

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OFFICE OF D.O.
4-6-05

**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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Robinson High School Auditorium/Gymnasium**

other names/site number **RHS Gym; RHS Fieldhouse**

2. Location

street & number **200 Block East Highland Avenue** Not for publication

city or town **Robinson** vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county **Crawford** code **033** zip code **62454**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. White /SHAP
Signature of certifying official

4-1-05
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

RHS Auditorium/Gymnasium
Name of Property

Crawford, Illinois
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **0**

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

RHS Auditorium/Gymnasium
Name of Property

Crawford, Illinois
County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Recreation and Culture/sports facility, gymnasium

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Recreation and Culture/sports facility, gymnasium

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement/Art Deco, Art Moderne

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **Concrete**

Roof **Asphalt**

Walls **Brick**

other **Concrete**

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

RHS Auditorium/Gymnasium

Name of Property

Crawford, Illinois

County and State

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.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Architecture

Period of Significance **1939 – 1955 for Criterion A; 1939 for Criterion C**

Significant Dates **1939**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder **Smith, Kranz and Strong, Urbana, Illinois**
Rinehart Construction Company, St. Louis, Missouri

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

RHS Auditorium/Gymnasium
Name of Property

Crawford, Illinois
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository **Archives, Robinson Daily News, 302 South Cross Street, Robinson, Illinois**

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **less than 1 acre**

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	436069	4319065	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

RHS Auditorium/Gymnasium

Name of Property

Crawford, Illinois

County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title **Greg Bilbrey**

organization

date **December 2004**

street & number **302 Loyland Drive**

telephone **618/654-2101**

city or town **Robinson** state **IL**

zip code **62454**

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name **Robinson Community Unit 2 Schools**

street & number **206 S. Jackson**

telephone **618/544-7511**

city or town **Robinson** state **IL** zip code **62454**

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**
Description

The Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium is located on the east side of the school's campus, just north of the intersection of Highland Avenue and Jefferson Street on the north side of Robinson, Ill. The building underwent construction in 1938 and was partially financed by a Public Works Administration grant — in fact, Eleanor Roosevelt visited Robinson to dedicate the gym shortly after its completion and described the PWA project in her "My Day" newspaper column. The Art Deco/Moderne building is well maintained and retains its original appearance with few visible modifications. It has served educational, recreational and community needs continuously for 66 years.

Setting: The building has large lawns to the south and southeast; paved parking to the east; a smaller lawn and a fire lane/alley to the west, between the gym building and the old high-school building; and the high school's running track and football field to the north. The front of the building is approached by a double concrete walkway with grass median that connects to the Highland Avenue sidewalk; narrower concrete walkways curve around each corner of the front of the building and extend down the east and west sides and across the back. The school campus is within an established, well-maintained residential neighborhood.

Exterior: The building, about 120 by 160 feet overall, is constructed of red brick and concrete. The main section has a peaked roof, with a flat-roofed, two-story section about 100 by 20 feet extending to form the entrance on the south side of the building. Four fluted concrete columns centered in this section frame the entrance doors, and glass block insets and stylized lettering between the columns, along with the curved aluminum awning edges, make this entrance section the building's most prominent Art Deco/Moderne feature. The north elevation (the "back" of the building) features a similar two-story, flat-roofed section, mostly plain except for office windows and a loading dock-type door centered in the wall. This door accesses the stage area inside. Brick pilasters echo the concrete columns at the south entrance and the pilasters on the east and west sides.

NPS Form 10-900-a
OMB No. 1024-0018
(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

The overall plan of the building is rectangular, with rectangular appendages at both the front and rear facades. The rooflines have concrete coping with a row of soldier bricks directly beneath it; a concrete water table, separated from the concrete foundation by three rows of brick, runs the perimeter of the building. The front facade, or south elevation, has three rectangular appendages, with flat roofs, located in front of the three-story gymnasium. The larger appendage is centrally located and flanked by two smaller appendages. The entrance is in the center appendage where the lobby and ticket area are located. It is accentuated by four fluted concrete pilasters which rest on top of a canopy with rounded edges and aluminum trim. The recessed area between each pair of pilasters has two insets of glass block tiles (six in all) divided by a concrete mullion. Each inset is composed of nine glass blocks; the blocks are stacked in a vertical line with one on top of the other. Lines creating a geometric pattern are carved into these insets as well. Panels above each insert have "Robinson Township High School Auditorium Gymnasium," one word per panel, engraved in stylized lettering. Beneath the canopy and directly below each fluted pilaster on the first floor is a concrete pilaster that has been scored to resemble ashlar masonry. The date 1938, the year the cornerstone was laid, is engraved in the pilaster on the southwest side. Three paired glazed doors with aluminum frames, located between the pilasters, open into the lobby. Two steps lead to the entrance, which is flanked by rectangular concrete balusters.

On each side of the embellished concrete entrance, which juts out about two feet from the wall, is a large fixed window with steel frames and muntins and nine lights. These windows have a continuous concrete sill. The center appendage measures approximately 50 feet wide and is flanked by two smaller appendages. The south walls of these appendages are very plain, with five steel windows separated by brick mullions on the second floor. There are entrances located on the side of the appendages that have double aluminum-framed glazed doors. The Art Deco-style door surround is concrete with geometric patterns and the curved canopy, which divides the door surround, has aluminum trim. A detail resembling a fluted pilaster is centrally located above the canopy and between two pairs of windows. Steel muntins divide the windows on the south corners of the appendages from the front windows.

NPS Form 10-900-a
OMB No. 1024-0018
(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

The south elevation of the gymnasium, which rises a story above the appendages on the front facade, has a low-pitched parapet roof with a pointed arch. Nine windows, in groups of three divided by brick mullions, are located beneath the roof's peak. The lintels of the windows follow the pitch of the roofline; the resulting pattern is a pentoid-shaped center window flanked by trapezoidal windows.

The east and west elevations are virtually identical. A downspout is located on each corner of each elevation. Each elevation is divided by five brick pilasters, which rise to the tops of the second-floor windows and are capped with concrete capitals. Between each pilaster are multi-paned, hopper steel-frame windows on the second floor. The windows on the far ends of the building are smaller than those in the middle. Glass block windows with concrete sills are located on the first floor. There are groups of three windows located between the brick pilasters and a group of two windows between the pilasters and the downspouts on the south and north ends of the elevation. The first window opening (from the south) of the east elevation has been bricked in. At the level of the first-floor windows, a series of string courses of brick set to protrude in relief from the normal bond of the wall, for the entire length of the wall, creates a "banded" effect through the window area characteristic of Moderne style. The top row is located just above the first-floor windows and the bottom row is located above the water table. The east and west elevations each have entrances at their north and south ends with curved metal awnings and fluted concrete details that echo the design of the main entrance. The north, or rear elevation, has a two-story center appendage, flanked by smaller, "L" shaped appendages, located behind the main rectangular block. The center is divided by four brick pilasters with concrete capitals. In the middle is a recessed entryway with a steel overhead door that accesses the interior stage area. The appendages on each side are identical and are slightly recessed from the central block. The north walls of these appendages have three steel-framed windows on both the first and second stories. The east and west elevations of the appendages, from south to north, have Art Deco-style double-door entrances with second-story steel windows above, identical to those located on the appendages off of the front elevation. At all four of these corner entrances, between the awnings and the upper windows, is a panel of decorative concrete

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 4 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

featuring carved and cast elements. The center of this panel divides the upper windows on this facade. The wall north of these entrances is recessed 2 -3 feet. A second-story window, located at this wall juncture, creates a corner window. Continuing to the rear of the building, the wall is devoid of any more detail besides the downspout on the northernmost corner.

Interior: The ground level of the south end of the building is mainly taken up by a lobby and ticket-office area, about 20 feet deep at its deepest point. Each end of the lobby narrows to about 12 feet approaching the foot of the stairs to the balcony level. As in most of the building, the lobby walls are of glazed brick in mainly a buff color, with decorative courses of black. Approximately the top two-thirds of the wall is finished in white painted plaster. The floor is tile in a pattern of unconnected black squares on a dark tan field. The lobby walls and ceiling meet with a three-tiered "crown molding" that reflects the Moderne design. The southeast and southwest side entrances open onto the lobby; also at each end of the lobby are wide stairways that access the balcony and upper seating area. Original wooden doors from the lobby to the gym area and to the first-floor areas under the seating banks have Art Deco-style circular windows, and some have original brass door hardware with fluting and curves reflecting the style. The ticket-booth area is separated from the lobby by a four-foot wall of the same brick as used in the walls, with angled front corners. The counter area and framing for the upper glass area of the booth is of varnished hardwood. There is an open space of about a foot between the top of the ticket booth and the ceiling, presumably to afford ventilation. One of the doors into the gym area accesses the back of the ticket booth.

A structural steel-supported roof covers the main interior space that includes a basketball court and tiers of seating on both the east and west sides. The court area is about 90 by 60 feet, while the tiered seating areas are about 30 by 80 feet overall. The seating areas are accessed from second-floor landings on each end and extend down from the course of gymnasium-style windows on the east and west sides, ending in a brick wall about six feet high. This brick matches the brick in the rest of the interior and features black

NPS Form 10-900-a
OMB No. 1024-0018
(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 5 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

string-course accents that echo the exterior "banded" effect. Locker rooms are on the first floor under each tier of seating. The building was designed for a seating capacity of about 2,200 used as a gymnasium and about 2,700 used as an auditorium.

A balcony at the same level as the second-floor landings overlooks the south end of the space. This balcony is actually an extension of a wide hallway that extends across the upper level on the south end of the building; three large openings in the interior south wall open onto the balcony from the hallway. Restrooms and storage are also on this end, at this level, on the south side of this hallway. Curved extensions of this balcony are at the southwest and southeast corners of the interior, at a slightly lower level, matched by similar curved "porches" at the opposite corners flanking the auditorium stage.

The stairways feature two intermediate landings as they rise to the balcony level. These intermediate landings allow access to different levels of the seating area and to the "porches" at each corner of the gym space. From the north balcony landing, two more short flights access the second-floor office/classrooms at the back of the building. Wide openings in the interior wall similar to those across the south side of the upper level afford access to these smaller balcony sections.

An auditorium-type stage area takes up the north end of the space. Offices, classrooms and the stairwells flank the stage. The stage area is accessed from doors in the wings that open onto the stairwells and by an exterior overhead door in the north end.

Steel railings, curved at the ends and corners in Art Deco styles, frame the seating areas, stairs and balconies.

Integrity: The auditorium-gymnasium building has excellent structural and stylistic integrity, surviving with little apparent modification, other than the painting of the inside of some upper-story window panes

NPS Form 10-900-a
OMB No. 1024-0018
(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 6 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

and the possible replacement of first-floor windows (see discussion below). Its integrity makes it an exemplary representative of the architectural style found in public buildings of the period.

The only apparent architectural modification to the building is reflected in the lower-floor windows in the east and west elevations. These may have originally been steel-sash windows that were replaced with glass block; an “architect’s rendering” of the proposed building published in the Robinson Argus newspaper in 1938 indicates taller lower-floor windows. However, the close color and texture match of the infilled brick and mortar below the glass-block windows suggests that — assuming that this modification was made — it was completed quite soon after the original construction. The fact that the apparent modification took care to continue the horizontal “banded” effect created by the unique brick bond through the first-floor window area also suggests that it was done not too long after construction, possibly by the original contractor. Glass-block windows, at any rate, are still consistent with the Deco/Moderne styles, and they do not detract from the integrity of the building’s design. Indeed, the entrance features vertical glass-block windows between the concrete pillars. These are more decorative than functional.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 7 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**
Significance Statement

The Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium is locally significant under Criteria A and C. The RHS Auditorium-Gymnasium meets Criterion A for entertainment/recreation for its association with recreation at Robinson High School. The period of significance is from 1939, the year it was built, to 1955, the 50-year cutoff for National Register significance. The building has been the venue for both school sports and general community events during this period. It has supported not only spectator sports and events, but also a full range of school-related physical-education and recreation activities. At the time of its construction, it met a significant need for more and larger indoor public space in the community, as well as relieving space problems at the high school.

The fieldhouse meets Criterion C as a striking and well-preserved example of Art Deco/Art Moderne architecture, particularly as expressed in New Deal buildings of the time. Some of the details and features in which these styles are evident include the fluted concrete columns and stylized lettering of the entrance; glass-block windows (both decorative, as in the upper entrance, and functional, as on the east and west elevations); curved and fluted aluminum awnings at the entrances; and interior details such as curved railings and circular windows in interior doors.

Historical background and recreational significance:

Robinson's growth and development: Before and during the period of significance, Robinson and Crawford County, Illinois, were shaped first by French explorers, then by agriculture, oil and industry. Fort Lamotte, built at Palestine along the Wabash River at the beginning of the War of 1812, was the county's first real settlement. Robinson was established in 1843, named for prominent lawyer John M. Robinson, and won a bid to be the new county seat.

The Crawford County oil boom that began in 1906 marked the beginning of Robinson's shift from a primarily agricultural community to one that even today is much more industrial than most rural Illinois communities its size. In the first three decades of the century, industries established in Robinson included an oil refinery, a maker of vitreous china bathroom fixtures, and a factory that was the city's chief claim to fame, L.S. Heath and Sons Inc., makers of the Heath English Toffee candy bar. Both the refinery and the candy plant (now owned by Marathon Ashland Petroleum and Hershey Foods respectively) are still major employers.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 8 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

According to the Illinois County Statistical Abstract, Crawford County's population jumped from 19,240 in the 1900 census to 26,281 in the 1910 census, reflecting the impact of the 1906 oil boom. Population has generally decreased since then, with a total of 20,151 reported in 2002. Robinson's population in 2000 was 6,822 and has declined to around 6,700 since then, primarily because of the aging of the rural population and the lack of new business or industrial development.

But that 36 percent oil-boom population increase changed Crawford County drastically; with more families moving in came a greater need for public facilities, including schools. Robinson Township built a new high school in 1911, just five years after the discovery of oil in the county, to serve the exploding student population, but local officials still struggled with the rapid growth.

The building that Robinson Township High School occupied in the mid-1930s had been built in 1922; it replaced the 1911 building that had been destroyed by fire the year before. But Robinson's population was still outgrowing its only high school, which was fed by two grade schools within the city and several country schools in the surrounding area.

During the 1937-38 school year, Robinson Township was prompted by state school authorities to do something about "congestion" in the 1922 high school's East Building. The school's original gymnasium was a cramped space on the ground floor (sub-ground level) that later served as the cafeteria. (It would not be until 1954-55 that the school would see a major classroom expansion, which included another gymnasium space that became known as the "girls' gym.")

Responding to the need, the Public Works Administration stepped in by offering a grant of \$62,181 to help pay for a new building. Taxpayers approved \$76,000 in bonds as the local component of financing for the project. Both ballot measures — the proposition authorizing the school board to erect the new building and the proposition to sell bonds — passed easily, by approximate 5-2 margins. Taxpayers apparently agreed with the sentiment expressed in the July 7, 1938, Robinson Argus newspaper, which said the school board "feel[s] that the substantial grant which has been made by the government should be used for the improvement of the local institution. They feel that at no time in the history of the school has there been an opportunity to get so much for such a small expenditure of local funds." The Argus reported that a property owner with an assessed valuation of \$1,000 would see a \$1.68 annual increase

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

in his tax bill. Argus publisher Victor Smith praised the vote in an editorial, saying "crowded conditions at the high school will be relieved, new facilities for training will be provided, a gymnasium of sufficient size to accommodate a crowd of state-tournament size will be provided, and the City of Robinson will now have a community auditorium, something badly needed for many years."

The contract for construction of the "gymnasium-auditorium" was let July 31, 1938, by the Robinson Township Board of Education to Rinehart Construction Co., St. Louis, on a low bid of \$85,778. The contract for plumbing, heating and ventilating was let to Tri-State Plumbing and Heating Co., Evansville, Ind., for \$16, 489. Smith, Kratz and Strong, Urbana, was chosen as the architectural firm.

The cornerstone was laid in November 1938 and the building was completed in the summer of 1939 at a total cost of \$137,826. Its seating capacity as a gymnasium was planned to be about 2,200, and about 2,700 as an auditorium. It was designed with locker, shower and administration rooms, and plans were to house the school's music department in the stage area.

The building's first year saw some major events, such as a visit by Eleanor Roosevelt Sept. 23, 1939, to dedicate the building with a speech which drew a crowd of about 1,500, and a concert by the U.S. Marine Band On Oct. 25, 1939, Mrs. Roosevelt referred to her Robinson visit and the new gym in her "My Day" newspaper column published Sept. 25, 1939:

Robinson, which we reached yesterday, is in a rural section, but the land is not so good and the farming is, of necessity, diversified. They are dependent here on a certain amount of industry and have a small refinery, a candy factory and a pottery works which makes bathroom fixtures.

Two of the NYA directors from the neighborhood [There was an NYA work camp in nearby Oblong]¹ came to see me and told me there were no youth projects in Robinson itself and no WPA or

¹ *The National Youth Administration was a New Deal program that helped those who were between the ages of 16 and 25 who, because they wanted to continue with their education, were given part-time jobs. More than 700,000 students enrolled in the program. The fact that there was an NYA camp*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 10 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

NYA load to speak of here, which makes this a very fortunate locality. The government, however, has helped them to build, through a PWA grant, a very beautiful gymnasium for the high school students, back of which they have a football field lighted by flood-lights so they can play at night.

The building's importance to the community and its recreational needs became evident immediately. The opening ceremony began with a basketball game between Robinson and Palestine grade schools and concluded with a Robinson-Hustonville varsity game.

The state regional tournament was also held in the new building in 1939, in which Flat Rock defeated Hutsonville in the finals and went on to beat Terre Haute (Indiana) Garfield High School for the Wabash Valley title.

It should be noted that the gym also served junior-high or middle-school-aged students for part of its history. Before the construction of a middle school in Robinson (just west of the high school) in the 1970s — and after the closing of country schools that generally served students through eighth grade — the RHS building accommodated the younger students as well.

Robinson Daily News Publisher K.V. Lewis provided his own take on the significance of the new building in a Sept. 25, 1939, editorial:

“Both the appearance here of Mrs. Roosevelt and the appearance of the U.S. Marine Band would have been impossible without the new R.T.H.S. gymnasium, for there would have been no place to accommodate them. And even before the building was entirely complete, it housed the important meeting of the Illinois-Indiana Petroleum Association, which probably would have had to have been placed elsewhere without it. We believe the contentions of the school board that the building would serve a large purpose as a community auditorium, as well as give the R.T.H.S. much needed extra accommodations, has been well-proved...”

in Crawford County was a little unusual since most projects were apparently in urban areas.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 11 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

The new auditorium-gymnasium went a long way toward solving the problem of the lack of indoor public space in the Robinson area, alluded to in Lewis' editorial. The largest indoor spaces up to this point had been movie theaters, lodge halls and possibly a couple of small hotel ballrooms. School gymnasiums were small and not designed to accommodate large public events. So while the immediate need for the new building was created by the increasing high-school population, the community readily backed the project because of the broader need for indoor public space in Robinson.

The value of the project remains evident, as the building has continued to meet the needs of Robinson's high school for 66 years with no additions or significant modifications.

Architectural significance: The Robinson High School Auditorium Gymnasium represents a very strong execution of the Art Deco/Moderne style, both in the overall cohesiveness of the design and in the architectural details (see the summary below, and the narrative description for further information). Also, the fact that the building has held up so well, both functionally and physically, is a testament to the quality of its design and construction.

Art Deco was a movement in decorative arts that also affected architecture, deriving its name from the World's fair held in Paris in 1925, formally titled the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, which showcased French luxury goods and reassured the world that Paris remained the international center of style. Art Deco did not originate with the Exposition; it was a major style in Europe from the early 1920s, though it did not catch on in the U.S. until about 1928, when it quickly shifted into the Moderne during the 1930s, the decade with which the concept of Art Deco is most strongly associated today. The term "Art Deco" actually did not see widespread use until the 1960s.

Art Deco, though definitions vary, is most often characterized by zigzag and stepped forms, bold and sweeping curves (unlike the sinuous curves of the Art Nouveau), chevron patterns, sunburst motifs, etc. The Moderne movement (also known as "Streamline" or "Streamline Moderne") was influenced by manufacturing and streamlining techniques arising from science and mass production, where aerodynamics are involved. Once the Chrysler Air-Flo design of 1933 was successful, "streamlined"

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 12 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

forms began to be used even for objects such as pencil sharpeners and refrigerators. In architecture, this style was characterized by rounded corners, used often for buildings at road junctions.

Though Art Deco slowly lost influence in the West, and was cut short by the austerity of World War II, in colonial countries such as India it became a gateway for Modernism, and continued to be used well afterward, even in the 1960s.

The Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium incorporates elements of both Art Deco and Moderne. A simplified comparison of the two styles could be that while Art Deco emphasizes vertical lines, Moderne emphasizes the horizontal; applied to the gym building, the entrance's fluted columns and carved stylized lettering reflects Art Deco influence, while the banded, curved aluminum awnings suggest Moderne style. Also, the circular "porthole" windows in some interior doors of the building reflect the use of nautical elements often seen in Moderne architecture. The banding seen in the brickwork — achieved by texture on the exterior (courses of brick set in relief) and color on the interior (contrasting black string courses in the brick surrounding the gym space) — is a further example of Moderne style.

"Stepped" design is also characteristic of Art Deco and is reflected in the gym building mainly in the "crown molding" effect that joins the walls and ceiling of the lobby, and in some of the smaller details, such as the brass door hardware and exterior light fixtures beneath the corner-entrance porches.

This Art Deco design element of stepping or repetition is also seen in the concrete panels above the four corner entrances (at each end of the east and west elevations). A fluted column echoing the style of the front-entrance columns rises above the awning and divides a pair of windows, while repeated inverted "L" shapes and curved shapes flank this column. The overall appearance of each of these entrances achieves the "rhythmic" effect often sought by Art Deco designers through these devices of stepping and repetition.

The use of curves in the interior balconies and railings is a further reflection of Moderne style. The choice of some materials — aluminum for awnings, glazed brick for the interior and steel-sash windows

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 13 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

and steel for railings, as well as the glass block used in the upper-entrance detail — is also characteristic of the period.

Other examples of Art Deco architecture in Robinson include a 1932 brick Masonic Temple building (203 E. Walnut Street) which has stepped features in its facade characteristic of earlier Art Deco. An American Legion hall (308 E. Main St.) has a few features characteristic of Moderne design — circular windows in the facade, most notably. Its date of construction is unknown but probably later than the generally accepted Art Deco/Moderne period. The Schmidt Clinic building, ca. 1939 (408 S. Cross St.), and Lincoln School, 1935 (East Poplar St.), both have some Art Deco features; the clinic has a stepped facade similar to the Masonic Temple and the school's main style-specific feature is a stylized bas-relief eagle above the entrance. Lincoln School, done by the same architects who designed the RHS gym building, saw a major addition in 2000 that was faithful to the building's original design. The former L.S. Heath and Sons office building on South Jackson Street was probably built in the late 1930s and incorporates some Moderne features (glass block, glazed brick, curved corners) but the design is not consistent throughout the building, which has seen some significant additions and modifications.

While these buildings each have some features characteristic of the styles, the RHS gymnasium-auditorium is by far the largest and arguably the most striking and cohesive example of Art Deco or Art Moderne in Robinson.

The architects: The Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium was designed by the firm of Smith, Kratz and Strong, Urbana, Ill. All three partners had been protégés of Joseph Royer, an earlier prominent Urbana architect and senior partner of Royer-Danely. E.V. Kratz had been a structural engineer and draftsman for Royer in 1913; Hubert A. Smith was a draftsman and designer for Royer from 1914 to 1919 and 1920 to 1930; and T.J. Strong was a field supervisor for Royer from 1919 to 1932.

Smith, Kratz and Strong designed at least 30 Illinois school buildings in the first half of the century, according to records in the Champaign County Historical Society archives. They included Downers Grove Community High School (1928-29), Geneva Community High School (1922-23), Jacksonville High School (1920-21) and several buildings at Jacksonville's MacMurray College. The firm also

NPS Form 10-900-a
OMB No. 1024-0018
(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 14 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

designed senior and junior high schools for Dubuque, Iowa (1922-23). They also designed Robinson's Lincoln Elementary School, and a gymnasium building in Spencer, Ind. Fittingly, they were chosen in the early 1950s to design an addition to Urbana High School, which their mentor, Joseph Royer, had designed in 1913-14; Royer died in 1954, shortly after Smith, Kratz and Strong won the bid.

Hubert A. Smith is also known for his theater design; he did the Cinema Theater in Urbana and the Garden Theater in Charleston, S.C.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 15 **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

Bibliography

Staff, "Proposition to Erect New School Building to be Decided by Voters of High School District at Special Election to be Held Here Tuesday," Robinson Argus, July 7, 1938; Page 1.

Staff, "Citizens Give Hearty Approval to Erection of New School Building," Robinson Argus, July 14, 1938; Page 1.

Staff, "Contract for Construction of New High School Building Let Friday to Rinehart Company of St. Louis: Work to Start When Approval Given," Robinson Argus, Sept. 1, 1938; Page 1.

Lewis, K.V. "New Gymnasium Proves Worth," Robinson Daily News, Sept. 25, 1939; Page 1.

Roosevelt, Eleanor, "My Day," United Features Syndicate, column for release Sept. 25, 1939.

Scarpone, Sam, "RHS Gym Dedicated 50 Years Ago," Robinson Argus, Nov. 30, 1989; Page 1.

Multiple authors, "Art Deco," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_deco

Multiple authors, "Streamline Moderne," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moderne>

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section __10_ Page __16_ **Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL**

Verbal Boundary Description

The Robinson High School campus is described in its entirety in Crawford County property records as the "W side of the fractional SW, Sec. 27, Twn. 7, Rng 12." The lot on which the auditorium-gymnasium building stands does not have a separate legal description.

To describe only the auditorium/gymnasium building: Beginning at a point 200 feet north of Highland Avenue and 70 feet east of the access drive on the west side of the building, proceed 160 feet north along the west side of the building, then east 120 feet along the north side of the building, then south 160 feet along the east side of the building, then 120 feet west along the south side of the building to the point of origin.

Boundary justification:

The boundary includes only the RHS auditorium/gymnasium building. The surrounding lawns, walkways and other grounds, while adding to the overall functionality and attractiveness of the property, do not contribute to the building's architectural or recreational significance (Criteria A and C).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL

Information on photographs: All photos are by Greg Bilbrey, Robinson, Ill. Originals are at Daily News, 302 S. Cross St., Robinson, IL 62454. Interior photos were taken Dec. 20, 2004; exteriors were taken from October through December 2004.

- #1. Interior view of gymnasium space looking north toward stage area from southeast corner.
- #2. Interior view of gymnasium space looking southeast from northwest corner.
- #3. Interior view of lobby, looking east from west end.
- #4. Interior view of ticket-booth area, looking northeast.
- #5. Interior view, detail of short hallway off gym space at northeast corner, looking east; shows circular window in door, decorative brick detail
- #6. Interior view, detail of small balcony at southeast corner, looking from balcony toward northwest. Shows railings, relationship to south-end balcony (upper left in photo).
- #7. Interior view, stairwell at northeast corner of gym, looking east from seating-level landing. Shows railings.
- #8. Exterior view, front (south) elevation, looking north-northwest from point near Highland Avenue sidewalk.
- #9. Exterior view, looking southeast from point just west of entrance doors to west end of lobby. Shows walkways, relationship of building to neighborhood. Cars parked at far right in photo are along Highland Avenue, which runs SW-NE; dark brick house in background at center of photo faces North Lincoln Street.
- #10. Exterior view, east elevation, looking west from center of east lawn.

NPS Form 10-900-a
OMB No. 1024-0018
(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Robinson High School Auditorium-Gymnasium, Crawford County, IL

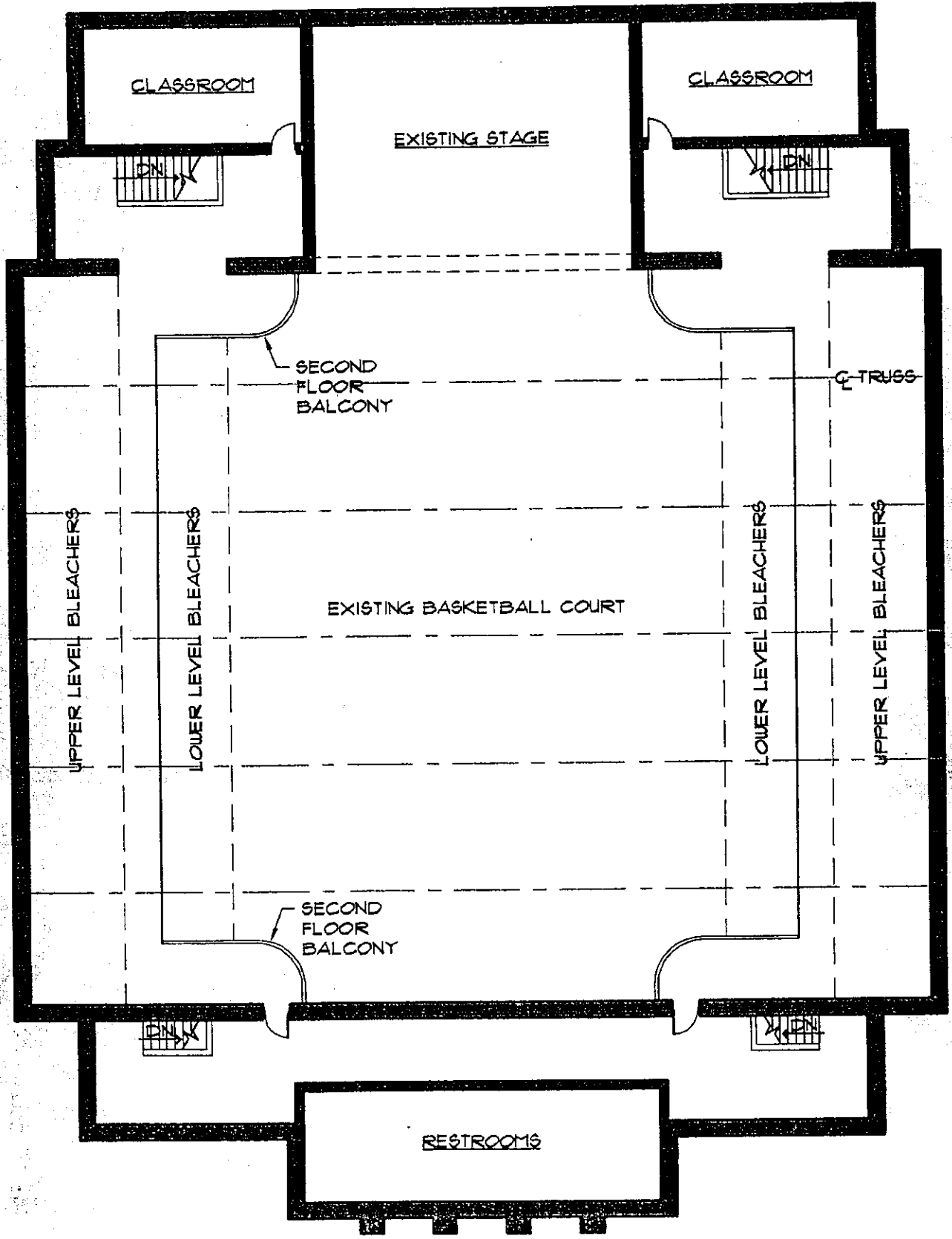
#11. Exterior view, west elevation, looking east from point on west side of RHS fire lane/access drive.

#12. Exterior view, north (back) elevation, looking south from south end of RHS football field.

#13. Exterior view, detail of entrance to west end of lobby at southwest corner of building. Shows decorative "banded" brick bond (left and center right of photo), door surround details, windows.

#14. Exterior view, detail of decorative concrete feature above entrance door at northeast corner of building. Shows aluminum awning, carved and cast concrete designs above awning, window details.

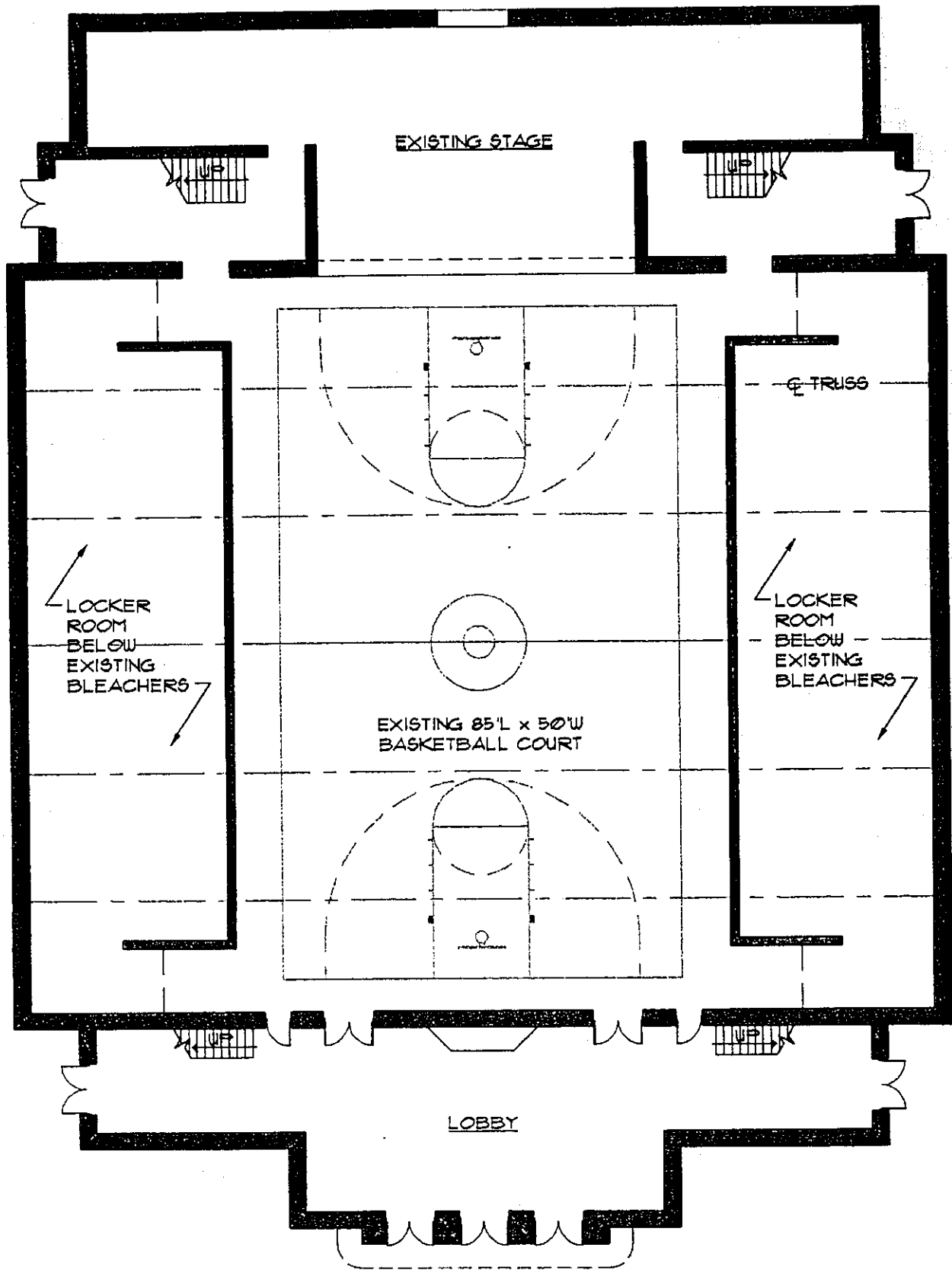
Robinson H.S. Auditorium/Gymnasium



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 20'



Robinson H.S. Auditorium / Gymnasium



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 1" = 20'



NW of Elkhorn Tavern within Pea Ridge National Park,
Garfield vicinity, 05000484,
LISTED, 5/26/05
(Cherokee Trail of Tears MPS)

ARKANSAS, JOHNSON COUNTY,
Dover to Clarksville Road Road --Hickeytown Road Segment,
Hickeytown Rd. E of US 64,
Lamar vicinity, 05000464,
LISTED, 5/26/05
(Cherokee Trail of Tears MPS)

ARKANSAS, RANDOLPH COUNTY,
Campbell Cemetery,
Address Restricted,
Imboden vicinity, 05000463,
LISTED, 5/25/05

COLORADO, ALAMOSA COUNTY,
First Baptist Church,
408 State Ave.,
Alamosa, 05000425,
LISTED, 5/22/05
(Ornamental Concrete Block Buildings in Colorado MPS)

COLORADO, EL PASO COUNTY,
Shove Memorial Chapel,
1010 N. Tejon St.,
Colorado Springs, 05000426,
LISTED, 5/22/05
(Colorado College MPS)

GEORGIA, FORSYTH COUNTY,
Cumming Cemetery,
Bordered by GA 20, GA 9 and Resthaven Dr.,
Cumming, 05000428,
LISTED, 5/21/05

HAWAII, KAUAI COUNTY,
Pu'u'opae Bridge,
Pu'u'opae Rd. between Kalama & Kipapa Rds.,
Kapa'a, 05000536,
LISTED, 5/25/05

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Des Plaines Methodist Camp Ground,
1250 Campground Rd.,
Des Plaines, 05000429,
LISTED, 5/22/05

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Oakton Historic District,
Roughly bounded by Oakton St., Howard St., Ridge Ave., and Asbury Ave.,
Evanston, 05000106,
LISTED, 5/23/05

* ILLINOIS, CRAWFORD COUNTY,
Robinson High School Auditorium--Gymnasium,
200 Blk of E. Highland Ave.,
Robinson, 05000434,
LISTED, 5/22/05