

FINAL SURVEY REPORT

*ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORIC INTENSIVE LEVEL
SURVEY OF THE
CLAREMORE DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT,
CLAREMORE, OKLAHOMA*

Prepared by

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ABSTRACT

This document serves as the final survey report for the Architectural/Historic Intensive Level Survey of the Claremore Downtown Historic District, Claremore, Oklahoma. The survey was initiated due to local public interest. The Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office undertook the survey in January 1996. The fieldwork was completed on January 10, 1996 with archival research and the final report being completed in February 1996.

The purpose of the survey was to locate, identify and document potential districts, buildings, objects, structures and sites within the designated area that meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The survey involved two basic components: (1) Field research to record minimum documentation on each property, regardless of age or condition, within the survey area; and, (2) Archival research sufficient to prepare a brief historic context characterizing the development of the area surveyed.

The survey covered a three block area of commercial development in Claremore's central business district. A total of 20 properties were minimally documented. Of these, eight were classified noncontributing, ten contributing, one worthy of further study and one, the Will Rogers Hotel (NR 1994), as already individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The resource classified as worthy of further study for potential individual eligibility is a vacant department store located at 415-417 Will Rogers Boulevard. This

building possesses an integrity of design and detail to an extraordinary degree. Overall, the Claremore Downtown Historic District was deemed to be National Register eligible as the remaining cohesive example of the once-thriving Claremore central business district.

This report and the individual property files will provide a basis for nominating eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places and for evaluating properties under the review and compliance program established by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

INTRODUCTION

The Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office undertook the Architectural/Historic Intensive Level Survey of the Claremore Downtown Historic District due to local public interest. On January 10, 1996, the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office completed the necessary fieldwork.

Located in the central commercial core of the Original Townsite, the Claremore Downtown Historic District is comprised of a three block area. The boundaries of the district are: Starting at the initial point of Lynn Riggs and Will Rogers boulevards, east on Will Rogers Boulevard to Missouri Avenue, south on Missouri Avenue to the alley south of Will Rogers Boulevard, east along the alley to Cherokee Avenue, north on Cherokee Avenue to the alley north of Will Rogers Boulevard, west along the alley to Lynn Riggs Boulevard, then south along Lynn Riggs Boulevard to the starting point. The district is separated visually from the remaining resources of the central business district by a lack of cohesiveness. The excluded area does not retain sufficient individual or collective integrity to meet National Register standards.

The Claremore Downtown Historic District is composed of primarily two-story commercial buildings. There are also a few one-story commercial buildings in the district. The predominant architectural style in the district is Commercial style. Sixty-five percent of the district was classified as such. There are also examples of the architectural styles Moderne, Modern

Movement and Contemporary Commercial in the district.

The building at 415-417 Will Rogers Boulevard has been determined to be worthy of further study for potential individual National Register eligibility. This resource retains its integrity to an extraordinary degree. The building's architectural features are intact on both stories. The architectural characteristics of a former department store remain evident in the two storefronts with inlaid ceramic tile indicating the "ladies" and "gents" sections.

The majority of resources in the area have undergone some alteration. This has been predominately contained to modifications to the first floor storefronts. The majority of second stories are relatively intact and continue to retain their integrity. There are two resources in the area which are infill and therefore noncontributing to the Claremore Downtown Historic District due to insufficient age. 400-402 Will Rogers Boulevard was constructed in approximately 1988 and 412-414 Will Rogers Boulevard in 1994. Both are one-story, brick buildings. They are easily identified as the only one-story buildings on the north side of the 400 block of Will Rogers Boulevard.

Although many of the individual resources have undergone alteration and do not retain sufficient integrity to be individually eligible, collectively the Claremore Downtown Historic District retains adequate integrity to meet National Register standards.

The survey was undertaken to identify potential National Register

Historic Districts and facilitate Section 106 review. Project personnel included Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office staff Architectural Historian Susan Allen and staff Preservation Research Assistant Cynthia Smelker. All personnel meet the Secretary of the Interior's qualifications.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Architectural/Historic Intensive Level Survey of the Claremore Downtown Historic District included the following objectives:

The first objective was to minimally document each property located within the study area. Minimal documentation includes completion of the Historic Preservation Resource Identification Form and adequate photodocumentation of each resource.

The second objective was to evaluate each resource's eligibility for inclusion in a National Register Historic District. This involved classification of each property as contributing or noncontributing resources to the proposed district. Properties were categorized as noncontributing for one of two reasons: (1) lack of integrity; or, (2) insufficient age. Properties warranting further study for possible individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places were also identified.

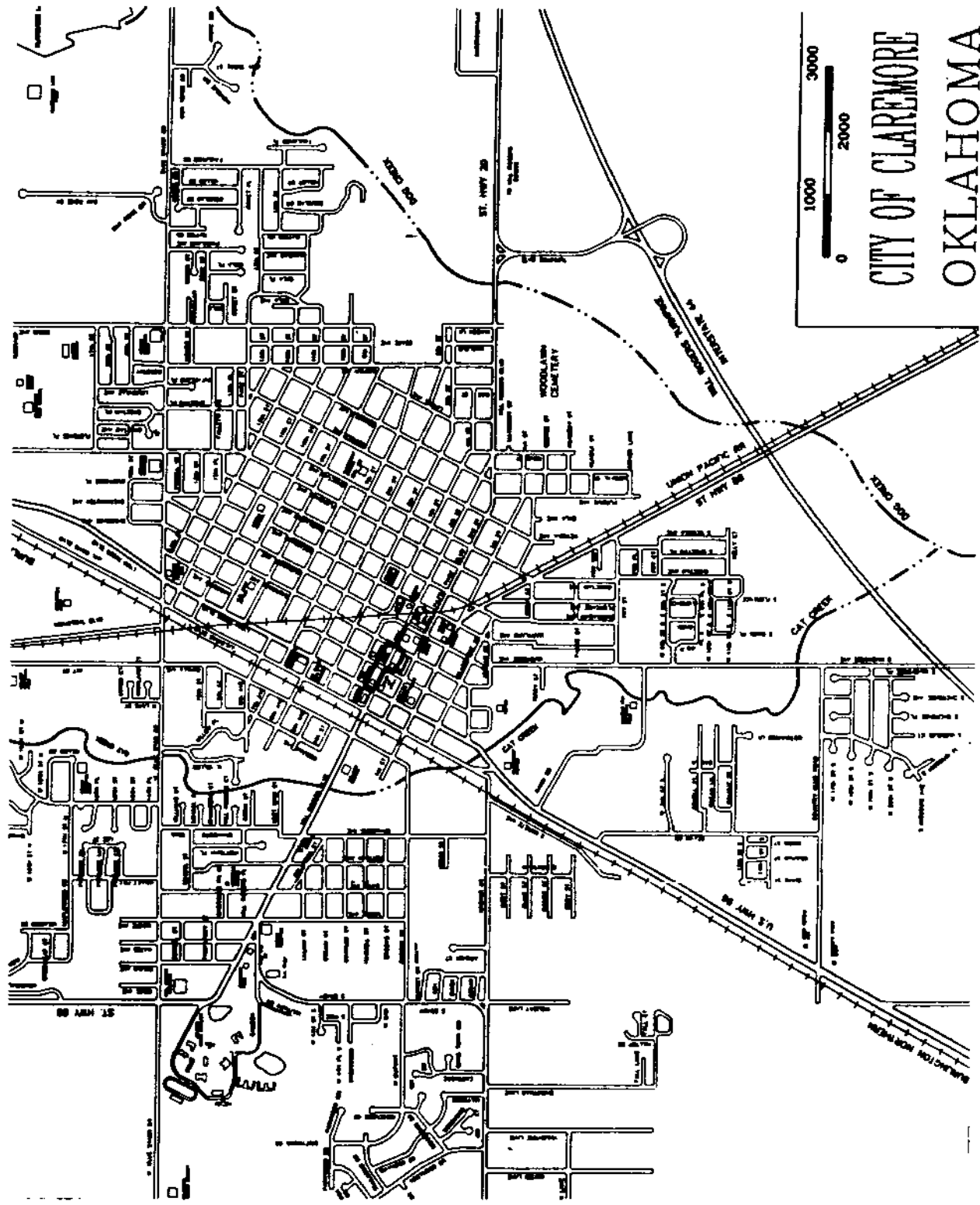
The third objective was to delineate boundaries for a potential National Register Historic District.

AREA SURVEYED

The study area for this survey consisted of portions of the central business district in Claremore, Oklahoma. Covering three blocks, the study area was bounded as follows: Starting at the initial point of Lynn Riggs and Will Rogers boulevards, east on Will Rogers Boulevard to Missouri Avenue, south on Missouri Avenue to the alley south of Will Rogers Boulevard, east along the alley to Cherokee Avenue, north on Cherokee Avenue to the alley north of Will Rogers Boulevard, west along the alley to Lynn Riggs Boulevard, then south along Lynn Riggs Boulevard to the starting point.

The Claremore Downtown Historic District is located in the central portion of the Original Townsite. The townsite was platted in 1883 under the authority of the Indian Commission.

AREA MAP



RESEARCH DESIGN

The staff of the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office undertook the Architectural/Historic Intensive Level Survey of the Claremore Downtown Historic District in Claremore, Oklahoma, in January 1996. Portions of the area were previously surveyed in the September 1985 "Historic Downtowns: An Inventory of Historic Structures in Bristow, Claremore, Drumright and Sapulpa, Oklahoma." This study was completed by the Membership Services Division, Indian Nations Council of Governments.

This cultural resource investigation was accomplished as part of the ongoing Oklahoma Comprehensive Survey Program, supported in part by state and federal funds. The overall purpose of this program is to increase the area surveyed within the state, assess eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, and facilitate Section 106 review.

The survey emphasized the recording of extant properties at a minimum level of documentation. The results of this project provide a basis for nominating eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places and for evaluating properties under the review and compliance program established by Section 106 of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, as amended.

The project also served to provide a brief historic context. The historic context identified reference material relevant to the development of the central business district and city, as well as provided a preliminary document for future

National Register nominations. To accomplish this goal, research was undertaken at the Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library and Western History Collections at the University of Oklahoma.

All properties recorded in the survey area were documented to the following standards: All individual properties regardless of age or condition were minimally recorded and photographed. Minimum recording includes completion of the Historic Preservation Resource Identification Form and photographs.

Upon completion, the survey results were recorded onto two separate survey maps. The maps show the district boundaries, the distribution of contributing to noncontributing properties and the approximate date of construction. Due to the lack of criss-cross telephone directories for Claremore, the date of construction for properties in the Claremore Downtown Historic District were derived largely from the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

The individual property files will be added to the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory. Photocopies of the final report and survey maps will be available from the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office upon request.

Project fieldwork was conducted by the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office staff Architectural Historian Susan Allen and Preservation Research Assistant Cynthia Smelker. The final report was prepared by Cynthia Smelker, Preservation Research Assistant. All of the above personnel meet the

Secretary of the Interior's qualifications.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The auction of lots on 11 August 1883 established present day Claremore, Oklahoma. Located in the Cherokee Nation of Indian Territory, the town was preceded by several Indian villages of the Osage and Cherokee tribes dating back to the early 1800s. Although the previous villages did not occupy the same site as the new town, several were associated with the name "Claremore."¹

Designated the county seat of Rogers County, Claremore has enjoyed a quiet prosperity. Similar to the majority of late nineteenth and early twentieth century American towns, Claremore's economic well-being relied heavily on agriculture. Even in 1948, eighty-four percent of the land in Rogers County was taken up by farms and ranches. The town provided area farmers and ranchers with necessary goods and transportation sources.²

Claremore, however, did not rely solely on agricultural for its economic vitality. The town also did not greatly benefit from Oklahoma's other principal industry, oil, except in an indirect manner. In 1903 while drilling for oil, a

¹The name "Claremore" originated from a 25 acre mound along the Verdigris River. A band of the Osage tribe settled on the mound in approximately 1802. The mound soon acquired the French name of Clermont, meaning clear mountain. The spelling of Clermont was changed to Claremore in 1874 due to a post office clerical error. ("Claremore," Information packet from the Claremore Chamber of Commerce, 1996).

²A Tourist's Guide to Claremore, Oklahoma, (Claremore, OK: Claremore Chamber of Commerce, July 1948), 31.

large artesian well was discovered instead. The black water coming from the well was of such an aromatic sulphide essence, the townspeople sought to cap the well. However, the health benefits of the mineral water soon resulted in a new flourishing industry for the town.³

By the 1920s, Claremore was known worldwide for its mineral water baths. Analysis of the radium water revealed it contained iron carbonate, calcium carbonate, calcium chloride, magnesium carbonate, magnesium chloride, sodium chloride, lithium chloride and a large component of hydrogen sulphide gas. The baths were touted to relief all forms of rheumatism, arthritis and skin ailments.⁴ Additionally, the baths were recommended for treatment of alcoholism and internal disorders such as constipation, intestinal toxemia, ulcers and high blood pressure. The radium bath's provided Claremore's primary economic support through the 1940s into the 1950s. After this time due to declining interest in the health benefits of the water, the popularity of the baths waned and many of the businesses associated with them closed.

Claremore also gained worldwide attention due to its many famous sons and daughters. The most well-known of these was Will Rogers. Rogers' actual birthplace was a ranch which was closer to Oologah, Oklahoma, than

³Ibid., 17-18.

⁴Claremore, Oklahoma, The Health Resort, (St. Louis, MO: Passenger Traffic Department, Frisco Lines, n.d.).

Claremore but Rogers identified Claremore as his home. Additionally, Rogers bought property in Claremore in 1911 on which, following his untimely death in 1935, the state of Oklahoma constructed the Will Rogers Memorial. The memorial, costing 750,000 dollars, was dedicated on 4 November 1938, Rogers' birthday. The memorial continues to be a major tourist attraction for the city.⁵

Other famous persons who called Claremore home include author Lynn Riggs, who wrote the story "Green Grow the Lilacs" on which the award winning musical "Oklahoma!" is based; singer Patti Page; astronaut Stewart Roosa; the Chief Executive Officer of J. C. Penney Bill Howell; and, the well-known rodeo announcer Clem McSpadden.⁶

Agriculture has remained an important source of revenue for the town. Tourism also continues to provide Claremore with critical economic support. The Will Rogers Memorial, J. M. Davis Arms and Historical Museum which contains one of the largest gun collections on public display, the Lynn Riggs Memorial Museum and the Oklahoma Military Academy Museum are just a few of the area attractions.

However, Claremore has experienced a constricting of other commercial enterprises following the decline of the radium bath industry. During the 1960s

⁵Ibid., 5, 7-8.

⁶Tulsa World, 17 April 1995.

and 1970s, approximately sixty percent of the town's workforce commuted to nearby Tulsa for employment. This resulted in a shrinking of the town's historic central business district. The town has rallied admirably following the opening of several industrial companies, such as Centrilift, which have returned a significant portion of the workforce to Claremore.⁷

As Claremore continues to grow, its built environment continues to evolve. The new industries bring a need for newer facilities. This results in new industrial centers on the outskirts of town as well as redevelopment of the historic downtown. Claremore's central business district has undergone tremendous change. The historic downtown is no longer clearly defined with a loss of integrity to many of the historic buildings. As such, the remaining identifiable, cohesive core of the central business district, the Claremore Downtown Historic District, warrants National Register status.

⁷Ibid.

DOCUMENTED PROPERTIES

1	Inspirations/Advantage 2000 Inc.	400-402 Will Rogers Blvd.
2	Ann's Cleaners and Laundry	401-402 Will Rogers Blvd.
3	Shadows of Time Antiques	404 Will Rogers Blvd.
4	Carol's Downtown Diner	405 Will Rogers Blvd.
5	B & K Discount Clothing	406 Will Rogers Blvd.
6	B & K Petite and Missy Sizes	407 Will Rogers Blvd.
7	Haddad's	408-410 Will Rogers Blvd.
8	The Peachtree Antiquary	409-411 Will Rogers Blvd.
9	Ann & Barbara's Interiors/Direct	412-414 Will Rogers Blvd.
10	Vacant Department Store	415-417 Will Rogers Blvd.
11	Heins Jewelry	416 Will Rogers Blvd.
12	Merle Norman	418 Will Rogers Blvd.
13	Streeter Building	419-423 Will Rogers Blvd.
14	G. W. Eaton Building	420-422 Will Rogers Blvd.
15	Mama's Memories/House of	500-504 Will Rogers Blvd.
16	Ernie's Billiard Palace	506 Will Rogers Blvd.
17	House of Trophies/Antiques	508-512 Will Rogers Blvd.
18	Antiques Collectibles	514 Will Rogers Blvd.
19	Crossroads Cafe/Mom's Back	516-518 Will Rogers Blvd.
20	Will Rogers Hotel	524 Will Rogers Blvd.

PROPERTIES INDIVIDUALLY LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

1 Will Rogers Hotel NR1994 524 Will Rogers Blvd.

PROPERTIES WARRANTING FURTHER STUDY

1 Vacant Department Store 415-417 Will Rogers Blvd.

CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES

1 Ann's Cleaners & Laundry 401-403 Will Rogers Blvd.
2 Carol's Downtown Diner 405 Will Rogers Blvd.
3 B & K Discount Clothing 406 Will Rogers Blvd.
4 Haddad's 408 Will Rogers Blvd.
5 Heins Jewelry 416 Will Rogers Blvd.
6 Merle Norman 418 Will Rogers Blvd.
7 G. W. Eaton Building 420-422 Will Rogers Blvd.
8 Ernie's Billiard Palace 506 Will Rogers Blvd.
9 House of Trophies/Antiques 508-512 Will Rogers Blvd.
10 Crossroads Cafe/Mom's Back Porch 516-518 Will Rogers Blvd.

NONCONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Inspirations/Advantage 2000 Inc. | 400-402 Will Rogers Blvd. |
| 2 | Shadows of Time Antiques | 404 Will Rogers Blvd. |
| 3 | B & K Petite & Missy Sizes | 407-409 Will Rogers Blvd. |
| 4 | The Peachtree Antiquary | 411-413 Will Rogers Blvd. |
| 5 | Ann & Barbara's Interiors/Direct | 412-414 Will Rogers Blvd. |
| 6 | Streeter Building | 419-421 Will Rogers Blvd. |
| 7 | Mama's Memories/House of | 500-504 Will Rogers Blvd. |

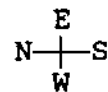
CLAREMORE DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT CONTRIBUTING/NONCONTRIBUTING
MAP

CHEROKEE

400-402 WILL ROGERS/NONCONTRIBUTING INSPIRATIONS/ADVANTAGE 2000 INC.	401-403 WILL ROGERS/CONTRIB ANN'S CLEANERS & LAUNDRY
404 WILL ROGERS/NONCONTRIBUTING SHADOWS OF TIME ANTIQUES	405 WILL ROGERS/CONTRIBUTING CAROL'S DOWNTOWN DINER
406 WILL ROGERS/CONTRIBUTING B & K DISCOUNT CLOTHING	407 WILL ROGERS/NONCON B & K PETITE & MISSY SIZES
408-410 WILL ROGERS/CONTRIBUTING HADDAD'S	409-411 WILL ROGERS/NONCON THE PEACHTREE ANTIQUARY
412-414 WILL ROGERS/NONCONTRIBUTING ANN & BARBARA'S INTERIORS/DIRECT TV	415-417 WILL ROGERS/ INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE VACANT DEPARTMENT STORE
416 WILL ROGERS/CONTRIBUTING HEINS JEWELRY	
418 WILL ROGERS/CONTRIBUTING MERLE NORMAN	419-423 WILL ROGERS/ 104 MISSOURI/NONCONTRIBUTING STREETER BUILDING
420-422 WILL ROGERS/CONTRIBUTING G. W. EATON BUILDING	

MISSOURI

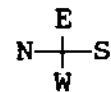
500-504 WILL ROGERS/NONCONTRIBUTING MAMA'S MEMORIES/HOUSE OF ANTIQUITY
506 WILL ROGERS/CONTRIBUTING ERNIE'S BILLIARD PALACE
508-512 WILL ROGERS/CONTRIBUTING HOUSE OF TROPHIES/ANTIQUES
514 WILL ROGERS/NONCONTRIBUTING ANTIQUA'S COLLECTIBLES
516-518 WILL ROGERS/CONTRIBUTING CROSSROADS CAFE/MOM'S BACK PORCH
524 WILL ROGERS/NR 1994 WILL ROGERS HOTEL



LYNN RIGGS

CLAREMORE DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT DATE MAP

CHEROKEE	
400-402 WILL ROGERS/c. 1908 INSPIRATIONS/ADVANTAGE 2000 INC.	401-403 WILL ROGERS/c. 1909 ANN'S CLEANERS & LAUNDRY
404 WILL ROGERS/c. 1909 SHADOWS OF TIME ANTIQUES	405 WILL ROGERS/c. 1905 CAROL'S DOWNTOWN DINER
406 WILL ROGERS/c. 1905 B & K DISCOUNT CLOTHING	407 WILL ROGERS/c. 1920 B & K PETITE & MISSY SIZES
408-410 WILL ROGERS/c. 1905 HADDAD'S	409-411 WILL ROGERS/c. 1909 THE PEACHTREE ANTIQUARY
412-414 WILL ROGERS/c. 1994 ANN & BARBARA'S INTERIORS/DIRECT TV	415-417 WILL ROGERS/c. 1916 VACANT DEPARTMENT STORE
416 WILL ROGERS/c. 1905 HEINS JEWELRY	
418 WILL ROGERS/c. 1905 MERLE NORMAN	419-423 WILL ROGERS/ 104 MISSOURI/c. 1905 STREETER BUILDING
420-422 WILL ROGERS/1902 G. W. EATON BUILDING	
MISSOURI	
500-504 WILL ROGERS/c. 1953 MAMA'S MEMORIES/HOUSE OF ANTIQUITY	
506 WILL ROGERS/c. 1903 ERNIE'S BILLIARD PALACE	
508-512 WILL ROGERS/c. 1913 HOUSE OF TROPHIES/ANTIQUES	
514 WILL ROGERS/c. 1909 ANTIQUAE'S COLLECTIBLES	
516-518 WILL ROGERS/c. 1930 CROSSROADS CAFE/MOM'S BACK PORCH	
524 WILL ROGERS/c. 1929 WILL ROGERS HOTEL	
LYNN RIGGS	



SUMMARY

The Architectural/Historic Intensive Level Survey of the Claremore Downtown Historic District proved a success. The survey covered three blocks in the Original Townsite of Claremore, Oklahoma. A total of twenty properties were minimally documented. Of the total number, ten were determined to be contributing with 8 classified as noncontributing. Additionally, one property was evaluated as warranting further study for potential individual National Register eligibility and one building has been previously individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

A brief historic context was also completed characterizing the development of the town. The district is composed of commercial buildings. As such, the predominant architectural style is Commercial style. The Claremore Downtown Historic District was essentially fully developed by 1930. Since that time, many of the properties in the district have been modified. For the most part, the alterations have been confined to the first floor storefronts which allow the buildings to continue to contribute to the Claremore Downtown Historic District.

Based on the survey observations, the Claremore Downtown Historic District was found to meet National Register eligibility standards. Composed of ten contributing, one warranting further study and one previously individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the district has a

contributing rate of sixty percent. The area contained an outstanding architectural example of a department store in the building located at 415-417 Will Rogers Boulevard. Further study is, however, necessary to determine its commercial significance and other possible areas of significance within the local area.

The survey was worthwhile from many perspectives. It identified a potential National Register Historic District. The survey also generally increased the area within the state inventoried and the number of properties identified for preservation purposes. This, in turn, will assist in expediting review and compliance activity within Claremore.

All properties were documented to the required State Historic Preservation Office standards with completion of a Historic Preservation Resource Identification Form and adequate photo documentation. The individual property files will be incorporated into the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory. Photocopies of the final report and survey maps will be available from the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office upon request. Additionally, the information was entered on the computer to facilitate its entry into the collective data base of significant Oklahoma and national cultural resources.

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