Sacred Spaces: Exploring Ardmore’s Houses of Worship

Continuing our exploration at our state’s religious buildings, we travel to Ardmore to look at several churches, both active and inactive, that flank the downtown commercial district of the city.

Ardmore was established in 1887 when the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway tracks were laid across the Roff Brothers’ Seven Hundred Ranch. From its humble beginnings as a cattle-loading station, the town grew as cotton farming exploded across the region. Major growth (and wealth) came to the town with the discovery of oil in 1913. Ardmore is home to many National Register of Historic Places listed properties, including an expansive downtown historic district and the city’s Carnegie Library.

In this issue, we’ll look at the history and architecture of five churches (First Baptist, First Methodist, First Presbyterian, St. Philip’s Episcopal, St. Mary Catholic Church) and the former home of Temple Emeth.
Preservation Oklahoma News, the newsletter of Oklahoma’s historic preservation community, is published quarterly as a joint project of Preservation Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office.

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Mail all correspondence to Preservation Oklahoma.

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SHPO Launches Hidden Oklahoma Webinar Series

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is pleased to host “Hidden Oklahoma,” a five-part webinar series in which we have invited archaeologists working throughout the state to discuss important archaeological sites they have investigated and to demonstrate how archaeology is critical to understanding our past.

In the first presentation (Mar 1) Dr. Leland Bement discussed bison kill sites in northwestern Oklahoma, including the Cooper, Jake Bluff, and Badger Hole sites. This presentation was recorded, and we invite you to watch the video and to register for the upcoming webinars in this series online at www.okhistory.org/shpo/webinars.

Jun 1: Dr. Debra Green will discuss Geoarchaeology.

Aug 2: Dr. Ian Thompson will present on how the Choctaw Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office uses archaeology to benefit tribal initiatives to revitalize Choctaw traditional arts and foodways.

Sep 6: Dr. Shawn Lambert will discuss ceramics and community interaction at Spiro.

Oct 4: Dr. Richard Drass will discuss archaeology at early-historic Wichita sites, including Bryson-Paddock and Longest.

Webinars are limited to the first 100 attendees. Contact Kristina Wyckoff, Historical Archaeologist at the OKSHPO, at 405-521-6381 for more information.

The Oklahoma Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, is pleased to announce its May Workshop series. The sessions will be held via Big Marker with registration available at https://www.okhistory.org/shpo/workshops.

**National Register Workshops:**
May 8, 2023, 1:00-2:00 p.m.: What is the National Register of Historic Places?
May 9, 2023, 1:00-2:00 p.m.: How to Research Your Property

**Section 106 Workshops**
May 10, 2023, 1:00-2:00 p.m.: Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
May 11, 2023, 1:00-2:00 p.m.: Documenting Post-European Contact Archaeological Sites in Oklahoma

**Tax Credit Workshops**
May 16, 2023, 1:00-2:00 p.m.: Tax Incentives Program Overview
May 17, 2023, 1:00-2:00 p.m.: The Historic Preservation Tax Credit: A Case Study

For more information or to register for classes, please contact Tifani Darata at tiffany.darata@history.ok.gov or 405-521-6249.
Sacred Spaces (continued)

First Presbyterian Church bell tower, Ardmore. Photo: Chantry Banks

Constructed in 1916, First Presbyterian Church is located at 223 W. Broadway in the central business district. It is constructed of red brick and stone and features a grand front entrance into the sanctuary of the building. Elegantly arched stained glass windows line all sides of the church, as well as the three-story bell tower. Red tiles cover the roof. Directly to the east of the main building, sits a smaller, almost identical in design chapel. Church offices and a small, enclosed courtyard connect the two buildings.

One of the most unique features of the church is the exposed set of bells sitting on top of the bell tower on the northwest corner of the building. Produced by the Meneely Bell Foundry of Watervliet, NY, they were installed in 1919. They were removed in 2002 due to structural issues. The bells were restored and placed back atop the tower in 2004. There are a total of eleven bells, and the largest can be rung independently of the others.

First Presbyterian Church and Chapel, Ardmore. Photo: Chantry Banks

Sitting at the southwest corner of C and 1st Streets, First Baptist Church completed construction in 1927. It is similar in size and design as First Presbyterian a few blocks away. It is also constructed of red brick and features a bell tower on the northwest corner of the building. It is more simply adorned, letting the focus land on the large stained-glass windows that can be found on both east and west sides of the building and over the main entrance of the church.

The entrance leads to a modest vestibule that opens to a large, airy, and light-filled sanctuary. Exposed timber beams line the barrel ceiling and three sections of dark wood pews face the altar. There is ample room for the choir and the baptistry is surrounded by warmly stained wood. The sanctuary features a balcony for additional seating and closeup views of the amber-toned glass windows.

First Baptist Church Sanctuary, Ardmore. Photo: Chantry Banks

First Baptist’s presence extends across the street to their education complex. It features buildings constructed at later dates and includes a beautiful example of mid-century modern architecture, The Brady Memorial Chapel. The chapel is constructed of buff brick and hexagons are the dominant motif of the building. A stylized cement cross and modern stained glass can be found above the main entrance. It is a wonderful juxtaposition to the late ‘20s main building just across the street.

Brady Memorial Chapel, Ardmore. Photo: Chantry Banks
Saint Philip's Episcopal Church began in February of 1893 with a small worship service conducted by the Rt. Reverend Francis Key Brook, the first bishop of the Missionary District of Oklahoma and Indian Territory. Saint Philip's became a self-sustaining parish in 1907.

The cornerstone of the current church building was laid on April 11, 1927. Modeled after Merton College Chapel at Oxford University in England, the church is one of the finest representations of modified Gothic architecture in the region. It is constructed of coursed gray limestone quarried near Carthage, Missouri. Distinctive red doors and elaborate iron hardware signify the entrance to the church. The sanctuary is laid out in a cruciform shape, traditional among Episcopal churches. The sanctuary showcases exposed wood beams and elaborate stained-glass windows.

A L-shaped parish hall was added 30 years later just to the west of the main building. And, in the mid 1980s, church offices and cloisters finally connected the two buildings. Both the parish hall and new construction feature limestone from the same Missouri quarry. It was the last building stone that the quarry produced.

The church is located at McLish and E street across from Central Park.

Catholicism has been a part of Ardmore since 1889, although a church was not constructed until 1898. That early church was damaged several times throughout the years by storms. In 1915, a gasoline tank car exploded in the railroad yard, demolishing much of downtown. The church also suffered significant damage.

The church grew and by the 1940s, it was determined a newer, larger building was needed. In 1951, the new church was dedicated by Bishop McGuinness. A church school and parish hall were added next to the main building in the 1960s.

Stained glass is featured prominently in the buff brick building. The main window over the entrance is a representation of St. Mary. Glass also climbs the belltower, located just to south of the entrance. Simple crosses adorn the top of the building and tower. The interior glows from the abundance of glass.

A marked break from the churches we’ve looked at so far, St. Mary Catholic Church is a testament to mid-century modern architecture. It is located directly south of St. Philip’s on a wedge-shaped piece of land.
Methodism also has been a part of Ardmore’s landscape since the town’s inception. A small wooden structure housed the original members and was later replaced by a small brick building. As the town and congregation grew, there was a need for a larger building. In 1920, land was purchased at the present site of the church. Work progressed slowly, as materials could be purchased. Early services were held in the basement of the incomplete church, and the first service was held in the newly completed sanctuary in 1925 and the building was debt free by 1937.

The Methodist Church looks unlike any other church building in town. Massive columns with Corinthian style capitals support a stone pediment over the main entrance. Decorative iron covers the doors at the entrance and an impressive arched window can be found over the central door.

Four identical windows on the east side of the sanctuary allow plenty of natural light to enter. In the 1960s, the McClure Chapel was added to the west side of the main building, altering the symmetry of the sanctuary windows. The chapel is a gorgeous example of midcentury design, with clean lines and a lack of ornamentation.

The sanctuary has been modified and remodeled over the years, 2014 being the most recent. Fortunately, the wonderful horseshoe shaped balcony has been retained through all renovations.

Finally, we couldn’t talk about religion and religious buildings in Ardmore without mentioning Temple Emeth, a now defunct synagogue across the street from St. Mary Catholic Church.

Judaism has been a part of Oklahoma’s religious fabric since before statehood and Ardmore once boasted one of the largest Jewish populations in the state. In the early 20th century, Eastern European Jews arrived in Galveston, Texas, and made their way north via the Santa Fe Railroad. Congregations, or kehillah, first met in meeting halls throughout the town, but acquired a home of their own in 1912. It was the former home of the First Christian Church. Here Temple Emeth worshiped until 1952, when the new temple was finally complete. The building features a central sanctuary with large clear glass windows.

Temple Emeth was designed by Lewis Isenberg, who was also lay rabbi. Isenberg and his parents had come to Oklahoma in 1938 on one of the last steamships allowed out of Germany. With them, they carried a torah (a scroll comprised of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) from their home synagogue. Most of their possessions were confiscated by the Nazis, but the torah was looked over. It found its home in the Ardmore temple for the next half century.

Temple Emeth served Ardmore’s Jewish population until 2003, when, due to dwindling congregation numbers, the building closed. It briefly reopened in 2004 for the funeral of Lewis Isenberg. It is currently owned by the Goddard Center and is used for storage.

The Riverview neighborhood is the focus of April’s TFA Historic Neighborhood Walking Tour. Five homes will be open for tours on April 23. The Riverview Historic District is an excellent and representative collection of houses and apartment buildings constructed from 1911 to 1938. While the Craftsman bungalow style dominates, other popular architectural styles in the district include Tudor Revival, Prairie School, and Colonial Revival. Although Riverview is predominately a middle-class neighborhood, the district also contains a number of larger, better-appointed homes built by many of the leading citizens of early Tulsa, including the Clinton-Hardy House, the Bird House, the Kerr House, and the magnificent McBirney Mansion.

Pershing Studios is the location for the Distinctive Dwellings tour on April 30. On this tour, guests will explore multiple living units in Pershing Studios as well as common spaces for residents. These work/live studio apartments were built in 1918 first as an elementary school and were renovated into apartments in 2015. Now, the property serves as non-traditional community housing with a garden, basketball court, art studio, and lots of character.

TFA travels to Pawhuska on May 13 for the 2nd Saturday Walking Tour. Learn about the unique architecture and history of the town and see filming locations from the upcoming film, Killers of the Flower Moon.

Finally, TFA’s June’s tour is The Skyline that Oil Built: Oil Barons & Architecture. Tulsa has a unique and beautiful skyline. Find out who built downtown Tulsa and why.

For more information and to purchase tickets for any of the mentioned events (and more), visit https://tulsaarchitecture.org/programs.

You’re invited to the Photography Along Park event!

Join the Oklahoma City Foundation for Architecture and Architectural Photographer, Mel Willis, on a walk along Park Avenue to enjoy some of downtown Oklahoma City's stunning structures while learning tips and tricks for getting that perfect shot! All skill levels are welcome including iPhones, Android phones, and tablets.

Mel Willis is an architectural and interior photographer with over 15 years of experience in helping designers grow their visibility. Her work can be seen in: Architectural Digest, Designboom, Dezeen, National Geographic, Forbes, Fast Company, Southern Living Magazine, and more.

The event takes place Thursday, April 13, from 5:00-6:00pm. Tickets are $10 for OCFA members and $20 for nonmembers. For more information and to register, visit https://okcarchitecture.com/events/photography-along-park.
Join POK on the Road

Preservation Oklahoma is excited to launch a new annual event, On the Road with POK! On May 20, we’re chartering a bus and heading out to western Oklahoma to visit some familiar and not so familiar sites in Roger Mills County.

The morning starts at 8:00am as we load up at the Henry and Anna Overholser Mansion and begin our journey. Enjoy breakfast and drinks on the bus and get to know your fellow travelers and learn western Oklahoma history from POK’s executive director, Chantry Banks.

We’ll arrive at the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site by 10:30am and meet with park rangers and explore the visitor’s center. We’ll then head to the battlefield site and have the opportunity to hike the interpretive trail. Much of the trail is paved and accessible to all guests.

Lunch will follow at Nana’s Kitchen, a popular lunch spot in Cheyenne. After lunch, we’ll explore downtown Cheyenne and be back on the road by 3:00pm, arriving back in Oklahoma City by 6:00pm.

Tickets are $75 for Preservation Oklahoma Members and $100 for nonmembers and space is limited. For more information, please contact Chantry at director@preservationok.org. Tickets can be purchased at www.preservationok.org/shop. Please join us!

Hart Family Fund for Small Towns Grant Application Now Available

Grants from the Hart Family Fund for Small Towns are intended to encourage preservation at the local level by providing seed money for preservation projects in small towns with populations of 10,000 or less. These grants help stimulate public discussion, enable local groups to gain the technical expertise needed for particular projects, introduce the public to preservation concepts and techniques, and encourage financial participation by the private sector. Grants from the Hart Family Fund for Small Towns generally range from $2,500 to $15,000. The selection process is very competitive.

The Hart Family Fund is an annual opportunity. The next deadline will be May 3, 2023. The review process is generally completed within three months of the application deadline, and applicants are notified via email once the review process is complete.

Applicants must be either a public agency, 501(c) (3), or other nonprofit organization to be considered eligible. Only public agencies and nonprofit organizations in towns with a population of 10,000 or less are eligible. Applicants that have received previous National Trust financial assistance are eligible provided that all grant requirements are current.

Only Organizational Level Preservation Leadership Forum Members, Main Street America Community Members, and Main Street America General Members are eligible to receive funding from the Hart Family Fund. Organizations do not need to have an active membership to apply for a grant, but selected grantees will be required to become members prior to the release of funds. Your membership status will be verified by our grants office once award decisions have been made. If you have questions about your membership status, please email members@savingplaces.org.

Applicants must be capable of matching the grant amount dollar-for-dollar. A cash match is required and can come from private or public sources, or from income earned from registration fees or fundraising activities. Donated materials and services, staff salaries and organizational overhead costs are not eligible sources of a match. Other funding from the National Trust may not be used to match a Hart Fund grant.

For more information and all grant requirements for the Hart Family Fund, please visit the National Trust’s website at https://savingplaces.org/hart-family-fund.
Neon Returns to the Hi-Way Cafe

Approximately 200 gathered Saturday evening to view a relighting ceremony for the neon sign of the Hi-Way Cafe near Vinita, Oklahoma. Guests enjoyed a classic car show, a scavenger hunt, and delicious food from the cafe. POK executive director, Chantry Banks, was thrilled to attend.

It was the first time in about 30 years the sign experienced a glow from its neon tubing. Tom Schwartz, who built the Route 66 restaurant and its sign in 1963, threw the switch for the sign around dusk.

Rhys Martin, president of the Oklahoma Route 66 Association, reported that attendees came from six states for the ceremony.

The Hi-Way Cafe in October received a $17,200 cost-share grant from the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program to restore the sign. The Route 66 Association of Missouri Neon Heritage Preservation Committee also assisted in the project. Preservation Oklahoma proudly provided a letter of support for the project.

The restaurant last summer also was one in 25 to receive a $40,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Historic Small Restaurants Grant Program.

Save the Date for MEP Kickoff

Plans are being finalized for the Most Endangered Places 2023 Kickoff Event. Join us from 6:00-8:00pm on June 29, 2023. Learn about the history of the list, enjoy complimentary food and drink, and be the first to find out what sites have made this year’s list.

The event will take place at The First National Center, downtown Oklahoma City. The First National Center was on POK’s very first Most Endangered Places in 1993. Tickets will be available at www.preservationok.org/shop.

Tulsa Planning Office Seeking Nominations

The Tulsa Preservation Commission is excited to celebrate National Preservation Month this May by recognizing local efforts to preserve Tulsa’s historic resources. We invite nominations from the public for people, projects, and buildings that have recently contributed to preservation efforts in Tulsa. Award winners will be honored at the 2023 Preservation Awards on May 24.

Nominations should recognize work completed between March 1, 2018, and March 1, 2023, within an Historic Preservation overlay district or National Register historic district, or at a property individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

A complete nomination should include contact information for you and the nominee, a brief narrative describing the contribution made to the community, and at least one photograph. Only complete submissions will be considered.

The deadline for submitting nominations is April 30. Visit https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/966MM2Q for the nomination form.
The Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) announces its annual matching grants to state, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations for the preparation of National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nominations. The SHPO has reserved $10,000 of its FY 2023 Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) allocation from the U.S. Department of the Interior for the program. Applications are accepted February 1 through April 30. Each grant is limited to $2,100, and the applicant must provide a nonfederal, cash match of at least $1,400.

Grant recipients will use the grant funds and nonfederal match to retain an appropriately qualified professional to prepare a complete individual property nomination package for the NRHP. Applicants must be aware that $3,500 (federal grant + nonfederal match) is only an estimate of the cost for such projects and that more than the minimum $1,400 nonfederal match may be necessary to cover the consultant fee. Consultants must consider the nature of the property proposed for nomination and many other factors as they develop their fee proposals.

The NRHP is the catalogue of our nation’s significant buildings, structures, sites, districts, objects, and landscapes important in our past. While listing is not a guarantee of preservation or of financial assistance, the NRHP status of a property is often critical to the strategy for its preservation. The NRHP provides increased public awareness of these irreplaceable resources, provides limited protection for them, qualifies property owners for federal and state tax credits under certain circumstances, and may qualify the property owner for grant assistance when such programs are funded.

To obtain an application form, go to www.okhistory.org/shpo/nrgrant. You may also contact the SHPO at 405-521-6249.

NRHP Nomination Grants Application Closes April 30

Work Continues at the Edwards Store

Another round of work has been completed at the Edwards Store (NRHP 1972/2021) thanks to Oklahoma Heritage Grant funds from the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Volunteers from around the state helped with brush clearing and continued cleanup of the site. They also completed topsoil preparation on the site where the original store was believed to be located. Metal detecting was also conducted throughout the site.

Dr. Amanda Regnier and Dr. Scott Hammerstedt from Oklahoma Archaeological Survey conducted GPR and GPS as well as limited shovel testing. Staff from the Choctaw Nation’s Tribal Historic Preservation Office also used GPR at the cemetery located at the homestead. Kristina Wyckoff from the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office was also on hand to help conduct field research.

The Edwards Store was an unofficial stop on the Butterfield Overland Mail route and is the only extant structure remaining in Oklahoma on the route. Visitors are welcome to visit the site. It is located northeast of the town of Red Oak on Norris Valley Road. For more information, visit https://edwardsstore.com.

Edwards Store, Latimer County. Photo: Chantry Banks

Edwards Store Interior, Latimer County. Photo: Chantry Banks
Join the Oklahoma Historical Society on Saturday, April 22, for “Perspectives in History,” the 2023 Oklahoma History Symposium, at the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City. This one-day event offers scholars, historians, authors, and museum professionals from across the state and country a forum to share their work with history enthusiasts. The symposium is free and open to the public, but attendees should register online. Lunch will be available only for those who purchase in advance during the registration process. To register, visit: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/oklahoma-history-symposium-tickets-558076009367.

The keynote, titled “Clara Luper’s Radical Love: A Tribute to the 65th Anniversary of the Katz Drugstore Sit-in,” begins at 11:30am and will be presented by Dr. Karlos Hill, regents’ professor in the Clara Luper Department of African and African American Studies at the University of Oklahoma. Sessions will follow in the afternoon.

**Historical Sessions**

12:30–1 p.m.  
**Lead, Zinc, and Influenza: Environmental Rule in Bartlesville, Oklahoma,**  
James P. Gregory, doctoral candidate, University of Oklahoma

1:10–1:40 p.m.  
**Oklahoma Freedom Fighters: Black Civil War Soldiers of Indian Territory,**  
Angela Y. Walton-Raji, co-founder of the Choctaw Chickasaw Freedmen Association

1:50–2:20 p.m.  
**Genie Boy Goes to Hollywood,**  
Cindy Donovan Wallis, director, Atoka Museum and Civil War Cemetery; Gwen Walker, site manager, Atoka Museum

2:30–3 p.m.  
**Woven Resilience: An Ethnoarchaeological Approach to Social Change in Cherokee Baskets,**  
Zachary Taylor Qualls, doctoral candidate, University of Tulsa

3:10–3:40 p.m.  
**Revived and Reformed: Michael A. Shadid, Populism, and the Nation’s First Cooperative Hospital,**  
Benjamin Folger, doctoral student, University of Oklahoma

3:50–4:20 p.m.  
**Contesting Memory in Oklahoma: Native and Settler Reactions to the ‘Indian Centennial’ of 1948,**  
Martha Beliveau, graduate student, University of Oklahoma

4:30–5 p.m.  
**A Great Success: How Three Women Helped Create the First Library in Indian Territory,**  
Michelle Skinner, reference librarian, Chickasha Public Library

**Professional Development Sessions**

12:30–1 p.m.  
**Oklahoma Heritage Preservation Grant Program: How the OHS can help you collect, preserve and share history,**  
Nicole Harvey, director of strategic initiatives, Oklahoma Historical Society

1:10–2 p.m.  
**Historic Preservation Perspectives: The Edwards Store Approach,**  
June Lester Chubbuck, board member and treasurer, The Edwards Store, Inc.; Chantry Banks, executive director, Preservation Oklahoma, Inc.

2:10–3 p.m.  
**Collaborating to Preserve Oklahoma’s Conservation History,**  
Tanya Finchum, oral history librarian, Oklahoma State University; Chad Williams, Research Division director, Oklahoma Historical Society; Larry Caldwell, Natural Resources Conservation Service retiree and Oklahoma Conservation Historical Society member

3:10–4 p.m.  
**Community Snapshot: Ways to Utilize a Historic Photography Collection,**  
Taylor Stober, collections specialist; Kimberly Ross, business manager; Bradley Fritch, education specialist; Kathy Kadavy, board president and lead project volunteer; all of Chisholm Trail Museum
Help POK Preserve Oklahoma's Historic Treasures!

Historic structures, much like photographs and newspapers, tell the story of Oklahoma communities, linking the past to the present. They also provide economically vibrant locations for local businesses and residents. Since 1992, Preservation Oklahoma has worked to protect and preserve these structures through advocacy, education, and programming. By joining our efforts, you are supporting the protection of Oklahoma's unique and diverse history. Your support also assists in the preservation of the 1903 Henry Overholser Mansion, an Oklahoma City landmark and home of POK's offices.

Membership Benefits

Membership benefits include discounted tickets to POK events, complimentary tours of the Overholser Mansion, and invitations to our annual membership appreciation event.

Membership Levels:

- Student $25
- Individual $50
- Family $100
- Partner $500

To join, please visit www.preservationok.org/membership and join through our secure online payment form. You can also join by calling the POK offices.

Henry and Anna Overholser Mansion Updates

It's an exciting time of the year at the Henry and Anna Overholser Mansion as the days get longer and the grounds start springing back to life! Stop by for a tour or just to relax on the lawn.

Beginning May 2, our Tuesday-Thursday hours will be changing, offering more tours throughout the day. Tours will be on the hour, beginning at 10am, with the last tour starting at 2pm. Drop-in tours on Friday and Saturday will remain. To make a reservation, please call 405-525-5325.

Students from Oklahoma City University's Corporate Video class are developing and producing a video about the home and Mrs. Anna Overholser. They have been working tirelessly to help tell the story of Anna and her contributions to early Oklahoma City.

Our free monthly sewing event, Carriage House Sit and Sew, has been very successful! Makers of all kinds are welcome to join us for a fun morning and afternoon of creating and community. Upcoming dates include April 15, May 13, and June 10.

Tuesday Tunes at the Overholser is returning for a second summer! Make plans to join us on June 6 to kick off the summer of live music on the lawn. Hunter Thomas will be our first artist with more to be announced soon. We'll also have Tuesday Tunes on July 11, August 8, and September 12.

For more information about any of the events listed above, or if you are interested in volunteering with us, email Chantry Banks, executive director, at director@preservationok.org