

INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY

OF

PONCA CITY'S

HILLCREST



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ABSTRACT

This intensive level survey of properties located in the area of Ponca City referred to as "Hillcrest" was conducted in order to 1) document each property within the geographically defined survey area, 2) to identify the existence of any potential historic districts in the area, and 3) to identify the presence of any properties individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The survey was conducted between February 2013 and May 2013. A total of forty-one (41) resources were documented and evaluated. Of those properties, eight (8) were determined to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. After complete evaluation of the properties within the survey area, as well as local source materials, it was determined that there was not sufficient significance to warrant the identification of a historic district in this area.

INTRODUCTION

Historic preservation began in Ponca City much as in other communities across the country, when local residents come together to save a single building. What began as a crusade gradually became institutionalized in the community and continues to thrive. One building becomes many more. In Ponca City, that building was the Poncan Theater, and with the help of local enthusiasts, what began as a grassroots effort to save the Poncan has grown over the last twenty years or so into one of the most active and effective local preservation programs in the state.¹

Ponca City was richly blessed architecturally in its early years. Often referred to as the “Jewel of the Prairie,” the discovery of oil and natural gas and the subsequent economic boom greatly impacted the built environment of the community. There was a concerted effort on the part of local businessmen, such as E.W. Marland and Lewis Wentz to bring the best and the brightest – scientists, educators, entertainers, engineers, and architects -- to the community. These residents left a significant impact on the landscape of this north central Oklahoma community. Despite what seems to be an obvious abundance of architectural and historic resources, until recently, many of these properties were not appreciated. They simply melded into the landscape of everyday life.

But since the saving of the Poncan in the late 1980s/early 1990s, there has been close cooperation between the City of Ponca City and the Main Street Program. The city participates in the state’s Certified Local Government (CLG) program, a program which requires that the city enact and enforce preservation zoning, as well as other preservation related activities in return for a share of the state’s federal preservation funds. One such activity included the preparation of a Historic Preservation Plan in 2007. That same year, the city was designated a Preserve America community by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The 2007 Historic Preservation was followed by the more recent Comprehensive Plan addressing housing, transportation, and a host of other issues and also known as Vision 2020. This comprehensive plan emphasizes maintaining the historic character of downtown as well as carefully balancing the needs for maintaining historic housing areas with the needs for new units.² The comprehensive plan also calls for identifying additional historic districts, possibly to be protected by zoning regulations. In addition to identification of historic resources, the plan calls for offering financial assistance for façade rehabilitations

¹ For a brief history of the Poncan renovation, see http://www.poncantheatre.org/poncan_history.htm.

² “Vision 2020 Ponca City Comprehensive Plan,” <http://www.poncacityok.gov/DocumentCenter/View/190> (accessed May 2013).

in the form of low interest loans, grants, technical assistance, or expedited, approval for façade or sign improvements.³ Further, the Comprehensive Plan calls for strengthening the standards and guidelines of the Historic Preservation Advisory Council. The Main Street program provides architectural guidance, as well as façade grants for member businesses. Since 1987, Main Street has helped infuse as much as \$25 million into the downtown economy.⁴ With the help of the city and the Main Street program, Ponca City is committed to preserving its architectural and historic resources, a mentality dating back to the days of E.W. Marland.

Because of its focus on historic preservation, survey, nomination, and active preservation of buildings, sites, structures, and objects in the community is a priority. The city was responsible for a survey of the downtown commercial district in 2008 as well as a National Register nomination for the district in 2010. The community also has several listed residential districts with preservation overlay zoning, as well as an ever increasing number of scattered, National Register listed properties. Listed properties reflect a variety of property types, ranging from an aircraft hangar from the World War II period, to Marland Mansion, and Wentz Camp. Ponca City is proud of its heritage and of the buildings associated with it.

³"Vision 2020 Ponca City Comprehensive Plan," <http://www.poncacityok.gov/DocumentCenter/View/190> (accessed May 2013).

⁴ For more information, visit <http://www.poncacitymainstreet.com/index.htm>.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Definition

A survey is the systematic process of identifying and recording historic buildings, structures, objects, districts, and sites. Surveys may be organized to look at all of the resources within a fairly small geographical area, such as a residential neighborhood, the incorporated limits of a city, or a section of land. Surveys may also identify resources relating to a specific theme within a county, region, or state.

Purpose

The principal purpose of a survey is to gather the information needed to plan for the wise use of a community's resources. The historic resources in a community or neighborhood give it special character and cultural depth. To use those resources effectively, to respect their value, and to extend their lives, it is necessary to integrate historic preservation into community planning. Survey information can be used to prepare a preservation plan that helps the community establish policies, procedures, and strategies for maintaining and enhancing those resources that make the community special. Survey data can also facilitate the review of federally funded or permitted projects that are subject to compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Uses

Survey information is used for a variety of purposes

- To identify and to document individual properties and districts eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places;
- To identify districts, individual properties, or archeological sites that warrant further study;
- To identify areas that are not eligible for the National Register and warrant no further study at the time of the survey;
- To document the existence and distribution of specific property types;
- To provide a context for evaluating properties nominated to the National Register; and
- To assist in long-range planning for the protection of significant resources;

Survey Types

Intensive

In an *intensive* survey, the goal is to document all historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and potential districts in the study area. Detailed research is

conducted on each individually property, sufficient to enable an evaluation of the property's eligibility for listing in the National Register.

Reconnaissance

The goal of a *reconnaissance* level survey is to estimate the distribution of historic properties in an area and to identify individual properties and areas that warrant further study. As such, it becomes the foundation for future survey and research efforts. Reconnaissance surveys generally fall into two categories: windshield survey and sample survey. In a windshield survey, researchers drive the streets and roads of a defined geographical area. The basic purpose of the windshield survey is to get a general picture of the distribution of different types and styles of properties, and of the character of different neighborhoods. Representative streetscape photographs that characterize the area are then taken and ultimately, a short description is written describing the character of the study unit. The purpose of the sample survey is to record minimum-level documentation on all properties that appear to be eligible for listing in the National Register and on representative properties within the study unit. Minimum-level documentation includes a survey form and photographs. Included photographs were taken by the surveyor and are on file at the SHPO unless otherwise noted. In Oklahoma, a reconnaissance level survey generally includes elements of both the windshield and sample survey.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

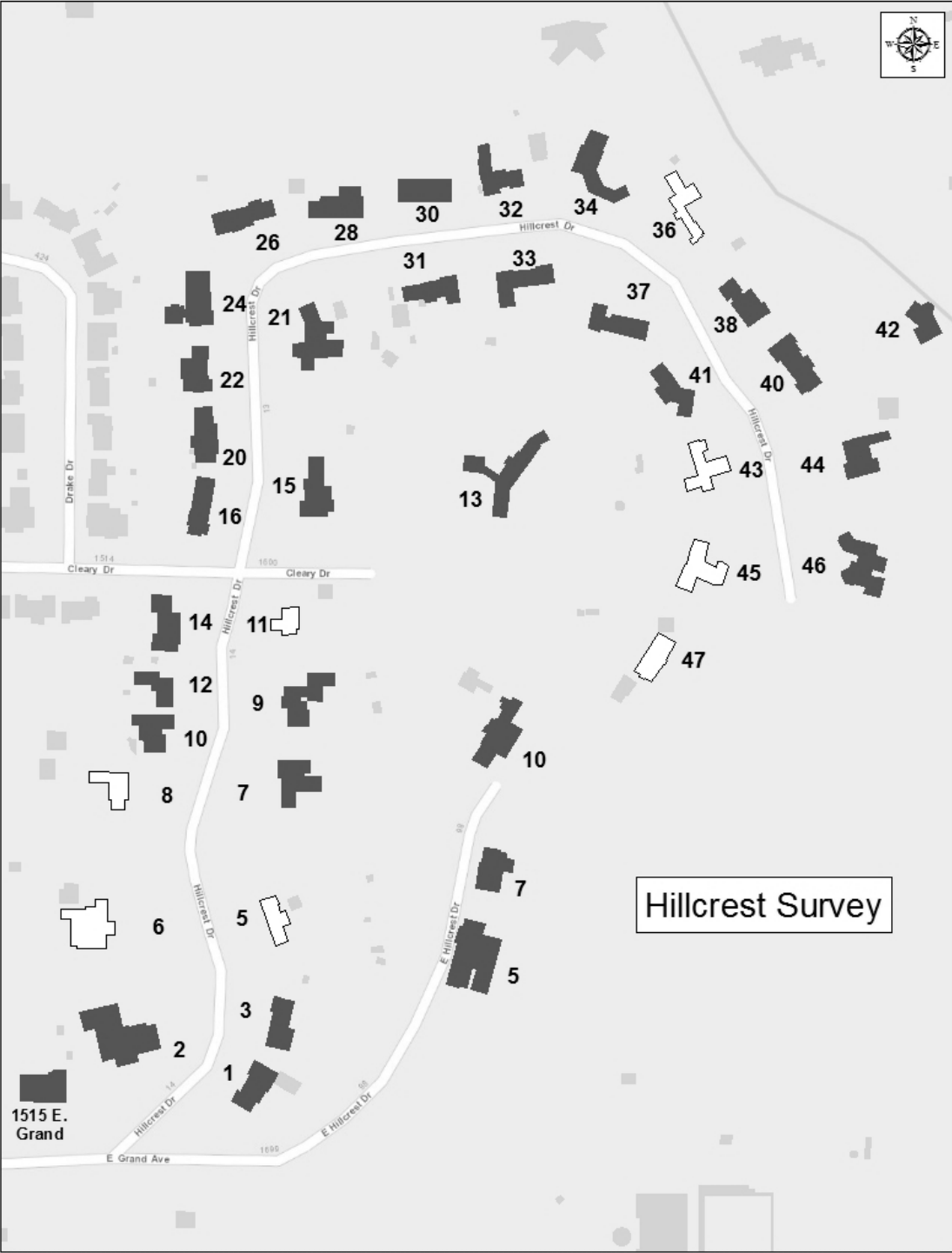
The purpose of this survey was to locate, identify, and document all buildings, site, structures, objects, and districts within the survey area that meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The results of this project will provide a basis for nominating eligible properties to the National Register and will assist the city with long range planning and preservation.

Each property within the survey boundaries was documented at a minimum level, regardless of age or condition. Minimum level documentation includes the completion of a Historic Preservation Resource Identification Form (HPRI) and two photographs. The properties were also keyed to a survey map. The collected information was used to determine the property's eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places, as either an individual property or as part of a historic district.

Over the years, many modifications have been made to individual properties within the survey area. Although each residence is assessed for its overall individual retention of integrity, there are several common alterations that affect a property's designation as eligible or as contributing/non-contributing. These include the replacement of original materials, such as cladding, windows, and doors, as well as additions. The effect of such replacements on the individual eligibility or the contributing/non-contributing status of a property depends on the material, its application, and its location. Radical and overwhelming alterations completed outside the period of significance dramatically detract from the historic character of a property and result in its ineligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

AREA SURVEYED

The subject area of this survey is the area commonly referred to as Hillcrest, within the city limits of Ponca City, Kay County, Oklahoma. Geographically, the survey area can be defined as follows: beginning at the intersection of South 14th Street and Grand Avenue; thence East along Grand Avenue a distance of approximately 800' to the intersection of Hillcrest Drive; thence North along Hillcrest Drive to the intersection of Cleary Drive; thence continuing North along Hillcrest Drive a distance of approximately 500'; thence curving to the East and continuing to the end of Hillcrest Drive being a cul-de-sac/dead end street; AND Beginning at the intersection of Grand Avenue, Hillcrest Drive and East Hillcrest Drive; thence continuing East and Northeasterly along East Hillcrest Drive to the end of the cul-de-sac/dead end street.



METHODOLOGY

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's most historic places. It was established with the passage of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Properties listed in the National Register must be significant for their association with a historic event or notable person, or be architecturally or archaeologically significant. Properties meeting one or more of these criteria must then be further evaluated to ensure that the property's historic integrity is intact. Historic integrity is related to a building, site, structure, object, or district's ability to convey its historic significance. In laymen's terms, the historic elements of a property should continue to be recognizable. Integrity is assessed based on a property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Prior to beginning fieldwork, the surveyor reviewed documentary and archival sources relating to Ponca City and Kay County. The previous surveys, Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory database, and existing National Register nominations were extremely helpful in providing a starting point for the research process. Resources utilized include Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, local histories, newspapers (particularly the vertical file at the Ponca City Public Library), historic photographs, and Kay County Clerk property records. Each residence was recorded and photographed. The field work was compiled and each property assessed based on the standards provided in the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.

PROPERTY LIST

Property Address	Opinion of NRHP Eligibility	Date of Construction
1 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1948
2 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	CA 1976
3 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1953
5 HILLCREST DRIVE	INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	CA 1923
6 HILLCREST DRIVE	INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1927
7 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1967
8 HILLCREST DRIVE	INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1922
9 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1923
10 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1957
11 HILLCREST DRIVE	INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1928
12 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1957
13 HILLCREST DRIVE	INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1927
14 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1956
15 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE	1952

	FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	
16 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1960
20 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1953
21 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1950
22 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1953
24 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1952
26 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1954
28 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1954
30 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1953
31 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1950
32 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1954
33 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1950
34 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1953
36 HILLCREST DRIVE	INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1938/1948
37 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1955
38 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER	1954

	OF HISTORIC PLACES	
40 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1952
41 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1952
42 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1958
43 HILLCREST DRIVE	INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1952
44 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1951
45 HILLCREST DRIVE	INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1952
46 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	CA 1930/2009
47 HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1927/1981
5 EAST HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	CA 1968
7 EAST HILLCREST DRIVE	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1996
10 EAST HILLCREST	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1948/1949
1515 E GRAND	NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	1958

RESULTS

Architecturally, there are some outstanding properties located within the survey boundaries, representative of the predominant styles of the early twentieth century as well as the work of locally and regionally prominent architect, John Duncan Forsyth. However, the survey area lacks continuity necessary for creating a district with architectural or historical significance. As will be discussed in the historic context, the area was developed over a relatively long period of time, with construction as recently as 1968, making the definition of a single contiguous district difficult.

The lots in the older section of the area to the south and those in the newer section (Drake Park and Enfield) to the north are drastically different, as the types, styles, and sizes of the houses found in each section. The houses found in the newer, northern section of the survey area are reflective of changes to housing trends found in the 1950s and 1960s. There are smaller ranch style homes as well as larger, sprawling ranches. And there are several modern style, even architect designed properties. Although located in close proximity, these neighborhoods are worlds apart in terms of architecture. The ranch style homes are decent examples of the style and type, but are certainly not the best examples of the ranch style in this community and certainly do not meet National Register of Historic Places criteria as representing a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. There are too many intrusions in the older section to the south to create a district dating to the 1920s and 1930s. The homes in this area are bound by the common link to Marland Oil and for the most part, the link to John Duncan Forsyth, but only six of the thirteen properties within this section could be counted as contributing resources. And the most notable of those properties are individually eligible for listing in the National Register.

INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES

Although there is not a National Register eligible district within the boundaries of Hillcrest, the area contains a number of properties individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places due to their architecture and or their association with the historic development of Ponca City.

5 Hillcrest Drive



Number 5 Hillcrest Drive is an outstanding local example of the Tudor Revival Style as envisioned by John Duncan Forsyth. Built for Marland VP, George Shalenberger, the home was built in 1923 but changed hands frequently due to the volatility of the oil business.⁵

John Duncan Forsyth moved to Tulsa in 1921 to partner with John McDonnell and then proceeded to Ponca City expressly to work for E.W. Marland. This L'Ecole des Beaux Arts trained, Scottish architect is best known in Ponca City for designing the Marland Mansion (completed in 1928), but he was responsible for designing a host of other residential and commercial buildings throughout the community, a number of which can be found within the survey area.⁶

⁵ *Ponca City News*, June 3, 1990 and December 10, 1997

⁶ Jim Gabbert, "5 Buildings by John Duncan Forsyth," *Preservation Oklahoma News*, July 2006.

6 Hillcrest Drive



This Spanish Colonial Revival style residence has a storied past and lengthy historical name. Built by John Duncan Forsyth for geologist Dr. W.A.J.M. van Waterschool van der Gracht, this painted brick clad residence is a single story with full basement. Although the Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival style is common in Ponca City, this variation of the style (utilizing painted brick and the low, single story profile) is not typical of this style in Ponca City.⁷

⁷ *Ponca City News*, January 13, 1993

8 Hillcrest Drive



The Lackey-Alcorn Home is an outstanding local example of a two story upright and wing example of the popular Colonial Revival. Also designed by John Duncan Forsyth for a high ranking Marland Oil official, this home retains a very high degree of historic integrity for being built in 1922.⁸

11 Hillcrest Drive



The Frank Lucas Home at 11 Hillcrest Drive was designed by John Duncan Forsyth in 1928 and is a locally significant example of its style associated with

⁸ Historic Homes of Kay County, 83-87; *Ponca City News*, January 27, 1993

John Duncan Forsyth. This limestone clad Tudor Revival cottage was reportedly built using excess materials from the Marland Mansion nearby. There have been some minor alterations on the north facade of the residence, but overall, this locally historic home retains a high degree of historic integrity.⁹

13 Hillcrest Drive



The Jack Cleary Mansion at 13 Hillcrest Drive is one of the oldest homes in Hillcrest and has always been the focal point of the neighborhood, despite set back at the end of a private drive surrounded by trees. Also designed by John Duncan Forsyth, this Colonial Revival style residence is locally known as the “House of Seven Gables.”

⁹ *Ponca City News*, January 20, 1993 and November 28, 2001

36 Hillcrest Drive



The Charles Morrill Home at 36 Hillcrest Drive is locally known as the “House of the Seven Stables.” Originally designed by John Duncan Forsyth to house the ponies of the Cleary children, the property and accompanying land was purchased in 1948 by the Morrill family to live on and to develop for real estate purposes.¹⁰ The family slowly renovated the interior of the home, leaving much of the original exterior virtually untouched. The modifications themselves have now taken on historic significance and the residence is a unique example of a modified John Duncan Forsyth.

¹⁰ Historic Homes of Kay County, 91-92; *Ponca City News* April 28, 1993

43 Hillcrest Drive



Tulsa born architect Bob Buchner trained at the University of Michigan, returning to Oklahoma to practice architecture after World War II. Buchner was regionally known for his contemporary style, akin to the works of later Frank Lloyd Wright and Bruce Goff, but subtly unique. Buchner designed several homes in Ponca City starting in 1951, two of which are known to be located in Hillcrest.

Forty-three Hillcrest Drive was designed and built for Constance Cleary Clark, daughter of Jack Cleary (former Marland executive and independent oil producer), in the 1950s. The Constance Cleary Clark house was “a very low budget design” with much of the house fitting in well with the other ranch style homes in the neighborhood and just a few details, particularly at the gable ends, exhibiting a more contemporary style reminiscent of Bruce Goff.¹¹

¹¹ *Historic Homes of Kay County*, 148-153

45 Hillcrest Drive



Also designed by Bob Buchner, 45 Hillcrest Drive was the second Ponca City home built for the Cleary Family (of 13 Hillcrest Drive). The Clearys wanted to downsize from their mansion, and in 1952, Buchner designed a tri-level contemporary home for them nearby. The colorful bands of vertical and horizontal windows are uncommon for residential construction and instead are reminiscent of school design at the time.¹²

¹² *Historic Homes of Kay County*, 148-153

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Ponca City is located in southeastern Kay County, just south of the Kansas state line in north central Oklahoma. Ponca City and Kay County were part of the so-called “Cherokee Outlet” the area of land guaranteed to the Cherokee Nation by the federal government to provide access to their ancestral hunting grounds in the west. The land was also home to other Native American tribes, including the Tonkawa and the Ponca, peoples forcibly removed to the area in the 1800s. The land was desirable for grazing purposes during the era of the great cattle drives. Initially, ranchers grazed their herds without compensating the tribes, but eventually, a price per head rental was paid. In 1873, the Cherokee Strip Cattlemen’s Association was formed and the entire area was leased by the Association from the tribes. Although it had been given in perpetuity, increasing pressure from white settlers in the 1880s led to the opening of the Cherokee Outlet for settlement in 1893. Prior to the opening, the land was surveyed and broken into seven, lettered counties. Kay County was initially “K” county. Settlers could claim 160 acres, a quarter section.¹³ (Cherokee Outlet Opening, *Chronicles of Ponca City*)

In the months leading to the run, potential settlers from across the country and even around the world flocked to Arkansas City, just across the Kansas state line. Among those settlers was B.S. Barnes, a Michigan businessman looking to make it rich in real estate. His idea was to subdivide whatever 160 acres he claimed into a new town. The federal government had already surveyed and staked off numerous towns, but there was little opportunity to make money from selling lots in a government controlled township. So, B.S. Barnes traveled the Strip, looking for an additional, better townsite, eventually stumbling across a spring just outside of the Ponca Reservation. The site was near the current railroad line and the water in the natural spring was potable and abundant. Barnes brought in surveyors to plat the area and returned to Arkansas City, promoting his new town and forming the Ponca City Townsite Company. His company sold city lots for \$2.00 a piece and lots were to be distributed through a drawing.¹⁴

On the day of the opening, B.S. Barnes participated with thousands of others. He arrived at his “town” and staked his claim, but others claimed the quarter

¹³ Alvin O. Turner, “Cherokee Outlet Opening,” *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia> (accessed June 24, 2013); Louis Seymour Barnes, “The Founding of Ponca City,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 35 (Summer 1957): 154-162.

¹⁴ Barnes, *ibid.*

section as well. Eventually, Barnes was able to negotiate with other claimants and his plans for distribution of the lots was carried out. On September 21, 1893, a drawing was held in the new town and over 2,000 lots were awarded to individuals who had purchased tickets. The city was incorporated in December 1893.

The new town grew overnight as settlers began building frame businesses and residences. Initially, though, the town's potential was hampered by problems with transporting water from the spring and with access to the railroad. The government platted town of Cross was located within a mile of the Ponca City townsite and the Santa Fe railroad stop was there. Barnes and other Ponca Citizens attempted to convince the Santa Fe to add a stop at Ponca City but their efforts were initially unsuccessful. It was not until 1894 that service to Ponca City began, with a boxcar depot serving the needs of the community. Initially, the railroad and the postal service insisted on referring to the new community as New Ponca. Ponca Station was located at the community of White Eagle, several miles away. It took several years for the name Ponca City to become officially recognized. Cross and Ponca City continued to compete until B.S. Barnes convinced the Santa Fe station master in Cross to move to Ponca City. With that defection, other Cross residents and businesses moved, literally, to nearby Ponca City. Eventually, the Cross community would be annexed into Ponca City.¹⁵

Ponca City quickly became a commercial center, the principal city of Kay County and north central Oklahoma. It was a trading post for Native Americans and farmers. Wheat was the major crop and ranching continued to be an important industry. By 1894, the city had its first flour mill and electric lights. Telephones arrived in 1896. In 1900, the first phase of the City Hall was complete. In that same year, a massive fire on Grand Avenue destroyed many of the original frame businesses. As they rebuilt, business owners chose to construct more permanent brick structures. In 1901, the city laid the first brick sidewalks. In 1909, the city received \$6,500 for the construction of a public library from the Carnegie Foundation. By 1910, Ponca City's population had reached approximately 4,000 and the city boasted a waterworks, public sewers, an iron works, ice cream factory, and three grain elevators.¹⁶

In 1905, natural gas was discovered near Ponca City and the city's history would forever be altered. At first, the discovery had little impact on the community, oil

¹⁵ Paula Carmack Denson, "Ponca City," *Oklahoma Encyclopedia of History and Culture*" <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia>, (accessed June 24, 2013); Barnes, *ibid.*

¹⁶ Barnes; *Ponca City News*, "History of Ponca City," <http://poncacity.com/centennial/index.htm> (accessed June 2013).

exploration in Oklahoma centered on the Osage reservation to the east. But in 1908, large scale exploration for oil and natural gas in Kay County would begin with the arrival of E.W. Marland. Marland began drilling in the coal fields of West Virginia. Marland was the first oil man to use geology to successfully locate oil. He heard of the natural gas finds in the Ponca City area and decided to explore the possibility. Marland was the first to drill for oil in Kay County. Actually, his first well was the first one drilled west of Osage County. His first well was located on lands belonging to the Millers on the 101 Ranch. The first well was unsuccessful, but in 1910, a second well in the same area was a gasser. His ninth well struck oil and the 101 Ranch Oil Company was formed. With Marland's eventual success, oil and gas exploration in Ponca City would become a major industry in 1911. The first major field was opened at Mervine in 1913, followed by the North Newkirk in 1916, and the Three Sands Field in 1921. Typical of other boom times, Ponca City soon resembled a Wild West community, with gun fights, cattle rustlers, prostitutes, and an overall sense of lawlessness despite the sudden prosperity. The discovery of oil and natural gas resulted in a dramatic population increase in Ponca City and surrounding areas of Kay County, as well as a shift in the economic activities of the community, as the area shifted from primarily agrarian to primarily oil related.¹⁷ (Book on Marland, "Marland Oil")

In 1915, E.W. Marland established a refinery for his oil at Ponca City, also adding a research center to develop new and better petroleum products. His company was now known as Marland Oil. By 1922, Marland would control one-tenth of the world's oil reserves and more than one-third of Ponca City's population would be employed by Marland Oil. Marland rewarded his employees generously and also gave lavishly to the local community, helping to build churches and other public facilities. Marland was a builder, and brought in architect John Duncan Forsyth to design private and business related facilities throughout Ponca City. (Book on Marland, "Marland Oil")

In 1911, another oil man would arrive in the area and make his mark. Louis "Lew" Wentz was originally an attorney who came to the area to protect the interests of a client who was speculating in oil leases. Eventually, Wentz himself became involved in buying up oil interests and drilling. He was successful and chose to stay in the area, becoming locally and regionally famous for his

¹⁷ John Joseph Mathews, *Life and Death of an Oilman: the Career of E.W. Marland* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951); Bobby D. Weaver, "Marland Oil Company," *Oklahoma Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia> (accessed June 2013).

generosity to the community. He built businesses and helped establish recreational and health care facilities in the area.¹⁸

The area that is the subject of this survey is legally difficult to describe. Locally referred to as Hillcrest, the area has also been referred to as Country Club-Hillcrest and as “Snob Hill.” Legally, the study area includes portions of the Enfield and Drake Park Subdivisions, as well as unplatted land and what is referred to as Ponca City Hillcrest. However, there is no legally filed plat named Hillcrest in this location. The only legally platted Hillcrest Addition in Kay County is located in another city (which is why legal descriptions for properties in the subject area include PC Hillcrest). Other sources refer to the area as Country Club Subdivision. However, the legally platted Country Club Subdivision of Ponca City is located in Section 23 of Township 26 North Range 2E and it was not platted until 1956 (Sanborn maps also refer to the area as Country Club, but it is not well mapped because it was outside the city limits). The area that is the subject of this survey project is located in Section 26 of Township 26 North Range 2E. According to the Kay County Clerk’s office, Hillcrest properties are on their list of real estate anomalies for which they have no real explanation.

Whatever its legal description, much of the area known as Hillcrest was originally owned by E.W. Marland and used as a golf course. Development began in the 1920s with the construction of homes for Marland’s “lieutenants”¹⁹ upper level executives also known as his “brain trust.” According to *Historic Homes of Kay County*, the original Country Club addition was to contain fifty tracts, each approximately one acre. But the vision never transpired, and far fewer homes were completed before the demise of Marland Oil at the end of the 1920s.

In 1928, Marland Oil Company became part of Continental Oil (Conoco), as a result of a hostile takeover by J.P. Morgan. Conoco continued exploration and research and development in the Ponca City area, bringing new jobs and construction projects. No longer in control of the oil company he’d built, E.W. Marland chose to become involved in state politics, although he also started to rebuild Marland Oil. As governor, Marland was instrumental in bringing WPA projects to Oklahoma during the Great Depression and in establishing the Interstate Oil Compact.²⁰

¹⁸ Linda D. Wilson, “Louis Haines Wentz,” *Oklahoma Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia> (accessed June 2013).

¹⁹ *Ponca City News*, April 28, 1993

²⁰ “Our History,” *ConocoPhillips*, <http://www.conocophillips.com/who-we-are/our-legacy/history/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed June 2013); Mathews, *Life and Death of an Oilman*; Weaver, “Marland Oil.”

Other portions of Hillcrest were originally part of the Cleary Estate, an unplatted area located to the northeast of the original 1920s development in Hillcrest. John Cleary and his wife, Helen, were native New Yorkers who moved to Ponca City in 1919. Cleary was head of the land department at Marland Oil and he later became a successful independent producer. In 1926, the Cleary's built a large Colonial Revival style residence at 13 Hillcrest Drive, locally known as the House of Seven Gables. The house was located on thirty-five acres and included several stables.²¹ In 1948, the Cleary family sold twenty-four acres of their estate to Charles Morrill, a Conoco employee. The Morrill's would renovate and live in a barn on the land (locally known as the "House of the Seven Stables" and located at 36 Hillcrest Drive), but the remainder was subdivided into the fifteen lots of the Enfield Addition in May of 1949. Local realtor, Marguerite Drake, was engaged to sell the lots and received three acres of the land as her commission. This land would be developed as the Drake Park Subdivision in the same year.²²

Over the years, the fortunes of Ponca City would continue to rise and fall with that of the oil business. The commercial success of the community and its residents is evident in the extant properties. Many of the homes in Hillcrest were built during the boom years of the oil industry, for high ranking executives at Marland Oil and later Conoco. The houses of Hillcrest stand as lasting reminders of the businesses and the individuals who were instrumental in the early growth and prosperity of this community.

²¹ *Ponca City News*, December 11, 1996; *Historic Homes of Kay County*, 88-90

²² *Ponca City News*, April 28, 1993; *Historic Homes of Kay County*, 91-92

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Kathy and John Brooks Walton. *Historic Homes of Ponca City Kay County*. JBW Publications: 2005.

This resource provides an overview of a number of historic residential properties across Kay County, many of which are located in Ponca City. It also provides some information on architects other than John Duncan Forsyth, including Bob Buchner, the other known architect who designed properties in Hillcrest.

Conoco Phillips, "Our History." <http://www.conocophillips.com/who-we-are/our-legacy/history/Pages/1909-1929.aspx> (accessed May 2013).

The Conoco Phillips Company maintains a brief overview of the company's development, starting with Continental Oil, and then the acquisition and merger with other oil companies.

Daughters of the American Revolution, *The Last Run, Kay County, Oklahoma, 1893*. Ponca City, OK: privately published, 1993.

Although an imperfect source as to some historical specifics, *The Last Run* is an oft referred to local resource on the city's past.

Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia> (accessed May 2013).

This online resource covers a variety of research topics related to Ponca City and the oil boom. These include articles on E.W. Marland, the Cherokee Outlet opening, on the city of Ponca City, as well Lew Wentz.

"History of Ponca City." <http://poncacity.com/centennial/index.htm> (accessed May 2013).

This locally maintained website provides a year by year account of significant events as gleaned from the pages of the Ponca City News and published in the paper in anticipation of the state's Centennial in 2007.

“Historic Homes” Vertical File at Ponca City Public Library

The Ponca City Public Library maintains an excellent collection of news clippings and other publications on a variety of topics, primarily from the *Ponca City News*. There are numerous files helpful for preservation research, dealing with downtown buildings, churches, schools, and residential properties throughout Ponca City. In addition to news clippings, there are maps and brochures from various events, including home tours.

Kay County Assessor Records

The Kay County Assessor’s office participates in the Courthouse USA program, making a minimal amount of data from their records easily accessible from anywhere. The photos provided are generally very limited, there is no mapping functionality, and no sketch of the resource is provided. The County Assessor also maintains copies of recorded plat maps.

Matthews, John Joseph. *Life and Death of an Oilman: the Career of E.W. Marland*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951.

Matthew’s biography provides a detailed glimpse into the tumultuous life of E.W. Marland. Particularly noteworthy for this and other projects related to Ponca City is discussion of his company, as well as Marland’s philanthropy and his love of architecture.

Ponca City News

The *Ponca City News* is a daily paper operating in Ponca City. According to the paper, the *News* was created with the merger of the *Ponca City Courier* and the *Ponca City Democrat* in 1918. Both papers originally date to the period just after the land opening. In the 1990s, the paper ran a special series on the homes built for E.W. Marland’s top executives, many of which were located in Hillcrest. These special articles provide some history of the house as well as history of the families who have resided within it.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Ponca City, Oklahoma. 1925, 1931, 1931 update.

Unfortunately, the Sanborn maps could shed little light on the development of Hillcrest. These maps, developed to help insurance agents determine policy rates, typically show change over time to a specific locale, as well as shape, size, and building materials. The 1925, 1931 and updated 1931 versions Ponca City versions were referred to for purposes of this project. Hillcrest was located outside the city limits during those time periods, although the 1925 and 1931 versions do show Marland's golf course and the Country Club Subdivision (along with Cleary Drive and Hillcrest Road) on the overlay map, but there is no detailed information on the area. In the 1931 update (from 1947), Country Club Subdivision is now incorporated and the golf course is shown as McFadden Park.

SUMMARY

The Hillcrest Addition, despite being a misnomer, is an area of Ponca City rich in history and architectural resources. Encompassing multiple subdivisions as well as unplatted areas, this portion of the community possesses numerous architect designed properties worthy of recognition locally and for their association with regionally significant architects John Duncan Forsyth and Bob Buckner. The other homes in the area are average examples of the styles most common during their periods of construction (between 1940 and 1970).