



# Fundamentals for Preservation of Oklahoma's Archeological and Historic Properties

On October 15, 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the National Historic Preservation Act (the Act) into law. It and its amendments established the structure and mechanisms for treatment of the Nation's archeological and historic properties, including creation of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), authorization of the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), and provision for State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO).

Oklahoma's SHPO is a division of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

By the mid-1960s, extensive scholarly work existed that documented archeological and historic properties nationwide. But, there was no protection for them other than acquisition. Important places were destroyed as a result of public construction programs, such as the interstate highway system and urban renewal projects, and of booming private development in the post-World War II era.

Concerned about the loss of the Nation's heritage, President Johnson directed the Rains Committee to study preservation efforts in Europe, and their recommendations were published in *With Heritage So Rich*. Based on the Committee's report, the National Park Service, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and others advocated for passage of the Act. Its findings state, in part, that "the spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage" and that "the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people." Further, the law stated that preservation of historic resources is in the public interest and that improved identification and administration of these resources will foster historic preservation, improve the planning of federal undertakings and "assist economic growth and development."

The SHPO implements the Act's programs for the State of Oklahoma, extending its benefits to the places that represent the state's diverse heritage. Fundamental to these benefits is listing in or eligibility for the NRHP. The status recognizes a property's significance, provides limited protection, qualifies owners for grant assistance (when funding is available), and in certain circumstances, qualifies owners for tax incentives.

