



Name of Property: Honey Springs Battlefield
City, State: McIntosh and Muskogee Counties, Oklahoma
Period of Significance: 1863-1866
NHL Criteria: 1
NHL Themes: I. Peopling Places
5. Ethnic Homelands
6. Encounters, conflicts and colonization
IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
3. Military Institutions and Activities
Previous Recognition: 1970 National Register of Historic Places
National Historic Context: I. Cultural Developments: Indigenous American Populations
VI. The Civil War
C. War in the West
X. Westward Expansion of the British Colonies and the United States, 1763-1898
C. Military-Aboriginal American Contact and Conflict
2. The Southern Plains
XXX. American Ways of Life
E. Ethnic Communities

NHL Significance:

- The Battle of Honey Springs, which took place on July 17, 1863, occurred within the



context of the American Civil War and was partially the result of Indian nations' alliances with the Confederacy. The battle was also the climax of a devastating concurrent civil war within the Cherokee and Creek nations.

- The battle was by far the largest engagement of the 1861-1865 period of conflict within Indian Territory, which saw more than 150 battles and skirmishes. It was the largest in Indian Territory in which Indian men fought as members of national regiments (Union and Confederate), and the first and largest in which Indian troops of both sides fought in the formalized style of Anglo-American warfare.
- This watershed event in the histories of the Cherokee, Creek (Muskogee), Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw nations--the "Five Civilized Tribes" of the Indian Territory--also had a far-reaching impact on other Indian peoples and nineteenth-century American national development.
- The battle was highly significant as the largest and among the first engagements in which slaves formerly owned by members of the five Indian Nations participated in Union uniform and among the first major engagement of black troops as Union soldiers.
- To restore peace, all five nations were forced to sign Reconstruction Treaties in 1866 which radically changed their sovereignty, land base, social structure, and relationship with the United States.

Integrity:

- The site possesses a high level of historic integrity. The location of the battle has been documented using primary and secondary documentary sources and archeological investigations. The site retains its setting, including its relationship to surrounding natural features and open spaces.

Owners of Property: Oklahoma Historical Society owns the majority of the property within the Honey Springs Battlefield Park (approximately 928 acres); Mary Martin (1 acre parcel); and Pumpkin Ridge Cemetery Association (1.35 acres).

Acreage of Property: approximately 930 acres

Origins of Nomination: An NHL nomination was originally proposed in the early 2000s, and a nomination proposing a 1,272-acre NHL was placed on the Landmarks Committee agenda in 2003. However, a majority of the 30 owners objected to the designation and the nomination was therefore withdrawn from the agenda. With the forthcoming 150th anniversary of the battle in 2013, the Oklahoma Historical Society recently proposed revisiting the nomination process. The historical society identified the core area of the battle through archival research and archeological surveys and proposed new boundaries. The revised boundaries include the key battle positions where the majority of the critical action took place and strategic landscape features. The proposed boundary encompasses the locations of the decisive actions: the opening of the engagement; the main skirmish and the turning point of the battle; the Texas Road crossing at Dirty Creek, which the Confederates attempted to control; the general retreat route; and the site of the Confederate depot that was burned to prevent the Union troops from capturing the supplies.



Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- National Historic Landmark designation will encourage and promote the continuing preservation and future management and maintenance of the battlefield.
- Recognition as an NHL will raise awareness of a lesser-known chapter of the American Civil War.
- The battlefield was identified in the Department of the Interior's *America's Great Outdoors: Fifty State Report*, November 2011, which stated as a potential action the designation of Honey Springs as a National Battlefield Park. NHL designation is considered an important first step in assessing the site's national significance and therefore its ultimate suitability as a unit of the national park system.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments: Dr. Murtagh questioned the integrity of the site because of the disproportionate number of noncontributing resources versus contributing resources. It was noted that the battlefield is being nominated as a site, comprising a battlefield landscape. The nominated site includes a large number of noncontributing resources (27), but the size, setting, and scope of the site itself overwhelms the perceived numerical imbalance of contributing vis-à-vis noncontributing resources. Many of the noncontributing resources are small in scale and are either clustered together for interpretive purposes (i.e. historical markers and waysides), or of a nature that blend in seamlessly with the landscape (i.e. cemeteries). Professor Hoyos suggested that a paragraph addressing the integrity of the site be added to the nomination.

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Stevens moved, Dr. Seale seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 11/08/12):

Leroy H. Fischer, PhD, Board Member Emeritus, Oklahoma Historical Society, Professor of History (Retired), Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Bob L. Blackburn, Executive Director and State Historic Preservation Officer, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (owner)

Robert L. Brooks, Director/State Archeologist, Oklahoma Archeological Survey, The University of Oklahoma

Karen Keith, Commissioner, District 2, Board of County Commissioners, Tulsa County, Oklahoma

Martha Pennington, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Associate Professor of Education, East Central University

Bruce Noble, Superintendent & Oklahoma State Coordinator, Sulphur, Oklahoma

Jerry M. Chenoweth, V.P. Shell Oil Company (Retired), Norman, Oklahoma

Gregory E. Pyle, Chief, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Durant, Oklahoma

Bill Anoatubby, Governor, The Chickasaw Nation, Ada, Oklahoma

Dr. Guy Logsdon, Board of Directors, Oklahoma Historical Society, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Christopher A. Price, Director, Honey Springs Battlefield Historic Site, Checotah, Oklahoma

Logan Sharpe, Sharpes Department Store, Checotah, Oklahoma

Donna Sharpe, Checotah, Oklahoma

Karen E. Martin, Checotah, Oklahoma

DeLois Ann McGee, Program Director, Checotah Literacy Council, Checotah, Oklahoma

Gary Nichols, Checotah, Oklahoma

Donal S. "Mike" Stidham, President, Peoples National Bank, Checotah, Oklahoma

Billy Wayne Hill, O.D., P.C., Checotah, Oklahoma

Llyod Jernigan, Executive Director, Checotah Chamber of Commerce, Oklahoma

Emmy Scott Stidham, Checotah, Oklahoma

Ruth Ann Ward, Checotah, Oklahoma

Katherine F. Smith, Branch Manager, Jim Lucas Checotah Public Library, Checotah, Oklahoma

Ronald H. Frantz, Jr., AIA, Architect

Kay Decker, Ed.D., Northwestern State University, Department of Social Sciences

Dr. Dan Lawrence, Norman, Oklahoma

Advisory Board Recommendation: