

Preservation Oklahoma

NEWS

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Movie Theaters in Oklahoma

Plus

Advocating for Historic Preservation

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On the Cover:

Built in 1926, the Tower Theatre is a contributing resource to Spanish Village (The Paseo), listed in 1995.
Photo: OKSHPO

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Preservation Oklahoma manages the 1903 Henry and Anna Overholser Mansion, owned by the Oklahoma Historical Society. Visit www.overholsermansion.org for tour information.

Mail all correspondence to Preservation Oklahoma.

A SAD GOODBYE

Almost four years ago, Preservation Oklahoma, Inc. was blessed with a new Executive Director, Mr. Chantry Banks. When I say blessed, that's the understatement of the century!! If you're thinking back to almost four years ago (and it's fair if you're scratching your head, most of us have blocked it out for the sake of our sanity) you might recall the worldwide pandemic that shut everything down, broke everyone's spirits, and just generally sucked the life out of the world in early 2020. So, Chantry didn't exactly walk into a happy, easygoing situation.



Chantry Banks snapping a photo. Photo: POK

But, because he's made out of unicorns and rainbows and sunshine, Chantry rose to the challenge of keeping our organization not only functioning but thriving. Chantry introduced all new programming (all online, initially) and kept our membership engaged with social media posts highlighting stories across the state and entertaining the internet with his charisma, wit, and charm.

When the world opened back up, History and Hops events drew a diverse group of members and potential members to listen to various experts on a variety of subjects while sipping various brews. Chantry did so many interviews for various publications, it's hard to keep track! He revolutionized our membership tracking, bringing us into the 21st Century and streamlining the process of managing our membership.

We are truly going to miss Chantry as he departs for a grand new adventure with the Oklahoma Historical Society. Thankfully, he'll remain close by, and we've threatened (er...promised!) to keep in touch with him often. We have been honored by his leadership, friendship, and his tireless dedication to POK. We wish you ALL the best Chantry!

POK Board President, Tori Raines



Chantry Banks. Photo: POK.



Chantry Banks & Lisa Escalon. Photo: POK.

MOVIE THEATERS IN OKLAHOMA, PART I

Gone are the days of vaudeville shows and opera houses that operated as a community's source of entertainment. The advancements in technology across the country at the end of the 19th century brought a change to our means of amusement and the places in which we gathered to escape the real world for a few hours. Technology was advancing rapidly during this period which forced traveling vaudeville shows to incorporate moving pictures as part of their variety shows that consisted of several acts including comedy routines, dancing, music, and magic. Even with these adaptations, by the beginning of the 20th century, the vaudeville acts would find themselves replaced outright by the new moving pictures. While many early movie theaters developed from repurposed vaudeville and opera houses, most communities would transition to storefront theaters converted from easily adaptable and empty downtown buildings that were available to house the new favored form of entertainment at the dawn of the 20th century.

Technology in movie theaters has advanced by leaps and bounds since the days of silent films. Today's theaters are now equipped with the latest 3D and 4k screens and are matched with Dolby Atmos sound technology that will not only make you feel immersed in the film but will have you questioning how the old-timers were able to hear Maverick's jet engines while maneuvering his Grumman F-14 Tomcat during that 4G inverted dive with a MiG-28 back in the good ol' days of 1986.

While theater technology continues to advance to this day, the buildings that house the moving pictures in most communities in Oklahoma have stayed relatively unchanged through time. We will look at some of the theaters across the state that have stood the test of time and continue to provide us with the entertainment and escapism of Hollywood and all its magic.



The Liberty Theatre in Carnegie is one of the oldest theaters in the state. Residents of this small community in southwestern Oklahoma can not only brag about having the oldest continually operated movie theater, but they can also boast about their world-famous Show Dogs from the concession stand. The Show Dog consists of a gourmet hot dog served with the Liberty Theatre's own special and unique chili recipe that has fed multiple generations of cinema fanatics enjoying a night of silver-screen escapism for a few hours. Liberty's brick ticket counter with glass casing centered on a black-and-white checkerboard floor has been greeting residents since its opening in 1917. The storefront-styled theater with its beige and light brown brick façade quickly switched from live performances to some of the first Nickelodeon silent films available to the public by 1919 and has only stopped entertaining the community one time in its life, and that was during the 2020 pandemic.

Liberty Theatre, Carnegie, Caddo County, Photo: OKSHPO.



Upper Image: Black Theater of Ardmore, Carter County.
 Lower Image: Dunkin Theatre, Cushing, Payne County. Photos: OKSHPO.



Orpheum Theatre, Okmulgee, Okmulgee County. Photo: OKSHPO.

While no longer used as a movie theater, the historic Black Theater of Ardmore holds the distinction of being the oldest all-Black commercial structure of its type in Ardmore. While the ticket window and several windows on the façade are no longer visible, the red brick building built in 1922 still holds its original characteristics including a stepped parapet along the roofline and a raised central portion at the front of the building that extends approximately five feet above the main parapet line. Below the parapet is a decorative frieze consisting of rows of toothing bricks and a row of brick dentils. Built during a time of racial segregation, Ardmore’s Black business district held one of the finest cinemas of its time that allowed African Americans to enjoy entertainment with dignity.

Okmulgee’s Orpheum Theatre is Oklahoma’s crown jewel of aesthetically pleasing movie theaters. Originally named the Cook Opera House, this two-story terra cotta and brick exterior Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival theater with fluted columns and composite capitals supporting an elaborate low-relief frieze harken back to the days of grandeur and the flappers who frequented its first screening of *Eyes of Youth* on August 23, 1920. While the exterior of the theater and its intricate detail are quick to grab your attention, the historic interior with its high arching ceilings and decorative sculptures are sure to have you conjuring up images of Errol Flynn and his pencil-thin mustache swooning Bette Davis while promptly stealing her away all in one night in the 1938 drama *The Sisters*.

While the original ticket booth that anchored the center of the Dunkin Theatre has long been replaced with glass doors and windows, the pride of Cushing still maintains the ornateness that has made it one of Oklahoma’s more distinguished theaters since 1926. The two-story commercial-style building with Italianate detailing stands out in Cushing’s downtown with its ornate terra cotta tiles and pilasters. Five classical columns designed to resemble spiral-wrapped or garlanded columns create a classy backdrop to the new marquee that still sports the “Dunkin” logo on each side. This majestic-looking building also doubles as a concert venue and just happens to sit next to the new Godofredo’s Pizzeria and Tap Room where you can indulge in some yummy pre-cinema munchies and libations. (Continued on next page)



Woodward Theater, Woodward, Woodward County. Photo: OKSHPO

The Woodward Theater, now the Woodward Arts Theatre, is a two-story concrete and brick Italian Renaissance-style storefront theater designed by architect Leonard Bailey and built by the L.S. Fisher & Company in 1929. The Woodward Arts Theatre's second floor has three sets of two-over-two double-hung windows with stone sills and lintels with historic signage running parallel between the first and second floors. Between the central windows are brick pilasters capped with stone capitals. Its center façade rises several feet above the roofline and is ornamented on either side by scroll brackets, while a centered neon marquee that was brought back to life in 2019 enunciates "Woodward" to its visitors. This beautiful marquee is significant to Woodward's past, as it replaced the previous "The Woodward" sign that was destroyed during the 1947 tornado that struck northwestern Oklahoma. The Woodward Theater sheltered a large contingent of children during the tornado and today continues to serve the community through its Youth Arts Camp and theatre productions.

Designed by renowned Tulsa architect John Duncan Forsyth who studied architecture at Edinburgh College in Scotland and later in Paris at the Sorbonne and L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the Poncan Theatre is a three-story Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival built in 1927 with decorative native stone and polychrome brick topped with a red clay tile hipped roof. Its Spanish Colonial Revival facade is a large curvilinear gable outlined with terracotta ornaments and accented with five finials with a round stained-glass window highlighted by a sunburst. The Poncan first opened on September 20, 1927, with the silent movie *Shanghai Bound* starring Richard Dix and Jocelyn Lee. By 2021 the theatre was in dire need of renovations, and through the "Raise the Roof" and "Save a Seat" campaigns more than \$250,000 was raised for much-needed repairs and enhancements. New seats were installed along with roof repairs in August of 2022, with the exception of the "haunted seat" located on the balcony. Today, the Poncan serves the community as a movie theater, concert hall, and events center where dance classes and theatre camps are available for students of liberal arts.

These are but a small sample of some of Oklahoma's wonderful and colorful movie theaters across the state. Tune in for our next quarterly publication as we take a look at some of Oklahoma's historic Drive-In theaters.



Poncan Theatre, Ponca City, Kay County. Photo: OKSHPO

NRHP Nomination Grants Available

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 \$3,000, and the applicant must provide a nonfederal, cash match of at least \$2,000. 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 \$5,000 (federal grant + nonfederal match) is only an estimate of the cost for such projects and that more than the minimum \$2,000 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/nrgrant. You may also contact the SHPO at 405-521-6249.

OKLAHOMA HISTORY SYMPOSIUM **"Perspectives in History"**

Mark your calendars for the 2024 Oklahoma History Symposium to be held on Saturday, May 4, at the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City. Presented by the Oklahoma Historical Society, this one-day symposium offers scholars, historians, authors, and museum professionals a forum to share their work with history enthusiasts. The symposium covers a broad range of topics devoted to Oklahoma history and includes a keynote, book signing, and exhibitors.

The symposium is free and open to the public. An optional boxed lunch may be pre-purchased but is not required to attend. Registration opens March 25. Visit okhistory.org/symposium for updates on sessions and speakers. For general questions or if you are interested in exhibit space or sponsorships, please contact Angela Spindle at 405-522-0472 or angela.spindle@history.ok.gov.



First Christian Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County. Photo: OKSHPO

The most effective historic preservation efforts involve positive working relationships between elected officials, departments of local government, property owners, and preservation advocates. Preservation works best when the community feels engaged with protecting the older and historic places they care about.

Make the Case for Support

- Educate the public (regularly and often) about the importance and benefits of historic preservation
- Present a positive image
- Stay active and generate positive press to place preservation in the public eye as much as possible
- Take advantage of prominent preservation projects, such as the rehabilitation of a significant building, to demonstrate the importance of its historic resources, bolster pride in the community, and create excitement about future preservation possibilities
- Hold lectures, give presentations, or create exhibits in easily accessible public places to highlight a project

Educate the Public

Educational programs, workshops, brochures, presentations, lectures, and slideshows can demonstrate the benefits of preserving historic resources. Use these tools to show the value of these resources to the community, and explain the threats to these resources and the consequences of losing them. Give your presentations to a variety of groups, such as local historical societies, social and civic clubs and organizations, the chamber of commerce, and church groups. Education efforts must be continuous to be effective, so develop an ongoing program to address this need.

Attend Meetings

To be visible within the network of local government and to stay informed of city projects and issues, you should attend city council meetings, and attend any city-sponsored events. Citizens should always keep in mind that they need a significant amount of support from elected officials in order to be productive and effective. If you (your organization) and the elected official cannot agree, you should present your information based on local ordinances and let the elected officials make their decision.

These are some of the local government offices that a historic preservation advocate will interact with on a regular basis:

Building Inspection

The building inspection office will be in charge of inspecting properties for their compliance with city codes. These individuals need to know historic district boundaries, and have a good working knowledge of the design review process and subsequent rules and regulations.

Planning Commission

Advocates of historic preservation should work with the planning commission on long-range plans to incorporate preservation goals within the overall city strategy. Advocates should be active in developing comprehensive plans and take lead roles in plans addressing historic resources.

Historic Preservation Commission

HPC are generally located in the Planning Department of city government. They are responsible for reviewing work on historic properties within their jurisdiction granted by local ordinance. They are also responsible for identifying historic properties within their community.

Affordable Housing

Many historic preservation projects involve developing affordable housing for low- to moderate-income groups. Many financial incentives for preservation work are directed at this purpose, and advocates will need to ensure that they are aware of these programs and their benefits.

Livable Neighborhoods and Revitalization

Any revitalization efforts, whether in downtown commercial districts or residential neighborhoods, should strongly involve preservation projects. Many preservation financial incentives are directed toward these types of projects. Advocates need to be actively involved with these efforts and work with the departments in charge to develop the best methods for revitalizing areas.



Adams Center, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Cleveland County.
Photo: OKSHPO



Northern Oklahoma College Music Building, Enid, Garfield County
Photo: OKSHPO

To be continued April 2024

SHPO CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2024

The Oklahoma Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, presents its 2024 calendar of events. There are no registration fees unless noted. All events will take place virtually, unless otherwise stated. For more information call 405-521-6249 or visit www.okhistory.org/shpoevents. Note: If you have a disability and need an accommodation, call 405-521-6249 at least two (2) days before the event.

CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES: Many of these programs meet the requirements for HSW hours/State of Oklahoma's Board of Governors of Licensed Architects, Landscape Architects, and Interior Designers, and for PDH hours/Oklahoma State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. The SHPO will email certificates of attendance after the event upon request, and participants self-report or document their attendance per policies of the respective boards.

Please check our website for updates. SHPO Lunch & Learns and Everyday Oklahoma Webinars are virtual only. Register online at www.okhistory.org/shpoevents.

JANUARY 2024

- 1 SHPO Closed
- 10 SHPO Lunch & Learn: Canadian County Jail, Amy Neathery, Preservation El Reno (12 p.m.)
- 15 SHPO Closed
- 18 Historic Preservation Review Committee Meeting (1:30 p.m./Dr. Leroy H. Fischer Boardroom, 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive, Oklahoma City; virtually via Teams)

FEBRUARY 2024

- 8 Everyday Oklahoma: Fascinating Stories about Familiar Places. "All-Black Towns in Oklahoma" with Gina Sofola and Kory Van Hemert. (2 p.m.-3 p.m.)
- 13 SHPO Lunch & Learn: Dr. Slaughter House, Doris Youngblood (12 p.m.)
- 19 SHPO Closed

MARCH 2024

- 6 SHPO Lunch & Learn: Creativity in the Preservation World: How to Reach a Younger Generation, Jessica Scott (12 p.m.)

APRIL 2024

- 9 Everyday Oklahoma: Fascinating Stories about Familiar Places. "Rocks, Ruts and Springs: Remnants of Early Trails through Oklahoma" with Susan Drago. (2 p.m.-3 p.m.)
- 11 SHPO Lunch & Learn: Aunt Minerva/Uncle Wallis: How to Research African American Ancestors. Shelby Ward (12 p.m.)
- 18 Historic Preservation Review Committee Meeting (1:30 p.m./Dr. Leroy H. Fischer Boardroom, 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive, Oklahoma City; virtually via Teams)

MAY 2024

Registration for all workshops: www.okhistory.org/shpoworkshops

- 4 Oklahoma History Symposium: Perspectives in History (Oklahoma History Center, 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive, Oklahoma City)
- 6 Workshop: Working with the National Register of Historic Places (10 a.m. – 11 a.m.)
- 7 Workshop: How to Research Your "Historic" Property (10 a.m. – 11 a.m.)

- 8 Workshop: Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (10 a.m. – 11 a.m.)
- 9 Workshop: Drafting and Executing Section 106 Agreement Documents with the OKSHPO (10 a.m. – 11 a.m.)
- 13 Workshop: Tax Incentives Program Overview (10 a.m. – 11 a.m.)
- 14 Workshop: The Historic Preservation Tax Credit: A Case Study (10 a.m. – 11 a.m.)
- 27 SHPO Closed

JUNE 2024

- TBD SHPO Lunch & Learn: Robert M. Jones/Rose Hill, Jeff Fortney (12 p.m.)
- TBD Everyday Oklahoma: Fascinating Stories about Familiar Places. “Masonic Lodges of Oklahoma” with Kenny Sivard. (2 p.m.-3 p.m.)

JULY 2024

- 4 SHPO Closed
- 11 SHPO Lunch & Learn: Historic American Building Survey (HABS) & Its Impact on Oklahoma with Catherine Lavoie (12 p.m.)
- 18 Historic Preservation Review Committee Meeting (1:30 p.m./Dr. Leroy H. Fischer Boardroom, 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive, Oklahoma City; virtually via Teams)

AUGUST 2024

- TBD SHPO Lunch & Learn: OSU Map Collections, Kevin Dyke (12 p.m.)
- 22 Everyday Oklahoma: Fascinating Stories about Familiar Places. “Harvey Girls/Harvey Houses in Oklahoma” with Linda Wilson. (2 p.m.-3 p.m.)

SEPTEMBER 2024

- 2 SHPO Closed

OCTOBER 2024

- TBD SHPO Lunch & Learn: Chapman Ranches, Rick Mitchell, Mead & Hunt (12 p.m.)
- 17 Historic Preservation Review Committee Meeting (1:30 p.m./Dr. Leroy H. Fischer Boardroom, 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive, Oklahoma City; virtually via Teams)

NOVEMBER 2024

Registration for all workshops: www.okhistory.org/shpoworkshops

- TBD SHPO Workshops
- 11 SHPO Closed
- 28 SHPO Closed
- 29 SHPO Closed

DECEMBER 2024

- 24 SHPO Closed
- 25 SHPO Closed

**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 levels and benefits, visit 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.



Oklahoma Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office

