



2030 OSAGE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

-- Eleanor Roosevelt

History



This brief section on the history of Osage County was taken almost verbatim from a talk given by Jenk Jones, Jr., at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve (Tallgrass Prairie) docent reorientation training session held March 1, 2003 and the new docent training session held April 6, 2003. **Although some of the information (who owned what, how many cattle, etc.) included in this History may have changed from the date of his talks, the historical information remains the same and full credit is given to Mr. Jones for this keenly insightful overview that includes:**

- The Culture
- Geography of Osage County
- Names on the Land
- People
- Places of Note in Pawhuska – The Osage County Seat
- The Four Pillars of Osage County: The Osage Nation; Cattle and Cattlemen; The Oilmen; and The Outlaws

Again, and according to Mr. Jones:

If the Tallgrass with its land, animals, birds and vegetation is the cake we offer visitors, stories of the people and places of Osage County and THE OSAGE are certainly its frosting.

CULTURE

Elmer McCurdy was one of that legion of rootless men who drifted west across America during the restlessness of the frontier era. Leaving Maine in his youth, he worked as a plumber, a miner and a soldier before a brief and subsequently fatal career as an outlaw, one of the more inept of that breed. Under normal circumstances, he would have disappeared into dust without leaving the merest trace upon the sands of history.

But fate decreed differently for McCurdy, or whichever of the several aliases he used. Shot to death by a posse in northern Osage County when he was just 31, he would in death have a career twice as long as his meager lifespan, travel more, earn more money (for others) and achieve far greater fame and notoriety than he ever did in life.

McCurdy was a mess near the end of his life, an alcoholic suffering from silicosis and tuberculosis. After leaving the Army, he switched to crime, being arrested for possession of burglary tools and involved in at least one train robbery and a bank burglary. He had learned something about explosives while in the Army (his instructor was a first lieutenant named Douglas MacArthur), but he forgot that when the Army blew something up it really wanted it destroyed. McCurdy tended to overuse explosives; in one instance his blast fused \$4,000 worth of silver coins to the walls of the safe. His take in crime was always a pittance. In 1911, three bandits held up a Katy train near the old outlaw stronghold of Okesa. They hit the wrong train. The haul they expected was on the next train, which was carrying \$400,000 in cash for payment to the Osages; the outlaws got only a few dollars from passengers on the train they robbed. McCurdy had been one of four men in the gang considered responsible; whether he was one of the three robbers who actually took part is uncertain. But a posse tracked him to a ranch near the Kansas border and killed him in a shootout. His body was taken to a Pawhuska undertaker's parlor, where it resided in a front window for months waiting for a friend or relative to claim it. No one did. Eventually the funeral home dressed him in the clothes he was wearing when shot, put a rifle in his hands and stood him in a corner. Some say it charged a nickel apiece to view the body; at any rate thousands reportedly came to see it, as entertainment opportunities were limited in Pawhuska at the time. Elmer was full of arsenic, a common mortuary tool then that served as a fine preservative.

After five years two men showed up and said he was their brother and they wanted to take him back to California for burial. Elmer was released to them. Shortly thereafter he appeared in West Texas as a leading attraction at a traveling carnival. For years he crisscrossed the country as a major draw, appearing in 40 states under names that kept changing so the yokels would shell out again when the show returned to a town. The body was used as a prop in film and TV, waxed and put in a museum and later painted so as to glow in the dark in a Long Beach amusement park, where he dangled from a noose. Now shrunken and mummified, McCurdy was simply called "the dummy." People had forgotten, if they ever knew, that this was a real body.

One day, while filming an episode of "The Six Million Dollar Man" at the amusement park, a workman moved McCurdy. An arm fell off, and a bone was exposed. The Los Angeles coroner's office now had what was unmistakably a corpse with - upon closer examination - an old gunshot wound. In newspaper terminology, they didn't know who, what, when, where, why or how. A nationwide hunt for information eventually centered

on McCurdy, thanks to contemporary newspaper accounts of the shootout and photos taken of the corpse after death. Meanwhile the news had leaked of the discovered body and all that the body had accomplished - at least for its owners - after McCurdy's death. It became an international story and McCurdy's fame soared. The amusement park, seeing dollars in his new notoriety, wanted him back.

But so did Oklahoma - to give him a proper burial. Led by citizens from Guthrie, Oklahoma provided conclusive evidence that this was indeed the elusive Elmer. A judge allowed his return to Oklahoma, provided no further circus would be made of the body. In April 1977, in a glass-drawn hearse preceded by lawmen, politicians and historians, Elmer was taken to the city cemetery in Guthrie and buried - next to a much more famous owlhoot, Bill Doolin. McCurdy still has allure for tourists, and his graveside often has been used for murder mystery weekends.

McCurdy is but one example of the wonderful stories associated with The Osage. Almost any name of town or individual listed above is worthy of detailed information to intrigue anyone.

Osage County - The Osage Nation - THE OSAGE - Different ways of describing the same place according to Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones prefers "THE OSAGE" because its geography and geology, plentiful wildlife and mix of vegetation, rich history and extraordinary cast of characters stretch far beyond mere legal jurisdiction or tribal legacy, giving it almost a mystical cast. Here live the Osage Indians, once per capita the richest people on earth due to oil. Here is bluestem grass that many call the best grazing land in America. Here the wooded eastern half of the nation fades away as the drier conditions of the west take over, inhibiting tree growth. Here lived remarkable Indian leaders, a future president, men and women who would become entertainment stars, a war hero, and oilmen who staked fortunes on formations hidden deep underground, cattlemen who braved drought, blizzard and the vagaries of markets, even an outbreak of outlaws famous or otherwise.

GEOGRAPHY OF OSAGE COUNTY

Osage County is the largest county in Oklahoma with an area of 2,251 square miles, the largest county in Oklahoma, larger than either Delaware or Rhode Island. The Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, at the southern end of the Flint Hills that range down from Kansas, has rocks dating from 290 to 298 million years old, somewhat older than neighboring areas to the north. Slicing through the Tallgrass' eastern sector is the Cross Timbers, a natural barrier of tangled growth that helped separate Woodland and Plains Indians and a tough wall to breach for soldiers, pioneers and early-day oilmen. Sandstone that underpins the eastern areas and helps trap moisture for those hardy trees that are the forest's advance guard; in the western areas, limestone nurtures the lush grasses that signal the beginning of the Great Plains. Both sandstone and limestone intermingle with shale.

To give you an idea of the myriad interesting bits of information on his subjects, Mr. Jones tosses out some names of places and people, attractions in Pawhuska and a capsule of what he calls the "Four Pillars of Osage County" discussed in detail later in this section of the 2030 Plan.

NAMES ON THE LAND

Osage - a French corruption of Wa-sha'-she or Wa-zha'-zhe, the name by which the then tribesmen called themselves. The Osages are members of the southern Sioux linguistic group, along with such closely related tribes as the Kaw (or Kansa), Omaha, Ponca and Quapaw.

Pawhuska - The name means White Hair; it was given to Osage Chief Paw-hiu-Skah (spellings vary) after he took part in a battle in Ohio against American troops during the Washington administration. He tried to scalp a fallen officer, only to have the officer's white hair (a powdered wig) come off in the chief's hand. Aided by the diversion, the officer escaped. The Chief thought the hair had great power - it had helped protect its wearer - and kept the wig with him for the rest of his life, taking the name White Hair as a result of his experience.

Nelagoney - A community southeast of Pawhuska meaning "spring" or "good water" in Osage.

Pershing - On Oklahoma SH-11 southeast of Pawhuska, an oil boom town named for Gen. John J. Pershing, head of US forces in Europe in World War I. The ruin of a church is just south of the highway; within a block were the "four Bs" of oilfield living: Baptists, bootlegger, bar and bordello.

Okesa – Located south of US-60 between Pawhuska and Bartlesville. Okesa means halfway in Osage, and was located halfway between Pawhuska and the western border of the Cherokee Nation in post-Civil War Indian Territory. Okesa was an outlaw haven and site of the last train robbery in Oklahoma in 1923. Outlaws also hid out in the area's caves, thick woods and small canyons.

Wynona - A now-faded oil boom town on SH-99 south of Pawhuska that means "first-born daughter" in Sioux language.

Hominy – An important oil town in the southern part of Osage County on SH-99 and SH-20. The name is believed to be a corruption of Harmony, for the old Harmony Mission in Missouri. Local artist Cha Tullis' metal sculpture on the hill immediately west of town depicts an Indian war party. There also are colorful murals on town buildings, mostly by Cha.

Barnsdall - Originally named Bigheart for Chief James Bigheart, whose grave alongside SH-11 less than a mile southeast of town has a historical marker. The grave is just north of the SH-11 junction with SH-123 and is marked by the tallest marker topped by a cross. Barnsdall was an oil town that survived flood, tornado, major fire, nitro wagon explosion and a deadly blast at its refinery in a 14-year span. It is proud of its "Main Street oil well," though one account says the well came first and the street was built around it. The town's old stone buildings are interesting. See the marker next to a tiny museum about the Tallant plant three miles north along SH-11; Tallant was a petrochemical pioneer that played a key role in World War II.

Burbank – Located west of Pawhuska on US-60, this community, supposedly named for cockleburs on a nearby bluff, gave its name to the greatest of the Osage oilfields.

Blackland - Cattle loading area outside Tallgrass Prairie on Bison Loop road. During World War II more cattle were unloaded and loaded here than at any spot in the United States.

Foraker - Located a few miles west of the Tallgrass Prairie, it was named for a US senator from Ohio. It had two booms: first in agriculture (corn, alfalfa, cattle, and hogs) and second as a shipment point serving the Burbank Field and once had 2,000 residents.

Avant - Named for prominent Osage Ben Avant, who was shot to death for hitching his horse in town at a place where only automobiles were allowed.

Woolaroc - Frank Phillips' fabled ranch located between Bartlesville and Barnsdall. The name Woolaroc is a contraction of wood, lakes and rocks.

Fairfax - Southwest of Pawhuska, this town is the site of the grave of Chief Ne-kah-wah-she-tun-kah, the last Osage Chief to be provided a traditional tribal burial ceremony. As the "Oklahoma Historical Tour Guide" reports, "Unfortunately this included placing a human scalp in the grave. A Wichita chief was selected for this "honor". The taking of the scalp in 1923 understandably caused a rather nasty intertribal incident and the US government banned any future scalp-hunting."

PEOPLE

Herbert Hoover - The future US president and an orphan, spent summer months in Pawhuska after his uncle, Major Lahan J. Miles, was appointed agent to the Osages in 1878. Hoover said his experiences growing up with the Osage children taught him a love of the outdoors that remained with him. Charles Curtis, a member of the Kaw Tribe and a US senator from Kansas who owned land in Oklahoma, would become Hoover's vice president.

James Bigheart - Greatest of a line of strong Osage Chiefs, he spoke English, French, Osage, Cherokee, Ponca and Sioux and had a reading knowledge of Latin. A full-blood, he favored the developmental policies more associated with mixed-bloods, believing his people would prosper through capitalism. Chief Bigheart presided over the committee that drew up an early Osage Constitution and was largely responsible for the idea that the Osage Nation should keep control over subsurface mineral rights so that all members who had headright shares would benefit from mineral riches (*i.e.*, oil) no matter where they might be found within the Osage Nation.

Ben Johnson Jr. (or Ben "Son" Johnson) - Spent much of his youth at the Chapman-Barnard Ranch, where his father was foreman. "Son" went west in the 1930s to break horses purchased in Osage County for the movies and to teach actors to ride Western style. He stayed to appear in some 300 films, including winning an Oscar for "The Last Picture Show". He was a close friend of John Wayne's and appeared in many films with him. "Son," like his father, was a world roping champion. He often returned to Pawhuska and sponsored local rodeo events. "Son" returned to Pawhuska one last time upon his death was buried there and a City Park in Pawhuska is also named after him.

Clark Gable - He worked as a roustabout in the Osage oilfields, especially around Barnsdall and Pershing, before heading to Hollywood. Gable was a part of a singing group at Barnsdall. He retained a warm spot in his heart for his Osage days and people he knew there.

Tom Mix - The future silent film star was a town marshal in Dewey just east of the Osage County border and knew the area well. The Wild West show on the 101 Ranch in Kay County gave him the boost that sent him to Hollywood.

Maria and Marjorie Tallchief - Osage sisters from Fairfax and two of five famed Oklahoma Indian ballerinas who appeared with the world's top ballet companies.

Anita Bryant - A former Miss Oklahoma and well-known entertainer was born in Barnsdall.

Major General Clarence Tinker - An air defense leader during World War II in the Pacific, he was killed while attacking Japanese ships near Wake Island in 1942. Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City, Oklahoma, is named for him.

Frank Phillips - This former Creston, Iowa, barber married his town banker's daughter and went to work for her father. Hearing about exciting prospects in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, Phillips checked them out, got into the oil business and banking along with his brother L.E., and eventually established Phillips 66. The brothers drilled three unsuccessful wells before hitting oil on their fourth with the last of their money, and triggered a string of 81 consecutive oil producers.

Waite Phillips - He learned the oil business while working under brothers Frank and L.E., and Waite later went out on his own and developed fields in Okmulgee and Creek Counties in Oklahoma, and even beyond Oklahoma's borders. He was noted for his philanthropy; Philbrook Museum, his former Tulsa mansion, is one of the Southwest's great art museums, and Philmont (his massive New Mexico ranch), is now home to thousands of Scouts each year.

H.V. Foster - He may have been Oklahoma's most influential oilman. Holding the great Indian Territory Illuminating Oil Co. lease for the entire Osage - at the time the largest oil lease in the world - he subleased parts of it to trigger hugely increased exploration and production in the area. He later brought in the major Greater Seminole oilfield and the even larger Oklahoma City Field, at the time the second biggest in the nation.

J. Paul Getty - Getty entered the oil business almost by accident. His father, George, was passing through Bartlesville, became intrigued with the fledgling oil business and put down \$500 for a 1,100-acre lease. Forty-three wells were drilled on it; 42 of them came in as producers. J. Paul started as a roustabout at \$3 for a 12-hour day. A millionaire by his early 20s and listed as the world's richest man, he lived in Tulsa for many years.

E.W. Marland - Phenomenally successful as an oil wildcatter, his Bertha Hickman No. 1 oil well was the discovery well for the Burbank Field. Coming to Oklahoma after making and then losing a fortune in coal in the Appalachian area, he amassed another fortune in oil and was lavish in his many donations, including the Pioneer Woman statue

competition. A Republican as a businessman, he became a New Deal Democrat after losing his second fortune - he blamed his misfortune on Wall Street - and was elected to Congress in 1932, governor in 1934. He and his wife adopted his wife's niece; after his wife's death, Marland had the adoption annulled and married the niece, which caused great controversy.

Colonel E.E. Walters - Auctioneer for the Osage oil lease sales, he worked for almost nothing (usually \$10 a day) and netted millions for the Osage Nation. He knew the oilmen intimately and was an expert at getting them to raise bids. So subtle were their signals that L.E. Phillips reportedly "bid" \$100,000 for a lease by brushing a fly away from his nose.

Maybelle Kennedy - Assistant treasurer of the US under President Truman.

John Joseph Mathews - Osage author of five books, a graduate of Oklahoma University and Oxford.

Norman Schwarzkopf - The US General of Gulf War fame was inducted into the Osage Nation in October 1993, the day the bison were released into the Tallgrass Prairie, in a dignified ceremony next to the old Chapman-Barnard Ranch headquarters. It was a rare honor that the Osages accorded, and they gave Schwarzkopf a name that translates to Eagle Chief.

Boy Scouts of America -- The first troop in America was established in Pawhuska in 1909 by the Rev. John Mitchell, just a decade after Baden-Powell founded the Scouting movement. To outfit those first Scouts, clothing was ordered from England. The result can be seen in a statue outside the Osage County Museum.

PLACES OF NOTE IN PAWHUSKA – THE OSAGE COUNTY SEAT

The Osage County Courthouse (County Courthouse) – The County Courthouse was built in 1913 from large concrete stone blocks in Classic Revival architectural style by architects Donathan and Moore. It was listed in 1984 on the National Register of Historic Places as one of the 101 buildings contributing to the nomination of the Pawhuska Historic Downtown District. The County Courthouse is significant because of its fine architectural design and because of its importance to the community and Osage County as the center and seat of County government. The County Courthouse is an impressive landmark located north of the downtown area in Pawhuska on hill and be seen for miles from its hilltop location.

Million Dollar Elm - Only the stump remains of the famed tree under which rich oil-lease sales were held, beginning in 1912. Many quarter-section leases brought bids of more than \$1 million, hence the name. Photos of that era show the trunk surrounded by oilmen, bankers, blanket Indians, tool pushers and other interested parties in a colorful tableau. The stump is on the grounds of the Indian agent's house atop Agency Hill, between the Osage County Courthouse and the Osage Nation Governmental Offices. The tree died in the mid-1980s and a marker tells its history.

Constantine Theater - A refurbished theater now used for various musical events, it was used to host the lease sales when the weather was bad. It was built in the 1880s as a hotel and converted to an opera house in 1914.

Immaculate Conception Church - Some of the finest stained glass windows in America, made by Munich craftsmen nearly a century ago, are in this Catholic Church. The large window on the north wall, titled "Cathedral of the Osage," depicts what were then living Osages and required special permission from the Vatican. Cost of the window at that time was only \$5,000, plus the cost of bringing German workmen to install it. Note the artistry, color and expressive faces in the larger windows along the walls flanking the pews, also crafted in Munich. Stations of the Cross come from Italy.

Osage Nation Chambers - On Agency Hill in Pawhuska, the Chambers include a mural of the Osage Story of Creation and another depicting famous Osages. The next building to the north is a tribal museum.

Osage County Museum - Located in the former Santa Fe Railroad depot, it has an interesting if eclectic mix (including early Boy Scout equipment) and many historical photos.

City Hall - A wonderful stone building just west of the Constantine Theater in downtown Pawhuska. It once served as the Osage Council House.

First National Bank Lobby – The Bank includes a period ceiling and floor, and quaint teller cages.

Triangle Building - This historic structure across Main from the First National Bank is on the site of the original station used for disbursing funds to the Osages.

Blacksmith House - A small stone structure that is the oldest building in Pawhuska, located just east of the new visitor's center on Main Street was built for a blacksmith who worked for the Tribe. A metal sculpture has been placed besides the building of a blacksmith shoeing a horse.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF OSAGE COUNTY

THE OSAGE NATION

Like many American Indian tribes, the Osages moved great distances over the period of centuries. From the Plains originally (the states of Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa and the Dakotas are named for sub-tribes of the Osage), they drifted well east of the Mississippi River before ultimately returning to America's midlands. By the time Europeans began to enter the mid-continent, the Osages generally held sway over lands between the Missouri and Arkansas Rivers north and south and to the Mississippi on the east, from which location came the term by which they were known, "**People of the Middle Waters.**" Many Osages moved into Oklahoma in the early 19th Century to get involved in fur trading with French traders, including the Chouteaus, in the Three Forks area near Muskogee. Union Mission, the first mission established in Oklahoma, was started in 1821 to serve the Osages. The first school, begun the same year, was for

French and Osage children. Osages had bloody fights with the Cherokees when the latter moved to Oklahoma from the southeastern US, and also with Plains tribes.

In the treaties forced by the federal government in 1818 and 1825, the Osages gave up their Indian Territory holdings for land in southern Kansas. At that time the Cherokee Outlet was established in northernmost Indian Territory, which then included all of present-day Oklahoma except the Panhandle.

The Cherokee Outlet ran west from a present-day Tulsa-Bartlesville line to the 100th Meridian, where it met the Texas Panhandle. The Outlet measured 58 by 226 miles (more than 13,000 square miles) and allowed the Cherokees to hunt on the plains, especially for buffalo.

Like most dealings with the government, the one involving the Osages and Kansas wouldn't last. The Osages had warriors on both sides during the Civil War (Bigheart, for instance, was a Union lieutenant; the Little Osage band favored the North, the Greater Osages the South). After the war the government ignored Osage service to the North and punished them for their Southern connections by taking away part of its lands (as it did with the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory). There was increased pressure on the remaining Osage holdings in Kansas as whites demanded the lands be opened to settlement. White hunters were depleting the game upon which the Indians depended. Meanwhile the Cherokees were having trouble with the Cherokee Outlet. The great cattle trails crossed it and the animals grazed it hard. Would-be homesteaders wanted the land. Timber thieves stripped it of what good wood there was. Land was needed for other displaced Indian tribes. And the government ruled many of the Cherokees' grazing leases with white ranchers were illegal, depriving the tribe of that revenue.

So those old enemies, the Osages and Cherokees, struck a deal. **The Osages, having sold their Kansas lands in 1870 to the government for a tidy profit (at \$1.25 an acre) bought nearly 1.5 million acres in the eastern end of the Cherokee Outlet. That land would become the Osage Nation, or Osage County, we know today. The price was 70 cents an acre, which subsequent events would prove to be one of the world's great real estate steals.** The Osages in turn sold 102,000 acres to their Kaw cousins, land east of the Arkansas River in Kay County adjoining Osage County. Tribes including the Ponca, Tonkawa, Otoe-Missouri and Pawnee obtained other parts of the old Cherokee Outlet, and the Cherokees sold the remainder to the federal government.

Most of the Osages moved to their new home in 1871 and 1872. They were fortunate in two ways: the new land cost less than the land they sold in Kansas, so they received enough interest income (from 5 percent on the surplus deposited in the U.S. Treasury) to meet tribesmen's basic needs, and they began to lease out parts of the county to cattle ranchers, providing another source of income. But they had problems as well. Perhaps half of the tribe died due to smallpox, cholera, TB and other diseases plus shortages in medicine and clothing. Hunger also took its toll, as by 1875 the buffalo largely had been eliminated on the Southern Plains.

The first Osage agency was located at Silver Lake south of Bartlesville until it was discovered that was east of the 96th Meridian, hence on Cherokee land. The agency was moved to Pawhuska. Indian tribes soon encountered the Dawes Act, which was

designed to break up tribally-held lands and put property in the hands of individual Indians. This would both weaken tribal structure and allow "surplus" lands to be made available for settlers. The Osages and the Five Civilized Tribes were supposed to be exempt from the Dawes Act because they held patented title to their land, but pressure was applied and the tribes eventually caved in. The Osages were the last to do so, when the government said it would allot the land itself if the tribe did not cooperate.

By the time (1906) the Osages agreed to divide the land, there were more mixed-bloods than full-bloods, and the former were more willing to walk the white man's path. Each Osage on the tribal rolls received a series of allotments totaling slightly more than a square mile. Of that, one 160-acre plot was designated a homestead and could not be taxed. Indians often were shortchanged or cheated in the process of passing lands on to others, and guardians, appointed particularly to run the affairs of full-bloods, who were considered less competent to handle their money, often ripped off their charges. Banks hit them with high interest and doctors and merchants overcharged them. Alcoholism also took its toll among the Osages.

Nonetheless, the tribe had its assets. It continued to receive money from interest on the money it banked from the Kansas lands it had sold as well as from cattle leases. And the Osages were alone among Indians in retaining the subsurface mineral rights for the tribe rather than individuals. The Osage Allotment Act of 1906 was established to determine tribal members and allot them headrights; the total for the tribe was 2,229. These headrights would include children born before July 1, 1907. Those born afterward could become members of the Osage but did not have headrights in their own right; they could only get them through inheritance or marriage. This demarcation would assume immense proportions later when the Osages would become - per capita - the richest people in the world.

The Osages certainly have provided Oklahoma with colorful names. The tribe has three primary bands: Dwellers Upon the Hilltop at Gray Horse, Dwellers in the Upland Forest around Hominy and Dwellers in the Thorny Thicket centered at Pawhuska. Names of prominent leaders within the Osage Nation included Bacon Rind, Lookout, Black Dog, Red Eagle and Strike Axe.

CATTLE AND CATTLEMEN

During the Civil War, longhorn cattle in Texas went wild and multiplied hugely when the men who normally would tend them went off to fight. Following the conflict, ranchers found vast herds of longhorns wandering the range. But although the rapidly growing US population and settlement of the Midwest increased the demand and price for beef, those Texans with surplus cattle were far from their lucrative markets. This led to the great cattle drives across the future Oklahoma along the East and West Shawnee, the Chisholm and the Great Western Trails. Cattle were driven to railhead towns in Missouri and Kansas for shipment to stockyards farther east. The major trails missed Osage County, although there was a branch off the East Shawnee Trail at Fort Gibson that went northwest through that area.

What cattlemen noticed as they drove north was the fine grassland Indian Territory had, and that led to leases in the Cherokee Outlet. Some cattlemen moved into the western and north-central parts, where they found the bluestem grass an excellent means to put weight on trail-wearied animals. What started as temporary cow camps evolved into permanent ranches. The Indians themselves took to cowboying more readily than farming despite government efforts to make them sodbusters. Osage County would ultimately boast super ranches: the various Drummond spreads once totaled more than 300,000 acres, Chapman-Barnard exceeded 100,000 acres and there were other great ranches such as the Cross Bell (Mullendore) and Adams. Lee Russell, a relative of cowboy artist Charles Russell, once ran cattle over much of western Osage and eastern Kay County and had herds from Texas to Montana. Lyndon Johnson had Osage County land; the Ted Turner Ranch raises bison for meat today.

The need to ship cattle to this area was a major impetus in railroad building. The Osage Nation soon was crossed by the Santa Fe, the Midland Valley (the two crossing in Pawhuska), the Missouri, Kansas and Texas, Katy and the Frisco. Branch lines later were built to supply the oilfields. The County's rails are now memory. But in their heyday the railroads disgorged thousands upon thousands of head of cattle onto the rich prairie each year. Blackland was the nation's largest point for off-loading and re-loading cattle. One report said the land was so rich that cattle came in 40 to the cattle car, but the same car could only hold 23 when they were shipped out. Some reports said Texas steers could double their weight in six months on bluestem grass.

Cowboys who rode the range often became legends in their own right. The Chapman-Barnard Ranch employed four (including Ben Johnson Sr.) who were rodeo world champions at one time or another. Ben "Son" Johnson took a year out of movie making to become a world champion roper in his own right. In neighboring Kay County, Bill Pickett, a black cowhand on the famed 101 Ranch, invented the sport of bulldogging, now known as steer wrestling.

The Osages knew they were onto something when they studied the lands in north-central Oklahoma. The soil was thin and rocky, unsuited for the plow and hence less attractive to white farmers. But it was wonderful grassland, with ample rainfall. James Chapman and H.G. Barnard saw the same thing. Starting with just 1,200 acres in 1915, they increased their holdings to 60,000 acres by 1920 and more than 100,000 in the 1950s. Ben "Son" Johnson said that when he was a boy as many as 18,000-20,000 cattle grazed on the ranch each year. The Tallgrass Prairie Preserve began with 29,000-

plus acres of the Barnard portion of the old ranch. About 35,000 acres of that which was Chapman land is now owned by the Bass family from Fort Worth; it lies west and north of the Tallgrass Prairie, with the old Midland Valley right-of-way serving as the boundary between Ranch and Preserve. The Mormon Church has 34,000 acres of the old Adams spread north of the Foraker Road, part of its extensive Osage holdings. So large are the ranches and so widely separated any houses that pilots call the northern Osage County "the black hole" when flying over it at night. Cattle remain a vital economic component of the Osage; the Osage Cattlemen's Association estimates the County has some 80,000-85,000 cows (not counting their calves of less than a year's age) and 150,000 stockers. Those figures are deemed conservative, meaning the Osage likely has more than a quarter-million cattle - or six times as many head as there are humans.

THE OILMEN

Of all the elements that comprise Mr. Jones' story of Osage County and THE OSAGE, oil may be the most intriguing. Here, as mentioned before, began the fortunes of Frank, L.E. and Waite Phillips, J. Paul Getty, E.W. Marland, Harry Sinclair, Bill Skelly, H.V. Foster, Josh Cosden, Tulsa's Zarrow family and Alf Landon who are among the many who struck success.

Traces of oil long had been noted in the area, including slicks on creeks, oil seeps and tar springs. The Osages' first oil deal was with the Indian Territory Illuminating Oil Company (ITIO), which was given rights to all drilling in the Osage Nation for 10 years beginning in 1896. Under the terms, ITIO had to find oil within 18 months and couldn't go six months without drilling or the lease would be terminated. The next year Oklahoma's first commercial producer was hit, the Nellie Johnstone, beside the Caney River in what is now Johnstone Park in Bartlesville in Washington County to the east of Osage County and during its lifespan it would produce more than 100,000 barrels of oil. More wells were successfully drilled on the Cherokee side of the border with the Osage Nation. The ITIO, which had financing problems and was under pressure to find oil on Osage lands, eventually subleased drilling sites and the pace of exploration accelerated. In 1906, the western part of the Osage Nation was thrown open to competition, with the ITIO retaining rights in the east. All of Osage County was open for bidding after 1916 - just in time for the greatest years of the Osage boom, triggered by demands of World War I and the postwar growth in automobiles.

To get a sense of how the oil business exploded, there were about 6,000 barrels produced in 1900, more than 11 million in 1914. The Osage boom and the vast leap in the number of automobiles coincided remarkably well.

This huge output increase reflected not only exploration and production, but also transportation. At the end of the 19th Century the Santa Fe Railroad reached Bartlesville, allowing movement of oil by tank car. Within the first six years of the 1900s, pipelines expanded linking its oil production to distant refineries and distribution systems.

Then in 1920, Marland brought in the North Burbank Field and the impact was almost beyond comprehension. The great North Burbank Field was 39 square miles when completely outlined and produced more than 300-million barrels of oil, while other Burbank fields added another 100-million-plus barrels. Peak production was in 1923 and

1924. One lease sale in March 1924 saw six of the winning bids each exceed \$1.5 million - that merely for the right to drill on 160 acres. The highest bid at that auction, an all-time record, was \$1,990,000, and the one-day total \$10,888,000 was another high mark. Sometimes it wasn't the big bid that succeeded - Marland once bid \$2,000 for a quarter-section and took \$2 million out of it. Handling the prolific discoveries often was hectic. When gushers came in, earthen dikes were used to hold the oil until storage tanks could be built. In 1901, Prairie Oil and Gas constructed one of the world's largest tank farms near Ramona, in Washington County just east of the Osage County line; you can still see some of the encircling dikes just east of US-75. That area, with 222 earthen tanks, and a smaller one farther north near Copan, had a combined capacity of more than 11 million barrels.

Although the collective fields with Burbank in their names were Osage County's largest concentration of oil riches, there was more oil produced in the County outside the Burbank fields than in it. The numerous oilfields produced some 1.3 billion barrels of oil since the whole business started, along with 165 billion cubic feet of natural gas. During the height of the boom from 1919-1928, more than \$202 million was paid to the Osage Nation in oil and gas royalties, bonuses, interest and land rentals. The highest price for oil at that time was \$3.50 a barrel in 1920. And we're talking dollars with a purchasing power of many, many times that of today's dollar. Osage headrights went from \$385 per person in 1916 to \$12,400 just seven years later. Although production slumped sharply in the 1930s, due both to natural factors and the Depression, waterflooding and the fracturing process Post-World War II brought another rush of production Countywide. Boosted by the sharp increase in oil prices following the Mideast crisis in 1973, headrights were worth more than \$26,000 each in 1980, although the real value in terms of 1923 dollars was less than that of 60 years earlier. The value of oil produced in the County in 1983 alone was \$297 million, with another \$18 million provided by gas. Over the years, some 42,000 producing oil and gas wells were drilled in the County; although, virtually all those still active are stripper wells (less than 10 barrels per day). They still manage to produce some 11,500 barrels per day on average, with sale value in 2002 of \$105 million.

The Osages learned a good deal about oil leases over the years. Their 1896 package with ITIO called for them to receive 1/10th of the value of oil at the wellhead and \$50 for every gas well completed and used by the company, plus Osages had free use of natural gas. By the time of the great oil boom Osages received not only the rich lease prices, but 1/6th royalty on leases producing less than 100 barrels per day and 1/5th on those with more than 100 barrels.

The fields were an oilman's dream. The oil was a high grade, with a good conversion to gasoline ratio. It was easily refined, with a very high percentage of kerosene. It was free of sulfur and asphalt. And it came from several thick producing sands at relatively shallow depths. Frank Phillips used it to produce an aviation gasoline that he proclaimed the best around. He used it in the Woolaroc, his airplane that won the Dole Derby in 1927, the first plane to fly from California to Hawaii. The victory brought Phillips 66 and its "avgas" great publicity.

Life in the oil-boom towns was colorful, but hardly comfortable. Vice and violence were common, along with rotgut bootleg whisky. Lawmen, when available, sometimes were as bad as the criminal element. Towns were horribly crowded, housing was at a

premium, and many men slept in theater seats or under pool tables. Chicken coops or boxcars might suffice as family housing, or "shotgun" houses hurriedly thrown up and providing minimal shelter from either cold or heat. Getting mail was iffy, with transient workers using general delivery. Schools and medical treatment were in short supply, and so was food, either in groceries or lunchrooms. Lumber had to be hauled long distances, and animal feed for wagon teams was hard to obtain. Roads and town streets were dust or mud. Drinkable water was scarce and often expensive. There was a lack of telephones, and runaway fires, nitro explosions or tornadoes could devastate towns.

Although the Tallgrass Prairie is not a major oil producing area, it still has more than 100 active wells and has produced six-million barrels of oil and nine-billion cubic feet of gas since drilling started there. Some 320 wells have been drilled within the Tallgrass Prairie borders and 65% of them were productive. From 1907-1928, Oklahoma was first or second in the nation in oil production in 21 of those 22 years and much of that came from Osage County.

THE OUTLAWS

Indian Territory, often called "The Nations" in reference to the Five Civilized Tribes that inhabited it, was a lawless place for much of the 19th century, especially after the dislocating influence of the Civil War. Outlaws, such as Jesse and Frank James, the Younger brothers, Ned Christie, Cherokee Bill, Rufus Buck and the much-overrated Belle Starr, were but a fraction of the criminals who populated Indian Territory. Judge Isaac "Hanging Judge" Parker employed some 200 marshals to track them down, and a quarter to a third of his lawmen died in the process.

Osage County had more than its share of troublemakers. The Doolins and Daltons were among the more famous gangs that roamed northern Oklahoma, along with their female lookouts Cattle Annie and Little Britches, who also were bootleggers and horse thieves. Bob Dalton once was Osage Chief of Police, and he and brother Grat (another of the four outlaws who were killed in the Coffeyville twin bank robbery in 1892) once were federal district marshals. Another Dalton brother, Deputy Marshal Frank, was killed in the line of duty, and was among other notable names that became part of the lore of lawlessness.

The Reign of Terror – This was the most serious outbreak of crime in Oklahoma history and was the so-called Reign of Terror that took place at the height of the oil boom during the 1920s. Beginning in 1921, at least two dozen Osages were murdered by gunfire, stabbing, poisoning or explosives, but the number may have greatly exceeded that as there were many other Osage deaths that occurred under suspicious circumstances. During the boom, oil royalty and lease money that went through the Osage to individual headright owners made the Osages the richest people per capita in the world. The headrights that topped out at more than \$12,000 in a single year would have a buying power today of several hundred thousand dollars. Since a family often had more than one headright, the amount of money involved was stupendous. Wild spending was a trait of people suddenly rich. One woman in a single day spent more than \$40,000 for clothing, jewelry, furnishings and land in Florida. Automobile agencies sold expensive cars to Indians who had discovered an aversion to walking; Osage County reportedly had the largest number of Pierce Arrow autos in the nation. With this kind of money acting as a lure, human coyotes soon surfaced. William K. Hale, an

Osage County rancher and banker, was the ringleader of a scheme to gain control of headrights by murder or insuring Osages with himself as beneficiary and then having them killed. He, his nephew Earnest Burkhart and a cowhand named John Ramsey were sentenced to prison in 1926 after a long legal struggle, but others may have been involved. It was one of the first big cases of the fledgling Federal Bureau of Investigation. A state investigator named Luther Bishop was a key to cracking the case; he was murdered in his Oklahoma City home in December 1926 and the crime was never solved.

Al Spencer - Perhaps the leading robber in the area over a period of years, he and Frank Nash led a gang that pulled off the last train robbery in Oklahoma in 1923 near Okesa. A month later a posse killed Spencer. So great was his fame that an estimated 15,000 people came to see his body. Nash was later killed in the famous Kansas City massacre in which he and four lawmen were machine-gunned to death. Pretty Boy Floyd may - or may not - have been involved in the attack that was aimed either at freeing Nash, who was under arrest, or silencing him.

Henry Wells - Another well-known outlaw, who missed the Okesa holdup because his horse went lame, he had a hideout in the hills of the eastern Osage County. Wells became a friend of Frank Phillips; it is said that Wells and his friends deposited their money with Phillips' bank and that the bank never had a problem with robbers. Wells once tipped off Phillips that Pretty Boy Floyd was in town looking to kidnap a member of Phillips' family. Wells was a regular at Phillips' Cow Thieves and Outlaws reunion at Woolaroc, and Phillips once hired his gang to hold up a stagecoach full of Eastern financiers en route to Woolaroc - Wells later returned the goods.

Henry Starr - A nephew by marriage to Belle Starr and a noted bank robber in his own right. Starr was the first person to draw a loan from the Phillips' new bank in Bartlesville. The loan, with interest, was repaid on time. Starr eventually was killed in an Arkansas bank robbery.

Henry Grammer - One of the most intriguing characters, Grammer was a world-champion rodeo performer from the Chapman-Barnard Ranch who had appeared before crowned heads in Europe and crowds in Madison Square Garden. But he also was known locally as "King of the Bootleggers" and may have had links to other crimes. A crack shot, his gun had many notches on it. While serving a federal prison term he was released momentarily to judge a rodeo in Fort Worth, and then returned to prison unaccompanied. He died in a 1926 auto wreck in which the car apparently had been tampered with and he may have been shot beforehand. When he died, he had more than \$10,000 in cash in his pockets, hardly normal wallet contents in the 1920s.

The Martin Brothers (Will and Sam Martin) – These men were wanted in five states for murder, robbery and assorted other peccadilloes. They were killed in a shootout at Wooster Mound, about five miles south of Pawhuska, by a small posse led by legendary lawman Wiley Haines. An historical marker on the east side of SH-99 marks the site of the shootout.

The Wild Man of the Osage - When he was killed, 16 human skulls and piles of bones were found in his cave.

Ed Lockhart - One of the Osage's bad men who - while serving a 20-year sentence - was given a 90-day leave from the state penitentiary by the infamous Governor Jack Walton, who specialized in turning felons loose. Lockhart immediately went on another crime spree. He was killed by a sheriff's posse in the hills of southeastern Osage County after taking a lawman hostage.

Dick Gregg - A longtime robber called "The Phantom of the Osage Hills," he was killed by an officer in a 1929 shootout after Gregg had slain the lawman's partner. He was the last major outlaw from the oil-boom days.

Mullendore murder - E.C. Mullendore III was a descendant of the famed Mullendore ranching family that had been in Osage County for decades. His slaying in September 1970 at his Cross Bell Ranch home remains the most famous officially-unsolved killing in Osage County.

Whizbang - The oil boom towns of the Osage were rowdy and often violent. The most infamous was the community best known as Whizbang, although the Post Office officially called it DeNoya. Located near Shidler, Whizbang was a wide-open place where slayings were common and it was said a woman wasn't safe on the street after dark. The bank was robbed twice. One longtime oilfield worker said, "A man that flashed a roll wouldn't likely be eating his breakfast with the boys next morning." Jose Alvarado, whose true name was Bert Bryant, is part of the local lore. A man who worked both sides of the law, he was involved in several controversial shootings while serving as a lawman in Whizbang. On one occasion, Alvarado had a fight with a lawman from Shidler over a woman, the other officer shot the woman dead and hit Alvarado in the chest and broke both his legs with bullets. Alvarado shot his foe four times in the body. As the "Ghost Towns of Oklahoma" relates, "The two men were taken to the same hospital; they recovered, forgot the woman and became good friends. Such was a day in the life of Whizbang."

Pistol Hill - Located between Whizbang and Shidler, Pistol Hill was an especially dangerous place. Outlaws would emerge from roadside brush as autos slowed for the steep climb and rob the motorists. Bridges also could be bad, with armed men suddenly blocking both ends and trapping drivers in between. Nor did holdup men spare oil rigs; many working crews were held up and relieved of money, watches and rings. In retaliation, workers at one rig surprised would-be robbers and hanged them from the well's walking beam. The sheriff asked no questions.

The colorful little collection of mayhem entitled "Tragedies of the Osage Hills" has chapter titles that reflect those days: "They Shoot Each Other," "An All-Around Bad Man," "Crime of a Brute," "Makes His Last Stand," "A Gruesome Tragedy" and "Human Gore Again Flows in the Osage Hills".

According to Mr. Jones, an intriguing story? You bet! It's one of a myriad of true yarns about this land we call Osage County and THE OSAGE that will fascinate visitors to the Tallgrass Prairie and give them reason even beyond the bison and the birds and the beasts to revere this land as we do.

Source: <http://www.oklanature.com/prod/osagehistory.html>