

Oklahoma!

AT YOUR FINGERTIPS



Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department

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State of Oklahoma
Office of the Governor

Dear Readers:

As governor of Oklahoma, it's my pleasure to invite you to explore the heritage and history of our great state within the pages of this booklet.

Originally home to the American Indian, vast herds of buffalo and unspoiled natural beauty, Oklahoma is absolutely unique. The pages that follow tell of the people from many walks of life who came here in search of adventure and freedom. Among them were gold-searching explorers, men and women freed from slavery, settlers, cowboys, outlaws and lawmen, and people who made their fortunes in oil.

We Oklahomans are proud to share our story with you. Enjoy your journey through these pages.

Sincerely,

Mary Fallin

Oklahoma's History

Although one of the youngest states in the nation, Oklahoma is a land that reaches far back in time. Oklahoma's recorded history began in 1541 when Spanish explorer Francisco Vazquez de Coronado ventured through the area on his quest for a lost city of gold. A few other Spaniards passed through the area, followed by French explorers and fur traders in the 1700s. The land that would eventually be known as Oklahoma was part of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, thus becoming part of the United States.

Beginning in the 1820s, the five largest tribes in the southeastern United States (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole) were relocated to Indian Territory. By the late nineteenth century these groups came to be called the “Five Civilized Tribes,” but are now referred to as the “Five Tribes.” Forced off their ancestral lands by state and federal governments, the tribes suffered great hardships during the rigorous trips west. The survivors eventually recovered from the relocation through hard work and communal support. From the 1820s to 1860, the tribes created new institutions and adapted their cultures to their new circumstances.



During the Civil War, the Five Tribes sided with the Confederacy and suffered from much destruction during the conflict. Following the war, federal officials penalized the Five Tribes by taking about one half of their lands from them and using the property to relocate other tribes from the region. The ongoing westward expansion of non-Indians in the area brought the cattle industry, railroad building and the tapping of natural resources such as coal and timber. By the 1890s, federal officials forced all the tribes in Oklahoma to give up their communal lands and accept individual property allotments to make way for expansion. There was talk of using Indian Territory for settlement by African-Americans emancipated from slavery. However, the government relented to pressure,

much of it coming from a group known as “Boomers,” who wanted the rich lands opened to non-Indian settlement.



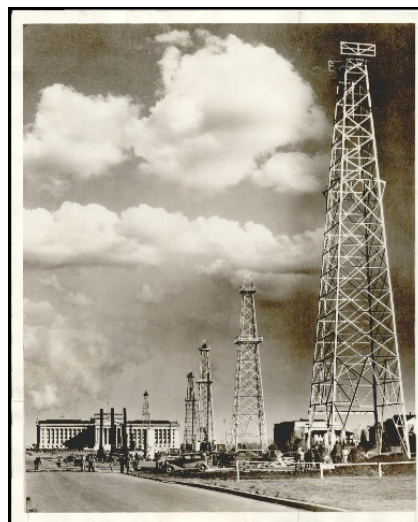
The western parts of the territory opened to settlers by holding a total of five **land runs** between 1889 and 1895. Settlers came from across the nation and even other countries like Germany, Ireland and Slavic nations to stake their claims. And African-Americans, some who were former slaves of Native Americans, took part in the runs or accepted their allotments as tribal members in eastern Oklahoma among the Five Tribes. In the 1890s and early 1900s years that followed, black

pioneers founded and settled entire communities at Arcadia, Boley, Langston, Taft, and several other towns.

On November 16, 1907, Oklahoma became the 46th state. Statehood brought economic growth in agriculture and other economic activities, especially oil. People came from all parts of the world to “strike it rich” in Oklahoma’s teeming **oil fields**. Cities like Tulsa, Ponca City, Bartlesville and Oklahoma City flourished.

In the twentieth century, Oklahoma’s history followed much of the national pattern—embracing progressive political reforms, experiencing a boom in the 1920s, suffering and recovering from the Great Depression, and supporting the efforts during World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. The state pursued federal assistance to build large reservoirs and defense bases, helping to enhance the economy.

Today, Oklahomans are filled with pride for their land of diverse cultures, scenic lakes and rivers, and genuine warmth and friendliness. Many cultural groups call the state home, resulting in unique areas like Oklahoma City’s Asian District and the small southeastern Oklahoma town of Krebs that’s known as Little Italy. Numerous events around the state celebrate its rich heritage, including the Oklahoma Czech Festival in Yukon, Azuma Festival in Guymon and Scotfest in Tulsa.

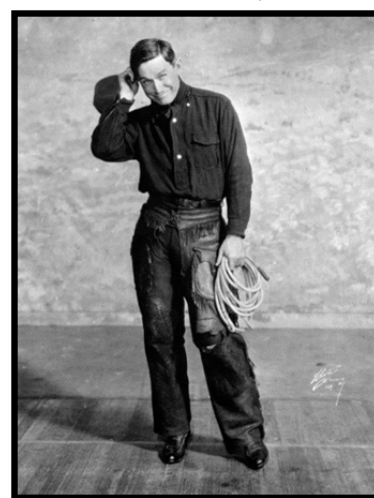


Native People



Sac and Fox, Delaware, Apache and Pawnee, call Oklahoma their home today. Such famous Native Americans as Sequoyah, Black Beaver, **Jim Thorpe** and Maria Tallchief contributed to Oklahoma's development.

The state is also the setting for vast horse and cattle ranches, rodeos and working cowboys. Such famous cowboys as Bill Pickett, Tom Mix, Gene Autry and **Will Rogers** hail from Oklahoma. Before Coronado and his colleagues landed on America’s shores, Native Americans resided



in what would become Oklahoma. Remnants of several different hunter-agricultural civilizations have been found in Oklahoma, including a site near Anadarko, where archaeologists discovered the bones of a mammoth and several spear points. Scientists estimate the mammoth was killed more than 11,000 years ago and have identified the spearheads as belonging to an ancient group of hunters known as the Clovis culture.

From 500 to 1300 A.D., a group known as the Mound Builders lived in an area just west of the Arkansas/Oklahoma border in LeFlore County. Artifacts left in ceremonial burial site “mounds” show the Mound Builders were highly skilled artisans with a sophisticated

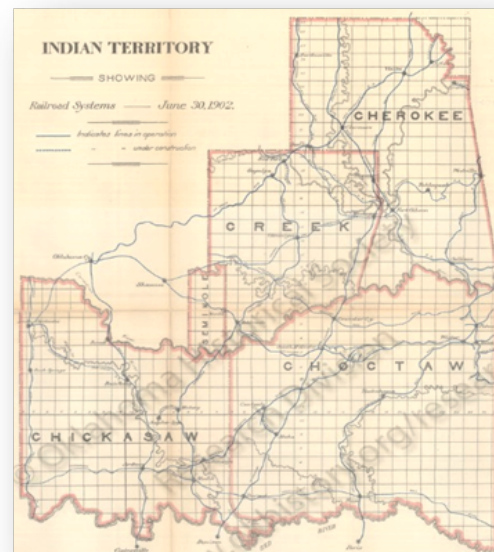


economy — a major ceremonial center as part of the larger Mississippian culture that spread throughout the current central United States. By the time explorers discovered the mysterious earthen mounds in the 17th and 18th centuries, the culture centered there was extinct, and the Wichita, Osage and Quapaw tribes laid claim to the region. Today, the **Spiro Mounds** area has been preserved for visitors and scientific study.

The Five Tribes

The lands ceded by the tribes to the United States government were turned over to the Native Americans of the old Southeast, who were being relocated from their tribal homes. By the mid-nineteenth century these five tribes had come to be known as the Five “Civilized” Tribes because of their adoption of the much of the systems of government, education and law enforcement of the dominate white culture.

Today referred to as the **Five Tribes**, they include the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek and Seminole. The problems of removal in the 1820s and 1830s varied with each of the tribes, with much loss of life and conflict before and during their trips west. The Choctaw even brought their police force called the Lighthorsemen to Indian Territory. This law enforcement unit maintained justice and safety for much of the region.





Although a relatively peaceful move, the most noted Native American removal to Oklahoma was that of the Cherokee. A portion of the tribe had already moved to Arkansas in the late 18th century. The rest were forced to move after the removal act of 1830.

The Cherokees' travels across the Missouri and Arkansas wilderness during harsh winter months became known in history as the “**Trail of**

Tears” because many members of the tribe died and were buried along the way. At first, the Seminoles moved into the Creek lands in the territory, and the Chickasaws resided within the boundaries of their related Choctaw neighbors. By 1856, each of the Five Tribes had established territorial boundaries in the frontier. These were all national domains, not reservations.

Settled in their new homes, the Five Tribes began building cultures out of the Oklahoma wilderness, laying the foundation of a society that would carry the territory to statehood and modern times. Each of the Five Tribes formed its own constitutional government and established advanced public school systems. The nations had powerful judicial systems and strong economies. Some tribes brought black slaves and freedmen with them from the East and built plantations, villages and towns in the new “Indian Territory.”

To protect the five nations from angry Plains Indians who were upset at having to share their lands with the newcomers, the U.S. Army built several forts. These included Fort Gibson near Muskogee, Fort Washita near Durant and Fort Sill near Lawton.

One Cherokee who moved west in 1829 was one of America's most honored Native Americans, **Sequoyah**. He was intrigued with the white man's ability to write, so after 12 years of experimenting and study, Sequoyah created an 86-letter syllabary for the Cherokee language. This alphabet was so efficient it could be learned in less than a month and became the standard means of communication for the Cherokee. Sequoyah's home is still standing near Sallisaw.



During the Civil War, individual Native Americans were divided between loyalty to the Confederacy or neutrality. However, tribal governments officially sided with the South. The rivalry turned to violence as Confederate factions attacked those Native Americans favoring neutrality, forcing them to flee into Kansas.

In the Reconstruction Era after the Civil War, the United States government confiscated the western portions of the Indian Territory and began resettling other tribes such as the Osage,



Iowa, Sac and Fox, Kickapoo, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa and Comanche. In eastern Indian Territory, the separate nations of the Five Tribes would survive until Oklahoma's statehood in 1907.

After the Civil War, many of the lands taken away from the Five Tribes and were turned over to the tribes from the West. Moving in to these newly designated lands were two great Native American leaders who lived their last days in the territory: Cheyenne Chief Black Kettle and Apache warrior **Geronimo**. Geronimo's relentless battle to stanch the expansion of settlers in the desert and mountains of the Southwest led him to incarceration at the Fort Sill Military Reservation near Lawton, where he lived to an old age.

Plains Indians

Chief Black Kettle was an outspoken proponent of peace with white men, but he was killed in the last great battle between Indians and the U.S. Army in Oklahoma. Black Kettle was among several chiefs who signed the peace treaty of Medicine Lodge, Kansas in 1867, which guaranteed the Cheyenne and Arapaho land in Oklahoma along with goods and services. As with many other Indian treaties, the federal government failed to uphold the bargain. Several bands of Cheyenne and Arapaho grew impatient, carrying out raids on government installations and many inhabitants. Conflicts between Native Americans and settlers continued in Oklahoma until the 20th century, although not as violently as the Washita River Battle. However most conflicts ended by 1875 at the end of the Red River Wars.



The Five Tribes' efforts to maintain autonomy disappeared in 1905 when attempting to organize an Indian state named Sequoyah.

The federal government rejected this idea in favor of a single state combining the Oklahoma and Indian territories. Thus, Oklahoma became the 46th state on November 16, 1907. When Indian and Oklahoma territories achieved statehood under one banner, Native Americans and settlers joined efforts to develop the state's cultural and economic assets. At the 2010 census, Oklahoma's Native American population was 321,687, the second largest



of any state. Currently, 39 tribes maintain governments in Oklahoma.

Although Native Americans in Oklahoma are an active part of modern society, many tribes continue their customs and ceremonial rites in powwows scheduled throughout the year. These colorful powwows feature dancers in native dress and are generally open to the public. Many major Native American events and museums are found in Oklahoma, providing an authentic glimpse at one of Oklahoma's most important pieces of history.

Wichita

By the time the first Europeans began exploring Oklahoma in the sixteenth century, an early group of Native Americans occupied the state. Today known as the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, the group lived in **villages of grass huts** along the Arkansas, Canadian, Red and Washita rivers.

The Wichitas, who belong to the Caddoan language family, were primarily farmers. They also gathered wild plants and berries, and spent four to six weeks on a bison hunt each winter. Their homeland was among that passed from France to the United States with the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. It was part of the land established in 1830 as Indian Territory. The federal government entered into a treaty with the Wichitas and other Southern Plains tribes in order establish peace with the incoming tribes.

In 1891, the Wichitas, Caddos and Delawares negotiated an allotment and land cessation agreement with the Cherokee Commission. The Wichitas received 160-acre allotments and were paid for their surplus land. Today, tribal headquarters is in Anadarko, and many citizens live in the town and throughout Caddo County.



Osage



The Osage settled in the rich woodlands of northeastern Oklahoma around 1796. Shortly thereafter, the area became United States property as part of the Louisiana Purchase. When a band of Cherokees settled near the Osage (after voluntarily moving from the East Coast), territorial violence erupted between the two tribes with white settlers caught in the middle.

Eventually the United States negotiated a truce with **Osage Chief Clermont**, dropping all damage claims against the tribe if the Osage would cede 7 million acres of land to the federal government. The Osage continued attacking, however, and were finally forced to cede the

rest of their lands to the United States in 1825. They then moved to Kansas territory, but it was soon opened to white settlement. In 1870, Congress sold the rest of the Osage lands, turned the money over to the tribe, and required them to move to a new reservation in Oklahoma, which later became Osage County. Before long, oil was struck on the land, and the Osage became the wealthiest people per capita in the United States.

Quapaw

Oral tradition suggests that the Quapaw's ancestors lived east of the Mississippi River, near the mouth of the Ohio, before moving downstream toward the Mississippi's confluence with the Arkansas River. The United States' purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803 greatly impacted the tribe's future. The Quapaw ceded their land to the United States government in 1818 and 1824.

In January 1826, the tribe endured a harsh relocation to Caddo land that lay along the Red River in northwestern Louisiana. In 1834, the Quapaw relocated again, this time to a reservation established in the northeastern corner of Indian Territory. In the 1890s, the tribe took the step of dividing up their communal land into allotments in response to the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887. Zinc and lead were soon discovered on tribal lands, allowing tribal members to gain significant royalty money from the mines.



The Cowboys

America's working cowboy began his history on the Texas plains where, after the Civil War, ranchers found they had a plentiful supply of beef with no place to sell it. Demand for beef existed along the East Coast, but to fulfill that need, Texas ranchers had to move cattle to the closest railroads in Kansas.



As **cattle drives** crossed the Oklahoma plains, drovers recognized the value of Oklahoma's land for grazing and the economic advantages of originating a herd in the territory. Oklahoma consequently turned into a prime site for cattle ranches and continues to be a thriving center for livestock. Although the ranch cowboys of history are still working the ranches today, their lifestyle has changed. Modern cowboys live with

their families in comfortable homes and use advanced technology in working cattle. Horses are still used on the range, but trucks are more common. Scientific knowledge of animal husbandry and irrigation planning are as practical to the modern-day cowboy as the rope and saddle were to the cowboy of yesterday.

Today, there are several Oklahoma guest ranches where visitors can saddle up and experience life on the ranch. They vary in the experiences they offer but all share an opportunity for guests to sample a taste of the Old West. Guests can mount up for a trail ride, take a roping lesson, participate in a cattle drive, try a branding iron, or just sit back, take a break and enjoy the atmosphere.

African-Americans

The history of African-Americans in Oklahoma is a story unlike any to be found in the United States. African-Americans initially came to the region on the “Trails of Tears,” as slaves. Later, they came as cowboys, settlers, gunfighters and farmers. By statehood in 1907, they outnumbered both Native Americans and first and second generation Europeans. They created more all-black towns in Oklahoma than the rest of the country put together and led some of the nation's greatest **civil rights** battles.



One of the great omissions in history books was the role African-American soldiers played in the Civil War. In 1863, blacks first fought alongside whites during the Battle of Honey Springs on a small battlefield south of present-day Muskogee. Black troops held the Union's center line in that battle, breaking the Confederate's center and giving the Union a critical win that secured both the Arkansas and the Texas Rivers. A year after the Civil War ended

in 1865, Congress passed a bill providing provisions for black troops, that became the 9th and 10th cavalry. Among other assignments, the 10th went on to be headquartered at Fort Gibson; the 9th was stationed at **Fort Sill**. Black soldiers also played a critical role in the Indian Wars of the late 1800s, earning the respect of Native Americans who gave them the name “Buffalo Soldiers.” They also built Oklahoma forts and fought bandits, cattle thieves and Mexican revolutionaries (including Pancho Villa).



After the Civil War, Freedmen and new African-American settlers in Oklahoma could vote, study and move about with relative freedom. Pamphlets distributed throughout the South urged African-Americans to join land runs in Indian Territory, to create black businesses, black cities and perhaps even the first black state. Pamphlets promising a black paradise in Oklahoma lured tens of thousands of former slaves from the South. Eventually 27 black towns grew to encompass 10 percent of Indian Territory's population.

Tulsa's Greenwood District was known as "Black Wall Street," since the African American community that lived there developed a profoundly successful and enviable infrastructure along the avenue. The famous Tulsa funk group The GAP Band actually took its name from the famous Greenwood, Archer and Pine intersection, using the first letters in each of the street names. After the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 destroyed much of the district, the community rebuilt. Today, the Greenwood Historical District showcases its heritage and history through the Greenwood Cultural Center and the Mabel B. Little Heritage House.

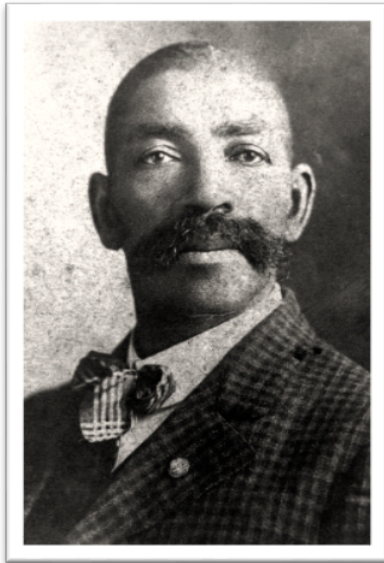
Oklahoma has a rich African-American music culture that has nurtured both rhythm and blues greats and legendary jazz pioneers. The Deep Deuce area of Oklahoma City was home to legendary jazz musicians such as **Charlie Christian** (middle) and Jimmy Rushing. The area also welcomed timeless performers such as Billie Holiday and Nat King Cole during its heyday.



The Outlaws

After cattlemen and settlers came to Oklahoma and Indian territories, outlaws were attracted to this wild frontier country of the late 1800s. Law enforcement hadn't been firmly established in the territories and the landscape offered many places where outlaws and their gangs could hide, such as the rocks, caves and trees in what is now Robbers Cave State Park in Wilburton.

Outlaws in Oklahoma robbed banks and trains, and stole horses and cattle. Some were quite infamous and dangerous, achieving legendary status and making heroes out of lawmen who brought the criminals to justice. Such was the fate of Bill Doolin, whose gang battled U.S. marshals in one of the most historic shootouts in the West in 1893. Marshall Heck Thomas tracked Doolin for three years, finally ambushing and killing him on a quiet country road in northeastern Payne County.



Another famous lawman was **Bass Reeves**, believed to be the first African-American deputy marshal commissioned west of the Mississippi River. A tough and fearless man, Reeves served for 35 years, longer than any lawman on record in Indian Territory. Reeves was born into slavery in Texas, but escaped to Indian Territory before the Civil War. Reeves was one of 200 deputies commissioned after 1875 by Judge Isaac C. Parker, the “Hanging Judge,” to track down criminals in lawless western Arkansas and Indian Territory. Many Indians distrusted white deputies, so Parker believed blacks would be particularly effective lawmen in Indian Territory.

Judge Parker sentenced many

notorious outlaws in Oklahoma. Another one of those was the infamous **Belle Starr**. In 1882, Parker sentenced her to federal prison on a horse-stealing charge. After her release, Starr lived quietly on her homestead near Eufaula until she was murdered on a road one wintry day in 1889. Starr's killer was never brought to justice.



Wild West Shows

Many Hollywood and rodeo cowboys got their starts in Wild West shows and circuses that became popular around 1900. Three of the more popular Wild West shows originated in Oklahoma from the Mulhall Ranch, the Pawnee Bill Ranch and the Miller 101 Ranch.

Zach Mulhall started a Wild West show at his 80,000 acre ranch in Guthrie. The show starred his daughter **Lucille Mulhall**, the world's first “cowgirl,” who became a favorite of President Theodore Roosevelt. She was one of the first women to compete with men in roping and riding events. She was called *Rodeo Queen*, *Queen of the Western Prairie* and *Queen of the Saddle*, among many other nicknames. The show toured from 1900 to 1915. Gordon William Lillie built his ranch near Pawnee and became famous as “Pawnee Bill.” This name was given to him by the Pawnee Indians after he saved the tribe from starvation during a harsh winter.



Pawnee Bill and some of his Native American friends later joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, but in 1888, Lillie started his own. The Pawnee Bill Show featured his wife, May, a refined Philadelphian who learned to ride broncs sidesaddle and became a sharpshooter with guns. Pawnee Bill's show included acts like, Apache Chief Geronimo and toured the world until 1913. Today, among the ranch's many relics and memorabilia, is an authentic 60-foot poster advertising a 1900 **Pawnee Bill Wild West Show** performance in Blackwell.

The Pawnee Bill Ranch Historic site and museum are open to the public.



Perhaps the most popular of all Wild West shows was originated on the **Miller Brothers'**



101 Ranch near Ponca City. The 110,000 acre ranch was built by Col. George Washington Miller and his three sons. Their show toured the world from 1908 until the Great Depression with headline acts featuring Lillian Smith, Bill Pickett, Bessie Herberg, Bee Ho Gray, Tom Mix, Jack Hoxie, Mexican Joe, Ross Hettan and Buffalo Bill. It was the largest diversified farm and ranch in America at the time. Bill Pickett's grave and the White Eagle Monument are located on the ranch grounds.

Rodeos

The rodeo was born on the range, where cowboys pitted their herding skills against each other and ranches competed for bragging rights. The Wild West shows picked up these competitions and included them as entertainment. Although the shows later dissolved, the competitions evolved into rodeos.

A rodeo includes a variety of events to test a cowboy's skill. The events include: calf roping, steer wrestling, **saddle-bronc riding**, team roping, bareback bronc riding, barrel racing and bull riding. The degree of danger varies but the competition is always exciting.

Oklahoma City is a major center for rodeo competition and is the home of one of the world's most prominent rodeo, the International Finals Rodeo. Held each January, this major event is sponsored by the International Professional Rodeo Association. The event boasts the top money winners of the IPRA-sanctioned rodeos throughout the year. Oklahoma is also home of the Lazy E Arena in Guthrie, one of the largest indoor rodeo arenas in the world. More than a hundred rodeos take place throughout the year in Oklahoma, ranging from high school and junior rodeos to intercollegiate and professional events.



Geography and Climate

Southwestern Tablelands

Unlike neighboring Great Plains ecoregions, little of the Southwestern Tablelands is in cropland. Instead, much of this elevated tableland is in sub-humid grassland and semi-arid grazing land. Natural vegetation includes grama-buffalo grass, mesquite-buffalo grass and shinnery (midgrass prairie with open, low growth of several types of oak and shrubs).

Wildlife: Quail, dove, duck, wild turkey, pheasant, deer, elk, antelope, sheep, llama, buffalo, prairie dog, over 200 native bird species (as well as 140 migratory varieties) and 213 vertebrate species.



A zest for adventure is the key to experiencing Oklahoma's Southwestern Tablelands. Take a wild dune buggy ride through the sands of Beaver Dunes Park or climb to the Sooner State's highest point, **Black Mesa**, where spectacular views and star gazing await. Explore the area's eye-catching rock formations or snap some photos at the Guymon Game Reserve. Relive the pioneer experience by traversing the original Santa Fe Trail or step into the past at the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site. From Kenton to Guymon to Cheyenne,

experience the great outdoors and visit historic attractions.

Western High Plains

With a greater elevation than the vast Central Great Plains found to the east, the Western High Plains also receives less rain than surrounding ecoregions. The terrain is relatively smooth (although slightly irregular in places) and is high in cropland. The natural vegetation is the famed buffalo grass cited by pioneers as they migrated west.

Wildlife: Quail, dove, duck, pheasant, wild turkey, deer, antelope, **prairie dog**, 187 native vertebrate species, migrating waterfowl and shorebirds.

A visit to Oklahoma's panhandle truly delivers a taste of the frontier. Panoramic vistas and outdoor activities await those wanting to experience the wide open spaces. Saddle up for a ride across the plains, set up camp and drop a line, or grab



a backpack and explore the area's dazzling plateaus. Here in the Sooner State's westernmost counties, visitors may find an abundance of wildlife, including some of the nation's largest prairie dog towns, sites of archeological and historic significance and welcoming neighbors in Boise City and surrounding towns.

Central Great Plains

The Central Great Plains receive more precipitation than the neighboring Southwestern Tablelands, resulting in more vegetation. The terrain is slightly more irregular than the Western High Plains. Once a grassland, with scattered low trees and shrubs in the south, much of this ecoregion is now cropland.

Wildlife: Pheasant, deer, sheep, llama, buffalo, elk, rattlesnake, prairie dog, bat, bobcat, coyote, 328 native vertebrate species, migratory route for birds.



The Central Great Plains, Oklahoma's largest ecoregion, encompasses the Sooner State from north to south. Whether you're touring the grandeur of the Marland Mansion in Ponca City, enjoying the ATV trails at **Little Sahara State Park** or rock climbing at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, you'll revel in the diversity offered in Oklahoma. From boating and rappelling to golf and water skiing, outdoor enthusiasts flock to this ecoregion to

experience a full array of fun family activities. America's "Mother Road," Route 66, traverses the Central Great Plains, so stop by the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum in Clinton or the National Route 66 Transportation Museum in Elk City for an in-depth look at the nation's most acclaimed highway.

Tallgrass Prairie (Flint Hills)

The Tallgrass Prairie (Flint Hills) features open hills of limestone and shale with steep and relatively narrow valleys. The natural vegetation features the tallgrasses: big bluestem, Indian grass and switchgrass, each of which can reach up to eight feet in height in moist, deep soil sites. Wildflowers bloom throughout the ecoregion.

Wildlife: Buffalo, bobcat, greater prairie-chicken, badger, armadillo, white-tailed deer, beaver, coyote and 243 native vertebrate species.

Originally covering over 142 million acres in 14 states, the Tallgrass Prairie was one of North America's major ecosystems. Today, the ecoregion is confined to Oklahoma and Kansas.

Sweeping vistas of the open prairie landscape along with incredible sunrises and sunsets are just some of the many natural attractions of this ecoregion. A driving tour through the

Nature Conservancy's **Tallgrass Prairie Preserve** near Pawhuska conveys the same images of namesake tallgrasses and herds of grazing bison that greeted pioneers as they crossed these plains in covered wagons over a century ago. For a scenic retreat, book a cabin at Osage Hills State Park, a densely wooded park nestled in lush, rolling hills.



Cross Timbers

The Central Great Plains ecoregion is a transition area between the once prairie, now winter wheat growing regions to the west and the forested low mountains of eastern Oklahoma. Transitional “cross-timbers” (little bluestem grassland with scattered blackjack oak and post oak trees) is the native vegetation.

Wildlife: Trout, bass, bluegill, catfish, deer, buffalo, dove, turkey, quail and 351 native vertebrate species.



Step into Oklahoma's wide-ranging Cross Timbers ecoregion and you'll find an incredible variety of activities. Bask in the outdoors at numerous lakes and state parks throughout the region, from the heavily wooded **Chickasaw National Recreation Area** in Sulphur to Lake Murray, Lake Texoma and more. For a more luxurious getaway, head to Guthrie, Oklahoma's bed and breakfast capital, where elegant hospitality and historic attractions abound. Further northeast,

Bartlesville's Price Tower (Frank Lloyd Wright's only skyscraper) promises upscale accommodations, while the Woolaroc Museum and Wildlife Preserve opens the door to the finer things in life as enjoyed by oilman Frank Phillips. Historic Fort Reno and Fort Washita tell the tale of army life in the territorial era.

Central Irregular Plains

The Central Irregular Plains ecoregion features natural vegetation that is comprised of grassland and forest, resulting in a natural mosaic. The terrain is less hilly than the adjacent Cross Timbers region to the south and less forested to the Ozark Highlands to the east.

Wildlife: Bald eagles, deer, bass, crappie, catfish, spoonbill paddlefish, walleye, hybrid stripers and 327 vertebrate species.

Oklahoma's Central Irregular Plains ecoregion dazzles visitors with its lush landscape, a rich

mosaic of grassland and forest. Plan a rustic getaway at **Sequoyah State Park** and Lodge, where golf, tennis, horseback riding, and more await. Oklahoma's rich Native American heritage is abundant in the region with destinations including the Five Civilized Tribes Museum in Muskogee. The Fort Gibson Historic Site captures the territorial spirit with a reconstructed log stockade, and the Honey Springs Battlefield comes alive every three years as re-enactors recreate the largest Civil War battle in Indian Territory. Pay homage to Oklahoma's first world-famous celebrity, Will Rogers, at the Will Rogers Memorial Museum in Claremore.



Ozark Highlands

Oak-hickory is bountiful in the Ozark Highlands, and stands of oak and pine are also common. This ecoregion has a very irregular terrain and is generally more heavily forested than adjacent regions (except the Ozark Forest to the south).

Wildlife: Bats, bass, catfish, crappie, deer, American white pelicans, snow geese, mallards, bald eagle and 311 vertebrate species.



The heavily forested Ozark Highlands ecoregion is one of the Sooner State's most popular destinations, with Grand Lake O' The Cherokees serving as the starting point for outdoor activities of all types. You'll find many parks around the lake, promising ample opportunity for boating, swimming, fishing and more. Or take a canoe trip down the **Illinois River**, where gentle rapids guide you along one of Oklahoma's most scenic water routes. Bird watchers cite the region as a favorite, especially when the American White Pelicans stop by Grand Lake for a couple of months during their annual migration. Bald eagles, mallards and snow geese can also be seen during various months.

Ozark Forest

The Ozark Forest ecoregion is a deeply dissected sandstone and shale plateau, originally covered by oak-hickory forests. Red oak, white oak and hickory remain the dominant

vegetation in this region, although shortleaf pine and eastern red cedar are found in many of the lower areas and on some south and west facing slopes.

Wildlife: Deer, black bear, bobcat, gray fox, turkey, dove and timber rattlesnake.

The Ozark Forest features an abundance of red oak, white oak and hickory trees in its heavily forested terrain. The region celebrates the Sooner State's Native American culture at numerous destinations, including the acclaimed Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah and Sequoyah's Cabin in Sallisaw. Trout fishermen head to the **Lower Illinois River**, Oklahoma's first year-round trout stream, while other outdoor lovers flock to Tenkiller State Park and other state parks in the region. Camping, fishing, water skiing and sailing are favorite pastimes of visitors to the Ozark Forest.



Hardwood Forest

A region of mostly forested valleys and ridges, the terrain of the Hardwood Forest is much less irregular than that of the Ozark Forest to the north and the Ouachita Mountains to the south.

Wildlife: Deer, owl, raccoon, bear, duck, red & gray fox, bobcat, hawk, snow geese, river otter and 312 vertebrate species.



East central Oklahoma's Hardwood Forest celebrates the Sooner State's earliest inhabitants at the Spiro Mounds Archaeological Center and at Heavener Runestone Park. At **Robbers Cave State Park**, walk in the footsteps of outlaws as you explore the hideout used by Belle Starr, Frank and Jesse James and other notorious outlaws. The forested valleys and ridges of the Hardwood Forest provide spectacular scenery and outdoor adventure.

Whether you're looking for a gentle nature trail or a more rugged rock-climbing experience, you'll find it in the Hardwood Forest. There's also plenty of water fun at Lake Eufaula State Park and Robert S. Kerr Reservoir.

Ouachita Mountains

The Ouachita Mountains ecoregion is composed of sharply defined ridges. Once covered by oak-hickory-pine forests, most of this region is now in loblolly and shortleaf pine.

Wildlife: Black bear, coyote, bobcat, deer, mink, bat, bobcat, bald eagle, varieties of woodpecker, dove, owl, road runner and 328 vertebrate species.

The skies in the Ouachita Mountains in southeastern Oklahoma are filled with towering pines, making for lush, peaceful surroundings for nature lovers. The Talimena National Scenic Byway, traversing the crest of the Winding Stair Mountain Range in the **Ouachita National Forest**, is one of the Sooner State's premier destinations for fall foliage, although you can certainly enjoy the view year-round. Beavers Bend and Hochatown State Park, adjacent to Broken Bow Lake, is a favorite spot for trout and fly fishing, boating, eagle watching, horseback riding and nature hikes. Other recreation areas in the region include the Glover River, Kiamichi River and Little River.



South Central Plains

The South Central Plains ecoregion, locally termed the “piney woods,” consists mostly irregular plains was once blanketed by oak-hickory-pine forests, but is now predominantly in loblolly and shortleaf pine.

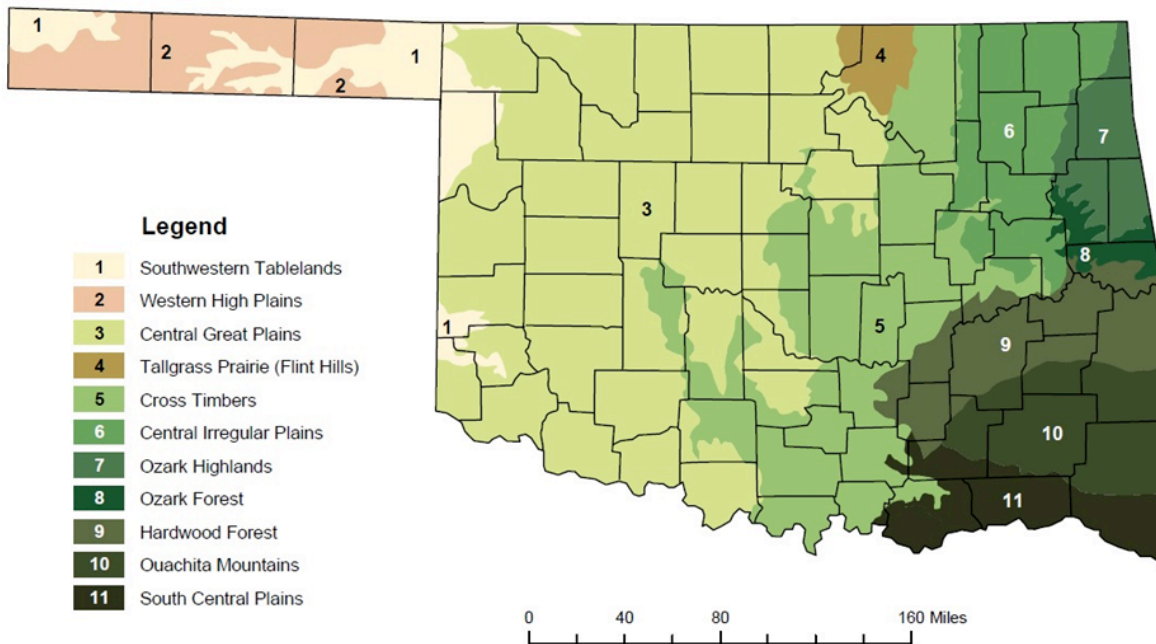
Wildlife: Deer, elk, antelope, bobcat, coyote, wolves, river otter, alligator, duck, pheasant, quail, numerous bird species and 315 vertebrate species.



Encompassing Oklahoma's southeastern border, the South Central Plains is replete with outdoor recreation, Native American heritage and small-town charm. Water sports abound at Hugo Lake State Park and Raymond Gary State Park, while wildlife of all sorts can be found at the Little River Wildlife Refuge where mallards, wood ducks and raccoons share the **cypress swamps** with alligator and beaver. Immerse yourself in the heart of the Choctaw Nation with a visit to the historic Wheelock Academy, a former boarding school for Choctaw females that's been restored by the Choctaw tribe.

Oklahoma is split into two major drainage systems. The northern and western two-thirds of the state are drained by the Arkansas River and its branches. These branches are the Cimarron, Neosho, North Canadian and Canadian Rivers. The southern part of the state is drained by the Red River and its main branch, the Washita River. Natural lakes in Oklahoma are small. Federal and state dam-building projects have created more than 200 man-made lakes. Among the largest are Lake Eufaula in east-central Oklahoma; Lake Texoma on the Oklahoma-Texas border and Oologah Lake in the northeast.

Ecoregions of Oklahoma



Climate

Most of Oklahoma has a warm, dry climate. The northwestern part of the state is cooler and drier than the southeast. Temperatures range from below zero in the winter to over 100 degrees the summer. Precipitation (rainfall, melted snow and other forms of moisture) varies greatly across the state. The wettest part of the state is in the southeast with 50 inches average rainfall per year. The driest part of the state is the panhandle with 20 inches average rainfall per year. Snowfall ranges from 2 inches a year in the southeast to 25 inches in the northwest. The growing season ranges from a high of 238 days in the southeast to 168 days in the Panhandle. Oklahoma averages 350 flying days per year.

Minerals

Fossil fuels, such as petroleum, natural gas and coal, are Oklahoma's richest mineral resources. Coal can be found in eastern Oklahoma. Petroleum and natural gas deposits are located across the state. Also, the state has large deposits of high-grade granite, gypsum, iodine, tripoli and many types of clay.

Economy

The base of the industrial sector is formed by mining. Oklahoma is the forth- largest natural gas producer in the nation and the fifth-largest oil producer. Leading industries produce machinery, metal products and refined oil products. The biggest crops are cattle, wheat, cotton, dairy products, hay and peanuts.

Below is a list of some of the larger employers in the state, the city where they are located, and number of employees.

Company Name	Location City	Approximate Employment
State of Oklahoma	Statewide	44,000
Wal-Mart	Statewide	34,000
Tinker Air Force Base	Midwest City	26,000
University of Oklahoma	Norman	11,900
Integris Health, Inc.	Statewide	10,000
Oklahoma State University	Stillwater	7,500
OU Health Sciences Center	Statewide	7,000
Braums, W.H. Inc.	Statewide	6,600
Devon Energy	Statewide	6,600
U.S. Postal Service	Statewide	6,500
Hobby Lobby	Oklahoma City	5,700

Government

Oklahoma has five U.S. Representatives and two U.S. Senators. There are three branches of state government. The Executive Branch is headed by the Governor. The Legislative Branch is made up of two houses; the Senate with 48 members, and the House of Representatives with 101 members. The Judicial Branch is divided into a series of courts, each with different jobs. Oklahoma has 77 counties and each is governed by a board of commissioners. These commissioners work in the city that their county has chosen as the county seat.

State Emblems



State Seal — Centered by a five-pointed star, whose rays contain the seals of the Five Tribes. In the center of the star are a Native American and pioneer shaking hands under a figure holding balanced scales, representing Justice. The star is surrounded by 45 smaller stars representing the other states admitted to the U.S. before Oklahoma. Oklahoma's state seal has a dark blue background. The large center star is white, the smaller stars are gold and the ring around the edge of the seal is gold.



State Flag — The flag features an Osage warrior's buckskin shield decorated with pendant eagle feathers as the basic design. In crossed positions over the shield are a Native American peace pipe and an olive branch, the white man's symbol of peace. The flag is a rich sky blue. The word “Oklahoma” is white. The Osage war shield is tan outlined in red, the peace pipe is white with red tips and the olive branch is green.



State Floral Emblem — **Mistletoe** grows on trees throughout the state and is plentiful in southern regions of Oklahoma. The dark green leaves and white berries show up brightly during the fall and winter in trees that have shed their own leaves.



State Flower — Named the state’s official flower in 2004, the **Oklahoma rose** is known for its deep red velvet color, pleasing fragrance and hardiness, especially during the summer months.



State Tree — The **redbud** grows in the valleys and ravines of Oklahoma. In early spring, its reddish-pink blossoms brighten the landscape throughout the state.



State Rock — Found only in a streak of rock that runs north and south through the middle of Oklahoma, the **barite rose rock** is a reddish-brown stone that resembles a rose in full bloom. Cherokee legend says the rocks represent the blood of the braves and the tears of the maidens who made the devastating Trail of Tears journey in the 1800s to Oklahoma.



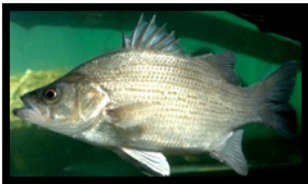
State Bird — The **scissor-tailed flycatcher** is a somewhat quiet bird with beautiful plumage and a long, sleek tail that is twice as long as its body. The deeply forked tail resembles a pair of scissors. The scissor-tailed flycatcher has a black and white tail, a dark gray back, a light gray chest and head and has pale, orange-red coloring beneath its wings.



State Animal — The **American buffalo**, or **bison**, is a massive animal that weighs from 800 to 2,000 pounds and stands nearly six feet high. A large head, high hump on the shoulders and dark brown, shaggy hair characterize the buffalo.



State Wildflower — The **Indian blanket** is a red flower with yellow tips. It symbolizes Oklahoma's scenic beauty as well as the state's Indian heritage. Indian blanket flowers bloom in June and July.



State Fish — The **white bass**, also called a **sand bass**, is dark blue-green on top, with silvery sides, a white belly and black horizontal stripes running along the length of its body.



State Reptile — The **mountain boomer**, or **collared lizard**, is a pretty turquoise blue except for its head and neck, which is bright yellow with black stripes along its neck.

State Colors — Green and white

State Country & Western Song — “Faded Love”

State Folk Dance — Square dance

State Fossil — *Saurophaganax maximus*

State Furbearer — Raccoon

State Game Animal — White-tail deer

State Game Bird — Wild turkey

State Grass — Indian grass

State Meal — Chicken fried steak, fried okra, squash, cornbread, barbeque pork, biscuits, sausage and gravy, corn, black-eyes peas, strawberries and pecan pie.

State Motto — “*Labor Omnia Vincit*,” Latin for “Labor Conquers All Things.”

State Musical Instrument — The fiddle

State Nickname — Sooner State

State Poem — “Howdy Folks” by David Randolph Milsten of Tulsa. (See next page for words)

State Salute — “I salute the flag of the State of Oklahoma. Its symbols of peace unite all people.”

State Soil — Port silt loam

State Song — “Oklahoma!” from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical OKLAHOMA!. (See next page for lyrics)

State Waltz — “Oklahoma Wind”

Statehood Day — November 16

State Song

Oklahoma!

By *Rodgers and Hammerstein*

“Brand new state! Brand new state, gonna
treat you great!

Gonna give you barley, carrots and pertaters,
Pasture fer the cattle, Spinach and Temayters!
Flowers on the prairie where the June bugs
zoom, Plen'y of air and plen'y of room,
Plen'y of room to swing a rope! Plen'y of
heart and plen'y of hope.

Oklahoma, where the wind comes sweepin'
down the plain, And the wavin' wheat can
sure smell sweet

When the wind comes right behind the rain.

Oklahoma, ev'ry night my honey lamb and I

Sit alone and talk and watch a hawk makin' lazy circles in the sky. We know we belong to
the land

And the land we belong to is grand!

And when we say - Yeow! A-yip-I-o-ee-ay!

We're only sayin' You're doin' fine, Oklahoma! Oklahoma - O.K.”



State Poem

Howdy Folks

By David Randolph Milsten

Well, here goes some scribblin' that's a little past due,
But I reckon I'm always a-thinkin' 'bout you.
I've been readin' the papers in my own little way,
And I see where you messed up my last birthday.

Through divine television I caught the dedication
And heard some tributes by a mighty swell nation.
Now that's a powerful nice shack you built on the hill;
But that's just like the Sooners, it gives them a thrill.

I never did nuthin' to cause all that fuss;
And sometimes, folks, I could almost cuss.
But, dern you, I love you, I guess it's my pride
That chokes me all up and hurts me inside.

I heard Jesse, Irvin, Cohan and Fred
And Amon and Eddie, what nice things they said.
I always called Claremore a big little town,
With guys like Mort Harrison and others around.

I see where Joe Crosson winged there for a day;
Remember him Wiley? We slept all the way.
But I'll tell you the part which touched me the most,
And it ain't like me to speak up and boast.

It was when dear Mary pulled the curtain string
For my act in bronze - what a homely thing!
But I guess it was sentiment that filled the place,
'Cause my kids kind of cried and I saw Betty's face.

God bless my old partner, she held up her head;
And though none of you heard me, she knew what I said.
And I spied Sister Sally with a shy little glance;
She's all the West means, charm and romance.

Old Jo had a job a-chisslin' my mug;
Why, I got more wrinkles than a Navajo rug.
So you're honorin' Oklahoma with a replica of me-
Move over, Sequoyah, for another Cherokee.

Well, much obliged friends, for the money you spent,
And the words that were spoken by our President.
I wish you had erected a memorial to peace;
We'd be happy up here if war talk would cease.

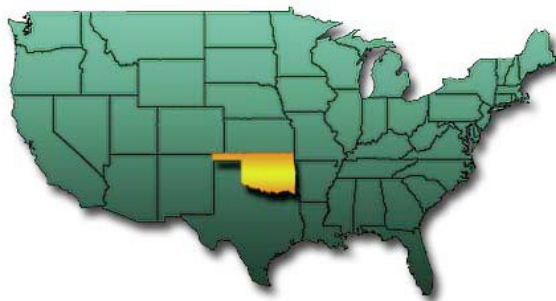
But I ain't ungrateful, I just can't see
Such a hullabaloo 'bout a cowboy like me.
Well, so long folks, it's time to retire;
I got to keep a date with Old McIntyre.

*"Howdy Folks," the official poem of the State of Oklahoma and the Will Rogers Memorial in Claremore, was written in 1938. It tells about the dedication of the Will Rogers Memorial on November 4, 1938. The characters mentioned are statesman Jesse Jones; writer Irvin S. Cobb; singer and dancer George M. Cohan; actor Fred Stone; publisher Amon G. Carter; comedian Eddie Cantor; Will Rogers Memorial Commission member Morton R. Harrison; Joe Crosson, the famous aviator who returned the bodies of Rogers and Wiley Post by air from Alaska; **Wiley Post**, record flier with whom Rogers was flying at the time of his death; Mary Rogers, Betty Rogers and Sally McSpadden, respectively, daughter, wife and sister of **Will Rogers**; sculptor of Rogers' statue Jo Davidson; famous Cherokee linguist Sequoyah; Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States; and columnist O.O. McIntyre.*



Oklahoma Facts

- The name “Oklahoma” comes from the Choctaw words “okla” meaning people and “humma” meaning red, so the state's name literally means “red people.”
- According to the 2010 U.S. Census Data, Oklahoma has the second-largest Native American population of any state. Many of the 320,000 Native-Americans living in Oklahoma today are descendants from the original 67 tribes inhabiting Indian Territory.
- Thirty-nine of the American Indian tribes currently living in Oklahoma are headquartered in the state.
- The governor of Oklahoma is Mary Fallin (took oath of office January 10, 2011); the lieutenant governor is Todd Lamb.
- Oklahoma's bipartisan state government houses a bicameral legislature.
- Oklahoma has 54 colleges and universities.
- The highest point in the state is Black Mesa in Cimarron County (4,973 feet); the lowest is east of Idabel in McCurtain County (289 feet).
- Oklahoma has more man-made lakes than any other state, with over one million surface acres of water and more miles of shoreline than the Atlantic and Gulf coasts combined.
- Oklahoma is one of the top natural gas-producing states in the nation.
- Oklahoma ranks in the top ten states for production of wheat, cattle, pecans, and peanuts in the United States.
- Oklahoma's four mountain ranges include the Ouachitas, Arbuckles, Wichitas and the Kiamichis.
- Forests cover approximately 24 percent of Oklahoma.
- Oklahoma is bordered by six states: Texas to the south and west, Arkansas and Missouri to the east, Kansas to the north and Colorado and New Mexico at the tip of the northwestern Oklahoma panhandle.
- Oklahoma is comprised of 77 counties.



- Oklahoma has a land area of 69,899 square miles and ranks 20 in the nation in size.
- According to 2010 U.S. census data, Oklahoma's population is 3,751,351, which represents an 8.7 percent increase in the population numbers reported in 2000. Of those, 72.2 percent are white, 8.9 percent are Hispanic or Latino, 8.6 percent are American Indian, 7.4 percent are African American, 1.7 percent are Asian, and 5.9 percent are two or more races.
- Oklahoma's two most populous cities are Oklahoma City with 579,999 residents and Tulsa with 391,906. The next-largest cities are Norman with a population of 110,925 and Lawton with a population of 96,867.

Famous Oklahomans



Carl Albert	Former Speaker, U.S. House	McAlester
Johnny Bench	Former professional baseball player	Binger
Garth Brooks	Singer/songwriter	Yukon
Kristen Chenoweth	Broadway star	Broken Arrow
Ree Drummond	"The Pioneer Woman"/author/cook	Bartlesville
James Garner	Actor	Norman
Blake Griffin	NBA player	Oklahoma City
Woody Guthrie	Singer/songwriter	Okemah
Hanson	Songwriters/music group	Tulsa
John Herrington	Former astronaut	Wetumka
Ron Howard	Actor/director	Duncan
Mickey Mantle	Former professional baseball player	Spavinaw
Rue McClanahan	Actress	Healdton
Reba McEntire	Singer/songwriter/actress	McAlester
Olivia Munn	Actress	Oklahoma City
Chuck Norris	Actor/martial artist	Ryan
Brad Pitt	Actor/director	Shawnee
Will Rogers	Humorist/entertainer	Claremore
Blake Shelton	Singer/songwriter	Ada
Thomas Stafford	Former astronaut	Weatherford
Maria Tallchief	Ballerina	Fairfax
Jim Thorpe	Former Olympian	Bellemont
Carrie Underwood	Singer/songwriter	Checotah
Sam Walton	Founder of Wal-Mart	Kingfisher
Alfre Woodard	Actress	Tulsa

Some favorite Oklahoma recipes

CHICKEN FRIED STEAK

1 egg, slightly beaten
1/2 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup water
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
2/3 cup bread crumbs, dry
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
6 (4 ounce) cubed steaks
3 cups vegetable oil for deep frying



Combine first four ingredients, mix well and set aside.
Combine bread crumbs and next three ingredients, mix well.
Dip steaks in buttermilk mixture, dredge in flour mixture. Let stand 10 minutes on paper towels.
Pour oil to depth of 1/4 inch in heavy skillet. Fry steaks in hot oil (375° F) over medium-high heat, adding oil as necessary until the meat is browned.
Remove steaks from pan and drain on paper towels; set aside.
Use drippings to make cream gravy or serve plain.

FRIED OKRA



Mixture of equal parts flour and corn meal
Salt and pepper to taste
Okra, cut up into 1/2 inch thick rounds
Mix cut okra with dry ingredients to coat. Fry in 1/2 to 3/4 inch of oil until golden brown.
1 1/2 cup all-purpose flour

You can fry in the same oil from the Chicken Fried Steak for extra flavor.

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