

# Preservation Oklahoma

## NEWS

July 2024/Volume XXX, Issue 4



## Swimming Pools in Oklahoma

Plus

Enjoy the Vibes from a Great **Neon** Sign

Preservation Oklahoma News, the newsletter of Oklahoma's historic preservation community, is published quarterly.

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**On the Cover:**

Wewoka Swimming Pool and Bathhouse (21201.OGP.17,  
Works Progress Administration Collection, OHS).

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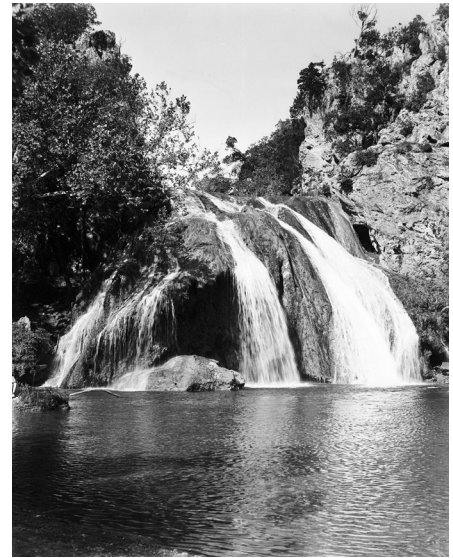
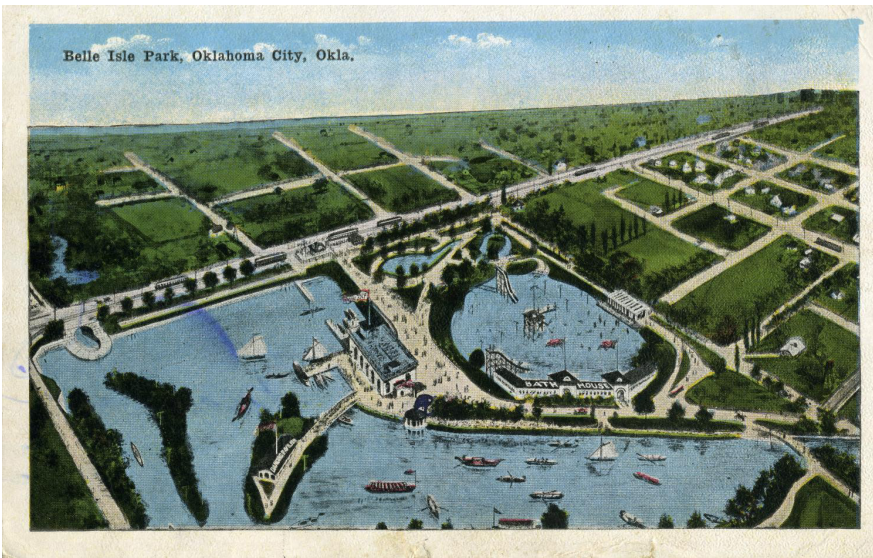
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Barbara Thompson

Lynda Ozan - *Secretary to the  
Committee*

# SWIMMING POOLS IN OKLAHOMA



Left: Bird's eye view of Belle Isle Park in Oklahoma City, 1917 (19687.TO.0030.55.9.161, Chester R. Cowen Collection, OHS).  
Right: Turner Falls, 1941 (21412.M236.10, Z. P. Meyers/Barney Hillerman Photographic Collection, OHS).

Oklahomans have always been drawn to the water as a place to play and relax during the hot summer months. The first swimming pools in Oklahoma were associated with outdoor parks or resorts that catered almost exclusively to middle- and upper-class adults rather than rambunctious children.

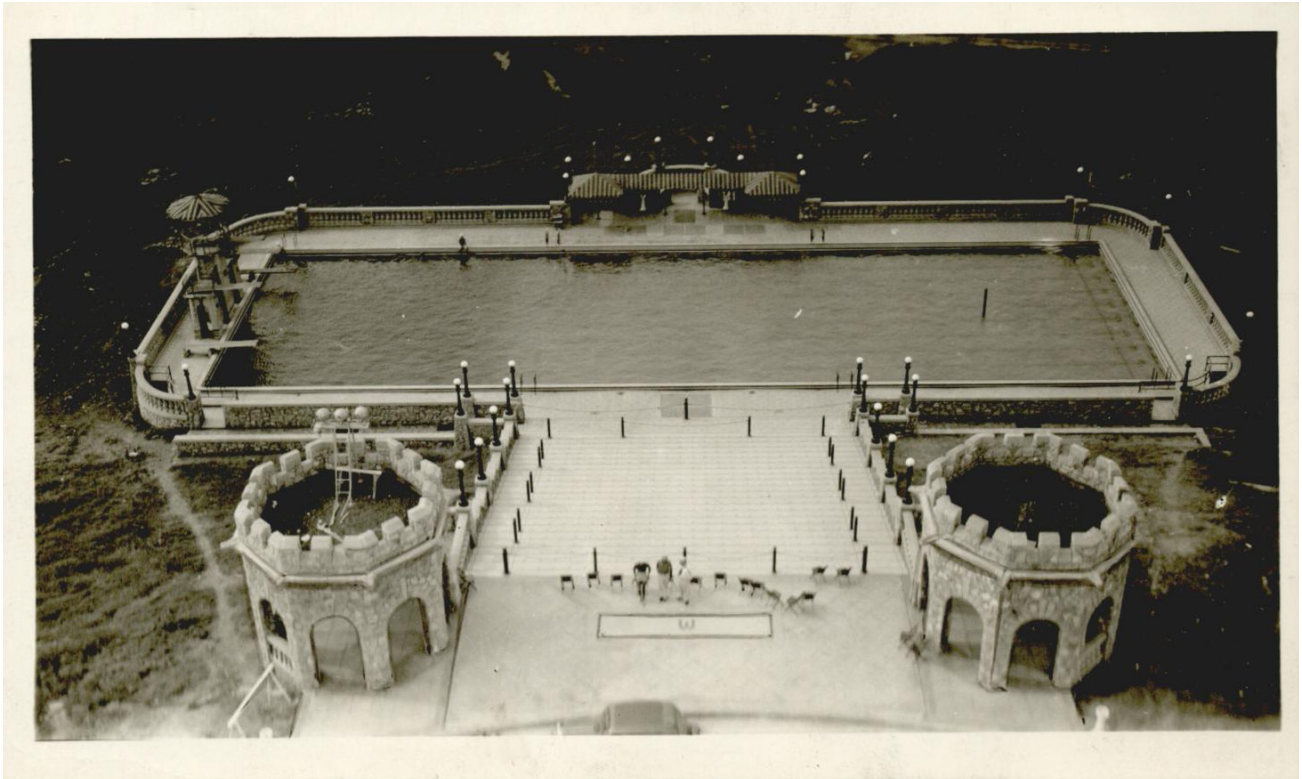
Delmar Garden, which operated south of downtown Oklahoma City from 1902 to 1910, offered a swimming pool and a variety of other attractions such as horse races, baseball games, restaurants, and a hotel. Similarly, patrons of Belle Isle Park in north Oklahoma City swam in the bathing pool, boated in a neighboring lake, and dined in the shade along the park's boardwalk.

Resorts in southern Oklahoma often constructed bathing pools by damming local creeks. Developers of Medicine Park created the Bath Lake pool by blocking Medicine Creek, which runs through the center of town. Visitors can still swim in the lake today. Frank Rush used the same strategy to construct a swimming pool for Craterville Park north of Cache. And no one should forget Turner Falls near Davis, which features a natural swimming pool that the public has enjoyed since 1919.



Swimming Pool at Craterville Park, 1922  
(60, W. P. Campbell Collection, OHS).

Ponca City benefitted from the philanthropy of Louis (Lew) Haines Wentz, a wealthy oilman who acquired thirty acres northeast of town to establish a public park in 1928. The park's Olympic-size swimming pool is a centerpiece attraction. Ample outdoor lighting and neon lights along the pool floor allowed the facility to remain open day and night. Wentz Park is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and features a variety of stone structures in addition to the pool, which remains in use and is operated by the City of Ponca City.



Swimming Pool at Wentz Camp in Ponca City, 1935 (2012.201.B1059.0322, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).



Night view of Wentz Camp swimming pool, 1936 (2012.201.B0121.0373, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

The construction of swimming pools and bathhouses was one strategy through which the Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided relief to Oklahomans during the Great Depression. The WPA constructed dozens of pool facilities across the state. The pools are easily identified for their high level of craftsmanship and use of local limestone or sandstone. Some facilities were constructed as a standalone project, such as the National Register-listed Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse. Others, like the pool and bathhouse in Wewoka's Eastside Park, were constructed as part of a comprehensive park improvement project that included a variety of structures, such as pavilions, bandstands, and sidewalks. Bathhouses in Alva and Duncan utilize concrete instead of stone and feature details indicative of the Art Moderne (Streamlined) architectural style.

The swimming pool in Lawton's Mattie Beal Park was the result of civil rights demonstrators seeking equal access to public facilities. Doe Doe Park, a private amusement park featuring a large swimming pool, was open only to white customers, and the city did not provide a public, integrated alternative. Activists staged protests at the entrance of Doe Doe Park throughout the summer of 1966, demanding equal access. In June, Clara Luper and approximately 100 individuals marched overnight from Oklahoma City to Lawton to protest the injustice. The city council responded by approving the construction of an integrated municipal swimming pool. It was completed in time for the 1967 swimming season and remains open to the public. Doe Doe Park was integrated one year later and has since been demolished.

Swimming remains a popular pastime, but historic community swimming pools are an endangered resource. Many suburban neighborhoods feature private pools, and some cities have replaced historic pools with new facilities. Rising maintenance costs, a lack of experienced craftsmen, and concerns regarding accessibility or sustainability are often cited when a municipality considers replacing a historic swimming pool. Visitation to public facilities also declined as it became cheaper for homeowners to install backyard swimming pools. Pool access and architecture will continue to change as families and children go swimming during the hot Oklahoma summers.

Written by Matthew Pearce, OHS



Upper Left: Alva Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse (OKSHPO)

Lower Left: Lawton's Mattie Beal Park Pool (OKSHPO)

Above: A civil rights demonstration in Lawton, June 1966  
(2012.201.B0135.0397, Oklahoma Publishing Company  
Photography Collection, OHS)

# ENJOY THE VIBES FROM A GREAT NEON SIGN

Neon was in its heyday from the 1930s through the 1950s. Like many iconic American classics (pizza, hamburgers, hot dogs) neon originates elsewhere. In 1910, French inventor Georges Claude introduced neon lighting, which creates illumination by applying electricity to neon or similar gas types in a sealed glass tube. (The various gases create different colors.) Claude is believed to have then designed the first neon sign for a barbershop in Paris. Neon signage came to America in the 1920s, when it appeared at a Packard automobile showroom in Los Angeles.

Soon it spread across the American landscape, from Times Square in New York City to the Las Vegas Strip, and even places like Tulsa and Vinita. Lynda Ozan, with the State Historic Preservation Office said, “neon signs are a great way of telling the stories and history of a community, a business and/or a building.”

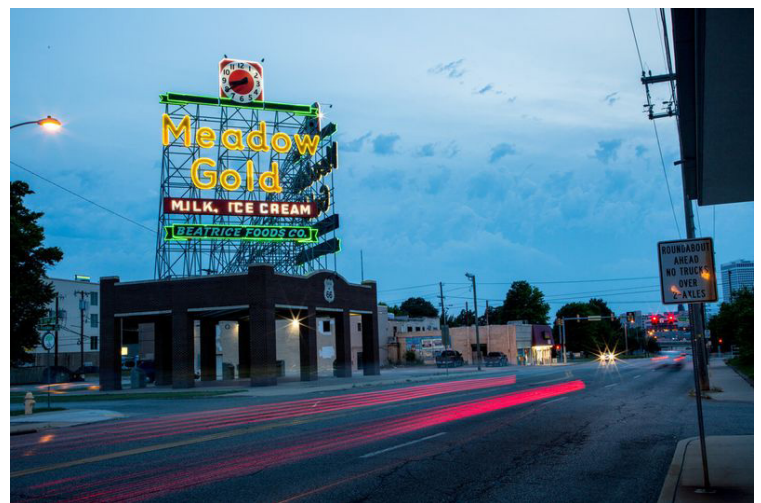
The recently restored “Hi-Way Café” sign near Vinita is a great place to start your neon experience. Thanks to a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and American Express, the sign was restored in 2023.



Will Rogers Motor Court, Tulsa, Tulsa County  
Photo: TravelOK.com



Hi-Way Cafe Neon Sign, Vinita, Craig County  
Photo: Hi-Way Cafe



Meadow Gold sign in Tulsa, Tulsa County  
Photo: TravelOK.com/Lori Duckworth

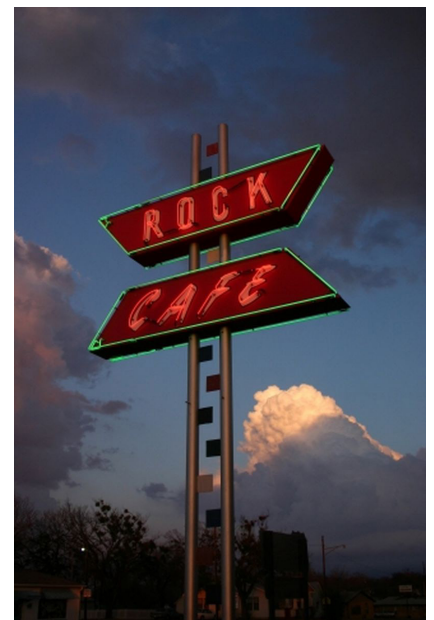
Tulsa has an extensive collection of historic neon signs to bask in the glow of on a warm summer evening. Campbell Hotel, El Rancho Grande, and the Meadow Gold Sign immediately come to mind. Thanks to a great partnership between the National Park Service, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture, Meadow Gold, once threatened, was moved and restored to all its bright, neon glory.



In Oklahoma City, Sunshine Cleaners lights the evening sky. The sign had not functioned for decades, but it was fully restored under new ownership. Institutions on the Oklahoma neon tour include Cock O' the Walk Bar & Grill and Cattlemen's Café. And no one should miss out on the theatres: Will Rogers, Tower and Winchester! Nothing is more American than a trip to the drive-in on a hot, steamy Oklahoma night.

Western Oklahoma did not miss out on the neon craze either. Visit Clinton for a great view of the Art Deco McLain Rogers Park sign/entry gate. Don't forget the Western Hotel in Sayre, which has bold colors and a desert motif.

Many places are lucky to hold onto their iconic neon signs. They are a remnant of a long-gone business or a symbol of a thriving locally owned shop. Deliberate action by community members and leaders is the most effective way to keep these prized works of art shining in your community. Given the incredible historical significance of neon signs and the place they hold in the heart of the community, working towards solutions to preserve historic American neon signs is imperative to our historic downtowns.



Top of Page: Tower Theatre, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Photo: Tower Theatre  
 Above Left: Waylan's Ku-Ku Burger, Miami, Ottawa County. Photo: TravelOK.com  
 Above Center: Buck Atom's Cosmic Curios, Tulsa, Tulsa County. Photo: TravelOK.com/Nathan Harmon  
 Above Right: Rock Cafe, Stroud, Lincoln County. Photo: TravelOK.com/Emily Priddy

Written by Lynda Ozan, OKSHPO

# ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY ALONG GOFF CREEK, TEXAS COUNTY

In 2023, we undertook an archeological survey of western portions of Goff Creek in the Oklahoma panhandle. This work resulted from the financial and in-kind support of the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office and the Oklahoma Archeological Survey. A survey of Goff Creek was proposed for two main reasons. First, this research would further document sites and aid in the chronology of cultural developments in the panhandle. Second, the survey sought to document Antelope Creek phase occupations (approx. 1250-1450 CE), because an abundance of cultural materials had been recovered by local collectors over the years.

The Antelope Creek phase is the southwestern version of the Plains Village adaptation to short-grass prairie, and its heartland is located to the south of the Texas panhandle. These late precontact peoples were bison hunters and farmers. Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of this archeological phase, and similar regional phases, is its architecture. Antelope Creek houses and structures are typically rectangular, semi-subterranean buildings with stone slabs for foundations. Christopher Lintz and others have suggested a pattern of settlement variability as well as change through time in Texas sites in response to trade, conflict, or drought. We wanted to know if similar patterns occurred in Oklahoma along the phase boundary, so we chose Goff Creek.

The survey documented numerous sites, most of which predate European contact, although one late nineteenth to early twentieth-century farmstead was also recorded. At least two sites are likely candidates for Antelope Creek occupations. However, this proposition will require further testing to confirm a date range or cultural affiliation. Other sites are likely associated with bison hunting or processing, including stacked stone cairns, which may have been used to direct the bison into a surround or dead-end location.

Although this survey is just the initial step in additional research, as mentioned above, and further work is needed to determine the date ranges and cultural affiliations of the recorded sites, the importance of the survey goes beyond site documentation. This survey also demonstrates the importance of getting to know the local environment and landscape as well as studying the way that landscape continues to change. Today, Goff Creek is a dry channel that only contains flowing water after severe or prolonged rainstorms, and as such, the valley is filled with a system of sand dunes. These dunes are constantly shifting with the winds to reveal, bury, or erode archeological sites. Dune formation is likely tied to the current drought conditions, and therefore, the valley would not always have looked as it does today. Refining our understanding of past environmental conditions will not only aid in the location of archeological sites but also help to indicate what the shifting sands have removed from the archeological record and our understanding of the past.



Soil profile showing remnant prairie soil (black layer) buried beneath the modern top soil (brown surface layer). Notice that the modern top soil (brown layer) is missing from the profile in the distant upper right hand corner of the photo – demonstrating preservation changes over short distances.



Overview of Goff Creek stream channel facing the northern bank of the active channel.

Written by Jennifer M. Haney, Leland C. Bement, and Hayden Montandon, Oklahoma Archeological Survey



# NEW NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS IN OKLAHOMA

## National Register of Historic Places listings from July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

Will Rogers Memorial Library, 121 North Weenonah Ave., Claremore, Rogers County, Listed 11/3/2023

Abe Lincoln Trading Company, North side of Main Street, 175 feet west of Clearview Road, Clearview, Okfuskee County, Listed 12/11/2023

Adams, John and Hazel, House, 108 Fairmont Road, Vinita, Craig County, Listed 12/27/2023  
(Bruce Goff Designed Resources in Oklahoma MPS)

Delaware School, District No. 64, approx. 6 miles north of Jay on US 59/OK 10, Jay, Delaware County, Listed 12/27/2023

Robertson, Dr. William A.T. and Lillian, House, 202 North 6th Street, Ponca City, Kay County, Listed 12/27/2023

Grayson Jail, approx. 200 ft west, intersection of Perkins St. and Finley St., Grayson, Okmulgee County, Listed 1/25/2024

Altus Junior College Library, 221 North Park Lane, Altus, Jackson County, Listed 3/5/2024

Blevins, Charles and Bertha, House, 1838 North Norfolk Avenue, Tulsa, Tulsa County, Listed 3/5/2024

St. George Episcopal Church, 148 West 7th Street, Bristow, Creek County, Listed 5/1/2024

Clyde's Supermarket and T.G.&Y., 1100 N. Walker Ave. and 429 NW 10th St., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Listed 5/23/2024

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 408 Colorado Ave, Okarche, Canadian County Listed 5/30/2024



Grayson Jail, Grayson, Okmulgee County



John and Hazel Adams House, Vinita, Craig County

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## July 2024

- 4 SHPO Closed
- 11 SHPO Lunch and Learn: Historic American Building Survey (HABS) and Its Impact on Oklahoma (12 p.m./Catherine Lavoie, National Park Service)
- 18 Historic Preservation Review Committee Meeting (1:30 p.m./Dr. LeRoy H. Fischer Boardroom, 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive, Oklahoma City; virtually via Teams)

## August 2024

- 8 SHPO Lunch and Learn: OSU Edmon Low Library Map Collections (12 p.m./Kevin Dyke)

## September 2024

- 2 SHPO Closed
- 24 Everyday Oklahoma: Fascinating Stories about Familiar Places. “Calabooses in Oklahoma” with Michael Mayes (2 p.m. - 3 p.m.)

## October 2024

- 17 Historic Preservation Review Committee Meeting (1:30 p.m./Dr. LeRoy H. Fischer Boardroom, 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive, Oklahoma City; virtually via Teams)
- 22 SHPO Lunch and Learn: Chapman Ranches (12 p.m./Rick Mitchell, Mead & Hunt)

## FINAL DRAFT OF STATE PLAN AVAILABLE AUGUST 5

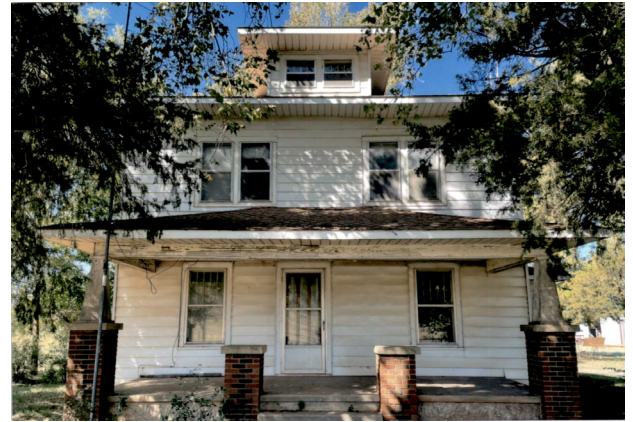
In July 2023, the State Historic Preservation Office released its first questionnaire addressing the update of its state plan, a process that is required by the National Park Service (NPS). A second questionnaire was issued mid-September in person and October 1, 2023, online to delve further into certain responses from the first questionnaire. All those answers, along with comments to a specific questionnaire for our Tribal partners, were used to develop the first draft of the new 10-year state plan. The first draft was available for comment from the public through March 29, 2024. The final draft will be available beginning August 5, 2024, for comments through August 30, 2024. After all comments have been addressed, the final draft will be submitted to the NPS for its final review. Following changes recommended by the NPS, the new state plan will be available on January 1, 2025 and will be good through December 31, 2034.

Final draft available at [www.okhistory.org/stateplan](http://www.okhistory.org/stateplan) beginning August 5, 2024.

# NEW OKLAHOMA CENTENNIAL FARM & RANCH RECIPIENTS

## Oklahoma Centennial Farm & Ranch recipients from April 1, 2023-April 30, 2024

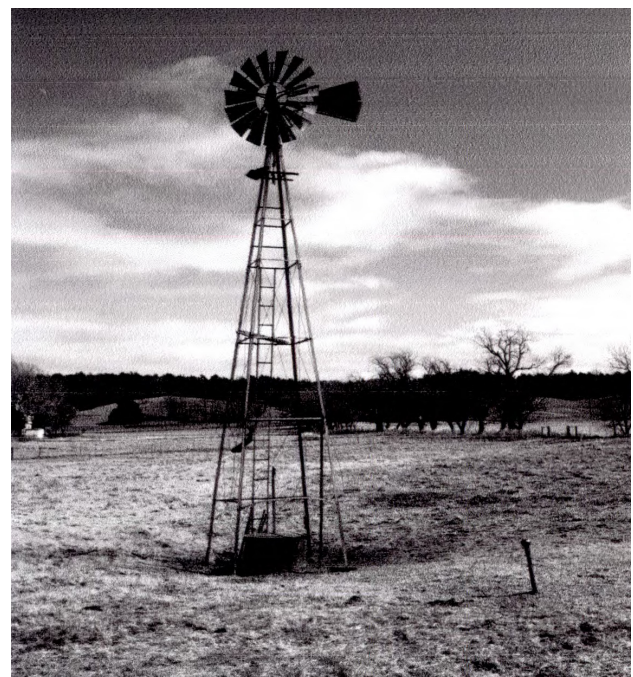
- Joe Lee & Beverly Bierig Farm, Major County
- Borelli Farm, Kingfisher County
- Culbreath Family Home Place, Tillman County
- Price Family Farm, Harper County
- Sims' Ranch, Harmon County
- The Juan and Ruby Tucker Family, Hughes County
- White Family Farm, Woodward County
- L. E. Wray Ranch Est. 1920, Blaine County
- Chlouber Farms, Kingfisher County
- Lowry Farms, Inc., Custer County
- Fred August Kehn Centennial Farm, Major County
- Droke Land Legacy LLC, Dewey County
- Hayden G Austin Jr Farm, Washita County
- Lanford-Cornett Homestead, Greer County
- Cornett Homestead, Harmon County
- Litsch-Kirkpatrick Family Farm, Dewey County
- Fowler Farms, Roger Mills County
- Pybas Farm, McClain County
- Eisenhauer Farm, Kay County
- Wall-Gaddis-Jones Ranch, Caddo County
- Hill Family Farm/Hillcrest Ranch, Muskogee County
- Cornelius Homestead, Cotton County
- Miliam Jones Homeplace, Washita County
- Hutchens Family Farm, Woodward County
- Wolves Den Ranch, Murray County
- Mack Family Farm, Garfield County
- Garrett Family Farm, Kingfisher County
- G. Goeringer/A. Koch Farm, Washita County
- Henry Koch Homestead, Washita County
- Pratt-Lucy Farm, Pottawatomie County
- Grandpa's Place, Woodward County
- Stowe-Lyon Centennial Farm 34140, Caddo County
- McLaury Family Farm, Beckham County
- Gurley Farms, Beckham County
- Josefy Farms, Tillman County
- Paul Case Farms, Ottawa County
- Wilson Homestead/Rocking Heart Ranch



Stowe-Lyon Centennial Ranch 34140, Caddo County



Stowe-Lyon Centennial Ranch 34140, Caddo County



Stowe-Lyon Centennial Ranch 34140, Caddo County

# Become a Member of the OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY TODAY!



Oklahoma  
Historical  
Society

**Join the Oklahoma Historical Society** to help preserve Oklahoma's rich heritage and culture. Being part of the OHS connects you with the diverse array of individuals who shaped the state, and supports the crucial work of collecting, preserving, and sharing these invaluable stories with future generations. Your tax-deductible membership donation directly aids in creating exhibits, educational programs, and publications that depict our history, and it plays a vital role in ensuring that history remains accessible to thousands of students and visitors each year.

All membership levels include unlimited free admission to all 24 of our museums and sites across the state, a one-year subscription to *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, *Mistletoe Leaves*, and *EXTRA!*, and a 15 percent discount in the Oklahoma History Center Museum Store and Research Center. A basic annual membership starts at only \$50. To join or for more information on membership, visit [www.okhistory.org/join](http://www.okhistory.org/join) or contact Nicole Bowman at 405-522-5242 or [nicole.bowman@history.ok.gov](mailto:nicole.bowman@history.ok.gov).

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