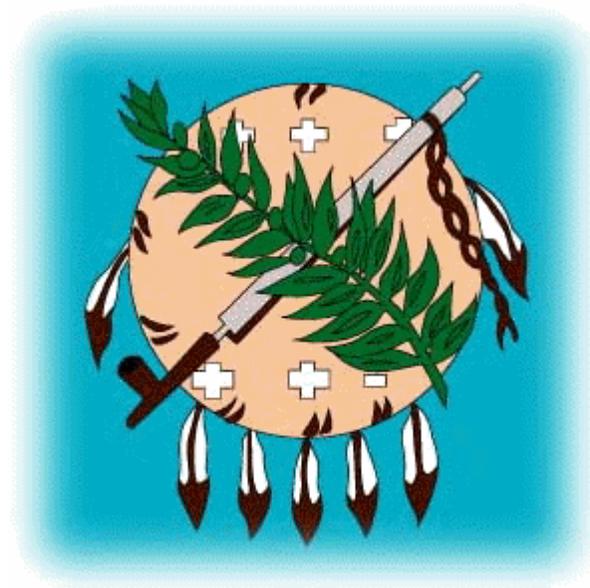


A Look At Oklahoma



A Student's Guide

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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 **Coronado** ventured through the area on his quest for the "**Lost City of Gold.**" The land that would eventually be known as Oklahoma was part of the 1803 **Louisiana Purchase.**

Beginning in the 1820s, the **Five Civilized Tribes** from the southeastern United States were relocated to Indian Territory over numerous routes, the most famous being the Cherokee "**Trail of Tears.**" 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 dislocation through hard work and communal support. Gradually, new institutions and cultural adaptations emerged and began a period of rapid developments often called the "Golden Age" of Indian Territory.



Following the destruction of the Civil War, Oklahoma became a part of the booming cattle industry, ushering in the era of the cowboy. Western expansion reached the territory in the late 1800s, sparking a controversy over the fate of the land. Treaties enacted after the Civil War by the U.S. government forced the tribes 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 know as "**Boomers,**" who wanted the rich lands opened to non-Indian settlement.

The government decided to open the western parts of the territory to settlers by holding a total of six land runs between 1889 and 1895.

Settlers came from across the nation and even other countries like Poland, Germany, Ireland and Slavic nations to stake their claims. And African-Americans, some who were former slaves of Indians, took part in the runs or accepted their allotments as tribal members. In the years that followed, black pioneers founded and settled entire communities in or near Arcadia, Boley, Langston and Taft.



On November 16, 1907, Oklahoma became the 46th state.

Statehood had become a sure thing, in part due to a discovery which made Oklahoma the "place to go to



strike it rich" -- oil. People came from all parts of the world to seek their fortunes in Oklahoma's teeming oil fields. Cities like Tulsa, Ponca City, Bartlesville and Oklahoma City flourished.

Oklahomans are filled with pride for their land of diverse cultures, hundreds of scenic lakes and rivers, and genuine warmth and friendliness. This proud Oklahoma spirit is echoed through the accomplishments of our citizens, such as humorist and "Cherokee Cowboy" **Will Rogers**, Olympian and American Indian athlete **Jim Thorpe**, African American author **Ralph Ellison**, astronaut **Thomas Stafford**, jazz musician **Charlie Christian**, and country music superstars **Reba McEntire**, **Vince Gill**, **Garth Brooks**, and **Jeremy Castle**.

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 this region on the "Trail of Tears," as Indian slaves. Later, they came as cowboys, settlers, gunfighters, and farmers. By statehood in 1907, they outnumbered both Indians and first and second generation Europeans. They created more all-black towns in Oklahoma than in the rest of the country put together, produced some of the country's greatest jazz musicians, 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. Blacks first fought alongside whites during the **Battle of Honey Springs**, an engagement fought on July 17, 1863 on a small battlefield outside 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 River and the Texas Road (the region's major transportation routes). This ensured the Union a solid foothold in Indian Territory -- one it never relinquished.

A year after the Civil War ended in 1865, Congress passed a bill providing provisions for black troops, what became the 9th and 10th cavalry. The 10th went on to be headquartered at Fort Gibson; the 9th was stationed at Fort Sill. Black soldiers built Oklahoma forts, fought bandits, cattle thieves, and Mexican revolutionaries (including Pancho Villa), and policed borders during the land runs. They 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**."



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.

Today many of Oklahoma's original black towns and districts are gone, but those that remain still host rodeos, Juneteenth celebrations, and community reunions.

Oklahoma Heritage

America is steeped in the traditions of the west and the American Indian, and no state boasts a richer heritage of both than Oklahoma.



Indians from more than 67 tribes, including the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Seminole, Osage, Cheyenne, Sac and Fox, Delaware, Apache and Pawnee, call Oklahoma their home today. Such famous Indians 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.



Native People



Before **Coronado** and his colleagues landed on America's shores, Indians 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. By the time explorers discovered the mysterious earthen mounds in the 17th and 18th centuries, the culture centered there was extinct, and the Osage and Quapaw tribes laid claim to the region. Today, the area has been preserved for visitors and scientific study as **Spiro Mounds State Park**.

Osage

Osage Indians 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 seven 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 opened a reservation for them which later became Osage County.

Before long, oil was struck on this land and the Osage became the wealthiest people per capita in the United States.

Quapaw

The Quapaw history is less violent, yet more tragic than that of the Osage. Prior to 1820, the tribe sold 45 million acres of their land south of the Arkansas river to the U.S. government for \$18,000. The United States took the rest of their land in 1824 when four Quapaw chiefs, induced with alcohol and \$500 each, ceded the property.

Homeless, the tribe settled near the Red River on land received from the Caddos, a tribe from Texas. However, crop failures in successive years diminished the tribe, and the survivors scattered.

In 1890, the Quapaw reorganized and obtained a sliver of property in northeastern Indian Territory. Zinc and lead were soon discovered on this land, and by the 1920s tribal members were gaining as much as \$1.2 million a year in royalties from the mines.

Five Civilized Tribes

The lands which the Osage and Quapaw had ceded to the United States government were turned over to the Indians of the old Southeast, who were being relocated from their tribal homes. Five tribes of these Indians had come to be known as the Five Civilized Tribes because of their advanced systems of government, education and law enforcement.

These tribes were the **Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek and Seminole**. The most peaceful removal among the Five Civilized Tribes was the Choctaw in 1820. The other

four tribes followed, with removals becoming increasingly bloodier from internal skirmishes and bouts with white men.

The Choctaw even brought their crack 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 tragic Indian 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.

By 1856, each of the Five Civilized Tribes established territorial boundaries in the frontier. These were all national domains, not reservations.

Settled in their new homes, the Five Civilized Tribes began building cultures out of the Oklahoma wilderness, laying the foundation of a society which would carry the territory to statehood and modern times.

The Five Civilized Tribes each formed their own constitutional governments 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 Washita** near Durant and **Fort Gibson** near Muskogee.

One Cherokee who moved west in 1829 was one of America's most honored Indians, **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 Indians 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 Indians 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 Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa and Comanche.

The separate nations of the Five Civilized Tribes, would survive until Oklahoma's statehood in 1907.

Plains Indians



After the Civil War, many of the lands taken away from the Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma Territory were turned over to tribes from the West. As non-Indian expansion pressed westward and the railroads built networks of tracks, the federal government decided to relocate the western Indians, whose homes stood in the way of "progress."

Moving in to these newly-designated lands were two great Indian leaders who lived their last days in the territory: Apache warrior **Geronimo** and Cheyenne Chief **Black Kettle**.

Geronimo's relentless battle to stanch the expansion of settlers in the desert and mountains of the Southwest led him to incarceration at the Ft. Sill Military Reservation near Lawton where he lived to an old age.

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.

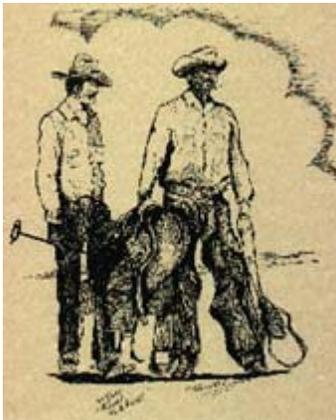
Conflicts between Indians and settlers continued in Oklahoma until the 20th century, although not as violently as in the Washita River Battle. The Five Civilized Tribes' efforts to maintain autonomy disappeared in 1905 when they attempted to organize an Indian state named Sequoyah. The federal government 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, Indians and settlers joined efforts to develop the state's cultural and economic assets.

According to the 2000 census, Oklahoma's Indian population is 252,420, the second largest of any state. Currently, 35 tribes maintain tribal councils in Oklahoma.

Although Indians 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 Indians dancing in native dress and are generally open to the public. Many major Indian events and museums are found in Oklahoma, providing an authentic glimpse at one of Oklahoma's most important pieces of history.

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 railroads, and the closest ones were in Kansas.

Between the cattle ranches and railroads lay **Oklahoma, the land of the great cattle trails between 1866 and 1889.**

As cattle drives crossed the Oklahoma plains, drovers recognized the value of Oklahoma's land for grazing, and the economical 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. Helicopters and airplanes also supplement horses in herding cattle. 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.

Branding irons are still used for identifying cattle by searing permanent marks into the animal's hides.

Brands were an early deterrent against cattle being lost or stolen, similar to serial numbers.

Designed to be functional, brands are simple, legible and easily identifiable. Despite their simplicity, many cattlemen hold their brand symbols in high esteem and name their ranches after them.

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** near 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 Doolin on a quiet country road in north-eastern 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 by **Judge Isaac C. Parker, the "Hanging Judge,"** after 1875 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. Associated with the Doolin Gang were a few female outlaws, including one of the most famous bad women of all times, **Belle Starr**.



Judge Parker sentenced Starr in 1882 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. Starr's killer has never been brought to justice.

Wild West Shows



The 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. Zack Mulhall's ranch near Guthrie covered 80,000 acres in Oklahoma Territory. He started a wild west show

starring his daughter Lucille, the world's first "cowgirl," who became a favorite of President Theodore Roosevelt. 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, who made him their "white chief" after he saved the tribe from starvation during a harsh winter.

Pawnee Bill and some of his Indian 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 toured the world until 1913.



The ranch, with many relics and memorabilia, is also the home of an authentic 60-foot poster advertisement for a 1900 Pawnee Bill Wild West Show performance in Blackwell. The ranch and museum are open to the public.

Perhaps the most popular of all wild west shows originated on the Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch near Ponca City, built by **Col. George Washington Miller** and his three sons. Their show toured the world from 1908 until the Great Depression and even included a team of Cossacks, but it remained true to its western roots with headline acts featuring cowboys and Indians.

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, **the only national spectator sport originating entirely in the United States.**

A typical rodeo includes a variety of events to test a cowboy's skill. From calf roping and steer wrestling to saddle-bronc 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 contests -- the International Finals Rodeo. Held in Oklahoma City each January, this major event is sponsored by the International Professional Rodeo Association, which is headquartered in Pauls Valley. The event boasts the top money winners of the IPRA-sanctioned rodeos throughout the year.

Oklahoma is also home of the "Lazy E," in Guthrie, **the largest indoor rodeo arena in the world.**

More than a hundred rodeos take place throughout the year in Oklahoma, ranging from junior rodeos to high school, intercollegiate and professional events. Oklahoma's rodeos also feature women's competitions where cowgirls compete in rodeo events, barrel racing contests and rodeo queen competitions. Indian rodeos are another major Oklahoma attraction.

Geography and Climate

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 dogs, 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 your backpack and explore the area's dazzling plateaus. Here in the Sooner State's western-most counties, you'll 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 who stand ready to roll out the red carpet.

Southwestern Tablelands

Unlike neighboring Great Plains ecoregions, little of the Southwestern Tablelands is in cropland. Instead, much of this elevated tableland is in subhumid grassland and semiarid 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 dogs, Over 200 native bird species & 140 migratory varieties; 213 vertebrate species are native to this ecoregion.

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 State Park, or climb to the Sooner State's highest point, Black Mesa, where spectacular views and star-gazing is at its finest await. Explore the area's eye-catching rock formations or snap some photos at the Guymon Game Reserve. Re-live the pioneer experience by traversing the original Santa Fe Trail, or let your imagination capture the scene at the Washita Battlefield National Historic site. From Kenton to Guymon to Cheyenne, experience the great outdoors and visit historic attractions.

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 dogs, bats, 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 National Wildlife Refuge, you'll revel in the diversity offered by Oklahoma. 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 Museum in Elk City for an in-depth look at the nation's most acclaimed highway. From boating to rappelling to golf to water skiing, outdoor enthusiasts flock to this ecoregion to experience a full array of fun family activities.

Tallgrass Prairie (Aka Flint Hills)

The Tallgrass Prairie features open hills of limestone and shale with steep and relatively narrow valleys. The natural vegetation features the namesake tallgrasses: big bluestem, indiangrass 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, bobcats, Greater Prairie Chicken, badgers, armadillo, white-tailed deer, beaver, coyote, 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 - big bluestem, Indiangrass and switchgrass - 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.

Crosstimbers (Aka Central Oklahoma/Texas Plains)

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, 351 native vertebrate species.

Step into Oklahoma's wide-ranging Crosstimbers ecoregion (aka Central Oklahoma/Texas Plains), 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,

Arcadia Lake and more! Or for a more luxurious getaway, head to Guthrie, Oklahoma's Bed and Breakfast Capital, where elegant hospitality and historic attractions abound. Further north, 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.

Caves & Prairies (Aka Central Irregular Plains)

Oklahoma's Caves & Prairies ecoregion (aka Central Irregular Plains) features natural vegetation that is comprised of grassland and forest, resulting in a natural mosaic. The terrain is less hilly than the adjacent Crosstimbers 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, 327 vertebrate species are native to this ecoregion.

Oklahoma's Caves & Prairies ecoregion dazzles visitors with its lush landscape, a rich mosaic of grassland and forest. Plan a rustic getaway at Western Hills Resort Ranch and the adjoining Sequoyah State Park, where golf, tennis, horseback riding, chuckwagon cookouts and more await. Oklahoma's rich American Indian heritage is abundant in the region, with destinations including the Five Civilized Tribes Museum and Ataloa Lodge in Muskogee. The Fort Gibson Historic Site captures the territorial spirit with a re-constructed log stockade, and the Honey Springs Battlefield comes alive every three years as reenactors 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/Boston Mountains to the south).

Wildlife: Bats, bass, catfish, crappie, deer, American white pelicans, snow geese, mallards, bald eagle, 311 vertebrate species are native to this ecoregion.

The heavily forested Ozark Highlands ecoregion is one of the Sooner State's most popular destinations, with the Grand Lake O' The Cherokees serving as the jumping point for outdoor activities of all types. You'll find 10 state 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 also abound.

Ozark Forest (Aka Boston Mountains)

The Ozark Forest/Boston Mountains 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, timber rattlesnake.

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

Hardwood Forest (Aka Arkansas Valley)

A region of mostly forested valleys and ridges, the terrain of the Hardwood Forest (aka Arkansas Valley) is much less irregular than that of the Ozark Forest/Boston Mountains to the north and the Ouachita Mountains to the south.

Wildlife: Deer, owls, raccoons, bears, ducks, red & gray fox, bobcat, hawk, snow geese, river otter, 312 vertebrate species are native to this ecoregion, 100 species of birds.

East central Oklahoma's Hardwood Forest (aka Arkansas Valley) celebrates the Sooner State's earliest inhabitants at the Spiro Mounds Archeological Center and at Heavener Runestone State 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 notables. 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, Robert S. Kerr Lake and other regional favorites.

Ouachita Mountains

The Ouachita Mountains ecoregion is made up 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, bats, bobcat, bald eagle, varieties of woodpecker, dove, owl, road runner, 328 vertebrate species are native to this ecoregion.

The skies in the Ouachita Mountains in southeastern Oklahoma are filled with towering pines, making for lush, peaceful surroundings for nature lovers. The Talimena Scenic Drive, 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 Resort 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, the Kiamichi River and the Little River, as well as five other state parks.

Cypress Swamps & Forests (Aka South Central Plains)

Locally termed the "piney woods," this ecoregion of mostly irregular plains was once blanketed by oak-hickory-pine forests, but is now predominantly in loblolly and shortleaf pine.

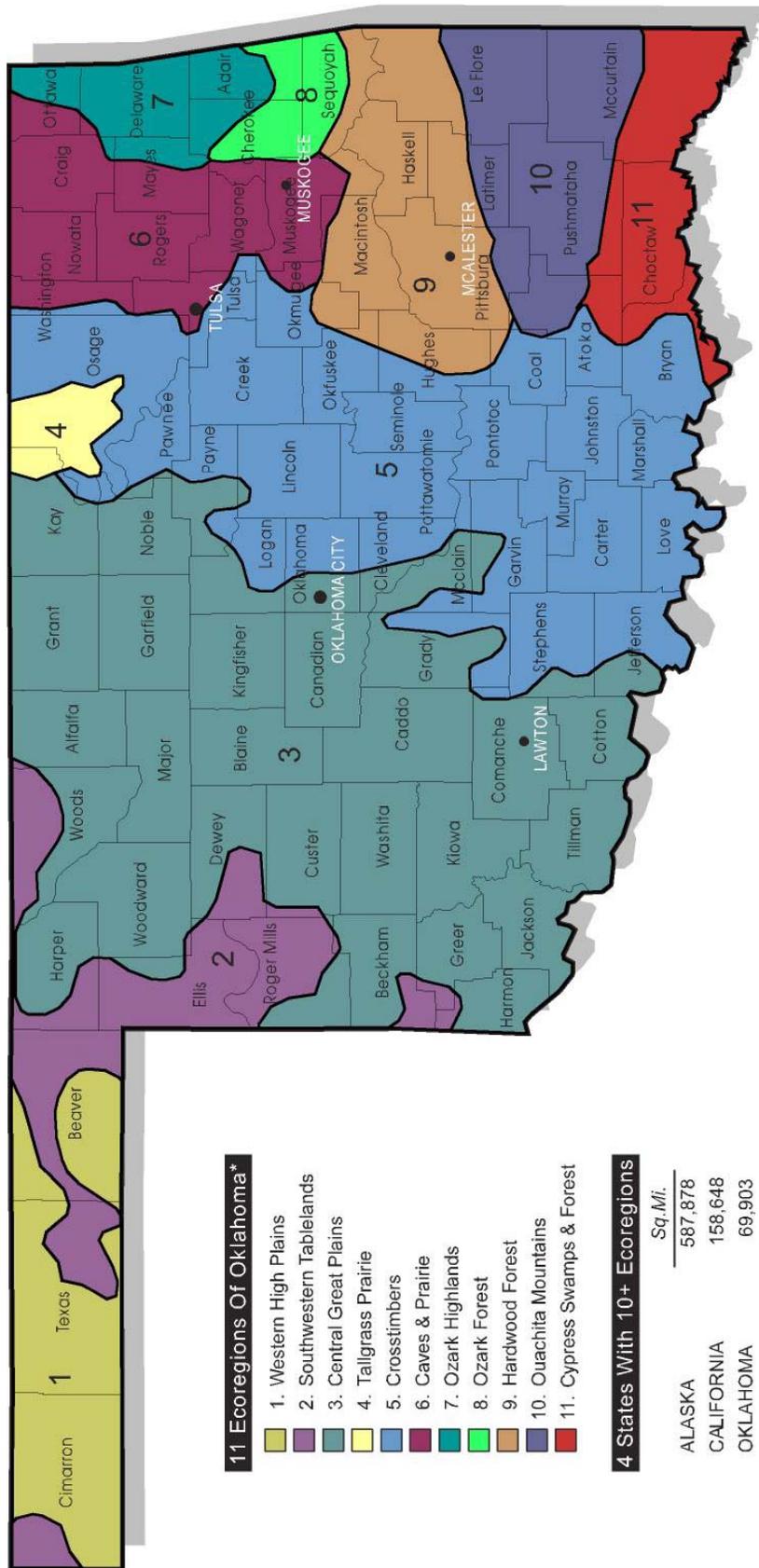
Wildlife: Deer, elk, antelope, bobcat, coyote, wolves, river otter, alligators, duck, pheasant, quail, numerous bird species, 315 vertebrate species are native to this ecosystem.

Encompassing Oklahoma's southeastern border, the Cypress Swamps & Forests (aka South Central Plains) is replete with outdoor recreation, American Indian 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 alligators 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 being lovingly restored by the Choctaw people.

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. Many 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 Texas - Oklahoma Border; and Oologah Lake in the northeast.

Oklahoma Map



11 Ecoregions Of Oklahoma*

- 1. Western High Plains
- 2. Southwestern Tablelands
- 3. Central Great Plains
- 4. Tallgrass Prairie
- 5. Cross-timbers
- 6. Caves & Prairie
- 7. Ozark Highlands
- 8. Ozark Forest
- 9. Hardwood Forest
- 10. Ouachita Mountains
- 11. Cypress Swamps & Forest

4 States With 10+ Ecoregions

| | Sq.Mi. |
|------------|---------|
| ALASKA | 587,878 |
| CALIFORNIA | 158,648 |
| OKLAHOMA | 69,903 |
| TEXAS | 266,874 |

*U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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° 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 15 inches average rainfall per year. Snowfall ranges from 2 inches a year in the southeast to 25 inches in the northwest (the Panhandle). 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 the northeast and the Arkansas Valley. 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 third 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 | 39,533 |
| Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center | Oklahoma City | 10,000 |
| U.S.Postal Service | Statewide | 10,000 |
| Phillips Petroleum Company | Bartlesville | 7,500 |
| Oklahoma State University | Stillwater | 7,500 |
| Independent School District #89 | Oklahoma City | 6,000 |
| Braum, W.H. Inc. | Oklahoma City | 5,000 |
| City of Tulsa | Tulsa | 5,000 |

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, which has 101 members. The Judicial Branch is divided into a series of courts, each with different jobs.

Oklahoma has 77 counties; 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, each ray contains the seals of the Five Civilized Tribes. In the center of the star are an Indian 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. The letters within it are dark blue.



State Flag - An Osage warrior's buckskin shield, decorated with pendant eagle feathers is the basic design. In crossed positions over the shield are an Indian 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 particularly bountiful 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 as 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. An old 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 at the shoulder. 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 color 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 - Okra and Chicken Fried Steak

State Motto - "Labor Omnia Vincit," meaning "Labor Conquers All Things."

State Musical Instrument - The fiddle

State Nickname- Sooner State

See below for words.

State Poem - "Howdy Folks" by David Randolph Milsten of Tulsa.

State Salute - "I salute the flag of the State of Oklahoma. Its symbols of peace unite all people."

State Soil - Port Silt Loam

See below for words.

State Song - "Oklahoma!" from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical of the same name.

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 potatoes,
Pasture for the cattle, Spinach and Tomatoes!
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-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 readen' 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 likt 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 Odd McIntyre

"Howdy Folks," the original poem of the State of Oklahoma and the Will Rogers Memorial at Claremore, Oklahoma, was written in 1938 and tells about the dedication of the Will Rogers Memorial in Claremore on November 4, 1938. The characters mentioned are Jesse Jones, statesman, Houston; Irvin S. Cobb, noted writer; George M. Cohan, famous song and dance man; Fred Stone, stage and screen star; Amon G. Carter, publisher, Ft. Worth; Eddie Cantor, radio and stage comedian; Morton R. Harrison, member of Will Rogers Memorial Commission; Joe Crosson, famous aviator who returned the bodies of Rogers and 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; Jo Davidson, sculptor of Rogers' statue; Sequoyah, famous Cherokee linguist; Franklin D. Roosevelt, thirty-second President of the United States; and O.O. McIntyre, noted columnist.

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."
- Oklahoma has the second largest American Indian population of any state. Many of the 380,000 American Indians 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 office in January 2011); the lieutenant governor is Todd Lamb.
- Oklahoma's bipartisan state government houses a bicameral legislature.
- Oklahoma has 43 colleges and universities.
- The highest point in the state is Black Mesa in Cimarron County (4,973 feet); the lowest is due east of Idabel in McCurtain County (287 feet).
- Oklahoma has more man-made lakes than any other state, with over one million surface acres of water and 2,000 more miles of shoreline than the Atlantic and Gulf coasts combined.
- Oklahoma is the third largest gas-producing state in the nation.



- Oklahoma ranks fourth in the nation in the production of all wheat, fourth in cattle and calf production; fifth in the production of pecans; sixth in peanuts and eighth in peaches.
- 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 68,667 square miles and ranks 18 in the nation in size.
- According to 2000 U.S. census data, Oklahoma's population is 3,450,654. Of those, 76.2 percent are white, 7.9 percent American Indian, 7.6 percent African American, 5.2 percent Hispanic and 1.4 percent Asian.
- Oklahoma's two most populous cities are Oklahoma City, with 506,132 residents, and Tulsa with 393,049. The next largest cities are Norman, with a population of 95,694 and Lawton, which has 92,757 people.

Famous Oklahomans

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Troy Aikman | Football | Henryetta |
| Carl Albert | Former Speaker, US House | McAlester |
| Johnny Bench | Baseball | Binger |
| Garth Brooks | Singer/Songwriter | Yukon |
| Walter Cronkite | Broadcast Journalist | Oklahoma City |
| Geronimo | Apache Warrior | Fort Sill |
| Woody Guthrie | Singer/Songwriter | Okemah |
| The Hansons | Singer/Songwriters | Tulsa |
| Shannon Lucid | Astronaut | Oklahoma City |
| Shannon Miller | Gymnast | Edmond |
| Will Rogers | Humorist/Entertainer | Claremore |
| Maria Tallchief | Ballerina | Fairfax |

The Oklahoma Meal

The official Oklahoma Meal is chicken fried steak and okra. Here's a chicken fried steak recipe and two different ways to cook okra. Enjoy!

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 1/2 cup all purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
6 (4 ounce) cubed steaks
vegetable oil

Combine first four ingredients, mix well, 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.

OKRA - BACON BAKE

1 1/2 lbs okra
3 fresh tomatoes cut up
1 cup chopped onion
1/2 bell pepper, chopped
1 jalapeño, chopped
5 strips bacon
salt and pepper to taste

Slice okra into thin rounds. Grease 2 1/2 quart casserole. Layer okra, tomatoes, salt, pepper, onions, and bell pepper in casserole. Lay bacon overlapping on top. Bake at 350° F for 1 hour.
Serves 6.

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.

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