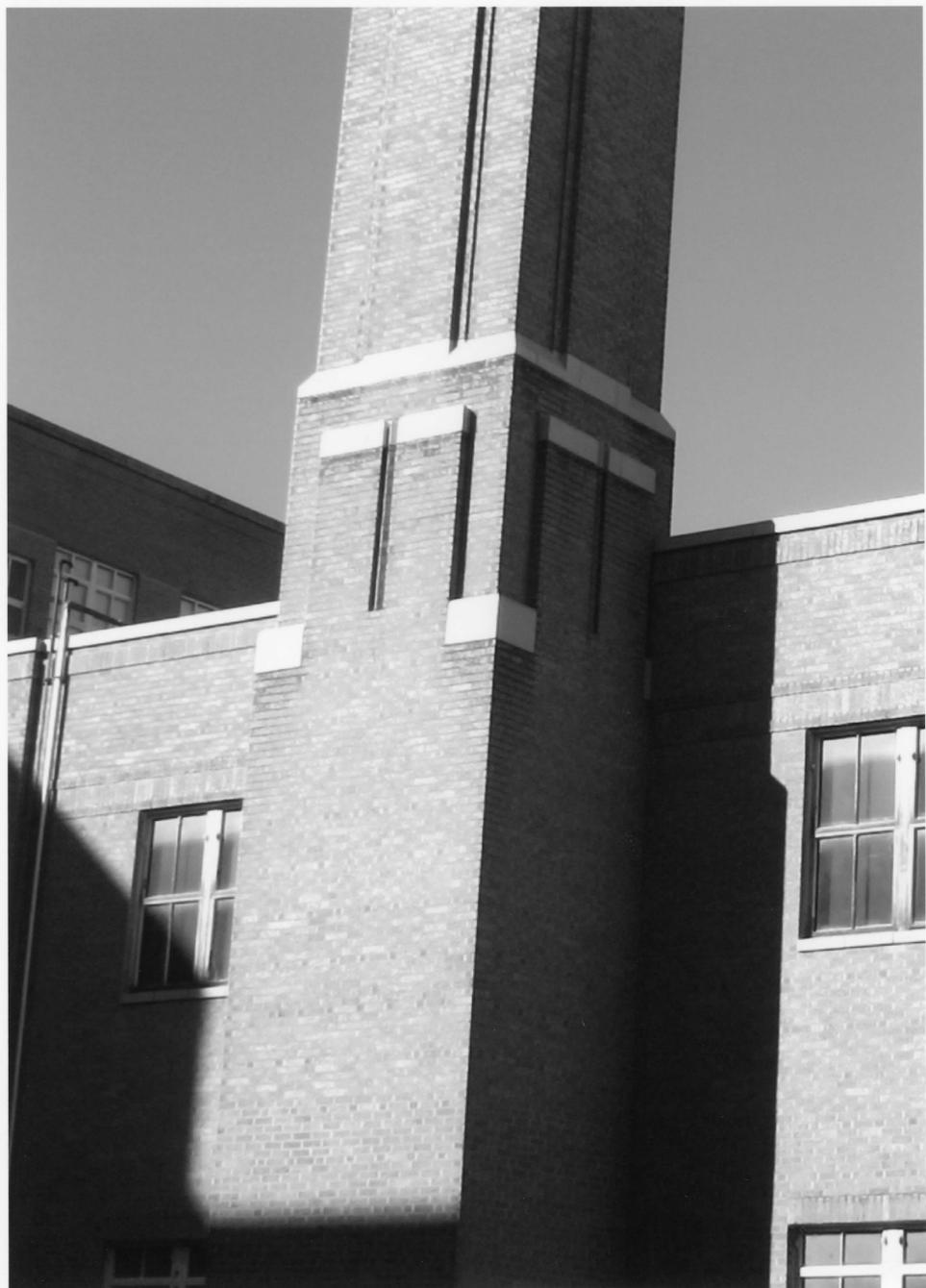
Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#20



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

29



Will Rogers H.S.,
Tulsa County, OK

#30



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

31



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

32



Will Rogers H.S.,
Tulsa County, OK

33



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

34



Will Rogers H.S.

Tulsa County, OK

#35



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#36



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#37



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

38



Will Rogers H.S.

Tulsa County, OK

#39



ASSISTANT
PRINCIPAL

Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#40



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

41



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

44



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#45



TICKETS

GENERAL SEATING

ADULT:\$8.00

STUDENT:\$5.00

Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

46



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#47



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#48



Will Rogers H.S.

Tulsa County, OK

49



Will Rogers H. S.

Tulsa County, Ok

50



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

51



We cross the prairie as of old
The pilgrims crossed the sea.
To make the West, as they the East,
The homestead of the tree.

We're flowing from our native hills
As our free rivers flow;
The blessing of our Mother-land
Is on us as we go.

We go to plant her common schools
On distant prairie swells,
And give the Sabbaths of the wild
The music of her bells.

JOHN CHESTER WHEAT



Will Rogers H.S.

Tulsa County, OK

#52



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#53



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#54

Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#55

GIRLS



Will Rogers H.S.

Tulsa County, OK

#56



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#57

Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

58



RESEARCH 100
1980-1981
1982-1983
1984-1985
1986-1987
1988-1989
1990-1991
1992-1993
1994-1995
1996-1997
1998-1999
2000-2001
2002-2003
2004-2005
2006-2007
2008-2009
2010-2011
2012-2013
2014-2015
2016-2017
2018-2019
2020-2021
2022-2023
2024-2025

With a spirit of pride and honor
we have the honor to announce
the names of the individuals
who have been selected to receive
the award.

With a spirit of pride and honor
we have the honor to announce
the names of the individuals
who have been selected to receive
the award.

Will Rogers H.S.

Tulsa County, OK

59



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#66



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#61



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#62



Will Rogers H.S.,
Tulsa County, OK

#63



Will Rogers H.S.
Tulsa County, OK

#64

Missing Core Documentation

Property Name

Will Rogers High School

County, State

Tulsa, OK

Reference Number

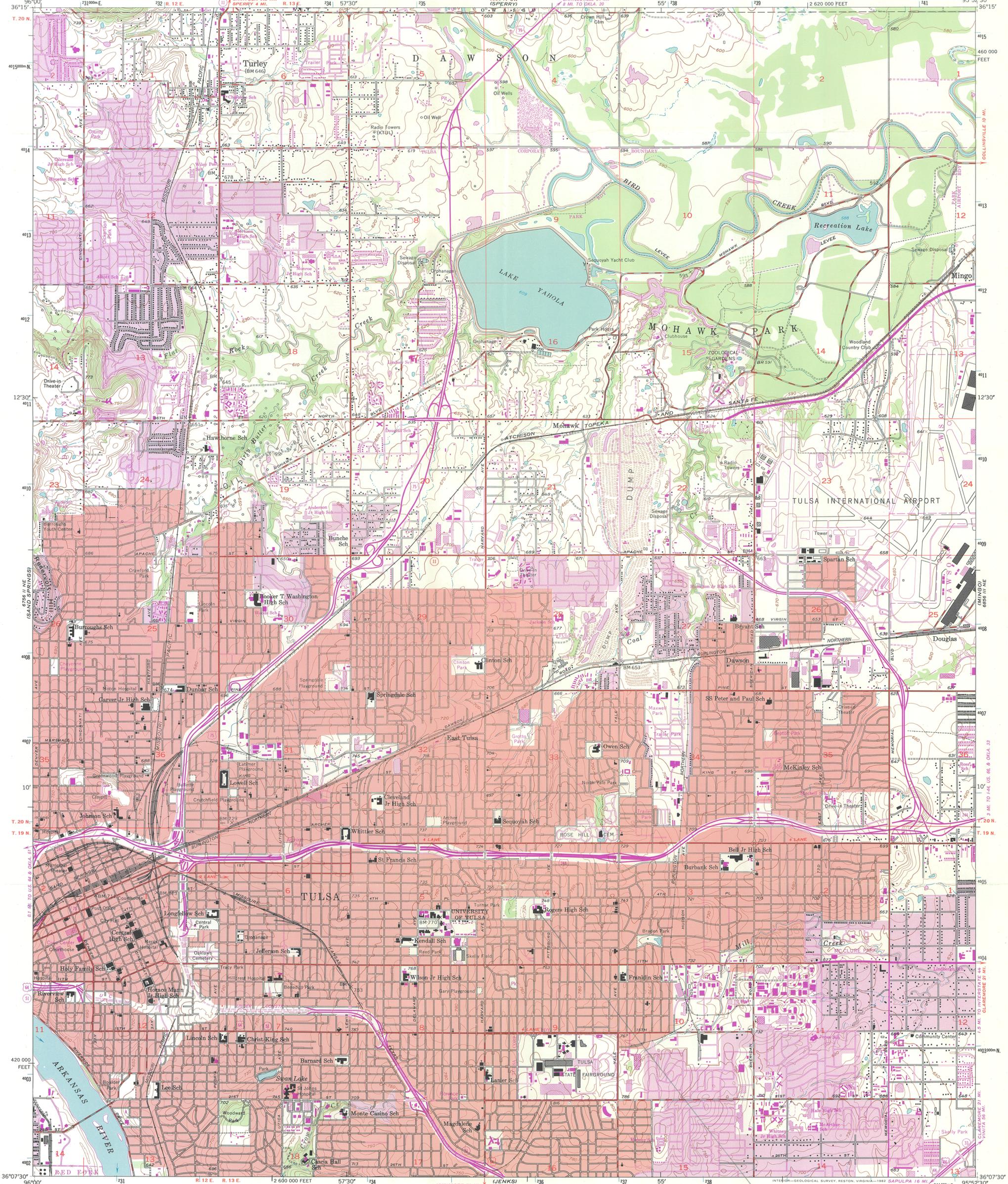
07000918

The following Core Documentation is missing from this entry:

Nomination Form

Photographs 42-43

USGS Map



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE,
and Oklahoma Geodetic Survey
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1950-1951. Topography by plane-table surveys 1954
Polyconic projection, 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Oklahoma coordinate system, north zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 3 meters south and
23 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1980
and other sources. Map edited 1982. This information not field checked
Purple tint indicates extension of urban area

UTM GRID AND 1982 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

1:44° 31' MILES
6" 116' MILES

1 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET
1 KILOMETER

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225 OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND BY THE OKLAHOMA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, NORMAN, OKLAHOMA 73069
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
Interstate Route — U.S. Route — State Route

15 236135 400476
zone Easting Northing

OKLAHOMA
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

TULSA, OKLA.
N3607.5—W9552.5/7.5
1954
PHOTOREVISED 1982
DMA 6856 III NW—SERIES V863

CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION REPORT

(Note: This report shall be completed for each nomination to the National Register of Historic Places submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office. Each item must be completed. The report form shall be attached to the complete National Register nomination. All comments received from the owner and others must also accompany the report.)

1. Name of Nominated Property: Will Rogers High School
Location: (Street Address) 3909 East 5th Place
(City) Tulsa
(State) Oklahoma
(County) Tulsa County

2. Certified Local Government Reporting: City of Tulsa
Contact Person: Amanda DeCort
Title: Preservation Planning Administrator
Address: 111 South Greenwood Avenue, Suite 200
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74120
Telephone: 918.596.2600

3. a. Date CLG received the nominations: 14 March 2007
b. Date Property Owner(s) notified: 2 April 2007
c. Date of Public Hearing (if appropriate): -
d. Date nomination considered
by local review commission: 12 April 2007
e. Date nomination submitted to SHPO:

4. Recommendations of the CLG (check appropriate item):
 - The chief elected official and the local review commission agree that the property is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

 - The chief elected local official and the local review commission agree that the property is not eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

 - The chief elected local official considers the property eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, but the local review commission disagrees.

 - The local review commission considers the property eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, but the chief elected local official disagrees.

RECEIVED

JUN 01 2007

BY SHPO

5. Owner(s) Response (check appropriate item):

- The owner (majority of owners) consent to listing of the nominated property in the National Register of Historic Places.
- The owner (majority of owners) object to the listing of the nominated property in the National Register of Historic Places.

(Additional comments should appear in this area)

6. Local Review Commission's Statement of Opinion:

The local review commission considers the property

- eligible
 not eligible

for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons:

Criterion A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Criterion 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. The Areas of Significance are Education and Architecture; the Period of Significance for Education is 1930-1955 and the Period of Significance for Architecture is 1939-1949.



Signature of Chairman

James E. Turner, AIA
Name

May 10, 2007
Date

Comments continue on the reverse side of this page.

- Yes
 No

7. Chief Elected Local Official's Statement of Opinion:

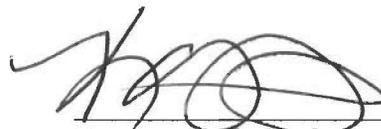
The chief elected local official considers the nominated property

- eligible
- not eligible

for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons:

Criterion A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Criterion 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 whos components lack individual distinction. The Areas of Significance are Education and Architecture; the Period of Significance for Education is 1930-1955 and the Period of Significance for Architecture is 1939-1949.



Signature of Chief Elected
Local Official

Kathy Taylor
Name

MAY 21 2007

Date

Comments continue on the reverse side of this page Yes
 No



Monday, Feb. 16, 1942

Tomorrow's High School

Progressive Education has passed its high-school test. An unofficial supreme court of educators, delivering its verdict in the famed Eight-Year Study this week, found that graduates of Progressive preparatory schools were more successful in college than their contemporaries. Many considered its report (*The Story of the Eight-Year Study*; Harper; \$1.75) a death sentence for the traditional system of U.S. high-school education.

The study began in 1932, when 300 liberal arts colleges gave the Progressive Education Association a green light to experiment by agreeing to admit graduates of 30 Progressive schools without the usual entrance requirements. The 30 schools, ranging from Denver's public high schools to Massachusetts' swank Milton Academy, eventually delivered four classes (1936 to 1939) to the colleges. A staff of impartial college judges paired each of 1,475 Progressive students with a conventional-school graduate of the same intelligence, sex, age, interests, family background.

Result: the judges found that the Progressive students got slightly better marks from their professors (2.52 v. 2.48); won more academic honors (Phi Beta Kappa, et al.); were more precise and systematic in their thinking, more resourceful in meeting practical problems; read more books; did more dancing; went to more concerts; took a keener interest in world affairs; went out for more extracurricular activities; were elected to more student offices. Clinching fact: graduates of the six most progressive schools had the best record, the biggest margin of superiority over their fellows.

How They Did It. In the light of these findings, *The Story of the Eight-Year Study* (author: Ohio State's Wilford M Aikin) may outline the high-school pattern of the future. It begins with a dismaying picture (as of 1933) of the nation's junior and senior high schools, which almost 10,000,000 U.S. youngsters attend yearly. The investigating commission found the schools dull and unchallenging, lacking in a central purpose, their graduates not even "competent in the use of the English language." Though five out of six high school graduates do not go to college, college preparation was still the schools' prime goal.

From this background, the 30 schools jumped off into empty space. Given a free hand to build an entirely new curriculum that would serve all their students, they floundered, philosophized, struck out in all directions. They launched courses ranging from *The Progress of Man Through the Ages* to *Football from the Spectator's Point of View*. Eventually they gathered principals, teachers, parents and students and sat down to get their bearings. Their decision: "A school is something more than curriculum and teaching. It is a society in itself, composed of young people and adults living and working together."

Thereupon the schools addressed themselves to problems of living and working. To their students this meant learning how to study, to choose and get a job, to get along with one's family, to solve the problems of sex,

marriage, food, clothes, houses, government, "the meaning of life."

Because few textbooks told the students and teachers what they wanted to know, they did their own research. In Boston a school reported: "We use the city we live in as a kind of demonstration laboratory for elementary economics, civics, science and architecture." In Tulsa, students started and helped carry through a revamping of the city's park system. One Tulsa junior high-school class took over as their own "problem house" a shack on the outskirts of town (just bought by a pair of newlyweds) and helped the couple rebuild, furnish, landscape and budget their home. One of the most Progressive school systems in the study, Tulsa also built two model Progressive high schools, named one for Will Rogers.

Teachers, parents and students all took a hand in running the schools. Because the problems of no two communities were exactly alike, each school had to chart its own road. Teachers, no longer able to discharge their duties by assigning lessons from a textbook and listening to recitations, had to learn their job all over again. Says Author Aikin: "The teacher has always had the leading role in schools everywhere. In democracy's high school his part becomes even more important. He does not merely play his assigned part; he helps select the play and is concerned with the whole production."

Upshot. The 30 schools proposed these prime objectives for U.S. high-school education: 1) every student should learn to read, write and speak the English language with skill and understand mathematics; 2) cut-&-dried textbook teaching should give way to teaching about the problems of modern living; 3) the concerns of U.S. youth should be the heart of the curriculum; 4) the schools should promote students' physical, mental and emotional health; 5) their "one clear central purpose" should be "to bring to every young American his great heritage of freedom . . . inspire devotion to human welfare."

Many a college educator heartily seconded these objectives. Canvassing his own faculty, Columbia's Dean Herbert E. Hawkes, an adviser to the commission, reported that they "wanted boys who could read with good speed and comprehension . . . who had a reasonable facility in self-expression . . . who knew how to tackle a hard intellectual job and carry it through to completion . . . who knew an idea when they saw one."

To free U.S. high schools to pursue these objectives, said the commission, colleges must drop their old entrance requirements, adopt new ones that will not prescribe high-school curricula. The commission's proposal: let colleges choose students on the basis of 1) their all-around high-school record, 2) scholastic-aptitude tests, 3) other new tests (such as the commission itself has developed) which measure a candidate's character and abilities instead of his specific knowledge.

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<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,766413,00.html>