

**Thematic Survey of New Deal Era Public Art in Oklahoma  
2003-2004**

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To:

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Geography at Oklahoma State University, represented by Dr. Alyson L. Greiner as the Principal Investigator and Dr. Mark A. White as the art historian, conducted a Thematic Survey of New Deal Era Public Art in Oklahoma during the 2003-2004 fiscal year. This survey was carried out under contract to the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office. The survey included all 77 counties in the state. Thirty-seven examples of public art were identified, documented, and photographed.<sup>1</sup> If this art was located within a building, that property was also minimally surveyed using the Historic Preservation Resource Inventory Form. Surveyed properties were also photographed in order to provide views of at least three elevations of each property.

This document constitutes the project report for the thematic survey. It explains the research methods used, includes a discussion of the kinds of art and properties surveyed, and presents the results of the project. The historic context provides background information on the development of New Deal art programs, giving particular attention to Oklahoma's experience. An annotated bibliography reviews the essential documents and publications related to the various federal programs that sponsored New Deal art. Professor Mark White of the Department of Art at Oklahoma State University prepared narrative descriptions of the art that include short biographies of the artists, as well as a glossary defining the terminology used in reference to the artworks. Taken

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<sup>1</sup> This is actually an undercount because attempting to count works of art presents a series of difficulties. For consistency in this project, multi-panel murals are counted as one item, or cycle, and multiple works created by the same artist for one building are counted as one item. So, for example, Acee Blue Eagle designed and painted seven life-size figures and numerous other designs in two of the rooms in the old gymnasium at the University of Science and Arts in Chickasha. Here, these multiple creations are tallied as one work.

together, this information can be utilized to help determine the eligibility of specific properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, with subsequent amendments, established a unique federal, state, and local partnership for the identification, evaluation, and protection of significant prehistoric and historic resources. While each state determines its specific program emphases and defines its major goals, cultural resource planning at the federal level builds upon work at the state and local levels. These interconnections are outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines (1983). For example, thematic surveys—conducted at the local level and managed by state historic preservation offices—constitute part of the cultural resource identification process or inventory phase. These surveys provide documentation and evaluation of properties potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The next stage involves applying the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. These criteria establish standards and guidelines that are applied to all properties nominated to the National Register. A property that successfully meets these criteria may be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Identifying, evaluating, and nominating properties involves considerable fieldwork and research. As research proceeds it is not uncommon to discover new areas or additional properties that merit further study, or to find that individual properties or districts have lost integrity or no longer exist. Such discoveries are documented and provide information for future planning decisions. Therefore, comprehensive preservation

planning involves a series of interrelated steps, and remains an organic process that incorporates new information as it is acquired.

This Thematic Survey of New Deal Public Art in Oklahoma demonstrates the implementation of Oklahoma's comprehensive planning process. The survey identifies individual properties that: (1) meet eligibility criteria for the National Register, (2) warrant further study for inclusion in the National Register, and (3) are ineligible for the National Register. Surveys such as this not only increase the area of the state surveyed, but also provide important data for making sound cultural resource management policy and city planning decisions.

Completion of this project was a collaborative effort. Dr. Alyson Greiner, Associate Professor of Geography at Oklahoma State University, served as principal investigator for the grant and conducted the survey. Dr. Mark White, Assistant Professor in the Department of Art at Oklahoma State University, served as the art historian and project consultant. All work was performed under a contract from the Oklahoma Historical Society (03-401) using funds from the U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service.

## II. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of the Thematic Survey of New Deal Era Public Art in Oklahoma followed standard scholarly practice. Secondary sources were essential for determining the parameters of the project including the kinds of public art created and the places that received the public art. Primary materials including Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, newspaper accounts, and archival materials were also consulted. This project also involved travel to and fieldwork at the buildings housing the public art.

The principal investigator followed the procedures used in previous survey projects completed for the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office (OK/SHPO), and the guidelines for thematic surveys set forth in *Architectural/Historic Resource Survey: A Field Guide*. Specific procedures included:

- 1) Compiling a comprehensive list of properties that contain Depression-era public art. Sources used to generate this list include: Nicholas A. Calcagno's *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma: A Bicentennial Project* (1976), Barbara Kerr Scott's *New Deal Art in Oklahoma* (1983), and Kathleen Grisham Roger's *Incidence of New Deal Art in Oklahoma: An Historical Survey* (1974).
- 2) Consulting other relevant thematic surveys conducted for the OK/SHPO such as W. David Baird's "WPA Structures Thematic Survey (1987).
- 3) Identifying existing local histories, especially city and county materials, for use in the preparation of the historic context. Materials such as newspaper accounts and locally written reports were located in the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City.

- 4) Conducting site visits in order to photograph and document both the art and the building in which it is housed. Properties were surveyed using the Historic Preservation Resource Inventory Form. Black-and-white photographs were made of the buildings while high-resolution digital color photographs were made of the art.
- 5) Preparing thumbnail sketches of the buildings or facilities containing the art, and writing narrative descriptions of the art itself.
- 6) Evaluating properties in terms of their eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.



### **III. PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND AREA SURVEYED**

The fundamental objective of this Thematic Survey of New Deal Era Public Art in Oklahoma is to identify those individual properties that on the basis of age and integrity warrant further study to determine their eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. For the purposes of this project, the art needs to have been created between 1933 and 1943 as part of one of the several federally sponsored art programs such as the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP), the Section of Fine Arts (Section), and the Works Progress Administration/Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP).

A related objective of this project is to increase the area of the state inventoried at the thematic and reconnaissance level. This constitutes part of the ongoing Oklahoma Comprehensive Survey Program. Properties surveyed for this project were recorded at a minimum level of documentation and were classified on the basis of whether they warrant further study or do not warrant further study for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. An additional objective includes identifying and annotating the reference materials necessary for completing any National Register nominations for properties located in the study area.

The survey area specified by this project covered the entire state; however, this does not mean that New Deal era public art was created for or exists in every county or town in the state. Rather, places and buildings that possess New Deal art are more the exception than the norm.

#### **IV. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology of this project followed professional standards. Initially, the principal investigator compiled a bibliography of material pertinent to the topic of New Deal art. Once a bibliography had been assembled, the principal investigator read the pertinent sources, developed an annotated bibliography, and prepared a historic context. Fieldwork began during the winter of 2004. During the course of the research for this project it was often necessary to meet with and informally interview certain individuals knowledgeable of a particular building's history or artwork itself. In the process, individual properties containing New Deal art were documented and photographed, as was the art itself.

Numerous visits were made to the map library in the Edmon Low Library on the OSU campus in order to consult the various Sanborn Fire Insurance maps covering the places with buildings possessing New Deal art. These maps and USGS topographic quadrangles were consulted for lot and block numbers, dates of construction, and township and range information needed to complete the Historic Preservation Resource Inventory forms. Black-and-white 5x7 inch prints with appropriate labels were placed in acid-free envelopes, and color prints of the art were generated. The principal investigator then prepared thumbnail sketches for the project report, and the art historian developed narrative descriptions of the art.

Following the completion of fieldwork, data on survey forms was entered into the computer using the OK/SHPO Access 97 template. The forms, 5x7 inch prints, and field

notes were placed in file folders and organized by address. Several computer-generated maps showing the locations and kinds of art were also designed.

## V. RESULTS

This section highlights the findings of this survey from the standpoint of historic preservation research.

1. This thematic survey produced minimum-level documentation for 37 properties in the state. Thumbnail sketches were prepared for all documented properties.
2. Fourteen additional properties were identified as possessing public art but do not warrant further study. In all but one of these instances the public art dates from the New Deal era. These properties are listed in Section XIII of this report which explains why they were classified as not warranting further study at this time.
3. Seven properties listed in the National Register were updated. These include:
  - a) Cherokee Female Seminary, Northeastern State University Campus, Tahlequah;
  - b) Garfield County Courthouse, Enid (114 W. Broadway Street);
  - c) Health and Physical Education Building, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, Chickasha (1700-2000 Blocks of S. 17<sup>th</sup> Street);
  - d) Oklahoma Historical Society Building, Oklahoma City (2100 N. Lincoln Boulevard);
  - e) U.S. Post Office, Anadarko (120 S. First Street);
  - f) U.S. Post Office, Cordell (121 E. First Street);
  - g) U.S. Post Office, Sayre (201 N. Fourth Street).

4. Seven properties documented are potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of their association with New Deal art. These properties include:

- a) U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, Vinita (120 E. Illinois Avenue);
- b) U.S. Post Office, Nowata (109 N. Pine Street);
- c) U.S. Post Office, Okemah (418 W. Broadway Street);
- d) U.S. Post Office, Watonga (121 N. Noble Avenue);
- e) U.S. Post Office, Weatherford (107 E. Franklin Avenue);
- f) Jacobson Hall, University of Oklahoma, Norman (550 Parrington Oval);
- g) Wilson Elementary School, Oklahoma City (2215 N. Walker Avenue).

5. A total of 15 of the 37 properties documented and surveyed warrant further study.

With one exception these properties are post offices that were the beneficiaries of art produced as a result of the Section, one of the New Deal programs. These properties warrant further study:

- a) Adams Hall, University of Oklahoma, Norman (307 W. Brooks Street);
- b) U.S. Post Office, Seminole (120 E. Oak Avenue);
- c) U.S. Post Office, Coalgate (38 N. Main Street);
- d) U.S. Post Office, Marietta (118 W. Main Street);
- e) U.S. Post Office, Drumright (118 N. Ohio Avenue);
- f) U.S. Post Office, Madill (223 W. Lillie Boulevard);
- g) U.S. Post Office, Stilwell (16 S. Second Street);
- h) U.S. Post Office, Sulphur (1100 W. Second Street);

- i) U.S. Post Office, Pawhuska (137 E. Sixth Street);
  - j) U.S. Post Office, Waurika (121 W. Broadway Avenue);
  - k) U.S. Post Office, Hollis (120 N. Second Street);
  - l) U.S. Post Office, Marlow (320 W. Main Street);
  - m) U.S. Post Office, Wewoka (115 W. Second Street);
  - n) U.S. Post Office, Purcell (228 W. Main Street);
  - o) U.S. Post Office, Poteau (115 N. Witte Street).
6. Because this study surveyed public art, the properties documented were public facilities. Most of the buildings were post offices, but a handful were education buildings on college campuses including the University of Oklahoma, the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha, and Bacone College in Muskogee. One courthouse, the Garfield County Courthouse in Enid, was also surveyed.
7. Narrative descriptions were prepared for all art in buildings deemed to warrant further study, or be potentially eligible for or already listed in the National Register.
8. A glossary of art terms used in the narrative descriptions was also prepared to facilitate understanding of relevant art movements and philosophies.
9. Brief biographical sketches were also prepared on most of the artists whose works are discussed in this project.

## **VI. KINDS OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES PRESENT IN THE SURVEYED AREA**

The nature of this survey has influenced and necessarily limited the kinds of historic properties surveyed and reported on here. New Deal art was specifically a public art produced for public buildings such as veteran's hospitals, community centers, public schools, and various other government buildings. For this reason, two basic categories of public facilities were surveyed during this project: government properties and educational properties. They are described briefly below.

### Government Properties

When the government embarked on an emergency construction program in the middle part of the 1930s as a measure to put unemployed persons back to work, the construction of federal buildings accelerated. Most importantly for this project, post offices were one kind of federal building recommended for every state. The New Deal art program most responsible for bringing art into public places and spaces—and particularly post offices—was the Section of Fine Arts (Section).

To aid the logistics of construction and hasten the process of designing and engineering new buildings, generic plans or types of post offices were utilized. Based on the limited results of this survey, it appears that four basic post office styles are found again and again in Oklahoma's small towns. Architecturally, those four styles are based on an Art Deco type, a Moderne type, a Federal Revival type, and a Classical Revival

type. The Art Deco type appears to be the most ubiquitous type in the state, and certainly was the most common type surveyed during this project.

Good examples of post offices designed in the Art Deco style include those in Pawhuska (137 E. Sixth Street), Sayre (201 N. Fourth Street), and Wewoka (115 W. Second Street). A good example of a post office in the Moderne style is the one in Coalgate (38 N. Main Street). The best example of a post office designed in the Federal Revival style is the Watonga post office (121 N. Noble Avenue). Other good examples include the post offices in Drumright (118 N. Ohio Avenue), Marietta (118 W. Main Street), and Madill (223 W. Lillie Boulevard). The best example of a post office designed in the Classical Revival style is the post office in Anadarko (120 S. First Street). The Oklahoma Historical Society (2100 N. Lincoln Boulevard) is easily the best example of a state building (not a post office) designed in the Classical Revival style.

### Educational Properties

A small collection of educational properties were surveyed during the course of this project. These properties are associated with the following colleges or universities: University of Oklahoma (Norman), University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (USAO; in Chickasha), Northeastern State University (Tahlequah), and Bacone College (Muskogee). Because so few of these properties were surveyed, the best example of a particular architectural style is often the only such example documented in the study.

The following architectural styles and specific examples were noted in connection with the educational properties surveyed during this project. Adams Hall and Jacobson

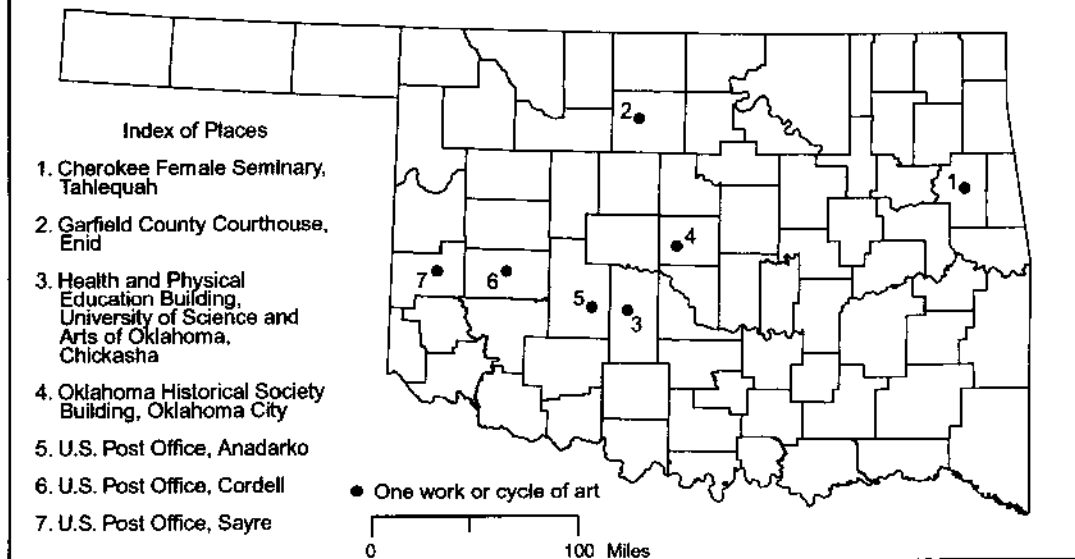


Hall at the University of Oklahoma provide excellent examples of the Collegiate Gothic architectural style. The Moderne style is reflected in the Health and Physical Education Building on the USAO campus. Finally, the Cherokee Female Seminary at Northeastern State University is an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival style.

## VII. LIST OF NATIONAL REGISTER UPDATES

1. Cherokee Female Seminary  
Northeastern State University Campus  
Tahlequah, OK  
Note: Listed in the National Register as of April 5, 1973.
2. Garfield County Courthouse  
114 W. Broadway Street  
Enid, OK  
Note: Listed in the National Register as of August 23, 1984.
3. Health and Physical Education Building  
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma  
1700-2000 Blocks of S. 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Chickasha, OK  
Note: Listed as a contributing resource to the Oklahoma College for Women Historic District as of September 9, 2001.
4. Oklahoma Historical Society Building  
2100 N. Lincoln Boulevard  
Oklahoma City, OK  
Note: Listed in the National Register as of February 21, 1990.
5. U.S. Post Office  
120 S. First Street  
Anadarko, OK  
Note: Listed as a contributing resource to the Anadarko Downtown Historic District as of December 10, 1990.
6. U.S. Post Office  
121 E. First Street  
Cordell, OK  
Note: Listed as a contributing resource to the New Cordell Courthouse Square Historic District as of January 7, 1999.
7. U.S. Post Office  
201 N. Fourth Street  
Sayre, OK  
Note: Listed as a contributing resource to the Sayre Downtown Historic District as of December 9, 2002.

## Updates to the National Register: Locations of Properties Possessing New Deal Art



## VIII. THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF UPDATES TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER, INCLUDING NARRATIVE DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR NEW DEAL ART

1. **Cherokee Female Seminary** (Northeastern State University Campus, Tahlequah). Built from 1887-1889.

This building provides an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival architectural style. It has three stories, an L-shaped layout, and a wooden clock tower. Two turreted towers with steep, slate, conical roofs flank the main entrance. All of the windows have slender, stone sills that contrast with the building's brickwork. Round-topped arches enhance the doors and windows.

The building has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1973. The areas of significance were then deemed to be Native American history and education. This list should be expanded to include significance for its architecture and art. Concerning its art, the building possesses two murals designed and painted by Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah. These men were Indian artists and members of the Kiowa Five. One mural, *Kiowa Buffalo Hunt*, is on the first floor just inside the main entrance. The other mural, *Kiowa War Dance*, is in the main foyer on the second floor. The integrity of these murals has been maintained, and they are in very good condition. The history, architecture, and art of this building should bolster the rationale for its National Register listing.

*Kiowa War Dance*, by Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah, 1934, oil on plaster.  
*Kiowa Buffalo Hunt*, by Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah, 1934 oil on plaster.

Under the PWAP, Mopope and either James Auchiah or Jack Hokeah created two murals for Seminary Hall at Northeastern State University. *Kiowa Buffalo Hunt* and *Kiowa War Dance* depict familiar themes in the context of their respective careers. Mopope demonstrated more fondness for the early nineteenth-century bison hunts than most of his colleagues, and he returned to the subject throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The horizontal, nearly panoramic format of the mural provided him with a sprawling, dynamic scene of the engagement between hunters and bison. The hunt clearly takes place before the advent of guns among the Kiowa, and the hunters ride with bows drawn, hoping to make a quick kill. Mopope's staging of the action, with hunters riding dangerously close to the bison, suggests that he may have been conscious of the popularity of Charles M. Russell's bison hunting scenes. Russell had attained fame for his own scenes of Northern Plains tribes engaged in the hunt, and such imagery had become well known in Oklahoma. Mopope gives the imagery his own stylistic cast, however, with the use of broad areas of flat color and with sharp contours, which he has uncharacteristically painted white.

The depiction of traditional dances in *Kiowa War Dance* is also characteristic of the art of the Kiowa Five. The artists emphasize the rhythm of the dance through the five drummers who beat the large war drum and sing a traditional accompaniment. In addition, the multiple positions of the dancers, with two presented frontally and two presented in profile, also creates a visual rhythm that alludes to the varied movements of

the dance. Apart from the artists' interest in rhythm, they also demonstrated a concern for the details of dress, and they clad the outside dancers in nineteenth-century garb while the inside dancers wear the twentieth-century powwow garb that the Kiowa artists often used. Such a contrast suggests a historical continuity between the earlier performances and later performances of the dance, and the importance of tradition among the Kiowa.

2. **Garfield County Courthouse** (114 W. Broadway Street, Enid). Built in 1934.

This massive limestone building, which occupies a sizable portion of a city block, reflects a minimalist example of the Art Deco style. The courthouse is a boxy structure that achieves depth with the use of a series of tiered facades that accentuate the entrances to the building. The building has three-stories and an exposed basement level. Decorative fluting marks the pilasters by the entrances on the north and south sides. Stylized geometric designs also decorate the central portions of the façade on the north and south elevations.

The courthouse is already listed in the National Register and is significant for its relationship with social history, particularly as expressed by the New Deal murals that decorate several of the interior halls and walls. The artist, Ruth Monro Augur, painted a mural cycle that depicts selected stages in the settlement history of the region. This art was produced as a result of the WPA Federal Art Project. It is unique because it represents the only extant and in situ example of a mural cycle completed in the state with WPA/FAP sponsorship.

*Trail Blazers of the Cherokee Strip: The Hunting Trail; The Explorer's Trail; The Cattle Trails; The Commerce Trail; The Homemaker's (or Home-Seeker's) Trail; The Rancher's Trail,*<sup>1</sup> by Ruth Monro Augur, 1935-37, oil on canvas.

Augur's mural cycle traces the long history of region that became Oklahoma from Native American life before European contact, to the arrival of the Europeans, and finally to the development of commerce and industry with the creation of the territory and state. During the 1930s, individual states became increasingly interested in both American history and their unique role in it. Eastern states began to rediscover and restore the disintegrating relics of their colonial past, and western states looked to their frontier history with a fresh perspective. Native American life before European contact and the expedition of Spanish General Francisco Vasquez de Coronado became a favorite subject for western states hoping to attract tourists. Augur created her mural in that spirit, and she insisted on accuracy in the dress and accoutrements. Her naturalistic style emphasizes this desire for accuracy, while the bright coloration hints at the bright light of the region. The choice of a largely pastel palette may also betray the influence of California Impressionism and Augur's training in that state.

The Enid cycle differs from many New Deal murals in that a carefully defined space had not been created for murals. Augur was forced to work around the architectural quirks of the courthouse, which contained long, narrow strips of space adjacent to the larger expanses of wall space. She often filled these problematic areas with anecdotal details, particularly with scenes of wildlife. In addition, she used maps and didactic text

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<sup>1</sup> The titles used here reflect those that Augur used on the panels which accompany this mural cycle, and differ only slightly from those Calcagno (*New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 1976, p. 9) uses.

to fill in these spaces, creating an educational component uncommon to most New Deal murals.

Augur begins the cycle with *The Hunting Trail*, which depicts bison hunting techniques before the arrival of Europeans and the importation of horses. At left, bison graze freely on the rolling plains of the region, and Augur adds a touch of humor to this otherwise tranquil scene by introducing a dialogue between a bull and two jackrabbits. However, chaos will soon erupt when the hunters, disguised under bison robes to affect a stealthy approach, unleash their arrows on the unsuspecting herd. The women wait atop the butte in the meantime to begin their job of skinning and butchering the fallen bison. Flanking *The Hunting Trail*, Augur created a map of the southwestern United States and traced Coronado's journey, which created a transition to the next mural in the cycle, *The Explorer's Trail*. The map is crowned by a Bald Eagle, however, claiming the Spanish expedition as a part of American history.

*The Explorer's Trail* depicts Coronado's crossing of the Cherokee Strip in June 1541 during his North American search for Cibola or the fabled cities of gold. Led by the Pawnee slave named Turk, Coronado began a trek northward and arrived at Wichita territory in southern Kansas before realizing the futility of his mission. Augur created an elaborate parade of Spanish military in their armor and pomp. She conspicuously added a Franciscan friar, probably Fray Marcos de Niza who first told Coronado of Cibola. As Coronado progresses through the territory that will eventually become Oklahoma, his progress is carefully observed by Plains Indians, who send smoke signals to warn of the



Europeans' approach. The narrow strip at the extreme right provided a problematic space that Augur filled with a roadrunner to add a touch of local flavor.

*The Explorer's Trail* subtly prepares the viewer for the next mural *The Cattle Trails* through the presence of Coronado's team of horses. Coronado brought approximately 1,000 horses to North America, but lost many during his expedition. The strays bred and created the extensive wild herds in the West. Proliferation of these herds encouraged the growth of ranching in the West.

*The Cattle Trails*, which Augur dated historically to 1866-1886, depicts the days of the large cattle drives. Augur has flanked the mural with another map tracing the three major trails from Texas, the Western, the Chisholm, and the Shawnee, which passed through Indian Territory and into Kansas. Brands from various ranches frame the map and provide a decorative, albeit historical context for the adjacent scene of an 1860s cattle drive. In 1866 following the conclusion of the Civil War, Texan cattlemen began to drive beef cattle to western Kansas primarily via the Chisholm Trail to Abilene. The Chisholm passed through present-day Enid, and Augur has depicted an extensive Texan herd watering in an area known as Government Springs Park. Like the previous murals, the artist filled the scene with anecdotal details such as the chuck wagon circle and the arrival of a large herd to the watering hole. Augur attempted to maintain her commitment to veracity in the details of dress and objects, but some influence from the romantic Hollywood cowboys of the 1930s appears in the group standing at center.

*The Cattle Trails* represents one form of early commerce in Indian Territory before the arrival of the railroads in 1886, and the next mural in the cycle, *The Commerce*

*Trail*, compares closely in theme since it depicts the transportation of goods by animal before steam-powered locomotion. Augur dated *The Commerce Trail* between 1866-1893, and attempted to capture every form of transportation used in the commerce of this period. At right, oxen teams driven by bull-whackers hauled heavy loads within the territory and to surrounding states at a relatively slow pace, while smaller loads could be delivered faster by mule trains driven by mule-skinners. The horse-driven stagecoaches in the background offered the most expedient service. Deliveries to tribal reservations were generally handled by Indian freighters, which used surplus U.S. Army wagons and gear. Augur suggests that these freights, pictured at left, were relatively complicated with numerous warriors ensuring the safe transportation of the load to the reservation.

Both the large drives of *The Cattle Trails* and the transportation methods of *The Commerce Trail* ceased almost entirely when the railroads entered Indian Territory in 1886 and official settlement of Oklahoma Territory began in 1889. The land runs that brought American settlers into Oklahoma Territory also receive inclusion in Augur's cycle in *The Homemaker's (Home-Seeker's) Trail*. Augur depicts the start of the Cherokee Strip run on 16 September 1893, which opened the territory that would include Enid. Military officials have signaled the official beginning and hundreds of settlers create clouds of dust as they race ahead to stake their land claims. Augur relied on photographs of the actual run to inform her image.

The final image in the cycle, *The Rancher's Trail*, returns to the theme of commerce but after the land runs, which promoted the growth of large ranches. Although the roping and herding of cattle is included in the image, Augur focuses most of her

attention on the branding of calves indicating the careful control of property that came with official settlement of the territory.

Augur's cycle provides an expansive view of both Enid and Oklahoma history from its prehistory to its territorial past. The murals offer a progressive view of modernization leading to the implied transition to the state of Oklahoma.

3. **Health and Physical Education Building** (1700-2000 Blocks of S. 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Chickasha). Built in 1927.

This building is on the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (USAO) campus and once served as the main gymnasium. It is a large, three-story building designed in the Moderne style. The first floor has a brown brick veneer while the second and third stories have a cream brick veneer. The second and third stories also possess brick pilasters with stone caps. A brick parapet with stone coping encircles the building. Recessed entrances on the east and west sides of the south elevation have stone and raised-brick door surrounds.

This building is part of the National Register-listed Oklahoma College for Women Historic District. When originally listed, the areas of significance were deemed to be architecture and education. This list needs to be revised and expanded to include art as another area of significance. Two classrooms (Rooms 201 and 202) in the building contain a cycle of murals painted in 1934 by Acee Blue Eagle for the Public Works of Art Project. Room 201 contains the life-size murals, *Buffalo Dancers* and *Moving Camp*, as well as some small, decorative and stylized bird designs. Room 202 contains the life-size murals, *Indian Spear Dancer* and *Dancer with Headdress*. Until very recently, a

third life-size mural, *Drummer*, also decorated a portion of one of the walls in the room. Unfortunately, water damage to that wall has caused the complete destruction of that mural. This room also contains a series of geometric designs, small bird designs as in Room 201, and a different, more abstract version of a thunderbird (described below).

The murals in both rooms are showing the effects of wear over the past 70 years, including scratching and chipping caused by student desks rubbing against the walls on which the murals are painted. Evidently some restorations were made to the murals in 2001, and this information is retained in the campus archives. In spite of their condition, these murals have retained their integrity. They are significant because they exemplify New Deal art that is strongly associated with Oklahoma's Indian heritage. Moreover, they are one of the few surviving examples of in situ art created in association with the Public Works of Art Project in the state.

University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma cycle, by Acee Blue Eagle, 1934, oil and tempera on plaster.

*Indian Spear Dancer*  
*Dancer with Headdress*  
*Drummer* (destroyed)  
*Thunderbird*  
*Buffalo Dancers*  
*Moving Camp*

Today, Blue Eagle's cycle for the former gymnasium at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma exists in a state of disrepair. Most of the murals still remain, fortunately, and the cycle contains a number of familiar images within the context of the artist's career. His stylized image of the *Buffalo Dancers*, crowned with a bison head and

a demarcation of the four cardinal directions, suggests the importance of ceremony in establishing a beneficial communion with natural forces. His *Spear Dancer* and *Dancer with Headdress* demonstrate the influence of the Kiowa artists, and Blue Eagle's fascination with the dances of the nineteenth century. In addition to the dancers, he included *Moving Camp*, which provides another reference to nineteenth-century Plains culture. He decorated the rooms with several geometric abstractions of birds including one complex thunderbird abstraction, the style of which not only originate in native aesthetic traditions but also speak to the lingering popularity of the art deco style. The birds are difficult to identify but may be eagles with their long wings and large tail feathers. Eagles hold a special place of reverence in Plains culture as the birds that fly highest and are therefore able to deliver prayers to the Creator. Similarly, the thunderbird is regarded as a manifestation of nature's power and holds a mythical position in Plains Indian cosmology.

Although the various murals do not contain a narrative, they offer traditional, affirmative views of Plains culture, and Blue Eagle likely chose his subjects out of personal familiarity and as a means of celebrating Plains life.

4. **Oklahoma Historical Society Building** (2100 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City). Built in 1929.

This is a three story Classical Revival style building with raised basement. A grand stairway leads to a recessed second floor entrance. The symmetrical façade is dominated by a two-story portico supported by ten Doric columns. Decorative cresting with a shell motif and small gargoyles tops and further distinguishes the portico. A new,

freestanding building of similar height and materials is under construction just to the east side. This building has been listed in the National Register since 1990. It is significant because of its architecture and its possession of ten murals depicting Indian figures and shields, identified and described below.

Spencer Asah, *Choctaw 1843, Secotan 1650*, 1937. Oklahoma City, tempera on plaster. Monroe Tsatoke, *Kiowa 1920, Cheyenne 1832, Kiowa 1832, Osage 1839, Kiowa 1900, Shield Designs (2), Comanche 1880*, 1930s. Oklahoma City, tempera on plaster.

Tsatoke's and Asah's murals for the Oklahoma Historical Building in Oklahoma City reveal a close similarity to the style they developed at OU, particularly the focus on a single figure suspended in space. With the exception of Asah's *Secotan 1650*, each mural depicts a tribe of Indian Territory at a specific moment in history with a great deal of attention given to details of formal dress. Most of the dates involve significant moments of interaction and negotiation with Europeans, Americans, and other tribes, which provided the artists with historical images of native dress. This selection of dates also suggests a subtle political interest in the transformation of native life under the influence of outsiders. Tsatoke's images of the Kiowa show the tribe in 1832 when the Stokes Commission first began to contact the tribes living in the Oklahoma region on orders from Congress; in 1900 when the United States included Indian Territory in the census; and in 1920 when another major census took place. The images describe Plains dress at the time of American contact, dress during the reservation period, and the powwow dress often worn by the Kiowa artists, respectively. Tsatoke also includes two neighboring tribes – the Cheyenne and the Comanche. He chose the date of the Stokes

Commission for his image of the Cheyenne but selected 1800 for the Comanche, possibly in reference to cessation of hostilities between the latter and the Kiowa. Finally, Tsatoke included two decorative touches in his mural cycle in the form of two shield designs that are most likely Kiowa in origin.

Asah's murals take a similar approach but he directed his attention to tribes from eastern North America: the Choctaw and Secotan. His image of the Choctaw in 1843 is drawn directly from George Catlin's 1834 image of the Choctaw stickball champion Drink the Juice of the Stone, and the Kiowa artist probably relied on one of the printed portfolios of Catlin's paintings for inspiration. Asah's dating of 1843 is puzzling in this context, however, and it is possible that the artist transposed the numbers. His image of the Secotan is most likely drawn from the pictorial accounts of John White, who helped establish the colony of Roanoke. White's watercolor drawings were engraved and distributed in the 1590s by Theodore de Bry. Asah's dating is problematic once again, although the artist may have intended to refer to the period of greatest interaction between the Secotan and Europeans.

5. **U.S. Post Office** (120 S. First Street, Anadarko). Built in 1935.

This is a three-story buff brick building with raised basement. It is designed in the Classical Revival style though its decorative details are minimal and include a limestone cornice with wide entablature and low relief carvings over the front doors. Rectangular windows create the effect of pilasters between the first and second stories.

This building was listed in the National Register as of December 10, 1990 as part of the Anadarko Downtown Historic District. The rationale for that listing drew on the significance of the sixteen Indian murals in the lobby. The murals, largely by Kiowa artist Stephen Mopope, depict Kiowas in various scenes and were the result of a Section commission. The building has retained its integrity and its association with New Deal art, specifically members of the Kiowa Five.

Anadarko Mural Cycle by Stephen Mopope and others, 1937.

Because Anadarko lies within the Kiowa Nation, Mopope's selection as artist is particularly appropriate. He is generally given full credit for the Anadarko cycle, but the Treasury Department Art Projects bulletin stated that Asah, Auchiah, and Tsatoke assisted in the creation.<sup>2</sup> This is understandable considering the extensive work required for the sixteen murals that decorate the Anadarko Post Office, and the cycle is undoubtedly one of the largest commissions for a post office. Mopope created a near compendium of the imagery he had favored since he began his art career in the late 1920s. His career as a dancer and his experiences on the powwow circuit most likely prompted the inclusion of several dance images such as *Two Eagle Dancers*, *Fancy War Dancer with Cedar Flute*, *Scalp Dance (Drum Chief Standing)*, *Individual War Drummer (Sitting)*, *Eagle Whip and Flute Dancers*, and *Two Women and Child Watching Dancers*. These subjects were within Mopope's repertoire, and many of the Anadarko images bear a close similarity to prints in the *Kiowa Art* portfolio. Other scenes seem to come from

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<sup>2</sup> *Treasury Department Art Projects Bulletin*, no. 14 (July 1937-January 1938), p. 23, in Holger Cahill Papers, Archives of American Art, reel 5290, frame 899.



the Kiowa past and Mopope's childhood such as *Two Men in Council*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Kiowa Moving Camp*, *Kiowa Camp*, *Buffalo Hunting Scene*, and *Indian Mother and Child in Cradle*. Finally, Mopope included a few images of Kiowa aesthetic heritage in *Medicine Man's Shield and Lance* and *Buffalo Hunter's Shield*, and also included a few decorative touches that seem more influenced by American popular imagery such as *Buffalo Skull with Crossed Arrows* and *Buffalo Head*. The images in total present a varied view of Kiowa culture that is both autobiographical and connected to larger themes within Kiowa culture.

6. **U.S. Post Office** (121 E. First Street, Cordell). Built in 1936.

This post office is designed in the Art Deco style. The building is one story with a flat roof, interior chimney, and basement. Cladding consists of limestone and brick veneers. The façade is symmetrical and limestone that is slightly fluted in appearance distinguishes the main entrance from the rest of the building. All of the windows are multipane; a pattern that is matched on the door and sidelights. Metal plaques showing the front and back of the Great Seal flank the entrance.

*The Scene Changes*, painted by Ila McAfee Turner, is the mural that decorates the interior wall above the postmaster's door. The mural was commissioned through the Section, and remains in very good condition.

*The Scene Changes*, by Ila McAfee Turner, 1938, oil on canvas.

The Cordell mural relies on a familiar convention of the passing frontier with the North American wilds, symbolized by the Plains Indian and the unbroken plains, supplanted by Western civilization, represented by pioneers, technological development and agriculture. As McAfee Turner explained: “The cowboy typifies the pioneer. The Indian on his horse heading out of the picture symbolizes the end of the freedom of life which was his heritage. The plow with the turned sod is symbolic of agriculture which followed closely after the cattle men. The homesteader’s cabin, with windmill, in the center of the panel, is indicative of the permanence of this new era as opposed to the tepee of the nomadic Indian.”<sup>3</sup> The bison, a lone wolf, and a Plains warrior pass off the landscape to the right while cowboy, steers, and a plow transform the landscape from the left. At center, McAfee Turner juxtaposes the wooden homestead with the hide tipi representing the future and past, respectively. Furrowed fields alter the rolling plains only slightly, and the artist was careful to suggest that a terrestrial continuity exists from the nomadic life of the Plains Indians to the agriculture and ranching of the European Americans. McAfee Turner uses uniform flora across the expanse of land, and the prairie dogs and quail stand outside the path of progress as though their existence remains unaffected by the technological and cultural changes taking place in the middle ground. As such, *The Scene Changes* depicts a wistful image of prairie history but an optimistic view of progress that represented a general history of Cordell and the surrounding region.

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<sup>3</sup> McAfee Turner quoted in Calcagno, p. 6.

7. **U.S. Post Office** (201 N. Fourth Street, Sayre). Built in 1938.

This is a one-story buff brick Art Deco style building. A wide band of limestone encircles the building and is capped with a projecting cornice. A large cast iron eagle marks the entrance. Tall, triple-hung windows break up the wall space on the front and sides of the building.

Vance Kirkland's mural, *The Opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Country*, is inside on the south wall. Some of the paint along the bottom of the mural has begun to flake. Painted in 1940, this mural represents another Section project that brought art into America's small towns during the Depression.

*The Opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Country,*  
by Vance Kirkland, 1940, oil on canvas.

Kirkland first began painting murals in 1936 for private commissions and for city businesses. His first involvement with the Section in 1938 resulted in a commission for the Eureka, Kansas post office entitled *Cattle Roundup*. Shortly thereafter in November 1939, he received the commission for the Sayre, Oklahoma mural *The Opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Country*, which he completed the following year. Like many Section murals, it depicts local history, specifically the 1892 run that eventually gave way to the founding of Sayre.

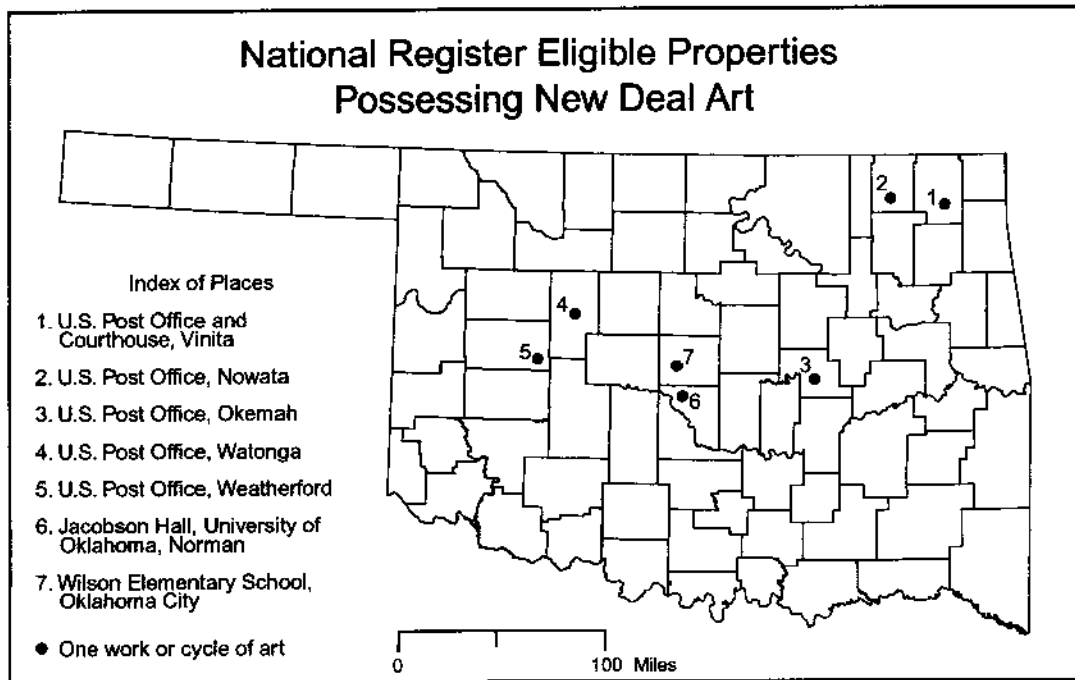
*The Opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Country* depicts a familiar image of the land run as a chaotic, furious race of lone riders, wagons, and even pedestrians. Kirkland focuses on a series of individual riders in the foreground forced to confront the chaos of a rearing horse and a stumbling runner. The background reveals more runners as

well as several stationary families and individuals at right. It is unknown whether these figures have arrived at their chosen plot of land or whether they are slow to embark on the run. Kirkland conveys his narrative through a naturalistic style subtly influenced by a planar approach to light and shadow that indicates a slight sympathy to abstraction. This amalgam of recognizable forms and traces of modernism is consistent with American Scene painting and anticipates Kirkland's future move to abstraction in the 1950s.

**IX. LIST OF PROPERTIES THAT ARE NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBLE**

1. U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
120 E. Illinois Avenue  
Vinita, OK
2. U.S. Post Office  
109 N. Pine Street  
Nowata, OK
3. U.S. Post Office  
418 W. Broadway Street  
Okemah, OK
4. U.S. Post Office  
121 N. Noble Avenue  
Watonga, OK
5. U.S. Post Office  
107 E. Franklin Avenue  
Weatherford, OK
6. Jacobson Hall  
University of Oklahoma  
550 Parrington Oval  
Norman, OK
7. Wilson Elementary School  
2215 N. Walker Avenue  
Oklahoma City, OK

## National Register Eligible Properties Possessing New Deal Art



**X. THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF PROPERTIES THAT ARE NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBLE, INCLUDING NARRATIVE DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR NEW DEAL ART**

1. **U.S. Post Office and Courthouse** (120 E. Illinois Avenue, Vinita). Built in 1938.

This is a three-story brick building in the Commercial Style with some modest Art Deco detailing. The central portion of the tripartite façade is slightly recessed and consists of limestone. Four fluted pilasters decorate the limestone on the second story, while low-relief engravings of ears of corn mark the wall space above the doors. An engraved eagle forms the centerpiece of the building between the two double-door entrances. Continuous courses of limestone encircle the building between the first and second stories, and at the top. Tall, slender windows enhance the verticality of the building.

Although the architecture of the building is modest, the building has retained its integrity. Moreover, inside the building on the first floor is the six-panel mural cycle, *Cherokee History*, painted by Randall Davey. These panels were created through the Section, one of the New Deal art programs. This building is noteworthy because of its association with public art depicting historical events of significance at the local, regional, and national levels.

*Cherokee History*, by Randall Davey, 1941 (tempera on canvas?)

Randall Davey's involvement with Robert Henri, John Sloan, and the New Mexican art community encouraged him to develop a subtle abstraction of form and a bright palette. *Cherokee History* is stylistically conservative compared to most of his

work of the 1930s and 1940s because of his desire for veracity. Davey paid close attention to details of dress and clearly relied on historical photographs as in the portrait of John Ross in the central panel of the eastern wall. The desire for a faithful representation in the Vinita murals was prompted in part by the controversy surrounding his 1939 Claremore, Oklahoma Post Office mural. That mural, *Will Rogers*, drew significant criticism from local residents who felt that Davey had overemphasized Rogers's career with the Ziegfield Follies. When Davey won the commission for the Vinita mural, Oklahoma Senator Josh Lee, concerned about the Claremore debate, cautioned publicly that the artist might have too little knowledge of Native Americans to complete the mural. With a second controversy brewing, Davey approached his second mural, a survey of Cherokee leaders and their conflicts with the British and Americans, with careful planning and research. Davey received some assistance on historical matters from popular journalist John Oskison, who had been born in the Cherokee Nation and was part Cherokee. Oskison's concern for the social plight of contemporary Native Americans may have had some influence on Davey's decidedly political images.<sup>1</sup>

*Cherokee History* focuses on two periods of tribal history: Cherokee conflict with the British in the 1760s and the events surrounding the removal of the tribe to Indian Territory in the 1830s. The six scenes are not presented chronologically suggesting that Davey intended to stress an ideological point through the arrangement. The three panels on the western wall begin the cycle and depict the Cherokee siege of British troops around 1760, the release of Chief Oconostota by the South Carolina Governor William

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas A. Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma* (Miami, Oklahoma: Pioneer Printing, Inc., 1976), 39.



Henry Lyttelton, and finally a composite scene which includes both Cherokee warriors harassing the British retreat from Cherokee territory and the Cherokee withdrawal from South Carolina to Georgia, respectively. Davey placed the catalyst for the scenes at left and right in the central panel. Lyttelton's detention of Oconostota was the result of a complicated series of events beginning with an alliance between the Cherokee and British in the 1750s. In exchange for Cherokee assistance against the French, the British built Fort Loudoun to protect the Cherokee from the pro-French Choctaw. Relations quickly soured, however, when a series of raids and retaliations between small Cherokee bands and British settlers resulted in deaths on both sides. Oconostota attempted to resolve the burgeoning conflict but met with evasion from most British officials. Lyttelton had organized a British response in the meantime and had imprisoned a large number of Cherokee. When Oconostota and Lyttelton finally met, the Governor insisted that twenty-four Cherokee be held accountable for the twenty-four deaths of British citizens, including Oconostota himself. Cherokee leader Attakullakulla negotiated Oconostota's release and promised to deliver the Cherokee personally responsible for British deaths. Davey's central panel depicts Lyttelton presenting the terms of release to a defiant Oconostota while British soldiers detain other Cherokee in the background.

Angered at British policy, Oconostota sought a treaty with the French and began a campaign to expel the British from South Carolina. He besieged Fort Loudoun and prevented reinforcements under Colonel Archibald Montgomery from quelling Cherokee resistance. Davey's left panel probably represents Oconostota's ambush of Montgomery's troops before they could arrive at Fort Loudon. The somewhat generalized

conflict set in the midst of dense foliage lacks either a view of the fort or the spectacle usually associated with a siege.

The Cherokee assault temporarily succeeded in driving the British out of South Carolina. Oconostota assured the British leadership of safe passage out of Cherokee territory, but several rogue bands continued to harass British troops. A British response to the harassment soon followed, and the Cherokee were forced south out of South Carolina and into Georgia. The right panel includes both events with Cherokee warriors firing at retreating British in the background and the Cherokee exodus from South Carolina in the foreground.

Taken together, the first three panels offer a narrative of conflict, resistance and oppression. Although Davey does not omit the violence committed by the Cherokee from his cycle, he generally casts Cherokee opposition in a noble, heroic light. Davey's residency in the Southwest had made him particularly sensitive to Native rights, and it is probable that he intended an image in support of Cherokee solidarity. This same cycle of resistance and oppression also dominates the last three murals, which includes Thomas Buffington addressing the Cherokee, the arrest of John Ross by the Georgia Guard, and the Trail of Tears, respectively. Like the first three panels, the last three are not arranged chronologically, suggesting a conceptual arrangement in which the first panel begins a narrative that is continued in the two flanking panels.

The first panel depicts the arrest of Chief John Ross, a political scandal that resulted from a complicated series of events. For nearly a century after resettlement in Georgia, the Cherokee coexisted relatively peacefully with the British and then the

United States, which had taken over control of eastern North America after the American Revolution. Conflict arose again in the 1830s when President Andrew Jackson decided to remove the Cherokee from eastern North America to make way for American settlement. The American government offered to purchase Cherokee territory in Georgia, but most of the tribal leadership opposed the sale. However, Cherokee leader Major Ridge supported the purchase and signed documents accepting the offer. Ross, acting in opposition to the Ridge's bargain, collected signatures from 16,000 Cherokee claiming that Ridge had no authority among the tribe to accept the sale. The state of Georgia responded in October 1835 by arresting Ross and seizing the signed documents. Davey depicts this very scene with Ross seated before the documents as the Georgia Guard enter to arrest him.

Despite Ross's protests, the American government moved the Cherokee from Georgia and Tennessee to Indian Territory in 1838-39. The resulting removal under armed guard has become known as the Trail of Tears to indicate the misery, sickness and death that accompanied the long, forced march during the winter months. In the right panel, Davey has depicted the physical and emotional hardship of the march through the sorrowful expression of the Cherokee and through the supine woman, who may be either sick or dead.

The Cherokee eventually resettled in the 1840s along the northeastern corner of Indian Territory, an area that would include the site of Vinita. Davey represents the continuity of Cherokee leadership and its transfer to Indian Territory in the left panel, which depicts Thomas Buffington addressing a collection of tribal members. Buffington is sometimes referred to as the last chief of the Cherokee because he wielded greater

political power than any subsequent leader of the tribe. Buffington had held the position of Mayor of Vinita in the early 1890s before his ascent to chief in 1899, and it is uncertain as to whether Davey captures the leader during his earlier or later post. Regardless, the artist considered Buffington's populist manner important, and the artist depicts the leader speaking from his buggy. The Cherokee leader had gained a popular following by meeting regularly and informally with his constituents.

Davey's concern for the historical details of his scenes proved successful. After the installation of the murals, the Postmaster of Vinita, Frank Bailey, reported to the Section of Fine Arts "that the murals and their installation are very satisfactory – and we consider them as a beautiful addition to this fine building."<sup>2</sup>

2. **U.S. Post Office** (109 N. Pine Street, Nowata). Built in 1938.

This is one story buff brick building with basement. Designed in the Art Deco style, it has a simple, symmetrical facade with recessed, decorative brickwork on door and window surrounds. Inside the building on the west wall is a mural by Woody Crumbo. The mural remains in good condition, as does the post office building. The building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of its association with New Deal art, and the Oklahoma Indian artist Woody Crumbo.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*The Rainbow Trail*, by Woody Crumbo, 1943 (tempera on canvas or plaster?)

Crumbo completed *The Rainbow Trail* for the Nowata Post Office in 1943, following the completion of his murals for the Interior Building and his resignation from Bacone College in Muskogee, where he had served as director of the art program. Like much of Crumbo's work, *The Rainbow Trail* depicts an image of nineteenth-century Plains life in the Traditional Indian Painting style. Crumbo's individual interpretation of Traditional Indian Painting incorporates the strong contours and bright, unmodulated colors used by contemporaries like Acee Blue Eagle. The tonal bands that line the contours add a decorative, stylized shading to the forms.

The riders depicted in *The Rainbow Trail* pause over a rough scrub of cacti and sagebrush, clearly startled by the appearance of a rainbow and the fantastical landscape indicated in the title. Crumbo's riders wear body paint and a sparse dress that would indicate a return from or the intention to battle.

3. **U.S. Post Office** (418 W. Broadway Street, Okemah). Built in 1938.

This is a one-story buff brick building with basement. Architecturally it reflects the Art Deco style, but is a modest example with few decorative details. It possesses a symmetrical façade, and a large iron grille with an eagle design marks the door. A very colorful mural designed and painted by Richard West in 1941 graces the west wall. Titled *Grand Council of 1842*, the mural remains in good condition though it was accidentally splattered with paint about 1991, when the interior of the building was repainted. This post office deserves listing in the National Register not only because of its association

with New Deal art and the Oklahoma Indian artist Dick West, but also because of its depiction of Indian history in the Okemah vicinity.

Cheyenne (1912-96), *Grand Council of 1842*, by Walter Richard West, (Wah-Pah-Nah-Yah, Wapah Nahyah, Light Foot Runner), 1941, egg tempera on canvas.

*Grand Council of 1842* depicts a significant treaty between the displaced Southeastern tribes, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole, and the Plains tribes of the area, such as the Cheyenne and Kiowa. The dispute between the two groups began over the dwindling bison herds in the area, as West noted: “When the territory tribes did not stop hide hunting, the Plains tribes started raiding the settlements and towns in the eastern part of the territory from the northern to the southern parts, burning cabins and driving stock.”<sup>3</sup> According to West’s research, the Creek’s took the initiative in settling the dispute by calling a council of the tribes at the Deep Fork River near Okemah. American officials, headed by General Zachary Taylor of Ft. Gibson and Creek Indian agent James Logan, helped to arbitrate the dispute successfully; however, the American military began construction of the nearby Ft. Washita that same year as a buffer between the competing tribes.

West included Taylor and Logan in the center of the composition among the large number of delegates from both Southeastern and Plains tribes. The primary officials from both groups have collected at the treaty table under both the seal of the Muscogee or Creek and a pair of peace pipes, indicating the formal and peaceful nature of the council.

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<sup>3</sup> West quoted in Calcagno, p. 21.

Other delegates from varying tribes listen attentively to the proceedings. The artist depicted numerous tipis at left and a collection of log cabins at right, indicating the presence and settlements of the Plains tribes and the Southeastern tribes, respectively.

Stylistically, *Grand Council of 1842* displays the careful attention to detail and specificity that characterizes Traditional Indian Painting and especially West's work. The artist often aspired to historical accuracy in the depiction of dress and architecture, and the careful drawing and coloring of the mural's forms indicates the desire to recreate every detail of the historical event. In fact, accuracy led West to study historical materials at the Smithsonian Institution, including a surviving painting of the council probably by the artist James Otto Lewis. West's naturalism in *Grand Council of 1842* would have been contrasted originally by a series of abstract Cheyenne designs derived largely from beadwork; the designs bordered the door and bulletin boards below the mural but were either removed or painted over during the history of the mural. This alteration may have undermined West's intent, but *Grand Council of 1842* remains a successful interpretation of local history.

4. **U.S. Post Office** (121 N. Noble Avenue, Watonga). Built in 1936.

This is a one-story brick building with basement that was designed in the Federal Revival style with a simple, symmetrical façade, modillions, and cornice returns on the gable ends. A keyed round arch with a sunburst motif frames the entrance. Matching eyebrow windows decorate the gable peaks and continue the sunburst design. This building is in very good condition. The mural, *Roman Nose Canyon* by Edith Mahier,

decorates the north wall. Because of its architecture and art, this building is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register. The art is significant because of its connection with the New Deal, and the local history of Watonga—specifically a manufactured controversy to bring attention to the mural and the town.

*Roman Nose Canyon*, by Edith Mahier, 1941, oil on canvas.

Edith Mahier's Watonga Post Office mural, *Roman Nose Canyon*, is perhaps the best known of all New Deal murals in Oklahoma. Mahier skillfully incorporated local history and contemporary tourism in *Roman Nose Canyon*. It depicts both the Cheyenne's confrontation with American settlers following the land run, and the surrounding landscape of Roman Nose Canyon, which had been the winter camp for the Cheyenne and was quickly becoming a contemporary destination for campers and naturalists. In the mural, Chief Henry Roman Nose stands at center with his wife, children, and fellow tribal members nearby. Roman Nose, or properly translated "Arched Nose," was one of the most prominent Cheyenne leaders during the Indian Wars of the 1860s. He was noted particularly for his headdress made with one buffalo horn and a train of black and red eagle feathers, which Mahier chose to omit in favor of a single feather.

The Cheyenne, who have come to water their horses, encounter settlers who have also come to water their livestock. For Mahier, the confrontation spelled the end of traditional Cheyenne life.

The settlers, also in search of water, have stopped their covered wagons near the stream, while they scan the horizon envisaging the gypsum pits, the flourishing wheat



fields, and their future city with its churches, school, homes and business houses. The young Indian stands holding his rifle, his defiance gone, but in its place wonder, for he is old enough to realize that he may never achieve those honors which his father and grandfather held dear; that he must find his place under a new system.<sup>4</sup>

As such, *Roman Nose Canyon* examined the familiar theme of the “vanishing race,” which had received treatment in other New Deal murals. Its notoriety came from the sensation that the Watonga Chamber of Commerce staged following the mural’s installation. Gerald Curtin, owner and publisher of the *Watonga Republican*, organized a nine-day protest in June 1941 involving Chief Red Bird, grandson of Black Kettle, his wife Prairie Woman, and their children. Red Bird expressed his distaste for the mural in state papers through an interpreter Joe Yellow Eyes. The Cheyenne protesters condemned Roman Nose’s physique as that of a “Navajo jellybean,” his absence of a proper headdress, and his breech-cloth as too short. Mahier responded that “I entered the competition mainly because few Oklahoma artists were participating and they were sending out this way eastern artists who were putting English saddles on Indian ponies. At least I didn’t do that.” Her anxieties may have been calmed by Curtin’s assistant at the *Watonga Republican*, Ernie Hoberecht, who confided: “It’s a publicity stunt . . . and everyone knows it is a joke. In fact, it’ll probably make you more famous than you already are.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Edith Mahier, “A Few Thoughts on Mural Painting,” Records of the Public Buildings Service, Record Group Number 121, National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>5</sup> Mahier and Hoberecht quoted in Karal Ann Marling, *Wall to Wall America: A Cultural History of Post-Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 279. Also see Arthur Silberman, “Watonga’s Day in the Sun or Trickster Comes to Town,” *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* (Winter 1988-1989): 374-391.

Mahier offered to repaint some sections of the mural but never did. Despite her presumed errors in the mural, she was fairly familiar with Native American culture. She spent much of her career at OU, and instructed a number of Native American artists such as Acee Blue Eagle and Dick West.

5. **U.S. Post Office** (107 E. Franklin Avenue, Weatherford). Built in 1937-38.

This is a one-story, flat-roofed, brick government building designed in the Colonial Revival style. Very wide stone lintels draw attention to the multi-pane windows. This pattern is matched by a wide panel of stone that marks the entrance. A narrow course of stone coping encircles the building at the tops of the walls.

This building is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register because of its association with New Deal art and the renowned American painter, Oscar Berninghaus. He painted the mural, *Terminus of the Railroad*, for the interior west wall of the post office as a result of his winning a Section commission. The significance of this work stems from the fact that it constitutes a rare example of a Berninghaus mural. By depicting the railroad Berninghaus selected a “classic” theme that not only resonates with the local history of Weatherford, but also much of the history of the state.

*Terminus of the Railroad*, by Oscar E. Berninghaus, 1939, oil on canvas.<sup>6</sup>

Thematically, *Terminus of the Railroad* creates a soothing image of past prosperity and progress for southern Oklahomans suffering from the lingering economic woes of the Great Depression. The mural depicts the station at the terminus of the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad as the hub of economic and social development; the storefronts along the main thoroughfare, which advertise dry goods and other commodities, and the number of wagons that have come to load goods onto and from the railcars indicate a growing economic infrastructure and technological progress. This image of civic development is enhanced by other signs of development, particularly the mail loaded onto the U. S. postal wagon and the telegraph pole barely visible behind train station. Berninghaus accentuates this progressive image of territorial Weatherford with the contrast of both the cowboy at lower left and the Cheyenne and Arapaho (a nod to the artist's fondness for Native American subjects) that sparsely populate the empty, limitless plain. Although Oklahoma's frontier romance of cowboys and Indians proved irresistible, Berninghaus suggests that this lingering past will soon be displaced by modernization. As such, *Terminus of the Railroad* served as a wistful image of local history but also as a reminder of Weatherford's civic growth in a decade beset by economic and social turmoil.

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<sup>6</sup> The definitive title of this work is not certain but is derived from Calcagno (1976). See the Historic Context in this work for references to other titles.

6. **Jacobson Hall** (550 Parrington Oval, Norman). Built in 1919.

This building is a very good example of the Collegiate Gothic style of architecture and possesses numerous decorative details. It is a three-story building with a three-arched entryway separated by buttresses. The decorative mix of brick and limestone enhances the building, as seen for example in the limestone quoins, arches, and window surrounds. The building does not have towers, but second-story cantilevered windows topped with battlements give the building a Medieval robustness. Most of the windows also possess elaborate tracery, often in the shape of Gothic arches.

This building is significant for several reasons. For many years it housed the School of Art on the University of Oklahoma campus and is named for Oscar B. Jacobson, its long-time director. Jacobson played a major role in the mentoring of Indian artists in the state and he was a devoted advocate of Indian art. As a recognized leader in Oklahoma's burgeoning art community, he was also closely associated with the implementation of the various New Deal art programs during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1934 one of his students, Derald Swineford, was awarded a Public Works of Art Project commission to carve oak panels for doors in this building. This project continued even after PWAP funding had ended, involved several art students in addition to Swineford, and resulted in the carving of a series of 30 oak panels. Swineford carved ten of the panels as part of the work for his master's degree.

It is believed that sometime in the 1960s the door panels were removed and placed in storage in the art museum on the OU campus. In 1997 the panels were returned to their original location. They remain in excellent condition, and the possession of this

art makes the building unique. These are the only known extant and in situ woodcarvings to have been created with PWAP sponsorship in Oklahoma.

*Thirty Carved Oak Panels Illustrating Life and Art Styles from the Cave Man through the Steel Worker, by Derald Swineford, Anita Furray, Margaret Giles, and Paul McBride, 1934-45.*

Derald T. Swineford is one of the few sculptors in Oklahoma to have been employed on New Deal art programs, and was one of four OU students who received PWAP funding in 1934 for the completion of a set of doors. Anita Furray, Margaret Giles, and Paul McBride assisted in the creation of the doors. The doors contain a total of sixty panels, thirty of which depict the cultural traditions of the world throughout history. These panels alternate with an additional thirty that imitate folded linen. Although the original PWAP called for a series of twenty narrative panels, Swineford later expanded the project by ten in fulfillment of his master's thesis, which he completed between fall 1937 and December 1945.

The doors not only demonstrate knowledge of world art history but also suggest an interpretation of art history based largely on the evolution of aesthetics. For many modern artists and critics in the 1930s, the history of art was a gradual exploration and development of aesthetic issues throughout the centuries, and Swineford may have been influenced by Jacobson's writings and lectures, which promoted that perspective. The panels include quotations of the traditional fine arts, such as painting, sculpture and ceramics, and references to other artistic traditions, such as textiles.

Swineford begins with Cave Man, in which the Neolithic hunter returns to the cave to draw the animals he has seen. His next three panels include three major non-Western traditions and significant influences on modern Western art: Oceanic Art, which includes the wood carving of the Polynesians and a particular focus on the architectural sculpture of a council house; African Fetish Makers, which shows untaught carvers and the worship of a fetish figure; and Mayan or Aztec, which contains numerous hieroglyphs and a scene inspired by a Mayan vase in which a leader is visited by an “inferior.” The next three panels involve what Swineford considered nomadic cultures: The Mongolian, whom Swineford referred to as the “Asiatic Navajo,” a panel which focuses on the colorful dress, the shepherding skills of the people, and the potential transaction over a horse; Arabian Art which includes an array of ornamental designs from Muslim culture such as those found on dress, dwellings, saddles, and jewelry; and finally The Mexican, who “prefers to dwell along the highways” according to the artist, a panel which depicts a genre scene of Mexican life including a restaurant, cathedral, a woman who transports produce by burro, a man with a serape passing by, and a man in back taking a siesta after drinking in the pulqueria.

The following five panels depict the development of art and culture under religion and empire beginning with Russia, which is set in the Volga region before the nineteenth century when the Orthodox Church represented the highest seat of power, wealth, and art in society next to the Czar. Swineford has also included the fearless and heroic Cossack at right. Ming Potter, by contrast, features a court scene in which a ceramicist presents his latest creation for the approval of the Ming emperor. Japanese also presents a court scene

with two women from the Yoshiwara district clad in decorated kimonos. Swineford found inspiration for the scene in both the work of the Japanese artist Utamaro (1753-1806), and in Jacobson's prints. The following scene, Buddha of Tibet, is also based on non-Western sources, namely Tibetan paintings. The arts flourished under Kar-ma-pa Buddhism, which appeared in Tibet in the tenth century with the teaching of Atisha, the learned saint. Just as Buddhism led to a flowering of the arts in Asia, Christianity produced a similar aesthetic tradition which Swineford depicts in Illuminated Manuscript Writers. Finally, Armor Maker or the Armorer features the development of armor and metalsmithing, specifically the refined Maximilian armor named for Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian.

Panels fourteen through sixteen focus on forms of choreography and dance, beginning with The Bull Fight, which depicts the ornately dressed matador preparing to bring the ritual to a climax. The next two panels, Eagle Dance Number 1 and Eagle Dance Number 2, show two variations on the Kiowa dance, and Swineford focuses on the most dramatic moment when two eagle dancers prepare to strike.

The remaining panels possess less of the thematic cohesion found in the first sixteen. Panel seventeen, Indian Weavers, depicts Navajo weavers from c. 1540. Swineford included the hogan dwelling in the background to create a setting, and the log structure creates a transition to the next scene, The Great American Migration. American pioneers build log cabins in the scene, and their garments, particularly the moccasins, betray Native American influence. The outdoor setting of panels sixteen and seventeen provide a subtle entrance to The Landscape Painters – Corot. Jean Baptiste Camille Corot

promoted plein air painting, or painting outdoors, and Swineford shows the French artist painting on the ground near the Barbizon area. As a counterpoint, Sculpture presents the other major aesthetic tradition in the West. The sculptor studies from the nude, and Swineford includes primitivist masks in background as both a stylistic influence on the modern artists and as a reference to the earlier panels of non-Western artistic traditions.

Although the remaining ten panels were not created under the direction of the PWAP, Swineford continued the basic theme of the first twenty. The concluding panels are Egyptian, a depiction of mummification and the Egyptian deities in sculpted form; Assyria, a depiction of the military culture of the ancient empire with a focus on the lion hunting reliefs characteristic of their architecture; Greek Pottery, a depiction of an Ancient Greek potter surrounded by a hydria, crater, and Francois vase; Viking Age, a depiction of the implements of the Viking warriors with particular focus on their seafaring vessels; The Gothic Period, a depiction of the guilds constructing a Gothic cathedral with a reference to the Crusades; The Italian Renaissance, a depiction of Leonardo da Vinci painting the Mona Lisa; Eskimo, a depiction of the material and technological developments of the culture, such as the kayak and igloo; Scotch Highlanders, a depiction of Scot dress and music; Totem Pole Carvers, a depiction of Northwest coast Native American material culture, such as house posts, carved boxes, and masks; and The Modern American Builder, a depiction of the science, technology and industry that makes up modern life.



7. **Wilson Elementary School** (2215 North Walker Avenue, Oklahoma City). Built in 1919.

This two-story building is a modest example of the Collegiate Gothic style applied to an elementary school. The stone quoins, arched entries, and tracery work on the façade reflect Gothic influences, though the building lacks the verticality typical of Gothic structures. Decorative stone coping marks the tops of the walls and this horizontality is echoed by a projecting stone cornice that encircles the building. Recessed double-doors framed by an arched entry and surrounded by sidelights and transom provide entry to the building.

Wilson School has always had an emphasis on the arts. When it was established it served the Heritage Hills neighborhood of Oklahoma City, then one of the "up and coming" neighborhoods in the city. During the New Deal, this school acquired several artworks created as a result of PWAP and WPA/FAP projects. The PWAP project led to the creation of two sizeable murals for the nursery and primary rooms in 1934. Several years later the school acquired easel paintings produced by the Indian artists Acee Blue Eagle and White Buffalo. These easel paintings were a result of their involvement with the WPA/FAP. While the murals were produced specifically for the school, it is unlikely that the easel paintings were. Nevertheless, this unusual concentration of New Deal art in the school makes it extraordinary. These artworks are described below.

*Nursery Rhyme Characters*, by Audre Yates, 1934 (oil on canvas)  
*The Circus*, by Audre Yates, 1934 (oil on canvas).

These two murals are approximately 3 ½ feet wide by 28 feet long. They were designed by Yates for the school's nursery and primary rooms, respectively. It is not clear if *Nursery Rhyme Characters* is the title that Yates gave that mural.

These murals were ideally suited for their locations in the school. Although the characters themselves lack firm identification, the fanciful costuming and whimsical animals compare closely to the illustrations found in contemporary children's books. Yates's simplified, pillowy forms not only imitate those of juvenile literature but also character of Max Fleischer's animations. The pastel colors would have enhanced the visual appeal for young children.

*Dancer*, attributed to Herbert White Buffalo, 1940.

Although the name White Buffalo has been used by a number of Native American artists in the twentieth century, the Cheyenne Herbert White Buffalo is the likely creator of *Dancer*, which was painted for the Federal Art Project around 1940. Little is known about White Buffalo's career, however. He lived in Concho, Oklahoma for most of his life on the Southern Cheyenne portion of the Arapaho-Cheyenne Reservation. It is unclear whether he had any professional training, but it is possible that he received some education at either Fort Sill Indian School or perhaps the University of Oklahoma. His aesthetic compares closely to that of fellow Cheyenne artist Dick West and the Kiowa artists, all of whom studied at OU and Ft. Sill. The clearly defined contours, simplified

anatomy, and stylized movement of *Dancer* demonstrate a clear familiarity with Traditional Indian Painting.

*Dancer* may be attributed to Herbert White Buffalo on the basis of subject matter as well. The dancer's regalia, his eagle bone whistle, and his stare upwards suggest that he is a participant in the Sun Dance. Few dances were as important in the religion life of the Cheyenne as the Sun Dance, and other Cheyenne artists such as West had dealt with the theme. Whereas West often depicted the spectacle of tribal involvement in the Sun Dance, White Buffalo preferred to focus on a single dancer in this painting. The dancer performs in place, never diverting his eyes away from the sun, until he collapses from physical and mental exhaustion. As such, *Dancer* represents one of the most sacred of all rituals in Cheyenne life and may have been painted from personal experience.

*Woman Making Baskets, by Acee Blue Eagle, n.d.*

Genre scenes of the Southeastern tribes were popular with Blue Eagle, and he frequently turned his attention to the duties of both men and women in daily life. In *Woman Making Baskets*, Blue Eagle examines the process of basket weaving among the Southeastern tribes. One woman, probably Creek in affiliation, sits beneath a brush arbor while weaving together various reeds, bark, and roots to form basketry. Blue Eagle has included the various forms of basketry: the tray at left which might be used for processing corn; the two bowls right of center which would be used for transporting materials of varying weight and composition; and finally the container for storing

foodstuffs at right. The woman at right enters with a kettle which may contain water for the softening of basket materials.

*Knife Dancer*, by Acee Blue Eagle, n.d.

*Knife Dancer* is a composition that Blue Eagle returned to many times throughout his career. The Southern Plains dancer, complete with headdress, performs the simple steps of the knife dance as he holds the blade aloft. The knife dance was a relatively minor dance in powwow culture, but it may allude to Blue Eagle's increasing interest in the knife dance as practiced by Samoan peoples.

*Ready for the Hunt*, by Acee Blue Eagle, n.d.

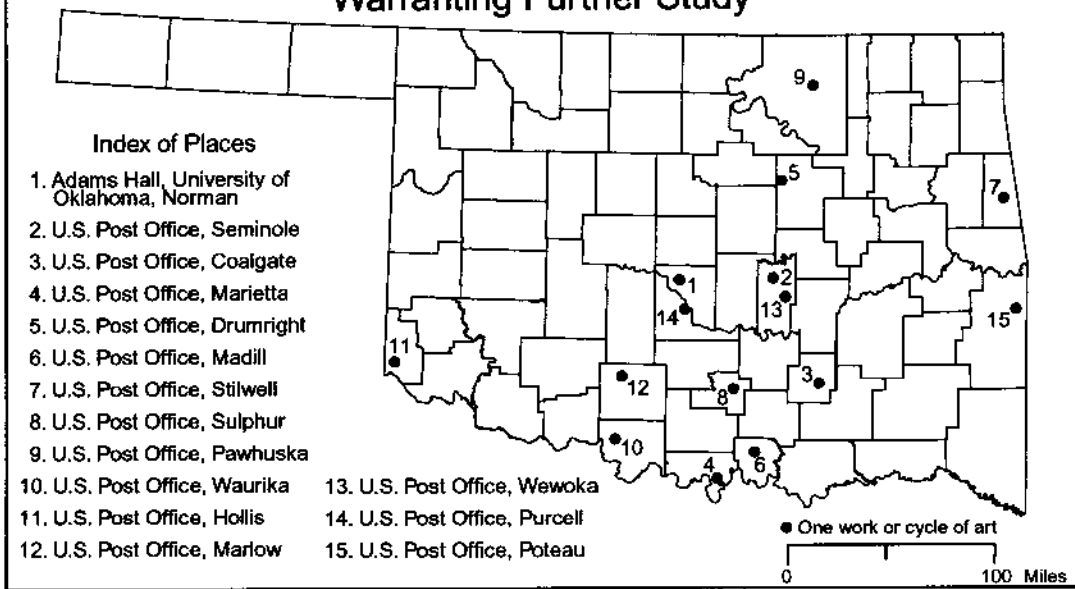
Hunting scenes are common in Traditional Indian Painting, but Blue Eagle's *Ready for the Hunt* is relatively unusual in the context of his career, since he preferred genre and dancing scenes. The title references the central hunter, who is armed with bow and arrow in preparation for a bison hunt. Blue Eagle's inclusion of the two other horses, one of which is a pony, is ambiguous, however, since hunters could not easily switch horses in the middle of a hunt. It is possible that either the title is different from Blue Eagle's original intention for the painting, or that the artist included the other horses to provide added visual interest. Perhaps, the image depicts a warrior who has just stolen several horses from his enemy. Whatever Blue eagle's intent, it is clear that he intended the image to be an examination of nineteenth-century Plains life.

## **XI. LIST OF PROPERTIES THAT WARRANT FURTHER STUDY**

1. Adams Hall  
University of Oklahoma  
307 W. Brooks Street  
Norman, OK
2. U.S. Post Office  
120 E. Oak Avenue  
Seminole, OK
3. U.S. Post Office  
38 N. Main Street  
Coalgate, OK
4. U.S. Post Office  
118 W. Main Street  
Marietta, OK
5. U.S. Post Office  
118 N. Ohio Avenue  
Drumright, OK
6. U.S. Post Office  
223 W. Lillie Boulevard  
Madill, OK
7. U.S. Post Office  
16 S. Second Street  
Stilwell, OK
8. U.S. Post Office  
1100 W. Second Street  
Sulphur, OK
9. U.S. Post Office  
137 E. Sixth Street  
Pawhuska, OK
10. U.S. Post Office  
121 W. Broadway Avenue  
Waurika, OK

11. U.S. Post Office  
120 N. Second Street  
Hollis, OK
12. U.S. Post Office  
320 W. Main Street  
Marlow, OK
13. U.S. Post Office  
115 W. Second Street  
Wewoka, OK
14. U.S. Post Office  
228 W. Main Street  
Purcell, OK
15. U.S. Post Office  
115 N. Witte Street  
Poteau, OK

## Properties Possessing New Deal Art and Warranting Further Study



## **XII. THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF PROPERTIES WARRANTING FURTHER STUDY, INCLUDING NARRATIVE DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR NEW DEAL ART**

1. **Adams Hall, University of Oklahoma** (307 W. Brooks Street, Norman). Built in 1936.

This building is now known as the Business Administration Building. It is an excellent example of the Collegiate Gothic style of architecture. The building has four stories with a brick façade that is enhanced by limestone detailing. The south entrance is the main entrance to the building and is distinguished by a projecting, battlemented bay with a frieze of coins. On either side of the projecting bay stand two large sculptures, “Commerce” and “Industry.” The sculptures were crafted by Jules Struppeck, possibly the first sculpture student to graduate from the university. Anecdotally, these sculptures are often attributed to the WPA. It may be that these sculptures represent the only known extant and in situ sculptures created for the FAP in Oklahoma. We found no conclusive evidence to support this claim, but suggest that further research is warranted. Also, above the west entrance to the building are two low-relief engravings titled “Petroleum” and “Mining.” We suspect that these were designed by Joe Taylor, an art professor at OU who taught the first sculpture classes there and who may very well have been assisted by Struppeck.

The lobby of this building possesses seven murals that were designed and painted by Craig Sheppard, Jacobson’s son-in-law.<sup>1</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that the panels

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<sup>1</sup> It seems that eight panels were originally produced. One of the panels is believed to have depicted slavery and may have hung in a faculty member’s office. This information was provided by Leslie Baumert, Director of the Visitor Center at the University of Oklahoma. We were not able to locate this eighth panel.



were produced with support from the WPA/FAP, though additional research is needed to confirm this. The murals are signed by Sheppard and dated 1936, which would place them in the right timeframe for FAP work; however, a review of the back issues of *The Oklahoma Daily* and *Sooner Magazine* did not find any articles specifically attributing them to the WPA.

2. **U.S. Post Office** (120 E. Oak Avenue, Seminole). Built in 1936.

This is a one-story with basement Art Deco style building with buff-brick and limestone cladding. The symmetrical façade is balanced by two smaller wings that project on either side of the building. The words “United States Post Office” are carved in a wide band of limestone that encircles the tops of the walls and projects outward just slightly enough at the top to resemble a cornice. The façade is marked by four brick pilasters that separate tall windows. Inside the building there is a mural, *Seminole Indian Village Scene*, on the east wall above the postmaster’s door. This mural was painted by Acee Blue Eagle as a Section project in 1939.

The exterior of building has retained its integrity, but the interior has been significantly modified in order to make the building more secure. In addition, one portion of the ceiling has been lowered, perhaps to accommodate heating or cooling ductwork. This has covered up a portion of the Acee Blue Eagle mural that decorates the east wall, though it does not appear that any of the figures in the mural have been covered. Because of this obstruction and because the mural has been restored, it is recommended for further study.

*Seminole Indian Village Scene*, by Acee Blue Eagle, 1939, oil on plaster.

Blue Eagle's *Seminole Indian Village Scene* is a genre scene ideally suited to the Seminole Post Office, which lies within the Seminole Nation. The scene is not based on Seminole life in Indian Territory but in the traditional tribal home of Florida. The scene is dominated by women in a cookhouse chickee, a traditional Seminole dwelling with a roof of palmetto fronds. At left, a man and a couple of boys seem to test bows, since it is improbable that they would be hunting the birds at such distance or in camp. Men and women alike wear the characteristic patchwork clothing for which the Seminole became particularly well known. Seminole traditional life became a particularly popular tourist phenomenon in Florida during the 1930s, and it is possible that Blue Eagle's image offers both an affirmation of tradition and a nod to contemporary developments in Seminole culture. Blue Eagle's image of Seminole life had a profound influence on Creek artist Fred Beaver, who later restored *Seminole Indian Village Scene* in 1965.

3. **U.S. Post Office** (38 N. Main Street, Coalgate). Built in 1940.

This one-story buff brick building with basement provides an example of the Moderne style. An alternating series of limestone pilasters and windows begins on the front of the building and continues around the northwest corner of the building and part of the way down that other side. The result is an asymmetrical façade marked by sizable, multipane windows. An Acee Blue Eagle mural, *Women Making Pishafa*, decorates the south wall inside the post office. The mural was painted in 1942 for the Section, and has since been restored. It is recommended for further study.

*Women Making Pishafa*, by Acee Blue Eagle, 1942, tempera and acrylic on plaster.

*Women Making Pishafa* signaled the end of Blue Eagle's involvement with the Section. The mural is a genre scene depicting the preparation of a flint corn beverage, also known as pah sho fah, which is popular among Creeks and other tribes of a Southeastern origin. A woman at right pounds the soft corn into meal while a young boy rides his toy horse nearby. At center, two women separate the husk from pulp. The ramada behind them reveals a table set with multiple bowls and a coffee pot indicating that pishafa may be consumed as a soup or beverage. In order to balance the scene, Blue Eagle included the man at left who prepares to fire an arrow into the flock of birds passing overhead. The stylized contours and rosy cheeks he used in *Women Making Pishafa* later had a decisive influence on Native American painting in Oklahoma and continue to appear in the work of some contemporary painters.

Like many of Blue Eagle's murals, the surface proved unstable and Creek artist Fred Beaver restored it in 1965.

4. **U.S. Post Office** (118 W. Main Street, Marietta). Built in 1939.

This is a single story Federal Revival style building in buff brick. The building has a basement, and a very slightly hipped roof with a louvered cupola that is topped with a weather vane. A limestone entablature at the top of the walls is mirrored by a limestone sill course at the foundation. A wide stairway rises to a double-door entrance that is distinguished by a fluted door surround topped with a metal eagle over the doors. Four windows spanning the symmetrical façade are "framed" by brick window surrounds that

are recessed slightly from the main wall surface. In 1942, with a Section commission, Solomon McCombs painted a mural inside on the west wall. That mural, *Chickasaw Family Making Pah Sho Fah*, was restored in 1963 but still shows considerable wear today. In numerous places the paint has chipped off, leaving noticeable white spaces where colors should be. The mural is an important piece of New Deal art but questions about the nature of the restoration necessarily raise questions about the integrity of the work. For this reason the building and the art are recommended for further study.

*Chickasaw Family Making Pah Sho Fah*, by Solomon McCombs, 1942, oil on plaster.

*Chickasaw Family Making Pah Sho Fah* was one of the last murals painted in the mural program. World War II had created a canvas shortage forcing McCombs to paint the mural directly on plaster. This technique created some instability and the mural was restored in 1963 by Creek artist Fred Beaver.

McCombs's Creek heritage informed most of his work, including *Chickasaw Family Making Pah Sho Fah*, and he became well known in the 1940s for his genre images of Creek life. His paintings generally capture the Creek past of his youth, particularly in the inclusion of historic dress and architecture; however, the rituals and beliefs depicted in the paintings persist in contemporary Creek culture, suggesting a continuity between past and present. *Chickasaw Family Making Pah Sho Fah* illustrates the preparation of a flint corn beverage, also known as pishafa, which is popular among Creeks and other tribes of a Southeastern origin. McCombs steps through the process beginning with the men at right that shell the corn and leave it to soak in water. The

women at center pound the soft corn into meal and the single woman at their right separates the husk from pulp. The meal is then cooked by the woman at extreme left. McCombs demonstrates a careful attention to form and details of dress while reducing the surrounding landscape to a series of stylized plants. His style displays the common characteristics of the Traditional Indian Painting style that dominated instruction at Bacone College, where he had trained under Blue Eagle.

5. **U.S. Post Office** (118 N. Ohio Avenue, Drumright). Built in 1939.

This one-story brick commercial building is designed in the Federal Revival style. It has a hipped roof and symmetrical façade. A limestone string course marks the first floor line and the windows are topped with wide limestone lintels. The wooden door surround consists of fluted pilasters and a dentilled moulding.

The interior mural above the postmaster's door was designed and painted by Frank Weathers Long for the Section. It remains in very good condition and its depiction of the land run highlights a classic theme in Oklahoma history. This property could easily be a contributing resource to a historic district, and merits further study because of its association with New Deal art.

*Oklahoma Land Rush, by Frank Weathers Long, 1941, oil on canvas.*

Although Long had completed several public murals by 1941, the award for the Drumright commission left him bemused; he chose the 1889 land rush, a favorite among

New Deal artists assigned to the state, simply because he could think of no other subject.<sup>2</sup> Stylistically, *Oklahoma Land Rush* shows the subtle influence of styles such as Post-Impressionism, with the bright, pastel coloration and the naïve simplification of form. The stylized shading results in a somewhat tubular interpretation of forms that is subtly similar to the machine imagery of Precisionism and the paintings of French cubist Fernand Leger.

Long adopted the familiar convention of the chaotic westward race for *Oklahoma Land Rush* made famous by published imagery of the run. The foreground depicts the various forms of transportation by which the runners sought out their claims: human locomotion, covered wagon, and horse. At far left, a sole runner, pursued by a dog, carries only a few meager possessions. A family in a covered wagon follows quickly behind him, although their speed threatens to wreck the family and their possessions. The canvas cover has torn away to reveal a mother and her son clutching the supports as the wagon bumps over the rough Oklahoma terrain. Both nervously eye the horse and rider that will soon overtake them. Long creates in the foreground a vignette of the entire run and similar scenes may be found in the sweeping background. The artist perceptively included elements of chaos and violence in *Oklahoma Land Rush* at various points throughout the composition, perhaps in recognition of the sensational reports found in the contemporary press. The rifle held by the runner in the foreground may be used for hunting but may also provide for defense of his claim. A stray wagon wheel just behind him indicates a previous breakdown, an incident repeated in the middle ground at right.

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<sup>2</sup> Frank W. Long, *Confessions of a Depression Muralist* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 124.

Despite these ominous touches, Long's *Oklahoma Land Rush* presents a view of state history and an event that produced the eventual founding of Drumright.

6. **U.S. Post Office** (223 W. Lillie Boulevard, Madill). Built in 1938.

This buff-brick clad government building is designed in the Federal Revival style. It is a single-story building with a hipped roof, basement, and two interior chimneys. Semi-elliptical arches over the windows and doors give modest artistic flair to an otherwise simple building. Decorative brickwork along the cornice line creates the effect of dentils. This dentilled pattern is echoed on a smaller scale at the tops of the pilasters that mark the wall space between the windows.

*Prairie Fire*, a mural by Ethel Magafan, decorates the west interior wall. Magafan designed and painted this mural for the Section. Both the post office and the mural are in very good condition and warrant further study in order to determine their eligibility for possible listing in the National Register.

*Prairie Fire*, by Ethel Magafan, 1940, tempera on canvas.

Ethel received the commission for Madill in November 1939 but only chose her subject, *Prairie Fire*, after consulting with the residents of Madill. She completed the mural at her Colorado Springs studio, but personally installed it in the Madill post office. Madill lies in the midst of the Oklahoma prairies, which experienced untold numbers of prairie fires in its prehistory. In the nineteenth century, both artists and the popular press had reacted to stories of prairie fires with fascination. The fires often reached staggering

proportions and destroyed huge tracts of land. Magafan attempts to capture the terror and sublime beauty of the fire by depicting a small band of pioneers attempting to escape the approaching blaze. As one group tries to quiet the frightened oxen, two others prepare to create an earthen break to slow the fire's progress.

The inspiration for the mural arose in part from her earlier study for Lawrence, Kansas. Ethel recalled that she wanted a "historical subject," and the massive nineteenth-century prairie fires offered another opportunity to explore sensational themes: "I was back to something violent again, but I thought it was very exciting material and I enjoyed doing that mural tremendously."<sup>3</sup> Both the stylized flames and the horse and rider at left compare closely to Magafan's aborted Lawrence mural. Her desire to recapture the intensity of the Lawrence composition prompted her originally to place the fire too close to the pioneers until the Section of Fine Arts protested that the scene seemed unconvincing.

Despite the Section's reservations about the composition, they celebrated Magafan's stylistic approach. Both the simplified approach to form and the expressive coloration of her style enjoyed great popularity in the 1930s during the ascendancy of the American Scene. It was undoubtedly this formal approach that earned Magafan her numerous mural commissions during the 1930s and 1940s.

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<sup>3</sup> Magafan quoted in Joseph Trovato, interview with Ethel Magafan, 5 November 1964, Ethel Magafan papers, Archives of American Art, reel 3949, frame 765.



7. **U.S. Post Office** (16 S. Second Street, Stilwell). Built in 1940.

This is a one-story brick clad government building in the Federal Revival style. The main portion of the building has a hipped roof and is flanked by two smaller, flat-roofed wings. Stone coping outline the tops of the walls. Canted corners distinguish and enhance the central portion of the building, while decorative brickwork in the form of a keyed, semi-elliptical arch marks the entrance. In the wall space below the windows on the façade there is additional decorative brickwork in a concentric diamond design.

Inside the post office on the south wall hangs Olga Mohr's mural, *Cherokee Indian Farming and Animal Husbandry*, which she painted as a result of a Section commission. The mural is torn in the lower left corner, but otherwise appears to be in good condition. Together with the post office, it merits additional study.

*Cherokee Indian Farming and Animal Husbandry,*  
*by Olga Mohr, 1942, oil on canvas.*

Stilwell resides in the Cherokee Nation, and Mohr chose a genre scene of Cherokee agricultural and husbandry practices for her subject. Following the Cherokee's move to Indian Territory in 1838-39, tribal members established profitable farms and ranches and often used techniques common among Euro-Americans. Mohr created a tableau of three activities and varying terrain to indicate the range of Cherokee agriculture and husbandry. At left, a woman sprinkles feed for roosters and hens in front of a shade tree and in the center a man attempts to quiet a rearing horse before a distant mountain. A man at right breaks the rocky soil, presumably to expand his field for planting, and behind him a crop of corn ripens to maturity. Mohr depicts these activities

with a simplified approach to form and an expressive coloration characteristic of other American Scene painters such as Ethel Magafan.

8. **U.S. Post Office** (1100 W. Second Street, Sulphur). Built in 1936.

The Sulphur post office was also designed in the Art Deco style. It has a flat roof and the basement level is partially exposed. Cladding consists of brick and stone veneer. The stone frames the entrance and sets it apart from the façade ends which are clad in brick. A narrow course of stone coping tops the walls and encircles the building. Three low-relief carvings of wheat decorate the stone walls above the windows and door on the façade. Unfortunately, the attempt to clean the stone by sandblasting it some years ago did noticeable damage to it.

The interior north wall has a mural painted by Albert T. Reid in 1939 for the Section. The mural is in good condition and, along with the post office, merits further study.

*The Romance of the Mail / The Mail in the Old Cattle Country,*  
by Albert Turner Reid, 1939, oil on canvas.

*The Romance of the Mail* is a dynamic scene of a stagecoach racing across the foreground as a nearby cowboy pursues a frightened stray. The haste of both the coach driver and the cowboy almost prompts a disastrous collision and one of the coach horses rears in fright. Reid imagines the West as full of frenzied, gripping action to stimulate the viewer's interest in the history of the postal service. Such images of the West had been popularized in the early twentieth century by artists such as Frederic Remington and

Charles M. Russell, and Reid seems to have emulated the latter in his interest to ranching culture. Like Russell, Reid also embraced a naturalistic style with clear attention to detail in dress and objects.

9. **U.S. Post Office** (137 E. Sixth Street, Pawhuska). Built in 1936.

This is a one-story, brick clad government building with a flat roof and basement. Designed in the Art Deco style, it has low-relief carvings of a train, plane, and boat in the limestone over the door and flanking windows. Continuous limestone sill and string courses encircle the building. Recessed brickwork marks the door and window surrounds.

The mural, *Osages*, by Olive Rush decorates the interior west wall. It, like many of the other post office murals, was the result of a commission by the Section. The mural warrants further research to determine the extent to which it is based on local history.

*Osages (Treaties – Osage Indians)*, by Olive Rush, 1938, oil on canvas.

The Treasury Department officially offered Rush the Pawhuska mural on 22 July 1937 based on the merit of her previous submissions. Rush then visited Pawhuska personally and after conversations with local citizens she chose her subject matter as Osage history.<sup>4</sup> The title of her mural is often listed simply as *Osages*; however, a personal photograph offers the more descriptive title of *Treaties- Osage Indians*. The image probably depicts two separate events in the formation of the modern Osage Nation. In the lower right, Osage leaders convene the constitutional convention, an important

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<sup>4</sup> Edward B. Rohan to Olive Rush, 15 December 1937, Olive Rush Papers, Archives of American Art, reel 1628, frame 627.

development in the history of the tribe and Pawhuska, while in the upper left, James Bigheart, a full-blood chief of the Big Beaver band, petitions Osage agent Major Laban J. Miles for a formal tribal government. General approval among the tribe and the American government in 1881 then led to a constitutional convention presided by Bigheart. Pawhuska, as a result, became the capital of the Osage Nation.

This interpretation of the two scenes is probable, although not certain as Rush did not record her intent. The only verification may be found in a contemporary press clipping that lists Miles among the figures. The article also suggests that the Osage leader on the far left is strikingly similar in appearance to Bacon Rind, a popular Osage chief of the early twentieth century. It is possible that Rush relied on photographs of popular leaders in creating her image of late nineteenth-century Osage politics. If Rush did rely on Bacon Rind's likeness in her mural, then she would have offered Pawhuska residents a compelling image of a local celebrity and a celebration of their local history.

10. **U.S. Post Office** (121 W. Broadway Avenue, Waurika). Built in 1937.

This is a very modest one story Art Deco style building. The façade is symmetrical around the main entry which is slightly recessed. The doors and windows on the front are accentuated by the use of recessed or beveled brickwork. A continuous limestone lintel course encircles the building. A narrow band of slightly projecting limestone coping also circles the building and marks the tops of the walls.

With a commission from the Section, Theodore Van Soelen designed and painted the mural on the interior west wall. The mural is a relatively uncommon example of a

landscape that is entirely devoid of people as well as any evidence of human habitation or settlement. For this reason the mural and the post office merit further study.

*Canadian Honkers, by Theodore Van Soelen, 1939, oil on canvas.*

Van Soelen's mural for the Waurika, Oklahoma post office, *Canadian Honkers*, speaks to both his artistic interests in wildlife and the local character of the town, since nearby Waurika Lake lies in the flight path of migratory birds. The artist portrays the geese at rest and in flight against what seems to be the shoreline marshes of the local lake. However, it is doubtful that Van Soelen ever visited Waurika, as he made most of the mural sketches in Tesuque then completed the mural in Cornwall, Connecticut.

11. **U.S. Post Office** (120 N. Second Street, Hollis). Built in 1939-40.

The Hollis post office is a one-story, cube-shaped building in the Art Deco style. Cladding consists of limestone and buff-brick. Limestone frames the entrance and flanking windows, while brick marks the façade ends. Three stylized wheat designs decorate the wall space above the entrance and flanking windows. These flanking windows may originally have been two separate entrances. Additional research is needed to confirm the dates and kinds of alterations to the building.

The mural on the interior north wall was painted by Lloyd Lozes Goff after winning a Section commission. The mural is in good condition and, like the post office, warrants further research to determine eligibility for listing in the National Register.

*Mapping the Trail*, by Lloyd Lozes Goff, c. 1941, oil/tempera on canvas.

Goff likely painted *Mapping the Trail* during his early days at the University of New Mexico, and the naturalistic style of the mural indicates the influence of UNM professor Kenneth Adams, who painted recognizable imagery with subtle, non-representation shifts in color. Though Goff's stylistic approach is fairly naturalistic, he does use intense color in the sky and soil and he occasionally mottles forms through the introduction of multiple colors. These touches of modernism are consistent with the general spirit of American Scene painting, which sought a focus on naturalistic imagery infused with some experimental techniques.

*Mapping the Trail* depicts five trail riders discussing the route of their cattle drive in the midst of their dilapidated camp. Their denim attire seems to mark them as early twentieth century cowboys, and the landscape with its rust-colored soil and light vegetation suggests the southwestern landscape of Oklahoma, although Goff may have used New Mexican terrain. The sod dwelling adorned with a horseshoe and a cattle skull offers contradictory messages of luck and the passing of life, respectively. With the coming storms in the background, Goff crafts an image of the uncertain life of the cowboy, often fraught with economic and environmental challenges. Cattle drives had become increasingly rare in the early twentieth century and the romantic cowboy that Goff depicts in *Mapping the Trail* had increasingly disappeared from the southwestern landscape during his lifetime.

12. **U.S. Post Office** (320 W. Main Street, Marlow). Built in 1940.

This is a one-story Art Deco style building with a symmetrical façade and buff-brick cladding. The central portion of the façade is marked by limestone panels engraved with a train, plane, and boat. Recessed or beveled brick helps accentuate the windows and door. A narrow course of limestone coping tops the walls and encircles the building. A wider band of limestone forms a continuous string course at the base of what would be the entablature. The window space on the east end of the front elevation has been modified to accommodate an additional entrance and wheelchair ramp.

The mural, *Cattle Days*, was painted by Lew Davis for the Section. It hangs on the interior west wall and remains in good condition. The post office warrants further study because of its association with New Deal art.

*Cattle Days*, by Lew E. Davis, 1942, oil on canvas.

Davis's *Cattle Days* was one of the last murals completed under the auspices of the Section. Inspired by a renaissance painting the artist had seen at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Cattle Days* possesses the static, constrained composition common to Italian painting of the fifteenth century. Davis's style also indicates a careful attention to volumetric form and naturalistic imagery that recalls both renaissance painting and the style of his teacher, Leon Kroll. The careful arrangement of the compositional elements suffered, unfortunately, when faulty blueprints forced an alteration in Davis's design. A

local paperhanger contracted to install the mural trimmed the bottom of the canvas to fit the space and eliminated most of fire pit, against the artist's wishes.<sup>5</sup>

Despite this technical fault, the subject matter of *Cattle Days* speaks successfully to the local history of Marlow, specifically the ranching culture of southern Oklahoma. Three cowpunchers brand a young calf while two steers and another calf look on sternly. At left, another cowboy coils a rope presumably used to lasso the calf at right. *Cattle Days* would have presented Marlow residents with an image of a recent past and an ongoing present.

13. **U.S. Post Office** (115 W. Second Street, Wewoka). Built in 1935.

This is a one-story Art Deco style building with brick cladding and a basement. The brick cladding is laid in courses of stretcher bond, except for every sixth course which consists of header bond. Three courses of increasingly wider bands of limestone encircle the building at the top of the walls, at the base of what would be the entablature, and at the base of the first level. Limestone panels above and below the windows that flank the entrance contrast with the brick cladding elsewhere on the building. Stylized cartouches also decorate the limestone above the windows and door.

On the interior east wall of the post office is the mural, *Historical Background of Wewoka*, painted by Marjorie Clarke for the Section in 1941. This post office is considered a contributing resource to the Wewoka Commercial District, which may be eligible for listing as a historic district. If such a recommendation goes forward, the

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Bermingham, *The New Deal in the Southwest* University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, Jan. 18-Feb 15, n.p.



association of the post office with New Deal art should be included as part of the rationale and discussion of significance.

*Historical Background of Wewoka*, by Marjorie Rowland Clarke, 1941, oil on canvas.

Clarke received the award of the Wewoka mural based on sketches submitted to the Section of Fine Arts. Wewoka had been the capital of the Seminole Nation since 1855 and had been named for a small waterfall nearby. Although Wewoka lies in the middle of the Seminole Nation, Clarke chose a less specific image of local history by depicting a long wagon train proceeding towards a steaming train and a distant mountain range. It is probable that the artist, a Maryland native, had little knowledge of this area of Oklahoma or its history, and the image was based on traditional images of westward expansion. Both the wagon train and the locomotive were common themes in the history of American art, and the combination of the two often indicated an embrace of Manifest Destiny, the nineteenth-century belief that American expansion across the continent was ordained. In this regard, Clarke's image could have been easily applied to multiple towns in the West. Clarke painted the imagery in a fairly descriptive manner and in subdued earth tonalities, which also indicates a western setting.

14. **U.S. Post Office** (228 W. Main Street, Purcell). Built in 1938-39.

This is a one-story Art Deco style building with flat roof and basement. The walls are clad in a light-colored brick, but a wide course of limestone encircles the building at the tops of the walls. A large eagle and iron grille fill the space above the entrance, while

slightly recessed and long, rectangular windows distinguish the front and sides of the building.

Frederick Conway's mural, *The Round-up*, decorates the interior east wall and is in good condition. The post office and mural warrant further study because of their association with New Deal art.

*The Round-up*, by Frederick E. Conway, 1940, oil on canvas.

Conway was originally commissioned to execute a mural of grazing cattle for the Jackson, Missouri post office, but the Postmaster and local residents preferred a design by Missouri artist James B. Turnbull, who had painted a cattle-loading scene for Purcell. The Section consented to switch the commissions, and Purcell received the Conway design intended for Jackson. Unfortunately, the Postmaster of Purcell, hoping for a cattle-loading scene, disapproved of Conway's design, so the artist submitted his own interpretation of the theme upon which *The Round-up* is based. Conway painted the mural in St. Louis and later supervised the installation of *The Round-up* personally, unlike most Section artists.

As the Purcell anecdote indicates, cattle ranching scenes were often a popular choice for Oklahoma Section murals, since the occupation claimed a significant place in the state economy. Purcell was also one of the stops along the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe line, so cattle herds were often loaded onto railcars at the town. Conway approached the subject in a manner different than most artists by eliminating any foreground separation between the viewer and the action of cowboys and cattle. Such

intimacy makes the viewer feel the press of the herd, and the direct stare of the steer in the lower right helps to locate the viewer in the midst of the action. Whether Conway meant to insinuate the viewer into the work of the cowboys or into the controlled chaos of the herd is difficult to say, but the artist may have intended a subtle, albeit humorous association between the herding of cattle and the frustrations of standing in line at a crowded post office.

Regardless of Conway's intent, *Round-up* offers a visually engaging scene that mediates between naturalistic form and a modernist sympathy for colorful pattern and spatial complexity. Cowboys and cattle alike are drawn in a representational style with heavy contours bounding each form. Conway's use of color and careful shading also emphasizes the naturalism of *Round-up*; however, the markings of the cattle and their dominating presence within the image creates a play of abstract color and form throughout much of the painting. The preponderance of diagonals in the composition energizes the painting and directs the viewer's eye in a circular motion around the perimeter of the picture plane. As such, the viewer is encouraged to perceive the painting as a decorated surface instead of a spatial extension back into three-dimensional space. This aesthetic approach allowed Conway to introduce modernist techniques while the satisfying the conservative taste for naturalism that was encouraged by the Section.

15. **U.S. Post Office** (115 N. Witte Street, Poteau). Built circa 1938-39.

The Poteau post office is a single-story government building with a flat roof and basement. It was designed in the Art Deco style and has a mixture of limestone and brick

cladding. Most of the limestone is used to enhance windows or the main entrance area, where it surrounds the door and flanking windows. Three courses of increasingly wider bands of limestone encircle the building at the top of the walls, at the base of what would be the entablature, and at the base of the first level. Low-relief and stylized engravings decorate the limestone wall space above the windows. An addition has been added to the northwest end of the building, with a strong effort to match the brick and style of the original building.

In 1940, Joan Cunningham designed and painted the mural that still decorates the interior northeast wall. That mural, *Cotton*, has suffered from what appears to be water damage. The mural is streaked, particularly along the top, and is peeling away from the wall on the bottom right. Still, the mural and post office warrant further study because of their association with New Deal art.

*Cotton*, by Joan Cunningham, 1940, oil on canvas.

Cunningham won the commission for the Poteau mural in September 1938, but did not complete and install the mural until 1940. *Cotton* seems to depict the Depression-era cotton industry, given the dress of the figures and the seeming modernity of the surrounding structures, although the region around Poteau had produced cotton for decades under Creek and then American farmers. The artist surveys the various aspects of cotton harvesting and production. Against the background of the Winding Stair Mountains, pickers fill their long bags with the crop, which is then loaded onto mule-

driven wagons that carry it for bundling and processing at the facility at right. Several workers congregate in the foreground at left and right and engage in congenial banter.

Cunningham's vision of the cotton industry seems to be largely optimistic, but the somber coloration of the mural, the subtle distortion of human forms, and the exaggerated perspective creates an unsettling image.<sup>6</sup> The architecture of the industrial plant creates a vaguely surreal quality, particularly in the unnaturally steep angle of the wall. A lone worker projects his elbow illusionistically into the viewer's space, adding another unusual element to the composition. A few sparse trees provide the only growth in a seemingly denuded landscape. These elements might suggest the influence of Surrealism, which had gained in popularity in the United States in the late 1930s, but the influence is more likely that of the renaissance artist Piero della Francesca, whose perspectival compositions enjoyed popularity among American artists of the 1940s.

Despite the disconcerting effect of the mural, it contains none of the more disturbing social issues confronting the cotton industry throughout the 1930s. The conflicts between underpaid labor and the increasingly powerful corporate farms, detailed most notably in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, are not pictured in Cunningham's mural. Like most Section murals, Cunningham avoided direct social commentary or controversial subject matter in favor of a celebration of American work and industry.

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<sup>6</sup> Nicholas A. Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma* (Miami, Oklahoma: Pioneer Printing, Inc., 1976), 31. Calcagno reports that Poteau residents felt the mural was an uncomfortable reminder of the Depression, and suggests that a petition may have been circulated to remove the mural.

### **XIII. LIST OF PROPERTIES THAT DO NOT WARRANT FURTHER STUDY, INCLUDING THEIR NEW DEAL ART**

1. McCombs Hall / Art Building  
Bacone College  
2299 Old Bacone Road  
Muskogee, OK

*Buffalo Hunt*, by Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah, c. 1934 (tempera on masonite?)

*War Dance*, by Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah, c. 1934 (tempera on masonite?)

These two murals hang in the Art Building at Bacone College. Both were designed and painted by Kiowa Indian artists, and were funded by the Public Works of Art Project. *Buffalo Hunt*, hangs on the wall in the stairwell between the first and second floors. *War Dance* hangs in the second floor hallway at the top of the stairs. Both murals are in good condition.

These murals do not warrant further study at this time because they have been moved from their original location. The murals were designed for the Office of the Superintendent of the Five Civilized Tribes Agency, once located in the Federal Building in Muskogee. Sometime prior to 1976 they were moved to Bacone College.

2. Palmer Center  
Bacone College Campus  
Muskogee, OK

*Indian Pictorial Writing*, by Acee Blue Eagle, c. 1973.

*Sequoyah Teaching His Alphabet*, by Acee Blue Eagle, c. 1973.

These murals are attributed to Acee Blue Eagle. He painted them in 1937. At this writing no conclusive evidence exists that identifies these murals as New Deal art. About 1973 Solomon McCombs made replicas of these murals because the originals were in poor condition. The whereabouts of the originals are unknown. The two murals that now hang in the Palmer Center gymnasium are the McCombs copies.

3. Berryhill Elementary School  
3128 S. 63<sup>rd</sup> West Avenue  
Tulsa, OK

*Ichabod Crane*, by Mary McCray, 1934 (oil on canvas)

*Uncle Remus*, by Mary McCray, 1934 (oil on canvas)

These two murals were originally designed for the library in the Berryhill Junior High School. By the mid-1970s these murals had been moved from the library into the auditorium at the junior high. When the junior high was renovated about ten years ago, the murals were moved to their present location in the cafeteria at Berryhill Elementary School, across the street from the junior high. Planned renovations at Berryhill Elementary School will convert the present cafeteria into a new library, and the murals will remain there. The primary rationale for not recommending that these murals warrant further study is because they are not in situ. The murals are in fair condition. The *Uncle Remus* mural has a few tears in the canvas, and both are quite dirty, showing the effects of being located in a cafeteria where things have splattered on them.

Although additional research is needed, these two murals may have a special significance in terms of their association with New Deal art. The murals were created as a result of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). This project tended to fund artists living and working in urban areas. As a rural locale in the 1930s, Berryhill may constitute the only rural location to receive PWAP art in the United States. If this can be confirmed, the significance of these murals should be re-evaluated.

4. Clinton City Hall  
415 Gary Boulevard  
Clinton, OK

*Race for Land*, by Loren N. Mozley, 1938, (oil on canvas?)

This mural was commissioned by the Section. By the mid-1970s this mural had been moved from its original location in the Clinton post office to the City Hall building. It is not recommended for further study at this time because it is not in situ.

5. Administrative Offices, Hugo School System  
208 N. Second Street  
Hugo, OK

*The Red Man of Oklahoma Sees the First Stage Coach*, by Joseph A. Fleck, 1937, (oil on canvas).

The original location for this mural was in the old post office in Hugo. It is likely that the mural was moved into the Administrative Offices of the Hugo School System when the post office moved into its new building. It is not recommended for further study at this time because it is not in situ. It was also commissioned by the Section.

6. Cherokee Strip Museum  
2617 W. Fir Street  
Perry, OK

*Range Branding Down by the Big Tank*, by Thomas M. Stell, Jr., 1941, (oil on canvas?)

This mural was commissioned by the Section and designed for the old post office in Perry. Like the Hugo mural above, the relocation of this mural likely resulted from the move of the post office into a new building. It is not recommended for further study at this time because it is not in situ.

7. Edmond City Hall  
100 E. First Street  
Edmond, OK

*Pre-Settlement Days*, by Ila McAfee Turner, 1939, (oil on canvas?)

This mural was also commissioned by the Section and designed for the old Edmond post office. It is now located in the City Council Chamber in Edmond City Hall and remains in very good condition. It is not recommended for further study at this time because it is not in situ.



8. U.S. Post Office  
201 E. Central Avenue  
Idabel, OK

*The Last Home of the Choctaw Nation*, by H. Louis Freund, 1940, (oil on canvas?)

This mural was commissioned by the Section and originally designed for the old Idabel post office. It is believed that the mural was moved into the new post office once it was completed, but this has not yet been confirmed. It is not recommended for further study at this time because it is not in situ.

9. U.S. Post Office  
1101 S. Muskogee Avenue  
Tahlequah, OK

*Choctaw Ball-Play*, by Manuel Bromberg, 1939, (oil on canvas?)

This is another mural commissioned by the Section and designed for the old Tahlequah post office. For a time the mural hung in the First National Bank Accounting Center, but has since been installed in the new post office on South Muskogee Avenue. The mural is in good condition, but is not recommended for further study at this time because it is not in situ.

10. No Man's Land Historical Museum  
207 W. Sewell Street  
Goodwell, OK

*Harvest*, by Jay Risling, 1939, (oil on canvas?)

Also commissioned by the Section, this mural originally hung in the old post office in Guymon before it was moved into storage at the No Man's Land Historical Museum in Goodwell. It is not recommended for further study at this time because it is not in situ.

11. U.S. Post Office  
900 Garth Brooks Boulevard  
Yukon, OK

*The Run, April 22, 1889—Taking the Lead*, by Dahlov Ipcar, 1941, (oil on canvas?)

Like many of the murals already noted, this one was commissioned for the old post office in Yukon and was moved into the new post office on Garth Brooks Boulevard once it was completed. It is not recommended for further study at this time because it is not in situ.

12. U.S. Post Office  
720 South Husband Street  
Stillwater, OK

*Early Days in Payne County*, by Grace L. Hamilton, 1963, (oil on canvas?)

This particular mural is not directly associated with New Deal art, though it may represent an enduring legacy of it. This mural appears to have been commissioned through the Section of Fine Arts of the Public Building Administration and was painted by a local Stillwater artist.

13. Al Harris Library  
809 North Custer Street  
Southwestern Oklahoma State University  
Weatherford, OK

*Kiowa Indian Dancers*, by Stephen Mopope, 1931, (oil on canvas?)

In the Director's Room on the first floor of the library hang two murals that were painted by Mopope in 1931. These murals were originally in the Art Building on campus. The murals precede all of the New Deal art programs and do not warrant further study in relation to this project at this time. Of course, the murals are significant as examples of Mopope's work.

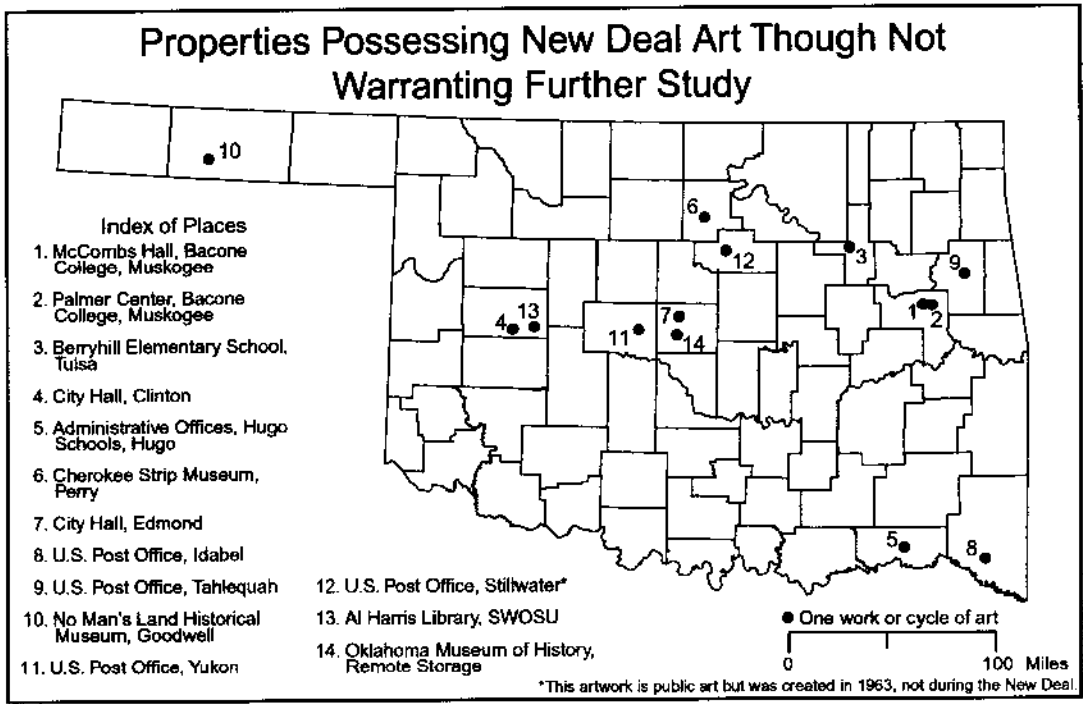
14. Oklahoma Museum of History (remote storage)  
2100 North Lincoln Boulevard  
Oklahoma City, OK

*Indian Friendship*, by James Auchiah, 1934, (oil on masonite?)

This painting resulted from the Public Works of Art Project and was originally designed for the Information Room of the Office of the Superintendent at the Five Civilized Tribes Agency in the Federal Building in Muskogee. In 1950, the noted scholar Grant Foreman was the agent who facilitated the move of the painting from its original location to the Oklahoma Museum of History, where it remains in storage today. It is catalogued as artifact number LP7370.

For the same project Auchiah also produced another painting, *Indian Lovers*. It was also designed for the Information Room. Probably about 1950 it was moved to the Art Building at Bacone College in Muskogee. The whereabouts of this painting are not known today.

## Properties Possessing New Deal Art Though Not Warranting Further Study



#### **XIV. HISTORIC CONTEXT**

##### Background

In the popular imagination Oklahoma's association with the Dust Bowl is legendary. Arguably, another facet of the Depression touched more Oklahomans and left a more enduring imprint on the state: the production of federally-sponsored art. More than three decades before the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts, an independent federal agency created in 1965, the U.S. government embarked on its first major foray into art patronage.<sup>1</sup> This historic context provides an overview of the events that led to the federal sponsorship of the arts, reviews the different art programs, their goals and achievements, and then focuses on Oklahoma's experience. Particular attention is devoted to the geographical distribution of New Deal era public art projects, the role of Native American artists in the programs, and the characteristics of the art created in and for the state.

It is rare that the United States would look to Mexico for ideas about governance or policy, yet that is what the country did in the 1930s. In an attempt to strengthen Mexican nationhood in the 1920s, President Alvaro Obregon had turned to his country's artists. His government commissioned artists to decorate public buildings in Mexico City with images of the Mexican Revolution. The artists were paid and the wages were

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<sup>1</sup> The creation of the National Commission of Fine Arts in 1910 marks an important development in the history of art and the federal government though its main focus was on maintaining the architectural and aesthetic character of Washington, D.C. See Sue A. Kohler, *The Commission of Fine Arts: A Brief History 1910-1976* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1977).

meager, but this initiative gave rise to the renowned school of Mexican muralists. The most famous of those artists include Diego Rivera, Jose Orozco, and David Siqueiros.<sup>2</sup>

In the United States, the artist George Biddle was aware of the Mexican muralists' success. Biddle, who had been a classmate of Franklin Delano Roosevelt at Groton, the elite Massachusetts prep school, saw federal patronage of the arts as valuable for two main reasons. On the one hand, he believed that by exposing Americans to art it would increase their awareness and appreciation of it. Biddle also thought that this art would lend support to government programs.<sup>3</sup> That is, it could articulate the social ideals of the New Deal. Not only would this provide a way to put unemployed artists to work, but the art they produced could reinforce and rebuild the American spirit. In 1933, Biddle expressed these ideas in a letter he sent to FDR.<sup>4</sup> Biddle won the president's support on this and over the following decade, federal patronage of the arts gradually unfolded.<sup>5</sup> In the process it significantly expanded the reach of the New Deal programs.

#### Public Works of Art Project (PWAP)

While George Biddle helped to stimulate and encourage interest in federal support for the arts, it was Edward Bruce whose vision helped to create and implement three of the federal art programs. Bruce was trained as a lawyer and an artist, and held a job in the

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<sup>2</sup> Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Achieving the president's support was not as simple as this passage implies. FDR forwarded a copy of Biddle's plan to the National Commission of Fine Arts (NCFA), which rejected it. The dissent largely reflects competing visions concerning the aesthetics of art. The NCFA embraced a classical aesthetic and saw Biddle as a proponent of modernism. See McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 6-7. The debate over what constitutes acceptable art not only influenced New Deal art but continues to shape discussions of public art whenever federal monies are involved.

Treasury Department. Because the Treasury Department oversees the construction, maintenance, and decoration of public buildings, Bruce became involved in the discussion of Biddle's idea about federal support for the arts. Bruce was an ardent advocate of the idea from the beginning, and for the next decade found himself a key player in the design and implementation of the federal art programs, beginning with the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP).

PWAP constitutes the first attempt at federal patronage for the arts in the 1930s.<sup>6</sup> The program was funded through the Civil Works Administration (CWA), one arm of the Public Works Administration. The CWA was a work-relief measure, and so was PWAP. Indeed, implementation of these early and emergency work relief programs reflected the government's acknowledgment that the hard times of unemployment touched all kinds of work and all sectors of the economy. PWAP was specifically designed to put artists to work decorating public buildings supported by federal, state, or local taxes. This commonly included courthouses, public schools and libraries, veteran's hospitals, community centers, and city auditoriums.<sup>7</sup>

PWAP began in December 1933 and lasted nearly seven months.<sup>8</sup> The program was short-lived because it was conceived as an emergency measure and at a time when many did not expect the depression to be as enduring as it was.<sup>9</sup> As originally planned,

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<sup>6</sup> Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ralph Purcell, *Government and Art: A Study of American Experience* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1956), 52; Erica Beckh Rubenstein, "Tax Payer's Murals" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1944), 30.

<sup>8</sup> Purcell, *Government and Art*, 50; Belisario R. Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1983), 48.

<sup>9</sup> Rubenstein, "Tax Payer's Murals," 29.

PWAP was to last for only two months.<sup>10</sup> Subsequent extensions, largely to give artists the chance to complete projects that were still underway, kept PWAP in operation for several additional months.<sup>11</sup> When Roosevelt ended the CWA in 1934 because of its cost, PWAP was also terminated.<sup>12</sup> During this brief period over one million dollars were allocated to PWAP for work relief.<sup>13</sup> The pay scale for artists started at \$26.50 per week and went as high as \$42.50 per week, depending on skill level and need.<sup>14</sup>

Nationally, PWAP employed nearly 4,000 artists who created tens of thousands of artworks ranging from paintings to maps and sculptures, and even batiks.<sup>15</sup> Explicitly, the basic charge for artists employed by PWAP was to depict or reveal the American scene.<sup>16</sup> Implicitly, this meant that works of art suggestive or illustrative of modernism were not acceptable, nor was any artwork that might express socialist or communist ideals.<sup>17</sup> Not only did there develop a tension in terms of the content of PWAP art, but Bruce's vision of PWAP did not always mesh with the aim of providing work relief. That is to say that as an artist himself, Bruce was more deeply motivated to find and employ skilled artists who could produce quality art, rather than being concerned with whether a particular person qualified for relief in the first place.

To facilitate nationwide administration of the program, the country was subdivided into multiple regions. Oklahoma and Texas formed one region—Region 12—

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<sup>10</sup> Purcell, *Government and Art*, 50.

<sup>11</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 121-123.

<sup>13</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Rubenstein, "Tax Payer's Murals," 29.

<sup>15</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 27; Rubenstein, "Tax Payer's Murals," 30.

<sup>16</sup> Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 42.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-46; McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 22-24. The most infamous conflict that arose over PWAP art involved the Coit Tower murals created by Bernard Zakheim and Victor Arnautoff.



the management of which was coordinated through a committee composed of museum directors or others with appropriate expertise. John S. Ankeny, who headed the Dallas Art Association, was appointed regional director while Oscar Jacobson, then director of the School of Art at the University of Oklahoma, represented Oklahoma on the regional committee.<sup>18</sup> Region 12 produced some 350 prints, 81 murals, 36 oil paintings, 17 carvings, 4 sculptures, 2 sketches, and 2 watercolors.<sup>19</sup> It is difficult to compare different regions because of the variety of artworks produced. For example, Region 13 included the states of New Mexico and Arizona and produced 200 Indian design studies, 40 murals (12 of these were from its Indian Division), 70 oil paintings, 49 watercolors, and 11 sketches, among other works. By contrast, Region 7, covering Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa, produced no fewer than 37 murals, 464 oil paintings, 303 watercolors, 96 sketches, and 10 sculptures.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, a tally of the total quantity of artworks produced for these regions reveals that the total output was identical for Regions 12 and 13, which both produced 492 works of art. However, at 931 items, the output of Region 7 was nearly double that of Region 12 or 13.<sup>21</sup>

It has been noted that PWAP employed 93 artists in the Texas and Oklahoma region; seventeen of those represented Oklahoma.<sup>22</sup> A quick glance at the demographic statistics for the region indicates that of the two states, Oklahoma was underrepresented. Using 1930 population counts, Oklahoma had just 7 PWAP artists per 1,000,000 people

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<sup>18</sup> Rubenstein, "Tax Payer's Murals," 28; Sally Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma, 1933-1943" (master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1984), 8-10.

<sup>19</sup> Rubenstein "Tax Payer's Murals," Appendix XV.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Appendix XIV. Note that tallies for murals indicate those produced and in process.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., Appendix XIV-XV.

<sup>22</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 10.

while Texas had 16 PWAP artists per 1,000,000 people. In spite of this under-representation, numerous works were executed in Oklahoma as a result of PWAP. In addition, the Native American involvement with this program was substantial and reflected Jacobson's work with Indian students, including a group of artists who came to be known as the "Kiowa Five." Most of the PWAP art produced in the state consisted of murals, though the Enid-born artist, Derald Swineford initiated work on several wood carvings with PWAP funding.<sup>23</sup>

A series of unusual developments combined to give Indian artists in Oklahoma the opportunity to hone their skills and to work on federally-sponsored art projects. Art historian Barbara Kerr Scott describes the interwar period as an "Indian Renaissance."<sup>24</sup> This was a time when Native American art was supported and encouraged in spite of the government's official policy of assimilation.<sup>25</sup> In Anadarko, the field matron of the Kiowa Indian Agency, Susie Peters, first encouraged her Indian students to draw, and then, in 1918 took the even bolder step of paying an art teacher, Mrs. Willie Baze Lane,<sup>26</sup> to give them some professional instruction.<sup>27</sup> Peters then helped the more skilled students to gain admission to St. Patrick's Mission School, where they came under the tutelage of Father Aloysius Hitta and Sister Olivia. Together Father Al, as he was called, and Peters worked to make it possible for these students to continue their art education at the

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<sup>23</sup> Swineford may have actually begun work on his carvings before PWAP began. See Barbara Kerr Scott, *New Deal Art in Oklahoma* (Lawton, OK: n.p., 1983), 4.

<sup>24</sup> Barbara Kerr Scott, "The Indian Renaissance," retrieved from <http://www.cameron.edu/~barbaras/IndianRen.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> Jamake Highwater, "Introductory Essay," *Kiowa Indian Art: Watercolor Paintings in Color by the Indians of Oklahoma* (Santa Fe: Bell Editions, 1979), 12.

<sup>26</sup> There is some confusion over her middle name as Highwater identifies her as Mrs. Willie Gaze Lane in his "Introductory Essay," 12.

<sup>27</sup> Highwater, "Introductory Essay," 12; *Things of the Spirit: Art by the Kiowa Five* (brochure, Oklahoma Historical Society, 1984), 3.

University of Oklahoma.<sup>28</sup> Samples of their art were subsequently shared with university art faculty.<sup>29</sup> Jacobson recognized the talent of these students and sought to bring them to Norman, though he knew they would not meet the university's formal admissions criteria. Realizing this, he pursued an alternative admissions procedure that classified them as "special students," a designation enabling them to take classes but not necessarily earn a university degree.<sup>30</sup>

In the late 1920s four Kiowa men—Spencer Asah, Jack Hokeah, Stephen Mopope, and Monroe Tsatoke—and one Kiowa woman, Lois Smokey, were admitted to the University of Oklahoma School of Art.<sup>31</sup> Although family circumstances kept Smokey from staying in Norman and continuing in the program, she was one of the original "Kiowa Five."<sup>32</sup> Following her departure another Kiowa artist, James Auchiah, joined the group. All of these artists hailed from the Anadarko area, achieved recognition for their art work, and came to be known as members of the "Kiowa Five." These artists were primarily muralists, though it is believed that Jack Hokeah also produced some easel paintings.<sup>33</sup> Several other Native American artists created artworks for the different federal programs and will be discussed below; however, Acee Blue Eagle, a Creek-Pawnee, also created murals for PWAP.

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<sup>28</sup> Highwater, "Introductory Essay," 12.

<sup>29</sup> At least two different versions of these events exist. Highwater ("Introductory Essay," 12-13) claims that Father Al took samples of their art directly to Oscar Jacobson. The brochure, *Things of the Spirit: Art by the Kiowa Five*, prepared by the Oklahoma Historical Society (1984) for an exhibition of Kiowa art states that Peters initially contacted Edith Mahier, who taught in the art department. Barbara Kerr Scott ("The Indian Renaissance," retrieved from <http://www.cameron.edu/~barbaras/IndianRen.htm>.) echoes this, and notes that Jacobson was traveling out of the country at the time Peters contacted Mahier.

<sup>30</sup> Highwater, "Introductory Essay," 13.

<sup>31</sup> "School of Art: A Brief History," retrieved from <http://art.ou.edu/dept/history/past.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Barbara Kerr Scott, "The Indian Renaissance," retrieved from <http://www.cameron.edu/~barbaras/IndianRen.htm>.

<sup>33</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 15.

The Kiowa Five quickly acquired prominence and visibility on the international scene, and traveled to Europe with Jacobson in 1928. One of the defining characteristics of the “Kiowa Style,” as it would come to be known, was the use of a two-dimensional composition where the details were enhanced by bold colors and crisp detail. It has been suggested that this style bears a stronger relation to abstract art than other contemporary Western styles.<sup>34</sup> Often, several of the Kiowa artists collaborated on the murals, making it difficult to ascertain just who painted what on a particular work of art.

Research to date indicates that approximately 20 different projects were completed in Oklahoma as a result of PWAP funding. Some easel paintings—possibly as many as 15—may have been completed for East Central University in Ada, but this has not been confirmed.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the most unusual project that began with PWAP support was the one that involved woodworking. Between 1934 and 1935 Derald Swineford and three other artists designed and carved multiple wood panels for doors in what used to be the student lounge of the art building at the University of Oklahoma.<sup>36</sup> The panels were created around the theme “Art and Man through the Ages” and depicted different cultural groups in order to highlight their particular artistic traditions.<sup>37</sup> It is believed that sometime in the 1960s those panels were moved and were eventually placed in storage at

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<sup>34</sup> Scott, *New Deal Art in Oklahoma*, 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>36</sup> Derald Thomas Swineford, “Thirty Carved Oak Panels Illustrating Life and Art Styles from the Cave Man through the Steel Worker” (master’s thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1945), 4.

<sup>37</sup> Swineford, “Thirty Carved Oak Panels,” 3.

the art museum, now the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. In 1997 the panels were restored to their original location.<sup>38</sup>

Most of the PWAP projects in Oklahoma led to the creation of murals. The most impressive of the PWAP murals that survive today are those by Monroe Tsatoke and Spencer Asah that decorate the third floor of the Oklahoma Historical Society. These ten panels depict Indian figures and shields.

Northeastern State University in Tahlequah retains a collection of murals designed and painted by several members of the Kiowa Five. The murals that remain in the best condition are the ones located in Seminary Hall. Just inside the main entrance is the mural, *Kiowa Buffalo Hunt*, painted by Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah.<sup>39</sup> Another mural of theirs, *Kiowa War Dance*, is located upstairs from the main entrance. In the Social Sciences Division, also in Seminary Hall (Room 103), is a mural that has been painted on the west wall above the fireplace. This mural appears to have been painted by Albin Jake, a Pawnee Indian, sometime beginning in the fall of 1949.<sup>40</sup> It is often incorrectly listed as a PWAP mural.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> "The Jacobson Doors," *Sooner Magazine*, Summer 2003, retrieved from <http://www.oufoundation.org/sm/summer2003>.

<sup>39</sup> These murals have been the source of much confusion. Meeks ("The Federal Art Program in Oklahoma (1934-1940)," 66) attributes these murals to Acee Blue Eagle, while Soelle ("New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 14) attributes them to Stephen Mopope and Jack Hokeah, as does Calcagno (*New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 36). The 1935 yearbook at Northeastern State University, *Tsa-La-Gi*, provides pictures of both murals (see p. 38) and attributes them to Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah. It seems most likely that Auchiah is the other artist since Hokeah is known to have spent considerable time in New Mexico during the 1930s. A "Save the Mural Fund" sponsored by NSU also attributes them to Mopope and Auchiah. See <http://navajo.nsuok.edu/native/savehist.html>.

<sup>40</sup> See "Art Students to Draw Murals for Departments" in *The Northeastern* (28 October 1949, p. 4) the newspaper of Northeastern State University. It mentions Albert (not Albin) Jake, but notes that the mural was to depict Indian dancers and hang above the fireplace.

<sup>41</sup> Nicholas A. Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma: A Bicentennial Project* (Miami, OK: Pioneer Printing, 1976), 36; Scott, *New Deal Art in Oklahoma*, 22.

Another educational institution that retains PWAP art is the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, formerly known as the Oklahoma College for Women. All of the New Deal murals on the campus appear to have been designed and painted by Acee Blue Eagle, though they are in varying states of repair despite recent restorations (ca. 2001). One mural has recently been destroyed because of water damage, and several others are starting to show wear. The murals are located in two classrooms on the second floor in the old gymnasium and were painted directly on the wall surface. Room 201 contains two life-size murals, *Moving Camp*, and *Buffalo Dancers*. Three small bird designs also decorate the walls around the room. Room 202 also contains two life-size murals, *Indian Spear Dancer* and *Dancer with Headdress*. Three small bird designs, a geometric design, and a stylized thunderbird also decorate the walls in the room. In the northeast corner of the room there used to be a full-size mural, *Drummer*, but water damage has caused the plaster to buckle to the point that the plaster where the mural was has fallen off leaving the underlying brick exposed. These rooms are still used on a regular basis and the desks in the classrooms, especially in room 201, have rubbed against and scratched the painted surface. In room 202 the installation of newer heating and cooling ducts has also obscured some of the bird designs and nearly clipped the top of the thunderbird.

Two main factors influenced the geographic distribution of PWAP art in Oklahoma. The first was the existence of artists who needed work relief, and the second was the short duration of the PWAP program. The lack of artists was partially a reflection of Oklahoma's youthfulness as a state and its rural and small town character. The prominent art centers in the country were in major metropolitan areas. Likewise, the short

duration of the program helped to concentrate PWAP funds in large urban places or those small towns that had publicly-funded colleges or universities with art programs. Figure 1 depicts the geography of PWAP art produced in the state.

Several of the artworks produced through PWAP have been moved from their original location, lost, or destroyed. In 1934 Acee Blue Eagle created a series of murals for the auditorium at Central State, now the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond. Those murals have since been painted over. Derald Swineford also painted murals for the old high school in Enid, but the school burned in 1943.<sup>42</sup> Two murals by Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah (*Buffalo Hunt* and *War Dance*) were painted for the superintendent's office of Five Civilized Tribes Agency which was located in the federal building in Muskogee. Those murals have since been moved to the art building at Bacone College, also in Muskogee. *Buffalo Hunt* hangs in the stairwell between the first and second floors, and *War Dance* hangs in the hallway on the second floor. Two of Auchiah's murals, *Indian Lovers* and *Indian Friendship*, once hung in the information room, also part of the Five Civilized Tribes Agency/Superintendent's Office, in the federal building in Muskogee. The former is believed to have been moved to the art building at Bacone College, but could not be located during the fieldwork for this project. The Oklahoma State Museum of History, a division of the Oklahoma Historical Society, received *Indian Friendship* in 1950.<sup>43</sup> It is not clear why these four paintings from the Five Civilized Tribes Agency were dispersed. Dr. Grant Foreman, noted Oklahoma

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<sup>42</sup> Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 10.

<sup>43</sup> Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 18; Personal communication with Jeff Briley, Assistant Director of Collections, Oklahoma State Museum of History, 20 August 2004. The Auchiah painting *Indian Friendship* is catalogued as artifact #LP7370.

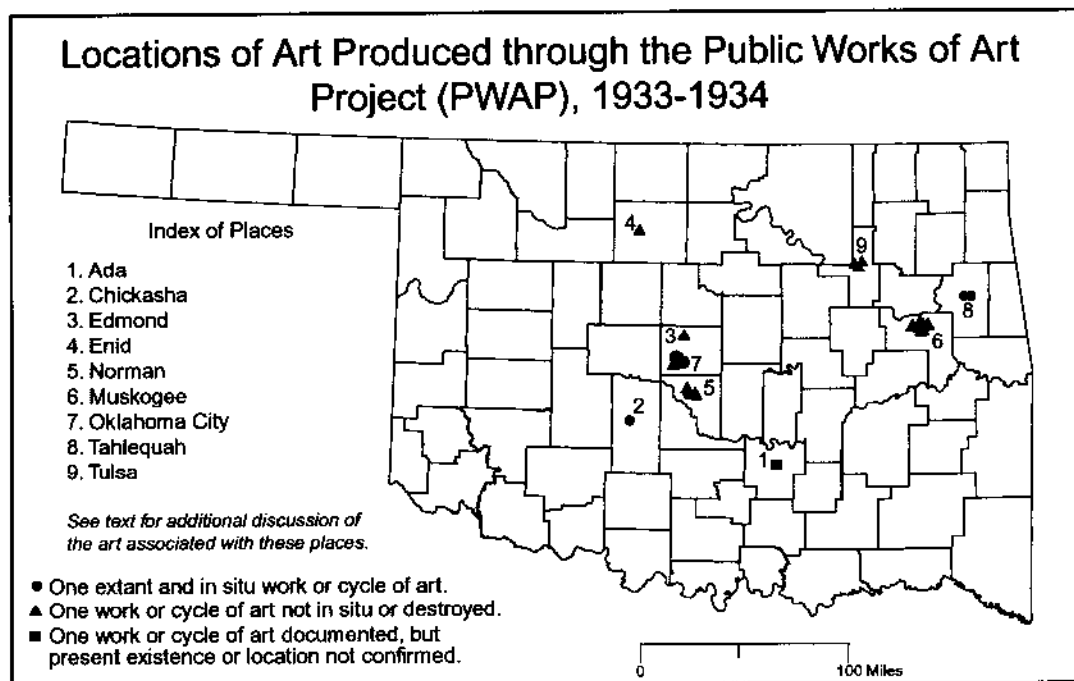


Figure 1



historian, served as an agent who facilitated the donation of the Auchiah painting to the Oklahoma Museum of History.

Sometime in the mid-1930s Lucile Spire Bruner painted a five-panel mural scene for the old Central High School in Muskogee.<sup>44</sup> At least one scene in the mural showed a car, hood open and about to be inspected or repaired by some men or boys.<sup>45</sup> Nicholas Calcagno, one of the first to begin to document the state's New Deal art, finds reason to believe the other panels were sold at auction.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the building has since been destroyed. Bruner also painted at least two other murals for the Dean of Men's office (now Evan's Hall) at the University of Oklahoma, but they remain unaccounted for.<sup>47</sup> Holmberg Hall, also at the University of Oklahoma, once displayed murals painted by Monroe Tsatoke, Stephen Mopope and likely other Kiowa artists.<sup>48</sup> Correspondence retained by Leslie Baumert, Director of the Visitor Center at the University of Oklahoma, indicates that as many as eight murals decorated Holmberg Hall. In addition, one former student who had attended the 1941-42 reunion specifically recalled that Mopope murals hung on either side of the stage in the building, which housed a 950-seat auditorium. Holmberg Hall has since been renovated and the fate of these murals is not known.

A similar outcome has befallen several PWAP murals designed for a number of Oklahoma City and Tulsa locations. Arthur Lee Van Arsdale's mural *The Spirit of Oklahoma* was painted for the entrance to the auditorium at Classen High School. It was

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<sup>44</sup> Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 18.

<sup>45</sup> Rogers, "Incidence of New Deal Art in Oklahoma," 75.

<sup>46</sup> Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 18-19.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

one of two murals that were designed by Dorothea Stevenson and that depicted urban and industrial facets of the state.<sup>49</sup>

Audre Yates painted two murals for the Woodrow Wilson School in Oklahoma City, including one showing nursery rhyme characters, and one called *The Circus*. The former still hangs in the kindergarten room though in places it is occluded by other wall hangings. *The Circus* was removed, rolled up, and placed in storage at the school.

In Tulsa, Ronald Darra's *Men on Oil Rig* mural painted for the lobby of the Industrial Arts building at Central High School (originally part of the Manual Arts Building and now part of the TCC Metro Campus) has gone missing.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that there was a sizable mosaic, possibly thirty feet from end to end, that also hung on the west wall in the lobby in this building. The mosaic is believed to have consisted of one-inch tiles glued on a copper or brass sheet. It depicted a panorama of Oklahoma, including the state flag, flower, oil derricks, rivers, and corn and cotton farming. The circumstances concerning the disappearance of this piece of art have reputedly been under investigation by the F.B.I.<sup>51</sup>

Also in Tulsa, Edward George Eckert's mural *Melody Man* was painted for the Johnson Elementary School, formerly the Booker T. Washington School. In the 1970s it was reported that the mural had been painted over.<sup>52</sup> Mary McCray painted two murals for the library at Berryhill Junior High School, *Ichabod Crane* and *Uncle Remus*. By the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 26. He states that the mural is in storage at the administrative building of the Oklahoma City Public Schools, but we were unable to locate it.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>51</sup> The information concerning this mosaic was kindly supplied by Marina Metevelis, Learning Resources Center, Tulsa Community College-Metro Campus. She used to teach "office tech" classes in the Industrial Arts building before it became part of Tulsa Community College.

<sup>52</sup> Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 37.

middle 1970s the murals had been moved from the library into the auditorium. When the junior high was renovated about ten years ago, the murals were moved to their present location in the cafeteria of Berryhill Elementary School, across the street from the junior high. In the near future expected renovations to the elementary school will convert the cafeteria into the school's library and the murals are to remain there.<sup>53</sup> Calcagno considers these particular murals exceptional for two reasons. First, PWAP art was typically produced for urban schools and Berryhill was a rural locale in the 1930s. It is possible that Oklahoma may, with these murals, possess the only PWAP art created for a rural area, although this needs to be confirmed through additional research. In addition, no other women artists produced PWAP art for Tulsa or its vicinity.<sup>54</sup>

#### The Section of Painting and Sculpture

Encouraged by the success of the PWAP, Bruce took pains to ensure that the end of the program did not spell the end of federal support for the arts. In October of 1934, the Section of Painting and Sculpture was established within the Treasury Department. In 1938 the program was renamed the "Treasury Department Section of Fine Arts" and the following year it became the "Section of Fine Arts."<sup>55</sup> It is often referred to as the "Section."

When Bruce originally conceived of the program he had proposed that one percent of the budget of a federal building be set aside for use for its decorative

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<sup>53</sup> Vicki Marks, a teacher at Berryhill Elementary School, provided these details on past and planned renovations.

<sup>54</sup> Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 37.

<sup>55</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 38.

artwork.<sup>56</sup> These monies—a mix of both Treasury and PWA funds—would effectively underwrite the program. Moreover, the art in these buildings would help to record the activities of other federal projects such as the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Civilian Conservation Corps, to name just a few.<sup>57</sup> In Bruce's view, then, federal patronage would yield multiple benefits that included providing an artistic record of government works.

In contrast to PWAP, the Section was never a work-relief program. Under Bruce's direction, the Section sought high quality art that would be utilized to decorate federal buildings. When art was needed for a particular building, competitions were held and juries, usually consisting of Section employees, decided the winner.<sup>58</sup> The winning artist would subsequently work under contract, producing sketches and preliminary cartoons or drawings that depicted the art that was envisioned. All art produced, including these preliminary works, was subject to Section approval. Approval had to be secured before the artist could execute the final product.

Most Section artists received about \$700-\$800 per project, though in a few instances the amount awarded for a Section project exceeded \$5,000.<sup>59</sup> The Section also coordinated traveling exhibitions for local museums, libraries, and other public facilities.<sup>60</sup> Several hundred sculptures were also produced as a result of Section projects, but these proved more costly for the program. As a result, the most common artwork

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>57</sup> Park and Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas*, 6.

<sup>58</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 53.

<sup>59</sup> Rubenstein, "Tax Payer's Murals," 42; Park and Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas*, 13.

<sup>60</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 68.

produced by Section artists were murals. Amid growing concern about the wise use of government monies during the war, the Senate voted to end the Section in 1943.

From an administrative standpoint, the Section was considerably more centralized than PWAP and lacked its regional committees. But more than simply commissioning art, the Section—in Bruce’s estimation—provided a viable way to bring reputable art into the everyday world of the American citizen. Beyond that, the Section also attempted to create a dialogue between the artist and the local citizens. Section artists were encouraged to visit the community that was to receive a particular artwork, and research it—at the artist’s own expense. High costs usually prohibited such travel, but from an ideological standpoint Section art was not intended to be thrust upon a given community or detached from that community’s identity.

There is no consensus opinion of Section art. Critics find fault with its conservative and non-controversial nature, and the restrictions that it placed on the artist’s creativity and originality.<sup>61</sup> In many ways, the artists who were awarded contracts with the Section found themselves trying to serve two masters. They had to produce art that satisfied the local community and, in order to get paid, also met Section approval. Therefore, to “paint Section” became the artists’ lingo for satisfying the tastes and demands of the anonymous Section jurists, and most importantly, Section Director Bruce.<sup>62</sup>

For all of its faults, however, the Section did succeed in bringing art into America’s small towns. In the nine years that it operated, over one thousand cities had

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<sup>61</sup> Park and Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas*, 66.

<sup>62</sup> Rubenstein, “Tax Payer’s Murals,” 70.

buildings, most of them post offices, which had received Section art.<sup>63</sup> The Section undoubtedly benefited from the government's emergency construction program in the mid-1930s, which paid for the design and completion of many federal buildings—including post offices—in every state.<sup>64</sup> To streamline this process a limited number of building designs were used, effectively creating look-alike post offices.<sup>65</sup>

The "48 States Competition," launched by the Section in 1939, was a national competition with the goal of generating a mural for one post office in every state.<sup>66</sup> This competition was covered by *Life* magazine, bringing visibility to the Section and its projects.<sup>67</sup> The Section capitalized on the fact that many post offices were built to the same design specifications, with the result that the competition tended to bias the smaller towns—those very places that were most likely to have received post offices constructed according to the generic design plans.<sup>68</sup> Nearly 1,500 designs were entered into the competition and a total of 74 works of art were commissioned—one for each of the 48 states plus 26 others.<sup>69</sup>

This practice of awarding multiple commissions from one competition was not unusual for the Section. Often artists who produced designs that did not win but placed highly in regional competitions were awarded commissions for other buildings. For

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<sup>63</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 66.

<sup>64</sup> Rubenstein, "Tax Payer's Murals," 39-40.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>66</sup> Karal Ann Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of Post-Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 81.

<sup>67</sup> Park and Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas*, 16. See the December 4, 1939 issue of *Life* magazine for reproductions of the winning mural designs.

<sup>68</sup> Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America*, 83. Here Marling takes a cynical view of the 48 States Competition, finding the reliance on generic post offices an easy way for the Section to minimize the commissions it paid the artists because these tended to be the smallest of the federal buildings.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 81; Park and Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas*, 16.

example, the artists who created the murals for the Idabel, Madill, Sayre, and Wewoka post offices were granted commissions based on their entries submitted in the competition held for the post office in Amarillo, Texas.<sup>70</sup> Because Oklahoma did not host many of these Section competitions, most of the Section artists who produced murals for the state were not from Oklahoma.

The post office in Purcell represented Oklahoma in the 48 States Competition and James B. Turnbull was the artist commissioned to produce a mural for it.<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, the mural that Turnbull painted was not the mural that Purcell ultimately received because of public upset in Jackson, Missouri at the mural that was painted for their post office. That mural, by Fred Conway, depicted cattle grazing amid oversized haystacks. By contrast, Turnbull's mural showed cattle being loaded on a train. When a Missouri congressman became involved in support of the Jackson citizens' outcry against Conway's mural, the Section reversed its original decision and sent the Conway mural to Purcell and the Turnbull mural to Jackson.<sup>72</sup> Upon receiving Conway's mural, the postmaster in Purcell also raised objections to it, prompting Conway to create an entirely different mural for Purcell.<sup>73</sup> Conway's second mural design is the one that hangs in the Purcell post office today.

At present it appears that thirty-one murals were completed for Oklahoma federal buildings through the Section (Figure 2).<sup>74</sup> Four basic themes are expressed in the Section

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<sup>70</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 21.

<sup>71</sup> Rubenstein, "Tax Payer's Murals," Appendix XXI.

<sup>72</sup> Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America*, 124-126.

<sup>73</sup> Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 32.

<sup>74</sup> Scott, *New Deal Art in Oklahoma*, 2. The rose window that graced the old Bacone Memorial Chapel was designed by the Indian artist Woody Crumbo in 1943, but this appears to have been the result of private

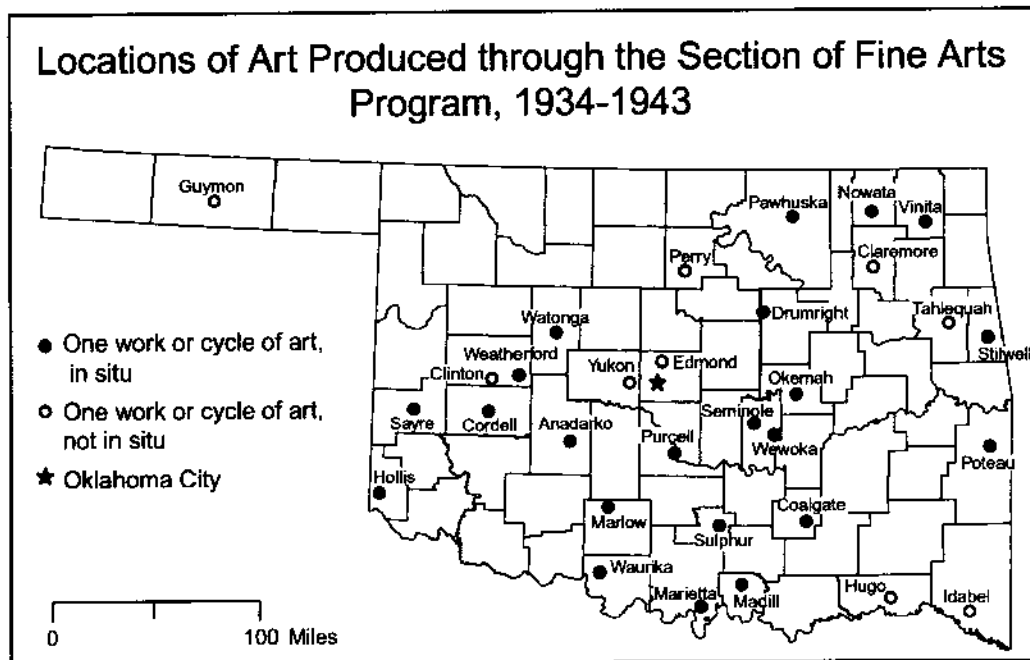


Figure 2

sponsorship, not a New Deal art project. See Virginia Burch, "Tulsa Woman Gives Indian Designed Window for Bacone College Chapel," *Tulsa Tribune*, 23 June 1940. I thank Frances Donelson, Librarian at Bacone College, for bringing this and other sources in the Bacone College archives to my attention. The Crumbo window and chapel were destroyed by fire in December 1990.



murals designed for Oklahoma. These themes include: 1) white settlement, including the land runs, 2) Indian history and culture, 3) nature and agriculture, and 4) local history. Although art was produced for the Section as early as 1934, Oklahoma did not install its first Section murals until 1937. Among the first items completed were the murals in the Anadarko Post Office and Indian Agency Building. These were painted by Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah in 1937. That same year Joseph A. Fleck completed and installed his mural, *The Red Man Sees the First Stage Coach* or *Choctaws See the First Stage Coach*, in the Hugo post office.

In Oklahoma, the geographic distribution of Section art clearly reveals a bias for small towns. As shown in the table below, three-quarters (74%) of the Section art completed for the state was allocated to buildings in towns with 5,000 or fewer people (Table 1). Four of the artists (Randall Davey, Acee Blue Eagle, Stephen Mopope, and Ila McAfee Turner) produced two Section murals for different post offices in the state. Altogether, Oklahoma artists received just 6 of 31, or 19% of the Section contracts awarded contracts in the state. Among the states, Oklahoma must surely be unique in that all of the Oklahomans who won contracts for projects in the state were Native Americans. The Indian artists included Stephen Mopope (Kiowa), who won two

**Table 1.**

<b>No. (%) of Section Murals</b>	<b>Town Popn., 1940</b>
23 (74%)	Below 5,000
6 (19%)	5,000-9,999
2 (6%)	10,000-12,000

contracts; Solomon McCombs (Creek); Woody Crumbo (Potawatomie); Richard (Dick) West (Cheyenne); and Acee Blue Eagle (Creek-Pawnee). Probably the most renowned of the muralists to paint as a Section artist for the state is Oscar E. Berninghaus. His mural, *Terminus of the Railroad*, decorates the Weatherford post office.<sup>75</sup> Women were awarded ten of the contracts, slightly fewer than one-third of the Section projects for the state.

During the 1930s post offices were built according to a handful of basic plans. As a result, the murals painted tend to have the same proportions ranging from about three to five feet in height and from ten to twelve feet in length. Because most of the Section artists worked in their own studios, the murals they painted are typically on canvas. Once the mural was complete, the artist brought the canvas to the post office for it to be installed on the wall. In almost every case the mural decorated the wall space above the postmaster's door. Because the murals are not at eye level, one's ability to view and appreciate them is often compromised by updates or renovations to the post office interior, especially hanging fluorescent light fixtures.

Change is inevitable, however, and it is quite remarkable that all of the Section murals have survived the six decades since their creation. Even so, nine of the thirty-one murals are no longer in their original location. The Clinton and Edmond murals have been moved to their respective City Halls. The Claremore, Guymon, Idabel, and Perry murals have been moved into local museums. New post offices in Tahlequah and Yukon

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<sup>75</sup> The precise title of this mural remains elusive. Calcagno (*New Deal Art in Oklahoma*, 41) uses *Terminus of the Railroad*, but Park and Markowitz (*Democratic Vistas*, 225) use *Terminus of the Railroad, 1898-1901*, and Sanders uses *Weatherford, Oklahoma Railroad Station, At the Turn of the Century*. See his book, *Oscar E. Berninghaus, Taos, New Mexico: Master Painter of American Indians and the Frontier West* (Taos, NM: Heritage Publishing Co., 1985).

now retain their respective murals, and the Hugo mural now graces the administrative offices of the Hugo public schools.

### The Treasury Relief Art Project

While the Section was not a work relief program, the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) was. Together, the Section and TRAP are referred to as the Treasury Department Art Program. Established under Bruce's direction in the summer of 1935, TRAP utilized WPA funding that had been made available through the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act.<sup>76</sup> In 1935, more than \$500,000 were allocated to TRAP for relief purposes.<sup>77</sup> TRAP artists were to be provided with materials for their projects and paid at regionally competitive rates according to one's skills.<sup>78</sup> As TRAP got underway, Bruce's ideal of producing quality art again conflicted with the goal of providing relief to needy artists. Harry Hopkins, the WPA administrator, maintained that TRAP was a relief program and that the majority of artists employed should be those on the relief rolls. Although Hopkins initially made some concessions to Bruce by requiring that seventy-five percent of the artists come from the relief rolls, by 1936 Hopkins had raised the requirement to ninety percent.<sup>79</sup> Following this, the program was gradually phased out over the next three years. TRAP officially ceased operation in 1939.

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<sup>76</sup> Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 56.

<sup>77</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 39.

<sup>78</sup> Rubenstein, "Tax Payer's Murals," 50.

<sup>79</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 42; Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 56-57.

TRAP also differed from the Section in the kinds of art produced.<sup>80</sup> Murals dominated Section art, and even some sculptures were produced, but TRAP artists produced a wide array of art that included easel works, curtains, posters, and templates for military medals.<sup>81</sup> Despite its short duration TRAP artists were highly productive, generating more than 10,000 pieces of art, most of which were easel works.<sup>82</sup>

At present, the general consensus appears to be that no TRAP art was produced in Oklahoma.<sup>83</sup> The speculation that the mural in the old postal plaza in Stillwater might be the result of TRAP funding is incorrect.<sup>84</sup> The mural, *Early Days in Payne County*, was painted by Grace L. Hamilton in 1963. This mural was commissioned by an art program that was administered by the General Services Administration Public Building Services.<sup>85</sup> Although additional research is needed to confirm this, the Stillwater mural does appear to have been among the first such murals commissioned outside of Washington, D.C.<sup>86</sup>

Ironically, the main reason that Oklahoma fared so poorly in terms of producing TRAP art seems to be the lack of artists who were eligible for relief. Although it appears that Jacobson was contacted about the possibility of awarding TRAP projects to

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<sup>80</sup> Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 56.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 56; McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 68.

<sup>82</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 39

<sup>83</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 29; Kathleen Grisham Rogers, "Incidence of New Deal Art in Oklahoma: An Historical Survey" (master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1974), 31.

<sup>84</sup> Park and Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas*, p. 225 list the Stillwater mural as a Section mural for Oklahoma but raise the question of its possible association with TRAP.

<sup>85</sup> This information was initially obtained from the unpublished paper "The Stillwater Post Office Mural by G. L. Hamilton" prepared by Teresa Holder, 1 May 2000, a copy of which was supplied by Mark White, Department of Art, Oklahoma State University. But also see *The Commission of Fine Arts, Eighteenth Report, 1 July 1958 to 30 June 1963* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1965), 50-52.

<sup>86</sup> *Commission of Fine Arts, Eighteenth Report, 1 July 1958 to 30 June 1963* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1965), 50-52.

Oklahoma artists, it was established that neither Mopope, Auchiah, nor Asah met the relief requirements stipulated by the WPA.<sup>87</sup>

### Works Progress Administration/Federal Art Project

The last of the New Deal art programs was the Works Progress Administration/Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP). The FAP was one of four programs established through the WPA to support not just artists, but musicians, writers, and actors as well. The Music Project, Writers Project, and Theater Project were the other components of WPA relief for the arts. These four projects are collectively referred to as “Federal Project Number One” or “Federal One.”<sup>88</sup>

The WPA/FAP was established in August of 1935, one month after TRAP. Although Bruce may have indirectly influenced this program, it was Holger Cahill, an expert in the area of folk art, who directed the program.<sup>89</sup> Unlike the Section, the WPA/FAP operated as a decentralized program. Each state had a program director as well as some assistants.

A basic goal of the WPA/FAP included developing centers of art activity in local communities. At no charge to the public, these centers hosted art classes and sponsored exhibitions.<sup>90</sup> In addition to outreach and education, other specific activities of the WPA/FAP included documenting different kinds of art and design.<sup>91</sup> The Index of

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<sup>87</sup> Soelle, “New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma,” 28.

<sup>88</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 77.

<sup>89</sup> Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 140-148, and 164-165.

<sup>90</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 141.

<sup>91</sup> Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 161; Soelle, “New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma,” 78.

American Design constituted a major national effort to create an illustrated history of folk art in America, and reflected Cahill's concern for the loss of certain crafts.<sup>92</sup> With WPA funding, artists were employed to draw, for the purpose of creating a documentary record, different designs from all kinds of decorative arts including but not limited to furniture, jewelry, and leatherworking. Although Cahill desired that each state have an Index of American Design project, they were established in only 35 states and Oklahoma was not one of them.<sup>93</sup>

Undoubtedly some artists considered their work on the Index of American Design mindless duplication of extant artifacts, but this one dimension of the WPA/FAP captures Cahill's working philosophy for the entire program; namely that it served the purpose of preserving specific artistic skills in a time when unemployment and assembly-line production prevented people from applying such traditional skills.<sup>94</sup> Cahill argued that for pragmatic purposes, not simply aesthetic reasons, art needed to be cultivated in communities across the country.<sup>95</sup>

Cahill's goals for the WPA/FAP and apprehensions expressed by bureaucrats about the public becoming too accustomed to relying on federal handouts ultimately shaped the implementation of the WPA/FAP. One of the major outgrowths of these twin concerns was the development of community art centers. The WPA/FAP did support muralists, and even recognized different skill levels among its artists.<sup>96</sup> It was, however, the community art centers that encouraged the greatest level of outreach and community

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<sup>92</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 134; Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 164.

<sup>93</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 44; McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 137.

<sup>94</sup> Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 166.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>96</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 38.

involvement. Because these centers placed such a great emphasis on art education and instruction, the WPA/FAP has been compared to a guild system in which skilled, professional artists mentored and guided the instruction of novices.<sup>97</sup> In order to give communities a stake in the art produced, the WPA/FAP mandated that a co-sponsor, usually another public institution, help underwrite the cost of the project that would produce the art they were slated to receive.<sup>98</sup>

The WPA/FAP was an immensely productive program. At the height of its operation more than 5,000 artists were employed.<sup>99</sup> Nationwide, this program yielded "...2,566 murals and 17,774 pieces of sculpture. Easel painters contributed 108,099 works in oil, watercolor, tempera, and pastel, and graphic artists printed some 240,000 copies of 11,285 original designs in various print media."<sup>100</sup> In addition, over 100 art centers were established across the country.<sup>101</sup> Beginning about 1938, support for the program, as for most New Deal programs, began to wane. In 1939 the program was renamed the "WPA Art Program," and in 1942 it was reorganized into the Graphic Section of the War Services Division. On the last day of April, 1943, the program officially ended.<sup>102</sup>

In Oklahoma, Homer Heck, a faculty member at the University of Oklahoma, became the State Director of Art. He oversaw the state's organization of the WPA/FAP

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<sup>97</sup> Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 151.

<sup>98</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 87.

<sup>99</sup> Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 151.

<sup>100</sup> McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 165.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>102</sup> Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation*, 231.

for only a short time before accepting another job.<sup>103</sup> He was succeeded by Nan Sheets, who played a major role in the establishment and supervision of the Oklahoma Art Center.<sup>104</sup> Oliver G. Meeks, who would eventually write his thesis on the WPA/FAP in Oklahoma, served as the assistant director of the state's art center.

To understand the role that Sheets played in the formation of the Oklahoma Art Center it is useful to briefly review the circumstances surrounding the arts in the state at that time. Only a state since 1907, Oklahoma can be said to have been art impoverished at least in terms of numbers of artists and the absence of art museums in the state. In 1930, neither Tulsa nor Oklahoma City had art museums. Oklahoma City did have an art league, which dated to 1910, but the only bonafide museum was one established in 1914 by a Benedictine Monk at Sacred Heart Abbey.<sup>105</sup> This would grow into the Mabee-Gerrer Art Museum at St. Gregory's University in Shawnee. Remarkably, Tulsa would not get its first art museum until 1939 (Philbrook Museum), and the Gilcrease Museum was not established until 1949.

Nan Sheets was a local artist and member of the Oklahoma Art League who moved quickly to establish a center for WPA/FAP operations. By January 1936, she had made plans to use the Commerce Exchange Building on South Robinson Street in Oklahoma City for the WPA Experimental Gallery.<sup>106</sup> For the next few years this gallery

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<sup>103</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 37; Rogers, "Incidence of New Deal Art," 34.

<sup>104</sup> Kathleen Grisham Rogers, "Incidence of New Deal Art," 34; 41.

<sup>105</sup> "About the Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art." Retrieved from <http://www.mgmoa.org/abou.htm>.

<sup>106</sup> "History of the Oklahoma City Museum of Art." Retrieved from <http://www.okcartmuseum.com/press/history.htm>.



hosted numerous art exhibitions and found itself in need of a larger facility.<sup>107</sup> Sheets worked to gain use of another building as for WPA/FAP activities, and by 1938 was preparing to move into the Municipal Building. Following completion of that move, Sheets was able to operate five art galleries in Oklahoma City. One gallery was intended to permanently house and display the holdings of the Oklahoma Art League, while the others were set aside for the display of the traveling exhibits or to show items on loan.<sup>108</sup>

The WPA/FAP was not confined to Oklahoma City, however, and the network of extension galleries that crisscrossed the state provides a good indication of the success of this program (Figure 3). By the spring of 1940, for example, eleven additional galleries had been opened, with two more to open the following year.<sup>109</sup> Depending on the local resources that were available, these galleries might host exhibitions or provide work relief to local artists who could teach courses on painting or sketching, for example, for the local community. Naturally, Oklahoma City did maintain the most diversified program in the state, supporting a number of extension galleries at public libraries, high schools, and community centers across the city itself. By contrast, Tulsa struggled to coordinate its art activities. Tulsa did operate an extension gallery until 1938, but it was superseded by the creation of the Philbrook Museum the following year.<sup>110</sup> With a few

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<sup>107</sup> "History of the Oklahoma City Museum of Art." Retrieved from <http://www.okcartmuseum.com/press/history.htm>.

<sup>108</sup> Oliver Gough Meeks, "The Federal Art Program in Oklahoma (1934-1940)" (master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1941) 125.

<sup>109</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 56-7.

<sup>110</sup> Meeks, "Federal Art Program," 126; Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 56.

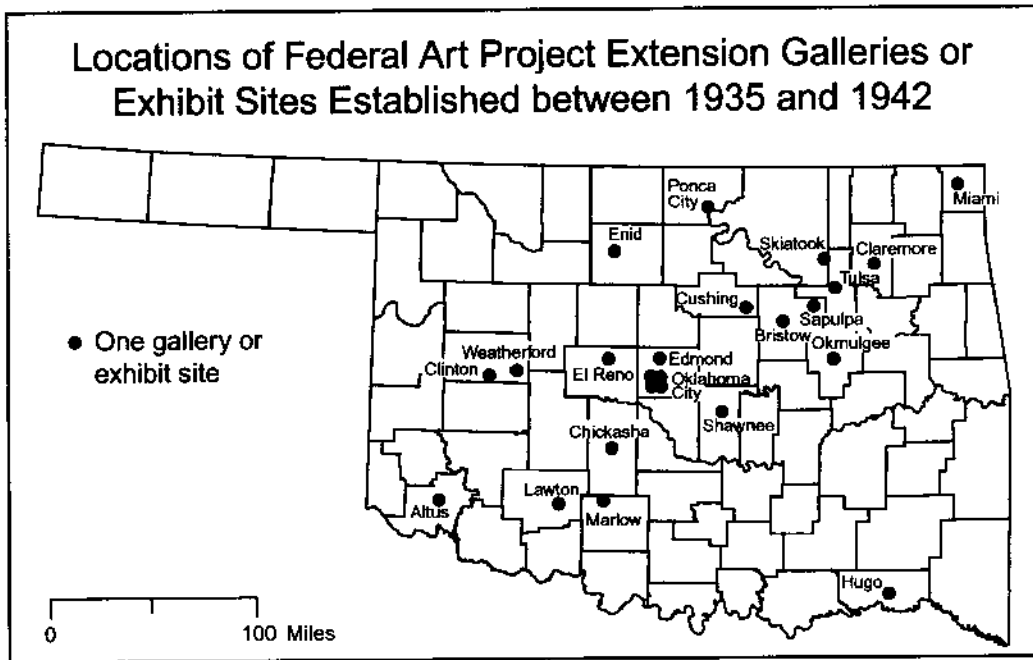


Figure 3

exceptions, then, the WPA/FAP proved to be a successful venture; in Sheets' proud estimation, the Oklahoma Art Center was the finest program of its kind in the country.<sup>111</sup>

While Oklahoma experienced a profusion of extension galleries, this diverged from what might be considered the typical experience with the WPA/FAP. As previously indicated, nationwide the WPA/FAP provided relief to artists who produced hundreds of thousands of prints and easel works, not to mention thousands of murals and sculpture designs. The output of Oklahoma pales in comparison to these figures, and the fact of the matter is that Oklahoma simply was not a significant center of art production—at least as measured by *quantity* of art and in comparison to other states.<sup>112</sup> In terms of sculpture projects in Oklahoma, it is not clear whether Jules Struppeck's designs, "Commerce" and "Industry" for Adams Hall at the University of Oklahoma were in fact part of a WPA/FAP project.<sup>113</sup> The only major mural projects produced through the WPA/FAP appear to have been painted by Ruth Monroe Augur.<sup>114</sup> Ironically, Augur was not even an Oklahoman; she hailed from Texas. Her six-panel mural design articulating the theme of historic trails was completed in 1937 and still graces the Garfield County Courthouse in Enid. Between 1939 and 1941 Augur also painted murals in one of the buildings at the Lincoln Park Zoo. These murals depicted various Oklahoma animals from prehistoric times to the present, but they have been painted over.<sup>115</sup> Sometime in the 1930s, probably before her work at the Garfield County Courthouse, Augur also painted a seven-panel

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<sup>111</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 78.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>113</sup> Soelle attributes these to an NYA (part of the WPA) commission that enabled Jules Struppeck to design them (see p. 65). A search of back issues of *The Oklahoma Daily* and *Sooner Magazine* was inconclusive.

<sup>114</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 40.

<sup>115</sup> Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 23; personal communication with Don Whitton, Records Department, Oklahoma City Zoo, 25 August 2004.

series for the banquet room at the Chamber of Commerce in Oklahoma City. Titled “Empire Builders of Oklahoma,” these murals presented a sort of illustrated typology of the kinds of pioneers who factored in the history of Oklahoma. These murals were subsequently destroyed.<sup>116</sup>

There is a sizable quantity of art at the Stovall Museum on the University of Oklahoma campus that was likely produced as a result of the WPA/FAP but needs additional research. Ralph Shead, for example, is believed to have painted some murals for the Stovall Museum at the University of Oklahoma. His brother, Robert, created a number of instructional diagrams for use in the Botany and Microbiology Department as well. Perhaps as many as 1,000 drawings were produced by numerous artists whose work helped document the excavation of Spiro Mounds.<sup>117</sup>

A number of works in Oklahoma City also need further research. Will Rogers Airport (formerly known as Will Rogers Field) was slated to receive a mural, possibly by Ruth Monroe Augur, depicting aviation history.<sup>118</sup> The whereabouts of this are unknown. Some easel works in the Osage Tribal Museum in Pawhuska have been attributed to artist Todros Geller and the WPA/FAP.<sup>119</sup> At least one mural and numerous easel paintings are believed to have been produced by black Oklahoma artists, but additional research is needed to confirm these associations and determine if these works still exist.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*, 22.

<sup>117</sup> Some or all of the projects mentioned here may have resulted from the activities of students participating in the National Youth Administration. See Soelle’s (“New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma”) discussion on p. 65.

<sup>118</sup> Soelle, “New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma,” 62. See also Scott, *New Deal Art in Oklahoma*, 23.

<sup>119</sup> Scott, *New Deal Art in Oklahoma*, 23.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

The U.S. entry into war triggered a series of changes to the WPA/FAP and would eventually bring about the demise of the program, yet the ability to contribute to the war effort helped Cahill's program survive for two more years. In 1942 what had been the WPA/FAP became the Graphics Section of the War Services Program. From this point forward, the art generated through this program contributed materials deemed beneficial to national defense.<sup>121</sup> Because Oklahoma City did have a silkscreening program, it became an important center for poster production, including

1,500 posters for the war savings staff, 4,513 for civilian defense agencies, 40 for servicemen's centers, 200 for the hospital at Will Rogers' field, 4,050 for the Venereal Disease Control Assistance Project, 15 for the Civilian Defense Corps of Oklahoma City, and 12 for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. More than 1,000 detailed maps were made for Oklahoma City's air raid division of civilian defense.<sup>122</sup>

One of the factors that complicates research on works produced through the WPA/FAP program is that much of the New Deal art was dispersed to different places and parts of the country once the program ended.<sup>123</sup> Numerous Oklahoma institutions actually acquired New Deal art in this way. For example, the Museum of Art at OU, the Oklahoma Art Center, the art department at the University of Science and Arts received works in this way. Likewise, Oklahoma City University is also believed to have acquired 90 paintings.<sup>124</sup> In some instances, specific governmental offices or individuals obtained works of art, including the State Treasurer's office, Senator Josh Lee, and Representative

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<sup>121</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 42.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 66; Scott, *New Deal Art in Oklahoma*, 23.

Will Rogers.<sup>125</sup> The Oklahoma City Public Schools also profited from this allocation system, gaining perhaps in excess of 100 easel paintings.<sup>126</sup> Four of these are in the possession of Wilson Elementary School. They include *Dancer*, attributed to Herbert White Buffalo, and Acee Blue Eagle's *Woman Making Baskets*, *Knife Dancer*, and *Ready for the Hunt*.

Clearly, the WPA/FAP vastly transformed the art scene in the state, while providing mechanisms for work relief and community involvement in the arts. As Soelle notes,

The public did indeed visit the art centers. In Oklahoma City over 20,000 people visited the gallery by August 1, 1936. Attendance grew steadily until 1940 when it was reported to have reached an average 6,000 a month in "casual gallery visits." Between April 1 and October 15, 1940, 64,773 persons were reported to have visited the Oklahoma art center and the extension galleries, 7,713 had attended art classes, 261 exhibitions had been shown, and 140 lectures and tours had been given with an attendance of 4,950.<sup>127</sup>

Moreover, the creation of the Oklahoma City Museum of Art in 1945 represents a lasting legacy of the WPA/FAP and particularly the community art centers established in the state.

In conclusion, of the four federally-sponsored New Deal programs for artists—PWAP, Section, WPA/FAP, and TRAP—three of them impacted Oklahoma. The only program that appears not to have had an Oklahoma component is TRAP. Other

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Soelle, "New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma," 55.

distinctions between the programs are notable. The level of Indian involvement in the production of PWAP art seems quite substantial. In fact, PWAP art in the state cannot really be discussed without acknowledging the many important contributions made by the artists known as the Kiowa Five. The contributions of Acee Blue Eagle also deserve mention. Not all of the artists who worked on PWAP projects were Indian, but many of the best surviving examples of PWAP art are in fact the works of Oklahoma's Indian artists.

The Section is the New Deal program that enabled the decoration of numerous Oklahoma post offices with murals. The majority of post offices receiving Section murals were located in towns with fewer than 5,000 people. Unlike the other New Deal programs, the Section was not a work relief program. As a result, Oklahoma artists constitute a small minority of the artists who were awarded Section commissions for art for the state. Interestingly, Indian involvement in Section projects was surprisingly strong in that all of the Oklahomans (by birth) who won contracts for projects in the state were Native Americans.

In Oklahoma the PWAP and Section programs tended to support mural design and creation. By contrast, the WPA/FAP was a much more diversified program that not only produced murals, easel works, and sculpture, but also established community art centers for the purposes of promoting art education and appreciation. Because there were so many kinds of art produced and types of projects developed, the WPA/FAP seems to be the most complicated of the New Deal programs to research. The dispersal of artworks

across the country and around the state following the termination of the program in 1943 further complicates our ability to document WPA/FAP artworks.

Although many New Deal artworks produced in Oklahoma have been lost, destroyed, or moved from their original location, a fair amount of the art produced remains in good condition and in situ. This historic context represents an initial attempt to survey the extant cultural resources that reflect the emergence of a public art in Oklahoma, and to do so from the standpoint of historic preservation.



## XV. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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"Business Administration Building," *The Sooner Magazine* 7, no. 8 (May 1935): 190.

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Dean A. B. Adams, "Homecoming for Business Administration Alumni," *The Sooner Magazine* 9, no. 1 (October 1936): 12-13.

A general discussion of the new structure, its funding, and the Sheppard murals.

"Tant, Taylor Art Works To Enter Kansas City Exhibit," *The Oklahoma Daily*, 2 February 1936, p. 1.

"Typical Pioneer Figures Are Made For New Building," *The Oklahoma Daily*, ?? February 1936, p. 1.

"Symbolic Panels To Adorn Doors Of New Building," *The Oklahoma Daily*, 13 March 1936, sec. B, p. 2.

Taylor is listed as the sculptor and Sheppard and Struppeck as assistants. Taylor is mentioned in all three articles.

"New Business Building Nears Completion," *The Oklahoma Daily*, 5 August 1936, sec. D, p. 5.

A discussion of the various aspects of the building, including the reference to Taylor as sculptor and notes the statues. No mention of Struppeck here; all credit is given to Taylor.

*Craig Sheppard*

"Murals Selected For Business Structure," *The Oklahoma Daily*, 12 March 1936, p. 1.

"Murals by Student Artists To Adorn Hall and Office of New Business Building," *The Oklahoma Daily*, 27 March 1936, p. 1, 3.

Both items discuss Mahier's class and the murals by Sheppard and Mark Miller (Dean's office).

*Jules Struppeck*

"Struppeck Began Chiseling Career While Still a University Freshman," *The Oklahoma Daily*, 24 September 1936, p. 1.

This is the major article on Struppeck. Notes the figures which will soon be installed.

"Commerce and Industry Are Moved to Business Building," *The Oklahoma Daily*, 28 October 1936, p. 1.

"Statuary Placed," *The Sooner Magazine* 9, no. 3 (December 1936): 53-54.

These articles track the arrival and placement of the sculptures. They indicate that the sculptures were made the second semester of Struppeck's senior year (Spring 1936??). The figures were made in plaster then cut into marble.

*Botany mural on the OU Campus*

"Botany Mural work Started," *The Oklahoma Daily*, 3 February 1935, p. 1.

This was created by an artist named Robert Shead.

*Oscar B. Jacobson*

"Jacobson May Assist WPA," *The Oklahoma Daily*, 13 October 1935, p. 1.

Jacobson will take over supervision of some TRAP projects, but only Anadarko confirmed.

"Appointment of Art Director Delayed," *The Oklahoma Daily*, 23 October 1935, p. 4.

Jacobson's appointment delayed. No record of when he was installed, however.

*Woodrow (Woody) Crumbo:*

Stull, Katherine. 1939. "Indian Instructor Has Attained Nationwide Fame Through Sketches, Other Art Work," *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*, 4 June 1939.

Discusses Crumbo's background and accomplishments prior to his departure for Washington, D.C. and his work on the murals for the new Department of Interior building.

Smith, Lucy May. 1945. "State Indian Artist Wins Fellowship," *Tulsa Tribune*, 1 May 1945.

Includes a picture of Crumbo and his Nowata mural (*Rainbow Trail*), and notes that he was awarded "one of the highest honors in the art world, the Julius Rosenwald foundation fellowship."

*H. Louis Freund*

"Post Office Mural to be Painted at Idabel," *McCurtain Gazette*, 25 October 1939.

"Artist to Place Mural in Post Office," *McCurtain Gazette*, 29 May 1940.

The October article includes a photo of the artist. Both articles discuss Freund's background, with the May article providing more detail on the subject matter of the mural he painted.

*Solomon McCombs*

"Indian Artist's Mural Placed in Post Office Here," *Marietta Monitor*, 10 April 1942.

A brief discussion of McCombs' work and mural for the Marietta post office.

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Though it covers only 27 of the state's 77 counties, this was the first survey to examine the impact of the New Deal on the cultural resources of the state.

### General Studies

Beckham, Sue Bridwell. *Depression Post Office Murals and Southern Culture: A Gentle Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.

This book examines post office murals from the standpoint of the myriad ways in which they reflect the South and southern culture. The author views the creation of the post office murals as a form of "reconstruction" in that the murals constituted external involvement in southern affairs. Chapters 4 and 5 are the strongest, and analyze depictions of the racial and sexual division of labor in the murals, as well as images of blacks and Indians. Oklahoma receives only brief mention in this work because the author considers it a western state.

Contreras, Belisario R. *Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1983.

A very readable book that discusses the four major federal programs (PWAP, Section, TRAP, and WPA/FAP) in light of the motives and idealism of project directors Edward Bruce and Holger Cahill. The book tends to focus on the more reputable artists affiliated with these programs such as Ben Shahn, John Steuart Curry, and Victor Arnautoff. Though the book is heavily illustrated, many of the images are very small. Oklahoma artist Woodward (Woody) Crumbo is briefly mentioned on p. 120 in relation to the interest, on the part of Section officials, in American Indian art.

Marling, Karal Ann. *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of Post-Office Murals in the Great Depression*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

Brimming with insight, this is the best analysis of Depression-era murals designed for post offices and sponsored through the Treasury Section of Fine Arts. The author assumes, however, that the reader already possesses quite a bit of knowledge of art and art history, making this a challenging read for the novice. Nevertheless, Marling's basic argument is that the post office murals in particular, and the government sponsored art of the Depression in general are best understood as the product of social programs, not art programs. Numerous competing interests, including the artist, the program managers, and the public influenced the art that was produced sometimes in ways that stretched and challenged the basic mission of the Section program. The mural in Purcell (p. 126) is briefly mentioned, and the clamor over the Watonga mural is detailed (pp. 278-280).

McKinzie, Richard D. 1973. *The New Deal for Artists*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

An informative book that suffers from poor organization and repetition. The focus of this work is the people—the directors behind the different New Deal programs and the politics involved. The bulk of the book deals with the Section and WPA/FAP. While the author is attentive to the geographic unevenness of relief projects and dollars, most of the details tend to concentrate on art projects and problems that developed in New York City. There is very little discussion of the art that was created and the accompanying illustrations are not well integrated with the text. Oklahoma is mentioned in a few instances as an example of a state that had considerable success with the federal art centers.

Midtown Galleries. *Painting in America: Mural Art in the New Deal Era: March 2 to April 9, 1988*. New York, NY: Midtown Galleries in Association with Janet Marqusee Fine Arts, 1988.

This pamphlet was produced to accompany an exhibit of mural art at the Midtown Galleries. The exhibit included sketches, watercolors, and other works created by artists in advance of the murals themselves. The introduction provides a useful overview of the different New Deal era art programs and identifies major themes associated with New Deal art. The pamphlet is organized by artist, and contains information on more than 40 different mural artists including Thomas Hart Benton and Ben Shahn. None of the muralists herein appear to have produced works for Oklahoma.

McDonald, William F. *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969.

Easily the most comprehensive work on "Federal Project Number One," or the arts program of the WPA. This history was sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation and the American Council of Learned Societies. It blends a study of official records with interviews of various individuals involved in the program. The interviews are geographically biased, drawing on people within the Boswash corridor. Nevertheless, this remains a valuable resource for its detailed coverage of the five different programs that constituted the WPA arts program.

O'Connor, Francis V. 1973. *Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project*. Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society Ltd.

Conceived and promoted by Holger Cahill, the national director of the Federal Art Project, this book was to have been published during the 1930s as a positive reflection on this program. For one reason or another, the book was never published and the manuscript was largely forgotten until O'Connor made inquiries with Cahill's widow. Though published nearly 40 years after it was first conceived, this book includes a unique series of short essays by various New Deal artists. This is one of the few works that provides statements from the artists themselves.

Overmyer, Grace. 1939. *Government and the Arts*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc.

This book surveys the relationship between governments and the arts in countries with more than one million inhabitants. It is the first attempt to document and record the art institutions in different countries, and to present the amount and kind of financial aid provided in support of the arts. Although the book was

published well before several of the federal programs in the U.S. were ended, it provides a helpful overview of the PWAP, Section, and WPA/FAP.

Park, Marlene, and Gerald E. Markowitz. 1984. *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

An excellent book that covers the origins and operation of the Section of Fine Arts. The authors discuss the art that was produced, its dominant themes, and the significance of Regionalism as an ideal that informed not only government policy in the 1930s but also New Deal art. The appendix lists, by state, the murals and sculptures created by Section artists. As of June 2004 the authors had donated their research files from this project to the Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C.

Purcell, Ralph. 1956. *Government and Art: A Study of American Experience*. Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press.

Written at a time when President Eisenhower was revisiting the issue of government support for the arts, this book presents a history of art patronage in the United States with a view towards aiding the process of policy development. After reviewing the various New Deal programs the author concludes that in a democracy limited government support for the arts can work well and have positive outcomes.

Rubenstein, Erica Beckh. 1944. "Tax Payer's Murals." Ph.D. diss., Harvard University.

This excellent dissertation was completed about one year after the government terminated the Section and WPA Federal Art Projects, and as a result, is one of the earliest studies of New Deal public art. The dissertation consists of three main parts: (1) a comprehensive discussion of the federal art projects implemented in the decade from 1934 to 1944; (2) a study of themes identified in the murals produced, not by program (PWAP, FAP, etc.) but by categories such as "Orientalists," "Mexicana," "Modernists," "Academicians," and more; and (3) an examination of public response and reaction to the art. The dissertation is remarkably thorough and is supplemented by an extensive collection of illustrations, which unfortunately, do not accompany the dissertation when it is ordered through interlibrary loan. The appendices are also a useful feature of the dissertation and include a sample *Bulletin* produced by the Section, as well as a WPA/FAP technical report on fresco techniques.

## Works Relating to Oklahoma

Blue Eagle, Acee. 1959. *Oklahoma Indian Painting-Poetry*. Tulsa: Acorn Publishing Company.

Completed shortly before Acee Blue Eagle's death, this book offers a brief presentation of the lives and work of Oklahoma's first Indian artists to gain national and international recognition. The artists discussed include Stephen Mopope, Monroe Tsatoke, Jack Hokeah, Lois Smoky [sic], Spencer Asah, James Auchiah, and Acee Blue Eagle. Each of the artists is pictured, as are two or three examples of their work.

Calcagno, Nicholas A. 1976. *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*. Miami, OK: Pioneer Printing.

This slim 52-page pamphlet remains the most authoritative work on public art in Oklahoma to date. It is organized geographically, by the location of the murals, and briefly discusses the artists. Its color photos of many of the murals make it an important historical record of murals in the state. Calcagno was Professor of Art and Humanities at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, now Northeastern State University and produced this booklet as part of a bicentennial project supported with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Oklahoma Humanities Committee.

Hirschfelder, Arlene B. 1994. *Artists and Craftspeople: American Indian Lives*. NY: Facts on File.

This book contains a short chapter, "Plains Indian Pictographic Art and the Kiowa Five" that traces the origins and development of the "Kiowa School."

*Kiowa Indian Art: Watercolor Paintings in Color by the Indians of Oklahoma*. Santa Fe: Bell Editions, 1979 [1929].

This folio contains thirty prints by the "original" Kiowa Five: Monroe Tsatoke, Stephen Mopope, Jack Hokeah, Spencer Asah, and Louise Bou-ge-tah Smokey [sic]. The 1979 edition is a reprint of one copy of the folio that was first produced in 1929 from art in Jacobson's personal collection. The bulk of the prints are by Tsatoke, Mopope, and Hokeah; just two works by Smokey and Asah are included. The introductory essay to the 1979 edition, by Jamake Highwater, discusses the characteristics of Kiowa art and the events that led to the production of this folio. The introduction also contains an essay by Jacobson that reveals his desire that more people recognize and appreciate the artistic talent of Indians.

Meeks, Oliver Gough. 1941. *The Federal Art Program in Oklahoma (1934-1940)*. Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma.

Meeks was the Assistant Director of the Oklahoma Art Center and worked closely with its director, Nan Sheets and his advisor, Oscar Jacobson. His thesis provides an inventory of art that was produced for Oklahoma through the PWAP, Section, and WPA/FAP programs. Meeks attempted to contact the various artists and to photograph the different works. On both accounts he had difficulty. A number of artists did not respond to his inquiries and several institutions refused to allow him to view the murals much less photograph them. Although he often does not provide dates for the different works, some of his photographs do record murals that have since been destroyed such as those by Ruth Monro Augur at the Lincoln Park Zoo. His thesis also includes a list of the exhibitions held at the art center in Oklahoma City. Regrettably, his thesis lacks a bibliography and contains numerous errors.

Rogers, Kathleen Grisham. 1974. "Incidence of New Deal Art in Oklahoma: An Historical Survey." Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma.

The most valuable part of this work is Appendix III. This 55-page section provides a list of the murals in the state, including their location, the name of the artist, the subject matter, current condition, and other details. This catalogue provides a snapshot of the murals as they existed in the early 1970s.

Scott, Barbara Kerr, and Sally Soelle. *New Deal Art—The Oklahoma Experience, 1933-1943*. Lawton, OK: Cameron University, 1983.

This small, 24-page pamphlet was produced in conjunction with the centennial of the birthday of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the 50-year anniversary of the start of New Deal programs. The pamphlet provides a thematic overview of art that was produced or allocated to Oklahoma through the various art programs associated with the New Deal. Mural art receives the greatest coverage and is discussed in terms of an Oklahoma identity in the 1930s. This is an important resource for anyone interested in a brief overview of art projects associated with the New Deal.

Silberman, Arthur. "Watonga's Day in the Sun, or Trickster Comes to Town," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 66 (1988): 374-391.

An expert on Plains Indian art, Silberman argues that the protests over Mahier's Watonga mural were part of a hoax designed to obtain publicity. What he finds most significant about the hoax is that it reveals blatant disregard for Indian



sensitivities. The author finds fault with Mahier's art as well as Marling's interpretation of this specific event.

Soelle, Sally. 1984. *New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma, 1933-1943*. Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma.

An essential resource that covers all of the major art programs (PWAP, Section, and WPA/FAP) that operated in the state. This remains the most comprehensive work on Oklahoma's New Deal art to date.

Swineford, Derald Thomas. *Thirty Carved Oak Panels Illustrating Life and Art Styles from the Cave Man through the Steel Worker*. Master's thesis: University of Oklahoma, 1945.

Derald Swineford, Anita Furray, Margaret Giles, and Paul McBride were art students at the University of Oklahoma who had PWAP sponsorship on a woodcarving project to "represent art and man through the ages" (p. 3). The students were supervised by Oscar Jacobson, director of the School of Art at the university. Ten of the panels were designed and carved by Swineford as partial fulfillment for his master's degree. His thesis briefly introduces the project, then identifies and discusses each of the panels. The panels are on doors in the visitor center, located in Jacobson Hall.

*Things of the Spirit: Art by the Kiowa Five*. Brochure that accompanied the exhibit in the Layton Gallery of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Sept. 7 1984-Jan. 18, 1985.

This 4-page color brochure summarizes the history of the Kiowa Five and the influential roles played by Susie Peters, field matron at the Kiowa Indian Agency in Anadarko, Edith Mahier, and Oscar Jacobson, faculty member and director of the School of Art, respectively, at the University of Oklahoma.

University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma. *The Acee Blue Eagle Murals in the Little Gym on the Campus of the Former Oklahoma College for Women*. Chickasha, OK: n.d.

Prepared about 2001, this six-page fold-out brochure discusses restorations made to the murals on the USAO campus as a result of an Oklahoma Art Council Grant. Art professor, Steve Brown directed the research and restoration of the Acee Blue Eagle murals in the old gym, and documentation of this project has been retained in the campus archives. The brochure does have some factual and typographical errors.

## XVI. NOTE ON TITLES

Most of the titles given for the murals come from Nicholas A. Calcagno, *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma* (Miami, Oklahoma: Pioneer Printing, Inc., 1976). While these titles have been accepted generally, it is possible that the artists in question may have chosen a slightly different title. Future research may reveal differences. In the case of Acee Blue Eagle's cycle at the University of Science and Arts at Chickasha, I have supplied generic titles for some of the imagery based on my knowledge of Blue Eagle's career, but these titles are simply utilitarian and should not be taken as an indication of the artist's intent.

## XVII. GLOSSARY

**American Scene:** A loose aesthetic movement in the United States between the World Wars. American Scene painting is characterized by a naturalistic approach to imagery but with subtle traces of modernism in terms of either intense coloration or the slight abstraction of form. The style was meant to be accessible to the American people, and artists often concerned themselves with what they considered American history and themes. American Scene was often seen as an antidote to the influence of European modernism, which some commentators considered foreign and incapable of contributing to American cultural growth.

**Cubism:** A modernist style created by Spanish artist Pablo Picasso and French artist Georges Braque in the late 1900s. Cubism attempted to reconcile the experience of the three-dimensional world with the two-dimensional surface of the canvas by reducing forms to planes. These respective planes were meant to describe the artist's engagement with a form at a specific time and place, and the combination of multiple planes suggested the totality of an experience, which is both spatial and timeful. Cubism had a number of variations as it evolved, including an interest in collage and ephemera and an interest in the machine.

**cycle:** A cohesive group of murals.

**Impressionism:** A style that developed in France that attempted to capture the nature of human sight in paint. The Impressionists suggested that the eye captured flashes and glints of color as it scanned space as opposed to carefully detailed information. This led to a subtle abstraction of form in an attempt to describe more accurately the way the eye responded to color. Impressionism became influential in the United States in the 1880s and continued to exert an influence on American art well into the 1940s.

**modernism:** A term used to identify a clear aesthetic philosophy in the arts that begins roughly in the late nineteenth century and begins to wane in the late twentieth century, according to most critics. Modernists generally discounted optical perception as a means of understanding reality in favor of intuition, spirituality, and scientific models. As such, modernism in the visual arts shows a preference for subjectivity, which often took the form of intense, sometimes non-representational color, a disregard for illusionistic recession into space, and an abstraction of form. A modernist painting usually emphasizes the formal properties of the work over the subject matter. Many critics identify Impressionism as the inception of modernism.

**Post-Impressionism:** A term coined by British art critic Roger Fry in 1910. Post-Impressionism refers to the various aesthetic tendencies that arose from Impressionism in the 1880s. Post-Impressionists favored subjectivity and imagination as the means to truth, and they often abstracted color and form to emphasize their emotional and spiritual response to nature.

**Precisionism:** A style that developed in the United States after World War I that emphasized the growing importance of machine culture. Artists often reduced forms to a hard, planar essence and limited their brushwork to give the appearance of industrial manufacture. Precisionism is largely influenced by cubism.

**Surrealism:** A style formed in Paris in 1924 under the influence of writer André Breton. Surrealism used the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud to insist that the unconscious mind was the true seat of reality. The style attracted proponents of abstraction initially, but around 1929 Breton began to favor a highly illusionistic style that introduced odd and irrational juxtapositions of objects. That latter form of Surrealism became increasingly popular in the United States in the 1930s through the influence of Spanish painter Salvador Dali.

**Traditional Indian Painting:** An unofficial title for the preferred style of painting among most Native American artists in Oklahoma for much of the twentieth century. The style is characterized by a simplification of form but with a concern for naturalistic features. Colors are usually flat and the forms are generally absent of modeling in light and shadow. Forms are typically differentiated from the background by a strong contour, usually in black. Background is sometimes nonexistent but frequently limited to a few spatial elements. In Oklahoma, the style grew through the influence of the Kiowa Five and the instructors at Bacone College: Acee Blue Eagle, Woody Crumbo, and Dick West.

## XVIII. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ARTISTS

**Augur, Ruth Monro** (1886-1967).

*Trail Blazers of the Cherokee Strip*,\* 1935-37, Enid, oil on canvas, 6 panels:

*The Hunting Trail* (north wall at west entrance on first floor)

*The Explorer's Trail* (south wall at west entrance on first floor)

*The Cattle Trails* (north wall at east entrance on first floor)

*The Commerce Trail* (south wall at east entrance on first floor)

*The Homemaker's (or Home-Seeker's) Trail* (in stairwell landing)

*The Rancher's Trail* (second floor, outside courtroom).

Ruth Monro Augur remains best known for her ambitious mural cycle for the Enid, Oklahoma courthouse and her murals for the Austin, Texas Statehouse. A native of Denver, she won a scholarship to the New York School of Art in 1905, where she studied under William Merritt Chase and Robert Henri. Her training led her initially to a career in newspaper illustration, but in 1915-16 she spent several months at the artist's colony at Carmel, California before studying briefly at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco and the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. She then accepted a position outside of her vocation as registrar of the Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy, which she held between 1917-1929.

Augur received a commission from the WPA/FAP early in the program's history with the 1935 award of the murals for Enid courthouse. She is one of the few artists not native to Oklahoma who lived in the state while researching and executing her work. Despite Augur's brief foray into mural painting in the 1930s, she turned to a career in illustration with Harlow Publishing Company after the dissolution of the WPA.

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\* This title is taken from one of the mural panels that introduces the cycle. It is not clear if this is the precise title Augur intended.

**Berninghaus, Oscar E.** (1874-1952).

*Terminus of the Railroad*, 1940, Weatherford, oil on canvas.

Oscar E. Berninghaus is best known today as one of the six founding members of the Taos Society of Artists (1915-27), an organization based in Taos, New Mexico. Composed mostly of Eastern artists, the Society found pictorial interest in the picturesque landscape and the Native American, Hispanic and Euro-American cultures of the Southwest. The Society established the first art colony in the region, though numerous American artists had visited the Southwest in the late nineteenth century, and the presence of the Society contributed significantly to the growth of the visual arts in New Mexico.

The national notoriety of the Society quickly established Berninghaus's reputation as an influential painter, but he began his career as a relatively successful commercial artist. At the age of sixteen, he apprenticed to a lithographer in his native St. Louis. Thereafter, he studied for three semesters at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts of Washington University. In 1899, he received his first major commission from the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, which hired him to illustrate tourist pamphlets of the stops along their route. Berninghaus persuaded the brakeman to stop near Taos during his tour of the route; the aspiring artist stayed only a week but found inspiration enough to return every year thereafter. He settled in Taos permanently in 1925 and drew popular and critical acclaim for the Puebloan, Hispanic, and diverse Southwestern subject matter that had attracted him to the area.

Berninghaus's affiliation with the Section was limited, and he completed few murals in the course of his career. His mural for the Weatherford, Oklahoma Post Office

in 1939 stands as one of his few accomplishments in that medium. Berninghaus executed *Terminus of the Railroad* in his Taos studio, although the stylistic character of the mural resembles his early illustrational style far more than the paintings of his mature career, which often demonstrate the subtle influence of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. By contrast, the mural's naturalistic imagery, sharp contours, and bright coloration compare closely to his earlier pamphlets as well as the illustrational style of early twentieth-century artists such as N. C. Wyeth. Berninghaus's return to a more conservative style in the Weatherford mural may acknowledge the general dictum of the Section, which preferred an accessible aesthetic.

**Blue Eagle, Acee** (Alex C. McIntosh): Che Bon Ah Bu Lah, Laughing Boy; Lumhee Holatee, Blue Eagle. Creek/Pawnee (1907-1959).

University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma cycle, 1934. Chickasha, oil and tempera on plaster.

*Indian Spear Dancer*

*Drummer* (destroyed)

*Thunderbird*

*Buffalo Dancers*

*Moving Camp*

*Dancer with Headdress*

*Women Making Pishafa*, 1942. Colgate, tempera and acrylic on plaster.

*Seminole Indian Village Scene*, 1939. Seminole, oil on plaster.

For much of the twentieth century, Acee Blue Eagle was one of the most recognizable Native American artists in the United States. Blue Eagle was born Alex C. McIntosh near Anadarko on the Wichita Reservation, but later changed his name to "Acee," a reference to his initials, and "Blue Eagle" in honor of his maternal grandfather.

He began his education at Nuyaka Indian School near Bristow, Oklahoma between 1916-22 then followed with the Chilocco Indian School between 1925-28.

In 1931, Blue Eagle followed the path of the group known as the Kiowa Five and enrolled in non-accredited courses at the University of Oklahoma under Oscar Brousse Jacobson and Edith Mahier. His involvement with the OU faculty led in part to his involvement with the PWAP in 1934. He would paint numerous murals for Oklahoma thereafter, including a commission from the Lion's Club for the U.S.S. Oklahoma called *Buffalo Hunt* (now destroyed).

Blue Eagle's reputation gained steadily in the 1930s, particularly with his 1935 tour of the United States and Europe with the lecture "Life and Character of the American Indian." He participated that same year in the International Federation of Education at Oxford and performed several Native American dances for the royal family of England. His growing acclaim earned him an appointment as the first Director of Art at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma in 1935. He resigned his position in 1938 and left the following year to visit Mexico, where contemporary developments in mural painting had received international notoriety.

With American entry into World War II, Blue Eagle joined the Army Air Corps, and through his various stations he met the Balinese dancer Devi Dja. The two had a brief marriage between 1946-52. The conclusion of the war allowed the artist to return to his vocation; he briefly taught at Haskell Indian School in Lawrence, Kansas in 1949. Blue Eagle returned to Oklahoma in the early 1950s, however, and became a local celebrity with a children's television show on KTVX in Muskogee. In 1956, he accepted a position



as Artist-in Residence at Oklahoma State Technical School in Okmulgee. He passed away two years later in Muskogee.

Blue Eagle's murals generally employ the style first developed by the Kiowa artists at the University of Oklahoma. The artist solidified the sharp contours, flat areas of coloration, and absence of background in the Kiowa paintings into a stylistic formula. Through his position at Bacone, Blue Eagle passed this style to other artists and helped to create Traditional Indian Painting.

**Clarke, Marjorie Rowland** (1908 - ?).

*Historical Background of Wewoka*, 1941. Wewoka, oil on canvas.

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Marjorie Rowland Clarke studied in-state at Goucher College in her home city and later at the Rinehart School of Sculpture, Maryland Institute, College of Art. When Clarke received the commission for the Wewoka mural, she lived in New Orleans, Louisiana. Little else is known about her career.

**Conway, Frederick E.** (1900-?).  
*The Round-up*, 1940. Purcell, oil on canvas.

Frederick E. Conway was a constant presence in the St. Louis art community for much of the twentieth century; not only was he born in St. Louis in 1900, but he studied at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts, before continuing his education in France at the Academie Julian and Academie Moderne. In 1929, he then accepted a position at Washington University in St. Louis and continued to teach there until 1970.

Conway received a Section commission to paint a mural for the Jackson, Mississippi post office, but public outcry led to a mural swap that sent his work to Purcell, Oklahoma instead. When concerns were again expressed about that mural's design, Conway agreed to paint another mural, *The Round-up*, which still hangs in the post office today. Conway's Purcell mural is significant in that it reveals the input local citizens could have on Section art. Artistically, Conway's mural provides a clever blending of naturalistic and modern techniques.

**Crumbo, Woodrow Wilson "Woody."** (Potawatomi; 1912-89).  
*The Rainbow Trail*, 1943. Nowata, tempera on canvas or plaster?

Woodrow Wilson Crumbo, popularly known as "Woody," was born on his mother's allotment near Lexington, Oklahoma. When Crumbo was four, his father Alex died, and in response, his mother moved young Woody and herself to Potawatomi land in Kansas. Crumbo attended grade school there for several years; unfortunately, his mother's death in 1919 left him an orphan. A Creek family near Sand Springs, Oklahoma provided him with a temporary home, but Crumbo moved from one foster home to the

next for several years. In 1929, Crumbo enrolled at Chilocco Indian School, where he began his study of art, as well as anthropology and history. He received a scholarship two years later to attend the American Indian Institute in Wichita, Kansas, a Presbyterian school for Native Americans; study in the visual arts quickly followed at the University of Wichita with painter Clayton Henry Staples between 1933-36 and at the University of Oklahoma with Oscar Brousse Jacobsen between 1936-38.

With an extensive fine arts education, Crumbo assumed the directorship of the art program at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma in 1938, a position recently vacated by Acee Blue Eagle. Crumbo then received support from the Department of Interior to study mural painting with Olof Nordmark. Over the next two years, he was one of few Native American artists from Oklahoma who painted murals for the Interior Building. His experience also earned him a commission from the Lion's Club for two murals for the U.S.S. Oklahoma, both of which were destroyed.

In 1941, Crumbo resigned from Bacone and returned to Wichita to work for Cessna and the war effort. This experience led him to employment at Douglas Aircraft in Tulsa the following year. In 1943 he completed his Section mural, *The Rainbow Trail*, for the Nowata post office. With the end of World War II, Crumbo returned to a career in the fine arts and accepted a job collecting Native American art and material culture for the Thomas Gilcrease Institute between 1945-48.

Crumbo left employment with Gilcrease for New Mexico. He spent time in both Cimarron and Taos, where he opened a print studio in 1952. He spent much his life there,

except for a brief tenure as the Assistant Director of the El Paso Museum of Art, which he accepted in 1960.

**Cunningham, Joan (1916-1997).**  
*Cotton*, 1940. Poteau, oil on canvas.

Joan Cunningham was born in Rochester, New York, and studied briefly at Radcliffe College in 1933-34. She then studied for two years at the Florence Cane School of Art at Rockefeller Center in New York with Jean Charlot beginning in 1934. Cunningham also attended the Art Students League briefly where she received instruction from Thomas Hart Benton and Alexander Abels. It was her education under Charlot that amply prepared her for a career as a muralist since the instructor taught fresco and had learned the technique from his teacher, the renowned Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. Cunningham completed her first fresco in 1936 for St. Mary's Church in Jersey City and followed with a mural for St. John's in Canton, Ohio. She completed her Poteau mural for the Section in 1940. The slight suggestions or hints of Surrealism in this mural distinguish it from most of the other Section murals in the state.

**Davey, Randall Vernon (1887-1964).**  
*Will Rogers*, 1939. Claremore, tempera on canvas.  
*Cherokee History*, 1941. Vinita, tempera on canvas?

Born in East Orange, New Jersey, Randall Davey began his education in architecture at Cornell University in 1904. He continued his studies for the next four years but left with an "Honorable Dismissal" to study art with Robert Henri at the New York School of Art. Davey quickly developed a close relationship with his teacher and

Henri soon appointed his student a teaching assistant. This position led Davey to accompany his mentor on several sojourns, including Spain in 1910 and Maine in 1911.

In the 1910s, Davey became increasingly close with a fellow member of Henri's circle, John Sloan, and the two left the East in 1919 to visit Santa Fe. New Mexico proved so attractive that Davey became a permanent resident in 1920. Financial need and professional enrichment often led him to take teaching positions, mostly out-of-state; over his career, Davey taught at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1919, the Kansas City Art Institute between 1921-24, the Broadmoor Art Academy in Colorado Springs between 1924-31, and finally the University of New Mexico between 1945-56. In the 1930s, he executed several post office murals for the Section, including those for Claremore and Vinita, Oklahoma in 1939 and 1941, respectively. He died tragically in a car accident on his way to California. Despite his training in the East, he remains identified chiefly with the development of the New Mexico art community.

**Davis, Lew E. (1910-1979).**  
*Cattle Days*, 1942. Marlow, oil on canvas.

Lew Davis is often identified as one of the most significant figures in the development of an art community in Arizona. Born in Jerome, Arizona Territory, Davis soon directed his attention to art and hitchhiked to New York City at the age of sixteen. He enrolled at the National Academy of Design in 1928 where he studied with Leon Kroll. After concluding his study in 1931, he taught briefly at a private school in New Jersey, before accepting a mural commission with the Treasury Department Art Project in 1935. Davis's affiliation with the Treasury Department, as well as his Arizona heritage,

presented him with the opportunity to collaborate in the creation of the Phoenix Art Center which was founded by the WPA in 1936. As the Assistant Director, he supervised exhibitions and conducted art classes. Davis was commissioned to paint a post office mural for Marlow, Oklahoma, which he completed in 1942.

Despite the retrenchment of the art programs during the war, Davis continued to work with government programs, most notably the Graphic Section of the War Services Division. Davis supervised a silkscreen shop segregated for African American soldiers at Fort Huachuca, Arizona in 1942. His service with the government concluded the next year, and he returned to an independent art career. He eventually founded the Arizona Art Foundation in 1951 and served on the board until 1956.

**Fleck, Joseph Amadeus (1892-1977).**

*The Red Man of Oklahoma Sees the First Stage Coach* or *Choctaws See the First Stage Coach*, 1937. Hugo, oil on canvas.

A native of Sziklos, Austria-Hungary, Fleck entered the Institute of Applied Arts in Vienna in 1908 and then moved to the Vienna Royal Academy of Fine Arts in 1911, where he studied under Hans Tichi and Rudolph Bacher. Military service in 1915 interrupted his burgeoning art career, although he spent most of World War I painting war heroes. The aspiring artist finished his training at the Academy in 1919 and immigrated to the United States in 1922, seeking career opportunities.

Fleck eventually settled in Kansas City and through the efforts of Conrad Hug, owner of the Hug Gallery, he found a job at Tiffany and Company. Within a year, Fleck's training earned him the position of head designer. His success at Tiffany notwithstanding,

the artist left the company in 1925 after he found new inspiration at a 1924 exhibition of the Taos Society of Artists at Hug Gallery. Shortly thereafter, Fleck traveled to Taos to meet the Society. He established close friendships with Taos artists such as E. Martin Hennings and decided to settle there in 1925.

Taos remained Fleck's home for most of his life, but the artist often accepted commissions and positions out-of-state. He executed a post office mural for Hugo, Oklahoma in 1937, and the artist later accepted a position as artist-in-residence at the University of Kansas City (University of Missouri, Kansas City) in 1942. He then rose to the position of Dean of Fine Arts before returning to Taos in 1946, when he joined the newly formed Taos Art Association. Fleck remained in Taos until 1973. He spent the remainder of his life in Pleasanton, California.

**Goff, Lloyd Lozes (1918-1982).**

*Mapping the Trail*, 1941. Hollis, oil/tempera on canvas.

Lloyd Goff is most commonly identified as one of the Dallas Nine, a group of Texas painters that first came to attention with the 1932 exhibition "Nine Young Dallas Artists." Born in Dallas, Texas, Goff received informal instruction from Frank Reaugh, a trail-driver turned painter, before taking courses under Thomas Stell at the Dallas Art Institute. Goff found success early, not only with the Dallas Nine but also in the Texas Centennial Exposition in 1936. He then received a scholarship to the Art Students League in New York City, where he studied with George Grosz and Kenneth Hayes Miller between 1936-40. In 1940, Goff transferred to the University of New Mexico, studying under Kenneth Adams and Raymond Jonson.

Goff had extensive involvement with various government programs. He worked as an assistant on Paul Cadmus's murals for the United States Embassy in Ottawa, Reginald Marsh's frescoes for Custom House in New York, and Edward Laning's murals for the New York Public Library. He also painted Section murals for the Cooper, Texas and Hollis, Oklahoma post offices. They are, respectively, *Before the Fencing of Delta County* and *Mapping the Trail*. Goff's murals for Texas and Oklahoma indicate the influence of his first teacher Frank Reaugh in the use of cowboy subject matter.

**Ipcar, Dahlov** (1917-).

*The Run, April 22, 1889 – Taking the Lead*, 1941. Yukon, oil on canvas.

Born in Windsor, Vermont, Dahlov Ipcar was the daughter of the notable American modernists William and Marguerite Zorach. Ipcar spent much of her childhood in either the family residence in Greenwich Village or on the family farm near Robinhood Village on Georgetown Island, Maine. Although William had a national reputation as a sculptor and Marguerite as a painter, they allowed Dahlov to develop her own interest in art and resisted the temptation to offer her any instruction; she eventually pursued formal training at Oberlin College in Ohio in 1934 but felt disenchanted with the pedagogical structure of the art program.

In 1932, she met Adolph Ipcar, and the two were married in 1936. The couple lived in New York City briefly, but financial pressures and Dahlov's longing for rural Maine led them to buy a dairy farm in Georgetown in 1937. She received her first major success in her art career two years later when the Museum of Modern Art offered her a solo exhibition. Entitled "Creative Growth," the exhibition demonstrated the possible



achievements of the professionally untrained but properly encouraged artist. Ipcar joined the FAP shortly thereafter, and completed a Section mural for the Yukon, Oklahoma Post Office in 1941.

Though Ipcar continued to paint for much of her career, she diverted much of her energy to illustrating children's books, beginning with Margaret Wise Brown's *The Little Fisherman* in 1945.

### **Kiowa Five**

Spencer Asah (Lallo, Little Boy): Kiowa, (1906-1954); James Auchiah: Kiowa, (1906-1974); Jack Hokeah: Kiowa (1900-1969); Stephen Mopope (Qued Koi, Painted Robe): Kiowa 1900-1974; Monroe Tsatoke: (Tsain-Taunkee, Hunting Horse) Kiowa (1904-37). Spencer Asah, *Choctaw 1843, Secotan 1650*, 1937. Oklahoma City, tempera on plaster. Stephen Mopope, *Anadarko Mural Cycle*, 1937. Tempera on canvas.

*Two Men in Council*  
*Two Eagle Dancers*  
*Fancy War Dancer with Cedar Flute*  
*Scalp Dance (Drum Chief Standing)*  
*Individual War Drummer (Sitting)*  
*Indian Mother and Child in Cradle*  
*Eagle Whip and Flute Dancers*  
*Two Women and Child Watching Dancers*  
*Buffalo Skull with Crossed Arrows*  
*Medicine Man's Shield and Lance*  
*The Deer Hunter*  
*Kiowa Moving Camp*  
*Kiowa Camp*  
*Buffalo Hunting Scene*  
*Buffalo Hunter's Shield*  
*Buffalo Head*

Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah, *Kiowa Buffalo Hunt*, 1934. Tahlequah, oil on plaster.

Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah, *Kiowa War Dance*, 1934. Tahlequah, oil on plaster.

Stephen Mopope with James Auchiah, *Buffalo Hunt*, c. 1934. Muskogee, tempera on masonite?

Stephen Mopope with James Auchiah, *War Dance*, c. 1934. Muskogee, tempera on masonite?

Monroe Tsatoke, *Kiowa 1920, Cheyenne 1832, Kiowa 1832, Kiowa 1900, Shield Designs, Comanche 1800*. Oklahoma City, tempera on plaster.

The group that came to be known as the Kiowa Five had a decisive impact on the development of Native American painting in Oklahoma and contributed greatly to mural programs in the state. Although it is difficult to say when the group received its famous moniker, the members that received popular attention were Spencer Asah, James Auchiah, Jack Hokeah, Stephen Mopope, and Monroe Tsatoke. Because their respective histories were intertwined, it is useful to treat their biographies together.

Although all five were born into the Kiowa tribe, they lived in various locations in Indian and Oklahoma Territories: Asah was born near Carnegie; Auchiah was born near Lawton; Hokeah was born in Oklahoma territory but was orphaned as a child and raised by his grandmother on the reservation; Mopope was born near the Red Stone Baptist Mission on the reservation; and Tsatoke was born near Saddle Mountain. Mopope and Tsatoke came from families of particular note; Mopope learned painting from his uncle, the distinguished Kiowa artist Silverhorn (Haungooah), and Tsatoke was the son of Tsa To Kee, a Kiowa scout for General George Armstrong Custer.

The five became acquainted through their initial education at St. Patrick's Mission School in Anadarko, Oklahoma during the 1910s. In 1918, Susan Ryan Peters, the newly appointed Field Matron for the Kiowa, discovered the promising artistic talent of Asah, Auchiah, Hokeah, and Mopope, and attempted to instruct the young men in aesthetics. She then arranged for Willie Baze Lane, an art teacher from Chickasaw, to teach the first four and Tsatoke. Lane's class lasted only a few months, but Peters's commitment to art instruction among the Kiowa led her to organize the Mau-Tame Lodge, an art

organization at St. Patrick's. Her efforts eventually came to fruition; Peters arranged for Asah, Hokeah, and Tsatoke to take non-accredited courses at the University of Oklahoma in 1926 under the head of the art department, Oscar Brousse Jacobson. Mopope and another Kiowa, Lois Bougetah Smoky, joined the next year, but Smoky dropped out after a semester, allowing Auchiah to join the classes in 1928. The Kiowa painted mostly scenes of traditional and contemporary dances, although some subjects of Kiowa history and the rituals of the Native American Church were included.

Jacobson considered the education and promotion of the Kiowa artists important. He secured funding from Lew Wentz of Ponca City to further their instruction, and he encouraged them to organize exhibitions of Kiowa dance and song at the university. Asah, Hokeah and Mopope were highly regarded as dancers and performed a number of programs at OU during their instruction, with Auchiah and Tsatoke serving as singers and drummers.

In 1928, Jacobson decided to introduce the Kiowa painters to a national and international audience. He organized a traveling exhibition for the United States and sent the work of the Kiowas to the First International Art Exposition in Prague. Some of the paintings were then reproduced for a folio of prints called *Kiowa Art*, which was published in 1929 in France and distributed internationally. The men quickly earned notoriety and came to be known as the Kiowa Five.

Peters also played a significant role in the promotion of the Kiowa Five when she arranged for the group to perform Kiowa dances at the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonials in Gallup, New Mexico in 1930. During this visit, Hokeah met the famed San Ildefonso

potter Maria Martinez and lived with her for much of the remaining decade as an adopted son. His residence in New Mexico led him to study at the Santa Fe Indian School in 1932, where he completed several murals for the school's cafeteria. Hokeah had his first exposure to mural painting in 1929 when he joined Asah, Auchiah, and Mopope in a commission for the Memorial Chapel at St. Patrick's Mission in honor of Father Isidore Ricklin.

During Hokeah's absence in the 1930s, the other four members also explored the possibilities of mural painting. In 1934, Jacobson supervised the four in the painting of several murals under the auspices of the PWAP, including images for the Oklahoma Historical Building, Bacone College in Muskogee, and Northeastern State University in Tahlequah. This involvement with a government commission undoubtedly earned Mopope the opportunity to create several murals for the Department of Interior Building in Washington, D. C. With a number of successes to their credit, Asah, Auchiah, and Mopope joined a number of Native American painters at Fort Sill Indian School in 1939 where they gained further technical training in mural painting under Olof Nordmark. These classes resulted in an extensive cycle for the school, but most of the murals have since been painted over.

Despite this spate of activity in the late 1930s, the Kiowa Five had more or less dissolved as an active group. The promotional efforts of Peters and Jacobson had largely created the group but all involved found it difficult to maintain. Hokeah's absence hampered group activity, and in 1937 Tsatoke died from tuberculosis. The remaining

members continued to paint for much of their lives, although they never equaled the activity of the late 1920s and the 1930s.

The Kiowa artists completed numerous murals within Oklahoma for both the PWAP and the Section. Asah, Auchiah, Hokeah, Mopope, and Tsatoke worked for the PWAP beginning in 1934, partly through the influence of Jacobson who headed the Oklahoma division.<sup>1</sup> Kiowa involvement in mural projects continued through 1937. All the murals deal with Native American culture with a decided emphasis on the Kiowa. All of the works are painted in the style the artists fostered at the University of Oklahoma. Their style indicates a simplification of form but with a concern for naturalistic features. Colors are relatively flat and unmodulated, and the absence of light and shadow often gives the forms a decorative appearance. In most cases, the Kiowa artists excluded any reference to background, leaving the forms to float in an undifferentiated field. This style influenced the development of Traditional Indian Painting, which dominated Native American painting in Oklahoma for much of the twentieth century.

**Kirkland, Vance** (1904-1981).

*The Opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Country*, 1940. Sayre, oil on canvas.

Born in Convoy, Ohio, Vance Kirkland spent much of his career in Denver, Colorado and contributed greatly to the visibility of the visual arts in the city. Kirkland studied at the Cleveland School of Art between 1923-28, earning a B.E.A. in art education, and followed with additional training at Western Reserve University and the

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<sup>1</sup> Of the members of the Kiowa Five, Jack Hokeah's contributions to and involvement in New Deal art programs remain the most elusive. It is not clear which specific projects, if any, he worked on or contributed to, and his inclusion in this list is somewhat speculative.

Cleveland School of Education in 1926-28. Following the conclusion of his education, he won a grant from the Carnegie Foundation to found the Chappell School of Art at the University of Denver, and he spent the years between 1929-32 developing a Bachelor's program in the fine arts.

Kirkland enjoyed some success during this time, including his first solo exhibition in 1930. These achievements led him to found the Kirkland School of Art in 1932. In 1938 he was commissioned by the Section to paint a mural for the Eureka, Kansas post office. Shortly thereafter he won another commission which resulted in the Section mural for the post office in Sayre, Oklahoma. His efforts eventually led to his multiple appointments at the University of Denver as a professor of painting, the director of the School of Art, and the chairman of the Arts and Humanities Division in 1946. Kirkland held the position until 1969 when he was appointed Emeritus, and that same year he established the Kirkland Studio and Gallery in Denver. The artist was not only instrumental in the growth of the visual arts at the University of Denver, but he also sat on the Board of Trustees of the Denver Art Museum and served as the honorary curator of contemporary art between 1948-56.

**Long, Frank Weathers** (1906-1999).

*Oklahoma Land Rush*, 1941. Drumright, oil on canvas.

A native of Tennessee, Frank Long spent much of his career in Kentucky and New Mexico. Long began his studies at the Art Institute of Chicago around 1924, and then transferred to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Following his education in

the United States, he studied in Europe for several years before returning to the US in 1929.

Long first began his involvement with the government mural programs in 1933 when he painted two murals for the University of Kentucky through the PWAP. That same year he moved to Chicago but stayed only a year before returning to Kentucky in 1934 to paint murals for the Louisville Federal Building. He produced works for the PWAP, the TRAP, and the Section. His Section murals appeared in post offices in Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, and Indiana.

Following the US entry into World War II, Long joined the military and was discharged in 1946. He then moved to Berea, Kentucky with his wife Laura Whitis. Kentucky offered little opportunity for Long at the time, so he left for Silver City, New Mexico in 1947, where he studied lapidary work, leatherwork and silver casting at New Mexico State Teacher's College. After his brief study, he returned to Berea. His training proved useful and the Indian Arts and Crafts Board offered him a position in Juneau, Alaska in 1951. However, the birth of his daughter Laura in 1953 made him conscious of the harsh Alaska climate, and in 1958 he requested a transfer to New Mexico, receiving assignment in Gallup.

Long stayed in Gallup for only a year before he returned to Kentucky once again to open a jewelry business, but the board recalled him in 1960 to work with the Seminole in Dania, Florida. In 1962, the board reassigned him to Albuquerque, where he remained even after his retirement in 1969. He collaborated actively with area pueblos like Zuni and Hopi, helping them to revive jewelry production.

**Magafan, Ethel** (1916-1993).

*Prairie Fire*, 1940. Madill, tempera on canvas.

Ethel Magafan and her twin sister Jenne enjoyed long careers in the visual arts and participated extensively in the Section. Though born in Chicago, the twins moved to Colorado at the age of three and spent much of their lives there. The twins began their art education when Jenne received a Carter Memorial Art Scholarship and used the money to enroll herself and Ethel in the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center (formerly the Broadmoor Art Academy) in 1934. Instructor Frank Mechau was impressed with the twins and hired them as assistants. Mechau gave them a firm foundation in mural painting, and the Magafans began to compete for Treasury Department mural projects in 1937. In April of that year, Ethel won the competition for the Lawrence, Kansas Post Office, only to have her study, *The Lawrence Massacre*, rejected by the local committee. Residents found the subject of Quantrill's violent raid on the abolitionist town during the Civil War an unwelcome reminder of past tragedies and urged that another mural be chosen. The national committee awarded Ethel the Auburn, Nebraska mural as compensation. Ethel completed six murals over the course of her career, including *Prairie Fire* for Madill in 1940.

Ethel and Jenne worked in Colorado Springs; however, on a California vacation, they met fellow artists Doris Lee and Arnold Blanch. Lee and Blanch, both Woodstock, New York residents, encouraged the Magafans to visit the growing art community there, and in 1945, the Magafans relocated to Woodstock. Ethel soon met Bruce Currie and the two were married in 1946. Ethel's successes grew with a Tiffany Foundation Award in 1949 and a Fulbright Scholarship in 1951, which she used to work in Greece. Tragically,



Jenne died in 1952. Ethel Magafan spent her remaining years living and working in Woodstock.

**Mahier, Edith** (1892-??).

*Roman Nose Canyon*, 1941. Watonga, oil on canvas.

A native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Mahier received a Bachelor of Design from Newcomb Memorial College School of Art in 1916. She accepted a professorship in the art department at the University of Oklahoma the following year. Around 1926, Susie Peters, Kiowa Field Matron, showed the drawings of the Kiowa artists to Mahier, who then encouraged Oscar Brousse Jacobson to enroll the men in special classes at OU. She instructed a number of Native artists in the following years, including Acee Blue Eagle and Dick West. Her Watonga Post Office mural, *Roman Nose Canyon*, is perhaps the best known of all New Deal murals in Oklahoma.

Mahier's experience with Native American design inspired her to collaborate with her sister, Frances Brandon, on a fashion line for Nieman-Marcus of Dallas. The Native-inspired designs gained in popularity throughout the 1940s and prompted her to showcase successive lines in annual fashion shows. This led the OU administration to transfer her to the School of Home Economics in 1950s, where she completed her tenure.

**McCombs, Solomon** (Creek; 1913-80).

*Chickasaw Family Making Pah Sho Fah*, 1942. Marietta, oil on plaster.

Like his cousin Acee Blue Eagle, Solomon McCombs earned a national and international reputation for his expertise in the theory and practice of Native American

art; in 1954, he lectured throughout the Middle East and Africa as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United States' State Department. Solomon was born near Eufala to Reverend James McCombs and Ella McIntosh McCombs. His grandfather was one of the founders of Bacone, leading to his primary education at Bacone College High School, from which he graduated in 1937. He then studied under Blue Eagle at Bacone College in 1938 and the University of Tulsa thereafter. He completed his Section mural for the Marietta post office in 1942.

McCombs spent a significant portion of his career in government service as designer-illustrator, and this led to his appointment as an ambassador. He also became a regular contributor to the Philbrook Art Center's Indian Art Annual in 1946, winning the grand award in 1969. McCombs spent most of his remaining years in Tulsa.

**Mohr, Olga** (1905 - ?).

*Cherokee Indian Farming and Animal Husbandry*, 1942. Stilwell, oil on canvas.

Born in Oklahoma, Mohr studied first in Oklahoma before attending the Art Academy of Cincinnati on scholarship in 1928. She married fellow student Richard Zoellner in 1930 and the two lived in Cincinnati until 1942. During this time, the couple exhibited regularly in Cincinnati and around the country. Mohr joined the FAP in 1935, and in 1937 the couple participated in a Treasury Department Section of Painting and Sculpture project in the Virgin Islands. Mohr's last project with the Section seems to have been her 1942 mural for Stilwell, Oklahoma. That same year, Richard and Olga moved to Knoxville, Tennessee where he became a mapmaker for the Tennessee Valley Authority. Richard relocated Olga and their son David, who had been born in 1940, to Tuscaloosa,

where he accepted a position at the University of Alabama. Olga continued to paint during this time, and studied both ceramics and rug weaving in the late 1940s. She died prematurely from cancer in 1955.

**Mozley, Loren Norman (1905-1989).**  
*Race for Land*, 1938. Clinton, oil on canvas.

Born in Brookport, Illinois, Loren's father, a physician, moved the family to rural New Mexico in 1906. Mozley spent most of his late childhood and adolescence in Albuquerque and attended the University of New Mexico in 1923. He spent summers in Taos, working as a secretary for Mable Dodge Luhan. His experience with the growing art colony led him to settle there in 1926. His friendship with the modernist artists such as John Marin and Ward Lockwood must have encouraged him to seek experience in Europe and he spent the years between 1929-31 studying at the Colarossi and Chaumière Academies and touring Europe. When he returned to the United States in 1931, he stayed in New York City, circulating among artist such as Diego Rivera, Frieda Kahlo, and Georgia O'Keeffe.

Mozley returned to Taos in 1935, but accepted a teaching position at the University of New Mexico the following year. He worked on a project for the TRAP, executing murals for the Federal Building in Albuquerque. His mural in the Clinton, Oklahoma Post Office was the result of a Section commission.

In 1938, Mozley left New Mexico for Austin, Texas to assist Lockwood in the creation of an art department at the University of Texas. That same year, he vacationed in Mexico City, finding great inspiration in Latin American art. The artist began to

experiment with Latin American themes in his own work and later assisted in the development of the Latin American Studies program at UT. Mozley traveled through Central and South America in the 1950s and 1960s working with local artists and photographing Pre-Columbian and Colonial sites. He retired from UT in 1975.

**Reid, Albert Turner (1873-1955).**

*The Romance of the Mail / The Mail in the Old Cattle Country*, 1939. Sulphur, oil on canvas.

Albert T. Reid attained national prominence as a political cartoonist in the early twentieth century, but his late career reveals his passionate interest in the West of his boyhood. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Reid executed a number of prints, paintings, and murals of the "Old West," particularly mail service on the frontier. *The Romance of the Mail* for the Sulphur post office is one of his many examinations of the subject and may have been influenced by his father, who worked for a stage line between Concordia and Waterville, Kansas. Reid was born in Concordia, but his father's death in 1887 prompted the family to move to Clyde. In the early 1890s, Reid audited classes at the University of Kansas, but he soon found his calling in 1896 when he entered a political cartoon contest sponsored by the *Topeka Mail and Breeze*. Reid won the prize and began working regularly for the paper until he moved to the *Kansas City Star* in 1897, where he remained for two years. After Reid left the *Star* in 1899, he worked at numerous newspapers and journals: *Chicago Record* in 1899; the *New York Herald* in 1899-1900; *Judge* in 1900; and *McClure's*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and other journals in 1901-02. He founded the *Daily Post* in Leavenworth, Kansas in 1905 and ran the paper until 1923. In

addition to his success in publishing, Reid co-founded the Reid-Stone Art School with George Melville Stone which later became the art department at Washburn University in Topeka.

Reid left Kansas permanently in 1919 to become the Director of Pictorial Publicity for the 1920 Republican campaign. He remained in New York City for the rest of his life. Reid won the commission for the Sulphur mural in June 1939 while he was living in New York.

**Rush, Olive** (1873-1966).

*Osages (Treaties – Osage Indians)*, 1938. Pawhuska, oil on canvas.

Olive Rush spent much of her mature career working on murals, well before the onset of the New Deal. Her early murals include those for the La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe in 1929. By 1932, her knowledge of mural painting led her to supervise Native American students at the Santa Fe Indian School in the decoration of several walls at the institution. The experience prompted her to lecture on Native American mural painting at the Teacher's College at Columbia University in 1933 and to supervise the installation of several Native American murals the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago that same year. Rush found support in the creation of the New Deal programs and executed murals for the Santa Fe library and the Biology Building at New Mexico A & M College (New Mexico State University) in 1934 and 1935, respectively. She followed with the mural decoration of the Pawhuska, Oklahoma Post Office in 1938; the result of a Section commission.

Although Rush is often identified as a New Mexico artist, her career began in the East. Born on the family farm at Rush Hill, Indiana, she studied initially at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1891, followed by instruction at the Art Students League in 1894 with Henry Siddons Mowbray, John Twachtman, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Her instruction lasted until 1899, but she began illustrating for Harper & Brothers in 1895 before accepting a position as a staff artist for the *New York Tribune* in 1897. Her career as an illustrator took her to Philadelphia in 1900 and later to Wilmington, Delaware in 1904 to study with illustrator Howard Pyle. In 1912, she enrolled at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts School to study with Frank W. Benson, William M. Paxton, and Edmund C. Tarbell. Rush first visited her future home of Santa Fe in 1914 but spent several years in Indianapolis and New York City before moving to the former in 1920. Her naturalistic, illustrational style inflected with an impressionist love of bright color made her particularly popular as a muralist in both Santa Fe and across the country.

**Swineford, Derald Thomas** (1908-1990).

*Settlers Moving into Oklahoma Territory*, 1934. Enid, oil on canvas? (destroyed);  
*Life and Art Styles from Cave Man through the Steel Worker*, 1934-45, with assistance from Anita Furray, Margaret Giles, and Paul McBride. Norman, oak panels.

Derald T. Swineford is one of the few sculptors in Oklahoma to have been employed by a New Deal program for artists, and was one of four OU students who received PWAP funding in 1934 for the completion of a set of carved oak panels for doors in Jacobson Hall. Swineford was born in Enid, Oklahoma and began his art training at the University of Oklahoma where he completed a B.F.A. and M.A. In 1941, he moved to Canyon, Texas to become the head of the sculpture department at West Texas State

University. He served in the U.S. Air Force during World War II. He accepted a position at the art department of the Oklahoma College for Women in 1946, now the University of Science and Arts, where he eventually became department chair. He retired in 1975.

**Turner , Ila McAfee (1897-1995).**

*The Scene Changes, 1938.* Cordell, oil on canvas;

*Pre-Settlement Days, 1939.* Edmond, oil on canvas.

Born in small community of Sargents near Gunnison, Colorado, McAfee Turner began her extensive study of art at the West Lake School of Art and the Haz Art School in 1917-18. The following year she studied with Catherine and Henry Richter at Western State College. She then left for Chicago in 1920, where she worked with the muralist James E. McBurney. During her four-year study with McBurney, McAfee Turner met her future husband Elmer Page Turner. The two left for New York in 1925 to further Ila's training at the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League. During her 1926 instruction at the League, the two were married.

With McAfee Turner's studies complete, the newlyweds visited Taos, New Mexico. The town appealed to the two and they settled there in 1928, building the White Horse Studio. McAfee Turner completed several Section murals from her Taos studio, including those for the Cordell and Edmond, Oklahoma Post Offices, in 1938 and 1939, respectively, and the Gunnison, Colorado Post Office in 1940. She lived in Taos until 1993; she spent her remaining years in Pueblo, Colorado.

**Van Soelen, Theodore** (1890-1964).  
*Canadian Honkers*, 1939. Waurika, oil on canvas.

Unlike most American artists who migrated to New Mexico for artistic inspiration, Theodore Van Soelen moved to the area to ease his bout with tuberculosis. Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, Van Soelen aborted a brief study at the St. Paul Institute of Fine Arts when his doctor recommended a trip west. He left for Utah and Nevada in 1910 where he worked on the Western Pacific Railroad. After a year in the arid climate of the West, he enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and then won a traveling scholarship to Europe in 1913. Van Soelen returned to the United States the next year, but in 1916, tuberculosis forced him west once again. He settled first in Albuquerque where he worked as a painter and illustrator. A growing interest in Native American life led the artist to move to a trading post; during this time, he met Virginia Carr, whom he married in 1921. The couple moved to Santa Fe in 1921-22 and finally to Tesuque in 1926 where they remained.

Van Soelen enjoyed the climate and artistic environs of New Mexico but began spending winters in Connecticut in 1934. His residences in the East and West allowed him to explore his interests to the full. During this time, he earned a national reputation as a painter of wildlife, particularly migratory birds. His Section mural for the Waurika post office reflects this facet of his work.



**West, Walter Richard** (Wah-Pah-Nah-Yah, Wapah Nahyah, Light Foot Runner), Cheyenne (1912-96). *Grand Council of 1842*, 1941. Okemah, egg tempera on canvas.

Born near Darlington, Oklahoma, Walter Richard West, commonly known as Dick, became one of the foremost Native American teachers in the twentieth century. He worked in a variety of styles throughout his career but is best known for his highly detailed interpretations of Cheyenne history and ritual. His concern for accuracy, when paired with his lengthy teaching career, produced a significant tendency towards an ethnographic and anthropological viewpoint in Native American painting.

West's distinguished teaching career was partly the result of his extensive education. He first attended Haskell Indian School in Lawrence, Kansas in 1935, then followed with instruction under Acee Blue Eagle at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma in 1938. Possibly under the influence of Blue Eagle, West then sought his B.F.A. at the University of Oklahoma under Oscar Brousse Jacobson, following the lead of both his Bacone instructor and the Kiowa Five. He earned his B.F.A. in 1941 and later his M.F.A. in 1950. In the years between, West studied briefly at the University of Redlands in California and Northeastern State College in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The artist also began his teaching career at his former alma mater, Bacone College, in 1947, holding the position of Director of the Art Department until 1970. He left Bacone for his first alma mater, now called Haskell Indian Nations University, where he served as the Director of Art between 1970-72 and the Chairman of the Division of Humanities between 1972-77.

West began his interest in mural painting in the 1940s and completed numerous murals throughout his career, most of which were intended for sites in Oklahoma. Along with a number of Native American artists, he received instruction in mural techniques under Olof Nordmark at the Ft. Sill Indian School between 1939-42, and West painted *Grand Council of 1842* during this period. He likely received the commission with the help of Jacobson who facilitated the mural division in Oklahoma.

**White Buffalo, Herbert** (1917-?).  
Cheyenne, *Dancer*, c. 1940. Easel painting.

Little is known about White Buffalo's career. He lived in Concho, Oklahoma for most of his life on the Southern Cheyenne portion of the Arapaho-Cheyenne Reservation. It is unclear whether he had any professional training, but it is possible that he received some education at either Fort Sill Indian School or perhaps the University of Oklahoma. His aesthetic compares closely to that of fellow Cheyenne artist Dick West and the Kiowa artists, all of whom studied at OU and Ft. Sill.

**Yates, Audre** (1914-?).  
Nursery Rhyme Characters (precise title uncertain), 1934. Oklahoma City, oil on canvas;  
*The Circus*, 1934. Oklahoma City, oil on canvas.

Although born in Kansas City, Missouri, Yates spent much of her youth in Oklahoma. Yates received the PWAP commission for Nursery Rhyme Characters and *The Circus*, both in Wilson Elementary School in Oklahoma City, after she graduated from high school in Oklahoma City. These murals are distinctive because of their use of bright, pastel colors which made them suitable for children's rooms.

In the late 1930s, she attended the Kansas City Art Institute, where she studied under Thomas Hart Benton, Ross Braught, Mildred Hammond, and Robert Mayes. She spent much of her remaining career as an illustrator.

## **XIX. SUMMARY**

Researching New Deal era public art in Oklahoma is a challenging and time-consuming task, but one that must be pursued if we hope to compile an inventory of these cultural resources. This section presents a brief summary of the findings of this survey, but these findings should not be construed as definitive. In numerous instances additional research is still needed to more conclusively establish when a particular work of art was created, what medium was used, what New Deal program it was associated with, how it was received by its community, or when it might have been moved to a new location. In some cases the answers to these questions are not to be found in Oklahoma, but rather in various archives across the country. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of historic preservation, awareness of these details becomes essential when attempting to assess the age, integrity, and historic context of particular artworks.

This thematic survey provided minimum-level documentation on 37 properties in Oklahoma. All but one of these properties contains art that was produced via three of the New Deal art programs that operated between 1934 and 1943. The one exception is the mural in the old Stillwater post office. Though it is public art, it represents a more recent vintage and was completed and installed in 1963.

As a result of this survey, a total of seven properties already listed in the National Register were updated, while another seven properties were identified as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. An additional fifteen properties were identified as warranting further study. These properties possess New Deal art, but additional research needs to be conducted to establish a viable rationale for listing

in the National Register. Finally, fourteen other properties were also found to possess New Deal art, or in the case of Stillwater, public art created long after the end of the New Deal. For various reasons these artworks and the buildings in which they are housed were not recommended for further study at this time.

The Public Works of Art Project, the Section, and the WPA Federal Art project greatly stimulated art production in the state and laid the foundation for the art museums Oklahoma possesses today. Oklahomans, particularly some of its Native American artists, contributed in numerous and significant ways through these federally-sponsored programs. Although Oklahoma's association with the Dust Bowl will likely persist, a more complete picture of the Depression should factor in the gradual emergence of an art community in the state while acknowledging Oklahoma's contribution to a public art.