



Auditoriums & Convention Halls

Plus

Tips for Documenting Historic Details

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Editor

Lynda Ozan
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State Historic Preservation Office
Oklahoma Historical Society
800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
405-522-4484
okhistory.org/shpo

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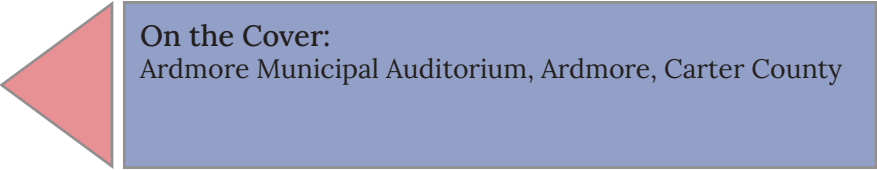
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On the Cover:
Ardmore Municipal Auditorium, Ardmore, Carter County

AUDITORIUMS AND CONVENTION HALLS IN OKLAHOMA



Tulsa Convention Hall, Tulsa, Tulsa County

Auditoriums and convention halls are a centerpiece of civic life in any community. They are gathering places of all types of events from school sporting events and graduations to civic productions and government meetings. As such, these buildings can be some of the biggest and most designed buildings in town. They can be standalone buildings or spaces integrated within a larger building. Regardless of however big or small the building or space may be, there is no question that these spaces hold significance to a place's history of recreation and culture. That being said, let's take a tour of Oklahoma from the lens of these local civic landmarks.

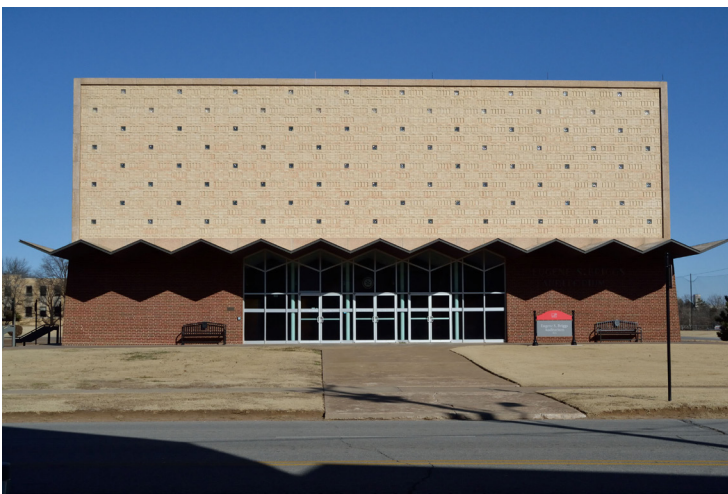
Starting in the south-central, we have the Ardmore Municipal Auditorium in Ardmore, Carter County (on cover). Built in 1941-1943 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the building was designed by local architects J.B. and Ben White who incorporated the existing circa 1916 Convention Hall into the design. The building is a two-story, blond and red brick building designed in the Art Moderne architectural style. When completed, the new auditorium increased the available seating to 3,500 and had better acoustics with its arena-type layout and unobstructed visuals with a new, self-supporting roof system, eliminating the interior columns of the previous space. The completed space was also enhanced by the inclusion of central heat and air conditioning. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2006 for its association with the WPA and for its architectural style.

The Tulsa Convention Hall in Tulsa, Tulsa County, also known as the Tulsa Municipal Theater or the "Old Lady on Brady", was built in 1913-1914 as a four-story, barn-like structure. Composed of steel, masonry, and brick, the building had some impressive features that included the "only municipal pipe organ west of the Alleghany Mountains and paid for by popular subscription", a 13-foot forward slope to the stage, and two jacks or "screws" that could raise the floor in the back of the auditorium. These jacks could also lower the floor to make it level so that the space could better accommodate convention activities. It also had a stage arrangement whereby the building could be opened up on both sides of the stage to allow for processions to move from the exterior, through the building on the stage, and out the other side. In a 1952 remodel of the building, many of

these features were lost. The building is credited with hosting Tulsa's first grand opera, the state's first major convention of Civil War Veterans in 1918, and the first International Petroleum Exposition in 1923. It also housed refugees from the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. The building ceased functions as the municipal convention hall and theater in 1977, when the City of Tulsa built a new facility. And though the building has experienced much change in its over 100-year lifespan, it is back to being a performing arts theater in a newly vibrant arts district in Tulsa. The building was listed in the National Register in 1979.

In Enid, Garfield County, on the campus of Northern Oklahoma College (formerly Phillips University) in 1958, the Eugene S. Briggs Auditorium was completed. Designed in the Modern Movement with strong Neo-Expressionism by the local architectural firm of Wheeler and Wheeler, the large building has three distinct sections: the lobby, the auditorium, and the stage house. A steel superstructure with a tactile patterned, contrasting colored brick curtain walls and glass block comprises the exterior envelope. The front façade has an unusual angular pattern while the two side elevations have zigzagged wall construction that is acoustically functional. As the building's "form follows [its] function", the auditorium is significant not only for its architectural merit, but also for its impact on the educational programming of the city and university culminating in the building being listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2017.

On the west side of downtown Oklahoma City, sits the Public Works Administration (PWA) built Municipal Auditorium (now known as the Civic Music Hall). Designed by architect Josephus Overton Parr and boasting a 6,000-person capacity, the large five-story building, built between 1936-1937, is constructed of limestone and blond colored brick in the Art Deco architectural style as part of the Oklahoma City Civic Center. There is also a contributing plaza in front of the building that enhances the entry experience. The building was listed in the National Register in 2016 to recognize its almost 90-year life. During that time, the building has hosted a wide variety of entertainment and recreation activities including plays, concerts, conventions, dances, circuses, athletic events, and also functions as an art center. The building is also significant as an excellent example of the Art Deco architectural style built by the PWA. The building ceased functions as a convention hall and athletics venue in 1962 when a new convention hall was built on the east side of downtown and all-sports arena was built at the State Fairgrounds. As such, the building was renovated to a music hall, which it still functions as today hosting a variety of plays, concerts, and recitals.



Eugene S. Briggs Auditorium, Enid, Garfield County and Civic Center Music Hall, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County

Lastly, we will look at the Stigler School Gymnasium-Auditorium in Stigler, Haskell County in eastern Oklahoma. This Works Progress Administration (WPA) built building is just one example of the many such public and recreational buildings in Southeastern Oklahoma built between 1935 and 1943 by the WPA. The rusticated and coursed native sandstone building, with a slight Art Deco influence, is a single-story building with an arched roof associated with the gymnasium-auditorium space while roof over the classrooms is flat. The building is significant as a product of the WPA's mission to employ people, mainly coal miners in the Stigler area, during the Depression. This multi-purpose space also helped lift the spirits of the local community by providing a space for school and community activities, especially sporting events. The Stigler School Gymnasium-Auditorium, and many others in Southeast Oklahoma, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.



Stigler School Gymnasium, Stigler, Haskell County

As we have seen from our brief tour of auditoriums and convention halls in Oklahoma, they come in all shapes, sizes, materials, and ages. From the very early days of statehood to the modern times, these spaces help create a sense of place and community for their respective locals with many of these buildings still in use as such today. So, the next time you want to have a night on the town or find some community pride, look no further than these hubs of civic entertainment and recreation.

Written by Sara Werneke, OKSHPO

AFTER THE TORNADO: RECOVERY AT THE CHICKASAW NATIONAL RECREATION AREA, SULPHUR, OK

The night of Saturday, April 27, a tornado touched down in the Veterans Lake area of the Chickasaw National Recreation Area and moved northeast into the City of Sulphur, which suffered massive damage to its historic downtown and residential neighborhoods. The recreation area received significant damage from both the tornado and heavy rain. Several buildings and structures, plus thousands of trees, were damaged or destroyed.

Following the tornado, the National Park Service quickly deployed an Incident Management Team which included law enforcement, safety, and natural and cultural resource experts. The park also received assistance from state agencies and other NPS units from across the country. Meanwhile, park staff were working alongside the other crews to secure the recreation area, assess damage, remove debris, and to make repairs to trails and other infrastructure.

The museum storage building initially appeared to have been severely damaged by a fallen tree, but once the tree was removed, the building had only minimal damage and collections were intact. There was substantial damage to several non-historic buildings in the maintenance area.

Several historic buildings suffered minor roof damage, including the Travertine Nature Center, but the Mission 66 Black Sulphur Comfort Station had more substantial damage, with much of its roof missing. Flooding in Travertine Creek, which runs beneath the Travertine Nature Center, damaged HVAC ducting for the main exhibit hall causing ongoing humidity and temperature issues. There was also minor to moderate damage to trails and roads throughout the historic district and the rest of the park.



Clockwise from upper left: The Black Sulphur Springs Pavilion (NHL District) had Minor Damage to the Roof and Entrance Sidewalk From a Large Tree Strike; The Monkey Tree, a Community Landmark in Walnut Grove (NHL District), Survived with Moderate Damage; and The Civilian Conservation Corps-built Comfort Station in Bromide Springs (NHL District) was Barely Clipped by a Fallen Tree



As the recovery planning proceeds, a positive and timely opportunity exists because the park already has received funding from the Great American Outdoors Act to undertake numerous projects such as roof replacements, a new maintenance building and rehabilitation of historic properties in the Platt National Historic Landmark District. There is intersection between that project and the needs that arose following the tornado. In close coordination with SHPO, damage assessment teams of architects, structural engineers and public health officers followed to identify which buildings were safe for occupancy and which historic properties in the Platt NHL District and elsewhere in the park were too badly damaged to use.

Teams identified that major damage to or destruction of trees and vegetation occurred throughout the NHL District, particularly in Flower Park, the Black Sulphur Springs picnic area, and Walnut Grove. Luckily, the beloved Monkey Tree, a tight grouping of three Osage orange trees at the Walnut Grove picnic area, survived, though long term care will be needed to return it to health.

The dense tree cover throughout the park was a character defining feature of the designed, naturalistic landscape. 500,000 trees and shrubs were planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s during the development of what was then the Platt National Park. To address the significant damage to the landscape, NPS began a landscape recovery project this summer, which will focus on the needs of Flower Park, a key connection with the City and an area heavily used by the community. That effort will include public meetings to gather input about the community's desires for the recovery of that area.

NPS is also closely following the recovery in the community and the park continues to welcome visitors. Approximately 95% of the park is once again open and operating. While long-term challenges remain, we are encouraged about the future that can bloom from the tornado's destruction.

For more information, follow the park on Facebook, X, and Instagram.

SIX TIPS FOR DOCUMENTING HISTORIC DETAILS BEFORE THEY DISAPPEAR

As they say, “once something is lost, you can never truly get it back” and that is as true for buildings and structures as anything. Once something is altered or demolished, it can never really be rebuilt to the way it was before. The best thing to do to make sure that these details are not lost to history is to preserve them in place. Sometimes that is not always an option, so then it becomes a matter of documenting the details or structures before they are gone. And even if there are not any changes to the property anticipated, things happen (tornados, floods, earthquakes) and it’s always a good idea to have a visual record of what the building looks like in present day, just in case.

Piggybacking off an article published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in July 2023, here are six ways to make sure that the record of what a property looks like today remains useful information for what could happen tomorrow.

1. What could be lost?

The most important question to ask oneself when starting to document a resource is “what could be lost?” Other aspects to consider are materials and craftsmanship and what are the character defining features that make the resource unique? If you keep these questions in mind when evaluating a resource, you will have a better sense of the hierarchy of needs and what type of documentation you should employ to record the answers to those questions.

2. Worst-case scenario

If the unthinkable occurs and the whole property is gone overnight, do you have enough information about it to rebuild it? If the answer is “no”, then maybe your documentation is lacking. All too often we have the mindset of “it’ll be there tomorrow so I’ll do it then.” But sometimes tomorrow doesn’t come for a resource and then you are kicking yourself for not taking the time to document it while you could.



Downtown Sulphur, April 27, 2024, tornado damage

3. Architectural photos

As such, the most basic and easiest form of documentation is taking photographs of the entire property. You don't need to be a professional photographer to take photographs of buildings and structures, you just need to keep a few things in mind when you're snapping your photos:

- Make sure you have the big picture. Take photos from a distance and include the surrounding environment to put the building, structure, or detail in its context.
- Take the photos from multiple angles. Move around the building or structure to give a 360-degree view of the resource, if possible.
- Once you have the overall view of the property, move in to take photos of specific features, finishes, and details.
- Be sure to document the full exterior and interior and don't forget to document the roof, if you can. If there is an adjacent building that is taller than what you are documenting, see if you can get access to a higher vantage point to take photos from above.
- Make sure that the photos are in focus and taken at the largest possible settings. The higher the resolution, the better.
- Create photo keys using a site plan/satellite image and floor plans with numbered arrows in the location of the photo pointing in the direction the camera was facing that corresponds with a number that the photo has been labeled. It will explain what we are looking at and where.

4. Written narrative

Follow up the photographs with a written description of the property and be as descriptive as possible. Here are some things to keep in mind while writing the narrative:

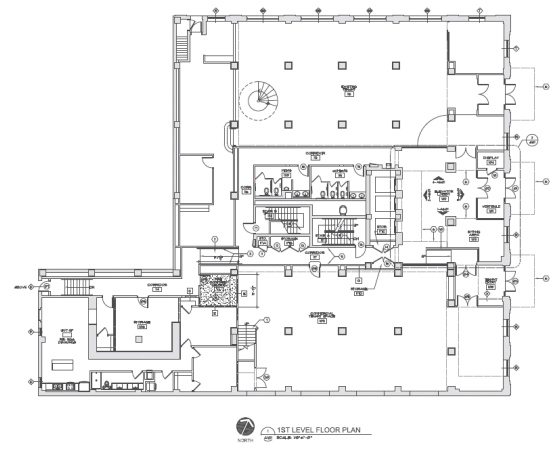
- Start with the setting. Is it in the middle of an urban commercial block and have one street facing façade and one alley elevation or is it on the corner and have two street facing façades? Is it a rural stand-alone structure that can be viewed from all sides? Are there other functionally related structures on the property and if so, what are their proximity to each other? Make sure all this described.
- Be methodical in your description as you move around and through the building or structure. You might start with the primary façade and describe the resource top-to-bottom, left-to-right. Then, moving right around the building, describe the side elevation top-to-bottom, left-to-right. Then moving around to the rear elevation and describing it in the same fashion. Keep going until the entire exterior of the building is described and then describe the interior in a similar, methodical way. This will help organize your thoughts and make it easier for readers to understand the resource.
- Be thorough, even when it seems overly repetitive and clunky. It is better to be too specific than not enough. For example, if the windows are original, paired, double-hung, six-over-six, wood with shared soldier brick lintels and shared cast stone sills, then say that. This level of description tells us window age, configuration, type, lite arrangement, material, and how the openings are finished. Being this specific will also help identify when a feature is different. If all the windows are six-over-six except one or two, then that can tell you something about what's happening on the interior, like those two smaller windows correspond to bathrooms.



Architectural Photo, Rev LW Thomas Homestead, Summit, Muskogee County



Architectural Photo, Hotel Dale, Guymon, Texas County



L to R: First Christian Church of Oklahoma City, demolished, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County;
Detail photo of Anderson Building, Sapulpa, Creek County; and Floor plan, Beacon Building, Tulsa, Tulsa County

5. Architectural drawings

You can further document the resource with measured architectural drawings. These can be as simple as sketches or as detailed as a full set of CAD (Computer Aided Drafting) drawings. These will help the most in terms of showing spatial relationships between features, so if you ever need to rebuild a wall, you know exactly where it needs to go. The minimum drawings or sketches you should have are:

- Site plan – shows the resource within its broader context. If you have a hard drawing or sketching these out, they can be easily achieved with the use of satellite imagery that is readily available through Google Earth, Google Maps, Bing Maps, and ArcGIS.
- Floor plan(s) – shows the relationships of the walls or structural components in relation to themselves. If they are measured, they can be to scale for a more accurate representation. If they are a sketch, you can notate the dimensions on the sketch to keep that record. You can also notate where windows, doors, and other openings or features, like fireplaces, are.
- Exterior elevations – shows how the resource looks from the exterior. Sometimes these can be supplemented with photographs, but you can write on and call out things, like materials or unique conditions, on a drawing that might be difficult to do on a photograph.
- Detail drawings – can be used to “zoom in” on a specific detail or feature that might otherwise be hard to depict in a smaller scale. These can be used to record the profile of a window frame or crown molding or the specific pattern of flooring or ceiling tiles.

For more stringent requirements for documentation, you can refer to the HABS/HAER/HALS documentation guidelines which “provide detailed information on how to execute measured drawings, photographs, and historical reports in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Architectural and Engineering Documentation and supplemental program requirements.”

www.nps.gov/subjects/heritagedocumentation/guidelines.htm.

6. Instinct

Trust your gut. If you think, even for a second, that you should document something, do it. Go ahead and take that photo of the old bridge. Do that rubbing of the pattern of a mosaic tile floor in the bathroom. Sketch that three-quarter view of the building. Draw the floor plan of that church with the pews and alter notated. They may prove useful for posterity.

While we don’t know what tomorrow will bring, the one thing it always brings is change. Here in Oklahoma, we are no stranger to change and disasters, both natural and man-made, and while we might be able to run away from them, our built environment cannot. We are constantly under threat of fires, tornados, earthquakes, and floods, and if those don’t claim our resources, the threat of the wrecking ball is also all too prevalent. In these uncertain times we live in, taking the time to record what we have now, is more important now than ever.

White, Meghan. “6 Tips for Documenting Historic Details Before They Disappear.” National Trust for Historic Preservation, July 07, 2023, <https://savingplaces.org/stories/6-tips-to-document-historic-details-before-they-disappear>.

HOW TO GET THE WORD OUT: ADVOCATING FOR HISTORIC PROPERTIES

An essential part of preserving old places is getting community support. Below are some tried and true methods for successful public relations campaigns.

Create a consistent and effective communication strategy for your historic property. A campaign to save a place benefits from identifying and targeting your audience with a key message. Publicly presenting your message through the media can also help bring attention to policy and decision makers who could ultimately be deciding the fate of your project.

Tell your story to local, state and national audiences. Telling your story to a reporter can seem taxing the first time but with more practice, your delivery becomes smoother. It is important to know your story inside and out but don't seem rehearsed. Be genuine and make your message stand out. Don't be afraid to follow up with them (repeatedly).

If your issue is time sensitive, consider writing an op-ed or a letter to the editor. This allows you to reach a larger audience and communicate your story/opinion quickly. Always include relevant evidence to enhance your credibility. And if it is necessary, encourage the readers to take action.

Social media campaigns are not much different. A social presence is mandatory these days but you must have a plan for it to be successful. Set goals, define the audience and list resources that support your work (personnel, financial, etc.). Do not feel that you have to be on every platform; pick the one that works best for your cause.

With just a small amount of time each day, you can build an engaging social media presence. Talk about what you are already doing and make it simple for people to connect to your project. You will build a community and find people as passionate about your project as you.

The places we love tend to be pretty, dramatic and/or visually appealing. Use photography and videos to your advantage to provide additional context. Always caption your photographs and include closed captioning, if possible, for videos. Consider hosting a tour of your project on your chosen social media platform.

Speaking of tours, host a community tour. Help people in your community learn about your project by providing a tour: of the property, the neighborhood, the city. These are a great way to get influencers and decision makers emotionally invested in the project.

Finally, provide the community the opportunity to comment: create a video of short interviews with community members speaking about the building, provide a place to write down comments at a public venue (think farmers markets, local fairs, state fairs, etc.). This input will allow you to build a more compelling story.

Harnessing the power of media, print, video or social, can be a transformative way to connect with advocates, build a community and drive support for the project. In the world of preservation, media helps to gain interest and support for preservation projects.

The SHPO hosts many virtual events throughout the year. Some of its many events have included training on federally mandated programs, research interests, history programming, and themed-based lectures.

Workshops

During the month of November, the SHPO will host their Section 106 (Kristina Wyckoff), National Register of Historic Places (Lynda Ozan), and Tax Credits (Sara Werneke) workshops.

Lunch and Learns

Held at least once a month, these sessions focus on a variety of topics including research techniques, rehabilitation projects, and advocacy. The last Lunch and Learn for 2024 will be held on October 22, 2024 and will focus on the Chapman Ranches of Oklahoma/Texas lead by Rick Mitchell of Mead & Hunt.

Webinars

For 2024, our webinar series theme was Hidden Oklahoma: Fascinating Stories about Familiar Places. Attendance throughout the year was very high. For 2024, the topic will be focusing on topics requested during our surveys for the upcoming State Plan. Watch OKSHPO's social media and website for speaker announcements.

Don't worry if you missed a topic of interest, you can always view the presentation on the OKSHPO YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@okshpo

Keep checking back on the OKSHPO calendar of events page for new opportunities so you don't miss the chance to register to attend: www.okhistory.org/shpo/events.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Route 66 represents a unique moment in history that continues to define the nation's identity: the rise of the automobile and its implications of freedom, mobility, and a quintessential American story.

Grants from the Preserve Route 66 Grant Fund will help preserve and enhance historic places on or connected to Route 66 for future generations.

Specifically, the Fund provides financial support to public agencies, tribal governments, or nonprofit organizations to preserve and interpret historic places along the Route 66 corridor in the following states: Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, or California.

Grants range from \$2,500 to \$10,000 with an application deadline of October 16, 2024.

To learn more, visit savingplaces.org/preserve-route-66-grant-fund-guidelines.



Sapulpa, Creek County, Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA HERITAGE PRESERVATION GRANT

APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR 2024/2025 GRANT CYCLE

The Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) is pleased to announce the opening of applications for the 2024/2025 cycle of the Oklahoma Heritage Preservation Grant Program. This grants-in-aid initiative, now in its sixth year, supports projects that aim to collect, preserve, and share Oklahoma's rich history across the state.

For this grant cycle, the OHS has designated \$600,000 to be awarded to qualifying projects. Grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$25,000 are available to municipal, county, or tribal governments, not-for-profit historical organizations, and support groups for these entities. All non profit applicants must be registered and in good standing with the Oklahoma Secretary of State. The grants will focus on four main categories: collections, exhibits, programs, and capacity building.

Key Dates:

- Application Opening Date: September 2, 2024
- Optional Draft Application Deadline: October 7, 2024
- Application Closing Date: November 1, 2024, at 5 p.m.
- Award Announcements: Late January 2025

“The Oklahoma Heritage Preservation Grant Program continues to positively impact communities across Oklahoma,” said Nicole Harvey, director of strategic initiatives and grants administrator for the OHS. “Entering our sixth year, this program remains dedicated to empowering local and tribal governments, as well as historical organizations, to preserve and honor our state’s heritage for future generations.”

Organizations interested in applying must have a strategic plan to be eligible. If an organization does not currently have a strategic plan, they may apply for funding specifically for developing one.

For more information about the grant program, including the official rules, please visit okhistory.org/grants or contact Grants Administrator Nicole Harvey at 405-522-5202 or grants@history.ok.gov.

HISTORICAL MARKER PROGRAM APPLICATION DEADLINE

OCTOBER 15, 2024

The Oklahoma Historical Society accepts applications for new historical markers twice yearly, with an upcoming deadline of October 15, 2024. Markers can commemorate a person, place, or event that has local, state, or national significance.

A successful application should consist of the completed application form, a narrative history of the event, person, or place to be commemorated, a map and photograph of the marker's location, and suggested marker text. It is the responsibility of the applicant to establish historical significance through a documented narrative history of the person, place, or event. The Oklahoma Historical Society reserves the right to edit the final marker text.

Free-standing cast aluminum markers and red granite markers are the two most common marker types sponsored under the program. Applicants are free to work with a manufacturer of their choosing, but marker design and text must comply with specifications and standards set by the Oklahoma Historical Society. Historical markers must be paid for by the applicant and must be accessible to the public.

Visit okhistory.org/markers to access the application form. Contact Matthew Pearce at 405-522-8659 or matthew.pearce@history.ok.gov for any questions about the program. Completed applications can be sent to Matthew Pearce by email or by mail to Oklahoma Historical Society, 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive, Oklahoma City, OK 73105.