

DOWNTOWN STILLWATER SURVEY



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OKLAHOMA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive, Oklahoma City, OK 73105

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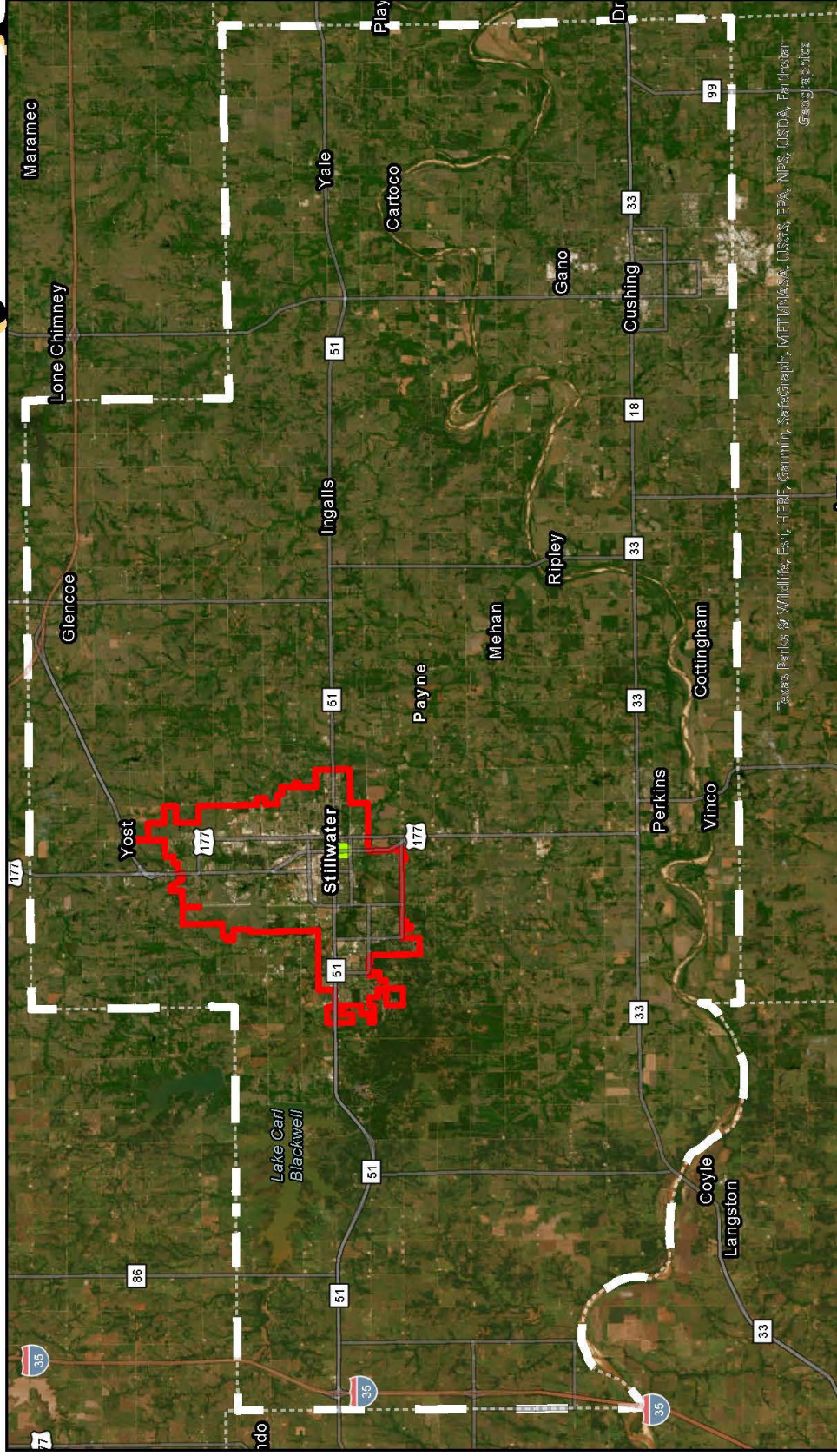
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**Cover photograph dated 1900 of downtown Stillwater, provided by timeline.okstate.edu

ABSTRACT

The architectural/historic survey of Downtown Stillwater, Oklahoma was conducted from 2022 to 2023. The survey is a continuation of the previous survey work of Main Street communities throughout Oklahoma. The survey was conducted by SHPO staff with a total of 96 resources documented, and the final report provides the results of properties individually eligible to the National Register of Historic Places and a small potential eligible historic district.

Stillwater, OK Survey Map



Key

- Stillwater City Limits
- Stillwater Survey Area
- Payne County Oklahoma



Oklahoma Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office

Marcus Young

Texas Parks & Wildlife, East, HERE, Garmin, Seagraph, METANAS, USGS, EPA, NPS, QSDA, Earthstar-Geographics

INTRODUCTION

Stillwater has been in and out of the Oklahoma Main Street program throughout the years. Their first participation dates from 1989-2007. They joined again in 2019 but have once again left the program. The purpose of the Main Street program was to provide support and energize its revitalization by creating partnerships, enhancing the physical appearance, and initiating stronger code enforcement to make the area friendly to businesses and visitors.

Historic Preservation efforts in Stillwater, Oklahoma, has centered on the commercial corridor along South Main Street as well as a few of the side streets. While there was no Certified Local Governments program within the City at the time the survey was initiated, Stillwater represents the cultural and historical evolution of a community in Oklahoma, the development of a major University, and an economy diverse in business and industry.

During the 1980s, a few of Stillwater's notable historic resources were listed in the National Register of Historic Places, including the Citizens Bank Building at 107 East Ninth in 1981 (NRIS 81000467); the Walker Building at 117 West Seventh in 1983 (NRIS 83002120); and the Selph

Building at 119 West Seventh in 1983 (NRIS 83002119). In 2020, the Lytton Building-Masonic Hall at 907-909 South Main (NRIS SG100006630) was also added to the National Register of Historic Places. Within Stillwater there are 12 other National Register-listed properties, many on the campus of Oklahoma State University.

Random properties in the Stillwater's historic commercial district were previously surveyed in 1998 and a few of Stillwater's historic resources appear in a regional thematic report. 424 South Main, 619-621 South Main, 716 South Main, and 719-721 South Main appear in the "Thematic Survey of Historic Movie Theaters in Central Oklahoma 2004-2005."

The next step in preservation efforts is the Architectural/Historic Survey of Downtown Stillwater. The objective of this project is to provide guidance and recommendations for future projects within downtown Stillwater.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The Downtown Stillwater Survey complies with *National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning* as well as the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office's (SHPO) "Oklahoma Architectural/Historic Survey Requirements" and "Architectural/Historic Resource Survey: A Field Guide." The purpose of the survey is to locate, identify, and record all buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts within the survey boundary and document them at the minimum level. Each resource identified was evaluated for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. All documentation is recorded on the "Historic Preservation Resource Identification Form" and includes two photographs.

Architectural styles will be selected based on "National Register Data Categories for Architectural Classification" in *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Form*. The majority of commercial architectural styles were derived from *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* by Richard Longstreth.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The goals for the preparation of the Downtown Stillwater Survey include:

- Identify and record each property on the Historic Preservation Resource Identification Form provided by the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO);
- Assess each resource's potential eligibility for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places;
- Assess if eligible under a Multiple Property Documentation Form for listing in the National Register of Historic Places;
- Provide a historical context for the survey area; and
- Prepare final report outlining to include but not limited to research design, fieldwork and findings for the survey area.

AREA SURVEYED

The Downtown Stillwater Survey encompassed approximately 34.5 acres. It is roughly bounded by 5th Avenue to the north, one half-block south of 10th Avenue to the south, Husband Street to the west and Lewis Street to the east.

Downtown Stillwater represents the core of the original business district when the town was established in 1889 and continued to prosper when a railroad line reached Stillwater in 1900. Within the

survey area, 96 resources were surveyed. All the properties are commercial properties found along or within proximity of Main Street, and these structures represent the evolution of a commerce-driven community supporting a university town.

METHODOLOGY

Initial preparation for the fieldwork included reviewing previous city surveys, National Register properties within city limits, and archival resources. The Payne County Assessor provided information regarding current address and legal descriptions. Other information collected was digital newspapers and photographs available at the Oklahoma Historical Society website. The Oklahoma Historical Society held a repository of local information through vertical files and books. The Oklahoma State University Digital Collections were used for historic aerials and topographic maps. Other sources for architecture literature included *The Buildings of Main Street* by Richard Longstreth, Building Heritage Technology online repository, scholarly articles, and other books as needed.

Fieldwork was conducted from 2022-2023. Buildings, sites, structures, and objects within the survey boundary were photographed at that time. The location of each property within the survey area is indicated

on a map showing the boundary line of the survey area and building footprint. A separate map was created to identify any potential historic districts including the contributing status of each property.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The first census for Stillwater showed 480 residents in 1890. During the next decade the town increased by 1,951 to reach 2,431 in 1900, equaling a growth rate of five times that of the first census. Unlike the other larger Oklahoma cities, Stillwater failed to increase their population at a rapid rate. By the 1940s, Stillwater's population increased to 20,283. By 2020, Stillwater had yet to reach a population of 50,000, remaining at just 48,134.

Stillwater was founded without a railroad which historically was an impetus for early growth. Nearly a decade after Stillwater's formation, the Eastern Oklahoma Railway, a subsidiary of the Santa Fe, completed their track from Pawnee to Stillwater. Prior to the railroad, Stillwater remained isolated as all building materials and merchandise had to be transported from communities to the west with railroad access. The coming of paved roads and a state/national highway system in the 1920s resulted in Stillwater's growth during that period as Highway 177 provided a connection to Ponca City to the north and Shawnee to the

south. Highway 51 finally provided a direct connection to Tulsa to the east.

The commercial and business district along Main Street has been maintained since inception. Physicians, dentists, attorneys, real estate companies, stores, hotels and restaurants were among the first to occupy the corridor. Fraternal orders were also represented in the Main Street corridor. Modern times brought stand-alone buildings to the downtown in the form of financial institutions with ample parking.

The development of the downtown corridor is tied to the development of Oklahoma State University (formerly Oklahoma A&M College). To support a major educational institution, businesses, shops, and professional offices needed to be brought to the area and into buildings that could be easily accessible from campus. By 1903, Oklahoma State University had begun building brick sidewalks to connect to downtown. The overall increase in students, faculty, and staff through the years has played a significant role in the local economy including residential construction, consumer spending at local establishments, and the need for additional public services.

Over the years, Stillwater has sought to diversify its economy and image but has remained a college town. Significant alterations to the buildings in the Downtown Stillwater survey area has resulted in the

determination that the area is not eligible as a historic district for the National Register of Historic Places. While there remain properties that are individually eligible and even more that warrant further study, the development of a commercial/economic context for the downtown core is not warranted. In the future, the historic context for individual properties should be the focus.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NUMBER OF RESOURCES SURVEYED

Within the survey boundary, 96 properties were surveyed. Buildings in the survey area included one- to two-story commercial businesses, civic uses, and some limited residential. The survey included those properties previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places due to the elapse of time from listing to the current survey.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

All properties within the Downtown Stillwater survey boundary were considered for designation in the National Register of Historic Places. This includes listing as an individual property or a potential historic district.

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

Additionally, a property must have sufficient integrity to convey its significance. According to National Register Bulletin 15, the seven aspects of integrity are as follows:

- Location
- Design
- Setting
- Materials
- Workmanship
- Feeling
- Association

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES & PROPERTY TYPES

Commercial

The majority of downtown Stillwater's architecture features the commercial style. This includes variations of a one-part commercial block featuring simple brick detailing, glass windows with transoms. The other common commercial type is the two-part commercial block. Stillwater's two-part commercial block features no more than two-stories with a distinct horizontal separation between the first story and the second story using a band.



FIGURE 1: 1008 SOUTH MAIN, ONE-PART COMMERCIAL BUILDING



FIGURE 2: 607 SOUTH MAIN, TWO-PART COMMERCIAL BUILDING

Modern Movement Commercial

The Modern Movement commercial buildings in Stillwater are typically large multi-story buildings devoid of ornamentation by using one exterior wall material, and large panes of glass for windows. These buildings are free-standing and provide off-street parking on site to accommodate the automotive user.



FIGURE 3: 608 SOUTH MAIN

Miscellaneous Styles

Other styles found throughout the survey area include one of each of the following: Mixed, Art Deco, Spanish Colonial, Bungalow/Craftsman, Tudor and Egyptian.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES	
STYLE	TOTAL
NO DISTINCTIVE STYLE	5
ALL OTHERS	6
COMMERCIAL STYLE	77
MODERN MOVEMENT	8
	96

CONSTRUCTION DATES

The approximate date of construction within the survey area begins in 1896 with the property at 914 South Main Street. The last construction was completed in 2020. The development of the survey area occurred steadily leading up to World War II. Prior to 1940, 74 buildings were constructed. Post 1940, new construction continued at much lower numbers. From 1971 to the 2020s, 10 new buildings were constructed.

CONSTRUCTION DATE RANGES	
YEAR RANGE	PROPERTIES
PRE-1900	1
1900-1905	6
1906-1910	3
1911-1915	1
1916-1920	18
1921-1925	18
1926-1930	20
1931-1935	2
1936-1940	5
1941-1945	3
1946-1950	4
1951-1955	1
1956-1960	2
1961-1965	1
1966-1970	1
1971-1975	1
1976-1980	4
1981+	5
	96

CURRENT USES

The most prevalent use within the survey are business and specialty store uses. Other uses found included professional offices, restaurants,

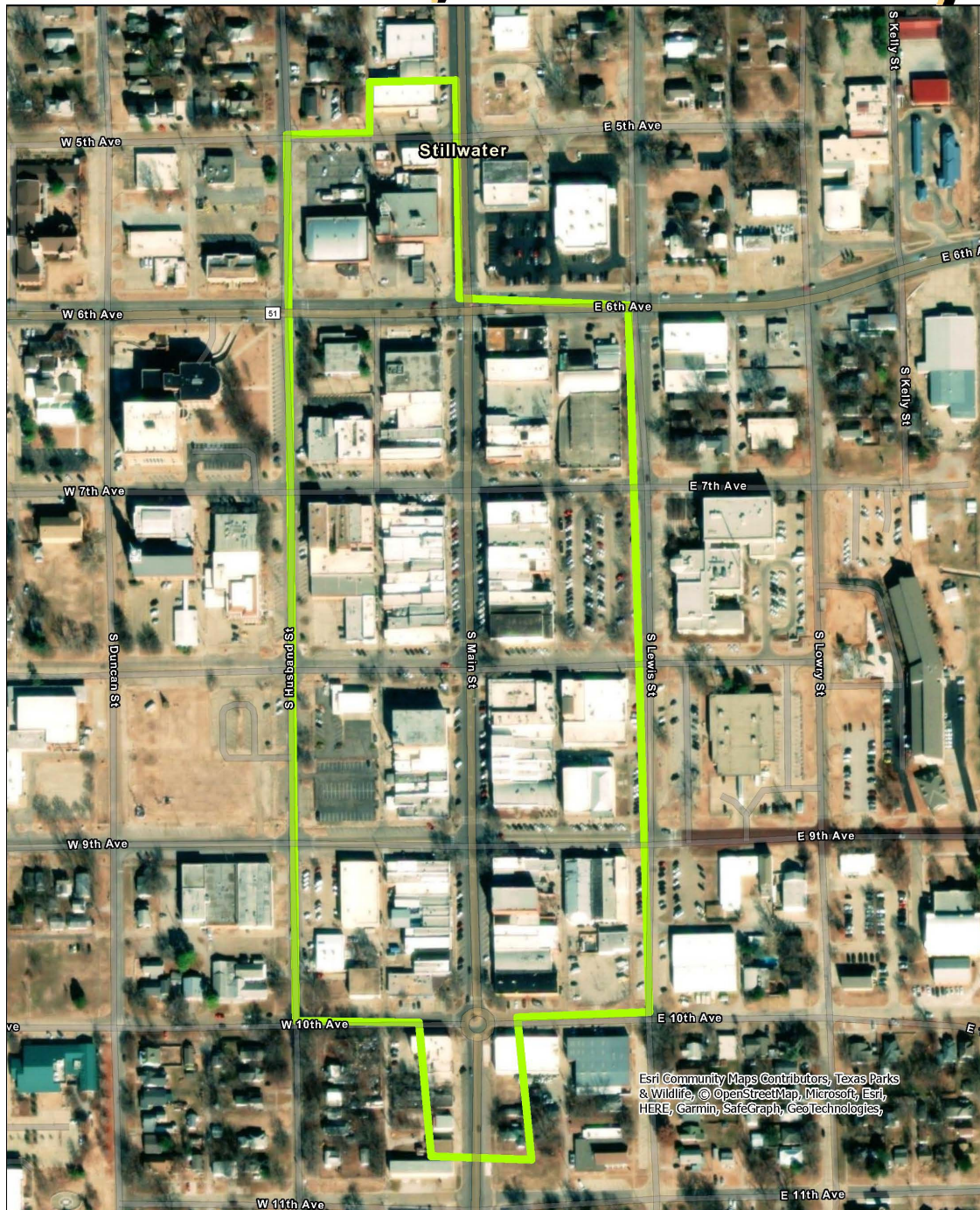
and financial institutions to name a few. Any saloons or bars were included as a restaurant.

CURRENT USE	
SUBCATEGORY	PROPERTIES
BUSINESS	20
PROFESSIONAL	15
FINANCIAL INSTITUTION	3
SPECIALTY STORE	29
RESTAURANT	11
MEETING HALL	2
AUTOMOTIVE	2
THEATER	1
VACANT/NOT IN USE	13
TOTAL	96

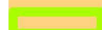
RECOMMENDATIONS

The Downtown Stillwater commercial area has been determined not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. This determination is the result of extensive alterations throughout the commercial core including alterations to buildings, road patterns, and streetscape.

Stillwater, OK Survey



Legend

 Stillwater Survey Area (1)

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Miles



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Three properties were determined to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:

- 113-117 East 9th Avenue
- 502 South Main Street
- 720 South Main Street



FIGURE 4: 502 SOUTH MAIN

12 properties were determined to warrant further study:

- 111 West 7th Avenue
- 113 West 7th Avenue
- 115 West 7th Avenue
- 424 South Main Street
- 601 South Main Street
- 608 South Main Street
- 623 South Main Street
- 808 South Main Street
- 914 South Main Street
- 1002 South Main Street

- 1008 South Main Street
- 1010 South Main Street



FIGURE 5: 1002 SOUTH MAIN

SUMMARY

The Downtown Stillwater survey area does not meet the National Register criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Within the survey boundaries three are individually eligible for listing and 12 warrant further study to determine their eligibility for listing. The district itself represents different methods of construction, varying architectural styles, and varying periods of development. However, due to significant alterations, the district is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.