

Moton School Campus Historic District

Muskogee County, Oklahoma

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Moton School Campus Historic District

Other Names: Moton High School, E. W. Warrior Jr. High School, Moton Elementary School

Name of Related Multiple-Property Listing: NA

2. Location

Street and Number: 208 W. Seminole Street

City or Town: Taft State: Oklahoma County: Muskogee

Not for Publication: NA Vicinity: NA

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<hr/>	
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<hr/>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/>	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
<hr/>	
Title:	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

- Building
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	Buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Objects
<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

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Number of contributing resources previously in the National Register: NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

EDUCATION/school

Current Function

GOVERNMENT/city hall

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

MODERN MOVEMENT/Midcentury Modern

NO STYLE/no style

Materials

Principal exterior material of the property: CONCRETE/concrete block
BRICK

Narrative Description

Summary

The Moton School Campus Historic District is west of the town center of the All-Black Town of Taft, a community in rural Muskogee County, Oklahoma. Taft's independent, Black-run public school district began to develop the campus in 1925 and continued constructing buildings related to the property's educational function through the early 1970s. Extant resources associated with the campus's educational use are four buildings and one object constructed between 1949 and ca. 1973. The major contributing resources—the 1958 Moton High School and the 1961 Moton Elementary School—are constructed of concrete block. Other contributing resources are the concrete-block-clad 1949 Moton School Shop, the metal-clad ca. 1973 Moton School Gymnasium and the ca. 1973 freestanding brick monument sign.¹ Campus elements such as asphalt driveways, mown grass fields, wood light posts, and a remnant foundation and archway, are not included in the resource count. The district retains the physical and historical integrity to convey its significance.

Description

Site and Setting

The town of Taft is 8 miles west of Muskogee, the seat of Muskogee County, Oklahoma (**Map 1**). Taft is about 1 mile south of the Arkansas River. Sporadic woodland areas, composed of deciduous trees interspersed with evergreens, interrupt the agricultural pastureland surrounding Taft. Wooded hills rise south and northeast of the town. Old Taft Road is the town's principal artery, intersecting the southern end of its loosely organized grid. The road traverses the town at a diagonal, extending from southwest to northeast roughly parallel to the historical alignment of the Midland Valley Railroad before looping south to connect to U.S. Highway 62 to the east. The town comprises dispersed dwellings, churches, civic, social, and school buildings. The Dr. Eddie Warrior Correctional Center, a minimum-security women's prison, is at Taft's northern edge and the Jess

¹ The gymnasium was not on a February 1973 aerial photograph of Muskogee County but was present by 1980. Taft's mayor, Elsie Ceasar, recalls that the gymnasium was constructed in 1972 or 1973. The freestanding sign also does not appear to be on the February 1973 photograph but is visible on the 1980 aerial photograph. It is conservatively assumed that the sign was added to the campus around the same time as the gymnasium during a period when the student population was expanding after 1970, when Taft's public schools began to absorb students from the institutions of the Oklahoma Children's Center.

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Dunn Correctional Center, a minimum-security men's prison, is just southwest of the town boundary.

The Moton School Campus, developed between 1925 and about 1973, is just west of the town center. The campus is north of Seminole Street at its intersection with Walnut Street and west of Pine Street. The campus was built on Lots 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 out of Block 8 and Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 out of Block 9, all in the original Taft townsite, plus the south 434 feet of the east 434 feet of Lot 2 of Section 19, Township 15N, Range 17E.²

Moton School Campus

The Moton School Campus has minimal landscaping. Mature trees demarcate the campus boundary on the north, west, and northeast and a chain link fence bounds the campus on the south and southeast. Two asphalt driveways, one west of the high school and one to its east, connect the campus to Seminole Street. The paved asphalt driveways unite in a semicircular driveway and parking area that rings the high school building. A mown grass field extends the length of the campus's west side. A second grassy area is at the campus's northeast corner.

Four buildings and a sign are clustered at the center of the Moton School Campus. These are a 1949 shop building, a 1958 high school, a 1961 elementary school, a ca. 1973 gymnasium, and a ca. 1973 freestanding sign (**Map 2**). The Moton High School building is at the south end of the campus, north of the intersection of Seminole and Walnut streets. It faces east toward Pine Street. The freestanding sign is in a grassy area in front (east) of the southern half of Moton High School. A sidewalk north of the sign connects an asphalt-paved lot to the building's primary entrance. Moton Elementary School is north of and perpendicular to the high school (**Photograph 1**). It fronts south toward Seminole Street. The shop building also fronts south, just west of the elementary school building. A gravel path west of the shop building connects the paved driveway to the south-facing freestanding gymnasium north of the elementary school (**Photograph 2**). Several light fixtures mounted on wood poles are at the campus's northeast corner (**Photograph 3**). A wood-frame building east of the elementary school constructed between 1964 and 1969, a blacktop northwest of the elementary school built between 1969 and 1973, an arched entrance over the western driveway where it meets Seminole Street built between 1969 and 1973, and a bungalow dwelling just east of the campus are no longer extant (**Photograph 4**).³ Only remnants of an arched entryway at the western driveway and elements of the 1925 Moton School annex foundation are visible.

The four extant buildings and one object constructed during the period of significance are contributing resources to the Moton School Campus. These contributing resources are summarized in **Table 1**, then described in detail.

² Muskogee County Clerk, Deed Record 2326:130, Muskogee, May 8, 1995.

³ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, 1958, Aerial Photograph; Muskogee County, Oklahoma, 1969, Aerial Photograph; Muskogee County, Oklahoma, 1973, Aerial Photograph; U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Services Agency, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, October 31, 1964, Aerial Photograph

Table 1. Resources Contributing to the Moton School Campus

Map ID	Historical Name/Description	Year Built	Architectural Style
1	Moton School Shop	1949	No Style
2	Moton High School	1958	Midcentury Modern
3	Moton Elementary School	1961	No Style
4	Moton School Gymnasium	ca. 1973	No Style
5	Freestanding Sign	ca. 1973	No Style

Moton High School

The 1958 Moton High School is a one-story Midcentury Modern institutional building with a roughly rectangular plan and a horizontal profile. A rear volume set south of center projects slightly to the west. The building is of concrete-block construction. Exposed exterior concrete block is painted beige. The administration (south) wing has a flat roof, and the east wing and rear volume have slightly gabled roofs.

The east (front) façade is asymmetrical with details that emphasize horizontality. A faux brick-veneer foundation clads the lower quarter of the concrete-block wall and a wide cantilevered eave overhangs at the roofline. A vertical brick wall, approximately one-third of the way from the south end of the façade, pierces the roof. This wall protrudes about 18 inches above the roofline, dividing the administrative and educational wings (**Photograph 5**). A plaque detailing school board members, the superintendent, school principals, and the building’s 1958 construction date is embedded in the south side of the wing wall (**Photograph 6**). The primary entrance is south of the wing wall. Plain brick surrounds encircle a set of double metal-slab doors, each with a single glazed square light. A sign for the “Taft Meeting Room” is above the entrance. A second projecting wall under the eave is south of the double door. A secondary entrance with a single metal-slab door with a single glazed square light is toward the south end of this façade. A sign for the “Taft City Hall” is attached to the wall north of this door. An integrated brick planter is between the entrances (**Photograph 7**). The administration wing has two sets of paired two-over-two aluminum awning windows, one south of the secondary entrance and the other between the entrances and above the planter. These windows have slanted concrete sills and protective vertical metal bars. The educational wing is defined by bands of grouped composite windows—one-over-one aluminum awning windows topped by nine glass blocks arranged in a three-by-three grid. These windows are atop a slanted brick sill that spans the length of the educational wing (**Photograph 8**). The northmost bay, with a group of four composite windows, is on a 1962 two-classroom addition that is compatible in scale, materials, and detailing.

The building’s two-volume south (side) elevation faces Seminole Street, both with wide overhanging eaves. Its eastern, flat-roof volume has two sets of paired and two single two-over-two aluminum awning windows with slanted concrete sills and protective vertical metal bars. The western, rear-gable volume is set back and has six grouped windows composed of nine glass blocks arranged in a three-by-three grid above one-over-one aluminum awning windows (**Photograph 9**).

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The west (rear) elevation faces the asphalt driveway. The southmost bay has no fenestration. The center bay, with no eave, is a low-pitch gable volume that projects west. At its recessed entryway, there is a set of double metal-slab doors, each with a single glazed square light. There is a three-light awning window just north of the projecting bay. Other windows on the rear are groupings of four and six of the previously described composite windows (**Photograph 10**).

The north (side) elevation faces Moton Elementary School. The roof has a slight gable and no eave. There is a set of double metal-slab doors, each with a single square glazed light, centered on this elevation (**Photograph 11**).

The interior division reflects the building's administrative and educational functions. The educational wing has concrete-block walls painted yellow, vinyl tile flooring, and a drop ceiling. Wood trim is painted pale tangerine. The primary entrance opens to an east-west hallway that extends to the double doors in the projecting rear volume. On the south wall of the corridor, two doors lead to the administration wing. A bulletin board is appended to the center of the wall, a row of metal lockers is installed to its west, and a single classroom is at the southwest end of the corridor. On the hallway's east side, north of the intersecting corridor, a glass trophy display case with painted wood trim is embedded at the corner of the intersecting walls (**Photograph 12**). The boys' restroom is at the corridor's northeast corner.

Most classrooms are along a north-south corridor that bisects the east-west hallway perpendicularly. Three classrooms interspersed with two sets of metal lockers are on the hallway's east side. A set of lockers on the west side divides two classrooms from a storage closet and the girls' bathroom (**Photograph 13**). Classrooms each have one or two chalkboards with wood surrounds (**Photograph 14** and **Photograph 15**). Groupings of composite windows saturate classrooms with natural light (**Photograph 16**). In some classrooms, flooring, and sections of the ceiling have been removed (**Photograph 17**).

The secondary exterior entrance opens to the administration wing. The door opens to an entry vestibule. Doors north and south of the vestibule lead to administrative offices and a western door opens to the superintendent's office (**Photograph 18**). A door on the superintendent's office's south wall leads to another office. This office opens to a small corridor, with mail slots for teachers, and then connects to the educational wing. Exposed concrete-block walls in the administrative wing are painted white and some walls are finished with wood panels. The superintendent's office and entry vestibule are carpeted; other rooms have vinyl tile flooring.

There have been minimal modifications to Moton High School since the period of significance. Exterior doors have been replaced and metal security bars have been added over windows on the administrative wing. On the interior, vinyl tile flooring has been removed in some classrooms, and drop ceilings have been inserted and subsequently removed in some areas.

Moton Elementary School

The 1961 Moton Elementary School is a single-story institutional building with an irregular footprint. The concrete-block building is composed of several distinct volumes: the primary horizontal-profile flat-roof volume with wide overhanging eaves that faces south toward Moton High School and Seminole Street; a rear side-gable volume for the auditorium; a flat-roof volume in the ell between the gable and horizontal volumes on the north side; and an L-shaped volume appended to the rear of the auditorium. The building's nominal stylistic characteristics are limited

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to the primary volume's horizontal profile and wide overhanging eaves that mildly mimic the high school's Midcentury Modern style.

The south (front) façade is horizontal with wide overhanging eaves (**Photograph 19**). A square entry vestibule pierces the eave at center of the façade. The recessed entrance has a single metal-slab door with one square glazed light. A sign for the "Taft Community Resource Center" is above the door (**Photograph 20**). A plaque detailing board of education members, district and school leadership, architects, contractor, and the 1961 construction date is embedded in the interior east wall of the recessed entryway (**Photograph 21**). Windows are one-over-one vinyl replacements with protective metal grates. A ca. 1970 cafeteria addition is appended to the east side of this volume; its materials, scale, and details echo those of the original building. A single metal-slab door opens to the cafeteria, with a sign for the "Taft Community Resource Center Kitchen" west of the door. A low-slung gravel-filled cinder-block planter spans the length of this façade.

The west (side) elevation has two sets of paired ten-light metal-casement windows with concrete sills that open into the auditorium. Asbestos siding clads the side-gable roof and metal siding has been applied to the exterior wall of the classroom volume. A small window on the rear ell volume attached to the auditorium is boarded closed.

The north (rear) elevation has two nine-light fixed-metal windows on the shorter side of the ell volume that projects from its west side. Three window openings of the same size are on the long side of the ell volume that is appended to the rear of the auditorium. Two of these openings have multiple-light metal-slab window units and one opening is boarded. A small window near the roofline is also boarded. The flat roof volume between the cafeteria addition and the auditorium has a single metal-slab door.

The east (side) elevation has asbestos cladding in the gable end of the auditorium volume. A door on the ell volume at the rear of the building is infilled and a window is boarded closed. The cafeteria volume has a single metal-slab door and two multiple-light fixed-metal windows behind metal grates (**Photograph 22**).

Interior finishes have been updated to accommodate the building's changed functions, but historical circulation patterns and key spaces like the auditorium and cafeteria remain intact. The primary entrance leads to a short corridor with an office and service window on its west side. The building has four classrooms on its south side: two west of the entry corridor and two east of it. The western classrooms are for the community to use, and the eastern classrooms are offices for the Taft mayor and treasurer (**Photograph 23**). Rooms opposite the classrooms include boys' and girls' restrooms and a storage closet. The interior has concrete-block walls painted white and drop ceilings. Corridor floors have vinyl tile and classroom floors have carpet.

The auditorium is at the center of the building (**Photograph 24**). It has concrete floors, and the ceiling is unfinished, exposing metal structural components and insulation. Two sets of bleachers with four steps each line the south wall on either side of the entrance. A stage and dressing rooms are on the north side of the room in the ell volume. At the east side is a trophy room with walls clad in wood laminate panels (**Photograph 25**).

The cafeteria and kitchen are at the building's east end where the primary east-west corridor opens to the cafeteria. The cafeteria is a square room with vinyl tile flooring and drop ceilings. Exposed concrete-block walls are painted chartreuse. A course of concrete blocks painted pale yellow runs roughly through the vertical center of the walls. Three service windows with counters connect the cafeteria to the kitchen on its north wall (**Photograph 26**). Two concrete breeze-block columns, painted chartreuse and pale yellow, are in the center of the room (**Photograph 27**). The south and east walls each have a set of paired, hung vinyl replacement windows. Scalloped wood valances decorate the top of each window (**Photograph 28**).

A door on the cafeteria's north wall opens onto the kitchen, which is finished similarly to the cafeteria (**Photograph 29**). The kitchen has one painted concrete breeze-block column. It has a set of paired fixed-metal windows on the east wall. The kitchen has wood cabinetry with metal hardware, a laminate countertop, paired ovens and a range, and a dishwashing station. A door on the kitchen's west wall leads to a small storage room, a restroom, and an industrial deep freeze.

Alterations to Moton Elementary School since the period of significance are replacement of most windows with vinyl units, infilling of a door on the east elevation and boarding of some minor windows on secondary elevations, application of metal siding to a portion of the west elevation's wall surface, and replacement flooring in interior corridors and classrooms.

Moton School Shop

The 1949 Moton School Shop is a single-story rectangular plan building with concrete block exterior walls and a flat roof and parapet (**Photograph 30**). The façade faces south and is symmetrical. Two window openings flank a central double metal-slab door behind a metal grate. All window openings are square; most are covered with protective metal grates, and some are boarded. There are five regularly placed window openings on the west elevation and three on the north elevation. A single entrance is centered on the east elevation between four evenly placed window openings (**Photograph 31**).

The 1949 building plan remains unchanged. It is evident in aerial photographs starting in 1952.⁴ A 1951 photograph of the Moton School Shop shows that the building was constructed with a side gable roof and three windows south of a centered door on its east elevation (**Figure 8**). The awning-covered entrance visible in the photograph faced east toward a 1925 school building. Although the adjacent building succumbed to fire, newspaper reports indicate the shop building survived, with some window damage, and temporarily housed academic classes while a replacement school building was constructed.⁵

The Moton School Shop sustained alterations to its roof type and fenestration after 1951, possibly during the 1960s; however, it retains its historic plan and location adjacent to the 1961 Moton Elementary School. Alterations that gave the building its present appearance were likely made

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, August 28, 1952, Aerial Photograph.

⁵ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Blaze Destroys Taft Grade School Building," October 11, 1960, 1; *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "Taft Grade School Burns," October 11, 1960, 1.

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around 1961 when the neighboring Moton Elementary School was built. The concrete block that clads the exterior of the building matches the adjacent 1961 Moton Elementary School, suggesting that the building was reclad contemporaneously with its construction. During this recladding, the fenestration pattern was altered. The building was reoriented so that its primary entrance faced south. The east entrance became a secondary entrance. Today, only two window openings are south of the east entrance. An awning over the entrance on the east elevation is also no longer extant, although the placement of the single door entrance appears intact. Research did not yield a definitive date for the removal of the gable roof structure. As the concrete block parapet is built continuously with the exterior walls and of the same material, the roof replacement also likely occurred around the 1961 construction of the adjacent Moton Elementary School.

Nonhistoric-age modifications visible on the exterior are the boarding of some windows and loss of the secondary door. The interior of the shop building was not accessible. The functional building is now used for storage, and the interior has not been adapted for new uses since 1961.

Moton School Gymnasium

The ca. 1973 Moton School Gymnasium, formerly known as the “Blue Gym” for its previous exterior paint color, is a rectangular building with a low-pitched front-gable roof (**Photograph 32**). It is clad in metal painted black and has two sets of double entrances centered on its façade. One entrance contains a set of double metal-slab doors; the other is infilled. Two vents are evenly placed at about the vertical halfway point of the exterior wall. There are single metal-slab doors on both the west and east elevations. Since the period of significance, the gymnasium has been painted and a set of double doors on the façade has been infilled. The interior of the gymnasium was not accessible, but as of 2021, appears to have been intact.⁶

Freestanding Sign

The ca. 1973 freestanding brick monument sign is east of Moton High School (**Photograph 33**). The pedestal is dark red brick with several stretcher courses as the base, English-bond brick composing the sides, and a rowlock course at the top. A plastic sign for the “Taft City Hall & Community Resource Center,” along with its telephone number and address, is affixed to the east side of the brick monument. The sign has an image of a black panther emblazoned over a decorative “M” and set between the words, “Formerly Moton High School Panthers.” Until at least 1984 and likely until the City of Taft purchased the property, a sign affixed to the monument read “Moton Public Schools, Dist. I-17, Taft, Ok: Home of the Panthers” (**Figure 9**). A wood border has also been added to the ground around the sign.

Physical Modifications

The Moton School Campus and its contributing resources are largely intact. Sympathetic additions were made to Moton High School and Moton Elementary School during the historic period. The roof form, fenestration pattern, wall cladding, and entrance of the Moton School Shop were modified during the period of significance. Changes may have been necessary safety upgrades to allow for the building’s continued use for industrial arts education or may have resulted from damage due to fire at the adjacent 1925 Moton School. The campus has experienced modest

⁶ For a 2021 view of the gymnasium interior, see this article:

<https://theblackwallsttimes.com/2021/10/20/hollywood-filmmaker-builds-black-owned-studio-in-all-black-town-to-rewrite-the-narrative/>.

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changes since the period of significance. Resources removed from the campus are a small wood-frame building east of the elementary school, a blacktop northwest of the elementary school, and an arched gateway at the west driveway from Seminole Street. Two primary driveways have been paved with asphalt. Otherwise, the landscape is unaltered. Similarly, the five contributing resources have experienced very minimal alterations since the end of the period of significance. Apparent on the exterior, some fenestration has been replaced, enclosed, or removed. Some interior floors and ceilings have been removed or replaced.

Changes in Use

The Taft public school district continuously used the Moton School Campus from 1925 until the 1990s, when it was the locus of public education for the All-Black Town. The City of Taft purchased the campus in 1995 and has since used the buildings for its city hall and other public and communal purposes.⁷ Moton High School was the Taft City Hall from about 1995 to 2016. It is currently unoccupied and used as storage, although the city intends to mitigate hazardous materials and repurpose the building for community use. Since 2016, Moton Elementary School has served as the Taft City Hall and Community Resource Center. The Moton School Shop is currently used for storage. The City of Taft has leased the Moton School Gymnasium to a Black-owned film studio, soundstage, and training facility.⁸ In contrast to these communal functions, prison facilities have subsumed Taft's other historical educational buildings. As a result, the Moton School Campus is the only remaining educational resource in the town that palpably communicates its historical function.

Integrity

The Moton School Campus Historic District retains its physical and historical integrity, clearly conveying its historic-period function as the Taft public school system's principal twentieth century campus.

Location

The campus and each of its contributing resources are in their original locations. Since the midcentury, the heart of the campus has comprised the existing buildings and sign. These resources retain their relationships to each other, and no new construction has taken place on the property since the end of the period of significance.

Setting

The campus and each of its contributing resources retain integrity of setting. Because of their locations on the periphery of the campus, the removal of certain secondary resources has not detracted from the property's overall setting, which continues to be defined by historical circulation patterns and the presence of and interrelationships between the buildings developed after the mid-twentieth century in response to changing needs and circumstances to house the property's core educational function.

Design

The Moton School Campus did not historically have designed landscaping elements. Buildings were added to the campus over time on an as-needed basis. The plan of the campus as it developed

⁷ Muskogee County Clerk, Deed Record, 1995.

⁸ Deon Osborne, "Hollywood Filmmaker Builds Black-owned Studio in All-Black Town to 'Rewrite the Narrative,'" *Black Wall Street Times*, October 20, 2021.

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through the mid-twentieth century remains intact. Design of contributing resources ranges from a stylized Midcentury Modern high school to utilitarian buildings for athletics and industrial arts education. Alterations on each building are part of the evolving history of the campus. Each extant building's form is unaltered since the end of the period of significance. Moton High School and Moton Elementary School each received a modular addition during the period of significance after the school district raised additional funds. The additions are compatible with the buildings in scale, materials, and profile. Character-defining attributes of Moton High School and Moton Elementary School—their horizontal profiles, fenestration patterns, interior circulation patterns, and corridor arrangement—are preserved.

The roof form and fenestration pattern of the Moton School Shop was changed around 1960. Despite these alterations, the building clearly presents as a functional midcentury auxiliary educational building. National Park Service *National Register Bulletin 16A* notes that for properties eligible under Criterion A for their associations with historic trends, “the period of significance is the span of time when the property actively contributed to the trend.”⁹ The Moton School Shop has been an educational resource on this public school campus that served Black students from its construction in 1949 through the end of the 50-year cut-off in 1974. As the home of industrial arts courses on the campus, the building illustrates the promotion of manual training for Black students. The characteristic that qualifies it for listing as a contributing resource to the historic district—its use for industrial arts education on the Moton School Campus—was gained at the time of its 1949 construction. Design elements such as the roof form were not essential to the building's function and changes allowed for its ongoing use for industrial education. The Moton School Shop thus retains the integrity to contribute to the historic district. Other campus buildings have their original forms, fenestration patterns, roof types, and features. Thus, overall, the Moton School Campus Historic District retains integrity of design necessary for listing under Criterion A for Education and Ethnic Heritage/Black.

Materials

Moton High School, Moton Elementary School, the Moton School Gymnasium, and the freestanding sign overwhelmingly retain their original materials. Typical modifications include replacement doors, enclosure or boarding of select door and window openings, and the addition of grates and security bars over windows. The plastic panel affixed to the freestanding sign has been replaced but the pedestal is intact. At Moton High School, vinyl tile flooring has been removed in select classrooms and drop ceilings have been inserted and subsequently removed in some areas. Other interior details, such as lockers, chalkboards, and most original finishes, are intact. In Moton Elementary School, windows have been replaced with vinyl units and interior finishes have been modified in classrooms and corridors to accommodate the building's evolved function, but these are impermanent and rectifiable. Notably, important interior spaces like the auditorium and cafeteria are largely unchanged since the period of significance.

Most original materials at the Moton School Shop were replaced during the period of significance. The shop was purpose-built to house manual training courses, and its original materials would have supported the building's functioning for that purpose. Replacement materials such as the

⁹ Linda Flint McClelland, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, National Register of Historic Places, 1997).

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concrete block exterior cladding perpetuated the building's intended use as the campus evolved due to changing circumstances. The original cladding appears to have been a solid color material with no detailing and the replacement material has a similar minimal and functional aesthetic. Taken as a whole, the buildings and object at the Moton School Campus overwhelmingly retain integrity of materials.

Workmanship

The stylized Midcentury Modern Moton High School building shows a high level of workmanship in details such as its wing wall, cantilevered eaves, and expansive fenestration. Elements of workmanship are echoed in the plainer Moton Elementary School's wide eaves and entry assembly. These details are intact and workmanship, retained. In its original form, the utilitarian Moton School Shop displayed minimal workmanship, but some was evident in its entry awning, windows, and gable roof. These details have since been modified and the building now displays the workmanship typical of a midcentury building with industrial function in its concrete block cladding and parapet. The gymnasium and freestanding sign are utilitarian in nature and did not have high levels of workmanship to begin with. Overall, the campus retains integrity of workmanship expected from a collection of midcentury educational resources developed in an ad hoc manner.

Feeling

The campus retains its integrity of feeling as a mid-twentieth century campus with its extant historic-period buildings and their character-defining features. As a former school and administrative facility, the property's use as a city hall, community resource center, and film studio reverberates its original purpose as a communal setting for small-town residents. These purposes ensure that the historic district has vital public functions in the Taft community, as it did during the historic period, contributing to the property's integrity of feeling.

Association

Archival research and analysis on the Moton School Campus Historic District reveal its substantive associative qualities with the history of education in Taft and the ethnic heritage of the town's Black students, teachers, and administration. Evident in the current signage that identifies the campus as the former home of the Moton High School Panthers, the Taft community continues to associate the property with its twentieth century educational function. The Moton School Campus Historic District retains its identity as the heart of Taft's twentieth century school district and its centrality to the community endures. The Moton School Campus thus retains integrity of association.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

Criteria Considerations N/A

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE/BLACK

Period of Significance

1949–1974

Significant Dates

1949

1958

1961

ca. 1973

Significant Person

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Davis & Stone, architects

Hale Brothers Construction Company, contractor

I. V. Towell Jr. General Construction Company, contractor

Summary

The Moton School Campus Historic District in Taft, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Ethnic Heritage/Black, with a period of significance of 1949 to 1974. The period of significance begins with the construction date of the earliest extant educational building on the campus and extends to 1974 to account for the district's continuous use as a public school campus and center of community life. The campus, with its Midcentury Modern Moton High School building, represents this All-Black Town's efforts to endow local students with quality public education in an era of systematized school segregation. In this way, the historic district is an example of autonomy in Black education that contributed to social cohesion. The historic district remains a central gathering place in this All-Black Town.

Statement of Significance

Historic Context: Oklahoma's All-Black Towns¹⁰

Introduction

After the Civil War, Oklahoma's first All-Black Towns—defined as communities with Black founders, a Black-dominated governance structure, Black town officials, or a Black postmaster—

¹⁰ This Historic Context of Oklahoma's All-Black Towns is an abridged version of the All-Black Towns historic context written by Stantec Consulting Services historians in 2023. For the complete context, see Amy E. Dase et

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developed as newly deemed Black Americans sought access to economic opportunities and spaces where racial persecution was less likely.¹¹ The earliest All-Black Towns were in the twin Indian and Oklahoma Territories (**Figure 1**). Their populations derived from two sources, the enslaved of the Native American Tribes forcibly relocated to the territories in the 1830s and 1840s, and free Black people who left Southern states after the end of Reconstruction in 1877.¹²

Most All-Black Towns were founded during the period of railroad expansion before Oklahoma achieved statehood in 1907 as the arrival of railroads to the Twin Territories accelerated community development. Between 1897 and 1907, railroads traversing the twin Oklahoma and Indian territories bolstered migration to and manifested unprecedented urbanization on the rural landscape.¹³ Most All-Black Towns established during this period formed in the eastern Indian Territory where the early presence of freedmen and their honed local experiences helped facilitate town formation. Those in the western Oklahoma Territory were all settled during or after 1889. In both territories, the ready availability of cheap land through grants, lotteries, or auctions attracted southern freedmen to settle in and near these towns.¹⁴ Agriculture was the economic backbone of these rural communities.¹⁵ With rail service, newly established All-Black Towns had passenger depots and means to support expanded commercial activity. Several towns, Taft among them, flourished with agricultural processing facilities, like a grain mill or cotton gin, that had rail access and benefited local farmers (**Figure 2**).

Town dwellers were typically southern migrant freedmen and their descendants. However, most people associated with the All-Black Towns were not town dwellers but dispersed on the surrounding rural farmsteads. By 1910 in Taft, for example, Black family farms surrounded the community and were positioned on both sides of the Arkansas River (**Figure 3**).¹⁶

Institutions

Institutions in All-Black Towns reflected the desire of founders and occupants to enjoy full autonomy over economic, political, and social affairs. United States post offices were among the most important institutions in All-Black Towns, signaling acceptance and approval for the communities from the federal government. Locally owned and published newspapers were another stride toward independence. Newspapers were instrumental in community engagement, distributing information, fostering associations with neighbors, and updating populations on civil rights advances and setbacks.¹⁷ The towns' downtowns offered commerce and community that Black entrepreneurs and residents devised to enjoy protection and opportunities. Railroad depots, sited alongside the tracks, were the transportation hubs for goods and passengers. Businesses sold goods and services from one or two streets with several small wood-frame or masonry commercial-

al., *Architectural and Historical Survey of Oklahoma's All-Black Towns, Phase I*, Stantec Consulting Services Inc (2023).

¹¹ Hannibal B. Johnson, *Acres of Aspiration: The All-Black Towns of Oklahoma* (Eakin Press, 2002).

¹² Johnson, *Acres of Aspiration*.

¹³ Augustus J. Veenendaal Jr., "Railroads," in *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 2024.

¹⁴ Norman L. Crockett, *The Black Towns* (University of Kansas Press, 1979).

¹⁵ Larry O'Dell, "All-Black Towns," in *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 2024.

¹⁶ Linda C. Gray, "Taft: Town on the Black Frontier," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume 65, No. 4 (1988).

¹⁷ Frederick German Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States* (University of Chicago Press, 1922).

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block buildings. Commerce included stores of many kinds, but especially groceries, and the occasional bank or hotel. Banks, including one in Taft, propped businesses, homeowners, and farmers with capital for loans.¹⁸ The high proportion of churches in All-Black Towns reflects the centrality of religion in these communities. Church congregations held both religious and secular gatherings, and regularly scheduled, holiday, and revival services.¹⁹ Each of these places has a cemetery, as well; in some cases, the burial ground is all that remains of an All-Black Town. Hotels offered non-discriminatory accommodations for traveling Black guests. Services included barbershops, real estate agencies, and cafés. Because their occupants desired autonomous civic affairs, some communities had a city hall and a jail. The All-Black Towns had local politicians responsible for managing community business and public works. Some towns had fraternal organizations that supported social change and imbued middle-class values of industry, thrift, and temperance.

Education

Educational programming in several All-Black Towns proved a two-fold success, teaching young and adult students, and drawing an educated workforce to their communities. Most towns had at least one primary school. The Rosenwald Fund, established in 1917, aided hundreds of rural school-building projects for Black students across the country until the program ended in 1932. In Oklahoma, the fund supported the construction of 176 schools, 16 teacherages, and 6 shop buildings in 44 counties.²⁰ The fund helped with school construction projects in 5 All-Black Towns in the 1920s: Brooksville, IXL, Lima, Tatum, and Vernon. Secondary and higher education opportunities founded in several All-Black communities attained recognition. In 1897, the Oklahoma Colored Agricultural and Normal University opened, the sole historically Black college in the state, which was renamed Langston University in 1941. Inman E. Page, one of the first two Black men to be educated at Brown University, was the school president who oversaw campus development for the land-grant college for its first few decades. The music education program developed at the Rentiesville Musical and Industrial School brought prominence to that community. As the epitome of industrial education that Booker T. Washington advocated, the Halochee Industrial Institute, founded in 1906 on the outskirts of Taft, was a Christian mission and vocational school considered the offspring of the forefather's infamous Tuskegee Institute.²¹ Taft also attracted state institutions for Black youth including the Deaf, Blind, and Orphans Institute and the State Training School for Girls.

Racism

While the All-Black Towns offered residents a degree of autonomy and security unknown in many other parts of Oklahoma, racist treatment still hindered their populations. Black migrants had viewed the Twin Territories as a haven from the hostile South, but Oklahoma's statehood in 1907 resulted in the institutionalization of racist segregation policies that would extend for decades. Instead of the hoped-for limited outside interference or prejudice that the mild-mannered state constitution appeared to embrace, the Oklahoma legislature enacted discriminatory Jim Crow laws, policies that banned interracial marriage, and segregated public accommodations, like schools,

¹⁸ Larry O'Dell, "Taft," in *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 2024.

¹⁹ *Okfuskee County News*, "Iron Post Items," June 10, 1909, 8.

²⁰ Cynthia Savage, "Rosenwald Schools," in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2022). <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=RO029>.

²¹ Gray, "Taft," 440.

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libraries, and railroad cars and depots.²² Although All-Black Towns afforded residents political engagement in local matters, white people who controlled county-level government wielded influence by withholding funding for schools and infrastructure.²³ Residents of All-Black Towns were legally permitted to vote; however, constant intimidation, redistricting, and gerrymandering reduced their access on election day. This curtailed fair representation and funding for public works and schools.²⁴ These realities made evident the limitation to the safety and opportunity that an All-Black Town could provide to a community in the midst of segregated Oklahoma.

Between and After the World Wars

Shifting economic and demographic trends after World War I brought change to many All-Black Towns. Agrarian-based communities reeled during the years between the world wars as the boll weevil, disease, and weather events decimated the harvests of farmers dependent on cotton as the monoculture cash crop.²⁵ Changing trends in transportation saw the collapse of the independently owned railroad companies that had been lifelines for All-Black Town merchants and farmers as the rise in automobile transport made urban centers more readily accessible.²⁶ Concurrently, the proliferation of post-World War I domestic manufacturing centers enticed farm workers to industrialized cities and towns for consistent work.²⁷ This trend continued after World War II as manufacturing enterprises drew employees from farms and small towns to work in mills, meatpacking, printing, metal products, and textiles.²⁸

After World War II, construction of new commercial, institutional, and religious buildings generally ceased as the populations in most All-Black Towns declined. Towns like Taft and Langston posed exceptions to this trend due to educational facilities and state institutions that offered employment, diversifying local economies beyond agriculture. This economic activity sustained sufficient services for nearby residents into the latter half of the twentieth century.²⁹

The All-Black Towns of Oklahoma offered their residents feelings of liberty and dignity, and prospects to control their livelihoods. While economic and social factors led inhabitants of some All-Black Towns to move away, this did not strip the towns of their achievements. Residents, past and present, continue to celebrate these places. They found agency in owning property, managing schools, voting, and operating their farms and businesses without assistance from or under the control of white people.

Taft

Introduction

The All-Black Town of Taft was founded in Indian Territory in present-day Muskogee County. In 1902, having received land allotments under the Dawes Act of 1887, Creek freedmen Thomas and

²² Johnson, *Acres of Aspiration*.

²³ Crockett, *The Black Towns*.

²⁴ O'Dell, "All-Black Towns."

²⁵ Crockett, *The Black Towns*; Johnson, *Acres of Aspiration*.

²⁶ Johnson, *Acres of Aspiration*.

²⁷ Dianna Everett, "Manufacturing," in *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 2024.

²⁸ Dianna Everett, "IXL," in *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 2022.

²⁹ William J. McAuley, "History, Race, and Attachment to Place Among Elders in the Rural All-Black Towns of Oklahoma," *Journal of Gerontology*, Volume 53B, No. 1 (1998): S36.

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Phillis Manuel settled the future site of Taft with their extended family.³⁰ One mile to the east was the townsite of Twine, where the Midland Townsite Company hoped to purchase land. Unable to acquire the desired parcels at that location, the company bought the nearest available tract, 120 acres to the west, platting the town of Taft west of the confluence of the Arkansas and Verdigris rivers. The postal office moved from Twine to Taft on November 18, 1904, and the town, named in honor of contemporaneous Secretary of War William Howard Taft, was incorporated on May 8, 1907.³¹ The town's population had primarily relocated from southern states, and Creek Freedman occupied adjacent rural land.³² The Taft City Hall was built in 1910.³³

The arrival of the railroad accelerated local development. By about 1904, the Midland Valley Railroad, which connected Hope, Arkansas, to Wichita, Kansas, via northeastern Oklahoma, had constructed a depot in Taft. By 1911, the area was home to farmers, merchants, and professionals.³⁴ The farming community, with cotton as its staple crop, patronized businesses in town. Like other All-Black Towns, Taft's entrepreneurs developed businesses to sell necessities and offer services. Within a decade of its founding, Taft had 37 businesses—groceries, hardware stores, barber shops, two hotels, cotton gins, a bakery, a meat market, and a two-story brick depot.³⁵ A white Muskogee businessman, John Coulter, operated a bank in Taft between 1906 and 1928.³⁶ Two newspapers, the *Enterprise* and the *Tribune*, informed the community of current events and feature stories.³⁷

Religious, social, and educational settings were opportunities for connection and uplift. The African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church was one of the first religious institutions in Taft. Creek Freedman Phillis Manuel donated the land from her allotment for the purpose. The Star Light Masonic Lodge was established first in Twine in 1904, and it moved to Taft a few months later to engage the community.³⁸ As the twentieth century continued, schools and state institutions became increasingly central to the Taft economy, providing educational and communal opportunities.

State Institutions and Local Schools in Taft

After the town's founding, Taft's residents worked to create educational opportunities for the community's young people. Some residents joined the Negro Press Association for the Oklahoma and Indian Territories organized in Guthrie in 1906, encouraging exchanges on current events and race issues. The group exerted its support for full and equal rights for Black students in Oklahoma. That year, Warren E. Glenn established the Halochee Industrial Institute (**Figure 4**).³⁹ North of the original town plat, the institute's curriculum included literature and practical classes like blacksmithing, wheelwrighting, sewing, and dressmaking. The institute had a small broom factory

³⁰ Gray, "Taft," 432.

³¹ Gray, "Taft," 433, 446.

³² Gray, "Taft," 435.

³³ Listed in the NRHP in 1984. See Bryan Brown, "Historic Local Government Buildings in Oklahoma's All-Black Towns," Oklahoma Historical Society (1984).

³⁴ *Taft Enterprise*, "The Character Peculiar to the Taft Negroes," April 18, 1911, 1.

³⁵ O'Dell, "Taft"; *Taft Enterprise*, "The Character Peculiar".

³⁶ Gray, "Taft."

³⁷ O'Dell, "Taft."

³⁸ O'Dell, "Taft."

³⁹ Gray, "Taft."

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in 1907.⁴⁰ The institute's presence sparked a building boom and local real estate prices increased beginning in 1906.⁴¹

Taft's citizens benefited from the placement of multiple state institutions at the town's fringes. The State of Oklahoma purchased the Halochee Industrial Institute campus in 1909 and soon located the Deaf, Blind and Orphans Institute (DB&O), one of several segregated state institutions, at the property.⁴² That September, it opened north of Taft to serve Oklahoma's Black youth. The Oklahoma legislature appropriated \$35,000 to fund the construction, staff salaries, and maintenance. Stephen Douglas Russell was the first superintendent.⁴³ Students were schooled in grammar with classes on gardening, farming, cooking, sewing, shoe-cobbling, carpentry, and harness-making.⁴⁴ By 1910, the campus had a three-story brick building and a two-and-one-half-story wood-frame building for manual training and home economics courses.⁴⁵ This focus on vocational education reflected Black educator Booker T. Washington's philosophy, which espoused hands-on trades education for Black youth and underpinned prominent schools like the Tuskegee and Hampton institutes.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, local residents were forming a public school system of their own. By 1908, Taft citizens had their own public school district, Independent School District Number 17 (School District).⁴⁷ That year, the School District issued a call for the construction of a brick building east of town, likely the first local public school, the W. T. Vernon School.⁴⁸ The town's growing population, which swelled from 352 in 1910 to 553 in 1920, may have necessitated the construction of a new school.⁴⁹ A school campus in the center of Taft later called the Moton School Campus, was developed in 1925. This location would be the nucleus of public education in Taft for much of the twentieth century.

The State of Oklahoma built two more segregated state institutions at Taft. By 1917, the State Training School for Negro Girls (State Training School) had opened on the Deaf, Blind and Orphans Institute campus (**Figure 5**).⁵⁰ The school was fundamentally a correctional institution for "delinquent" girls that the State committed to the facility. In the late 1930s, the Deaf, Blind, and Orphans Institute and the State Training School students attended high school together but had separate elementary school programs.⁵¹ In 1934, Oklahoma established the State Hospital for the

⁴⁰ Gray, "Taft"; Muskogee County Clerk, College Heights Addition, Taft, Muskogee, February, 1907.

⁴¹ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "City of Taft on Eve of Great Big Boom," March 13, 1907, 3.

⁴² Gray, "Taft," 440-441.

⁴³ E. D. Cameron, *Third Biennial Report of the Department of Public Instruction* (State Board of Education Oklahoma, 1910), 273, 289.

⁴⁴ Cameron, *Third Biennial Report*, 289-290.

⁴⁵ Cameron, *Third Biennial Report*, 289.

⁴⁶ Arthur Norman, "A New Approach to Negro Education," *The Journal of Negro Education*, Volume 30, No. 1 (Winter, 1961): 38.

⁴⁷ E. D. Cameron, *Second Biennial Report of the Department of Public Instruction* (State Board of Education Oklahoma, 1908); *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "To Contractors," August 18, 1908, 4.

⁴⁸ *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "To Contractors"; O'Dell, "Taft."

⁴⁹ Oklahoma Department of Commerce, "Population for State, Counties, Cities and Towns of Oklahoma: 1890-2010," 2011.

⁵⁰ Oklahoma Planning and Resources Board, *A Ten-Year Plan for the State Penal and Correctional System in Oklahoma*, Oklahoma Department of Libraries via Oklahoma Digital Prairie, January 1939.

⁵¹ Oklahoma Planning and Resources Board, *A Ten-Year Plan*, 1939.

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Negro Insane, for the mentally ill, south and west of Taft (**Figure 6**)⁵² By 1937, Taft's three state institutions, were known collectively as the Consolidated Negro Institutions of Oklahoma.⁵³ Around 1953, the State of Oklahoma changed the State Hospital's name to Taft State Hospital and separated its administration from that of the Consolidated Negro Institutions.⁵⁴ The Deaf, Blind and Orphans Institute and the State Training School continued to operate jointly as the Consolidated Negro Institutions until 1961, when the institute ceased operations.⁵⁵ These state facilities employed Taft residents when most All-Black Towns were experiencing population declines—Taft's population rose from 690 in 1930 to 772 in 1940.⁵⁶ In multiple cases, business managers and administrators at the state institutions later had careers in Taft's school district.⁵⁷ Work experience at the institutions helped hone professionals for jobs at Taft's public schools.

Public Education for Black Students in Oklahoma, 1907–1974

Taft's public school system formed within the statewide context of legally mandated segregation at educational facilities. The funding and administrative training that Taft's state institutions offered combined with the town's status as a Black-majority community created an unusual educational environment for Taft's students during the Jim Crow era. The majority Black population of Taft's school district meant that its public schools could operate autonomously with the potential for a better quality of education than that afforded to Black students in Oklahoma's white-majority school districts. At the same time, Taft public schools benefited from philanthropic programs intended to alleviate some of the dire effects of segregated education in the South. In the latter half of the twentieth century, some statewide patterns of public school integration—or lack thereof—would be mirrored in Taft.

Oklahoma Statehood and Separate School Laws

Oklahoma's 1907 constitution enshrined segregation in law from the state's earliest days. Article XIII, Section 3 proclaimed:

Separate schools for white and colored children with like accommodations shall be provided by the legislature and impartially maintained. The term 'colored children' as used in this section shall be construed to mean children of African descent. The term 'white children' shall include all other children.⁵⁸

⁵² O'Dell, "Taft."

⁵³ *Okfuskee County News*, "McCormick to Study Program," September 3, 1937, 6.

⁵⁴ Oliver Hodge, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1952–1953, Bulletin No. 109-B, 1952; Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1953–1954, Bulletin No. 109-C, 1953.

⁵⁵ Oliver Hodge, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1961–1962, Bulletin No. 109-K, 1961; Cathy Spaulding, "Remembrances Slated for Fort Gibson, Taft," *Muskogee Phoenix*, May 25, 2017.

⁵⁶ Oklahoma Department of Commerce, "Population for State, Counties, Cities and Towns of Oklahoma: 1890–2010".

⁵⁷ Oliver Hodge, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1960–1961, Bulletin No. 109-J, 1960; Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1967–1968, Bulletin No. 109-Q, 1967; Marilyn Leader, "Eddie Warrior, Steel Belted Education Ambassador," *McIntosh County Democrat*, March 29, 2012, A1; *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "R. L. Hudson Resigns Taft School Position," March 3, 1961, 5.

⁵⁸ Leonard B. Cayton, "A History of Black Public Education in Oklahoma" (PhD Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1977), Connecting Repositories, 37.

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Laws passed shortly after statehood reinforced segregated education. This legislation mandated the complete segregation of facilities for Black and white students at private and public institutions and prevented teachers from working at institutions that enrolled both Black and white students.⁵⁹

The new State of Oklahoma enacted legislation that allowed counties to organize school districts, as had occurred in Taft.⁶⁰ In 1908, the former Indian Territory had 2,200 school districts in 41 counties, and the former Oklahoma Territory had 3,441 school districts in 34 counties.⁶¹ The State structured a school system so that the majority race in each school district ran the school board that governed the district. Each county was responsible for maintaining at least one “separate” school for the minority race or for organizing the minority to attend a segregated school in a nearby district.⁶² Most separate schools were for Black students, and the term became synonymous with Black-majority schools in Oklahoma.⁶³ A tax levied on property in the school district supported the majority school, while a tax levied on property in the county, initially capped at one mill,⁶⁴ funded the separate school.⁶⁵

Segregated Education in Oklahoma

Although the State raised the county tax that funded separate schools to 2 mills in 1921, this scant funding was insufficient to equip buildings with appropriate facilities or adequately compensate teachers.⁶⁶ Many separate schools lacked funding for necessities like desks and stoves for heat, leading a state superintendent’s report to call them “unfit for human occupancy.”⁶⁷ School districts with large numbers of separate schools did not have funds for adequate buildings and teacher salaries were docked or the school year shortened to compensate for these shortages.⁶⁸ The majority of separate schools served Black students, who overwhelmingly suffered the consequences of this inequitable distribution of capital. During the 1927–1928 school year, Oklahoma had 539 separate schools with 43,740 Black pupils and only 21 separate schools for 676 White students. Muskogee County had 30 Black schools for 5,156 students.⁶⁹ That year, 69 school districts across Oklahoma, including Taft’s, had schools for Black students controlled by Black school boards.⁷⁰ These school districts’ ability to levy a property tax on district residents gave these communities the rare capacity to raise funds and equip schools more appropriately.

Philanthropy and Advocacy

Philanthropic organizations sought to remedy the dire conditions that legally mandated school segregation created. Between 1917 and 1932, many schools benefited from the Julius Rosenwald

⁵⁹ Cayton, “A History of Black Public Education,” 42–43.

⁶⁰ Cameron, *Second Biennial Report*, 72.

⁶¹ Cameron, *Second Biennial Report*, 72–73.

⁶² Cynthia J. Savage, “The Julius Rosenwald Fund: Northern Philanthropy in Oklahoma’s Separate Schools,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume 77, No. 1 (Spring, 1999): 5.

⁶³ Cayton, “A History of Black Public Education,” 43; Savage, “The Julius Rosenwald Fund,” 5.

⁶⁴ Millage is a tax on property that is calculated in mills per dollar. One mill equals one tenth of one cent, or one-thousandth of a dollar. Millage differs by jurisdiction and is set by each school district to fund its operation.

⁶⁵ Savage, “The Julius Rosenwald Fund,” 5.

⁶⁶ Savage, “The Julius Rosenwald Fund,” 5.

⁶⁷ John Vaughan, *Twelfth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Oklahoma Board of Education via Oklahoma Digital Prairie, 1928), 71.

⁶⁸ Vaughan, *Twelfth Biennial Report*, 68.

⁶⁹ Vaughan, *Twelfth Biennial Report*, 66.

⁷⁰ Vaughan, *Twelfth Biennial Report*, 64–65.

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Fund. The fund primarily aided school construction for Black students in 15 states, including Oklahoma, which began receiving Rosenwald Fund disbursements in 1920.⁷¹ More than 150 Rosenwald schools were constructed in Oklahoma during the program's operation. Starting in 1928, the fund also financed libraries and transportation for Black students to attend school. The fund issued one-third of the cost of books for a library and paid for shipping, and the local community and public-school fund was responsible for the remainder. The program developed more than 60 libraries in Oklahoma elementary and high schools.⁷² Oklahoma's Black schools also benefited from the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, which subsidized teacher and supervisor pay for Black schools in rural areas.⁷³ The John F. Slater Fund funded high school developments known as County Training Schools, intended to prepare teachers to instruct rural Black pupils.⁷⁴

Oklahoma's Black educators organized efforts to counter the inequities that the segregated education system imposed on Black students. The Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers (OANT) was formed in 1907 when 67 educators gathered at Langston's Colored Agricultural and Normal University. The OANT encouraged leadership among Black educators, gathered information on the condition of Black education in the state, offered teacher training, and lobbied for the revision of the Oklahoma constitution to prompt greater and equitable funding for separate schools. This last effort ultimately led to an increase in the millage levied for Black schools, expanding appropriations for separate schools by \$18 million.⁷⁵ Following the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (Brown v. Board of Education)* decision, the OANT created a program to safeguard opportunities for Black teachers anticipating challenges gaining employment due to impending school integration. The organization merged with the Oklahoma Education Association in 1955 and disbanded in 1958.⁷⁶

Brown v. Board of Education and Its Aftermath

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled the "separate but equal" principle underpinning segregated education unconstitutional in its 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*, decision, paving the way for public school integration. In response to this mandate for integration, in January 1955, the Oklahoma legislature passed a resolution to end the county tax levy for separate schools and consolidated school taxes in a common fund to be disbursed based on school attendance. Later that year, with the governor's support, Oklahoma voters approved the Better Schools Amendment to the state constitution.

Despite these positive changes, school segregation in Oklahoma persisted. Rural districts in particular resisted pressure to integrate; most of the 273 schools that did so during the 1955–1956 school district were in cities. Some school districts, particularly outside of urban areas, did not have biracial populations, so schools remained practically segregated despite the mandate for integration.⁷⁷ The approximately 12 high schools that existed in All-Black Towns in 1956

⁷¹ Savage, "The Julius Rosenwald Fund," 7–8, 12.

⁷² Savage, "The Julius Rosenwald Fund," 13–14.

⁷³ Vaughan, *Twelfth Biennial Report*, 35.

⁷⁴ Vaughan, *Twelfth Biennial Report*, 36.

⁷⁵ Cayton, "A History of Black Public Education"; Melvin R. Todd, "Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers," in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 2024.

⁷⁶ Todd, "Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers."

⁷⁷ Eunice S. Newton and Earle H. West, "The Progress of the Negro in Elementary and Secondary Education," *The Journal of Negro Education*, Volume 32, No. 4 (Autumn, 1963): 472.

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continued to serve only Black students that year.⁷⁸ Post–World War II building programs at Oklahoma’s Black high schools attested both to the continuation of segregation in education and the postwar rise in the number of Black students completing high school.⁷⁹ In parts of southeast Oklahoma, new Black high schools were planned and constructed and others renovated or modernized even after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.⁸⁰ The Oklahoma School Code continued to mandate separate schools into the 1960s.⁸¹ In 1961, only 24 percent (n=9,806) of Oklahoma’s Black school-age population were enrolled in an integrated school.⁸² Although this was better than the average in the South—by the 1960–1961 school year, just more than 7 percent of Black public school children in 17 southern states and Washington, D.C., attended school with white children—it was not until the 1972 creation of a cross-district busing plan that the true beginning of the end of legalized segregation occurred in Oklahoma’s public schools.⁸³

Taft’s Moton School Campus

The Taft Independent School District and Early Schools

After statehood, Taft joined hundreds of communities across Oklahoma, establishing a school district and broadening educational opportunities for the local youth. The Taft School District administered its local schools.⁸⁴ Because a preponderance of the local school-age population was Black, its public schools had majority status and the district could enjoy funding from taxes levied on property that fell within the district instead of subsisting on meager county financial support as “separate” schools. This status meant that Black professionals administered the district and Black community members served on the school board, giving Taft residents full agency over the education of its youth. In 1908, A. Harrison served as superintendent of Taft schools, which had 4 grade-school teachers and a student population of 200 at the time.⁸⁵ The ability to autonomously operate the local school district offered unusual control of educating its children in an era of mandated school segregation.

The community immediately prioritized constructing a school building. The drive to raise funds earmarked for schools reflected the high value Taft’s residents gave to educating their youth. Architects H. H. Brickley and John Farrell of Muskogee issued a call for contractors to bid on constructing an eight-room brick school to be situated 1.5 miles east of downtown Taft.⁸⁶ The School District implemented an aggressive tax, displaying its commitment to public education, that may have helped fund the construction. In January 1909, the School District levied 27 mills

⁷⁸ Thelma D. Perry and Julius H. Hughes, “Educational Desegregation in Oklahoma,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Volume 25, No. 3 (Summer, 1956): 309.

⁷⁹ Newton and West, “The Progress of the Negro in Elementary and Secondary Education,” 476.

⁸⁰ Perry and Hughes, “Educational Desegregation in Oklahoma,” 309.

⁸¹ Dianna Everett, “Better Schools Amendment,” in *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 2024.

⁸² Newton and West, “The Progress of the Negro in Elementary and Secondary Education,” 473.

⁸³ Newton and West, “The Progress of the Negro in Elementary and Secondary Education,” 473; Oklahoma Historical Society, *Segregation in Schools*, 2024.

⁸⁴ Cameron, *Second Biennial Report; Muskogee Times-Democrat*, “To Contractors.”

⁸⁵ Cameron, *Second Biennial Report*, 179.

⁸⁶ *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, “To Contractors.”

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on each dollar of taxable property, compared to nearby the Muskogee City School District 7-mill levy.⁸⁷ The county appropriated an additional \$529.25 to the School District that year.⁸⁸

Taft's first school, the W. T. Vernon School, opened sometime between 1908 and 1910, likely in the 8-room brick schoolhouse.⁸⁹ On a hill in the Bridges Mountain View Addition, the school taught both elementary and high school students.⁹⁰ It was named for William Tecumseh Vernon, an A.M.E. minister, an educator, and a Register of the U.S. Treasury—the highest governmental post occupied by a Black man at the time of his 1906 appointment. Naming the school for Vernon evoked community aspirations for the next generation.⁹¹ From its earliest days, the school was also a social hub. It was the site of a 1910 Emancipation Proclamation celebration for Taft.⁹² The Vernon basketball team competed against other Muskogee County schools.⁹³ The Vernon School closed in 1925, when a new school was built.⁹⁴ The School District also operated an elementary school in the Blackjack community from at least 1936 until around 1950.⁹⁵ The community was about three miles northeast of Taft and also had a church and cemetery.⁹⁶ High school students from the community attended school in Taft.⁹⁷

Moton School Campus Development

In 1925, the Taft School District began developing the Moton School Campus on a multiple-acre plot north of the intersection of Seminole and Walnut Streets, just west of the town center. Coinciding with this move, the school district was renamed in honor of Dr. Robert Russa Moton, the second president of Alabama's renowned Tuskegee Institute.⁹⁸ This continued the local tradition of naming educational facilities after prominent Black educators. Construction of the new, centrally located building marked the creation of the campus that housed the only local public high school from 1925 until the 1970s and remained the administrative heart of the school district, which also became known as Moton Independent School District 17 (Moton School District) until

⁸⁷ *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "To Review Tax Levy Here," January 16, 1909, 1.

⁸⁸ *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "County School Money," January 25, 1909, 7.

⁸⁹ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Big Celebration among Colored People of Taft," January 4, 1910, 2; O'Dell, "Taft."

⁹⁰ Personal communication between Mayor Elsie Ceasar, Taft, OK, and Jenya Green, Stantec Consulting Services, regarding schools in Taft, Oklahoma, November 19, 2024; Muskogee County Clerk, Bridges Mountain View Addition, Taft, Muskogee, Oklahoma, March 3, 1908.

⁹¹ Gray, "Taft," 441; Spencer Research Library Archival Collections, William Tecumseh Vernon, 1871–1944, 2024.

⁹² *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Big Celebration."

⁹³ *Black Dispatch*, "Boynton Notes," January 25, 1923, 3.

⁹⁴ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Contract Let at Taft on \$22,980 School Building," November 27, 1958, 2.

⁹⁵ *Black Dispatch*, "Taft High School Begins Year's Work," September 24, 1936, 5; *Muskogee Morning News*, "Black Jack (17) School News," February 2, 1950, 4; *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "School District is Sued by Head of Lumber Firm," March 28, 1940, 6; personal communication between Mayor Elsie Ceasar and Jenya Green, 2024.

⁹⁶ Keith D. Biglow Funeral Directors Inc., Roy Lee Johnson, 2019; Find A Grave, Blackjack Cemetery, 97979, 2000; Google Maps, Excerpt of Muskogee County, Oklahoma, 2024.

⁹⁷ Personal communication between Mayor Elsie Ceasar and Jenya Green, 2024.

⁹⁸ Gray, "Taft," 443; Tuskegee University, Dr. Robert Russa Moton, 2024.

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the 1990s.⁹⁹ Its central location made the campus, along with several churches, an important social hub for residents for the duration of the twentieth century.

The original 1925 Moton School was a low-slung single-story brick building with modest Mission Revival detailing including a flat roof with an understated parapet (**Figure 7**). An entry vestibule centered on the façade had an arched entrance with two flanking arched windows.¹⁰⁰ The building faced Seminole Street and housed the elementary school in its east wing, the high school in its west wing, and a cafeteria in the center volume.¹⁰¹

The new campus and its school reflected ideals of the Progressive Education Movement, which were embodied in school campuses nationally between 1910 and 1933. School buildings of the period reflected the movement's focus on participatory and child-centered education, moving away from the monumental toward the functional and focusing on greater integration between indoors and outdoors. Like the new Moton School, many had period-eclectic detailing and were set back from the road on an undeveloped campus to allow room for later expansion. Increased attention to meeting community needs encouraged incorporation of gathering places such as auditoriums and outdoor spaces into the campus.¹⁰² The Moton School's central cafeteria and large grounds invited this community-centered function.

The 1925 Moton School remained the primary building at the Moton School Campus until after World War II and the community invested in its upkeep and operation. Paid for with \$40 in Rosenwald Funds, \$40 in public funds, and \$40 in community funds, the elementary school received a collection of books known as a Rosenwald Library during the 1929–1930 school year.¹⁰³ Taft residents supported school functioning by boarding teachers who came from elsewhere.¹⁰⁴ The district board of education paid for ongoing building maintenance—roof repairs, window painting, and an order for replacement front exterior doors in 1936.¹⁰⁵ In 1949, the school was enlarged with the addition of a rear annex and a detached shop for manual training education

⁹⁹ Oklahoma Department of Education, *Annexations, Consolidations and Changes, 1977–2012*, Oklahoma Department of Libraries via Oklahoma Digital Prairie (2012).

¹⁰⁰ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, School Yearbooks, 1900–2016, Ancestry.com, 1951; Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, School Yearbooks, 1900–2016, Ancestry.com, 1956.

¹⁰¹ Elsie Ceasar, Mayor Elsie Ceasar, September 17, 2024, interviewed by Jenya Green and Robin Miller, Stantec Consulting Services.

¹⁰² Sapphos Environmental, *Los Angeles Unified School District Historic Context Statement, 1870–1969*, SurveyLA: Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey, Citywide Historic Context Statement Series, (City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources, 2014), 29–39.

¹⁰³ John Vaughan, *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Oklahoma Board of Education via Oklahoma Digital Prairie, 1930), 83.

¹⁰⁴ Ceasar, 2024; U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Inhabitants, District 092, Taft Ward 1, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, National Archives and Records Administration, Ancestry, 1910, Manuscript Census; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Inhabitants, Enumeration District 51–61, Taft, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, Ancestry, National Archives and Records Administration, 1940, Manuscript Census; Inhabitants, Enumeration District 51–59, Taft, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, Ancestry, National Archives and Records Administration, 1950, Manuscript Census.

¹⁰⁵ *Black Dispatch*, “Taft High School.”

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was constructed to its west (**Figure 8**).¹⁰⁶ By 1938, an auxiliary building was built east of the elementary school.¹⁰⁷ It appears to have been in use as a double garage by 1952 based on the two driveways leading to its south elevation visible on an aerial photograph from that year (**Figure 9**).¹⁰⁸ In 1957, a fire destroyed the double garage, which protected two school buses.¹⁰⁹ The building was replaced between 1964 and 1969.¹¹⁰

With three State-sponsored institutions for Black children in Taft, a community experienced in administering programs for Black youth surrounded the Moton School. These institutions and their administrative professionals and educators developed interconnected relationships with the Moton School District. By 1950, children at the State Training School who continued courses after tenth grade did so at the Taft public high school. Similarly, children at the Deaf, Blind and Orphans Institute deemed physically capable of participating were transported by bus to the Taft public school campus.¹¹¹ In 1951, the first-through-ninth-grade program at the State Training School was formally affiliated with the Taft public school system.¹¹² After the Deaf, Blind and Orphans Institute closure in 1961, the Moton School District began administration of the State Girls' Training Elementary School.¹¹³

After several decades of development, Moton School District officials became the target of improper behavior allegations in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1940, Oklahoma's Black newspaper the *Black Dispatch* reported that three school board members and the district superintendent were charged with embezzling about \$700 in school funds; the accused pleaded not guilty.¹¹⁴ In 1954, five school board members resigned after the president and district superintendent were charged with mishandling funds when a Taft resident petitioned the district court to launch a grand jury investigation into school district activities.¹¹⁵ These board members were replaced and the school district could again turn its attention to campus improvements.¹¹⁶

A new period of campus construction began in 1958 with the erection of Moton High School. Moton High School was part of a wave of high schools for Black students in Oklahoma built or updated in the aftermath of World War II and *Brown v. Board of Education*.¹¹⁷ Construction of the new facility in part reflected the nationwide, postwar uptick in Black students attending and completing high school.¹¹⁸ Rising enrollment in the Moton School District likely also resulted

¹⁰⁶ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1951; *Muskogee Morning News*, "News from Taft," August 25, 1949, 7; *Muskogee Morning News*, "Community News Briefs," December 1, 1949, 1.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, February 5, 1938, Aerial Photograph.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, 1952.

¹⁰⁹ *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "School Buses, Garage at Taft School Burn," November 9, 1957, 2.

¹¹⁰ Nationwide Environmental Title Research 1969; U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Services Agency 1964.

¹¹¹ Oklahoma Department of Charities and Corrections, *Annual Report of the Department of Charities and Corrections*, Oklahoma Department of Libraries via Oklahoma Digital Prairie, 1950.

¹¹² Oklahoma Department of Charities and Corrections, *Annual Report of the Department of Charities and Corrections*, Oklahoma Department of Libraries via Oklahoma Digital Prairie, 1951.

¹¹³ Oliver Hodge, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1962–1963, Bulletin No. 109-L, 1962.

¹¹⁴ *Black Dispatch*, "Taft School Board Faces Charges of Embezzlement," May 25, 1940, 2.

¹¹⁵ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "New Taft School Board Named," June 11, 1954, 3.

¹¹⁶ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Taft School Resignations are Accepted," June 8, 1954, 1.

¹¹⁷ Perry and Hughes, "Educational Desegregation in Oklahoma." 309.

¹¹⁸ Newton and West, "The Progress of the Negro in Elementary and Secondary Education," 476.

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from partnerships with state-sponsored institutions, necessitating expansion at the Moton School Campus where 405 students were enrolled in 1958.¹¹⁹ Early that year, the Moton School District voted to levy both a 5-mill emergency tax and a 5-mill building fund tax.¹²⁰ Funds raised may have been put to work that November when the district let a contract for \$22,980 to build a new school on the campus. The I. V. Towell Jr. General Construction Company of Tulsa constructed the building, which had four classrooms, two offices, a health room, and 100 student lockers.¹²¹ The school was built south of and perpendicular to the 1925 school, facing Pine Street. The completed building was dedicated as Moton High School in April 1959. It embodied many popular nationwide trends in postwar school construction. These included its Midcentury Modern style, modular design, low-pitched roof, wide overhanging eaves, generous fenestration, and plain finishes.¹²² The building had science, health, mathematics, English, social, office, and storage rooms all equipped with heating, lighting, and ventilation. The high school chorus performed at the dedication and Oklahoma's State High School Inspector attended.¹²³ With the new high school in place, elementary instructors had more room to teach their first through six graders in the 1925 building.¹²⁴

The excitement about the expanded campus was short-lived as a tragedy hit the Moton School District in October 1960. A fire destroyed the 1925 elementary school building, causing an estimated \$50,000 to \$60,000 worth of damage. A lack of fire hydrants stymied firefighter efforts to quell the blaze, forcing them to haul water from the Taft State Hospital, about one-half mile southwest of campus. Faced with this shortage, firefighters focused on and succeeded at saving the newly constructed Moton High School but could not save the elementary school. The adjacent shop building experienced minor damage, including loss of its windows.¹²⁵ In the aftermath of the fire, the Moton School Shop, A.M.E. Church, and First Baptist Church provided substitute classrooms to the town's 140 grade-school students.¹²⁶

Under the stewardship of Moton School District Superintendent E. W. Warrior, a new elementary school building quickly replaced its fire-damaged predecessor. Tulsa-based architects Joe I. Davis and Willard Stone designed the building and the Hale Brothers Construction Company were the contractors (**Photograph 21**).¹²⁷ Underscoring the campus's connection to trends in postwar school building, both the architects and contractor that worked on the elementary school were involved in the construction and expansion of other postwar school campuses throughout Oklahoma.¹²⁸ Construction cost \$50,000 and the finished building had four classrooms, a dressing

¹¹⁹ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Contract Let."

¹²⁰ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Results of School Election Are Filed," March 27, 1958, 12.

¹²¹ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Contract Let."

¹²² Sapphos Environmental, *Los Angeles Unified School District Historic Context Statement, 1870-1969*, 81.

¹²³ *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "New High School Dedication Set Sunday at Taft," April 3, 1959, 13.

¹²⁴ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Blaze Destroys."

¹²⁵ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Blaze Destroys."

¹²⁶ *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "Taft Grade School Burns"; *Oklahoma Eagle*, "Fire Destroys Moton School at Taft," October 13, 1960, 1.

¹²⁷ *Antlers American*, "Contractor is Far Ahead of Work Schedule," June 18, 1964, 2.

¹²⁸ *McIntosh County Democrat*, "Contract Awarded on Negro School," June 13, 1963, 1; *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "New Elementary School Building 'Open House' Scheduled at Warner," February 16, 1962,

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room, office, concession stand, furnishings, and a gymnasium with a capacity of 750.¹²⁹ Like many postwar schools, it was designed to accommodate modular additions once funds could be raised for necessary additional construction.¹³⁰ Only a few months after completion of the elementary school, voters approved a bond to append a two-classroom addition to the high school and a cafeteria adjoining the auditorium to the elementary school.¹³¹ Hale Brothers Construction Company won the contract to erect the concrete-block additions with a \$13,789 bid. The two-classroom addition was to measure 24-by-30 feet and the cafeteria addition, 45-by-30 feet.¹³² The cafeteria was added to the east elevation between 1969 and 1973. During the same period, a blacktop was added to the campus grounds northwest of the elementary school and shop buildings, and an arched gateway embellished the driveway west of the high school.¹³³ A detached gymnasium was built north of the elementary school around 1973 and a freestanding monument sign was placed east of the high school about the same time (**Figure 10**).¹³⁴ After construction of the detached gymnasium, the gymnasium in the elementary school was used as an auditorium.¹³⁵

Integration

As in other parts of Oklahoma, federal mandates for school integration were slow to be realized in Taft. The Moton School District superintendent announced that desegregation would take place during the 1955–1956 school year, but interracial schooling was not an immediate reality in this All-Black Town.¹³⁶ Unlike in many other communities, the Black-majority schools in Moton were not dissolved when busing was introduced in the early 1970s. Instead, the Taft public schools absorbed both Black and white students from the newly integrated Oklahoma Children’s Center, a facility for neglected and dependent children that replaced the State Training School and Taft State Hospital in 1970.¹³⁷ The former Deaf, Blind and Orphans Institute campus became known as the north campus of the Oklahoma Children’s Center and the former State Hospital campus became the south campus (**Figure 11**). The resulting increase in the student population from absorbing students into the Moton School District necessitated increased classroom space. A renovated building on the south campus housed Moton High School, the north campus hosted Moton Elementary School, and the E. W. Warrior Junior High School, named in 1975 for the longtime district superintendent, was in the buildings at the central Moton School Campus.¹³⁸ The majority of students, teachers, and administrators in the Moton School District were Black, but cooperation with the Oklahoma Children’s Center generated some integration with White students,

2; *The Okmulgee County News*, “Beggs,” November 21, 1963, 6; *The Tulsa Tribune*, “Second Disaster Poses Owasso School Crisis,” July 21, 1947, 1.

¹²⁹ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, “\$50,000 Elementary School to Be Dedicated at Taft Today,” August 13, 1961, 2-1.

¹³⁰ Sapphos Environmental, *Los Angeles Unified School District Historic Context Statement, 1870–1969*, 81.

¹³¹ *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, “Taft Voting on School Bond Issues Tuesday,” October 10, 1961, 12; “Construction Starts Monday on Taft High School Building,” April 26, 1962, 3.

¹³² *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, “Construction Starts.”

¹³³ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aerial Photograph, 1969; Aerial Photograph, 1973.

¹³⁴ Caesar, 2024; Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aerial Photograph, 1973; Muskogee County, Oklahoma, 1980, Aerial Photograph.

¹³⁵ Caesar, 2024.

¹³⁶ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, “Taft Teachers Plan Workshop,” August 5, 1955, 8.

¹³⁷ *Daily Oklahoman*, “Taft Hospital Due Consideration,” February 18, 1970, 4; Gray, “Taft,” 444; Doug Hicks, “U.S. Investigating Schools at Taft,” *Tulsa World*, February 15, 1978, 1B.

¹³⁸ Gray, “Taft,” 445; Leader, “Eddie Warrior,” A1.

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teachers, and administrators.¹³⁹ The partnership between the School District and the Oklahoma Children's Center positioned Taft schools to receive operational revenue despite the community's shrinking population.¹⁴⁰

Superintendents, 1958–1974

Two district superintendents compelled campus development between 1958 and 1974. R. L. Hudson had served in this role during the 1943–1944 school year and returned to the position from 1954 through the end of the 1960–1961 school year.¹⁴¹ He oversaw the construction of the Moton High School and Moton Elementary School buildings. During his career, Hudson also served as a superintendent of the Deaf, Blind and Orphans Institute and was a business manager at the Taft State Hospital.¹⁴²

E. W. Warrior, the principal of Moton High School during Hudson's second stint as district superintendent, succeeded Hudson in the role, taking over for the 1961–1962 school year (**Figure 12**).¹⁴³ A graduate of Langston University, Warrior devoted his lengthy career to expanding and enhancing educational opportunities for Black Oklahomans. He was the supervisor of Jeans Teachers in Muskogee County and was the principal of the first Muskogee County Rosenwald School.¹⁴⁴ Like Hudson, Warrior had experience with the state-sponsored institutions at Taft; he was business manager of the Consolidated Negro Institutions in 1947.¹⁴⁵ As superintendent of the Moton School District, he was an influential leader when the colocation of the high school and the elementary school emerged as the Moton School Campus.

Principals, Teachers, and Staff, 1958–1974

Principals of schools in the Moton School District between 1958 and 1974 tended to be well-connected with educational institutions in Taft. These Black educators and administrators oversaw operations on the Moton School Campus and were important leaders in Taft. Women were sometimes principals of the elementary and junior high schools, while the high school principal during this period was always a man. Between 1958 and 1974, Moton High School had three principals: E. W. Warrior (1954–1961), Harold C. Aldridge (1961–1965), and Alexander Springs (1965–at least 1974). The longest-serving junior high school principals during the period were Georgia H. Coleman (1967–1970, **Figure 13**) and E. E. Gamble (1971–1974). Coleman had also previously been principal of Blackjack Elementary.¹⁴⁶ Warrior, Aldridge, and Coleman each served one year as the elementary school's principal. Others in that role included Mrs. Bennie C. Johnson (1963–1970), Booker T. Gracey (1970–1972), and Tanzy B. Lockridge (1972–

¹³⁹ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, School Yearbooks, 1900–2016, Ancestry.com, 1972.

¹⁴⁰ Hicks, "U.S. Investigating," 1B.

¹⁴¹ *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "Hudson Resigns."

¹⁴² *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "Hudson Resigns."

¹⁴³ Hodge, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1961–1962, 1961; *McIntosh County Democrat*, "E. W. Warrior is Called Outstanding Citizen," June 23, 1977, 2.

¹⁴⁴ Leader, "Eddie Warrior," A1; *McIntosh County Democrat*, "E. W. Warrior."

¹⁴⁵ Leader, "Eddie Warrior," A1.

¹⁴⁶ *Muskogee Morning News*, "Black Jack (17)."

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at least 1974).¹⁴⁷ Gracey was also principal of the State Girls' Training Elementary School from 1963 to 1970 (**Table 2**).¹⁴⁸

Many teachers devoted their careers to Taft's youth. Teachers who worked for the Moton School District in both 1956 and 1972 included Aldridge, Coleman, cosmetology teacher Albertine King, math and science instructor Pinchat Reed, second-grade teacher Margaret McIntire, and home economics instructor Captoria Aldridge. Custodians, bus drivers, and clerical workers conducted their jobs to the benefit of local pupils.¹⁴⁹

The number of teachers at all grade levels rose sharply in the district after it absorbed Oklahoma Children's Center students in 1970. The number of high school teachers rose from 11.5 during the 1970–1971 school year to 18 in 1971–1972 and peaked with 21 teachers the following year.¹⁵⁰ Junior high school teachers increased from 6 in 1969–1970 to 16 in 1971–1972, subsequently dropping to 14 the next year.¹⁵¹ The number of elementary teachers increased from 5 in 1969–1970 to 9 the following year, before tapering to 5 in 1973–1974.¹⁵²

Student Body

The student population of the Moton School District generally rose throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The district student population was 200 in 1910.¹⁵³ By 1945, the student population had risen to 320 students.¹⁵⁴ It reached a peak of 436 pupils during the 1952–1953 school year.¹⁵⁵ The Oklahoma Board of Education stopped enumerating school district enrollment after 1954. The student body was made up of local Black students until the absorption of the Oklahoma Children's Center in 1970 led to the enrollment of a minority of White students in Taft schools (**Figure 14**).¹⁵⁶

Curriculum

Schools in the district offered a curriculum that balanced academic coursework with vocational training. Elementary school students attended class by grade level. Academic coursework for

¹⁴⁷ Bennie is the first name of the woman who served in the role of Moton Elementary School principal.

¹⁴⁸ Oklahoma Educational Directories, authored by the state superintendent of education and published by the Oklahoma Department of Education each school year, provide the names of public school district superintendents, principals, and public schools by county. State superintendents for the 1958–1974 period were Oliver Hodge (1958–1967), D. D. Creech (1968–1970), Scott Tuxhorn (1970–1971), and Leslie Fisher (1971–1974). Oklahoma Educational Directories for 1957–1958 to 1974–1975 are available through the Oklahoma Department of Libraries via Oklahoma Digital Prairie.

¹⁴⁹ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1956; *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1972.

¹⁵⁰ Fisher, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1971–1972, 1971; Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1972–1973, 1972; Tuxhorn, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1970–1971, 1970.

¹⁵¹ Creech, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1969–1970, 1969; Fisher, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1971–1972, 1971; Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1972–1973, 1972.

¹⁵² Creech, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1969–1970, 1969; Fisher, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1973–1974, 1973; Tuxhorn, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1970–1971, 1970.

¹⁵³ Cameron, *Third Biennial Report*.

¹⁵⁴ A. L. Crable, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1945–1946, Bulletin No. 108-V, Oklahoma Department of Education, Oklahoma Department of Libraries via Oklahoma Digital Prairie, 1945.

¹⁵⁵ Hodge, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1952–1953, 1952.

¹⁵⁶ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1972.

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junior and high school students included typing, English, language arts, math, science, social science, and geography. The schools had art, music, and physical education classes. Vocational offerings were home economics, plumbing and welding, business, and agriculture.¹⁵⁷

Sports and Activities

Basketball was the primary sport for Moton High School with boys' home games that stirred a night of entertainment for Taft residents. The team seems to have been known as both the Lions and the Panthers between 1945 and 1951, with the latter eventually assuming the role of mascot permanently.¹⁵⁸ The Moton High School Panthers played teams from other Black high schools in Oklahoma, like teams from other All-Black Towns such as Boley, Rentiesville, and Tullahassee. They also competed against separate segregated schools in larger cities like Muskogee and Oklahoma City.¹⁵⁹ The team excelled, particularly when Harold Aldridge was coach during the late 1950s and 1960s (**Figure 15**).¹⁶⁰ Girls participated in basketball and softball teams.¹⁶¹ Other activities at the schools were chorus, marching band, and the 4-H club.¹⁶²

The Moton School Campus as a Community Center

The Moton School Campus attracted Taft's residents as the town's educational core, and it was a community social hub for decades. Along with local churches, the Moton School Campus was a public space where residents gathered for various activities. The campus hosted events for the community like the polio vaccine campaign for inoculations.¹⁶³ School plays and demonstrations by the cosmetology students offered entertainment.¹⁶⁴ Funeral services were held in the auditorium, demonstrating the essential role the campus played at the most personal moments Taft residents experienced.¹⁶⁵

Dissolution of the Moton School District

Over the opposition of Taft residents, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections acquired the north and south campuses of the Oklahoma Children's Center in the 1980s.¹⁶⁶ The south campus was transferred to the Department of Corrections in 1980. Moton High School subsequently relocated

¹⁵⁷ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1972.

¹⁵⁸ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1951; *Muskogee Morning News*, "School News," March 17, 1949, 5; *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "Moton (D.B.O.) Panthers See No Loss of Power in Name Change; Will Meet Manual," September 25, 1945, 6.

¹⁵⁹ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Taft Nips Rentiesville Basketballers, 38 to 43," January 28, 1959, 7; "Late Taft Rally Downs Sand Springs," January 15, 1960, 9; "Taft, Manual Score Tourney Court Victories," January 18, 1963, 9; *Muskogee Morning News*, "School News"; *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, "Taft Rolls On," January 6, 1959, 8.

¹⁶⁰ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Idle Sports Chatter," February 26, 1963, 7.

¹⁶¹ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1956; *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1972; *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Taft Lists Game," June 25, 1961, 16.

¹⁶² Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1956; *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1972.

¹⁶³ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Pharmacists to Have Big Hand in Sabin Oral Drive on Polio," March 5, 1963, 7.

¹⁶⁴ *Muskogee Morning News*, "Juniors, Seniors Stage Class Play," April 22, 1954, 6.

¹⁶⁵ *Muskogee Daily Phoenix and Times-Democrat*, "Kermit Thomas," October 31, 1963, 2.

¹⁶⁶ Oklahoma Department of Corrections, Dr. Eddie Warrior Correctional Center, 2012; Jess Dunn Correctional Center, 2014.

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from the south to the north campus.¹⁶⁷ In anticipation of its acquisition by the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, the high school again moved, this time from the north campus to the central Moton School Campus, in 1983.¹⁶⁸ Taft continued to operate its school district for another eight years. However, without funding, a student body, and resources from the state institutions, the Moton School District was unable to sustain itself, and it was annexed to the Boynton Independent School District No. 4, on August 8, 1991. This ended 66 years of continuous education on the Moton School Campus.¹⁶⁹ However, unlike those of the former state institutions, the Moton School Campus remained activated as a civic and community center in Taft even after the local school system dissolved.

Current Uses

In 1995, the Moton School District conveyed the campus to the City of Taft.¹⁷⁰ There, the Taft City Hall operated in the high school until 2016.¹⁷¹ At that time, Taft City Hall moved to the elementary school. Currently, the high school is used for storage, as is the former shop building. Since 2021, the City of Taft has leased the gymnasium to a Black-owned film studio.¹⁷² Public functions continue on the campus.

Historical Significance, Education

The Moton School Campus Historic District, as the expression of Taft's Moton School District, is significant at the local level under Criterion A, in the area of Education. The Moton School Campus represents the culmination of this All-Black Town's efforts to provide quality public education to its children in an era of systematized school segregation. Of, by, and for Taft's consciously created community, Black professionals administered the district and its elementary, junior, and high schools. Black teachers taught in its schools, which primarily served Black students throughout their years of operation. The Moton School Campus represents expanding educational investment in an All-Black Town during the postwar era and is a testament to the Taft community's commitment to equal educational opportunities for local students. The period of significance extends from 1949, the construction date of the oldest extant campus building, to 1974, the 50-year cutoff guideline, reflecting its continued use as a public school campus through the end of the historic period.

Historical Significance, Ethnic Heritage/Black

The Moton School Campus Historic District is significant at the local level under Criterion A, in the area of Ethnic Heritage/Black for its associations with a defined All-Black Town founded to protect and provide opportunities in the Jim Crow era. The establishment of the Black-led Moton School District permitted local children to be educated relatively free of daily injustices of separate schools that state law mandated during the era of Jim Crow segregation. The Moton School Campus gave the community autonomy for educating its youth. It was and is a central gathering place, an important location for social connections in Taft. The campus is evidence of a distinctive

¹⁶⁷ Ceasar, 2024.

¹⁶⁸ Ceasar, 2024.

¹⁶⁹ Oklahoma Department of Education, *Annexations, Consolidations and Changes, 1977–2012*.

¹⁷⁰ Muskogee County Clerk, Deed Record, 1995.

¹⁷¹ Ceasar, 2024.

¹⁷² Osborne, "Hollywood Filmmaker."

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landscape of racial fulfillment and self-realization, and its construction was made possible by the social movement to establish and maintain All-Black Towns. The period of significance extends from 1949, the construction date of the oldest extant building, to 1974, the 50-year cutoff guideline, reflecting its continued use as a public school campus through the end of the historic period.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: NA

Historic Resources Survey Number: NA

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 5.3 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

Latitude: 35.761916

Longitude: -95.549639

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is the property line of Muskogee County Parcel 510030979 in the southeast quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 19, Township 15N, Range 17E. Legal description: T15N R17E S19 S434 E434 Lot 2.

Boundary Justification

The nominated area is the property historically associated with the Moton School Campus.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Jenya Green, Architectural Historian

Organization: Stantec Consulting Services

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Telephone: 512-831-6160

Date: November 2024

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

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Moton School Campus Historic District

Muskogee County, Oklahoma

Supplemental Documentation

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Moton School Campus

City or Vicinity: Taft

County: Muskogee

State: Oklahoma

Photographer: Robin Miller, Stantec Consulting Services

Date Photographed: September 17, 2024

Photograph	Description	Direction of Camera
0001	Moton School Campus from Seminole Street between Walnut and Pine Streets	Northwest
0002	Moton School Campus from Seminole Street west of Walnut Street	Northeast
0003	Overview of Moton School Campus with Moton Elementary School (foreground), Moton School Gymnasium (background), and grassy area with light fixtures	Northwest
0004	Overview of Moton School Campus showing the historical location of the blacktop (left) and Moton School Gymnasium (right)	North
0005	Moton High School façade	Southwest
0006	Moton High School building plaque	North
0007	Moton High School entrances to the administrative (left) and academic (right) wings	West
0008	Detail of Moton High School windows	Southwest
0009	Moton High School south elevation	North
0010	Moton High School west elevation	East
0011	Oblique of Moton High School west and north elevations	Southeast
0012	Interior of Moton High School east-west corridor with bulletin board and lockers (left) and trophy case (right)	West
0013	Interior of Moton High School north-south corridor	South
0014	Interior of Moton High School classroom	Southwest
0015	Detail of Moton High School classroom chalkboard and pencil sharpener	Southeast
0016	Interior of windows in Moton High School classroom	Northeast
0017	Interior of Moton High School classroom with two chalkboards, and some flooring and some drop ceiling removed	Southwest
0018	Interior of Moton High School Superintendent's Office	Southeast
0019	Moton Elementary School façade	Northwest
0020	Detail of Moton Elementary School entryway	North
0021	Moton Elementary School building plaque	West
0022	Moton Elementary School east elevation	Southwest
0023	Interior of Moton Elementary School classroom	Southeast
0024	Interior of Moton Elementary School auditorium showing bleachers (left) and stage (right)	West
0025	Interior of Moton Elementary School trophy room	Northeast

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0026	Interior of Moton Elementary School cafeteria	Southeast
0027	Moton Elementary School cafeteria service windows	North
0028	Scalloped valance over a window in the Moton Elementary School cafeteria	Southeast
0029	Moton Elementary School kitchen	Northeast
0030	Oblique of Moton School Shop south façade and west elevation	Northeast
0031	Oblique of Moton School Shop east (side) and north (rear) elevations and Moton Elementary School (left)	Southwest
0032	Oblique of Moton School Gymnasium south façade and west elevation	Northeast
0033	Freestanding monument sign	Northwest

Photographs

Photograph 1. Moton School Campus from Seminole Street between Walnut and Pine Streets, facing northwest



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Photograph 2. Moton School Campus from Seminole Street west of Walnut Street, facing northeast



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Photograph 3. Overview of Moton School Campus with Moton Elementary School (foreground), Moton School Gymnasium (background), and grassy area with light fixtures, facing northwest



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Photograph 4. Overview of Moton School Campus showing the historical location of the blacktop (left) and Moton School Gymnasium (right), facing north



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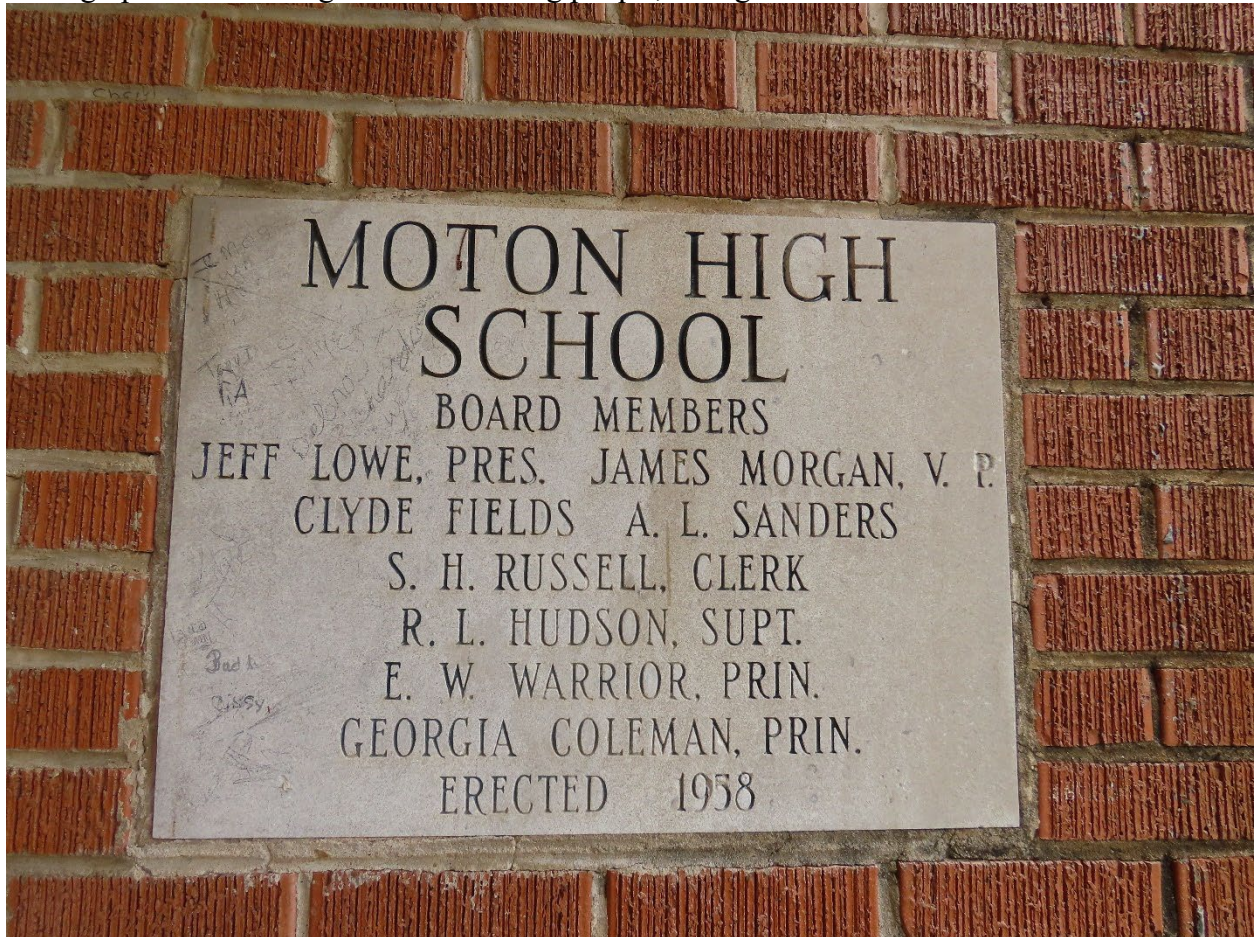
Photograph 5. Moton High School façade, facing southwest



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Photograph 6. Moton High School building plaque, facing north



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Photograph 7. Moton High School entrances to the administrative (left) and academic (right) wings, facing west



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Photograph 8. Detail of Moton High School windows, facing southwest



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Photograph 9. Moton High School south elevation, facing north



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Photograph 10. Moton High School west elevation, facing east



Moton School Campus Historic District

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Photograph 11. Oblique of Moton High School west and north elevations, facing southeast



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Photograph 12. Interior of Moton High School east-west corridor with bulletin board and lockers (left) and trophy case (right), facing west



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Photograph 13. Interior of Moton High School north-south corridor, facing south



Moton School Campus Historic District

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Photograph 14. Interior of Moton High School classroom, facing southwest



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Photograph 15. Detail of Moton High School classroom chalkboard and pencil sharpener, facing southeast



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Photograph 16. Interior of windows in Moton High School classroom, facing northeast



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Photograph 17. Interior of Moton High School classroom with two chalkboards, and some flooring and some drop ceiling removed, facing southwest



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Photograph 18. Interior of Moton High School Superintendent's Office, facing southeast



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Photograph 19. Moton Elementary School façade, facing northwest



Moton School Campus Historic District

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Photograph 20. Detail of Moton Elementary School entryway, facing north



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Photograph 21. Moton Elementary School building plaque, facing west



Moton School Campus Historic District

Muskogee County, Oklahoma

Photograph 22. Moton Elementary School east elevation, facing southwest



Moton School Campus Historic District

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Photograph 23. Interior of Moton Elementary School classroom, facing southeast



Moton School Campus Historic District

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Photograph 24. Interior of Moton Elementary School auditorium showing bleachers (left) and stage (right), facing west



Moton School Campus Historic District

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Photograph 25. Interior of Moton Elementary School trophy room, facing northeast



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Photograph 26. Interior of Moton Elementary School cafeteria, facing southeast



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Photograph 27. Moton Elementary School cafeteria service windows, facing north



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Photograph 28. Scalloped valance over a window in the Moton Elementary School cafeteria, facing southeast



Moton School Campus Historic District

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Photograph 29. Moton Elementary School kitchen, facing northeast



Moton School Campus Historic District

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Photograph 30. Oblique of Moton School Shop south façade and west elevation, facing northeast



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Photograph 31. Oblique of Moton School Shop east (side) and north (rear) elevations, facing southwest. Moton Elementary School is at left



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Photograph 32. Oblique of Moton School Gymnasium south façade and west elevation, facing northeast



Moton School Campus Historic District

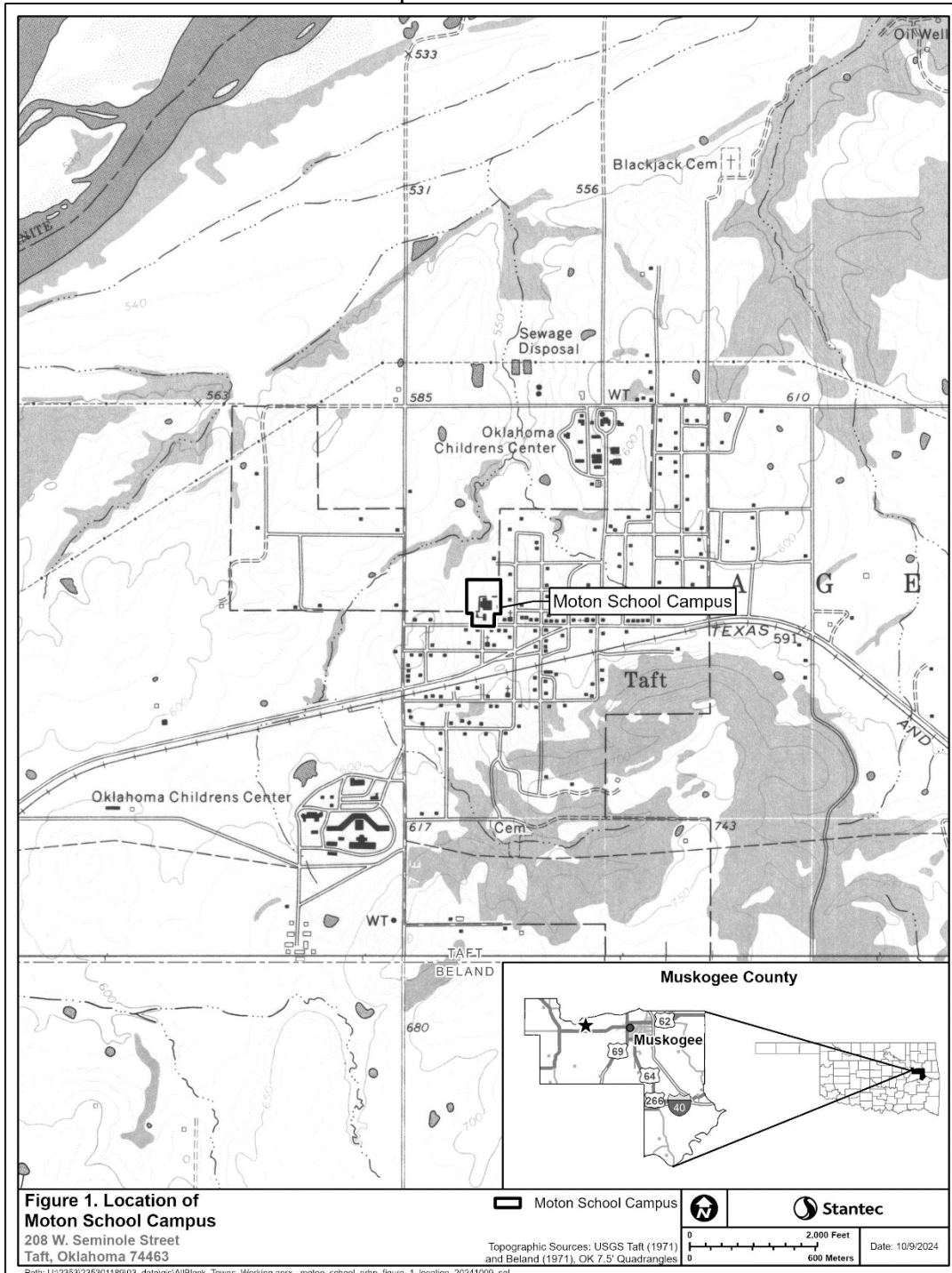
Muskogee County, Oklahoma

Photograph 33. Freestanding monument sign, facing northwest



Maps

Map 1. Location of the Moton School Campus Historic District



Moton School Campus Historic District

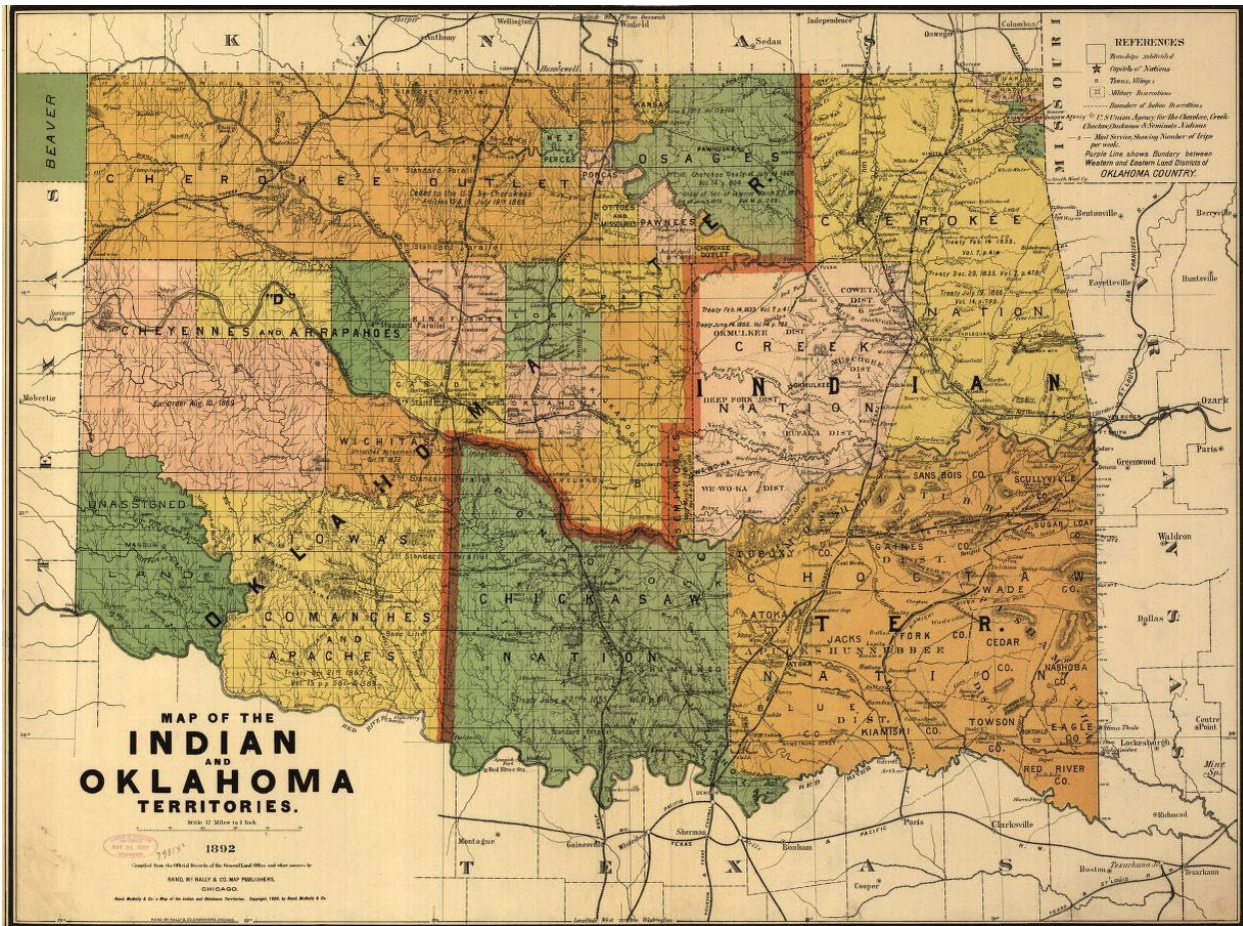
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Map 2. Moton School Campus Historic District bounding coordinates, contributing resources, and photograph locations



Figures

Figure 1. By 1892, numerous railroad routes crisscrossed the Indian and Oklahoma Territories and even more would follow in the next few decades.¹⁷³

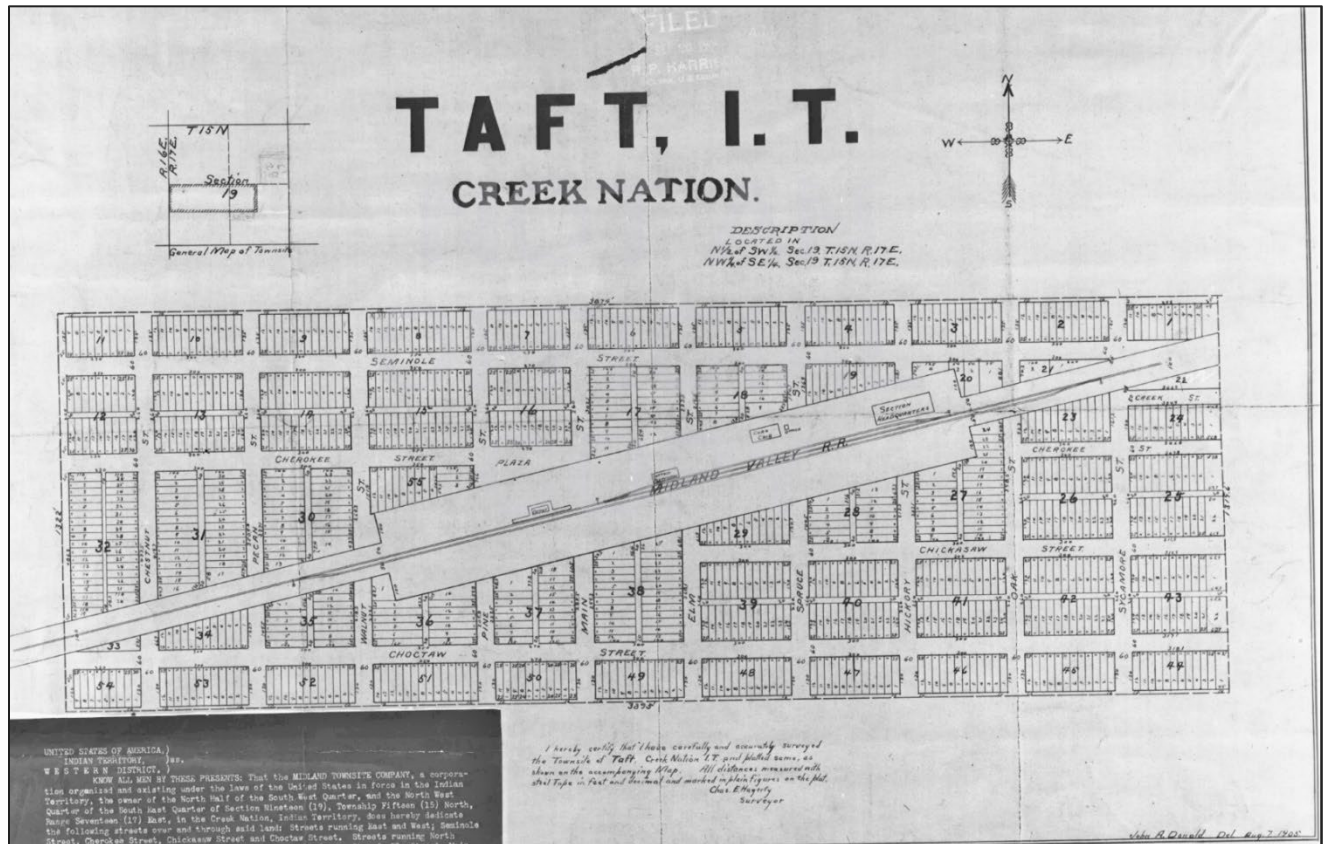


¹⁷³ McNally & Company Rand, *Map of the Indian and Oklahoma Territories* (Library of Congress), 1892.

Moton School Campus Historic District

Muskogee County, Oklahoma

Figure 2. In Taft, the Midland Valley Railroad bisected the town. Besides a depot, the section headquarters, a cotton platform, a corn crib, and an office were along the line.¹⁷⁴

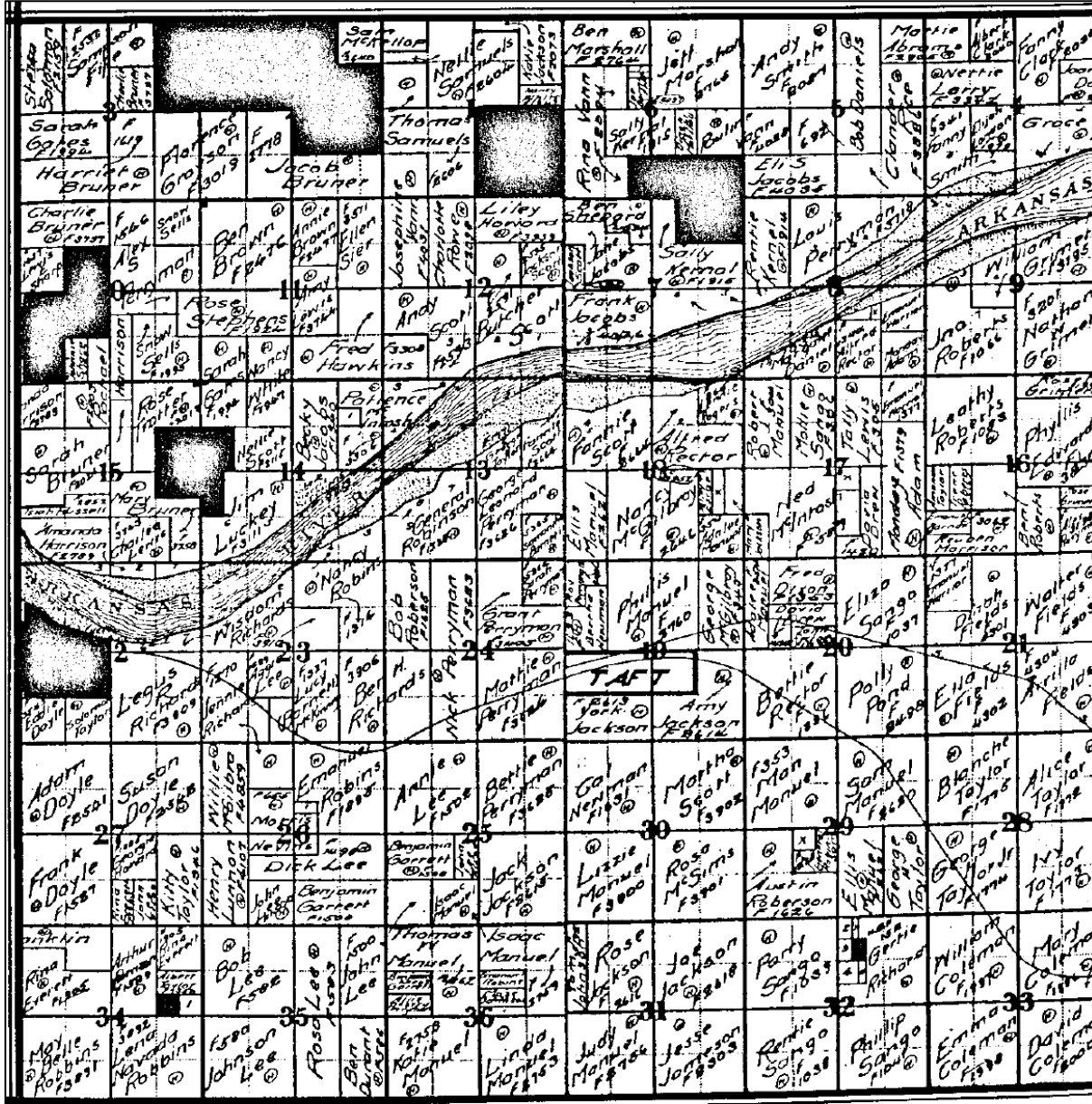


¹⁷⁴ Muskogee County Clerk, Taft, Indian Territory, Muskogee, August 7, 1905.

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Figure 3. In 1910, the names of Black families, indicated with an F, for Freedmen, surrounded Taft, near the center. The shaded quarter sections were the only land White families occupied in the vicinity.¹⁷⁵



¹⁷⁵ Gray, "Taft."

Moton School Campus Historic District

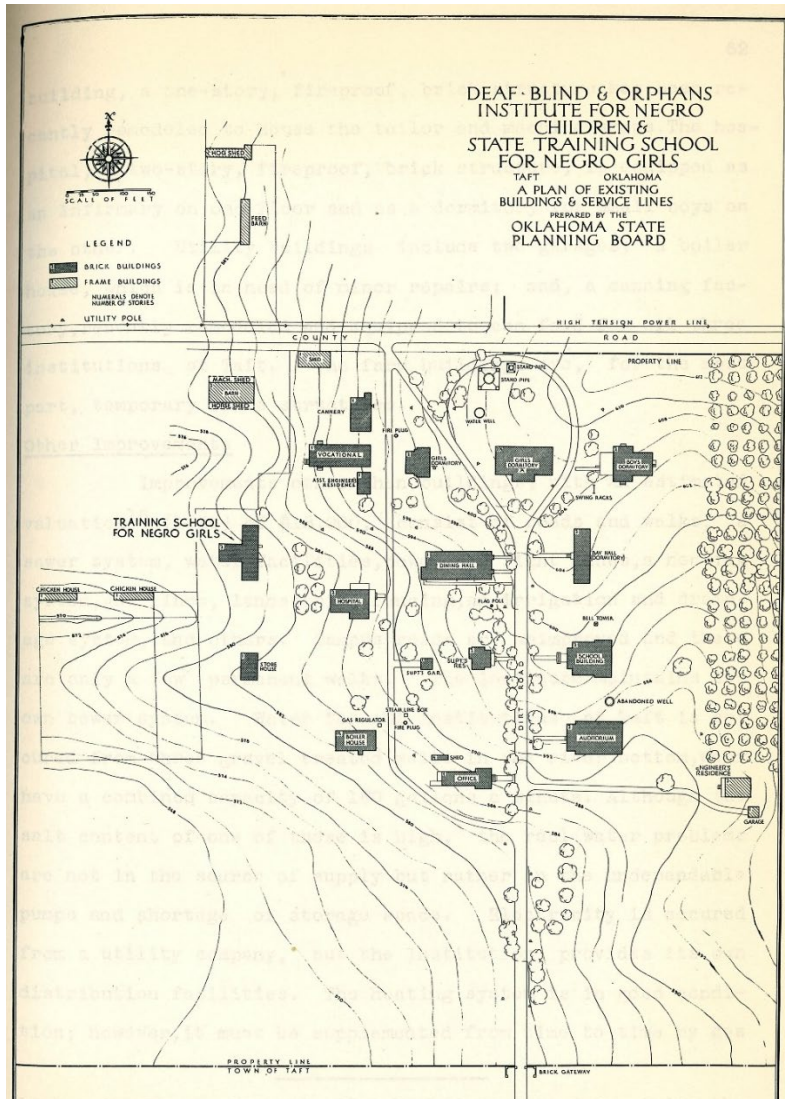
Muskogee County, Oklahoma

Figure 4. The Halochee Industrial Institute Model Department, students, and staff, likely taken between 1906 and 1909.¹⁷⁶



¹⁷⁶ Unknown Photographer, Halochee Industrial Institute, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, Gateway to Oklahoma History, ca. 1907.

Figure 5. A January 1937 map shows the Deaf, Blind and Orphans Institute and State Training School for Negro Girls campus north of Taft.¹⁷⁷

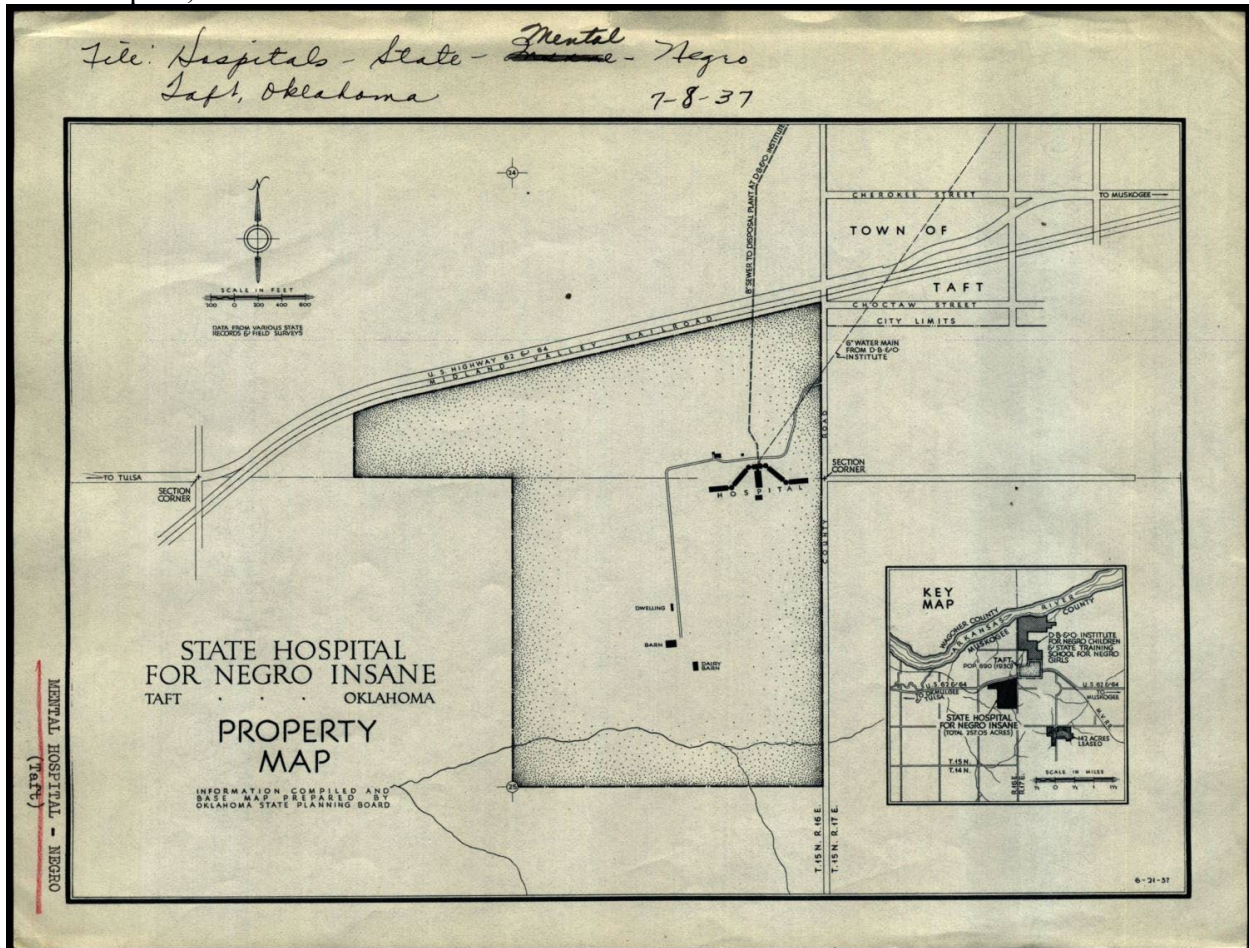


¹⁷⁷ Oklahoma State Planning Board, *State Homes for Orphans and Veterans in Oklahoma: A Preliminary Study of Present Facilities and Conditions*, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, February, 1937.

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Figure 6. A 1937 property map of the State Hospital for Negro Insane, later known as the Taft State Hospital, southwest of Taft.¹⁷⁸

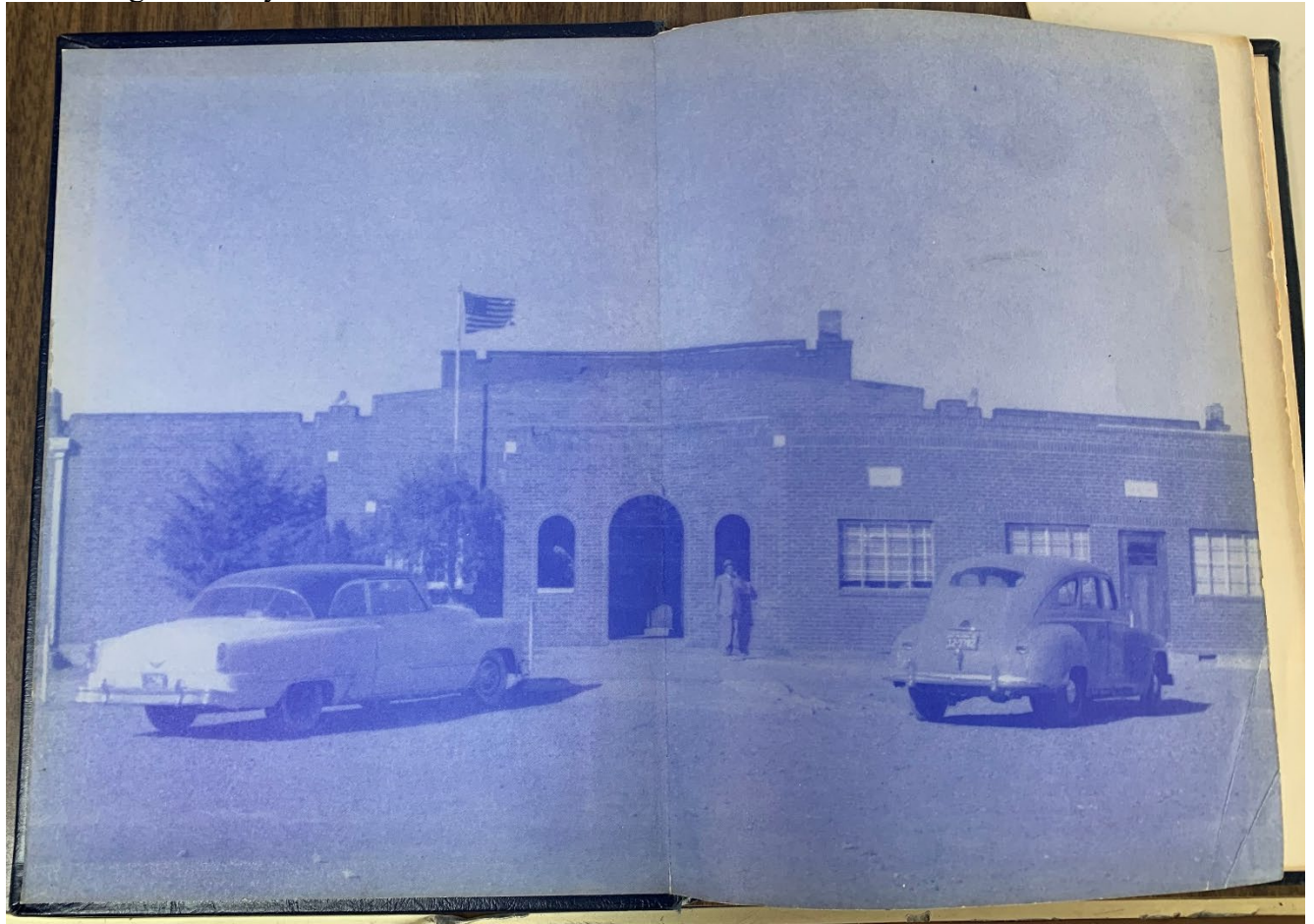


¹⁷⁸ Oklahoma State Planning Board, State Hospital for Negro Insane (Gateway to Oklahoma History), 1937, Map.

Moton School Campus Historic District

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Figure 7. The 1925 Moton School building was featured on the opening endpapers of the 1956 Moton High School yearbook.¹⁷⁹

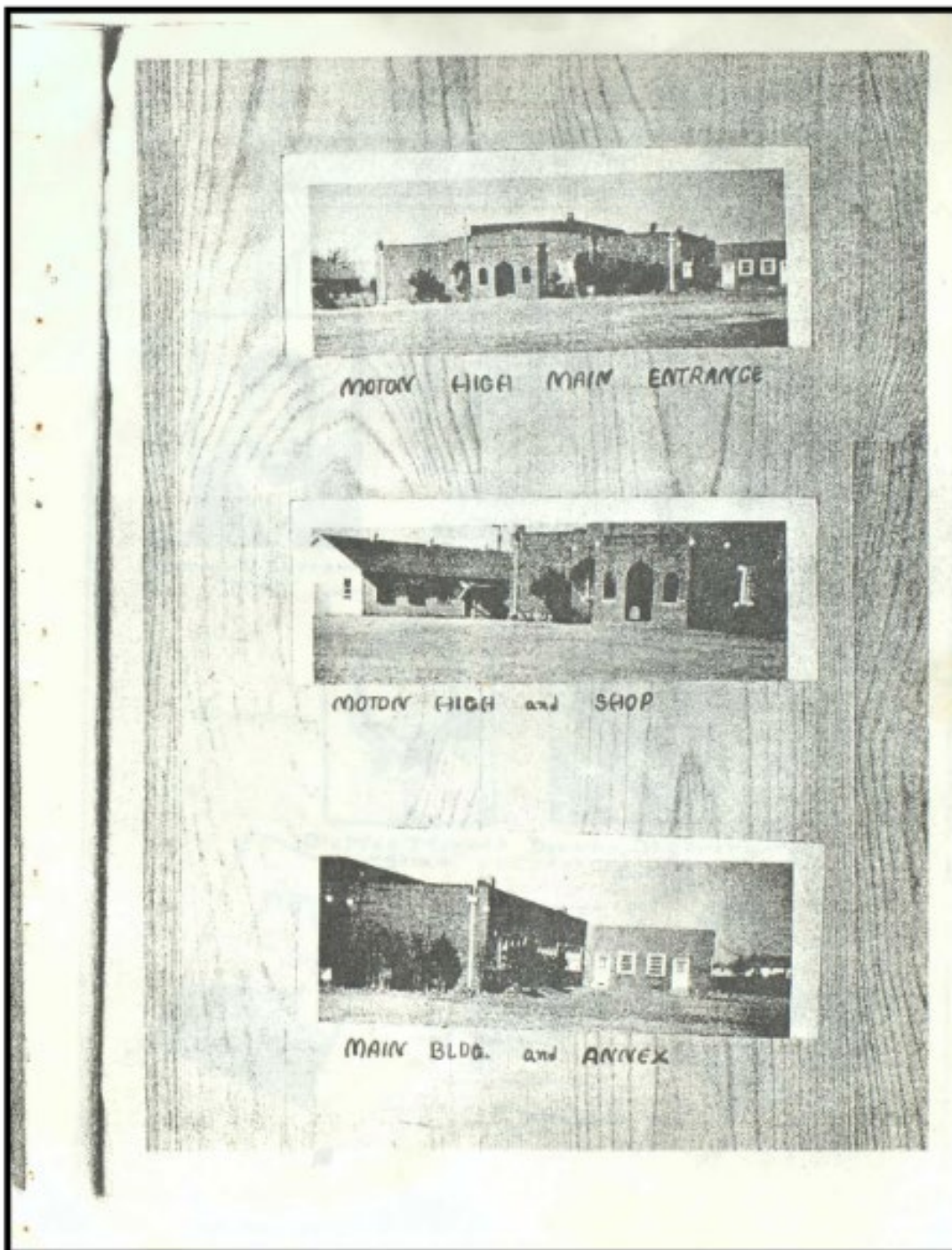


¹⁷⁹ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1956.

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Figure 8. This page from the 1951 Moton High School yearbook shows the 1925 Moton School building (top), the 1949 Moton School Shop (center, at left), and the rear annex (bottom).¹⁸⁰



¹⁸⁰ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1951.

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Figure 9. This excerpt of a 1952 aerial image of Muskogee County, Oklahoma shows the 1925 Moton School with its 1949 rear annex addition. The 1949 Moton School Shop is to the west of the Moton School. A smaller building, likely a double garage for school buses, is to the east of the Moton School.¹⁸¹

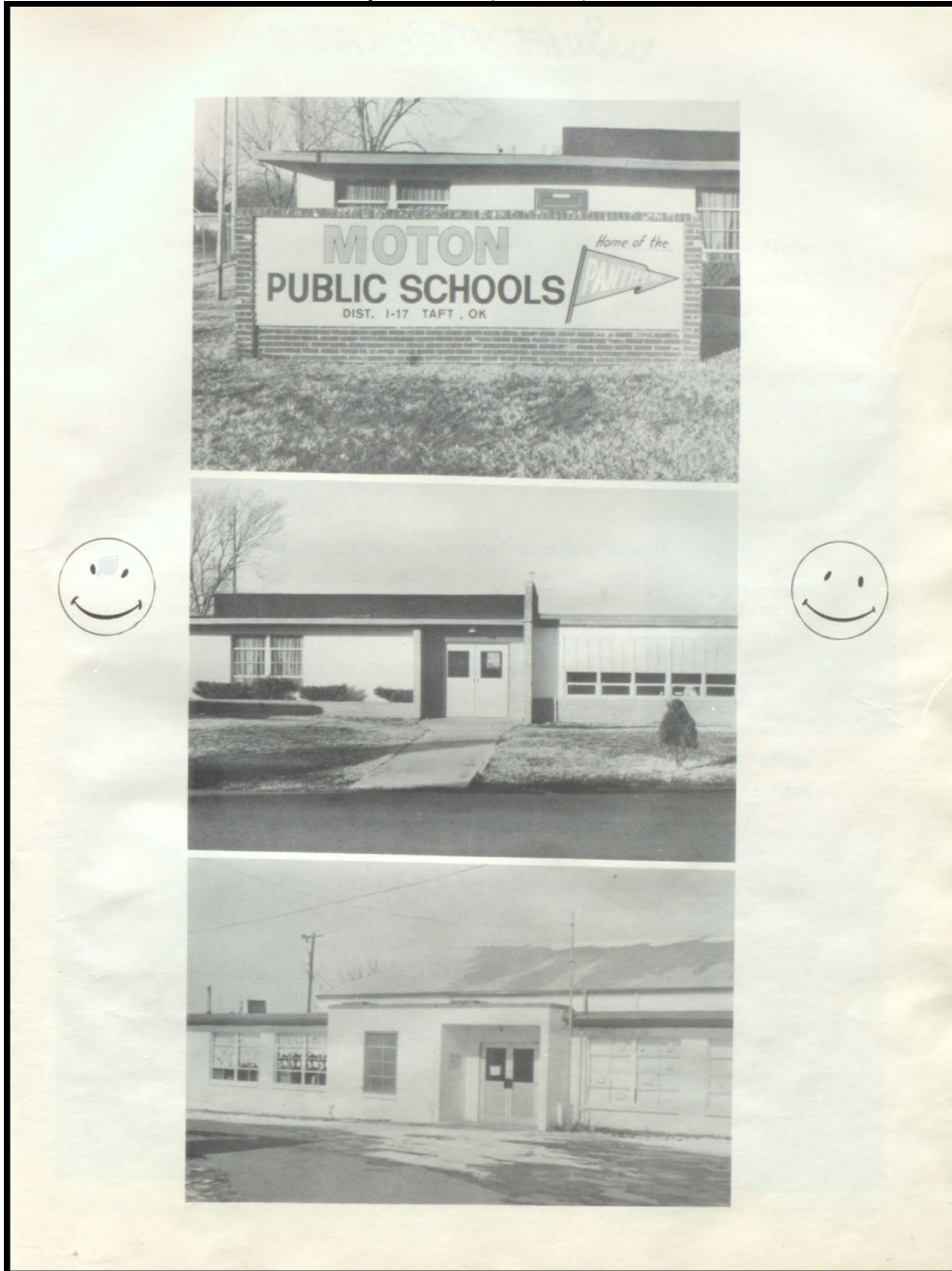


¹⁸¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, 1952.

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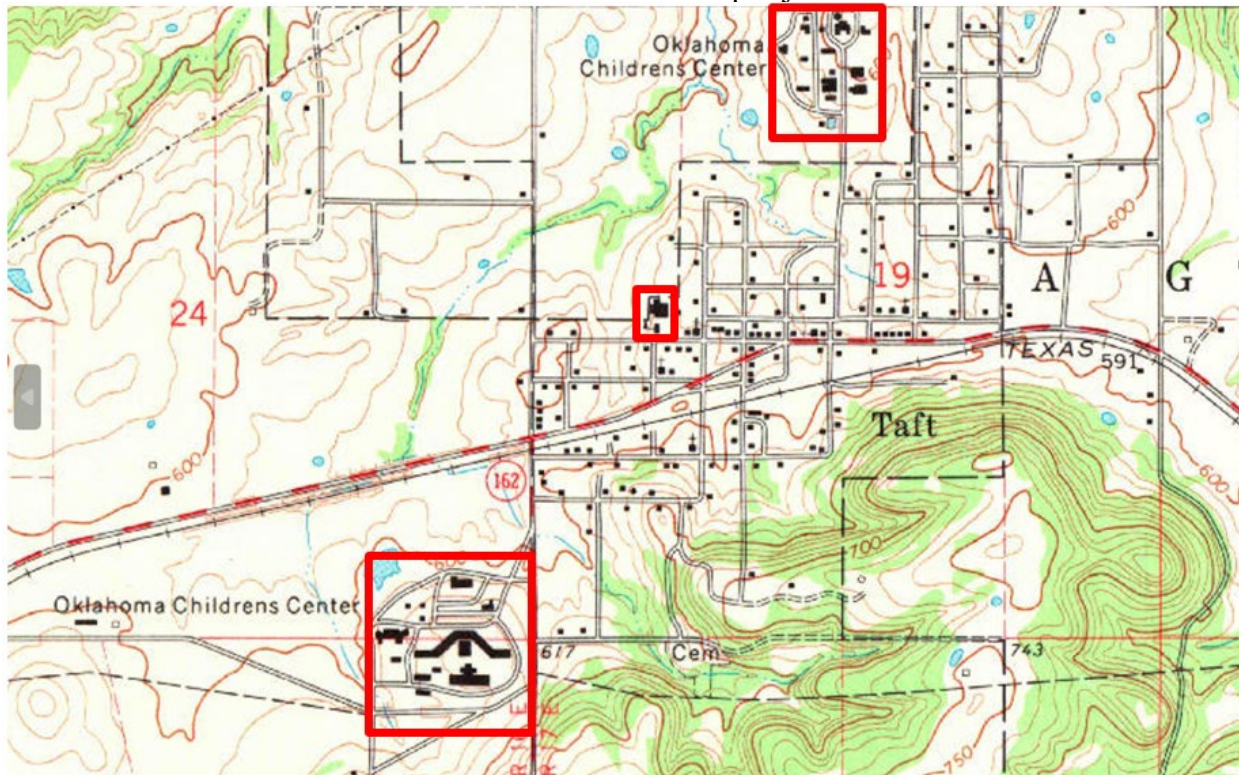
Muskogee County, Oklahoma

Figure 10. Images from the 1984 Moton High School yearbook show the freestanding monument sign east of Moton High School (top), the entrance of Moton High School (middle), and the entrance of Moton Elementary School (bottom).¹⁸²



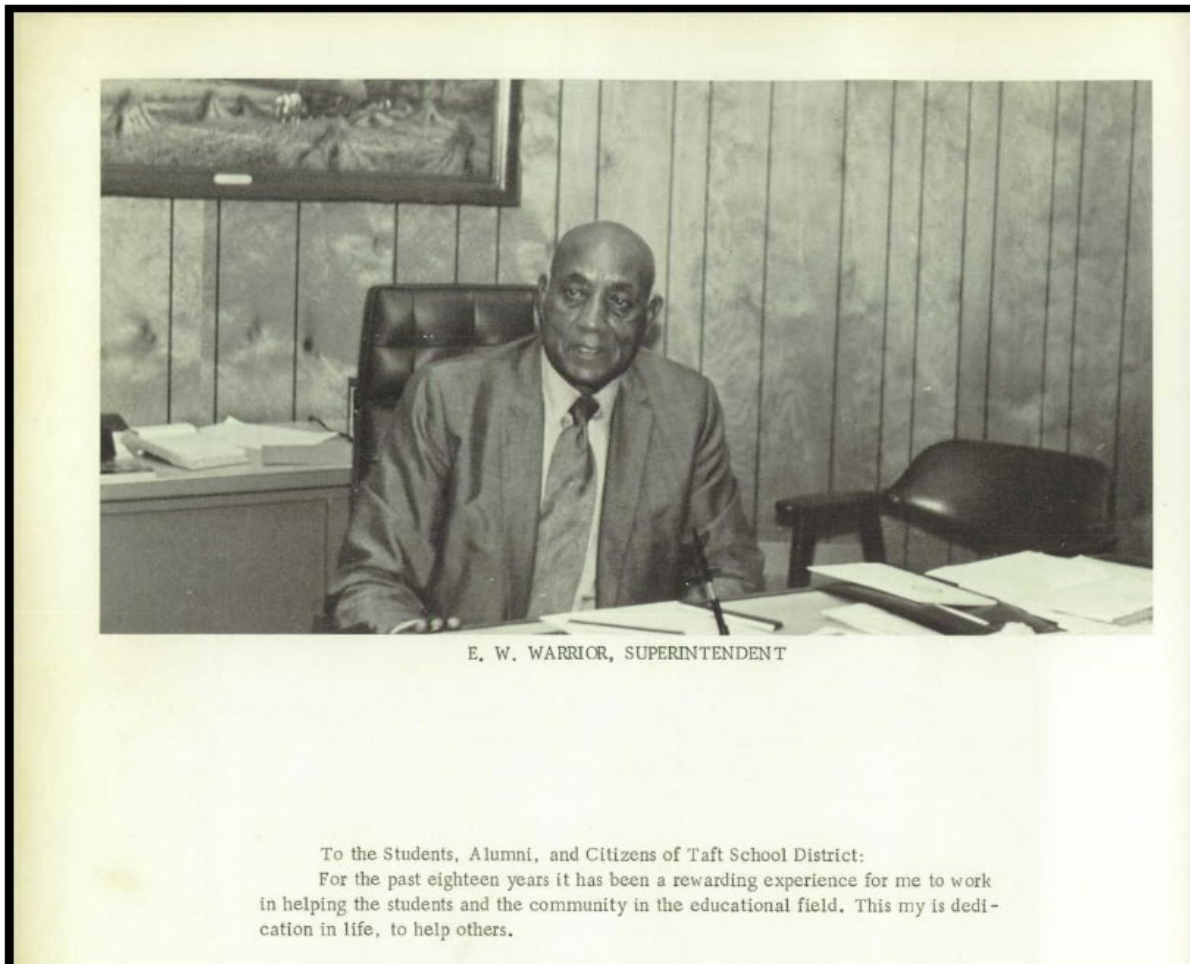
¹⁸² Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, School Yearbooks, 1900–2016, Ancestry.com, 1984.

Figure 11. Excerpt of a 1971 topographic map showing the north and south campuses of the Oklahoma Children's Center and the Moton School Campus just west of the center of Taft.¹⁸³



¹⁸³ U.S. Geological Survey, Taft, Muskogee County, Oklahoma Quadrangle, (TopoView), 1971, Topographic Map.

Figure 12. Image of Superintendent E. W. Warrior in the Moton High School 1956 yearbook.¹⁸⁴



¹⁸⁴ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1956.

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Figure 13. Mrs. Georgia H. Coleman was a longtime educator at Moton School District schools and served multiple years as principal of the Junior High School and Moton Elementary School.¹⁸⁵

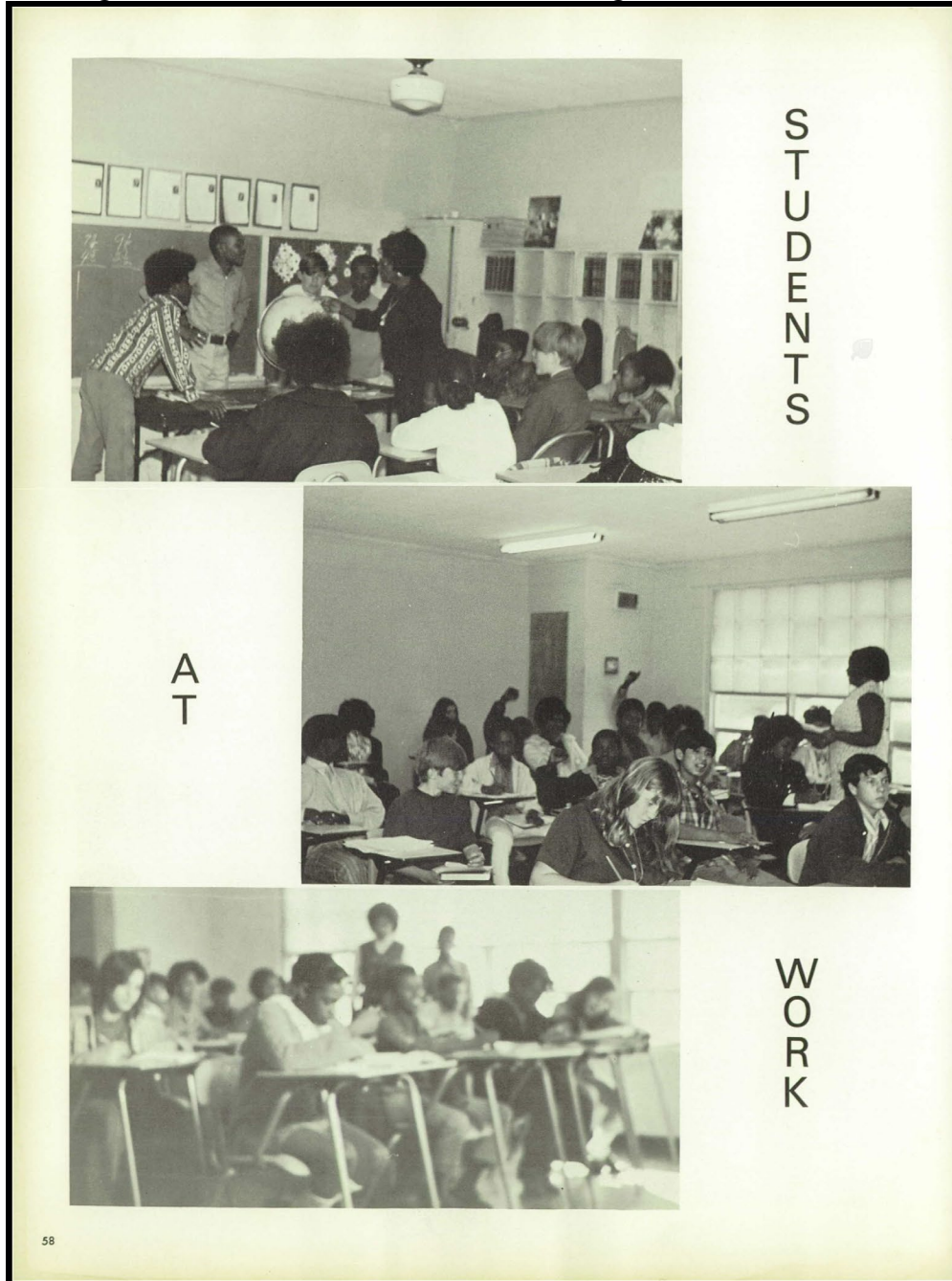


¹⁸⁵ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1972.

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Figure 14. During the 1971–1972 school year, which was after integration with the Oklahoma Children’s Center Junior High School, classes took place in the 1958 Moton High School Building, later known as E. W. Warrior Junior High School.¹⁸⁶

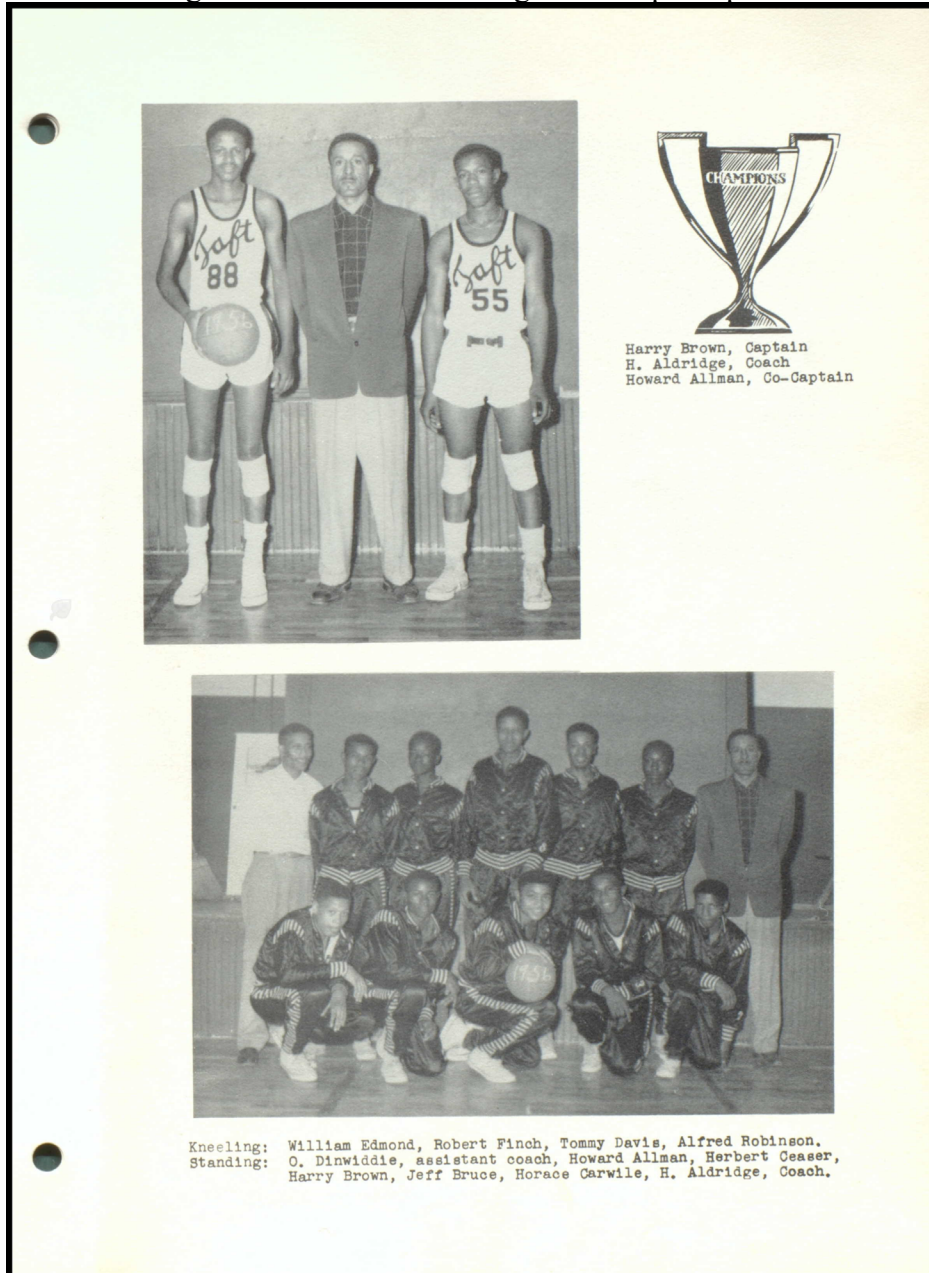


¹⁸⁶ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1972.

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Muskogee County, Oklahoma

Figure 15. The Moton High School basketball team during the 1955–1956 school year. Coach Harold Aldridge was also the Moton High School principal from 1961–1965.¹⁸⁷



¹⁸⁷ Moton High School Yearbook Staff, *Moton High School Yearbook*, 1956.

Moton School Campus Historic District

Muskogee County, Oklahoma

Table

Table 2. Moton School District Principals and Teachers, 1958–1975¹⁸⁸

School Year	High School Principal	Number of High School Teachers	Junior High School Principal	Number of Junior High School Teachers	Elementary School Principal	Number of Elementary School Teachers	State Girls Training Elementary ¹⁸⁹ Principal	Number of State Girls Training Teachers
1957–1958	E. W. Warrior	5.5	--	--	George Scott	9.5	--	--
1958–1959	E. W. Warrior	5	--	--	Georgia H. Coleman	10.5	--	--
1959–1960	E. W. Warrior	6	--	--	Luanna Franklin	10.5	--	--
1960–1961	E. W. Warrior	3	--	--	E. W. Warrior	5	--	--
1961–1962	Harold C. Aldridge	8	--	--	Harold C. Aldridge	10	--	--
1962–1963	Harold C. Aldridge	6	--	--	Georgia H. Coleman	11	Pinchat Reed	
1963–1964	Harold C. Aldridge	7	--	--	Bennie C. Johnson	10	Booker T. Gracey	2
1964–1965	Harold C. Aldridge	10	Harold C. Aldridge	Jr./Sr. H.S. combined	Bennie C. Johnson	4	Booker T. Gracey	2
1965–1966	Alexander Springs	10	Alexander Springs	Jr./Sr. H.S. combined	Bennie C. Johnson	4	Booker T. Gracey	4
1966–1967	Alexander Springs	19	Alexander Springs	Jr./Sr. H.S. combined	Bennie C. Johnson	4	Booker T. Gracey	5
1967–1968	Alexander Springs	9	Georgia H. Coleman	4	Bennie C. Johnson	4	Booker T. Gracey	5
1968–1969	Alexander Springs	9	Georgia H. Coleman	7	Bennie C. Johnson	3	--	--
1969–1970	Alexander Springs	11	Georgia H. Coleman	6	Bennie C. Johnson	5	Booker T. Gracey	6
1970–1971	Alexander Springs	11.5	--	--	Booker T. Gracey	9	--	
1971–1972	Alexander Springs	18	E. E. Gamble	16	Booker T. Gracey	8	--	--
1972–1973	Alexander Springs	21	E. E. Gamble	14	Tanzu B. Lockridge	6	--	--
1973–1974	Alexander Springs	21	E. E. Gamble	16	Tanzu B. Lockridge	5	--	--
1974–1975	Alexander Springs	20	Cecil E. Harrison	11	Tanzu B. Lockridge	5	--	--

¹⁸⁸ Information from Oklahoma Educational Directories, 1957–1958 to 1974–1975. The symbol "--" in a cell indicates that there was no school in that category for the given school year.

¹⁸⁹ This school was known as State Girls' Training Elementary and High School during the 1962–1963 school year and as Moton Elementary School during the 1969–1970 school year.

Moton School Campus Historic District

Muskogee County, Oklahoma



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