

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

SEP 18 '97

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Roff Armory

other names/site number Roff National Guard Armory

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number Southwest corner of Burns St. and N. 9th not for publication N/A
city or town Roff vicinity _____
state Oklahoma code OK county Pontotoc code 123
zip code 74865

=====
3. State/Federal Agency Certification
=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this XX 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 XX meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide XX locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Blake Wade

Signature of certifying official

August 11, 1997
Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====
4. National Park Service Certification
=====

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- ____ entered in the National Register _____
- See continuation sheet. _____
- ____ determined eligible for the _____
- National Register _____
- See continuation sheet. _____
- ____ determined not eligible for the _____
- National Register _____
- ____ removed from the National Register _____
- ____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date
 of Action

=====

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>DEFENSE</u>	Sub: <u>arms storage</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>EDUCATION</u>	Sub: <u>school</u>
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u>	<u>sports facility</u>
<u>TRANSPORTATION</u>	<u>road-related</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/WPA Standardized Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

walls STONE: Limestone

other _____

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

=====

8. Statement of Significance

=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ECONOMIC
MILITARY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1935-1937

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

Significant Dates 1937

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Nolen, Bryan W., Supervising Architect
Works Progress Administration, Builder

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

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- Previous documentation on file (NPS)
 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

- Primary Location of Additional Data
 State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: N/A

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

Acreage of Property Less than one (1) acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	697780	3833720	3	_____	_____
2	<u>N/A</u>	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

N/A 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 Jill Marsh, Preservation Research Assistant

organization OK State Historic Preservation Office date June 30, 1997

street & number 2704 Villa Prom telephone (405) 521-6249

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73107

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form
Roff Armory
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma

Page 8

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Roff Public Schools

street & number 100 N. Broadway telephone 405/456-7663

city or town Roff state OK zip code 74865

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

SUMMARY:

The Roff Armory is a self-contained, horizontal, one-story building measuring 125 feet by 200 feet and constructed of native limestone. A local project of the Works Progress Administration in Pontotoc County, Oklahoma, the armory was constructed in 1935 - 1937. The armory property is located at the southwest corner of Burns Street and North 9th. The surrounding area is residential, with a commercial area to the south. The armory does not have a main facade because the historic function of the building necessitated that the design incorporate separate, equal elevations for the two National Guard units, one on the east, the other on the west. However, related to its current function, the west elevation is not as heavily utilized as the east elevation which now serves as the main entrance. The floor plan is typical of WPA-built armories, in that the building comprises three distinct sections. A central, north-south section, with barrel roof, contains the drill area, while flat-roofed sections on the east and west comprise offices, supply and arms rooms, and garage areas. Though the massing is strongly horizontal, several architectural details give the building a vertical emphasis: the parapeted entrance bays on the east and west with piers; the parapeted walls and corner pilasters of the central drill hall section; pilasters on the corners and between windows; and narrow, vertical steel-framed multiple-light hopper windows in all elevations. The steel-framed windows are all original, as are three of the nine exterior overhead vehicle doors, and all of the pedestrian doors. Alterations to the exterior have been minimal. Several of the windows have been covered with metal to prevent them from being continuously broken. Interior alterations are minimal: a metal wall has divided the drill hall into a gymnasium in the north half which contains the original stage and a garage in the southern half. The stage area has been enclosed. The metal partition wall reaches only to the rafters, and is then open to the top of the barrel roof. The Roff Armory retains an extremely high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to enable it to exemplify WPA-type military architecture in Oklahoma.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The Roff Armory is a self-contained, horizontal, one-story building constructed of native limestone from a quarry one-and-a-half miles southeast of Roff. The building measures 125 feet north-to-south and 200 feet east-to-west. A local project of the Works Progress Administration in Oklahoma, it was constructed in 1935 - 1937. The armory property is located at the southwest corner of Burns Street and North 9th. It is bordered by North 9th on the east,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 10

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====
Burns Street on the north, North 10th on the west, and an alley on the south, with Main Street one block south of the alley.

The roof line of the Roff Armory indicates that the building comprises three distinct sections: A central north-south section, with barrel roof, comprises the drill area, while flat-roofed one-story sections on the east and west comprise offices, classrooms, supply and arms rooms, and garages. Historically and presently, the drill hall roof is covered with roll roofing, while the east and west sections are covered with tar and gravel. The north and south arc of the barrel roof, over the central section, contrasts with the horizontal lines of the east and west wings. The roof line, around the entire building, has stone coping. At the four corners of the drill hall, shallow pilasters buttress the corners, wrapping around the edge, and rise to become "towers." Near the top of the pilasters on the sides are three long, narrow, recessed lines in the stone, placed closely together, almost giving the appearance of gun slits. This feature, combined with the battlement created by the numerous pilasters, reinforces the fortress like appearance of the armory.

The EAST elevation of the armory consists of four bays: Slightly off-center is the entry bay consisting of a pedimented parapet and massive, shallow pedimented piers and wing walls that enframe the recessed entry, which is the main focus of the elevation. The original solid wood-panel double doors are still present. On the doors, in large wooden letters which have been painted black are the words "ROFF FFA." To the north of the parapet is what appears to be a radio antenna. A small, narrow, vertical four-light casement window lies close to the pilaster on each side of the entry bay. Flanking the entry bay are two bays enframed by pilasters; each bay contains a pair of 15-light windows flanked on each side by a 10-light window. The south end of the east elevation contains the fourth bay, which is separated by a wide shallow pilaster, and has a 10-light window. There are wide shallow pilasters on the north and south corners of the east elevation that project slightly above the roof line. All the windows on the east elevation have been covered over with metal. Each of the windows and the wall area above are slightly recessed, creating the illusion that there are pilasters between the windows. The recessed areas are also lower at the roof line, reinforcing the pilaster appearance. This, combined with the stone coping, gives the roof line a battlement appearance which contributes to the fortress image of the armory.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 11

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

The SOUTH elevation is divided into three sections, the drill hall section in the center, characterized by its barrel roof, window/door arrangement and massive corner pilasters, and the others being the administrative/garage sections on the east and west, characterized by overhead doors. The east and west sections of the elevation are slightly recessed and have a lower roof line than the central drill hall. This, combined with the massive pilasters on the corners of the drill hall, provides a visual division of the elevation. The east and west sections of the south elevation each contain four arched overhead doors. In the east section, three of the four overhead doors are the original wood-panel doors. The fourth door, along with all four overhead doors in the west section, have been replaced with metal doors. Both the east and west sections have corner pilasters and a battlement along the roof ridge, all capped with rusticated stone. The merlons of the battlement and the pilasters have the long narrow recessed lines, giving the illusion of gun slits that is part of the fortification image. The central (drill hall) section contains an arched overhead door in the center, flanked by three windows on each side, and then a pedestrian door. The pedestrian doors, which are the original wood doors, are slightly recessed and have wing walls capped with stone. The doors are located in the wide, shallow, massive corner pilasters. Above the central overhead door is a slightly pedimented parapet, topped with what appears to be a radio antenna. The corner pilasters and pedimented parapet combine to create an immense wall that becomes the focus of the elevation. As on the east facade, in the central drill hall section the windows and the wall area above are slightly recessed and have a lower roof line. Five of the six windows have been covered with metal.

The WEST elevation is an identical copy of the east elevation, consisting of four bays. Slightly off-center is the entry bay consisting of a pedimented parapet and massive, shallow pedimented piers and wing walls that enframe the recessed entry. The original solid wood-panel double doors are still present. A small, narrow, vertical four-light casement window lies close to the pilaster on each side of the entry bay. Flanking the entry bay are two bays enframed by pilasters; each bay contains a pair of 15-light windows flanked on each side by a 10-light window. The south end of the west elevation contains an additional bay, which is separated by a wide shallow pilaster, and has a 10-light window. All the windows on the west elevation are original. There are wide shallow pilasters on the north and south corners of the west elevation that project slightly above the roof line. Each of the windows and the wall area above are slightly recessed and are lower at the roof line, reinforcing the fortress appearance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 12

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====
The NORTH elevation, like the south elevation, is divided into three sections, the drill hall section in the center and the administrative/garage sections in the east and west. Portions of the east and west sections of the north elevation are recessed. The walls of the west half of the east section and the east half of the west section are flush with the wall of the central drill hall section, while the end sections of the walls in the east and west sections are recessed. There is a shallow corner pilaster which rises slightly above the roof line between the flush and recessed areas. The recessed areas contain two 15-light windows each. The windows are the same as the others in the building, being slightly recessed along with the wall area above them and lower at the roof line. The projected areas of the east and west sections each contain a ribbon of three 12-light windows. The central (drill hall) section of the north elevation contains two windows, one close to each of the pilasters on the northeast and northwest corners of the drill hall. All of the windows are original. The drill hall section is topped by a pedimented parapet and shallow pilasters which buttress the corners and rise to become "towers." Near the top of the pilasters on the sides are three long, narrow, recessed lines in the stone, placed closely together, as is found on the south elevation.

Though the buildings massing is strongly horizontal, several architectural details influenced by the Art Deco style give the building a vertical emphasis: the parapets and massive piers and wing walls marking the entries, the parapeted walls and corner pilasters of the central drill hall section, pilasters on the corners and between windows, and narrow, vertical, steel-framed multiple-light windows in all elevations. Original metal downspouts are in place on the north and south elevations.

There is a modern noncontributing greenhouse located near the northeast corner of the armory. The greenhouse is constructed of fiberglass, with an arched roof. The south end contains two centered metal louvers with a single metal door to the west. A metal exhaust pipe protrudes from the wall to the east of the louvers and rises slightly above the greenhouse roof.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The Roff Armory exhibits a rectangular plan that was standard for WPA armories. The building is divided into three functional sections, a central drill hall area and two administrative/garage sections on the east and west. The original floor plan has been maintained. In the administrative/garage sections, rooms lie on either side of an east-west central hallway. A supply room with the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 13

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

original ammunition vault and a large four-bay garage occupy the south half of both the east and west sections. Both areas still retain their original walls, floor, and ceiling. On the north side of the hallways are classrooms, storerooms, and restrooms. At the end of the hallway in the east section is the set of original double wooden doors that led to the drill hall, and now lead to a gymnasium. The original concrete ceiling and floor and the stone walls are still present in the central hallways and many of the rooms. A dropped ceiling and carpet has been added to the classrooms. All of the interior doors in the armory are the original wooden doors and still have their original hardware. Many of the light fixtures are original as well.

The drill hall retains much of its original interior. The original stage, located on the north wall, has been enclosed with corrugated metal and is now used for storage. To the west of the stage are steps leading down to an original wood door that accesses the underground rifle range, which is currently used for storage as well. The drill hall is divided into two sections by a metal wall running east to west. The metal wall does not reach all the way to the ceiling of the barrel roof, but stops at the rafters, which are original. The area above the rafters is still open, resulting in the drill hall retaining its original feeling of openness. The north half of the drill hall is currently used for a basketball court for the local schools. A dropped ceiling has been added and the original 1937 wood-block floor has been replaced with a new wood floor of narrow planks. A score board has been mounted on the north wall, and bleachers have been placed below the stage area. The south half of the drill hall is currently used as an additional garage for Roff Public School buses. The original wood-block floor has been replaced with concrete. There is a door in the metal wall that connects the north and south halves.

The garage areas of the east and west sections are still intact, with original ceilings, floors, walls and doors. The east garage area is used as a shop by the Roff FFA program while the west garage area is used by the Roff Public School District as a garage for its buses.

Alterations:

Alterations to the exterior have been almost non-existent. The original windows are still intact, but those on the east and south elevations have been covered with metal to keep them from being continually broken. Six of the nine original wooden overhead doors have been replaced with metal overhead doors. A noncontributing modern fiberglass greenhouse has been built near the northeast

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 14

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====
corner of the building for the FFA program, but is not connected to the building. Except for these minor changes, the Roff Armory is essentially unaltered from its original appearance. It retains an extremely high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship and conveys the feeling and association of its past environment.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 15

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

SUMMARY:

The Roff Armory is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the economic context of Works Progress Administration projects in Roff, Oklahoma, 1935 - 1937, and within the military context of national defense requirements of the Oklahoma National Guard's local units in the era between the two world wars. It is also eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C for its architectural significance as an example of WPA building style and methodology locally and in Oklahoma. The armory was constructed between 1935 and 1937 by local men who were qualified for work relief under WPA guidelines. The project brought \$84,833 into the economy of Roff, Oklahoma by employing skilled and unskilled workers for more than seventeen months. The armory also filled a military need for an adequate, secure drill hall and arms storage building for the Headquarters Battery and Combat Training, 1st Battalion, 160th Field Artillery and the Headquarters Battery and Combat Training, 3rd Battalion, 189th Field Artillery of the 45th Infantry Division of the Oklahoma National Guard. The Roff Armory is significant architecturally as an excellent, intact example of WPA Standardized style architecture. The materials, native stone, and workmanship, evident in the masonry, reflect both the goals of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma and the practical considerations of using unskilled labor to construct large public buildings. As it retains a high degree of integrity, the Roff Armory is able to convey the necessary feeling and association within these three areas of significance.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Oklahoma suffered severely during the initial years of the Great Depression, from 1929-1933. Oklahoma was a predominantly rural state, where in 1930, 65.7 percent of the population lived in rural areas, and twenty-seven of the state's seventy-seven counties had no "urban" areas or towns of more than 2,500 persons. Drought and general agricultural failure during the 1920s and 1930s, combined with a downturn in the petroleum industry, exacerbated the general economic depression. Rural communities, towns, and cities, which functioned as agricultural or petroleum service centers, consequently foundered.

Oklahoma's state and local governments, as was the case in other states as well, were unable to provide much help for citizens, whether urban or rural. Limited relief offered by counties did not alleviate the suffering, nor did meager annual appropriations by the state legislature. No public funding was available to maintain the existing infrastructure, and private charity failed to create or

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 16

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

to provide adequate assistance for relief initiatives. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration, established in May of 1933 by the Roosevelt administration, provided work relief programs along with some direct relief, in terms of food, clothing, and stipends. However, realizing that its efforts were insufficient to assist all those in need and responding to the call for a revamped relief system, the Works Progress Administration was created in 1935. The urban employed and displaced farm families combined to create a situation in which 33 percent of all Oklahoma families, 900,000 men, women, and children, were on the direct relief rolls by the time that Roosevelt created the WPA by executive order in May, 1935. By July 1935, there were 127,416 jobless men certified to work on WPA projects in Oklahoma.¹ By November 1935, 372,753 Oklahomans, including women and children, were receiving relief from WPA programs.²

The inauguration of the Works Progress Administration in 1935 stands as one of the benchmarks of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" for the United States. Administered nationally by Harry Hopkins, the program was designed to assist in lifting the nation from the depths of severe economic depression. Make-work projects provided work-relief for literally millions of individual citizens whose lives had been devastated by the near-collapse of the American economy. The infusion of cash into work-relief projects all over the state made a significant economic impact on hundreds of communities. During the seven-and-one-half-year life of the WPA, more than \$10.75 billion were expended, of which Oklahoma received more than \$185 million for projects ranging from school lunch programs, flood control, and archeological excavations, to major construction projects such as armories, highways, bridges, schools, stadiums, and museums.³

Chambers of Commerce and planning committees drew up specifications to meet three major criteria established by the administration: 1) projects must meet a well-defined community need; 2) each project must be sponsored by a public body, such as a city or county government or school district, which was required to provide from 10 to 25 percent of the project cost in cash and/or materials; and 3) 90 percent of those hired must be unemployed employable workers who were carried on the relief rolls. Compensation was to be based on 130 hours of work for \$21 (later \$23) per month, for unskilled labor. In June of 1935 Oklahoma WPA Director General William S. Key estimated that there were already "70,000 employable unemployed" ready to work on his agency's projects throughout the state; by November of that year, 67,973 people were at work for the WPA, and by January of 1936, WPA rolls reached an all-time high of 94,281.⁴

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 17

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====
The town of Roff is in the southwestern part of Pontotoc County, located in the heart of the most fertile region in what was the Chickasaw Nation. The town was originally settled by Joseph T. Roff, after whom it was named. In 1883 he drove a herd of 2500 cattle to the area and settled there. Joseph Roff's wife was Indian, allowing him to use all the land he desired within one-fourth mile of any other claim. He claimed 700 acres and built a house. In 1887 Joseph Roff secured tenant farmers to cultivate his land. The land produced a very fine crop of grain and cotton, and as a result other white settlers came into the area and began to cultivate it. By 1890, Joseph Roff put up the first general merchandise and grocery store as there were some two dozen families living in the vicinity at the time. The settlement that developed was granted a post office on June 14, 1890, and the town of Roff was established.

Also in 1890 the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad built a line through Roff. The building of the railroad caused considerable growth of the town. The old town of Roff was located on the north side of where the railroad went through, but after the building of the railroad most of the businesses moved south of the railroad to the present site of the town. The new town sites were surveyed south of the railroad and business lots and residence lots were offered for sale. Over a thousand lots were sold ranging from \$30 to \$50 each. Joseph Roff, who was one of the three officers of the Townsite Company, granted the claim deeds to the purchasers while the warranty deeds were given by the government. By 1900 the town had about 500 people, which in a few months had increased to fifteen hundred. With the advent of the railroad, farmers were in direct contact with the markets, which expedited the growth of the town. The soil surrounding the town was suitable for the cultivation of corn, cotton, wheat, oats, and also fruit, producing high yields. By 1901, Roff had one cotton mill and three cotton gins; one wholesale grocery; telephone service; two banks; three drug stores; three hardware stores; three lumber yards; one newspaper; one brick yard; four general merchandise houses; three grocery stores; three furniture houses; one sheet metal works; one elevator and mill; three blacksmiths; two hotels; three livery barns; and one bakery. The town had become a well developed and agricultural community. By 1908 Roff had a population of 2,000, and by 1910, the town was a business and trading center for a wide scope of the surrounding area.⁵

While in the beginning the town was centered around agricultural production, many people soon became involved in petroleum exploration/production and oil field services. In fact, Pontotoc County became the hub of some of Oklahoma's richest oil production. The agricultural depression in the late 1920s, which was compounded by overproduction of petroleum and a consequent drastic drop in oil

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 18

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

prices in the early 1930s, put hundreds out of work. The catastrophe affected Roff and Pontotoc County as it did the rest of the state. The federal government had instigated relief programs such as the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Public Works Administration (PWA), but the impact from these programs was limited. Creation of the Works Progress Administration in May 1935 brought a new attack on the problems of the Depression. The WPA was designed to combat record national levels of unemployment by setting up public works projects. WPA work gave men and women a dignified way to earn an adequate living. By October 1935, 132 men in Pontotoc County were employed by the WPA, 49 of them assigned to quarry rock to be used on various WPA and PWA projects in the county.⁶

Armory construction was the first major thrust of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma. By mid-1937, 126 armories had been constructed throughout the United States, with 51 of these projects located in Oklahoma. When the WPA ended its program in 1943, 54 armories had been built and 53 others "reconstructed" in the state. The new construction infused \$3.5 million into local Oklahoma economies.⁷

Groundbreaking for the Roff Armory took place in the fall of 1935, and construction proceeded through the rest of the year, through 1936, and into 1937. Due to labor shortages, material shortages, and weather-related shutdowns, a short project expanded into a long one. Finally finished in March, 1937, the armory was dedicated on March 26, 1937. On that day, Roff celebrated with an open house and banquet. General Key, state WPA director, and other state and local dignitaries participated in the dedication, and the program concluded with a dance in the new armory.⁸

WPA projects in 1935-1937 propped up the sagging economy of Pontotoc County. By May of 1936 alone, estimated WPA expenditures in Pontotoc County totalled more than \$204,875 on projects ranging from farm-to-market roads to traffic lights and sewing rooms. Seventy-five percent of the expenditures went to labor alone. The WPA's cost on the armory project was \$79,838.20. A break down of the numbers show that \$41,491.80 was spent for relief labor; \$7,724.93 for non-relief labor; \$21,985.43 for materials and supplies; \$8,331.74 for equipment; and \$324.26 for other expenses. An additional \$4,994.80 was expended from sponsor contributions in the form of wages, materials and supplies, and equipment. All totaled the armory brought \$84,853 into the economy of Roff.⁹ In human terms, 136,328 man-hours of labor went into the armory's construction. These figures testify to the labor-intensive nature of WPA projects, which were designed to provide as much work as possible for those on relief rolls. Most of the hours were consumed in hand labor--stone cutting, concrete-pouring, and installing the wood-block floor

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8

Page 19

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

in the drill hall (pine blocks were cut, primed, set in asphalt, sanded, oiled, and polished, in sections). A concrete floor would have sufficed, but ample time and labor were available to create a more complex floor.¹⁰

Upon completion, the Roff Armory became the home of the Headquarters Battery and Combat Training, 1st Battalion, 160th Field Artillery and the Headquarters Battery and Combat Training, 3rd Battalion, 189th Field Artillery of the 45th Infantry Division, Oklahoma National Guard. Reorganized under the National Defense Act of 1920, the Guard was an integral part of United States military preparedness. Since 1920, approximately five-sixths of America's military strength lay with "citizen soldiers"--National Guard divisions and Reserve divisions in nine corps areas across the Nation. Each corps area had one Regular Army division, two National Guard divisions, and three Reserve divisions. Oklahoma, along with New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado, formed the 45th Infantry Division of the National Guard within the Eighth Corps. Despite inadequate training facilities, the Oklahoma National Guard provided service during various natural disasters and civil disturbances in the 1920s and 1930s. Because the Guard paid its members a monthly fee, which they spent locally to feed and clothe their families, Oklahoma communities actively competed to secure local Guard units during these years. Roff had already been the home of the two Guard units for some time before the armory was built.¹¹

The National Guard received only one-tenth of the War Department's budget in the interwar years, and equipment was surplus from World War I. Many units needed permanent training, drilling, and storage facilities, as Guard members were required to meet 48 drills per year. Units without permanent armories usually rented space in warehouses that often lacked proper security. Four hundred new armories created by the cooperative effort of the federal and local governments helped correct this serious deficiency.¹²

The new Roff Armory provided permanent housing for the two local National Guard units. The new facility was more than adequate for the detachments' needs. The building was divided into separate areas for the two units, each area serving specific functions. The entire central section running north to south housed the drill hall, comprising the stage and the drill floor. The east and west wing sections, housed each unit's arms vaults, supply rooms, dressing rooms, classrooms, offices, storage rooms, locker rooms, and garages. The east and west wings are mirror images of each other providing separate areas for the two units. A door to the west of the stage leads to the underground rifle range located beneath the stage. Thus the building provided for virtually every training need,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 20

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

except for field training exercises.

Due in large measure to the WPA armory-building program, the 45th Infantry Division was able to achieve a level of military efficiency and readiness that prepared it to be among the first four National Guard divisions federalized in late 1940 by President Roosevelt. After the United States entered World War II, the 45th saw action in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy.¹³

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The Roff Armory exemplifies WPA military architecture in Oklahoma. In the mid-1930s two armory plans were developed by Major Bryan W. Nolen, an Oklahoma City architect and National Guard officer selected in 1935 to serve on the staff of WPA administrator General William S. Key. Nolen's exterior design indicates the building's functions. He planned for every armory to have a drill hall section, usually having a high ceiling and either a barrel or a flat roof and also a flat-roofed, single-story extension (office, garage, and arms storage section) on one or both sides, the number depending on the number of guard units (one, two, or four) to be housed in the building. Design was flexible, allowing for changes in orientation of the building depending on street locations or size of the property. The WPA preferred to use locally purchased building materials, and therefore armories were constructed of native stone, usually quarried locally, or brick, manufactured within the state. Using locally quarried stone, which was labor-intensive, was a means of reaching the WPA goal of maximizing employment.

WPA architectural philosophy rejected ornate features, intricate designs, and elaborate trim; therefore, WPA armories tend to be straightforwardly utilitarian. They have a strong horizontal massing which is often relieved only by vertical Art Deco detailing or by virtue of being a provincial interpretation of a romantic high style, such as Tudor. The massive pilasters and parapets over the entrances and drill hall section are vertical Art Deco touches that lighten the otherwise fortress-like appearance of the Roff Armory.

The overall appearance and detailing of the armory reflect the minimal funding for materials, as well as the use of unskilled and skilled labor. The WPA armories, as exemplified by the Roff facility, may not be architectural masterpieces in the classical sense, but they served the WPA's purpose - to make work, and to provide secure space for national defense units. WPA armories exemplify the New Deal's practical determination to "do something - and to do something now." As David Baird notes in his survey of WPA structures of Oklahoma,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 21

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

WPA buildings are "the architecture of the poor," "mute reminders of the emotional distress and physical pain many Oklahomans suffered during the 1930s and of the enlightened relief effort by the Federal government that alleviated much of the suffering."¹⁴ In type, style, scale, materials, and workmanship, WPA armories, of which the Roff Armory is an excellent example, are unique when compared to the rest of the built environment.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8

Page 22

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

ENDNOTES

1. Dianna Everett, Clinton Armory National Register of Historic Places Nomination, and Marlow Armory National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, 1994.
2. The Ada Weekly News, November 28, 1935, page 5.
3. Everett, Clinton Armory National Register Nomination and Marlow Armory National Register Nomination, 1994.
4. Ibid.
5. Pontotoc County Historical and Genealogical Society, History of Pontotoc County (1976), 93-96.
6. The Ada Weekly News, October 3, 1935, page 4.
7. Ibid.
8. The Ada Weekly News, April 1, 1937, page 3.
9. The Ada Weekly News, March 25, 1937, page 3.
10. Jill Marsh, Duncan Armory National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, 1996.
11. Everett, Marlow Armory National Register Nomination, 1994.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9, 10

Page 23

Roff Armory
name of property
Pontotoc County, Oklahoma
county and State

=====

Bibliography

The Ada Weekly News, July 1, 1935 - April 1, 1937.

Everett, Dianna, Clinton Armory National Register of Historic Places Nomination, and Marlow Armory National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, 1994.

Marsh, Jill, Duncan Armory National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, 1996.

Pontotoc County Historical and Genealogical Society, History of Pontotoc County, 1976.

=====

Verbal Boundary Description:

The property consists of Lots 1 (one), 2 (two), 3 (three) and 4 (four) of Block 107 (one hundred and seven), Roff original plat, Pontotoc County.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the area historically associated with the Roff Armory and as legally recorded in Book 775, page 91, Pontotoc County Clerk's Office.



Roff Armory





Roff Armory



