

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name **ROCK CAFÉ**

other names/site number **N/A**

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2. Location

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street & number : **114 West Main Street**

city or town: **Stroud**

state: **Oklahoma**

code: **OK**

county: **Lincoln**

not for publication: **N/A**

vicinity: **N/A**

code: **081**

zip code: **74079**

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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   nationally   statewide  X  locally. (  N/A  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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Signature of certifying official                      Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO   
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.)

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Signature of commenting or other official                      Date

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State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the

National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the

National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

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Signature of Keeper    Date  
                                    of Action

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5. Classification

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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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> structures
<u>1</u>	<u>    </u> objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: Restaurant

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: Restaurant

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE  
roof OTHER: Tar and Gravel  
walls STONE: Sandstone  
CONCRETE: Concrete block  
other \_\_\_\_\_

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

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8. Statement of Significance

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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)

COMMERCE  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1939-1951

Significant Dates 1939

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Roy Rives, Builder

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	712120	3958410	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

N/A 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.)

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title

Dawn Welch

organization \_\_\_\_\_

date January 29, 2001

street & number 114 W. Main Street

telephone 918 968 3990

city or town Stroud

state OK zip code 74079

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Additional Documentation

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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)

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Property Owner

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

name: Dawn Welch

street & number: 114 West Main Street

telephone: (918) 968-3990

city or town: Stroud

state: OK

zip code: 74079



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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9

Rock Cafe  
name of property  
Lincoln County, Oklahoma  
county and state  
Route 66 & Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

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SUMMARY

The Rock Café is a tall, single story, sandstone building constructed in 1936-39 in Stroud, Oklahoma. It is located in downtown Stroud, on historic Route 66, having served as a café for local and travelers since opening its doors in 1939. Route 66 was the main business street of Stroud and the Rock Café was built on the east edge of the commercial strip. It sits on a large lot, with parking in front and mature trees at the rear. The building is rectangular with a parapet wall, flat roof, and a tin pent that shields the sandstone walls. Fenestration is regular and a large, stone chimney is prominent on the front wall. Over the years, modifications to the interior have been made, and on the outside, a patio area with a pergola was constructed on the west side. None of the modifications detract from the historic integrity of the Rock Café. It is being nominated as part of the Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma Multiple Property Listing within the context of Commerce on Route 66 in Oklahoma (1926-1944). The associated property types is Diners and Restaurants. The Rock Café retains a high degree of integrity of design, location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

DESCRIPTION

The Rock Café was built from 1936 to 1939 in Stroud, Oklahoma. It was built to provide food & beverage service to the Route 66 highway traffic and locals. The cafe is a one-story, high facade, sandstone building with a flat roof on a concrete foundation. The sandstone for the walls came from an area near Kellyville, thirty miles east.

The Rock Café is located on the east edge of downtown Stroud, on the south side of Route 66. The primary faced faces north; there is a parking lot to the east, a covered patio on the west side, and a storage/utility shed on the south side. A neon sign reading "ROCK CAFE" is located in front of the building.

The north side is the primary facade. It is five bays wide, with a central entry. A large, stone chimney separates the westernmost windows. A tin-covered, pent roof wraps around the building. On the north side, a painted sign reads "HICKORY SMOKED BAR-B-QUE" with a painted representation of a flop-eared pig's head. The walls are composed of coursed, rubble sandstone. The corners feature pilasters that extend above the roof line and are topped by concrete, pyramidal caps. The mortar joints are untooled.

The north wall is lighted by four, metal framed windows and a centrally placed door. The two eastern-most windows are six-paned. The smaller, four-paned western-most windows flank a stone, shouldered chimney that pierces the pent roof. The main entry is a single, wooden door with a six-light window. The sills for all of the windows are smooth, cast concrete. The lintels for the windows and the door are irregularly shaped sandstone beams. There are four, somewhat large openings in the wall above the windows and door, just below the eave of the pent roof. These are vent openings for the large attic. They are covered with wooden louvers and screens.

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The east wall has two windows and two attic vents. The windows are offset to the north side of the east wall. The northern-most of the two was originally a door. It was converted to a window in 1983, the lower half being infilled with matching rubble sandstone. All other features are identical to openings on the north side. The sandstone on the east side of the building does exhibit a greater variety of exposed fossils; it is not known if it was a conscious decision to showcase these on one wall.

The west wall is identical to the east wall. The current owners erected a covered patio on this side of the building. It is attached to the wall with flashing; but is otherwise impermanent. As on the east wall, one of the two openings was formerly a door. The current owners plan on re-converting it in order to give better access to the patio.

The rear, or south, of the building has had the most change. A kitchen addition has been added to the rear. Utilizing rock-faced concrete blocks salvaged from an old home, the addition utilizes existing openings in the original building. One window serves as a pass-through and the original rear entrance to the café is used as the entry to the kitchen. The new addition utilized older materials and is sympathetic yet differentiated from the original building. It does not detract from the integrity of the Rock Café. An exterior door to the restroom was located at the west side of the south wall. It was infilled with matching sandstone in 1983. There are no plans to restore it.

The green painted, corrugated, tin pent roof that surrounds the building features exposed rafter tails and beadboard decking. The four corner pilasters are visible above it and the chimney pierces it on the north side. Only the coping of the main wall is exposed.

Directly behind the building is a small, tin-sided, noncontributing shed. It is used for storage. In front of the building, between the roadway and the entrance, is a neon sign that reads "ROCK CAFÉ." The sign is supported by two steel poles, closely spaced, that have bars welded between them in an alternate pattern. Each word of the sign is in its own, trapezoidal unit. The sign dates from the 1940's, likely to 1948 or 1949.

The interior of the Rock Café has been altered over the years, most notably by the installation of a dropped ceiling in 1983. Still, the overall feel and layout of the interior remains intact. The central feature of the dining area is the fireplace. Located on the north wall, the brick and sandstone fireplace features a stone mantel shelf. The ceiling of the dining room is tongue and groove beadboard, and the floor is checkered tile.

There have been no significant alterations to the Rock Café. It remains a good example of a roadside café catering to travelers on Route 66 as defined in the Route 66 & Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma Multiple Property Submission. The Rock Café retains a high degree of integrity in all aspects and is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C.

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SUMMARY

Work started on the Rock Café in 1936 and was finished in 1939. Built to serve local patrons in Stroud and travelers on Route 66, the Rock Cafe is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and Criterion C. It is being nominated under the Route 66 & Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma Multiple Property Submission. The associated historic context for the Rock Café is found in Section E of the MPD, Commerce on Route 66 in Oklahoma (1926-1944). It is nominated as a good example of a roadside café, as defined in Section F, Associated Property Types: Restaurants and Diners. The Rock Café retains a high degree of historic integrity and has a close association with Route 66.

BACKGROUND

The original town of Stroud was located a mile west of its present location. John W. Stroud had established a general store on his farm in 1891, garnering a post office in 1892. He constructed speculative business buildings around his store and people began to trickle in to his newly created town. Unfortunately, in 1897, the St. Louis and San Francisco railroad bypassed his nascent town. Undeterred, Stroud purchased land near the railroad, platted and began to promote a new town of Stroud. "Old Stroud" emptied as the businessmen moved their stores to the new town. Stroud grew at a normal rate, like many small Oklahoma towns. A modest boom occurred in the 1920s with oil speculation, but the town remained a diverse community, serving the local countryside.

In addition to the railroad, Stroud was served by a state highway, Highway 7. When the decision to create a federal highway from Chicago to California, Highway 7 was incorporated into Oklahoma's segment. The new highway would be designated US 66, commonly referred to as Route 66. This was in 1926. With federal money, this new highway system was upgraded. In some areas, the originally existing roadway proved inadequate and new alignments were paved. In all areas, the roadway was reconstructed, paved, or otherwise improved to facilitate high speed, cross country travel.

Along with the roadbed itself, a number of other improvements took place along the designated route. Amenities catering to travelers began to pop up everywhere. Service stations, hotels and tourist cabins, and restaurants were all constructed to facilitate the new travelers. Even with the Depression, folks took to the road, whether to seek a new life or to escape from their realities for a short time.

The end of World War Two brought a new life to the Mother Road, as Route 66 has been called. Auto travel became a strong part of America's culture. Route 66 became a focal point for travelers, both business and vacation, as they headed across the western states. Visiting Natures wonders and stopping at "tourist traps" along the road became

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ingrained in the car culture. It was into this environment that the Rock Café was born, and it was this culture that it served.

#### COMMERCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

"Today, Stroud is textbook small -town America, where Route 66 as Main Street shoots arrow straight through the heart of the business district. There are exactly two stop lights between entry and exit. It is a community proud of its U.S. 66 connection, evidenced by the many shops identifying themselves with the old road and city hall's involvement in advocating Stroud's Route 66 heritage. Several vintage neon signs still decorate the boulevard, and at 114 E. Main the Rock Cafe, one of the most recognized landmarks anywhere on the highway, anchors the town firmly to America's Mother Road."<sup>1</sup>

The Rock Cafe opened on August 4, 1939. It was built by a man named Roy Rives, who leased it to George Price.<sup>2</sup> The Rock was an instant success serving beer, soft drinks and meals to the traveling public. The Depression was waning at this time and people had the extra dollar to spend on a trip or a night out at a local café.

The cafe became a Greyhound Bus stop, adding to its importance economically to the town and adding to its significance in the realm of transportation along Route 66. During World War Two, the bus stop serviced many men in uniform as they traversed the country from duty station to duty station or when on leave. Several men recall it as a special stop for them before heading to war. The men speak of gals and brawls they either participated in or witnessed while on their brief stop.

After the war, the Rock Café was open 24 hours. It became very popular with vacationing families and over the road truckers as well as the local area high school students. Day travelers and those pushing the long haul cross country could stop in anytime for a quick bite to eat. Stroud's downtown hotel, the Hotel Lincoln (NR 1995), was located two blocks west. The café became a watering place for drummers and businessmen who used the hotel.

The Rock Café was, like many public places, a segregated establishment. Black and Indian customers were not allowed in the building; they were required to order meals from the rear kitchen door. Food was handed out to them and they ate outside.

Even though the Rock Café has been in use as a restaurant since its inception, it has had a hard time keeping tenants. The cafe witnessed many lessors over the years, but has always remained named "Rock Café." The builder and owner

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<sup>1</sup> Ross, Jim. "Route 66 & The Ozark Trail," Route 66 Federation News, Vol.4, Number 4, 1998. Page 10.

<sup>2</sup> "New Café Opened." Farmers' Weekly-Stroud Democrat, 11 August, 1939.

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of the building, Roy Rives, had difficulty keeping tenants. It changed management every two to three years, finally finding a stable proprietor in the late 1950s.

As a commercial entity, the Rock Café has remained a stable landmark in Stroud and all along Route 66. It served patrons of the local community and the community of the road from 1939 to the end of its designated period of significance, 1951. Visitors from coast to coast and beyond refer to it as one of the only true Route 66 businesses left in operation, a true gem. Even though the Rock Café has operated continually, the period of significance was set at the termination of the 50 year cut off for National Register properties. It is eligible for the national Register under Criterion A, in the context of Commerce on Route 66 in Oklahoma.

#### ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Rock Café is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C, as an excellent example of a roadside restaurant or café as defined in the associated property types of the Route 66 & Associated Historic Resources multiple property submission.

The Rock Cafe is famous as the giraffe-looking, stone cafe that has been as strong and dependable as the highway itself. The Rock Cafe is architecturally significant as the only extant sandstone building of its type and use along Route 66 in Oklahoma. there are other sandstone buildings along the road, including abandoned tourist cabins near Kellyville and auto-related service buildings in a number of towns. The Rock Café was constructed as a roadside café and has remained as such since 1939.

The cafe was built by Roy Rives between 1936 and 1939. The concrete foundation was formed up and poured wheelbarrow load by load. He hired high school students to help erect the higher elevated stone. It is known that Mr. Rives paid only five dollars for all the stone and that could be the sole reason it was used. His inspiration for the building's design is unknown, but the finished product is one admired by many, both Route 66 enthusiasts and casual observers alike. It has a strong resemblance to some of the early Craftsman style buildings that are found in many Oklahoma towns. It could be that Mr. Rives was influenced by other, functional commercial buildings he had seen. The stone building has several unique features including the pent roof and the use on the east side of visible bug fossils in the wall stone. The offset chimney is an interesting feature. The cafe stands out on Route 66 and is often photographed, filmed, artistically drawn and studied by architects and others interested in unique buildings.

The Rock Café is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C as an excellent example of a roadside restaurant serving customers on Route 66. It is nominated under the context of Commerce on Route 66 in Oklahoma (1926-1944) as referenced in the Route 66 & Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma Multiple Property Submission.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mayfield, Mamie. Former lessor of Rock Café. Interview with Dawn Welch, 4/5/93.

“New Café opened.” In *Farmers Weekly-Stroud Democrat*. 8/11/39.

Ross, Jim. “Route 66 & The Ozark Trail.” *Route 66 Federation News*. Vol. 4, No. 4, 1998.

Smalley, Ed & Aleta. Former owners of the Rock Café. Interview with Dawn Welch, 1/30/93.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots sixteen (16), seventeen (17), eighteen (18), nineteen (19), twenty (20), twenty-one (21) and the west half of lot twenty-two (22), Block twenty-nine (29), City of Stroud.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These are the boundaries historically associated with the Rock Café.



Rock Cafe

Rock Cafe  
Lincoln County, Oklahoma

E 712120  
N 3458416

ZONE 14

STROUD SOUTH QUADRANGLE  
OKLAHOMA—LINCOLN CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

655 1 SE  
(DEP. W.)

OKLAHOMA

