United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Attucks School

Other names/site number Southeast Elementary School, Attucks Alternative Academy

2. Location

street & number 346 South Fourth ☐ not for publication

city of town Vinita ☐ vicinity

State Oklahoma code OK county Craig code 035 zip code 74301

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this X 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 X 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** X **local**

Bob Blackburn — Signature of certifying official/

10-20-09 — Date

Director - SHPO — Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of certifying official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

✓ entered in the National Register — Edson H. Beall — 12-3-09

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [ ] private
- [X] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

- [X] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	Objects
1	0	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: School

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: School

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement: Art Deco

Other: WPA

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick, Stone

roof: Rubber

other:

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- [X] 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
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- [ ] A owed 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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education
Ethnic Heritage/Black

Period of Significance
1916-1958

Significant Dates

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
WPA: Gymnasium
County: 1916 School

Period of Significance (justification)
The period of significance for the school extends from 1916, when the first portion of the existing school was erected, to 1958, when the last students were integrated into other schools.

Criteria Consideratons (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Attucks High School sets on three acres in a residential neighborhood at South 4th Street and South East Avenue in Vinita. Located mid-block, the school is surrounded by vegetation. The brick school was constructed in 1916-17 as a separate school. An addition was constructed 1925 which doubled the school size. In 1939 a WPA gymnasium was constructed. Stylistically the school is a combination of a simplified Art Deco and WPA construction. Two historic brick chimney are located on the northeast and southwest elevations. As is typical throughout the United States, some of the windows have been replaced with ca. 1970 aluminum frame windows. The doors throughout the building are non-historic, metal, glazed, panel.

Narrative Description
(see continuation sheets)

The building has been most noticeably altered by the replacement of doors and some windows. These changes are not uncommon to schools that are still in use and, notably, only the windows on the southeast elevation of the 1925 addition. Because the window dimensions have not been modified and the overall fenestration pattern remains clearly evident, these alterations have not destroyed the ability of the building to convey its significance. The multiple additions to the building all occurred within the property's period of significance and, thus, do not have a negative impact on the building's historic integrity. Other minor changes have occurred to the individual components of the building but, overall, it retains a good degree of integrity and clearly communicates its historic role in education in the community.

The façade, northwest elevation, is three bays wide with a projecting central bay. Common decorative elements on the façade include a belt course of brick along the first floor, decorative brick banding in the cornice and elaborate square brick designs at the corners of the cornice. Located in the center of the cornice in the projecting bay is a relief plaque and elaborate square brick designs at the corners. The roof line is capped with a stone coping. Located on either side of the projecting bay, on both the first and second floors is a pair of one-over-one windows with stone sills and brick soldier course lintels. Located on the first floor of the projecting bay is an arched brick opening with a modern door. The second floor has a six pane window. Located between the first and second floor is a modern metal canopy.

The southwest elevation has common decorative elements including a belt course of brick along the first floor, brick banding in the cornice and elaborate square brick designs at the corners of the cornice. The roof line is capped with a stone coping. Both the first and second floors have four windows with stone sills and brick soldier course lintels at the northwest-southwest corner. The southeast-southwest corner projects slightly. The first and second floors of this section have two sets of four windows with stone sills and brick soldier course lintels. The cornice on this section is stepped. Located along this elevation is the original spiral staircase which leads to a second floor classroom.

The southeast elevation has been concealed partially by a 1939 WPA gymnasium addition. The first floor has four two pane windows. The second floor has four three pane windows. The windows have stone sills and brick lintels.

The northeast elevation has common decorative elements including a belt course of brick along the first floor, brick banding in the cornice and elaborate square brick designs at the corners of the cornice. The roof line is capped with a stone coping. Both the first and second floors have four windows with stone sills and brick soldier course lintels at the northwest-northeast corner. The northeast-southeast corner projects slightly. The first and second floors of this section have two sets of four windows with stone sills and brick soldier course lintels. The cornice on this section is stepped.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of signficance and applicable criteria)

The Attucks School, located in Vinita, Craig County, Oklahoma, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A for its historic significance as a separate primary and secondary school in Vinita. The applicable areas of significance are education and black ethnic heritage. The Attucks School served the black community of Vinita as a combined elementary, junior and high school. It was not the only black school in Craig County, as there were seven, but it was the only secondary school that was available to blacks until after desegregation in the mid-1950s. While the Vinita public school system readily desegregated as required by law following the landmark decisions of *Brown vs. Board of Education,* it took upwards of three years for desegregation to occur in Vinita. Attucks School is also significant under Criterion A for its association with New Deal era programs. The WPA constructed the gymnasium/auditorium wing in 1939.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)
(see continuation sheets)

For more than three decades, the Attucks School fundamentally served the black community of Vinita. In addition to educating the area black students on a primary level, the school provided the only means of secondary education for black students in Vinita from 1925 until 1958. The existing building, with its various additions constructed over the decades of use, merits recognition for its historic role in education in Vinita. The Attucks School is testimony to the triumph of black education from 1916 through 1958.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)
(see continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____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 #_____

Primary location of additional data:

__X__State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
__X__Local government
____University
____Other
Name of repository: Oklahoma Historical Society/SHPO

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3 acres
(do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15N	307671	4056054	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

Block 99, Lot 55, 7 and all of Lots 8, 9 & 10

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries include all the land that has historically been associated with the school.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Glenda Downing/Counselor Tech Vinita Public School & Emma Rose Moore/Retired Teacher
Edits by: Lynda Schwan/OK SHPO National Register Program Coordinator

organization Vinita Public School date 22 May 2009

street & number 346 South Fourth telephone 918-256-6470

city or town Vinita state OK zip code 74301

e-mail downingk@vinitahornets.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Old Attucks High School

City or Vicinity: Vinita

County: Craig **State:** Oklahoma

Photographer: Lynda Schwan

Date Photographed: 07 August 2009

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

No.	Subject	Dir.
0001	Southwest elevation	NE
0002	Southwest elevation	NE
0003	Interior	

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.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

The 1939 WPA gymnasium is located at the southwest-southeast corner of the school building. Common decorative details of the addition include rusticated masonry, stone sills and lintels, and stone copings. The façade, southwest elevation has a stepped cornice and stepped wall surface. The central projecting bays have two long narrow four pane windows, each capped with a decorative relief panel and a single pane window with a decorative relief panel above each entrance. On either side of the narrow windows is a projecting one-story entrance accessed by two steps with stone knee walls capped with stone. Above each door is a stone panel; one states "Attucks School Auditorium;" the other states "Attucks School Gymnasium." At each corner of this elevation is a window opening that has been covered with wood panels.

The northwest has no openings as this is where the two buildings are attached. The southeast elevation of the gymnasium has two window openings at the basement level and two window openings on the main level. All have been covered with wood panels.

The northeast elevation has four long narrow windows openings that have been covered with wood paneling in the center. Located at the southeast corner is a wood panel door. Located at the northwest corner is a set of wood and glass doors. Above the door is a window opening that has been covered with wood paneling.

Interior:
The interior of the school retains it original floor plan and detailing. Features include plaster walls and ceilings, wood floors, blackboards, radiators and wooden shelving. The principal's office, cafeteria and counselor's office are all still located on the second floor.

Education has long been one of the foundations of community development. Unfortunately, during the first half of the twentieth century, the educational opportunities for black schoolchildren were stifled by racism, a shortage of money and inadequate facilities. These conditions were allowed to persist relatively unchecked for decades by federal laws that allowed and state laws that mandated separate schools for white and black children. Although black schools in towns and cities tended to have more substantial facilities, better educated teachers and more consistent school terms than their rural counterparts, the separate schools were never accorded the resources of the majority schools as required by the law.

Despite these restrictions, the black schools were important components of the local black community and, along with churches, are typically the best remaining resource associated with the black ethnic heritage. From Oklahoma's earliest days, African-Americans comprised a significant section of the population. In 1870, more than 6,000 blacks lived in Indian Territory. Twenty years later, the federal census recorded 18,000 African-Americans in Indian Territory and 3,000 in Oklahoma Territory. Until approximately 1897, Oklahoma was fairly well integrated, however, using the "separate but equal" doctrine of the 1896 United States Supreme Court decision in the case of *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, the 1897 territorial legislature mandated racial separation of schools, juries and public facilities. Notably, the number of blacks had substantially grown to number almost 38,000 in Indian Territory and nearly 19,0000 in Oklahoma Territory by the turn-of-the-century. The policy of segregation continued into statehood when the 1907 state legislature, as one of its first undertakings, enacted a "Jim Crow" law restricting use of not only schools and public facilities but also transportation. Section III, Article XIII of the Oklahoma Constitution provided for "a complete plan of separation between the white and colored races, with impartial facilities for both races." As defined by the statute, the term "white" included all non-black races.[1]

The school system in Oklahoma was designed so that members of the majority race in the school district, either African-American or white, composed the school board, which had authority over the local school district. The county then maintained a separate school for the minority students or made arrangements for their transfer to a compatible racially composed school in another district. The majority school was supported by a tax levied on all property in the district. The minority school was maintained by a tax levied on all property in the county, not to exceed one mill. A popular method of handling this situation in urban areas was for the county to construct and maintain the building and the local district to provide the furnishings and teacher for the minority school. Notably, because many counties were unable to levy sufficient funds to adequately maintain the separate schools, the state legislature increased the amount of levy from one mill to two mills in 1921. This mill levy still remained generally inadequate to construct and maintain facilities for African-American schoolchildren which at that time exceeded 36,000 students statewide.[2]

The Attucks School District was established in 1900. The district was commonly referred to as Vinita. Before statehood, there were schools for Indian children supported by the Cherokee Nation and subscription grade schools for non-Indian children. There were two subscription grade schools in Vinita prior to statehood. One subscription school was located at North Scraper and West Sequoyah; it was moved to South 4th and East South

[1] Cynthia Savage and Jill Marsh, "Architectural/Historic Intensive Level Survey of Langston University, Langston, Oklahoma," (Available State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, March 1997), 14-15. See also Cynthia Savage, "Historic Context for the Julius Rosenwald Fund in Oklahoma" (Available Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, August 1997), 7.

[2] Savage, "Rosenwald Fund Context," 7.

Avenue to serve as the "City Negro School." City Council minutes from June 15, 1915, stated ...if the new Negro school was not built "by the county," the title to the property (lots 9 & 10, Block 99) would revert to the City. The old frame building was torn down and a new brick building was constructed by 1916.[3] The two story school allowed for two rooms on the first floor for grade school and two classrooms upstairs for the junior and senior high school. The 1925 addition added four additional rooms. Of the seven historic school buildings in Vinita, two are extant.

In 1910, the United States Census recorded 4,082 people in Vinita with 96 school aged African American children. The previous statehood census in 1907 did not enumerate based on race. By 1920, Vinita had 5,010 people with 328 claiming "Negro" as their color. Within twenty years, by 1940, the population of African Americans climbed to 630 with 235 persons being of school age.

The 1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map contained a subset map which reflected a small two story brick building at the front of the lots 9 & 10. The school has heat, gas, no lights and was labeled "Public School, Negro." The 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map also contained a subset map with the same details as the 1916 map. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map dating 1925-1941 provided additional information. On this map, the 1925 addition appears and includes the date of construction. At this point, the map labels the school "Public School, Colored."[4]

As was typical of the period, the Attucks School was more than just the source of education for the local black schoolchildren. The school with all of its extracurricular activities was an important social and community center. In addition to the popular, highly visible athletics, the school also provided a consistent outlet for musical and other academic attainments. Additionally, the school served as a resource center for the community and provided needed services and information that would have otherwise been unavailable to individual community members. Finally, the school provided reliable employment for members of the black community with positions ranging from janitor to administration.

Significantly as a separate school, the Attucks School allowed the black community a certain amount of autonomy in the education of their youth. The closure of the Attucks School reduced the direct black parental and community authority over secondary education of black students in Vinita. This was partly due to the shift of the students to a much larger school where parents, teachers and administrators were less able to exert their influence because of the overwhelming number of students. Additionally, as the minority group attending an integrated school, the black community did not have the numbers to influence policy to the degree of the majority element.

For more than three decades, the Attucks School fundamentally served the black community of Vinita. In addition to educating the area black students on a primary level, the school provided the only means of secondary education for black students in Vinita from 1925 until 1958. The existing building, with its various additions constructed over the decades of use, merits recognition for its historic role in education in Vinita. The Attucks School is testimony to the triumph of black education from 1916 through 1958.

Attucks School is also eligible under Criterion A for its association with the work undertaken by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in Vinita, Craig County. The work relief provided by the WPA allowed many destitute people to survive the trying times of the 1930s while also stimulating the local, and therefore state and

[3] Vinita City Council minutes, June 15, 1915.
[4] Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, "Vinita," 1916, 1925 and 1925-1941.

national economies. The gymnasium/auditorium is also historically significant due to its role in the educational experience of the African-American schoolchildren on Vinita. School athletic facilities allowed the area children to train their bodies as well as their minds. The building is an example of the WPA standardized style as applied to school gymnasiums/auditoriums. The building program left a legacy of architecture recognized by type, style, scale, materials and workmanship.

WPA buildings, such as the gymnasium/auditorium facility at Attucks School, were constructed principally between 1935 and 1940, although the agency itself continued through 1943. Without the economic assistance provided by the WPA, the majority of school districts could not raise the money necessary to build a new building. Critically, the WPA did not neglect the non-academic side of the American educational experience in their construction projects. The WPA constructed several athletic fields and gymnasiums thorughout the state.

The WPA workforce was drawn from the unemployed living within the project area. Workiners were qualified to work on the WPA projects by the local Public Welfare Department, working through the National Reemployment Service. The WPA paid a flat security wage, which was slightly higher than direct relief payments but lower tham comparable private employment pay. By 1937, the average pay in Oklahoma was thirty-six dollars a month for unskilled labor. Skilled and semi-skilled workers received higher wages depending on the skill required and the experinece of the workman. By 1940, the WPA enforced an eighteen month ceiling on employment. However, the worker was eligible for reemployment after thirty days and a recertification of need.

The infusion of much-needed work and money into hard pressed communities relieved the pressure of the unemployed on local, state and national economies. The WPA undertook a number of projects in Craig County, including projects related to schools, parks, armories, and public service buildings. The employment of Craig County inhabitants on these projects not only aided the economy of Vinita and Craig County but also resulted in permanent useful additions to the community. The construction of the Attucks gymnasium/auditorium allowed the expansion of educational opportunities for the local children. The gymnasium/auditorium also allowed for broader public attendance at future athletic and cultural events.

Buildings such as the Attucks gymnasium/auditorium remain a testament to the social ills and remedies of the 1930's. Overwelmingly functional and utilitarian in nature, the building nonetheless represents the local and national efforts to ressite the debilitating effects of the worst depression in American history with a certain fortitude and style. The buidling reflects an overall identifiable character not evident in other New Deal era or subsequent building programs.

The Attucks School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A for its historic significance as a separate primary and secondary school in Vinita. The applicable areas of significance are education and black ethnic heritage. The Attucks School served the black community of Vinita as a combined elementary, junior and high school. It was not the only black school in Craig County, as there were seven, but it was the only secondary school that was available to blacks until after desegregation in the mid-1950s. While the Vinita public school system readily desegregated as required by law following the landmark decisions of *Brown vs. Board of Education,* it took upwards of three years for desegregation to occur in Vinita. Attucks School is also significant under Criterion A for its association with New Deal era programs. The WPA constructed the gymnasium/auditorium wing in 1939.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Vinita City Council Minutes: June 15, 1925 and October 5, 1915.

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