

Preservation Oklahoma

NEWS

April 2024/Volume XXX, Issue 3

A joint publication of the State Historic Preservation Office and Preservation Oklahoma, Inc.



Drive-In Theaters in Oklahoma

Plus

Advocating for Historic Preservation (Pt II)

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's State Historic Preservation Office.

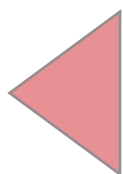
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On the Cover:

Built in 1949, the Tee Pee Drive-In opened in 1950 in Sapulpa on historic Route 66. Photo: Tee Pee Drive-In/
Sarah Lehew

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DRIVE-IN THEATERS IN OKLAHOMA



Chief Drive-In Theatre, Ninnekah, Grady County. Photo: OKSHPO



Beacon Drive-In Theater, Guthrie, Logan County. Photo: Steve Montgomery

Drive-in theaters are as American as apple pie and baseball. Drive-ins became popular after World War II as a place to provide entertainment for the entire family without breaking the bank. Within five years, the number of drive-ins across America had increased from 96 in 1944 to 2,202 in 1950. By the 1990s, fewer than 1,000 remained across the country, and as of 2024, there are approximately 321 left, with eight of those being in Oklahoma. While I cannot condone loading a couch out of the dorm lobby to comfortably seat a handful of friends to enjoy a lovely evening of cinema and beverages under the stars like some of us did back in the day, there is still plenty of opportunity to enjoy Oklahoma's outdoor cinemas. Here is a look at a few of those.

The title of Oklahoma's oldest drive-in theater belongs to the Chief Theatre in Ninnekah. Operating and entertaining since 1949 and located just west of Highway 81 between Ninnekah and Chickasha, the Chief offers up a nice throwback to the days of yore when parking meant something other than a vehicle maneuver and the cars that transported you there were chock-full of charisma and more curves than a Georgia highway. With the option of covered seating and a full concession offering everything from pizza to Frito chili pie, hamburgers, and root beer floats, the Chief Theatre still provides quality family entertainment at very reasonable prices. The Chief is open year-round, and any time is an excellent time to get away from the house for a few hours to partake in movie night with some good old Americana dinner choices.

Guthrie's Beacon Drive-In Theatre has been in operation since 1950. Following the same simple architecture of drive-ins during this era, the Beacon, having seen better days, holds to its roots, sporting a visible advertisement sign, screen tower, ticket office, projection booth, concession stand, and ramped spaces that accommodate up to 360 vehicles. The only modification to Guthrie's drive-in theatre has been removing the pole speakers to accommodate more modern FM radio tuning audio. Located roughly one mile south of downtown Guthrie along Highway 77, the Beacon offers seasonal showings of all the latest releases for Central Oklahoma residents. Be sure to hit that ATM before. It is a cash-only experience.

Enid's former Trail Drive-In Theatre, located just off of S. Van Buren, holds a special place in my heart, as it was my first exposure to the glory of the silver screen. While Smokey and the Bandit may not be considered "kid friendly" in some circles, the smell of popcorn on a summer night mixed with the sound of Jackie Gleason coming in through the individual speakers that hung from each car window incites a nostalgia unmatched by any other today. I'm just glad that Ford had the insight to make the trunks of their 1978 Thunderbirds spacious enough for a 12 and 6-year-old to ride in until Mom gave the all-clear signal, and we could pop the trunk to join the rest of the civilized world. Now dubbed the Freedom Plains Park and void of its original exterior facade, Enid's drive-in theater has recently seen a push for renewal after 40 years of abandonment with a vision of adaptive reuse as a nonprofit community event center that will feature an area for food trucks, inflatable buildings (including pubs) that the public can rent—eventually the re-birth of the projector screen that first opened to the public on June 3, 1950.



Trail Drive-in Theatre, Enid, Garfield County. Photo: OHS



Trail Drive-in Theatre, Enid, Garfield County. Photo: OHS

The Winchester Drive-In, located at 6930 S. Western Ave. in Oklahoma City, has been drawing customers like moths to a flame since 1968 with its iconic Chester, the neon cowboy holding a (presumably) Winchester rifle, and equally impressive neon ticket booth. While the drive-through ticket booth invokes a certain nostalgia, the Winchester meets a modern theater's standards with its Dolby digital screen and sound. Entry is cash only; however, card readers and an ATM are available inside the concession stand if you want to indulge in a homemade pizza or chicken basket. While the staff are specialists in jump-starting vehicles whose battery couldn't make it through the entire movie, they recommend bringing your portable radio and a good lawn chair for the ultimate under-the-stars viewing.



Winchester Drive In, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County
Photo: Winchester Drive In

The Tee-Pee Drive-In (see front page), located along historic Route 66 in Sapulpa, has recently undergone significant renovations, including a fully renovated amphitheater, a retro playground, and a new rock-climbing area. Tee-Pee now offers some very cool retro Spartan trailers and Airbnb rentals for visitors who want to extend their stay. These authentic 1950s trailers manufactured down the road in Tulsa come equipped with built-in radios so that you and the family can tune in to the movie while enjoying modern-day amenities such as a private full bathroom, queen-size bed, and a kitchenette. Less than a year old, the Tee-Pee is leading an innovative re-birth of the drive-in experience that breathes new life into a classic family outing.

Oklahoma is the home state of some of the earliest movie stars in the country. The likes of Will Rogers and Gene Autry alone make us the Hollywood of the Prairies. More recent movie stars include Brad Pitt, reared in Shawnee, and James Garner from Denver (find that one on the map!), while Alfre Woodard and Jeanne Tripplehorn hail from Tulsa. The list of silver-screen flair with Oklahoma ties is endless, and the theaters in our grand state showcasing the vast array of Okie talent are, to this day, timeless keepsakes that are reflections of our rich past.



The Tee-Pee Drive-In, Sapulpa, Creek County.
Photo: Tee Pee Drive-In/Sarah Lehew



The Tee-Pee Drive-In, Sapulpa, Creek County.
Photo: Tee Pee Drive-In/Sarah Lehew

Written by Michael Mayes, OKSHPO



Brookshire Motel, Route 66, Tulsa, Tulsa County
Photo: Tulsa World/Mike Simons

How do I save a historic building from threats or demolition?

Many tools are available to preserve historic structures and can assist you with a variety of approaches. While no single method will guarantee that a landmark building or site can be saved, it is crucial to gather all the vital information about the endangered site and communicate to others the educational, economic, and social benefits of its protection.

Historic Designation

Designating a historic site as significant by listing it to state, local, or federal historic registers provides validity that your site is historic and may provide some limited protections. Listing on historic registers is also a requirement to receive some grants.

Recruiting Others

Very often, it takes the work of a community, employing resources at all levels, to save a historic site. It is essential to broaden your constituency and include as many neighborhood associations, historical societies, preservation organizations, students, and experts in the field as possible. Including other active people in your community who are not explicitly associated with historic preservation, such as civic organization members, local government staff, elected officials, and developers, is also essential. Churches are also a great place to discuss and get support on important preservation issues.

Offer Tours

Tours are a tried-and-true method for building a community's appreciation for its historic resources and significant architecture. Put together a bus tour that takes guests past historic buildings throughout the neighborhood. Create a self-guided driving tour with a booklet that visitors and residents can continue using.

Submit Nomination to an Endangered Places List

When a site is threatened by demolition, alteration, or neglect, nominate it to a local organization's endangered list (think Preservation Oklahoma, Inc.). Nominations of this kind are an excellent way to generate publicity, raise awareness of threatened places, and explain to a broader audience why these places are significant and worthy of protection.

Form a Nonprofit or Friends Group

Forming a Friends Group with a specific purpose is an effective way to organize your efforts. If your Friends Group becomes a 501(c)3, it adds legitimacy to the effort and makes acquiring grants easier.

Public Action

Letter writing, petitions, letters to the editors, public rallies, and communicating with the press are good ways to raise awareness and increase support for your preservation project.

Funding

Saving a historic site often means acquiring or raising funds to perform studies or match available grants. Ultimately, it may also mean you need to purchase the building outright.

Conclusion

Use public engagement to get the community to see and benefit from your efforts. Community outreach events, educational opportunities, and sometimes even advocacy are ways to encourage participation. Giving preservation a 'seat at the table' ensures community members are involved in preservation decisions.



Donnay Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County
Photo: The Oklahoman/Doug Hoke



Adams Center, The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Cleveland County. Photo: The Oklahoman/Steve Sisney



Cordell Hall, OSU, Stillwater, Payne County.
Photo: Stillwater News Press/David Bitton

Written by Lynda Ozan, OKSHPO

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY OF NAVAL AIR TECHNICAL TRAINING CENTER (NATTC), NORMAN

In 2023 The University of Oklahoma Department of Anthropology and Oklahoma Archeological Survey (OAS) received funding from the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office through the National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund to conduct a geophysical survey of the former location of the Naval Air Technical Training Center (NATTC) on what is now the South Campus of The University of Oklahoma (OU). In September 1942, three training facilities from the west coast consolidated and moved to Norman. Personnel at NATTC were trained to repair all aircraft used by the Naval forces. This included WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service; women who received special approval to serve in the continental United States during World War II). NATTC had 65,000 graduates during the war, was shuttered for a short period of time, and was later reopened during the Korean War. Over 150 buildings, including training facilities, barracks, recreation areas, and a hospital were constructed. Many were reused by OU after the base closed but nearly all have since been removed.

Although the above-ground architecture is gone, aerial images and patterns of water retention show that subsurface remnants of some of these buildings still exist. To date, Scott W. Hammerstedt, Madeleine Hale, Asa R. Randall have surveyed 11.5 acres with both ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and magnetometry. They have successfully identified the footprints of six buildings. These were the WAVES Hospital and Medical Facilities, the WAVES recreation/CPO Galley, and four school trade training buildings. Figure 1 shows the GPR footprint of one of the training buildings.

This survey shows that, despite the lack of evidence on the surface, potential archaeological resources may still exist. We hope to more fully examine this potential in future work.

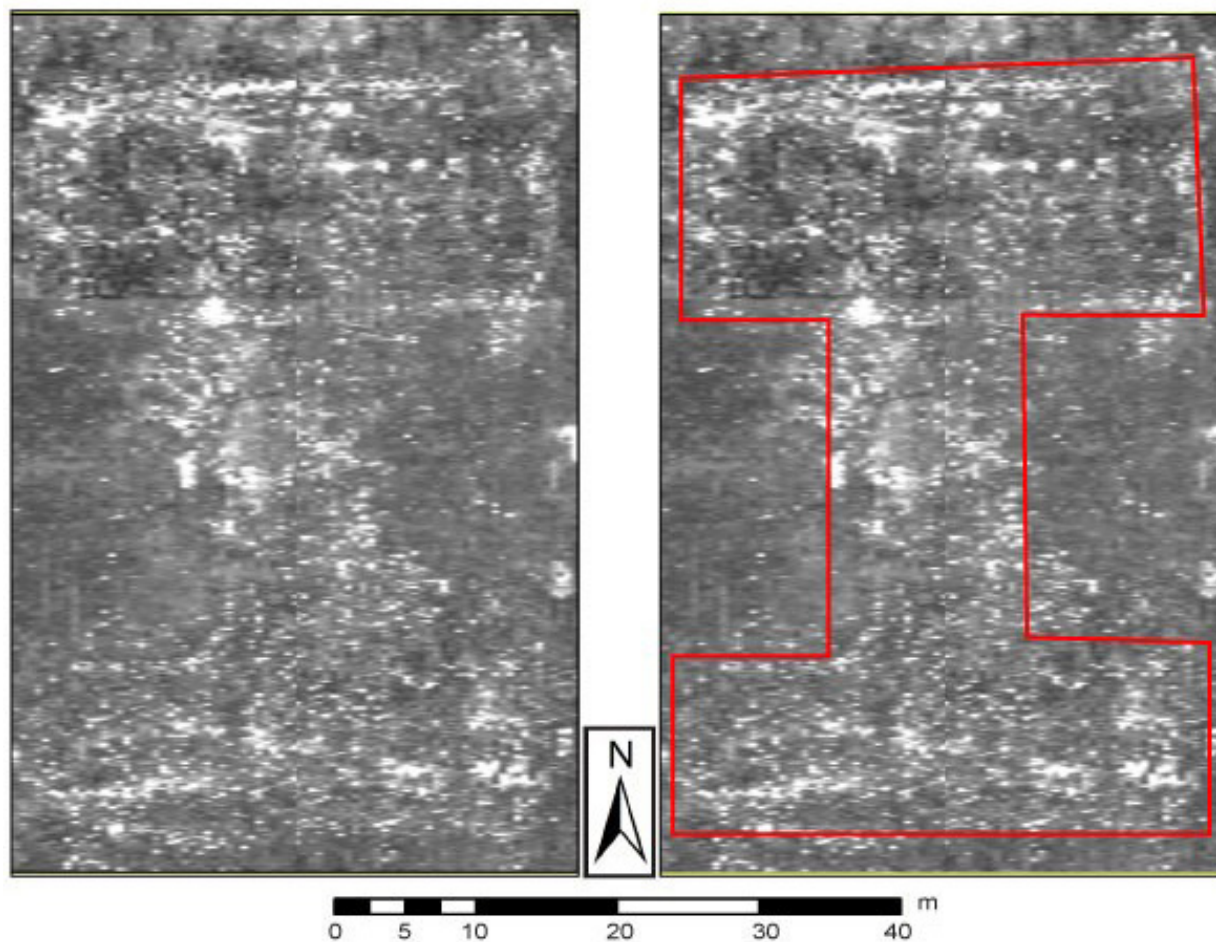


Figure 1. A school trade training building seen in GPR data at roughly 20 cm below surface. The left image shows uninterpreted data and the right image traces the outline of the building.

Written by Scott Hammerstedt, OAS

2024 OKLAHOMA ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE

The fourth biennial Oklahoma Archaeology Conference (OAC) took place on the University of Oklahoma (OU) Campus from February 29 through March 2. There was no OAC in 2022, and it was perhaps an even greater pleasure for professional archaeologists, researchers, and faculty and students representing universities across the state and the region to gather to present, consider, and discuss current research in Oklahoma and beyond. This conference provided an opportunity for coming together in more ways than one, and collaboration was an important theme.

Collaborative research and indigenous knowledge were a particular focus. Friday afternoon, the tribal collaborative forum comprised a panel discussion in which tribal members, who were artists, addressed the critical importance of indigenous knowledge in archaeological investigations and interpretations. This forum provided an opportunity to acknowledge and address the historical divide between anthropologists and living Native communities. Panelists discussed their experiences as serious scholars of their respective arts. They highlighted the lasting effects of the divide between anthropologists and Native communities and individuals, including appropriation, issues of identity, and recognition. The discussion emphasized the benefits of building respectful working relationships between artists and archaeologists and bridging this divide for future scholarship.

The conference also offered artist presentations and demonstrations on Saturday, which underlined the message conveyed in the panel discussion. In the Friday evening keynote address, delivered by Dr. Brandi MacDonald (University of Missouri), she shared her collaborative research with Mirrar Traditional Owners in Australia.

The conference also provided opportunities for bridging the perceived divide between archaeology in academia and cultural resource management or CRM. Since the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966, a significant amount of archaeological work has been done by archaeologists conducting work for federal agencies to meet the requirements of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's (ACHP) regulations under this law (Section 106 and Section 110 of the NHPA). Archaeologists often identify as those working in academia or cultural resource management professionals. While education programs in Oklahoma generally prepare individuals interested in archaeology for careers in academia, many who complete their degrees will go on to work in cultural resource management.

The work of CRM and academic archaeologists provides us with meaningful research and interpretations. However, only some training programs cover the critical skills necessary for CRM archaeology. This deficit could be a problem for archaeology, expressed in the content of many posters, presentations, and discussions during this year's conference, highlighting the challenges of maintaining a qualified archaeological workforce in Oklahoma.

After the presentations concluded on Saturday, conference attendees were invited to a dinner to consider creative ways to address Oklahoma's need to train and maintain a workforce of qualified archaeological professionals. The dinner was well attended, and participants discussed their various experiences, perspectives, and suggestions. For more information about archaeology in Oklahoma, visit the Oklahoma Public Archaeology Network (OKPAN) at ou.edu/okpan.

Written by Kristina Wyckoff, SHPO

2024 SPIRO MOUNDS EXCAVATIONS

The University of Oklahoma Anthropology Department will have its 2024 Summer Field School in Archaeology at Spiro Mounds Archaeological Center. The field school will begin on May 13 and run through June 14, 2024. The field school is for undergraduate students at the University of Oklahoma and other institutions. Excavations will be conducted in two areas of the site. Crews will be in the field Monday - Friday from early morning until roughly 2:30 PM. Visitors are welcome to come and observe the excavations during operating hours. The park is open Tuesday-Saturday from 9-12 and 1-4.

EVERYDAY OKLAHOMA WEBINAR SERIES

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is pleased to host “Everyday Oklahoma,” a 2024 four-part webinar series about a variety of Oklahoma’s historic places. Webinars are limited to the first 100 attendees. Contact the OKSHPO, at 405-521-6249 for more information.

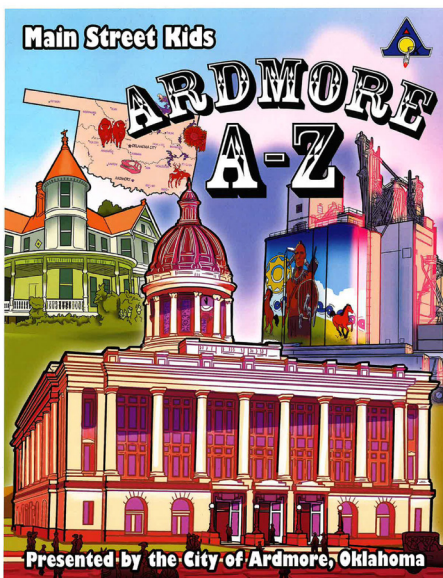
February 8 - All-Black Towns in Oklahoma (completed and available at www.youtube.com/@okshpo)

April 9 - Susan Dragoo will discuss Rocks, Ruts and Springs: Remnants of Early Trails through Oklahoma where she will focus on the Butterfield Overland Trail. (2 p.m.)

June 13 - Kenny Sivard will discuss Masonic Lodges of Oklahoma. (2 p.m.)

September 24 - Michael Mayes, the survey coordinator for the OKSHPO, will discuss Calabooses in Oklahoma. (2 p.m.)

KIDS ACTIVITY BOOKS AND MORE - AVAILABLE NOW



The City of Ardmore, an Oklahoma Certified Local Government (CLG), has recently published its book for kids, Main Street Kids, Ardmore A-Z. Jessica Scott with the City of Ardmore was the first to develop and publish Ardmore’s kids activity book in 2020. Ardmore’s success has led multiple other CLGs in the state to create community books: Anadarko, Muskogee, Norman, and Ponca City. These books provide kids with a great resource to learn about historic preservation in their community, and let’s face it—the adults like them, too! Ardmore’s books have been such a success they reprint every year, which has led to the development of a new reading book. More CLG communities are also considering developing activity books for kids, and even Ardmore is looking at creating a new activity book soon. Please contact Jessica Scott at the City of Ardmore at 580-223-3477 if you are interested in a copy of Ardmore A-Z or their activity book; both books are free of charge.

SHPO TO HOST WORKSHOPS

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

National Register Workshops

Due to a staff vacancy in this position, there will be no live National Register workshop in May of 2024. Please visit the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office's YouTube channel for past NRHP workshops at www.youtube.com/@okshpo

Section 106 Workshops

May 8, 2024, 10:00-11:00 a.m. - Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

May 9, 2024, 10:00-11:00 a.m. - Drafting and Executing Section 106 Agreement Documents

Tax Credit Workshops

May 13, 2024, 10:00-11:00 a.m. - Tax Incentives Program Overview

May 14, 2024, 10:00-11:00 a.m. - The Historic Preservation Tax Credit: A Case Study

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

UPDATED SHPO EVENTS

JUNE 2024

13 SHPO Lunch & Learn: Robert M. Jones/Rose Hill, Jeff Fortney (12 p.m.)

20 Everyday Oklahoma: Fascinating Stories about Familiar Places. "Masonic Lodges of Oklahoma" with Kenny Sivard. (2 p.m.-3 p.m.)

SHPO SPEAKERS AVAILABLE

Is your organization interested in learning more about preservation? Do you need a guest lecturer on preservation for your spring class? Is your boy/girl scout troop interested in learning about archaeology? The SHPO staff can help you out. The SHPO has developed a list of topics that we can present to organizations. It is now available on our website with a speaker request form.

Some examples of presentations:

What does the SHPO do?

Calabooses

Rosenwald Schools

How Do We Become a Certified Local Government?

Oklahoma's National Register of Historic Places

Check out all of our presentations at www.okhistory.org/shpo/presentations.

**GET YOUR MEMBERSHIPS TO
THE OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AND PRESERVATION OKLAHOMA, INC. TODAY!**

OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

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

PRESERVATION OKLAHOMA, INC.

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 and Anna Overholser Mansion, an Oklahoma City landmark and home of POK's offices.

STUDENT - \$25

INDIVIDUAL (ONE ADULT) - \$50

FAMILY (TWO ADULTS AND UP TO FOUR CHILDREN) - \$100

PARTNER (UP TO SIX DESIGNATED ADULTS) - \$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 at 405-525-5235.

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Oklahoma Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office

