NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth
Other names/site number: Site #WA1233
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: Southwest corner of East Douglas (U.S. 62) and Parker streets
City or town: Prairie Grove State: Arkansas County: Washington
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___**national** ___**statewide** X **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X **A** ___**B** X **C** ___**D**

Stacy Hurst 3-19-15

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	
District	
Site	
Structure	X
Object	

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/communications facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/communications facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
OTHER/Telephone Booth

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: _METAL, GLASS_

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph
The Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth is a square telephone booth located on the south side of U.S. 62 on the east side of Prairie Grove. The booth was built c.1960 and features aluminum and glass construction. The booth rests on a concrete pad and is topped by a flat aluminum roof. The bi-fold door is located on the booth's north side, adjacent to U.S. 62.

Narrative Description
The Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth is a square telephone booth located at the southwest corner of U.S. 62 and Parker Street on the east side of Prairie Grove. The booth was built c.1960 and features aluminum ("satin anodized aluminum," according to the specifications) and glass construction. The booth rests on a concrete pad and is topped by a flat aluminum roof. The bi-fold door is located on the booth's north side, adjacent to U.S. 62.

According to Section 2.02 of the 1971 specifications for the Airlight Telephone Booth, "The overall dimensions of the booth are:

- Height – 86-1/8 inches
- Width – 35-7/16 inches at roof, 33-1/2 inches at base

- Depth – 35-7/16 inches at roof, 33-1/2 inches at base."[1]

The location of the booth, which is adjacent to U.S. 62 and just to the northeast of the Colonial Motel, was a perfect location to serve residents, travelers, and motel guests. It is also across the street from Prairie Grove Battlefield Park (NR-listed September 4, 1970).

The booth's phone number is (479) 846-9314.

Front/North Façade

The north façade contains the booth's bi-fold door, which is located slightly off-center to the east. According to Section 2.03 of the specifications, "The door consists of two vertical sections, each containing two clear safety glass panels. The door is self-closing and folds along the right wall when opened." The specifications indicate that the glass is tempered glass that is 7/32" thick.[2]

Above the door is a red panel with white letters that reads "TELEPHONE." A small projecting aluminum cornice spans the top of the booth.

Side/East Façade

The east side of the booth consists of four large horizontally-oriented panels, with the top three panels being 7/32"-thick tempered glass. The panels are all off-center slightly to the south. The bottom panel is an opaque red panel. Below the bottom panel is a small rectangular aluminum panel with six louvers that provide ventilation in the booth. Above the top panel is a red panel with white letters that reads "TELEPHONE." A small projecting aluminum cornice spans the top of the booth.

Rear/South Façade

The south side of the booth consists of four large horizontally-oriented panels, with the top three panels being 7/32"-thick tempered glass. The panels are all off-center slightly to the east. The bottom panel is an opaque red panel. Below the bottom panel is a small rectangular aluminum panel with six louvers that provide ventilation in the booth. Above the top panel is a red panel with white letters that reads "TELEPHONE." A small projecting aluminum cornice spans the top of the booth.

Side/West Façade

The west side of the booth consists of four large horizontally-oriented panels, with the top three panels being 7/32"-thick tempered glass. The panels are all off-center slightly to the north. The bottom panel is an opaque red panel. Below the bottom panel is a small rectangular aluminum panel with six louvers that provide ventilation in the booth. Above the top panel is a red panel

[1] American Telephone and Telegraph Company. *Bell System Practices, Section 508-401-100, Outdoor Booth, KS-14611 Airlight*. Issue 1, November 1971, p. 1. Found at: http://thephonebooth.com/library/psem/508-401-100.pdf.
[2] American Telephone and Telegraph Company. *Bell System Practices, Section 508-401-100, Outdoor Booth, KS-14611 Airlight*. Issue 1, November 1971, pp. 1 and 3. Found at: http://thephonebooth.com/library/psem/508-401-100.pdf.

with white letters that reads "TELEPHONE." A small projecting aluminum cornice spans the top of the booth.

Interior

The interior of the booth consists of one space with the telephone located in the southwest corner of the booth. An aluminum shelf, that tapers from south to north to provide clearance for the open door, is located on the west wall between the bottom two glass panels. A plastic phone directory holder is suspended from the bottom of the shelf. Light in the booth is provided by a circular florescent tube light located above a translucent cover.

Integrity

The Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth retains excellent integrity from the time of its construction c.1960. Although the booth was struck by an SUV in 2014, the booth was restored and reinstalled by Prairie Grove Telephone Company (PGTelco). The telephone that is in the Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth is the original telephone from the time of the booth's installation c.1960. When the booth was damaged in 2014 the only part that was replaced was some of the glass panes. Some of the panes had already disappeared prior to the accident, and those were replaced along with any others that had been broken. The booth's original aluminum structure is still intact, although it was straightened after the accident.[3] The setting around the telephone booth also reflects the setting at the time of the booth's construction, since U.S. 62, Prairie Grove Battlefield Park, and the Colonial Motel were all in place in 1960.

[3] Parks, David. President, Prairie Grove Telephone Company (PGTelco). E-mail to the author. 30 July 2015.

8. Statement of Significance

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

[X] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

[ ] B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

[X] 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 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.)
ARCHITECTURE
COMMUNICATIONS

Period of Significance
c.1960-1965

Significant Dates
c.1960

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

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C** as an excellent example of the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth developed in the mid-1950s. When the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was introduced c.1954, advertisements touted it as "something new in telephone booths." Its aluminum construction was an improvement over previous booths, and the glass around it, along with the overhead light, made the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth well-lighted and very comfortable to use.

The Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth had several distinctive characteristics that were common to that type of telephone booth, and which are exhibited in the example in Prairie Grove. The aluminum frame and glass panels allowed the weather resistance and weather protection for users that were necessary for an outdoor application. The previous wooden telephone booths were designed for indoor use, so the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth represented an evolution in telephone booth design in order to allow it to function better in more varied environments. Advertisements for the Airlight booth also touted the "tip-up directories" that are in "easy reach" and the "ample shelf for packages and handbags," both of which are present in the Prairie Grove booth.

In addition, the Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth is also being nominated to the National Register with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its importance in the communications history of Prairie Grove. By the early 1980s, AT&T oversaw approximately 1.4 million pay phones around the country. In the days before cellular phones, the pay phone and telephone booth were instrumental in allowing telephone communications outside the home or office. Furthermore, the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was important in communications in the fact that it was geared towards automobile users, especially in small towns and rural areas, which also represented an evolution from the previous phone booths that were more pedestrian oriented. Although the introduction of cellular phones has meant the fast and widespread demise of the phone booth, a local outcry called for the reinstallation of the Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth after it was damaged in early 2014, illustrating the importance of the phone booth to the local community.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

The establishment of Washington County and Arkansas's western border began in 1820 with the creation of Crawford County by the Arkansas territorial legislature. Four years later, Congress passed a bill that moved the western boundary of the Arkansas territory 40 miles to the west, although white settlers were not allowed to establish residence in the new area due to an 1817 treaty. In 1827 the Secretary of War lifted the ban on white settlement in the Cherokee country, and on October 13, 1827, Lovely County was created by the Arkansas territorial legislature. The

following year, a treaty moved the territorial boundary 40 miles to the east, to its present location, and on October, 17, 1828, the territorial legislature created Washington County out of Lovely County, which ceased to exist.[4]

The site of Prairie Grove was first settled in 1829 by Reverend Andrew Buchanan, and through his activities a school and church were also soon established. After Buchanan's death in 1857, his land was split up among various benefactors, and in 1871, Buchanan's stepson, Col. James P. Neal, acquired the various parcels and began to live in Buchanan's homestead.[5]

After Neal was able to acquire all of the parcels, he decided to establish a town on the land. Neal was able to secure a post office, and he became the first postmaster. In the next few years, several businesses were established, including a blacksmith shop in 1872, a general store in 1875, and a large flour mill in 1876. In 1877, the town was platted and the sale of the first lots began on March 24, 1877. By the late 1880s, Prairie Grove had a population of around 500 residents.[6] Prairie Grove was incorporated on July 9, 1888.[7]

The commercial importance of Prairie Grove also grew as the town's population grew. By the late 1880s, it was reported that

> The two most important manufacturing enterprises of the town are the Prairie Grove Mills, now owned and operated by H. C. & G. W. Crowell, and the Prairie Grove Canning and Evaporating Factory, operated by a joint-stock company. ... The factory is supplied with all the latest improved machinery for canning and evaporating fruit. It has a capacity of 10,000 cans per day by the canning process, and 250 bushels per day when evaporating fruit or vegetables.
>
> The mercantile interests of Prairie Grove are represented by the following individuals and firms: General stores, H. C. & G. W. Crowell, B. A. Carl, W. N. Butler & Co., Hardy & Marrs, W. P. Dyer and D. F. McMillan; furniture, H. H. Collier; harness and saddlery, A. Dixon & Co.; druggists, McCormick & Co. and H. C. Crowell; jewelry, musical instruments, etc., Simmons & Henderson; marble works, Leach & Dorman; hardware, Baggett & Sanders; lumber, J. V. Rich.[8]

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[4] *History of Washington County, Arkansas*. Springdale, AR: Shiloh Museum, 1989, pp. 85-86.
[5] *History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889, p. 265.
[6] *History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889, p. 265.
[7] *History of Washington County, Arkansas*. Springdale, AR: Shiloh Museum, 1989, p. 264.
[8] *History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889, p. 266.

Communication was also important during the early days of Prairie Grove, the town having had three newspapers by 1890. "In 1885 a weekly newspaper called the Prairie Grove *News* was established by Joseph Garrison, and published for about one year. In April, 1887, H. Milton Butler began the publication of the Prairie Grove *Banner*, which he has since continued. The *Rising Sun* was published for a short time in 1887, but was soon bought out by the *Banner*."[9]

Although the first telephone call, which was between Alexander Graham Bell and his assistant, Thomas Watson, occurred on March 10, 1876, it was a few years before the people of Arkansas could make phone calls. Telephone service first reached Arkansas when the Western Union Telegraph Company installed it in Little Rock in November 1879. It is believed that Little Rock's telephone exchange is the third oldest exchange in the country. After it was used in Little Rock, it was not long until telephone service was installed in other parts of the state, including Prairie Grove.[10]

Telephone service came to Prairie Grove in 1888 when local physician Ephraim Graham McCormick strung a telephone wire across the city's main street to his brother's pharmacy across the street. Since many of the town's neighbors also wanted to have telephone service, the brothers incorporated the company in October 1906. Initially, the Prairie Grove Telephone Company had a switchboard and a one-page directory.[11]

After establishing the phone service in Prairie Grove, McCormick later strung the line from Prairie Grove to Fayetteville. James C. Parks, McCormick's son-in-law, started working on the switchboard and later became president of the company. He operated the company until his death in 1958. Throughout the twentieth century, the company grew and survived the World Wars and the Depression, due in part by never disconnecting a phone for not paying the bill. (Payments were routinely accepted "in the form of eggs, produce and 'the occasional cow.'") The company remains in the Parks family and is currently headed by David Parks, who came on board with the company in 1980. Today, the Prairie Grove Telephone Company has 33 employees, 6,900 landlines, and 5,800 bills that are sent out every month. The old Prairie Grove telephone prefix was Vinewood or VI.[12]

Initially, telephone service was only limited to those people who subscribed to telephone service and leased the company's equipment. However, if a non-subscriber had an emergency and needed to summon the police or fire department, they had no way to do it. As a result, it became apparent early on that telephone usage had to be open to everyone. The solution was to have a public pay station, and the first one opened on June 1, 1880, in the New Haven office of the Connecticut Telephone Company. The cost per call was ten cents, which was paid to a uniformed attendant. Not long afterwards, William Gray, invented a "coin-controlled apparatus

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[9] *History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889, pp. 265-266.

[10] Sutherlin, Diann. *The Arkansas Handbook*. Little Rock, AR: Fly-By-Night Press, 1996, p. 392.

[11] Barry, Dan. "A Town Won't Let Go of a Coin-Drop Line to the Past." *The New York Times*, 4 July 2014, found at: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/us/05land.html?_r=0.

[12] Barry, Dan. "A Town Won't Let Go of a Coin-Drop Line to the Past." *The New York Times*, 4 July 2014, found at: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/us/05land.html?_r=0.

for telephones" that required inserting a coin into a slot. Gray's invention was given patent number 408,709, and the first one was installed in the Hartford Bank in 1889.[13]

As pay stations for phones became more prevalent, it was only a matter of time before a booth developed to allow the conversation to have some privacy. The first fully-enclosed telephone booth, which was interestingly on wheels, was patented in 1883. By the early 1890s, however, phone booths had become quite elaborate affairs. An 1891 brochure indicated that "basic models – with double walls and domed roofs – were available in oak or cherry and cost between $112 and $225. Extra features included a Wilton rug for $3.50 or $6.50, revolving stools with russet leather tops for $2.00, and yellow silk window draperies for $3.00 a pair."[14]

By 1912, Western Electric's catalog featured simplified phone booth models that could be lined up in a row. The booths featured double-hinged folding doors, fans, lights and stools that were attached to the booth's hardwood walls. Each booth also featured shelves with slots below them to hold the phone book. Later models, which were made of steel, were specifically intended for outdoor use.[15]

As the twentieth century dawned, the use of the telephone – and the telephone booth – grew tremendously. As Ariana Kelly writes in her article, "Last Call for Phone Booths," "By 1904 there were over 3 million phones and 81,000 phone booths across America. By 1946, only half of American homes contained phones; consequently, pay phones were nexus points for communities. For traveling salesmen and other insolvent entrepreneurs, telephone booths in the lobbies of public buildings were the only affordable places to do business."[16]

Outdoor telephone booths began to appear in the 1940s during World War II at military bases, and they allowed military personnel to make calls to families back home. However, it was during the 1950s that they became prevalent on the American landscape. Interestingly, "Pay telephones eventually became so deeply ingrained in American life that even the government catered to them: When the U.S. Treasury changed the composition of coins, they checked with the telephone company to make sure the coins were compatible with pay phones."[17]

Although telephone booths were intended to attract people who needed to make phone calls, they attracted two other groups for very different reasons. College students loved phone booths for the crazy competition of seeing how many people they could fit in one. The North American record, which was set at St. Mary's College in Morega, California, was 22. Phone booths installed in National Parks also did a good job of attracting moose. Interestingly, as Michael

[13] Stern, Ellen, and Emily Gwathmey. *Once Upon a Telephone: An Illustrated Social History*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994, pp. 117-118.
[14] Stern, Ellen, and Emily Gwathmey. *Once Upon a Telephone: An Illustrated Social History*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994, pp. 120-121.
[15] Stern, Ellen, and Emily Gwathmey. *Once Upon a Telephone: An Illustrated Social History*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994, p. 121.
[16] Kelly, Ariana. "Last Call for Phone Booths." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 13 January 2013. Found at: http://www.salon.com/2013/01/13/last_call_for_phone_booths/.
[17] McLeod, Michael. "Old-Fashioned Telephone Booths are Quickly Becoming Obsolete." *The Seattle Times*. Found at: http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=20030430&slug=payphones30.

McLeod writes in his article "Old-Fashioned Telephone Booths are Quickly Becoming Obsolete," "Several of the animals charged into the booths and destroyed them, having mistaken their reflections in the glass for a rival horning in on their area code."[18]

When the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was introduced in the mid-1950s, the Bell Telephone System took out advertisements touting the booth's new modern design and features. For example, a 1954 advertisement proclaimed that "There's Something New in Telephone Booths." The advertisement read:

> Any time you see one of these new Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booths, you're likely to want to go right in and make a call.
>
> For they are mighty attractive and comfortable. They are well-lighted, day and night. Tip-up directories are in easy reach. There's an ample shelf for packages and handbags.
>
> The Airlight Outdoor Booths are never closed. They are available for service 24 hours a day, every day in the year.
>
> It's just another step in the never-ending job of making the telephone more convenient and more useful to more and more people.
>
> By bringing the telephone closer to you, we bring you closer to everybody. And thus make the service just that much more valuable.[19]

Another advertisement from 1959 also stressed the convenience of the new phone booths in a variety of situations. The advertisement, titled "Like a lighthouse on the highway," showed a lit-up phone booth on the shoulder of a dark highway, and read

> A thoughtful husband, hurrying home, phones to reassure his wife.
>
> A young family calls ahead to make reservations for the night.
>
> A vacationing couple enjoys a telephone visit with old friends off their route.
>
> A sputtering car coasts to a stop and two grateful women phone for road service.
>
> Lighted outdoor telephone booths are multiplying along America's highways. They and half a million other public

[18] McLeod, Michael. "Old-Fashioned Telephone Booths are Quickly Becoming Obsolete." *The Seattle Times*. Found at: http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=20030430&slug=payphones30. Interestingly, according to http://www.fiftiesweb.com/fashion/cramming.htm, telephone-booth stuffing originated in Durban South Africa, and the South African record of 25 people has yet to be surpassed.

[19] "There's Something New in Telephone Booths." 1954 Bell Telephone System Advertisement. Found at: http://thephonebooth.com/phoneadverts/telephonebooths/something-new-in-telephone-booths.html.

> telephones – in stores, stations, hotels, motels, airports and other places – make telephone service more useful and convenient day or night.
>
> Public telephones get things done wherever you are. They save you time and trouble. Use them like your own phone – to visit a friend, check an address, thank a hostess – to make reports, appointments, sales. There's always a public phone handy to help you.[20]

The Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was the first telephone booth that was designed specifically for outdoor use where previous telephone booths were meant for indoor use. The aluminum frame, glass booth, and the light allowed it to be used outdoors and at night as well as during the day. As one of the advertisements pointed out, "The Airlight Outdoor Booths are never closed. They are available for service 24 hours a day, every day in the year. It's just another step in the never-ending job of making the telephone more convenient and more useful to more and more people."[21]

The use of the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth soon spread across the country, including Arkansas. The Prairie Grove Telephone Company installed one on the east side of Prairie Grove on U.S. 62 near the Colonial Motel c.1960. The booth's location on the main highway near a motel and across the street from the Prairie Grove Battlefield Park made perfect sense. People passing through Prairie Grove, staying at the motel, or visiting the park, could enjoy the booth's convenience.

The Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth had several distinctive characteristics that were common to that type of telephone booth, and which are exhibited in the example in Prairie Grove. The aluminum frame and glass panels allowed the weather resistance and weather protection for users that were necessary for an outdoor application. The previous wooden telephone booths were designed for indoor use, so the Airlight Outdoor Telelphone Booth represented an evolution in telephone booth design in order to allow it to function better in more varied environments. Advertisements for the Airlight booth also touted the "tip-up directories" that are in "easy reach" and the "ample shelf for packages and handbags," both of which are present in the Prairie Grove booth.

Although no records exist concerning the installation of this particular phone booth, the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was geared towards automobile users, especially in small towns and rural areas, which also represented an evolution from the previous phone booths that were more pedestrian oriented. The advertisements that touted the new booths also illustrate the fact that they were often meant for drivers. The advertisement proclaiming "There's Something New in Telephone Booths" is illustrated with a booth next to a highway and also shows a mother making a call with her car parked right nearby. The other advertisement is also illustrated with a phone

[20] "Like a Lighthouse on the Highway." 1959 Bell Telephone System Advertisement. Found at: http://thephonebooth.com/phoneadverts/telephonebooths/like-a-lighthouse.html.
[21] "There's Something New in Telephone Booths." 1954 Bell Telephone System Advertisement. Found at: http://thephonebooth.com/phoneadverts/telephonebooths/something-new-in-telephone-booths.html.

booth next to a highway and the tagline drives home the auto-centric nature of the booth by proclaiming that it's "Like a lighthouse on the highway." The text in the advertisement also illustrates the fact that the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was something that was useful for drivers. The advertisement said:

> A thoughtful husband, hurrying home, phones to reassure his wife.
> A young family calls ahead to make reservations for the night.
> A vacationing couple enjoys a telephone visit with old friends off their route.
> A sputtering car coasts to a stop and two grateful women phone for road service.
>
> Lighted outdoor telephone booths are multiplying along America's highways…[22]

The Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth also shows that these were often meant to be used by motorists. The location of the booth, next to the Colonial Motel, and across the street from Prairie Grove Battlefield Park was a location that would have been convenient for tourists coming to Prairie Grove, especially by automobile, since it was on U.S. 62. Interestingly, at about the same time that the phone booth was installed, a lot of work was being carried out at Prairie Grove Battlefield Park, including moving structures from the surrounding area to the park, in order to enhance the visitor experience.[23]

The Prairie Grove Telephone Company had at least three other Airlight Telephone Booths in addition to the one in Prairie Grove. Company records indicate that the company had one booth in Farmington and two in Lincoln, but all were removed prior to 1990. The booths in Lincoln and Farmington were also along U.S. 62 in order to cater to motorists, so that people could pull over and park in order to use the phone.[24]

Although the exact date of the installation of the Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth is not known, the Prairie Grove Telephone Company believes that it was installed c.1960. An article in the *Prairie Grove Enterprise* on April 17, 1958, talked about the growth of Prairie Grove's phone system and the upgrades that the company was undertaking, and it's possible that the phone booth was installed as part of the improvements. The article stated:

> Thirty-seven new telephones were installed last month by the Prairie Grove Telephone Company – breaking a previous record of thirty-two installations for one month. Also a new record was established for the three month period of January, February

[22] "Like a Lighthouse on the Highway." 1959 Bell Telephone System Advertisement. Found at: http://thephonebooth.com/phoneadverts/telephonebooths/like-a-lighthouse.html.
[23] Staff of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. "Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park." *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*. Found at: http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1253.
[24] Parks, David. E-mail to the author. 30 July 2015.

> and March when 97 new telephones were installed. These figures seem especially significant in view of the fact that January, February and March are normally the slowest months of the year. An indication that this part of the country is experiencing considerable growth at the present time.
>
> The company also announced that the new long distance equipment has been installed in the Prairie Grove, Lincoln, Farmington, Morrow and Dutch Mills exchanges and a great deal more new equipment will be installed within the next few months. This equipment has and will mean considerable improvement in all phases of telephone service.[25]

The period of 1958 was also a period of a tremendous amount of development at the Prairie Grove Battlefield Park, which may have also contributed to the installation of the booth to serve tourists coming to visit the park.

The Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was replaced in many cases by the 1970s by the telephone kiosk. Not only was the telephone kiosk less maintenance (and therefore cheaper) for the telephone companies, the design and positioning of the kiosks sometimes meant that drivers didn't even have to get out of their cars to make calls. Although the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was convenient for motorists, the evolution to the telephone kiosk took the convenience of using a pay phone from the car one step further.

Like most phone companies, the Prairie Grove Telephone Company did switch to canopy type pay phones, sometimes referred to phone kiosks, which were open kiosks with pay phones that one could pull up to in an automobile. The phone kiosks consisted of a pole with an open box containing the pay phone. Sometimes, but not always, a beacon existed on top advertising the phone. The phone kiosk was also an improvement for the telephone company because it required less maintenance and was less costly for the company to utilize. Today, the Prairie Grove Telephone Company still operates two phone kiosks, one in Devil's Den State Park and one in front of their offices in Prairie Grove.[26]

By the 1980s, pay phones were still an important part of the telephone network and important in communications. Sonny Kleinfield's book *The Biggest Company on Earth: A Profile of AT&T* noted:

> Besides supplying home and business phone service, the Bell System superintends some 1.4 million pay phones. They are found in stores, on street corners, in subways, but also on Metroliner trains, stashed inside the Statue of Liberty, and rocking on some Coast Guard boats. Nothing is out of the question. A number of coin phones have been installed in forests to oblige

[25] "Phone Installations Set New Record." *Prairie Grove Enterprise*. 17 April 1958, p. 1.
[26] Parks, David. E-mail to the author. 17 August 2015.

> talkative hunters. The decision on when to collect the coins from the phones (usually when about $72 piles up inside) is made by computer. In most cases it costs a dime to make a local call, though until recently it was a nickel in Louisiana and it's a quarter in Florida. Despite the relatively modest amount of money to be found in pay phones, they have long been a popular mark for criminals. Since it can take an embarrassingly long time to jimmy open and empty out a pay phone, coin robbers often take the whole phone with them, if they can. Ecologists once cleared out a Detroit municipal pond and discovered 168 coin phones buried in the debris. Some pay phone receivers rest on their hooks for months. At the other extreme, the phone near the ticket counter in the bowels of the Greyhound Bus Terminal on Chicago's Randolph Street is snatched up an average of 270 times a day. It's the busiest pay phone in the nation. Have to call the doctor? Go anywhere else.[27]

The fact that some pay phones were not being used became more and more prevalent starting in the 1970s as the use of cellular phones increased. The time also marked when the phone booth all but disappeared. In 1993, there were 13 million cellular phones in the United States, and in just ten years it had skyrocketed to 143 million. During just about the same period, the number of pay phones declined from 2.6 million in 1996 to less than two million in 2003. As Michael McLeod writes:

> Once every pay phone had its own little booth, and every little booth was a stage for solitary dramas. Telephone booths were the original chat rooms, back in a time when real life was all that there was.
>
> Underworld characters slinked into the booths to smoke Lucky Strikes and rat on one another. Reporters in dapper hats phoned in scoops from them. Lovers held their receivers close to murmur across the wires.
>
> Phone booths held the crowd at bay, providing a sliver of privacy for one thin dime. It was the greatest time-share bargain in history.
>
> Naturally, it didn't last.[28]

The usage for the Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth also illustrates the fact that the telephone booth is quickly becoming a thing of the past due to the proliferation of cell phones. In 1991, the Prairie Grove telephone booth brought in $340, but by 2005 the amount had dropped to $109.55. David Parks, President of the Prairie Grove Telephone Company,

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[27] Kleinfield, Sonny. *The Biggest Company on Earth*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981, pp. 9-10.
[28] McLeod, Michael. "Old-Fashioned Telephone Booths are Quickly Becoming Obsolete." *The Seattle Times*. Found at: http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=20030430&slug=payphones30.

indicates that "In the 1970's the annual collection was $750 per year, 1980's it was $618 per year. In 2014 it was $19 of which over half of that amount was in August when we put the phone booth back in service and many people, including me, were making phone calls from the pay phone! Our TOTAL pay phone collection per month 25 years ago was around $1,500 per month. Now it is $12, on a good month."[29]

The dramatic rise in cellular phone use and the dramatic decline in the use of pay phones almost took out the Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth in 2014. On June 7, 2014, the booth was damaged after being struck by an SUV whose owner had fallen asleep at the wheel. Due to the fact that the money raised by the booth – about $2.00 every six months – does not cover the booth's expenses, which includes the expense of maintaining the phone line and $5.00 a month for the electricity to light the booth's light, the Prairie Grove Telephone Company (PGTelco) considered disconnecting the phone booth. However, because of the local response on Facebook, the company instead took the booth to their warehouse and began the process of repairing and restoring the booth. Patrick Smith, who had used the phone booth on many occasions as a teenager to call home after attending a move at the 112 Drive In Theater in Fayetteville, did most of the work on the booth. After several weeks of work, the Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was reinstalled outside of the Colonial Motel where locals and passersby can stop and take pictures or, if they choose, once again even make a phone call.[30]

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

The Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was the first telephone booth that was designed specifically for outdoor use where previous telephone booths were meant for indoor use. The aluminum frame, glass booth, and the light allowed it to be used outdoors and at night as well as during the day. The Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth had several distinctive characteristics that were common to that type of telephone booth, and which are exhibited in the example in Prairie Grove. The aluminum frame and glass panels allowed the weather resistance and weather protection for users that were necessary for an outdoor application. The previous wooden telephone booths were designed for indoor use, so the Airlight Outdoor Telelphone Booth represented an evolution in telephone booth design in order to allow it to function better in more varied environments. Advertisements for the Airlight booth also touted the "tip-up directories" that are in "easy reach" and the "ample shelf for packages and handbags," both of which are present in the Prairie Grove booth.

The Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth represented a new direction in the design of telephone booths. Instead of wooden booths that were found inside hotels, drug stores, or other businesses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth was developed specifically for outdoor use. Its aluminum and glass construction was durable enough to stand up to the elements and the amount of glass along with

[29] Parks, David. E-mail to the author. 3 August 2015, and Parks, David. E-mail to the author. 30 July 2015.
[30] "Accident Disconnects Beloved Prairie Grove Phone Booth." Found at: http://www.arkansasmatters.com/story/d/story/accident-disconnects-beloved-prairie-grove-phone-b/70375/QMo5psvRnU6yuF7nwk3_KA, and Barry, Dan. "A Town Won't Let Go of a Coin-Drop Line to the Past." *The New York Times*, 4 July 2014, found at: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/us/05land.html?_r=0.

the louvers on the sides allowed its namesake elements – air and light – to flood the booth. Bell Telephone touted the new Airlight booth as being "mighty attractive and comfortable," and features such as being "well-lighted, day and night," having "tip-up directories…in easy reach," and having "an ample shelf for packages and handbags" made it live up to Bell Telephone's claim.[31] The Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth represents an excellent example of this distinctive 1950s phone booth type, and although it was once common around the country, it is one of two Airlight Telephone Booths currently known to remain in Arkansas.

Telephone booths were once a common feature in America's towns and cities. The 1958 Telephone Almanac estimated that there were "some half a million" indoor and outdoor telephone booths in use around the country.[32] The fact that telephone booths like the Airlight booth were multiplying along America's highways made "telephone service more useful and convenient day or night."[33] The importance of the Airlight telephone booth in communications was claimed by Bell Telephone in their advertisements in that "they save you time and trouble" and "by bringing the telephone closer to you, we bring you closer to everybody. And thus make the service just that much more valuable."[34] The value and importance of telephone booths, especially in the days prior to the proliferation of cellular phones, is indisputable.

The location of Prairie Grove's Airlight booth illustrates its importance in the town's communication during the 1960s (and up to today). Located on U.S. 62, the main highway through town, the booth is located adjacent to the Colonial Motel, Prairie Grove's only hotel, and across the road from Prairie Grove Battlefield Park, the community's main tourist attraction. The location meant that it was easily accessible to those who would most likely need it in Prairie Grove – travelers passing through and tourists visiting the park or spending the night in town.

The Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth represents an excellent example of an Airlight booth, a type of building that has virtually disappeared from the landscape due to the exponential growth in the use of cellular phones. The Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth is also important to the communication history of Prairie Grove, representing an important means of communication in the area in the 1960s. Due to its importance in Prairie Grove's communication history, and due to its significance as an excellent example of an Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth, the Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criteria A and C.**

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[31] "There's Something New in Telephone Booths." 1954 Bell Telephone System Advertisement. Found at: http://thephonebooth.com/phoneadverts/telephonebooths/something-new-in-telephone-booths.html.
[32] Stern, Ellen, and Emily Gwathmey. *Once Upon a Telephone: An Illustrated Social History*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994, p. 118.
[33] "Like a Lighthouse on the Highway." 1959 Bell Telephone System Advertisement. Found at: http://thephonebooth.com/phoneadverts/telephonebooths/like-a-lighthouse.html.
[34] "Like a Lighthouse on the Highway." 1959 Bell Telephone System Advertisement. Found at: http://thephonebooth.com/phoneadverts/telephonebooths/like-a-lighthouse.html, and "There's Something New in Telephone Booths." 1954 Bell Telephone System Advertisement. Found at: http://thephonebooth.com/phoneadverts/telephonebooths/something-new-in-telephone-booths.html.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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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 # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _WA1233_____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _Less than one acre.__

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 35.982623 Longitude: -94.309993
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 15 Easting: 381904 Northing: 3982814
2. Zone: Easting: Northing:
3. Zone: Easting: Northing:
4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Beginning at UTM point 15/381902/3982815 on the southern edge of U.S. 62, proceed southerly for 15 feet to UTM point 15/381902/3982811, thence proceed easterly for 10 feet to UTM point 15/381905/3982811, thence proceed northerly for 15 feet to the southern edge of U.S. 62 at UTM point 15/381905/3982815, thence proceed westerly along the eastern edge of U.S. 62 to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth and its immediate surroundings.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
street & number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72201
e-mail: ralph@arkansasheritage.org
telephone: (501) 324-9787
date: January 9, 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth

City or Vicinity: Prairie Grove

County: Washington County State: Arkansas

Photographer: Callie Williams

Date Photographed: August 28, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of _5_. South and east façades, looking northwest.

2 of _5_. North façade, looking south.

3 of _5_. West façade, looking east.

4 of _5_. West and south façades, looking northeast.

5 of _5_. View of the interior, looking southwest.

Figure 1: Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth – After the Accident, 2014.

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 100 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.

|--------778 feet----------|

Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth
Prairie Grove, Washington County, Arkansas

15 381904E 3982814N

North

|--------190 feet----------|

Prairie Grove Airlight Outdoor Telephone Booth
Prairie Grove, Washington County, Arkansas

15 381904E 3982814N

North

TELEPHONE
TELEPHONE
Prairie Grove
Battlefield
State Park

TELEPHONE

TELEPHONE
PARKER ST
STOP

TELEPHONE
TELEPHONE
PARKER ST
STOP

TELEPHO
COINS
5
10
25
TELCO