United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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 if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>historic name</th>
<th>Oakley High School Stadium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>other names/site number</td>
<td>Irwin Stadium; Irwin Field; KHRI# 109-51</td>
</tr>
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2. Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>street &amp; number</th>
<th>118 West 7th Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>city or town</td>
<td>Oakley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>Kansas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>code</td>
<td>KS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>county</td>
<td>Logan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>code</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zip code</td>
<td>67748</td>
</tr>
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</table>

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>national</th>
<th>statewide</th>
<th>local</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

SEE FILE  
Signature of certifying official  
Date  
Title  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official  
Date  
Title  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>entered in the National Register</th>
<th>determined eligible for the National Register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>determined not eligible for the National Register</td>
<td>removed from the National Register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other (explain:)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Signature of the Keeper  
Date of Action
5. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property</th>
<th>Category of Property</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Check as many boxes as apply)</td>
<td>(Check only one box)</td>
<td>(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ private</td>
<td>□ building(s)</td>
<td>□ buildings</td>
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<tr>
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<td>district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ public - State</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ public - Federal</td>
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<td>structure</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Contributing | Noncontributing
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1 | 1

6. Function or Use

<table>
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<th>Current Functions</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Recreation and Culture: Sports Facility</td>
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7. Description

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>roof: N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other:</td>
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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

Oakley High School Stadium is located on the campus of Oakley High School in Logan County, Kansas. Oakley is a small city of approximately 2,100 people, located at the intersection of Interstate 70, U.S. Highway 40, and U.S. Highway 83. The stadium is publicly owned by the Unified School District 274 and has been in continuous use since its construction in 1938.

Narrative Description

The stadium is within the local school district campus on the north edge of town. It is situated on an east-west axis along West 7th Street, with the middle school to the east, a grade school to the southwest, and the high school to the north. It is an outdoor seating structure facing a standard 100-yard football field with a natural grass surface encircled by a 400-meter track that has a rubberized surface. The stadium includes two locker rooms, men’s and women’s restrooms, a storage space that serves as a tornado shelter for students, a press box, and fan seating.

The physical appearance of the building is marked by symmetrical construction of limestone blocks. The stadium’s north façade faces West 7th Street and features nine bays defined by projecting stone columns. The central bay features a bell tower, which has been modified to accommodate a newer announcer’s box. Each bay flanking the central tower includes two original 20-pane steel windows with hoppers.

The bleachers comprise the entire south face of the stadium, and face south toward the track and football field. There are four sets of curved stairs providing access to three sections of bleachers. The bleachers are concrete and the row seating is metal. The cap on the end walls was likely originally concrete that has been stuccoed. A central announcer’s box was first added in the 1960s and was renovated in 1987 and again in 2009 to reflect its current appearance (Figures 4-6). It is made of concrete block and is accessed through a door on the east side of the box.

Each side elevation (east and west) includes two openings with slight concrete overhangs and replacement doors – one leading to a public restroom and the other to locker rooms beneath the bleachers. The interior of the stadium features concrete floors and concrete block or stone walls. The interior spaces and ceiling heights conform to the design of the underside of the stadium seating.

The nomination boundaries are defined by the fence surrounding the adjacent playing field and include the contributing stadium and site and non-contributing concession stand building.

Integrity

Except for the loss of some historic materials, the stadium retains key aspects of integrity including location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Losses of historic materials include the replacement of the original limestone foundation with concrete in 1990. And, what used to be the bell tower is now a press box, with additional concrete blocks providing structural support.
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)

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 Owned 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)

Government

Entertainment/Recreation

Architecture

Period of Significance

1938-1963

Significant Dates

1938, 1939

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Marshon, Lewis (builder); WPA Labor

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1938 with the construction of the stadium and extends to 1963 – the fifty-year cut-off date established by the National Park Service to provide sufficient passage of time to allow objective evaluation of the historic resource eligibility at the time of its listing.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A
Oakley High School Stadium
Logan County, Kansas

Statement of Significance

Summary (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The construction of Oakley High School Stadium was financed through the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and the facility has hosted football games and track meets since its completion in 1939. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance under Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation and Government and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. It is nominated as part of the New Deal-era Resources of Kansas multiple property submission, and is an example of the Social and Recreational property type outlined in the multiple property documentation form.

Elaboration

Oakley is the county seat of Logan County in northwest Kansas. Settlers first arrived in this area in the late 1870s and early 1880s, and the city registered a population of nearly a few hundred people in 1890. By the time Frank Blackmar published his history of Kansas in 1912, Oakley had become a "well appointed little city with cement sidewalks, electric lights, ice plant, a commercial club, an opera house, a county high school, flour mill, steam laundry, bottling works, creamery, cold storage plant, 2 banks, a machine shop, a weekly newspaper (the Graphic), telegraph and express offices, and an international money order post office with one rural route."\(^1\)

The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas provides a snapshot of Oakley at about the time the stadium was being constructed. Oakley had a population of 1,159 in the 1930s and was the largest town in Logan County. It had "modern accommodations (municipal swimming pool and golf course), and adequate transportation facilities provided by the transcontinental highway and the Union Pacific Railroad..."\(^2\) Several attempts to move the county seat from the much smaller Russell Springs did not materialize until 1963.\(^3\)

Located in northwest Kansas, Logan County was situated within one of the hardest hit areas of the Dust Bowl, which encompassed all of western Kansas, eastern Colorado, and the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas.\(^4\) As a result of the tough economic times, Oakley leaders sought funding and labor assistance through federal New Deal programs, including the WPA. In addition to the high school stadium, known WPA-financed projects in Oakley included improvements to the school grounds and the addition of an industrial arts building and bus barn.\(^5\)

Throughout the last half of the 1930s, the WPA constructed 619 buildings in the state of Kansas. Many of those projects were recreational facilities, including 52 stadiums, since the hours of work in America had been limited by recent legislation, the demand for leisure activities had increased even as the economic situation deteriorated.\(^6\) The stadium construction was part of a broader effort to improve school facilities in Oakley that began as early as 1936 when the Oakley school district purchased land from Justine W. Young for $1200. When speaking to the local Chamber of Commerce in 1938, Paul E. Jackson, office engineer of the WPA district headquarters at Hays stated that the Oakley school project was "one of the largest projects in the district at this time" and he complimented the community and project

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\(^5\) Works Progress Administration, Central Office Reference Card Location Project File. (KSHS Library/Archive: MF 6038-6042)

\(^6\) Rosin, E-20. New Deal-financed stadiums in Kansas that are listed in the National Register include: Newton Field (Harvey County) and Lane County Community High School stadium (Lane County).
sponsors for keeping costs low. The newspaper reported that “the entire school project in Oakley will total more than $60,000.” The school’s cost for the project as $17,000.7

Changes to the school facilities began in the mid-1930s. In October 1936, “Oakley’s first real school building,” which had served the community for fifty years, was razed by WPA workers to make room for a native stone garage and bus building.9 Plans were announced for new tennis courts, a place for horseshoes, and general beautification of the school grounds.10 The existing football field was re-sodded in April 1938, thanks to donations from the Chamber of Commerce and the help of 20 volunteers. F. W. Irwin furnished the sod from his pasture northeast of Oakley.11

Work began on the stadium in late 1938, probably after the football season ended. Lewis Mershon was the lead builder for the stadium project. According to his son, Jerry Mershon, his father was the project director and the foreman. Using a team of only unskilled laborers made up of local farmers who were struggling financially, Lewis Mershon was able to complete the project to specifications and within budget. The foundation trench was dug and concrete poured in mid-December 1938.12 Jerry Mershon states that his father was a Republican and that local support won his father the job because he was a trusted local builder and the people of Oakley did not want an architect from out of town to get the job.13

The limestone used for the project was quarried locally, and the rocks were cut to measure 18 x 10 inches. Men did all of the work by hand with only a gas powered saw to cut the large blocks.14 According to Delma Dible, a local historian and descendant of one of the workmen, workers carried their lunch with them at 7:00 a.m. when a truck picked them up at the railroad roundhouse. They then worked until 7:00 p.m. when they were returned to Oakley, 18 miles from the limestone quarry. Some of the handmade, historic tools used to cut the stone and build the stadium are on display at the Fick Fossil Museum in Oakley.15

An article in the September 15, 1939 edition of the Oakley Graphic noted that work on the stadium was nearing completion, and Mershon was quoted as saying, “We hope to have the interior ready for use at the first home game.” The stadium was described as 165 feet, 8 inches in length, 44 feet wide, and 25 feet high. The stadium seating capacity was noted as 1,250. The interior included dressing rooms and showers for both home and visiting teams, and in each end of the stadium there were public restrooms, with the remainder of the interior being used for a public rifle range. Today, the interior is largely unchanged, although there are no rifles being fired.

The stadium was first used on October 6, 1939 for the first home football game of the season. The Oakley Graphic called this matchup “the annual football classic” between the Oakley Plainsmen played the Colby Eagles. The game began at 8:00 p.m., a later time than that in previous years due to the installation of the modern floodlights. Although the newspaper reminded readers that Oakley had defeated Colby “seven times in the last eleven years,” the Plainsmen were “trounced” by the “powerful” Eagles.16

The Oakley High School athletic field and later the stadium was named for Frank W. Irwin, who served the school district in various capacities beginning in 1886. He began his involvement with the Oakley district at its formation, serving as a teacher from 1886 until 1910. Irwin was the high school principal from 1903-1904, and the superintendent from 1903-1905 and again from 1910-1911. He served on the school board from 1919 until 1941. Early school yearbooks refer to the man as a “school man in the strongest sense of the word” and an “educational stronghold.”

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7 Oakley Graphic, 13 February 1938.
8 Fred Teeter, One Hundred Years of Oakley Schools (Hays, KS: Fort Hays State University, 1995).
9 Oakley Graphic, 23 October 1936.
10 Oakley Graphic, 6 March 1936.
11 Oakley Graphic, 8 April 1938.
12 Oakley Graphic, 16 December 1938.
13 Jerry Mershon, Personal Interview by Kyndal Maurath and Levi Hefner, 30 May 2011.
14 The Oakley Graphic noted on 9 July 1938 that Carl Talley had built a new machine for precision cutting and faster work at the local quarries.
15 Delma Dible, Personal Interview by Kyndal Maurath, 12 May 2011.
16 Oakley Graphic, 6 October 1939; 13 October 1939.
According to Warren Park, a 1966 Oakley High School graduate, the bell that used to be in the tower of the stadium disappeared shortly after his graduation. The bell had been removed to make way for the press box that was constructed in 1960s, and the bell disappeared. Although many rumors about the eventual location of the bell circulated at the time of its disappearance, the story that most graduates agree upon is that a former superintendent took the removed bell to his retirement cabin in Colorado. Although local historians and newspaper editors were enlisted to attempt to track down the historical bell, no one has come forth to provide the needed information as to the artifact’s current owner or location.17

One famous alumna, Zelma Hurst, would have witnessed the construction of Oakley High School Stadium. She was one of a very few African American students that attended school in Logan County, and because of the small minority population of the town, schools were not segregated. After Hurst graduated in 1940, she married Andrew Henderson and moved to Topeka, Kansas, where her own children were forced to bus across town to attend a segregated school, while a school for white children was closer to her home. She participated in the landmark case Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education as one of the 13 parent plaintiffs, and she used her Oakley High School experiences in her testimony in the pivotal civil rights case.

The stadium has hosted high school football games and track meets continuously since its completion in 1939. Oakley High School has competed with a variety of teams throughout its athletic events history, and the leagues have shifted over the years due to fluctuating student populations. From 1946-1949, Oakley belonged to the WKEA League, and was crowned football champions in 1949. From 1950-1952, Oakley belonged to the UP League, and for many years beginning in 1953 belonged to the NWKL League. Opponents have long included Colby, Atwood, Wakeeny, Quinter, St. Francis, Goodland, Hoxie, and Hill City. The junior high football and track teams have also competed at the stadium.

**Architecture**

According to the “New Deal-era Resources of Kansas” multiple property documentation form, “the styling of these resources [social and recreational facilities] varied from rustic to Moderne.”16 Architectural historian Alan Gowans further defines government-sponsored architecture, suggesting the New Deal-era building programs favored a combination of Art Deco – which incorporated stylized shapes, zigzags, and vertical accents – and Moderne – which emphasized round shapes and horizontal accents.19 In terms of materials, “these facilities were generally constructed in a manner that was more labor intensive than might otherwise be typical.”20 For instance, a stadium or picnic facilities were constructed of stone, usually quarried locally, and concrete rather than of wood.

This is certainly the case with the Oakley High School Stadium, which exhibits symmetry, vertical and horizontal lines, and rounded features, all of which gives it a WPA Moderne appearance. Its stylistic references to Art Deco and Moderne are subtle, and a more appropriate description of the stadium’s style may be Western Kansas Stone Vernacular with Restrained Art Moderne/Deco Influences.

**Summary**

Completed in 1939, Oakley High School Stadium is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance under Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation and Government and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. It is nominated as part of the “New Deal-era Resources of Kansas” multiple property nomination, and is an example of the Social and Recreational property type outlined in the multiple property documentation form.

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17 Warren Park, Personal Interview by Valerie Brown-Kuchera, 30 November 2011.
18 Rosin, F-29.
20 Rosin, F-29.
9. Major Bibliographical References

“Big Game Tonight.” Oakley Graphic. 6 October 1939.


“F.W. Irwin, Principal.” The Prairie Queen. Oakley Public School Yearbook. 1912.


“OHS Students Work on Historical Project.” Oakley Graphic. 20 April 2011.


“Proposed Athletic Stadium.” The Plainsmen. 1937 Oakley School Yearbook.


The Plainsmen. 1937 Oakley School Yearbook.

The Plainsmen. 1946 Oakley School Yearbook.
The Plainsmen. 1970 Oakley School Yearbook.

“Track Squad. The Plainsmen. 1949 Oakley School Yearbook. Pg. 35.

Works Progress Administration, Central Office Reference Card Location Project File. (KSHS Library/Archive: MF 6038-6042)


10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  Approximately 6
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References  (See Figure 1 for Site Map and Latitude / Longitude Coordinates.)
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The nominated property includes the Oakley High School Stadium and the adjacent athletic field, all of which is enclosed within a fence. See Figure 1 for lat/long coordinates of boundary.

This property is within the parcel described as follows: All Blocks 10, 11, 12, 25, and lots 17 thru 21 of Block 22 in Glicks Addition, Oakley City.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

These boundaries encompass the stadium and the adjacent athletic field, which is historically associated with the Works Progress Administration’s construction program.
Oakley High School Stadium
Name of Property
Logan County, Kansas
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Valerie Brown-Kuchera; Gifted Facilitator for Oakley Schools; Jerrik Keller, Student; Kyndal Maurath, Student; Levi Hefner, Student
organization Oakley High School
organization Oakley High School
Date May 20, 2011
street & number 118 W. 7th Street
telephone 785-754-8125 – Valerie Kuchera, Teacher
city or town Oakley
State Ks
zip code 67748
e-mail vbrown@nkesc.org

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:

Name of Property: Oakley High School Stadium
City or Vicinity: Oakley
County/State: Logan, Kansas
Photographer: Sarah Martin
Date: April 25, 2012
Sketch Map: See Figure 3

Description of Photograph(s) and number:
1 of 11 North elevation of stadium (along W 7th Street), facing SW
2 of 11 Close-up of north elevation of stadium, facing SW
3 of 11 East (side) and south elevations of stadium, noncontributing concession stand at right, facing NW
4 of 11 South elevation of stadium, showing track in foreground, facing NW
5 of 11 Football field at left, track, and stadium at right, facing W
6 of 11 West (side) and south elevations, facing NE
7 of 11 Overview of stadium, track, and football field from the northwest corner of the property, facing SE
8 of 11 West elevation, showing entrances to locker room and restroom, facing NE
9 of 11 Interior of women’s restroom beneath stadium seats, facing SE
10 of 11 Interior of locker room beneath stadium seats, facing E
11 of 11 Interior – storage space beneath stadium seats, facing W
Property Owner:

(name U.S.D. 274 Oakley School District (Attn: Bill Steiner))

street & number  118 W. 7th Street Telephone  785-671-3241

city or town          Oakley state  KS Zip code  67748

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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.
Oakley High School Stadium
118 West 7th Street
Oakley, Logan County, KS
(Datum: WGS84)
Lat/Long Coordinates:
A: 39.13228 -100.85711
B: 39.13223 -100.85567
C: 39.13207 -100.85557
D: 39.13206 -100.85499
E: 39.13119 -100.85513
F: 39.13125 -100.85710
Figure 2: Contextual Map (Bing.com)
This photo was taken by the school yearbook staff in the spring of 1970. It shows the press box as it appeared after the removal of the bell and the installation of the new press box.
Figure 5:
This yearbook photo shows the bell tower behind the 1949 track team.

Figure 6:
This picture, taken by the yearbook staff in 1969, shows the press box after the bell removal and before the modern renovation.
Figure 7:

F. W. Irwin is shown here, along with a description of his contributions to the school district up to 1912, the year of *The Prairie Queen* school yearbook from which this photo is taken.