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VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

**HOMETOWN OKLAHOMA
SPECIAL EDITION SERIES**

February 10, 2004

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Thanks in part to some fast thinking and resourceful people in Vinita, on September 16, 1937, the Grand River Dam project won final approval from the Public Works Administration in Washington D.C.

Prior efforts to construct a dam on Grand River had failed because of a lack of financing. The benefits of the project were obvious; flood control, irrigation, recreation, and the generation of low cost hydro electricity. The major problem was overcoming opposition from private utilities and politicians in other parts of the state who felt their constituents would receive no direct benefit from the dam.

The law creating the Grand River Dam Authority passed on July 29, 1935. That was just the beginning of a series of political and legal battles fought between supporters and opponents of the massive public works project.

George Schaefer, a Vinita merchant and civic booster, was credited with coming up with the idea to enlist President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's support for the project. 1936 was an election year, and F.D.R. was on a whistle stop campaign, coming through Oklahoma.

Schaefer persuaded the city council to hold an emergency meeting to pass an ordinance requiring all presidential trains to stop in Vinita! A telegram was sent and it has been said that Roosevelt got a bang out of someone having the guts to do something like that.

The president was greeted by a large crowd and a banner saying "Let's build the Grand River Dam." Schaefer welcomed the president and told him about the project. Being the politician he was, Roosevelt thanked the people for the unscheduled stop and promised to see what he could do about the project when he got back to Washington D.C.

This is just one example of how the people of Vinita can pull together for the benefit of the town and community. We hope you enjoy the rest of articles and features about Vinita!

The History of Vinita

The early Cherokee settlers in the Indian Territory clung to land that was most like that they had been forced to leave. They chose the rough and timbered land along the creeks and rivers where they could hunt and fish. The prairie land offered little but hunting grounds.

There were only scattered settlements in the pre-Civil War days in the area now known as Vinita. A few families were known to have lived along the creeks in the area in 1865.

In October 1869, the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas railroad survey crew reached the south bank of Big Cabin Creek. Their instructions were to establish a station approximately 30 miles south of the Kansas state line.

Knowing the survey route, Elias Boudinot staked out a town site three miles south of the present crossing of the Katy and Frisco railroads. He knew the survey had shown this spot on the Atlantic and Pacific maps as the site of the crossing. He acquired a two-mile square for the town site.

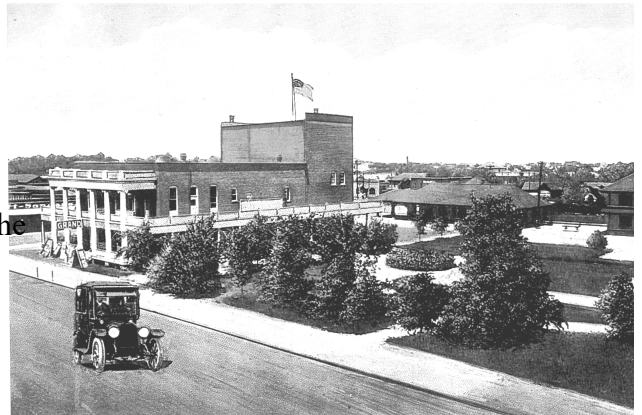
Andrew Pierce Jr., managing director for the Atlantic and Pacific railroad, switched the route and crossed at the present site of Vinita.

Pierce had gained the cooperation of several officers of the Cherokee National Council. He had the blessing of Chief Lewis Downing to change the survey site, thus creating the new town site of Downingville, made up of thousands of valuable acres. In 1871 Boudinot was "cut in" for one third of the new town site and permitted to name the town Vinita in honor of his friend, sculptor Vinnie Ream. The story of Vinnie is included in this issue.

John Thomas was the first Downingville (Vinita) city marshal. During his term a gang of outlaws rode into Vinita from the west. Someone notified Thomas and he went to the west side of town (about where the Methodist Church is now located), and waited for them to leave town. He was hoping to capture them single-handed, but when he ordered them to halt, they opened fire on the marshal and shot one of his fingers off.

After that incident, city authorities brought in a man by the name of L.P. Isbell whom they thought might clean out the bad men. They made him town marshal and indeed he cleaned up the town. He served the city for several years and lived in Vinita for the remainder of his life.

Prior to the railroads there was some development by early settlers. Rev. Amory Nelson Chamberlin came to the area as a missionary in 1868 and located at Pheasant Hill, northwest of Vinita. A year later came Rev. Hamilton Balentine who became the pastor of the first church organized there.



The Grand Auditorium and Parker Plaza



Vinita Hotel



Cobb Hotel

Nichols Soap N Stuff

Wholesale Gifts

Emu Soap & Lotion

431959 E. 180 Rd.

Vinita, OK. 74301

(918) 256-3169

CRZ4ART@junct.com

William L. Trott established the first livery stable in 1868. Johnson Thompson and sons built the first store in Vinita in 1872. Thompson was Vinita's first Mayor.

The store was a stone building on the west side of the MK&T tracks, at the corner of Vann and Illinois. He had moved his store from the Old Military Road 10 miles south of Vinita.

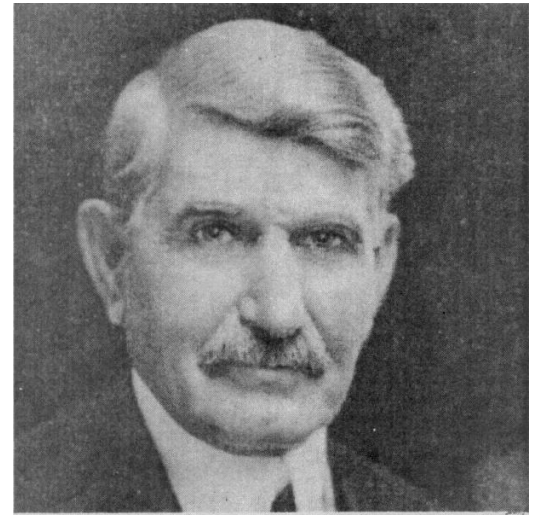
Arch Goodykoontz and George W. Green built the second store in town. It was located on the east side of the MK&T tracks. It was a two-story frame building, with storeroom on the first floor and living quarters above. A boardwalk connected the store to the first hotel, the Commercial House.

The first town lot to be sold was purchased by Martin Thompson in 1872. The first doctor in town was Dr. Morris Frazee, who came in 1871. The Indian Chieftain was started in 1882 with Gus Ivey as editor. The first post office opened September 13, 1871. The first Postmaster was William H Campbell.

The 1870s and 1880s brought many new settlers to the area. New fine homes were built and private schools were opened. The first school in town to offer high school classes was Worcester Academy.

The now thriving community of the 1880s and 1890s saw the need for a bank. On July 31, 1891 a few of the leading merchants and cattlemen met in the lobby of the Cobb Hotel to address the matter. After considerable correspondence with Washington officials, on March 8, 1892, a charter was granted to the First National Bank of Vinita, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory. The bank opened with capitol stock of \$50,000.00

The first officers of the bank were S.S. Cobb, President; E.N. Ratcliff, Vice President; and H.C. Cook, Cashier. The bank was located in the Cobb Hotel and opened for business March 15, 1892. Sam Leforce, a prominent cattleman and Vinita resident, was the first customer. He rode a cow pony to the bank on opening day and made the first deposit. In 1897 the bank moved from the Cobb Hotel to the corner of Illinois and Wilson.



W.E. Halsell



First County School Superintendent, Harvey Shelton, wife Mae, and son Harvey Jr.



Elias C. Boudinot



Pat & Marsha Thomas
Owners

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Vinita, OK. 74301

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A major change in government came in 1897 when Congress approved an act nullifying tribal laws. This resulted in Vinita being incorporated in 1898 and voters formed their own city government. To bolster the expanded federal services a U.S. jail was built in Vinita in 1898.

The same year W.E. Halsell built a brick structure at the corner of Wilson Street and Canadian Avenue, which he leased to the U.S. as a federal courthouse. It was used for this purpose until statehood and for a period of time as a county courthouse.

In 1898 the first telephone system was placed in use. The first electric power plant was started in 1899. In 1903 a movement was started for a central water system. Davis Hill and W.H. Kornegay, two members of the town council, pushed the project to completion with James Davenport as mayor. The artesian wells were not ready and the system wasn't in operation until 1905. A gas distribution system was built in 1907.

The Byrd Opera House on East Illinois, east of the Katy tracks, provided a building for major shows after it was built in 1898. In 1907 private investors built the Grand Auditorium, one of the major show-houses in the southwest at that time. It was later acquired by the city through a \$28,000.00 bond issue and Vinita officials moved into the building. Adjoining the building was Parker Plaza, named for Luman Parker, Jr., community leader. It was the pride of the community for 30 years.

Statehood saw many changes for Vinita. Craig County was created at statehood, and was named for Granville Craig, a prominent Cherokee merchant in the area. Vinita was named the County Seat. The business district began to expand.

Employment was provided for a number of men when the Milikan Refinery opened west of Vinita in 1911. It operated for 15 years before being consolidated with a plant at Coffeyville, also owned by Sinclair Oil Company.

A permanent boost to the economy came with the opening of the Eastern Oklahoma Hospital, northeast of Vinita, in 1913. Later it became known as Eastern State Hospital. For many years the hospital was Vinita's largest employer. We have the history of Eastern State later in this issue.

With the advent of the "good roads" movement in the nation and in Oklahoma, Vinita business leaders launched an all-out effort to see that the city won a designation on the major routes. They were most successful as revealed by the fact that five major highways were routed through the heart of downtown.

The residents of Vinita welcomed the good news on September 16, 1937, that President Roosevelt had signed the bill that made possible the building of the Pensacola Dam on Grand River. Community leaders had worked for it over a long period. Coming on the heels of the severe depression, it was a tremendous boost to the area's economy. Creating the "Lake o' the Cherokees," it provided a new industry for Vinita in recreation and tourism. It led to widespread construction of rural electric systems.

As the lake began to fill up following the completion of the dam across the Grand River, people began to talk about a name for the lake. The Vinita Daily Journal and the Tulsa Tribune jointly conducted a contest to select the best name to submit to the directors of the Grand River Dam Authority.

Mrs. Marguertie Garner of Vinita, daughter of Tom Buffington, a former Cherokee chief, submitted the name Lake o' the Cherokees. Most of the lake was in the Cherokee Nation. The board liked and used the name. Mrs. Garner received a small check from the Journal and the Tribune.

The GRDA was first housed in the city hall, the old Grand Auditorium building having been transformed into an office building in 1938. The building of the dam led to the GRDA building, the KAMO offices and the Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative structure.

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	Vinita, OK 74301
Secret	(918) 256-5905
	Hours
Shop	Mon. & Tues.
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Owner	Thurs. - Sat
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Kim Simmons	

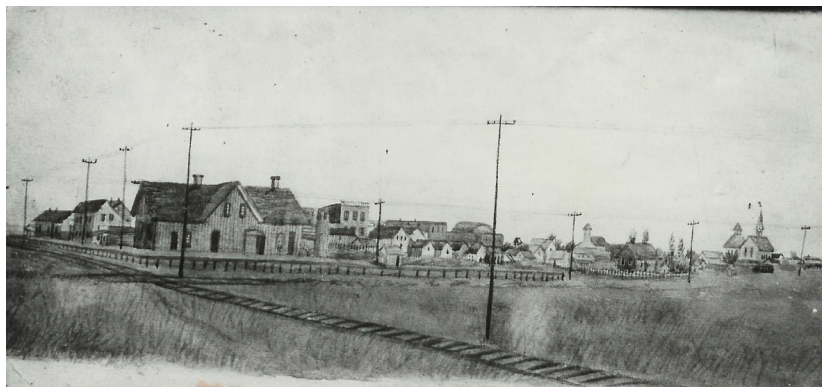
The Battle of Cabin Creek

A church, stage station, hospital and stockade buildings are clustered along a busy military road connecting Fort Scott, Kansas and Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, with supply wagons bringing settlers and goods into the territory.

Confederate President Jefferson Davis termed the "Battle of Cabin Creek" the "most complete battle" of the Civil War. Known to Union historians as the "Disaster at Cabin Creek". Of the 88 battles and skirmishes that took place in Indian Territory, the second Battle of Cabin Creek was the most significant.

In a desperate effort to wrest possession of Indian Territory from the control of the federals, General Stand Watie and other Confederates formulated a plan to cut the supply line. A Confederate force of 2,000 men attacked a Union wagon supply train consisting of 205 wagons, 91 sutler (supply) wagons and four ambulances, at a stage station called Cabin Creek. The train was escorted by 300 troops and there were 170 Union Cherokees garrisoned at Cabin Creek Station, sent from Fort Gibson for escort. There were at least 250 teamsters, armed for the occasion.

At 1:00 a.m., September 19, 1864, the Battle of Cabin Creek began. By dawn the Union defenses were crushed and Yanks were scattered in the woods, retreating to Fort Gibson. For the first time in years, food was plentiful and badly needed supplies were available. Over 100 wagons, about 720 mules and goods valued at \$500,000 were captured. This "victorious" mood was not to last long, however, as the following spring, General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House and General Stand Watie and his brigade laid down their arms.



Painting of Vinita done in 1886

Business in Vinita

March 15th of this year will mark the 112 anniversary of the opening of the First National Bank of Vinita.

Many other businesses in Vinita have been around for better than half to three quarters of a century.

The building of the Grand River Dam helped in establishing three businesses that employ many people from northeast Oklahoma. They are GRDA, KAMO, and NEO Electric Coop, Inc.

Many Vinita businesses have been owned and operated by the same families for generations.

The Burkhalter Funeral Home opened in 1923. It is a third generation family owned business.

The Luginbuel Funeral Home, established in 1927, is a fourth generation family owned business.

Several generations of the Elliott family have owned and operated many businesses in Vinita, starting in the early 1900s.

Silas and Emerson Elliott operated a livery stable, and Emerson had one of the first thrashing machines in the area, which he would hire out. Later Emerson purchased a horse drawn transfer service, soon progressing to a few small trucks. Upon selling that business he purchased a larger truck and hauled sand and gravel for Eastern State Hospital.

Emerson and his wife, Nell had 4 sons who each started businesses.

Between the 4 boys, they owned and operated everything from cafes and bakeries to a wholesale beer company, a used car dealership, a bus line, a dry cleaning business, shoe and shoe repair store, appliance and furniture stores, and the trucking line.

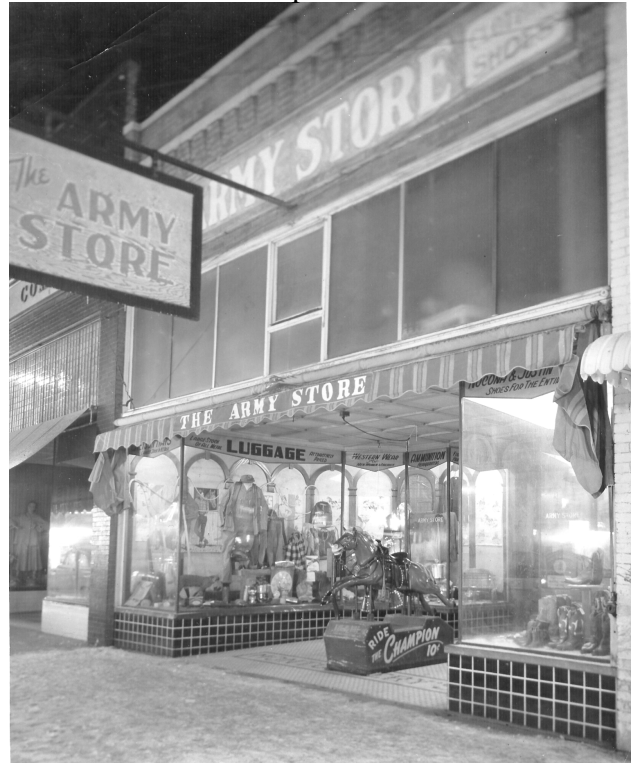
When Vincent Elliott first started Elliott Truck line, Inc. he only transported livestock. After deciding a more diversified type of hauling was needed, Vincent began to get permits from the Interstate Commerce Commission. The trucking company flourished and he discontinued transporting livestock in 1976. The company has ICC rights in 48 states.

A few other long-term businesses in town are Clanton's Café opened in 1926. The original building burned. It was rebuilt in the same location. C.R. Moore Motor Company opened in 1930. Ford Motor Company, now Green County Ford opened in 1939. McKisick Jewelry was opened by a Mr. Grubb in 1939. C.V. McKisick purchased the business in 1946.

The Center Theater was built in the 1920s. It was one of the first movie theaters built in the state.



Randall Tire Shop in the late 1930s



The Army Store

Vinita Tag Office

320 S. Wilson
Vinita, Ok. 74301
Phone: 256-3110
Fax: 256-3143

Open
Mon-Fri
9:00 to 4:30
PikePass & Notary

Vinita, Now

According to the 2000 Census Report, the population of Craig County was 14,950. The County Seat, Vinita's population was 6,472. As with many of the towns in this part of Oklahoma, many of the families who live here have been here for generations. Community pride in preserving the history is evident in many parts of the town. Several of the buildings in the downtown business district, and homes throughout the town predate Statehood.

The city has an elected Mayor and the council form of government. The town is divided into four wards and there are two council members per ward. The current Mayor is Joe Johnson. Assistant to the Mayor is Charlie Enyart. Council President is Sammie Bennett. Ward 1 Council Members are Pat Yarger and Mike O'Neal. Ward 2 Council Members are Mark Williams and Lee Simmons. Ward 3 Council members are Skip Briley and Don Daniels. Ward 4 Council Members are Jim Wright and Sammie Bennett. Other city officials are: City Clerk – Sharon Ivie, City Treasurer – Vera Tresler, Street Commissioner – Roy Faulkner.

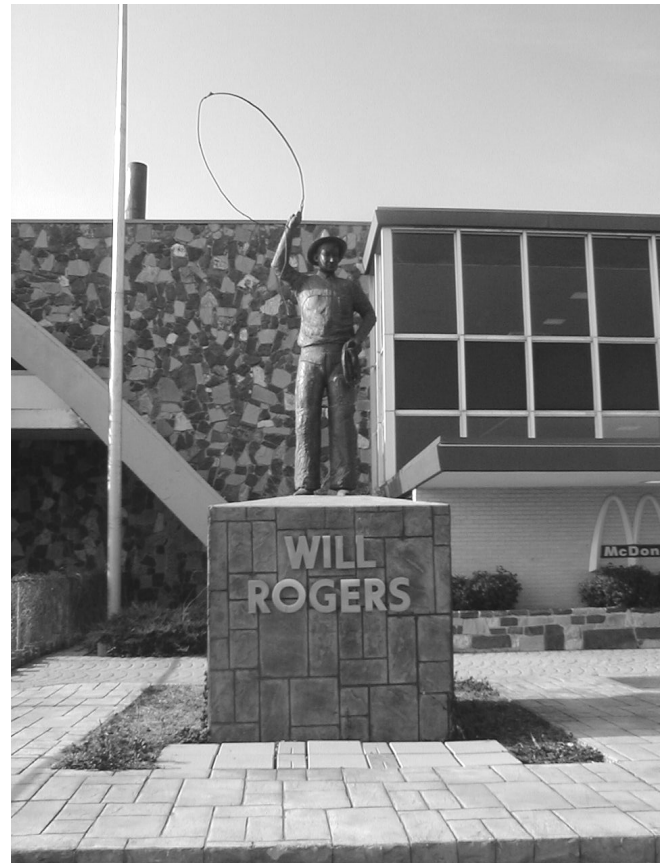
The Vinita Fire Department has ten full time paid personnel and fourteen volunteers. The Fire Department Chief is Jim Butcher. The department has three class A pumpers, two tankers, two grass rigs, and one rescue unit.

The Vinita Police department has a total staff of twenty-two. There are fifteen officers and detectives, and one K-9 officer. The Chief of Police is George Hicks.

Local, national, and international companies call Vinita home. Because of the steady, stable and dependable workforce, industrial employers have found Vinita to be an excellent location for their manufacturing plants. Working with local education systems, workers are able to easily fit into virtually any industrial environment.

The Vinita Industrial Park is a prime site for locating an industry. Park I comprises 90 acres of land, the park contains 18 lots and currently houses 7 facilities. Park II comprises of 200 acres, it is currently being developed into 23 lots and is appropriate for a variety of industries. One facility is currently beginning constructed in Park II.

The Vinita Public School System offers quality in all facets of education. They offer a wide range of programs and extra curricular activities for the students.



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Vinita Chamber of Commerce

The Vinita Area Chamber of Commerce boasts membership of 250 businesses. The community is the primary retail trade area in Craig County. The Vinita Area Chamber of Commerce has 12 committees who develop programs or events for the betterment of the community. Each member of the Chamber is asked to serve on three of these committees.

The Agriculture Committee plans and organizes the Spring Livestock Show and Premium Sale. The Retail Trades Committee plans retail promotions, downtown events, the Christmas Parade, Bunko Tournament and Annual Sidewalk Sale.

The Economic Development Committee develops and implements programs that ensure a healthy business climate and promote economic growth in the Vinita Area.

The Education Committee meets on an as needed basis to assist the area educational institutions. The committee also helps select the Calf Fry Scholarship winner.

The Legislative Forum stays informed of legislative issues that may affect area businesses and the community. The group schedules the legislative/candidate forums.

The Membership Committee expands and enhances benefits provided to members, while increasing our membership. This committee develops the recruitment and retention program.

The Community Development Committee is designed to improve the quality of life in Vinita and the surrounding area through specific projects. This group meets as projects are chosen.

The Manufactures Alliance serves as a liaison between the community and area industries. There are also committees to plan and organize the Calf Fry Festival / Big Country Weekend, the annual golf tournament, and the annual rodeo parade.



Vinita's Rescue Unit



KAMO POWER

Vinita, OK

*Bringing Wholesale Electricity to
Northeast Oklahoma and Southwest Missouri*

Events in Vinita

Although Vinita is best known for events celebrating their western heritage, a variety of festivals and celebrations are held throughout the year. Many are hosted in community parks or in the downtown business district.

February 19: The Chamber of Commerce will be hosting their Annual Meeting and Banquet at Cowboy Junction. They will be celebrating their 100th anniversary! Call 256-7133 for tickets and information.

March 6: The Home & Garden Show is an annual event is hosted by the 4-H Foundation and held at the Craig County Fairgrounds. Educational seminars and demonstrations will be held throughout the day. Attendees will have the opportunity to register for door prizes. Call 256-7569 for information.

March 6: The Craig County Spring Livestock Show is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. The annual event includes Craig County youth in a competition showing of livestock. Call 256-7133.

April 24 & 25: The Vinnie Ream Cultural Center hosts its annual Spring Art Show and Auction. Call the Center 256-4911 or the Chamber 256-7133 for information.

May 1 is the date set for the citywide garage sale and clean up.

June 11: The Chamber Classic Golf Tournament will be held at the Grand Cherokee Golf Course. For team applications and sponsorship information call 256-7133.

(Continued on next page)

Wilson Street, over the years



COWBOY UP BARBER SHOP



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Vinita, Ok.
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Open Tues – Fri
7:30am to 5:00pm
Sat 7:30am to noon
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Back in 7 Days**

July 27-31: The Craig County Free Fair held at the Craig County Fairgrounds, is hosted by the Craig County Free Fair Board. The fair includes exhibits, livestock show, children's games and nightly events.

August 7: The Summer Fest Car Show and Sidewalk Sale. The Vinita Area Chamber of Commerce Retail Trades Committee sponsors this annual event. It is held in Downtown Vinita beginning at 7:00 a.m. Activities include a sidewalk sale, pet parade, food concessions, vendors and a car show held in South Park. A cruise night is held in the evening after the car show.

August 24-28: The 68th Annual Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo is one of the premier rodeos in the Southwest. The American Legion Post #40 sponsors this event. Tickets are available in advance. The event is held at the American Legion Rodeo Grounds. There will be a parade downtown on the 25th, beginning at 11:00 am.

September 10 & 11: Big County Weekend offers three major events over the course of the weekend. A country music concert featuring top name entertainers kicks off the event. This year's entertainers have not been named yet. The outdoor concert will be held at the American Legion Rodeo Grounds. Floor seating and General Admission tickets are available by calling (918) 256-7133. There is a dance following concert for ages 21 and over.

September 11: The 25th Annual World's Largest Calf Fry Festival & Cook-off. This annual event is held at the American Legion Rodeo Grounds and is sponsored by the Vinita Area Chamber of Commerce. Gates open at 9:00 a.m. The event includes arts & crafts display, children's games and activities, cowboy games, cook-off competition, celebrity judges, live entertainment, horseshoe competition and plenty of fun.

Later in the evening (7:30 pm) The Bull Chute-Out takes place at the American Legion Rodeo Grounds and is followed by a dance.

October 9: Oktoberfest is hosted by the Holy Ghost Catholic Church, and held on the church's grounds. Activities include, live entertainment, great food and arts & craft booths

October 23 Boo Birthday Bash is an annual event hosted by and at the Vinnie Ream Cultural Center.

November 21: Vinita Merchants welcome visitors with warm apple cider, cookies and great Christmas buys.

December 2: The Christmas Parade is sponsored by the Vinita Area Chamber of Commerce Retail Trades Committee. The annual parade of lights is a winter favorite. The parade begins at 7:00 p.m. in Downtown Vinita. And don't forget to see Santa after the parade at the Vinnie Ream Cultural Center.

December 4 & 5: A Dickens' Christmas is fun for the entire family. Enjoy carolers and actors in Victorian dress in Vinita's historic downtown and the Vinnie Ream Cultural Center. Activities include storytelling, home tours, Victorian Tea and tree lighting ceremony. The Vinnie Ream Cultural Center and the Vinita Area Chamber of Commerce host this event.

Please note that the event dates and times are subject to change. You can contact the Chamber Office at 256-7133 for more information about any of the events.

The Vinita Area Chamber of Commerce has an excellent and informative web site. Information from the web site was used in many of the articles and features in this edition. You can visit the site at www.vinita.com



Frisco Depot

Places of Interest in Vinita

The residents of Vinita are proud of their heritage. Great effort and care has been taken to maintain some of the older buildings and homes located in Vinita. Vinita is home to several buildings registered on the National Register of Historic Landmarks. The downtown business district is chockfull of structures reminiscent of its Victorian history. Vinita's residential areas also serve as a showplace for many beautiful early and pre-statehood homes. A map and brief description of each home is available at the Eastern Trails Museum.

The Eastern Trails Museum, located at 215 W. Illinois is open Monday – Saturday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Visitors can leisurely browse through history or have a guided tour of each exhibit. If you haven't been to the museum yet, plan to spend several hours, or you might miss something significant. There are pictures, original documents, books, works of art, memorabilia, and many more items that tell the history of Vinita, Craig County, and the Indian Territory. Volunteers staff the museum. Wanda Norton is Curator.

The World's Largest McDonald's spans the Will Rogers Turnpike. It was built in 1957 by Continental Oil Company. It was opened as a turnpike concession facility. Before it became McDonald's in 1987, it was known as the Glass House. It was a fine dining establishment and the banquet facilities hosted school proms and other events.

It was the first structure built over a major highway. Its 29,135 square feet gives it "The World's Largest McDonald's" billing. 2 McDonald's outside the United States come close.

Cabin Creek Battle Site is where a major Civil War battle took place in 1864. Confederate forces captured over 100 wagons, about 720 mules and other goods valued at \$1,500,000. The Battle of Cabin Creek is re-enacted every 3 years. It will be held in the fall of this year.

The Vinnie Ream Cultural Center is located at 1110 W. Canadian Avenue, provides a realm of activities, workshops and performances for the public to enjoy. The cultural center is named after the famous 19th century American artist, Vinnie Ream. Vinnie is the woman Elias Boudinot named the town in honor of. The turn of the century structure, that is now home to the cultural center, hosts Carol Castor as artist in residence, by appointment.

The mission statement of the center is: "The mission of the Vinnie Ream Cultural Center is to create an environment where everyone is encouraged to celebrate our diverse heritage and express our uniqueness through experiences in the arts."

The evolution of the center from idea to reality is another example of how the people of Vinita can pull together.

The building that houses the center was once a historic Vinita home. When it went on the market, benefactors made the purchase possible. Volunteers went to work, turning a major project into a labor of love. Men, women, and children ripped out old carpet, pulled nails, cleaned, painted, served refreshments, joined committees, and participated in activities as they began.

Contributions of time, labor, and money began to come in. Professionals, business owners, and residents of the community turned the dream into a reality and the center opened in 2000.

"Fine Woods This & That"
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Owned & Operated by Jean Couch Coppage
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Wood Gifts!!!**

Vinita Day Center

The Vinita Day Center, located at 111 S. Wilson is a prime example of just how caring and generous the residents of Vinita really are.

The center was established in 1987. Sharon and Buck Roundtree, and Sharon's mother, Rhonda Belle Shanahan, donated the building where the center is housed.

Caring and concerned residents of Vinita saw the need for an activity center which would meet the ongoing needs of many area residents who have severe and persistent mental illness.

A board of Directors was formed to oversee the operation of the center. The center is a non-profit operation, and has no affiliation with any city, state, or federal government agencies.

The center is funded by donations from individuals, church and civic groups, and grants from various sources. They also take donations of clothing, household items, electronics, etc., for their patrons to take, use, and enjoy.

They offer patrons a safe environment where they can socialize, participate in recreational activities, or just hang out with friends who really care about them.

They have pool tables, pinball, TV, videos, puzzles, games, and they host parties on holidays and special occasions.

The center is staffed by volunteers who always seem to have a listening ear, a shoulder to lean on, a hand to lend, and hearts of gold!

Donna and Ted Hicks, a mother and son with a combined total of 30 years experience at Eastern State Hospital, are the volunteers who keep the place going. Ted has been a volunteer for 3 years. He talked his mother into joining him at the center, and after the first day she was hooked!



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Vinita OK. 74301

Basic Service \$23.65, Special Quart Service
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Synthetic Service \$52.50, Air Filter \$8.99-\$31.99,
Fuel Filter Service \$24.99, Transmission Flush
\$90.50

All prices have 5 Quart Service and Tax Included

Carol Castor

Carol Castor is an award winning artist and professional portraitist who does work in oils and pastels. She has a BFA from the University of Oklahoma and studied at the Art Students League New York. While there she studied oil portraiture with David Leffel and anatomy with Gustav Rehberger. She did additional studies with Daniel Green of New York, William Reese of Washington, and Arnold Newman of New York.

Carol was born in Oregon and raised in Oklahoma. She spent her childhood in Ponca City. It was there her fascination with drawing and painting people started. In college she earned spending money by painting pastel portraits of fellow students. Continuing her commissioned portraiture on a part time basis, she taught art in the Oklahoma Public School System for five years before turning to painting full time in 1980.

Carol has done portraits of former governor George Nigh and his wife, Native American wood sculptor Willard Stone, Oklahoma Episcopal Bishop Gerald McAllister and his wife. She has also done several portraits of past and present department heads of Oklahoma colleges and universities.

Carol's work is featured in public and private collections from Texas to New York and Germany. Her portraits hang in the permanent collections at Craig General Hospital, the Vinita Public Library, Oklahoma Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, the Western Heritage Center in Fort Worth and the National Cowgirl Halls of Fame. Her works are also on display at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, the O.U. College of Pharmacy, and the O.U. College of Law.

Carol is featured in the Second Edition of *American Artist: A Survey of Leading Contemporaries*. She is also featured in current editions of *Who's Who in America*, in the South and Southwest, in *American Women, Who's Who in the World*, and *Who's Who in American Education*. She is a member of the American Society of Portrait Artist.



Carol Castor



Carol's portrait of Vinnie Ream

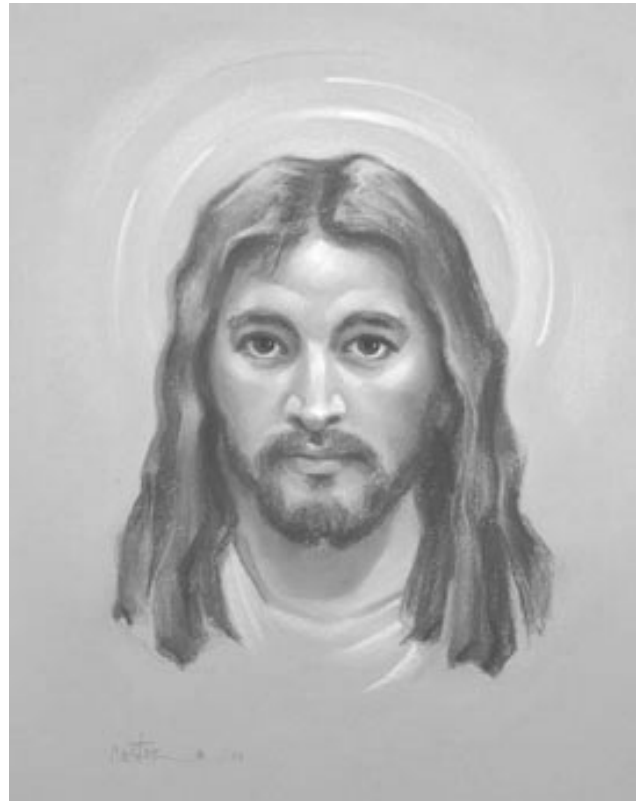
(Carol Castor continued)

Carol has received numerous civic awards including AAUW Woman of Distinction, Vinita Chamber of Commerce Service Award and Hall of Fame. She serves on the board of directors at Craig General Hospital. She has served as Artist in Residence for the Vinita Public School System since 1998. She is past President of the Vinnie Ream Culture Center, where she maintains a studio as an artist in residence.

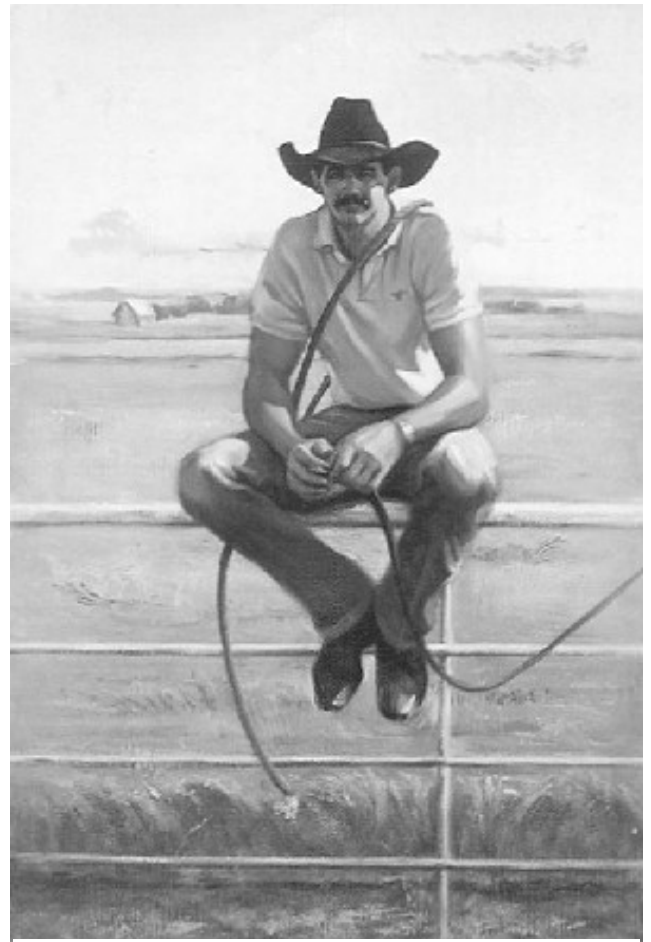
Carol speaks with pride about the Cultural Center. She said the creation and development of the Center was amazing to be part of. The way the community pulled together and worked together to see the Center become a reality was inspirational.

Carol moved to Vinita with her husband and son in 1969. Her husband had taken a job with a local Law firm. She said she had concerns about life in a small town, as she had never lived in one before. She said in a matter of a few short months she had fallen in love with the town and thought of it as "HOME." Even after her marriage ended 12 years ago she decided to stay in her adopted "hometown."

When she isn't busy with her painting or her work at the school, she is working on a book she is writing. She says she enjoys her life in Vinita and is very happy here. She is indeed a warm and friendly lady, with a great sense of humor. It was more like a visit with an old friend than an interview! Her son and his family live in Edmond Oklahoma.



Carol's "Friend" Jesus



Carol's painting of Tee Woolman

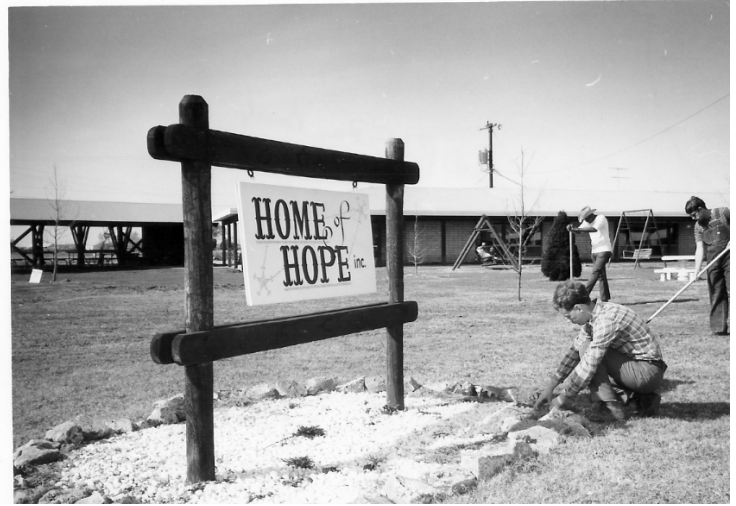
Home of Hope

Home of Hope got its start in 1968 as a non-profit, residential alternative to nursing home care for persons with developmental disabilities. The original founders were Jane Hartley, Laura Neely, and Dr. Dehart. The building was originally the Taylor Memorial Hospital. They opened with 7 residents. Over the next few years the residential facility filled to capacity. Expansions were started and additions in services were added. Little renovations have been made to the original building. In fact, the lead lined x-ray room is still there.

In 1971 a 7,500 square foot Learning and Recreation Center was added. In 1979 12 acres was purchased for recreation, horticulture, maintenance, and parking. In 1987 the Wodloe Foundation donated 110 acres to the facility. For the most part, the acreage is undeveloped. Some planned improvements include additional meeting space at a lodge, two and three bedroom cabins, two 15-person dorms and other amenities. The facility will be designed to provide overnight lodging and activities for families and small groups. It will be a full service resort with dining and an on-going activity schedule. It will truly be a get away. A rustic country feel that will be ideal for retreats, off site training, and short term get aways.

In the late 1980s vocational programs and facilities were added. Then in the early 1990s community based supported living and employment programs were created. Once again Home of Hope was a forerunner in groundbreaking programs, with the development of the first intermediate care facilities for the mentally retarded (ICF-MR) six-bed program in Oklahoma.

In 1997 Home of Hope was the first private facility in Oklahoma to downsize a large institution by moving from a 94-bed facility to eleven six-bed homes. This "dream" was realized through private and public grants.



Home of Hope Inc. was once the Taylor Memorial Hospital.



(Home of Hope continued)

Today Home of Hope has 410 employees and provides residential services to 180 people and vocational services to 210 people in 7 counties in northeast Oklahoma.

Vocational services include Hope Industries, The Hope Chest, supportive community based employment, and the VICA program.

Hope Industries, a 15,00 square foot building, houses several work crews as well as providing traditional sheltered employment. A pick up and delivery service is also operated from this location. There are 75 persons employed in these operations.

The Hope Chest is a retail operation employing 5 persons who are being trained in cashiering, pricing, sorting and stocking.

Community based employment allows people with disabilities to work at jobs in the community with support of job coaches.

VICA (Vocationally Integrated Community Awareness Program) is essentially a training program for persons with more severe limitations toward work. The keystone of this program is intensive one-on-one training and repetition.

Residential services include supports to people in their own homes, in apartment settings, in group homes, and small ICF-MR (Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded) Facilities.

Home of Hope remains a non-profit facility with a 27 member Board of Directors. John Rowe has been the Administrator for 7 years. He has worked in this field for 19 years. He got into this line of work because of 2 family members with disabilities. He said after he left home he learned people with developmental disabilities were treated "different." He wanted to do everything he could to change that.

People who work in this field are hard working, caring, compassionate people who always go "the extra mile." One such example is Home of Hope employee Lori O'Neill. On March 31, 2003, at the Governor's Conference for People with Development Disabilities Lori received a Direct Support Service award. She was also named "Best of the Best" in the Agency Companion Program.

She worked for 8 years as Habilitation Training Specialist, then as companion to Tim. She took extra classes so she could better care for him. She even took her then future husband, Melvin to meet Tim before she would marry him. She knew the 2 men most important in her life would have to accept each other. Their wedding was even planned around Tim's health problems. The newlyweds moved into Tim's home and became agency companions, until Tim's death. Lori's supervisor and Tim's parents had high praise for the job Lori did with Tim.



Lori O'Neill and Jim Nicholson

Classifieds

Green Country Ford 1st Customer



Ellis Maggard (Chelsea Resident) paid cash for his new 1974 Ford Pick up. He was the First customer after Green Country Ford moved to their present location. Johnny McComb is handing Mr. Maggard the keys.

Ellis Maggard (now deceased) is pictured above with Johnny McComb.

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Heroes



Many people from Craig County have paid the ultimate price, while serving our country. It is with great pride we honor some of these fallen heroes. Our hearts go out to the families of these "HOMETOWN HEROES". To those of you more fortunate, to have served and returned home, we extend a heartfelt "Thank You!"



World War II

Craig County had more casualties in this war than any of the others.

*William Cravens
Bearl Walker
James Bankhead
Riley Cox
Ogle Bigknife Jr.
Milton Bigley
Elmer Tune
Robert Kenreigh
Chester Bugher
William Hampton
Lee Carr
Albert Christian
Howard Armstrong
Charles Colton*

*Junior Horner
Walter Arnold Jr.
Harold Colvard
Bernard Freeman
Joseph Bridges
Eugene Dawes
Woodrow Egnor
Onid Campbell
Vester Beckham
Donald Coppedge
James Hale
Edger Fransler
Frank Clarkson Jr.
Charles Scott*

*William Richardson
Raymond Johnson
Ralph Keener
Leroy Haire
Francis Koe'sler
George Taylor
George McDaniel
Arthur Stanislaus
Oliver Haynes Jr.
Winston Mills
Clarence Still
Gyppe Woodall
Harry Rogers
Clyde Wallace*

*Benjamin Slack Jr.
Wayne Davis
Willis Starr
Adolphus Luper
Perry Strickland
Grover Hetzel
Charles Thompson
Lenard Rathjen
Charlie Bishop
Dempsey Mills
Donald Willy
Everett McGee
cecil Bryant
Lloyd Comer*

Korea

*Arthur Allard
Donald Jackson
Etwood Overgard
Lindy Bridges
Everett Jones
Harold Ruggles
Raymond Allard
John (E.L.) Meaghers*

World War I

*James Beets
Green West
Theodore Starr
Alexander Fields
Herbert Dean
Lawrence Dean
James Combs
James Harris
Max Wren
Ned Hoskin
William Hall
Michael Kapsiotis
Fredrick Harvey
Dale Peace
Benjamin Scissel
Ray Smith
George Newland
George Wagner
Samuel Gammill
Charlie Jaques
Harry Newman*

Vietnam

*Gaylord Couch
James McMillan Jr.
Henry Webster
Billy Goins
Michael Sloan
Jerry Hill
Gary Hall
Harry Dresher Jr.
Ronald Ruckman
Millard Farbrow
Billy Jent
Clark Shawnee*



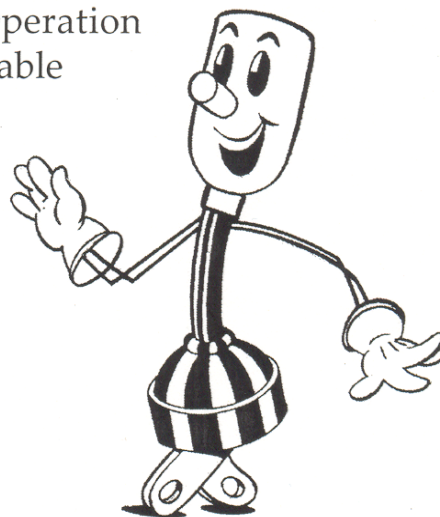
***Craig County War Memorial
Located in South Park in Vinita,
was dedicated November 11, 1991.
The names listed here are inscribed on
the monument.***





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History of Education in Vinita

The establishment of Worcester Academy, a Congregational school, in 1882 attracted many new residents to the community. The Congregational Church was established in 1879. Rev. Joseph Scroggs was pastor and headed the Academy. It was located in what is now known as the "school block." In 1893 Aldrich Cottage, a dormitory for students was built around the corner on Illinois Ave. The Academy operated until 1899, at which time the building became the first "public school" in Vinita. The town purchased the building 1902 for \$12,000, as a result of a bond issue.

The Willie Halsell College, which was formerly the Galloway College, was established in 1888 and added further value to the property west of the tracks. The school was named in memory of W.E. Halsell's daughter. The large four-story building was second to none in the Cherokee Nation. Although it was called a college, classes only went to the high school level. It was a boarding school, whose most famous student was Will Rogers, who attended classes for 2 years in his early teens. The school was closed in 1907.

The Sacred Heart Academy opened with 30 students on September 13, 1897. It was located in the 300 block of North Scraper. It was a mission school for Indian and Negro children. By 1903 there were 106 students. There were facilities for boarding girls, with out of town boys boarding in private homes. The original building was a two-story frame building with a bell tower. By the 1920s there were about 150 students, half of which were boarding at the school. Tuition was \$30.00 a month including room and board. Grades taught were kindergarten through 12th grade. At the end of the 1966-67 school year, Sacred Heart Academy closed its doors after 69 years of service.

Craig County's first school Superintendent, Harvey Shelton was appointed in 1907, after statehood when public schools replaced Indian schools. The 43-year-old Shelton was an experienced educator. One month after statehood, approval had been given for the creation of 60 schools in Craig County. Shelton served two terms as County Superintendent. He was paid \$3 a day, up to \$1,000 a year, a fee which he and his counterparts earned every penny of! Teachers were paid \$35 to \$60 a month.



The first Sacred Heart Academy



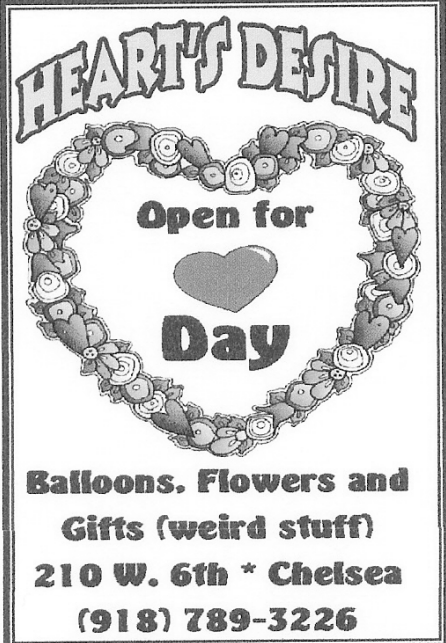
Willie Halsell College



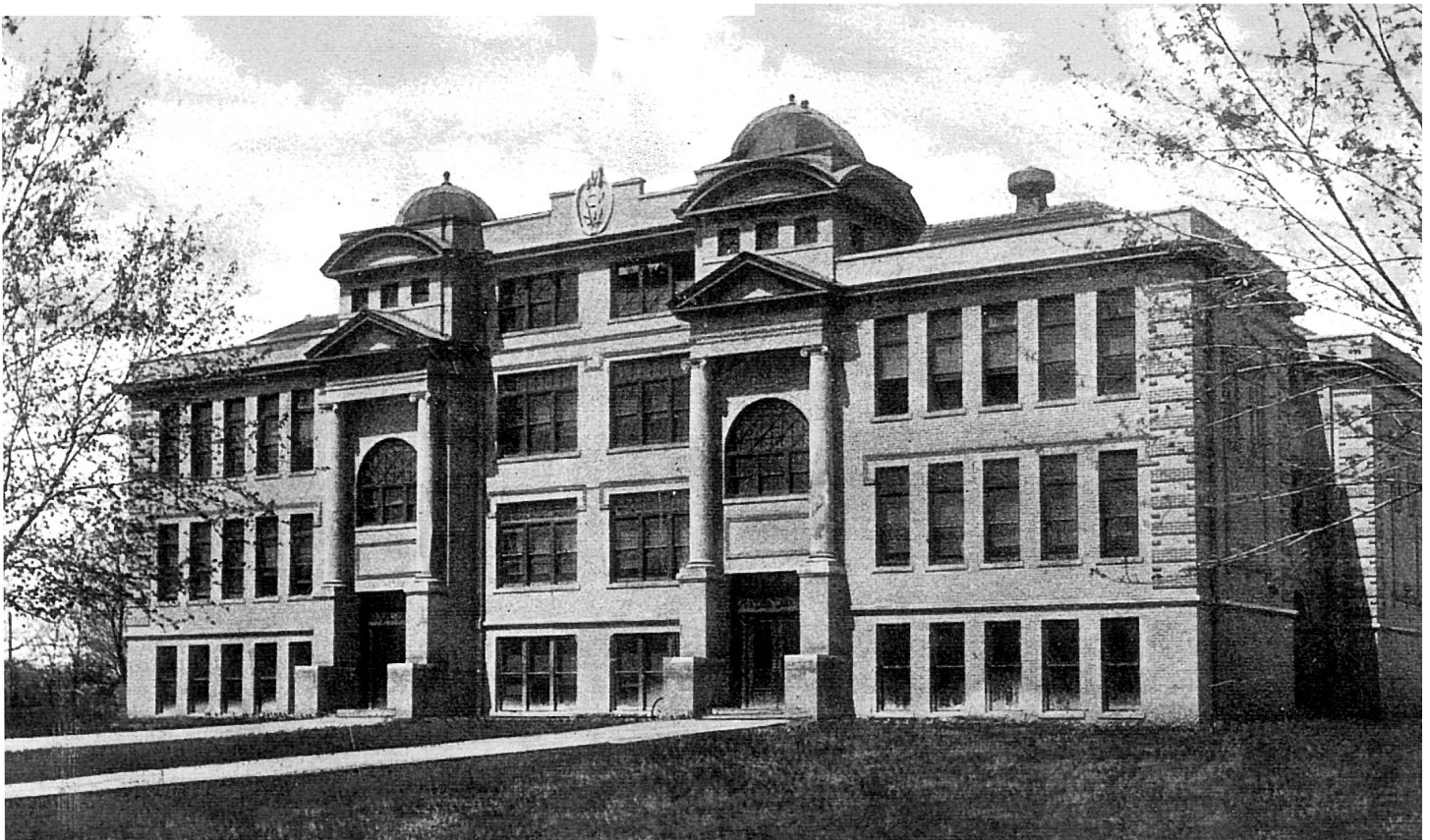
Worcester Academy

The list of duties in the County Superintendent's job description was ever growing and changing, as well as the list of problems and obstacles they encountered along the way. Organizing and instructing school boards of their duties, advising in the location of schools, assisting with the hiring of teachers, and giving examinations to make sure those teachers were qualified to do their jobs. Possibly one of the most trying parts of the job was dealing with school board members who were interested in promoting education, but who were uneducated themselves.

The first Superintendents were looked to for guidance and assistance, as fights over locations and names of schools often became bitter. Often times they were called upon to act as judge and jury, mediators, counselors, referees, and accountants. At that time the law required children from 6 to 16 to attend at least 3 months of school a year. Difficulties in enforcing this law often resulted in lawsuits. The dedication of the first County Superintendents laid the groundwork to enable the Public School System to evolve to what it has become today. Many of the school systems in the smaller towns in this part of Oklahoma are the town's largest employers.



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Vinita High School in 1911-12

Vinita Public Schools

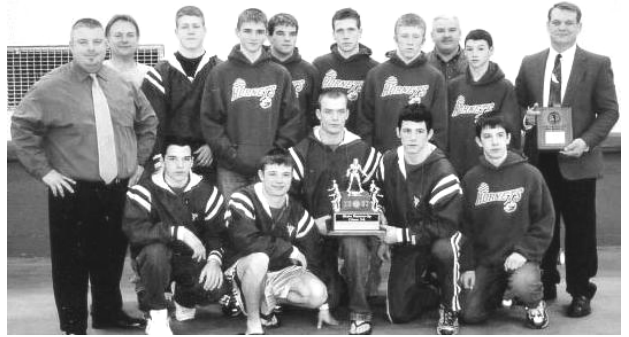
Mike Garde is the Superintendent of the Vinita Public School District. Pete Hiseley is the Assistant Superintendent. The district covers 172 square miles, and the average enrollment is just over 1,600 students.

The top priority of the school system is to maximize the learning experience for each and every student. Their continuous improvement efforts are focused on increasing student achievements through a nurturing environment. They believe they can accomplish this goal with the support of the community, involved parents, dedicated teachers, and students who come to school ready to learn.

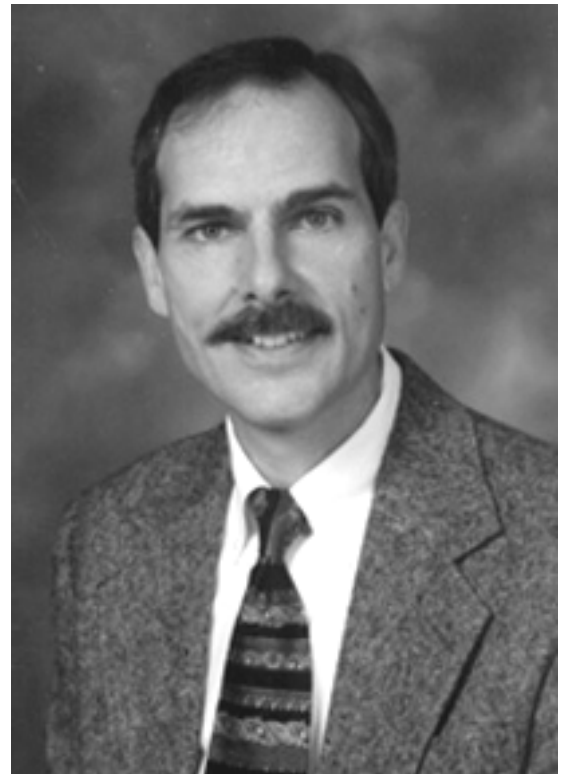
The district has received recognition on the local, state, and national level. Vinita received the State Drop Out Prevention Award for the Alternative Academy in 1999. The summer school program received the National Summer Sunshine Award from the USDA, the Governors Accommodation, the quality Award from the State Department of Human Services in 1998.

In keeping with the commitment to a tradition of pursuing excellence, they are preparing students for the challenges of the highly technological world of the 21st century. Technology provides access to information and opportunities that extend beyond classroom walls. That is why they are especially proud of the school website, which has been fully implemented by high school students.

Vinita Public School System is fortunate to have two Indian Education programs that enhance the education of their large population of Native American students. Currently, the school system has 804 Native American students from the following tribes: Apache, Arapaho, Cayuga, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Chickasaw, Chippewa, Choctaw, Comanche, Creek, Delaware, Eel River (CA), Eskimo, Iroquois, Kiowa, Mohawk, Navajo, Ogalala, Osage, Ottawa, Pawnee, Peoria, Potawatomi, Quapaw, Sac & Fox, Seminole, Seneca, Shawnee, Sioux, Wichita, Wyandotte, and Zuni. Representatives of the Cherokee tribe make up 91% of this group.



The Wrestling Team



Mr. Garde

The first program, Title IX, is a part of the U.S. Department of Indian Education. It provides an after-school tutoring program, counseling for students, a school nurse, art instruction, an artist-in-residence program, funds for parent committee activities, and software and other supplies needed to enhance the education of Native American students. To be eligible for services under the Title IX program, parents must fill out and sign a 506 form with appropriate tribal information.

The second program, Johnson-O'Malley (JOM), is administered through the Cherokee Nation and provides a home-school liaison, school supplies for JOM-eligible students, materials for special school projects, incentives for students who attain a 3.5 GPA or higher, Indian cultural and educational materials, band instruments, and funds for parent committee expenses. To be eligible for services under JOM, students must have a CDIB card, or records showing lineage to a parent or ancestor with a CDIB.

The Vinita Adult Learning Center, which is part of the Lifelong Learning Section of the Oklahoma State Department of Education, serves four counties in northeast Oklahoma: Craig, Delaware, Mayes, and Ottawa. Classes are offered at satellite locations in Vinita, Afton, Miami, Commerce, Wyandotte, Pryor, Little Kansas, Locust Grove, Salina, Oaks, Jay, and Grove.

The office has a staff consisting of director, Judy Bryan. Full-time teachers are Danette Eastin, Lisha Kirby and Janie Maynard, and secretary Rhonda Callaway. In addition, approximately 15 part-time teachers provide instruction at the satellite locations.

Attucks Alternative Academy is an extension to the high school and middle school programs of the participating school districts in their consortium. These include Vinita, Ketchum, Adair, Bluejacket, Cleora, White Oak and Welch.

Their goal is to provide a preventive program to intervene before students dropout, due to excessive absences, poor behavior, or by disinterest in school because of low academic skills.

The program is a collaborative community model providing the opportunity for students and parents to benefit from all of the community agencies that may be of service in dealing with specific family challenges.

The school provides individualized educational programs, which may include vocational training, full-day classes, and concurrent enrollment with the regular schools, work-study, and counseling. A flexible model is designed to ensure services, which may not originally have been incorporated into a students program. In addition to the core curriculum taught, students have the opportunity to learn life skills through classes taught, the management of our school store and/or service learning projects within the community.

Mutual respect and integrity are reinforced at the school. Their levels program for discipline rewards good behavior. Monthly field trips are one example of a reward. Pursuit of excellence in academics and personal living is their goal.

Larry Sholes is the principal of Attucks Alternative Academy.

Vinita High School provides a variety of Advanced Placement courses, as well as providing concurrent enrollment in college courses. Recent bond issue improvements include: remodeled science labs, new band and chorus room, new distance learning lab, a career center and new practice gymnasium.

The school offers an outstanding academic curriculum, athletic programs, and an impressive list of extra curricular clubs, organizations, and activities, to meet the needs and interests of their students.

Athletic programs include football, cheerleading, wrestling, boys' and girls' basketball, baseball, softball, golf, and track. These programs have produced many State Championship wins.

Mike Cox is the principal.

Ewing Halsell Middle School believes that public education is an inherent right, privilege, and duty of each student. Education is a lifelong process that contributes to enriching the human experience as well development of academic and career skills. Education enables students to grow as individuals and gives them the basic tools and skills needed to participate as effective members of society.

The school is dedicated to pursuing excellence in its programs. They are committed to providing quality education that responds to the needs of the community and the individual student's needs, interests, and abilities. The programs offered to the students allow them the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

The middle school instructional program is distinctively different from the elementary or high school. This program offers a strong basic education and opportunities for the students to explore various subjects so they might determine areas of interest for future study. Teachers, counselors and administrators strive to balance academic goals with human needs. Students will have a middle school schedule that provides different teachers and rooms for each subject, but they will also have a group of teachers who meet as a team to monitor each student's academic, social, and emotional progress.

Will Rogers Elementary (grades 3 through 5) Each teacher has a Pentium II computer and printer. There is a dedicated GATE program instructor. A complete computer lab is available to students with integrated learning software. Six new classrooms were built in 2001 through a \$1.2 million bond project.

Hall-Halsell Elementary (pre K through second grade) puts literacy first. The Literacy First Reading Program goal is to teach more children to read better. Teachers in the primary grades received training recently to implement the program that is designed to bring non-mobile children up to grade level standards by the end of grade 5.

The Literacy First program is based on cutting edge research, which has proven effective with students from all races and income levels. This program will work but it is up to us to make it happen. Children will be expected to read more in school. The teachers pledge to be tenacious and persistent in utilizing new reading strategies in their classroom efforts.

Parental participation can make a huge difference in the success of Literacy First. Reading at home can make a huge difference in a child's reading ability. Reading together builds life-long bridge to future success.



Eastern State Hospital

When Oklahoma became a state in 1907, the mentally ill were first cared for through contracted private sanitariums. The Cherokee Nation maintained an asylum in the Indian Territory at Park Hill.

According to information compiled by the State Department of Mental Health, the First Legislature created "East Oklahoma Hospital for the Insane," but the location was not permanently fixed. Control and government would be under a three member Board of Trustees.

The Eastern Oklahoma Hospital for the Insane was established by act of the second Oklahoma State Legislature in 1909, to be located at Vinita, Craig County, on a 160-acre tract of land given to the State by the City of Vinita for this purpose. S.S. Cobb originally owned the land.

In the Special Session of 1910 an appropriation was made to erect two buildings, a powerhouse and laundry building. These buildings are known as Buildings 1 and 2. Work on the buildings started in 1910, with completion in 1912.

Governor Lee Cruce appointed Dr. F.M. Adams as the Hospital Superintendent in August of 1912. His original 4-year appointment turned into a lifetime job, as he served until his death in December of 1955.

Mildred (Peggy) Winchester was an original member of the hospital staff. Several people worked January 10th to the 28th unpacking and sorting all the new things with which to open the hospital.

The hospital opened with two doctors, Dr. Adams and Dr. Edwin Williams, a physician from Philadelphia who had some experience with the mentally ill. Williams returned to the east about two years later, and Dr. P.L. Hays became assistant superintendent. Dr. Hays remained on staff, succeeding Dr. Adams as superintendent and served until October of 1961.

The hospital also opened with a staff of 45 people. Ward attendants' salaries ranged from \$25 to \$60 a month. They worked 13 hours a day, with half a day off each week.

For many years, most of the hospital employees were required to live on the grounds. Some roomed in basements of ward buildings and two old barracks buildings. Meals were provided as part of their salary. Although employees worked long hours with low pay, there was a feeling of camaraderie, as if they were one big family.

The first patients received on January 28, 1913, were 300 people from the 27 county "district" of Eastern Oklahoma Hospital. They were transported

by a special train from the Oklahoma Sanatorium at Norman. The Norman facility was a private hospital contracting with the state. In 1915, the state purchased the hospital and it became Central State Hospital.

The train was unloaded at the "Asylum Spur," a little over a mile south of the hospital. Wagons were sent to carry the women and a few older men, with the rest walking to the new hospital.

In 1914 Building 3 was completed and 300 more patients were moved from Norman. This was the second step in a progressive expansion of the hospital. The gradual expansion over the years saw buildings added and more land acquired.

All major and domestic buildings were built from legislative appropriations. The modernization and new construction in 1952 and 1953 were made possible by a 1949 state bond issue.

In addition to buildings being added to house and care for patients, services were added or expanded, renovations and improvements were made to update and modernize the facility.

At one time or another during the hospital's history, it has had a fire station, an ice plant, a mortuary, cemetery, canning plant, sewing room, laundry facility, boiler plant, and the farming operations.

During the years of peak patient population, farming was an important economic factor. Swine, poultry, and dairy operations provided meat and milk, while garden produce was used fresh and also canned for later use. Many farm oriented patients worked alongside employees, and this provided valuable therapy.

The hospital's Holstein dairy herd was considered one of the best in the state, with some of the cattle setting production records and winning prizes at state fairs. The dairy was closed and a dispersal sale was held in 1968. Other farming operations were gradually phased out in the early 1970s. Some cattle were retained and used for beef for the hospital until the State Mental Health Board ordered all farm operations closed. The remaining cattle were sold, farm equipment was auctioned, and the acreage leased. Income from the land went into the capital outlay fund.

Through the first 40 years of the hospital's history, much of the patient care was custodial in nature. Staff was limited, but treatments, which were innovative at the time, were introduced.

Dr. Hays pioneered in many types of treatment, including luminal, sodium amytal, and various types of shock treatment. He was among the first to use malaria in treatment of syphilis.

Dr. Hays was the first in the nation to use atropine sulphate as a treatment for Parkinson Syndrome. In 1956, the staff under Dr. Hays' direction, took part in a research program to test the tranquilizing drugs thiorazine and serpasil.

Dr. Adams became recognized as one of the nation's foremost Hospital Administrators. Even with limited funds and staff, he pioneered in new types of treatment and psychotherapy. For his service in the field of mental illness, he was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1954. At the time, he had more years of service than any other state employee.

Two of the buildings on the grounds have been named in honor of Drs. Adams and Hays. The employee dormitory built in 1953 was named Adams Hall, and a medical services building opened in 1952, was named Hays Treatment Center in 1960.

In 1947, a state Mental Health Department was created by the Legislature, and the hospital was renamed Eastern State. From that time forward, the state saw increased awareness of the needs of the mentally ill, and increased funding made it possible for more intensive and specialized treatment.

In 1956, the first Department of Nursing was established. Dorothy Hall, a registered nurse was the director. When she took the post in 1956, the hospital had 6 licensed nurses and 400 unlicensed

workers in psychiatric nursing. There were 72 ward units.

The first Psychiatric Aide class graduated in 1956. It wasn't until 1966 that P.A. training was introduced in all state mental hospitals.


During the 1950s employees worked a 48-hour week, with 15 days vacation, 15 days sick leave, and 6 holidays per year. Participation in the Social Security program began in 1951. The 40-hour workweek for state mental hospital employees was introduced in 1964.

Volunteers have played a vital role in the hospital. During the years of peak population, Red Cross volunteers from several towns in northeast Oklahoma devoted much time to work with patients.


In 1959, ESH received an award from the American Psychiatric Association for outstanding accomplishment in improving the care and treatment of the patients.

In 1969, state mental hospitals were desegregated and patients from Taft were moved to hospitals serving their "home" district.

In 1971, the first floor of Adams Hall was remodeled, and the administrative offices were moved there, from the building that had been constructed in 1949.



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Patient population peaked at 2,600 in the 1950s. The 1970s saw the beginning of a gradual reduction in patient population and staff. Administrators at the state level were committed to transition to community-based care. Establishment of community inpatient facilities moved slowly.

In December of 1980, the Department of Corrections joined forces with the hospital with the creation of the Trusty Program. Ten men were brought to ESH for work assignments in several different departments. Although no hospital employees lost jobs, some positions were not filled as employees retired or resigned, and more inmates were added to the program.

In October of 1985 ODMHSAS began a residential treatment program for DOC inmates convicted of DUI. The TADD (Treatment Alternative for Drinking Drivers) Program was housed in 10 Building. The program was phased out, and in the late 1990s Vinita Alcohol and Drug Treatment Center was established for patients of ESH and inmates of DOC who had problems with substance abuse.

In 1988 a regional juvenile detention center, the ROCMND Youth Agency of Vinita was established on hospital grounds.

In 1994 the Northeast Oklahoma Correctional Center, a minimum-security facility, was established. NOCC officially opened December 13, 1994, when 25 inmates were received from Jess Dunn and Dick Conner Correctional Centers.

The center took over Buildings 14 through 16, the cottages located on the north end of the hospital grounds, and the park located south of the cottages.

Buildings were renamed and numbered, and renovations and improvements were made. There has also been new construction of buildings and roads.

Under pressure from Governor Frank Keating, the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS) and its state board, agreed in 1999 to convert the hospital's civil patient services to an enhanced residential care facility. The proposal was to reduce the civil population to only two units, one each for males and females, with a total capacity of 44. This was to be in place by July of 1999. Long-term patients who had not been successful in community placements were to remain.

Legislators, responding to the concerns of many citizens and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, delayed the transition date to January of 2001. However, the DMHSAS decreed the first phase of the reduction would be effective a full year earlier, January of 2000.

In March of 2000, 74 employees with a total of 859 years of service were terminated. 41 more people lost their jobs in June. A total of 260 positions were eliminated, leaving a staff of 333 in July of 2000. In some cases, remaining staff had to take a reduction in classification and pay. Area legislators were successful in restoring a portion of the pay cuts.

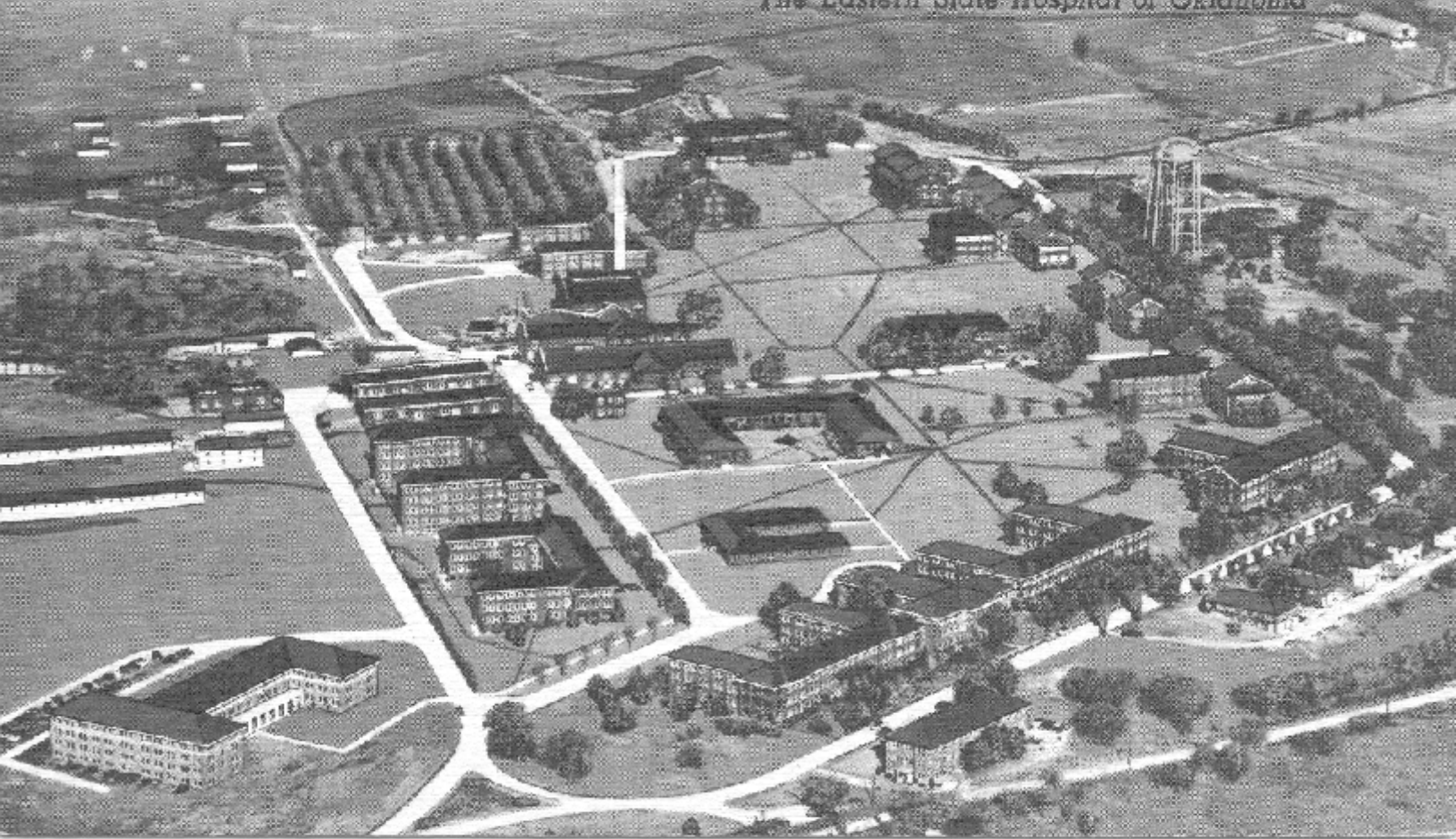
In late March of 2000, ESH had 64 civil patients and 155 forensic patients. The hospital served as the forensic treatment facility for the entire state. Forensic services are for those with charges pending, or who have already been adjudicated and found not guilty by reason of insanity.

On April 8, 2003, Eastern State Hospital officially became the Oklahoma Forensic Center. The center has around 300 employees. They maintain Joint Commission Accreditation, having recently been recertified. They strive to continue to provide a high quality of services.

We spoke with Jackie London, Performance Improvement Coordinator at the center, and she told us many people have the misconception that the center is a part of DOC, but they are with the ODMHSAS.

Although ESH may only be a memory to those of us who worked and or lived there, the significance of the role it played in the history of Vinita for 90 years will live on forever!

We want to thank Emma Rose Moore for furnishing the information used here. At the request of the Craig County Heritage Association, Emma wrote the history of Eastern State Hospital (1913-1984) for inclusion in the History of Craig County, a book published in 1984. Later she updated the paper to include the years through 2000. Ms. Moore was an Adult Education Teacher and Public Information Officer at ESH for many years.



Airial view of Eastern State Hospital

These pictures show the name changes over the years



Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo

Will Rogers was born in 1879 at a ranch house on the Verdigris River. After his mother died in 1890, Will was sent to several schools away from the ranch, but the one he grew to like the most was Willie Halsell College located in Vinita. He attended three terms, from 1892 until 1895 and he never forgot the happy days he spent there or the friends he made.

Years later, while attending a school reunion in 1934, Will Rogers told the Vinita folks, "Have a rodeo here next year and I'll come back." He returned that fall for the old-timer's parade, but on August 15th, 1935, just days before the rodeo, Will Rogers and famed pilot Wiley Post were both tragically killed in a plane crash.

It was decided that the Vinita rodeo would be held as a memorial to Vinita's cherished "son" Will Rogers, as it has been every year since. The Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo has become one of the most outstanding rodeos in the entire southwest.

Vinita's American Legion Post 40, sponsor of the annual rodeo since its inception in 1935, has spared no expense in making this rodeo one of the biggest and best. The large purse (\$50,000) attracts the top cowboy champions of the nation. Almost 70 years of experience has given the sponsors the know-how, which makes the show perennially one of the nation's best.

Each year cowboys and clowns from past rodeos are honored with the presentation of the "Old Timers" Award.

One of the specialty acts for last year's rodeo was Professional Rodeo Clown, "Shotgun" Rodney Gaston.

Shotgun Rodney



Shotgun Rodney



The Harmon Sisters of Vinita were billed as the World's Youngest Trick Ropers and Riders in the 1920s.

Vinnie Ream Hoxie

Vinnie was one of three children born to Robert Lee Ream and Lavinia McDonald Ream. She was born in Madison, Wisconsin on September 25, 1847. She was 10 when the family moved to western Missouri. She attended the academy section of Christian College in Columbia, Missouri, where she displayed a talent in music and art. When the Civil War started the family was in Fort Smith Arkansas, where Mr. Ream was in the real estate business. They managed to make their way through Confederate lines to Washington D.C. It was there Mr. Ream, although stricken with rheumatism, acquired a government job.

The cost of living was high in Washington D.C. and the family's tight money situation motivated Vinnie to seek a \$500 a month job as a postal clerk. Missouri lawyer James Rollins and Pennsylvania Congressman John Wallace contacted Postmaster General Montgomery Blair on Vinnie's behalf. Blair signed the order to hire Vinnie on November 1, 1862. She went to work in the Dead Letter Office.

In 1863 she paid a visit to the studio of sculptor Clark Mills. She felt she could model the clay, and set about making a medallion of an Indian chief's head. She impressed Mills and he took her on as a pupil. Before long she was sculpting busts of some very notable VIP's who visited the Washington area, including Senator John Sherman, General George Custer, Francis Preston Blair, Thaddeus Stevens, and Horace Greeley.

It is said that in the latter part of 1864 some friends arranged for her to do a bust of President Lincoln. The story goes that at first Lincoln refused, but upon hearing that she was a poor girl, struggling to make it on her own, he relented and agreed to half hour sittings on a daily basis for a period of 5 months. Mary Todd Lincoln was said to have denied the fact that Vinnie had met the president, much less that he had ever sat for her on a regular basis.

The bust she created won the approval of her admirers, and after much debate, in 1866 Vinnie was granted a \$10,000 contract to do a full-sized marble statue of Lincoln, which was to stand in the Capitol rotunda. She was the first woman to win such a federal commission. Concerns about her age and talent were voiced. Mary Todd Lincoln expressed her disapproval, and Jane Swisshelm, a journalist, wrote that Vinnie's success was based solely on her "feminine wiles."



Portrait of Vinnie



© Library of Congress

Vinnie in wedding dress



- Portrait Commissions
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According to the terms of her \$10,000 contract, half would be paid on completion of a plaster model. The second half would be paid upon acceptance of the finished marble statue. Vinnie spent 2 years working on the model in her rent-free Capitol studio. She did a clay model first, which she then made a mold of, for the plaster model.

She was almost evicted from the studio in 1868 as a result of Congressional suspicion that she had influenced a crucial swing vote against impeaching Andrew Johnson. Vinnie experienced the wrath of Republicans who voted 61 to 47 to turn her studio into a jail. Vinnie vacated the studio of her belongings, leaving only the clay model. The soft clay needed to stay moist, and moving it would have proved disastrous.

Thaddeus Stevens came to Vinnie's rescue. Although deeply bitter about his failed impeachment effort, he was still politically powerful and Vinnie's friend. He introduced a House resolution, allowing Vinnie to return to her studio. The resolution passed, giving Vinnie another year to transfer her clay model to plaster.

When the plaster model was completed Miner Kilbourne Kellogg, one of the American art world's most colorful and well-known figures of the time evaluated the work. He gave the model a glowing report, singing Vinnie's praises. Vinnie's critic's opinions rested on deaf ears, and on a whole Congress liked the model. The Secretary of the Interior was also pleased and issued Vinnie her \$5,000 check.

In 1871, Vinnie, her parents, and the plaster model set sail for Rome, where it would be turned to marble. Secretary of State William Seward sent along a letter of introduction. She chose the purest white marble from quarries in Carrara, and under the tutelage of Luigi Majoli she created the statue. In 1871 it was unveiled at the Capitol.

In 1875 Vinnie won a \$20,000 federal commission to do a bronze statue of Admiral David G. Farragut, once again stirring the wrath of her critics. She cast it from the propeller of his ship, the Hartford. It was unveiled in Washington's Farragut Square in 1878.

At the age of 30 Vinnie married Lieutenant Richard Leveridge Hoxie. One son Richard Ream Hoxie was born in 1883. The family lived on Farragut Square. Vinnie gave up her sculpting at her husband's request. However in 1906 she did accept a commission from the state of Iowa to do a statue of Samuel Kirkwood, their Civil War Governor, for Statuary Hall in the Capitol building in Washington.

Because of a chronic kidney problem, Vinnie was quite frail, and her husband rigged a rope hoist and boatswain's chair to enable her to finish the statue.

Her last work was commissioned by the State of Oklahoma for a statue of Cherokee Chief Sequoyah. She was able to finish the model shortly before her death. George Zolnay later cast it in bronze. Vinnie died in Washington on November 20, 1914. She is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



Vinnie's statue of Lincoln



Vinnie's statue of Sequoyah

Oklahoma Hall of Fame Members From Vinita

Dr F.M. Adams was named to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame for his work at Eastern State Hospital. Dr. Adams served as Superintendent from 1913 until his death in 1955.

Adams was a pioneer in mental hospital work. He devoted his life to keeping up with developments in psychotherapy so cure, comfort, and relief could be brought to the mentally ill.

Dr Adams was well thought of by the hospital staff, highly respected by his profession, and recognized nationwide as one of the foremost hospital administrators.

Dr. Adams was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1954. Governor Johnston Murray described Adams as one who did things he didn't have to.

Thomas M. Buffington was named to the Hall of Fame to honor the fact he was "last living Cherokee Chief." His successor, W.C. Rogers never had the power and authority usually exercised by tribal chiefs.

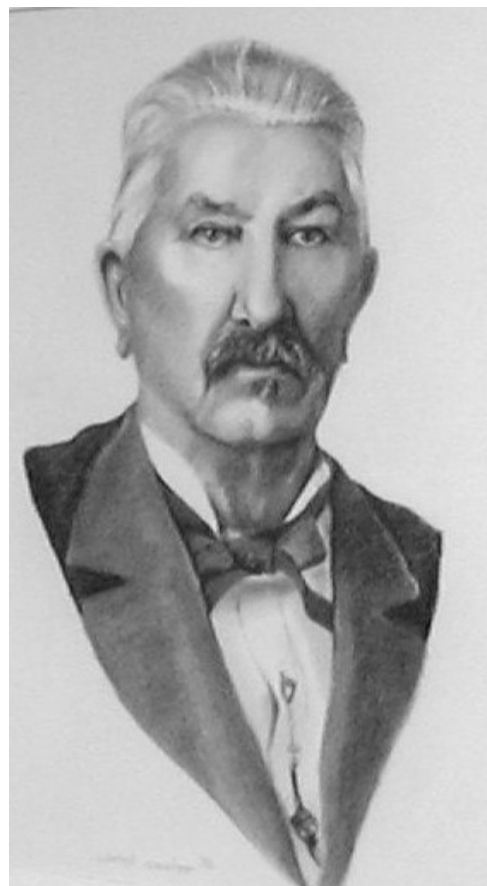
A newspaper article about Buffington's nomination stated, "Recognition by the state will be give to Thomas M. Buffington, last living Chief of the Cherokees, as a result of a movement launched by Pryor and Vinita citizens to give honor to the only living head of the once proud nation, within a nation."

Buffington began his career in tribal politics as secretary to his brother who was a member of the Cherokee Senate. He was elected district judge of Delaware District in 1889 and resigned in 1891 to become a member of the Cherokee Senate. He was later named President of that body.

When Joel Mayes died in 1891, he became Acting Principal Chief where he served until C.J. Harris was named Chief. Then becoming Mayor of Vinita, he soon was nominated as a Downing Party candidate for Principal Chief, winning the election of 1899. He served as Chief in a very trying and controversial time. Most of the details of land surveys and allotments preparing for statehood occurred during his tenure.

Buffington was an active supporter of Oklahoma statehood and urged Cherokees to join the government of the United States peacefully.

Buffington said, "Common sense teaches us, if we could be one people, we must have a fraternal union of hearts. A smoldering hatred and hostility is a threatening evil to the strength of happiness of many hearts."



Thomas Buffington
Painting by Carol Castor



O.B. Campbell
Painting by Carol Castor

O.B. Campbell was inducted into the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame in 1984. He got his start in journalism in 1929.

He and his wife, Mary Lee, moved to Vinita in 1935 as a result of the job as managing editor of the Vinita Daily Journal. In 1939 O.B. and L.W. Hightower purchased the newspaper.

The Campbell's son John was born in 1936. He attended Vinita public schools, graduating in 1953. He attended the University of Oklahoma, following in his fathers footsteps, graduated with honors in journalism in 1957. In 1963, O.B. and John bought Hightower's interest in the Journal. The father and son team ran the newspaper until they sold it in 1969.

O.B. served in various phases of scouting, from Scoutmaster to council Vice President. He served on the Oklahoma Historical Society Board of Directors, The Grand River Dam Authority, Vinita Library Board of Trustees, and helped establish the Eastern Trails Museum.

O.B. was a local history enthusiast. His column "Old Trails" was a regular feature in the Journal. He also wrote several historical books.

James Davenport was named to Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1937.

Judge Davenport was a member of the Territorial council from 1897 to 1901, serving as speaker the last two years of his term. He served as one of the attorneys for the Cherokee Nation 1901-1907. He was mayor of Vinita in 1903 and 1904

Davenport elected as a Democrat to the Sixtieth Congress on September 17, 1907, and served from November 16, 1907, when Oklahoma was admitted as a State into the Union, until March 3, 1909. He was elected to the Sixty-second, Sixty-third, and Sixty-fourth Congresses (March 4, 1911-March 3, 1917) He was elected judge of the criminal court of appeals of Oklahoma in November 1926; reelected in 1932 and served until his death in Oklahoma City, Okla., January 3, 1940.

W.H. Kornegay was named to "Who's Who of America two years in a row and was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1936.

Kornegay served on the Constitutional Convention and helped draft Oklahoma's constitution. He was appointed to the Oklahoma Supreme Court by Governor "Alfalfa Bill" Murray.

At one time Kornegay and Davenport were partners in a law firm.



W.H. Kornegay
Painting by Carol Castor



Vinita City Hall

Did You Know?

While doing research for this issue, we took a walk down "Memory Lane" with several residents of Vinita. We uncovered many interesting and fun facts along the way. Did you know?.....

- At one time 22 passenger trains came through Vinita daily. You could ride the early train to Oklahoma City and return the same day.
- In July of 1935 Vinita was mentioned in "Ripley's Believe it or Not." It stated that the corner of Wilson and Illinois was the only place in the world where 5 federal highways met.
- The ship named the S.S. Vinita was launched in November of 1919, at Long Beach California.
- On October 14, 1911, the Wright brothers' bi-plane "Vin Fiz" was the first airplane to land in Vinita. It was also the first plane to land in the state. Cal Rodgers landed the plane on the grounds of Willie Halsell College during the first transcontinental flight in the United States. The flight from Sheepshead Bay, New York, to Pasadena, California, took 49 days. Along the way Cal crashed at least 16 times and landed 70 times. According to the U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission, the only original pieces of his airplane to make it all the way were a vertical rudder, a few wing struts and an engine oil pan. To help finance the trip, he accepted the sponsorship of Vin Fiz grape soda. He painted "Vin Fiz" on the rudder and other parts of the plane, and the Vin Fiz owner provided a support train to carry Rodgers wife, mother and enough parts to rebuild the airplane at least twice.
- Vinita held an annual Strawberry Festival from 1925 to 1929. Vinita was known as the "strawberry capitol of the southwest."
- Tilden Dawson of Vinita was the first American to be killed in the Spanish-American War. He died at the battle of Los Guasamas, Cuba.
- Britain's Royal Air Force operated glider pilot school 3 miles north of Vinita during World War II.
- Dr. Phil McGraw of the Dr. Phil Show was born at the Vinita Hospital, located at 126 S. Scrapper.



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Thank you!

We want to thank each and every one of you who met with, and assisted us, while we were working on the articles and features in this edition of Hometown Oklahoma. Without your help, this issue would not have been possible.

While doing research for this issue, we learned the residents of Vinita have always been caring and generous toward their neighbors. From the beginning of Vinita's history to now, Vinitans have always been ready to donate time, money, and hard work for the betterment of the community and to help those less fortunate.

We also want to thank our readers. We hope you enjoy future issues of this series.

Special Thanks

To the following people!

- *Amber Egnor,
Executive Director Vinita Area
Chamber of Commerce.
- *Wanda Norton,
Curator of the Eastern Trails Museum.
- *The staff at the Vinita public Library.
- *Emma Rose Moore
- *Pat Waddle

Most of the old photos in this issue are courtesy of Wanda and Pat. The history research of the town, schools, and people was done at the library, museum, and on the internet.

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NEXT STOP: Foyil Oklahoma!

We're looking forward to sharing with our readers what we learn about YOUR hometown!

We will also cover some of the history of Bushyhead in the Foyil issue.