Travel & Recreation
SOUTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA
Welcome to the Shortgrass Country of Southwestern Oklahoma.

Through the years, residents have bragged about their "shortgrass country," so-called because of the native shortgrass that survived drought, hot summers and cold winters to support buffalo and other animals. Man-made lakes and extensive irrigation have modified its original harshness, but the area remains a favorite for tourists who know it as Great Plains Country.

This is the first in a series Oklahoma Today plans on different regions of the state. Only a few of the attractions found in Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Jefferson, Kiowa, Stephens and Tillman counties are included. We leave the rest for you to discover.

Northeastern Oklahoma will be the focus of the Spring 1981 issue.
The next few years should be exciting as GREAT PLAINS COUNTRY
During the past few years, visitors to Lawton’s downtown business area have encountered an eerie sight. Twelve blocks of the business district had been wiped clean of buildings in an urban renewal program. It reminded many of cities devastated in World War II bombing raids.

Visitors often joked that Lawton should apply for a wheat allotment or graze cattle on the weeds and grass growing on the cleared land.

But when these same visitors return today to Oklahoma’s third largest city, they are in for another surprise. The downtown “pasture” is once again a shopping area—with a difference.

Almost unique among American cities is Lawton’s large, enclosed shopping mall in its central business district, complete with landscaping and spacious parking areas. While most large cities now have such malls in the suburbs, almost none have rebuilt their downtown area in this manner.

And chamber of commerce officials from other states as well as other Oklahoma communities have been looking at the air-conditioned and heated mall as a possible answer to their downtown urban renewal problems.

Lawton officials view the re-development of the downtown area as their single most important accomplishment during the 1970s and expect it to have the most impact on Lawton’s future in the next decade.

They are equally excited about the start of production in Lawton’s first major manufacturing industry, the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. Approximately 1,400 persons will be employed by the $205 million plant when it reaches full production during 1980.

A stable military community at Fort Sill, a sufficient water supply for the next 20 years and a $1.2 million development plan for the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge also contribute to a bright outlook for this
section of Great Plains Country.

City manager Bob Metzinger says the Central Mall is important for improving not only Lawton's image in Oklahoma and across the United States, but its self-image as well.

"I just can't over-emphasize the importance of the Central Mall in changing downtown Lawton," Metzinger said. "People in this community are proud of this downtown mall."

Lawton has grown rapidly to an estimated population of 90,000 since it began as a tent city on Aug. 6, 1901. Most of Great Plains Country was opened to settlement in the last great land opening in the United States when an area the size of Connecticut was opened by lottery on that date.

The central business district, however, lagged behind the population growth and the revitalization of downtown began in 1969. Since then, a new post office, public library, and Comanche County Courthouse have been constructed along with other private businesses.

Many may remember Lawton as a wide-open Army town with the downtown area lined with 65 bars. Military police once patrolled the streets, especially on pay day night.

All of this has changed now, and a large Sears store at the east end of the mall has replaced what was probably the most bawdy area. Penney's and Dillard's are other anchor department stores along with 70 smaller shops in the 645,000 square foot mall.

The revitalization of downtown Lawton has forced other businesses throughout the city to remodel and to compete, making Lawton truly a regional retail center, according to Sam Ard, executive director of the Lawton Chamber of Commerce.

The city has also broadened and increased the number of its arterial streets, so that traffic moves efficiently.

The Goodyear plant, which will contribute heavily to the Lawton economy, is located on a 500-acre site in west Lawton with a marvelous view of the Wichita Mountains. The plant will produce radial tires for the nation's new car market. The company will expand its facilities during the 1980s if the plant proves profitable.

Ard said.

Of course, the major industry in Great Plains Country is Fort Sill, the artillery center of the free world. As a military post, it has had a stable past and is expected to have a stable future. Current military population is about 22,000.

Commanding the post is a "local boy who made good." Major General Jack Merritt and his wife, Rosemary, grew up in Lawton, attended Lawton schools and the University of Oklahoma. Gen. Merritt enlisted in the army as a private, attended Officer Candidate School, and came up through the ranks.

The beautiful, well-maintained post is a tourist attraction as well, and Fort Sill welcomes visitors.

"The military has had a reputation of being a closed society," Lt. Col. A. T. Brainerd, public affairs officer, said. "But we encourage people to visit and to know Fort Sill is here. We are proud of our heritage and our museum complex.

"This post has the class that the rest wish they had. It has the best on-post quarters, the best office space. It is kind of an ideal army post."

The recently completed Waurika Reservoir, some 53 miles southeast of Lawton, will take care of the city's anticipated water needs into the next century. Lawton's other water supplies come from Lake Lawtonka and Lake Ellsworth.

Lake Waurika also will supply water for Duncan, Waurika, Comanche, and Temple. When full, the 10,000-acre lake will be almost two miles wide and 11 miles long.

The 1980s should see the lake and its surrounding area develop into a major recreational area for Southwest Oklahoma. Cabins, boating, fishing and other water activities are already available.

Of course, the splendid Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge will continue to be a favorite recreational area for many. More than $1.2 million will be spent in developing the
refuge over the next three years.

The road to the top of Mount Scott with its magnificent view is being re-built and will open this spring. Overnight camping is now allowed for backpackers in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area. The refuge also allows oar-powered boats at Jed Johnson, Rush, Quanah Parker and French lakes.

Duncan, with a population of about 20,000 on the eastern edge of Great Plains Country, is the home of Halliburton Services, the world’s largest supplier of technical oil field services.

Westran Corp., a foundry, has built a new plant and began production in 1979. Sun Oil Co. has had an oil refinery in Duncan for many years, and other oil-related businesses continue to grow.

Halliburton is doubling the size of its Research Center in a $30 million construction project. When complete, the new facility will house the chemical, electrical and mechanical research and development departments, the tools research and engineering department, offices and allied facilities.

Halliburton plans to ultimately relocate all of its operations on a 650-acre tract at the southeast edge of Duncan. The new Research Center is being built there, and the Manufacturing Center and Energy Research Institute are already on the site. A 160-acre recreation area for employees is almost complete.

The Research Center, the largest of its type in the world, will include a series of one-story, modular structures, each 10,000 square feet in size and connected by protected walkways. The center also will include a library, auditorium and lunchroom.

The Energy Institute, a college campus-like facility, trains oilmen from around the world as well as Halliburton employees. Situated on 270 landscaped acres, the institute includes classroom buildings with the latest audio-visual equipment, a large dining room and kitchen, living quarters for the oil and gas industry students, a swimming pool, lighted tennis courts, a bass-stocked fishing lake, a jogging trail and a nine-hole golf course.

The Halliburton employee recreation area has picnic sites, an activities building, four lighted softball diamonds, tennis courts, outdoor volleyball-basketball courts, a jogging track, four lighted racquetball courts, a children’s playground, and a small lake.

Tours of the Manufacturing Center, one of the largest privately operated manufacturing plants in the state, may be arranged by appointment.

A new shopping mall also has opened recently in Duncan. Four lakes provide an ample water supply and plenty of good fishing, swimming and water skiing.

Agriculture and Altus Air Force Base account for the steady growth of Altus and Jackson County. Road-sides and street curbs of small towns throughout this region are lined with puffs of cotton in the fall. In the spring, the land turns green with new wheat.

Irrigation has helped the area develop as an agricultural center. And Altus, with an estimated population of 26,000, is the largest city in the largest irrigation district in the state. Nine cotton gins are located there, and bales of cotton are shipped all over the world.

About 5,000 are assigned to Altus Air Force Base, home of the C-5A Galaxy, the world’s largest airplane. Tours are scheduled each Thursday. The entire base is within Altus city limits.

A large, in-door and out-door, public swimming facility will open this fall in the city park. Cost of the two pools is being jointly financed by the public schools and the city.
If you like to hike, or merely stroll in the wilds, the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge northwest of Lawton is paradise.

The creme de la creme of Wichita hikes is a trip through the eerie, bat-filled Rock Rooms under Elk Mountain. The awesome Rock Rooms, which we will enter in this story, are for the hardy.

But young or old, hardy or handicapped, you can find your trail in this 59,020-acre national preserve.

The well-marked Indian Tongue Hiking Trail is a seven-mile course. A shorter nature trail near French Lake includes inscriptions explaining the ecology.

Refuge guides conduct a wildflower tour in May, wildlife and wildlands photograph tour and rock and mineral tour in June, a creek bottom hike and wade in July, and wilderness hikes into the Charons Garden Wilderness Area in November. There is a 50-cent for adults, 25-cent for children, fee for these and other guided tours, and schedules can be obtained by writing to the refuge, Route 2, Box 448, Indiahoma, Ok 73552.

If you prefer to strike out on your own, trails lead off from all picnic and camp sites. Forty Foot Hole and the Narrows, near the Boulder campground, and Elk Mountain and Mount Lincoln are perennial favorites.

Charons Garden Wilderness Area, some 5,000 acres in the southwestern corner of the refuge, is open for hiking. Here are Charons Garden Moun-
Mountain Climbers’ Paradise

Seeking the entrance to the Rock Rooms, the explorers descend the steep boulders filling a canyon on Elk Mountain. More people get trapped on the cliff at right than anywhere else in the Refuge. In the background are Charon’s Garden and Southwest Oklahoma. Photos by Ben Herrington.

tain, Twin Rock Mountain, Sunset Peak, Elk Mountain, Mount Lincoln, Styx Canyon, numerous glens and hidden springs, a natural waterfall and mountaintops paved by nature with solid blocks of granite.

The wilderness designation, made in 1970, guarantees that Charon’s Garden will be preserved in its natural state and that man-made structures such as roads, large artificial lakes and public campgrounds will not be permitted.

The area is open to the public and since May, 1979, overnight backpacking has been permitted on a limited basis. Permits are required, at $1 each, available at the headquarters.

Now for the creme de la creme. Elk Mountain towers near the refuge headquarters, its tabletop outline dominating this section of the Wichitas. In altitude, it is 2,280 feet, the eighth highest in the refuge. Its plateau can be seen from many miles away. The top, which appears flat from a distance, is actually rugged, approximately a half-mile long and 1,000 feet wide.

We have to go to the top of Elk Mountain before we can enter the Rock Rooms “under” it. Some people call the rooms “caves,” but they are not. They are passageways eroded under boulders larger than houses and shaped like prehistoric monsters littering the canyon.

Give yourself an hour to climb the mountain and reach the entrance, two hours to climb through, an hour to climb off the mountain after exit from the Rock Rooms, and an hour to hike back to your car—a total of five hours.

Everyone in the family can make it to the top and back on the Elk Mountain Trail that begins at the dam at Sunset Campground and pool. The walk up the mountain will take about 45 minutes, and views of the land as it appeared to our forefathers are panoramic.

A herd of buffalo grazing far below near Caddo Lake looks like brown sugar sprinkled over a golden tablecloth. Refuge lakes sparkle in the sunlight. In spring, buzzards return to the Wichitas and soar, a sure sign of the changing season. As you climb, the sky gets bluer, the air cleaner, the senses more acute. Elk Mountain is pungent with the sweet dampness of oak, characteristic of the Wichitas, and the fresh cedar-chest odor of Eastern Junipers.

If you are lucky, you will see a deer or an elk. At the top, you will hear the haunting notes of the canyon wren, like droplets of falling water.

The top of Elk Mountain is littered with stone about 600 million years old. The mountains, once much higher, have eroded. The granite boulders are solidified hot rock that once formed the middle of the mountains. They became rounded through erosion. Erosion created valleys, and the granite boulders through the centuries wedged into and filled these canyons.

The southwest canyon on top of the mountain is a great gash filled with boulders, a king-sized version of the smaller slide or “river of boulders” on the southwest side of Mount Scott.

The Rock Rooms are under these great boulders, piled story on story. To reach the entrance, you pick your way along the north side of the canyon. The south wall is too rugged. Look ahead, down the canyon, for a slender boulder thrusting upward like a frozen seal forever lunging for a fish. Directly below the stone seal is the entrance, at the far west end of the canyon, near the south wall.

Do’s and don’ts:

Do consult Manager Bob Karges or other refuge officials before you go to the rooms.

Go with someone who has been there before.

Wear long-sleeved shirt and long trousers.

Take some rope, and powerful flashlights.

Wear good climbing shoes, preferably rubber soled, and wear gloves.

Don’t go during icy winter months, when falling is easier.

From the big entrance, the rooms begin as a deep, steep passageway descending under the boulders. It is fairly light for approximately 50 yards, and you can see daylight between the stones above you.

Water gurgles in streams running under the stone beneath your feet. You keep descending. It gets darker. Your footsteps echo. Disturbed bats chatter. This is also home of the small, reddish pine vole mouse, although I
out of the caves again, the group finds it's still a long way down to post oak lake. the bottom entrance to the rock rooms is near the top of the mountain.

have never seen one in the rock rooms.

these eerie passageways are always cool, even on the hottest summer day. biologists say bears probably hibernated here. black bears were last reported in the wichitas in the mid-1930s.

your flashlight beam reveals dozens of clustered bats hanging upside down above you, roosting on the ceiling, which is the underside of a gigantic boulder.

the big-eared western bats peel away from their cluster and boil up and down in panicked flight. they don't hit any solid object, however. they have a natural sonar system. they make a sound that bounces off solid objects, so they can fly in the dark. they have gaping mouths and catch insects on the wing.

at one point, in the bottom of the rock rooms and the bottom of the narrow canyon, you can reach out and touch a canyon wall with each hand. it is dark and you realize mountains of boulders are wedged above you and you may wonder what might happen if an earth tremor dislodged a boulder. this is no hike for claustrophobics.

you come to a drop of approximately 20 feet. you can see a tiny patch of sky between the boulders high above. to reach the room 20 feet below, you will need to crawl under a boulder and drop five feet into a dark room whose floor is a pool of water.

drop in, exclaiming at the cold, and wade across. in rainy weather, the pool may be waist deep. the bottom is gravel and the water crystal clear.

elk mountain would have provided privacy and plenty of acorns for bears. the rooms would have given water and shelter from northers through the long winter's sleep.

after two hours of descending in the semi-darkness, you will feel that you are coming out at the bottom of the mountain. not so. instead, you emerge only part way down, still high above the mountains and plains stretching westward. post oak and treasure lakes glitter far below. you carefully climb down the mountain.

take this trip, and you will understand why the plains indians call this mountainous island in a prairie sea the sacred mountains.
Hikers today can find tailings and old mine shafts, mute testimony to the dreams of the

DAUNTLESS

GOLD SEEKERS OF THE WICHITAS

Gold fever ran high when it sold for $20 an ounce during Oklahoma’s great gold rush.

Many of the 2,500 mine shafts were crowned with horse powered toasts and shaft houses such as this one near Snyder.

“I thought my fortune made,” John Maley scrawled in his journal a late summer day in 1812 after he and two companions panned 50 pennyweights of gold and one nugget weighing seven. An adventurer seeking to explore Red River’s uncharted hinterlands, Maley learned of precious metal found on the headwaters while in Natchitoches, La., where he began his journey six months before.

He was now in the Wichita Mountains where he discovered former Spanish workings as revealed in the obscure journal he kept. In a canyon stream he found piles of gravel and sand, the recent diggings of a party who left a flat wooden dish and shovel. When Maley combed the mountain above, he wrote he “found old diggings in abundance where the Spaniards had dug silver ore.”

Might he have been near Devil’s Canyon on the North Fork of Red River where ancient adobe and stone ruins would be found and Indian legends tell of lost Spanish mines?

No one can now say, but John Maley set the stage for gold seekers in the Wichitas for the remainder of the century when he returned to the lower Red River settlements and worried in Natchez. His return expedition the spring of 1813 ended 600 miles out when Osages took everything.

The first gold rush in the Wichitas was contemporary with California’s of ’49. Texas newspapers first reported it in May that year. Thomas Carmack was one who joined a company of 80 gold seekers that summer. As late as August the Fort Smith Herald reported a company of men leaving for the Wichita gold placer.

The Treaty of Medicine Lodge of 1867 set aside what is now southwestern Oklahoma for the Plains Indians, forbidding white intruders. But Indian treaty or not, gold seekers kept eyeing the Wichitas, an oasis on the plains, an unexplored range which spawned tales of riches.

In July 1881 Fort Sill experienced its silver rush when a Colorado miner appeared with a chunk assaying almost pure, and officers and enlisted men alike stampeded to stake their
claims between Medicine Bluffs and Mount Scott. When the post commander urged opening the reservation to miners, the secretary of war ordered the intruders out.

West of the North Fork of Red River was Greer County, then a part of Texas, which included the western end of the Wichitas. California miner A. L. Yeckley sank three shafts on Elm Mountain in 1886. About that time another prospector began staking claims and did so for the next 20 years. He was Andrew Jackson Meers, ex-Confederate captain and surveyor of Greer County.

In early 1892 more silver strikes in Greer County gave rise to the mining camp of Silverton near Quartz Mountain, and the Fort Worth Gazette reported several carloads of ore shipped to Denver. Midway between present Snyder and Altus, Navajo became the center of mining activity in the '90s. Shafts were sunk on Navajo Mountain in 1893 and by '97, "six shafts were running at full blast," stated the El Reno News.

By early 1895 the Daily Oklahoman reported "hundreds of prospectors are swarming into the Wichita Mountains and troops have been ordered from Fort Reno to eject them." The Marlow Magnet added fuel saying, "One thing is certain, there are immense and rich deposits of gold in the Wichitas. When the rush begins, the Black Hills and Cripple Creek excitement will be completely overshadowed."

It appeared the miners were preparing to invade in force. Guthrie's State Capital predicted warfare in September 1895 and estimated 500 to 1,000 prospectors in the mountains. Indian Agent Frank Baldwin ordered Fort Sill troops and Indian police to bodily remove the gold seekers, among whom was A. J. Meers, sinking a shaft at the foot of Mount Scott.

Texas surveyor E. A. Williams was a staunch believer in the Wichita gold fields. In 1900 he moved his family to Mountain View where he met Frank R. Wildman. Together they formed the Wichita Mining Company and began operations on Glen Creek in the shadow of Nest Egg Mountain four miles southeast of present Roosevelt.

In June the Otter Creek mining district was organized in nearby Post Oak Canyon with 152 miners present. The Indian agent sent an investigator who reported 200 claims staked and a five-ton smelter being erected. E. A. Williams believed the agent had no jurisdiction over the miners, declaring that "in the event you destroy our works, we shall sue."

In October Fort Sill cavalry destroyed the camp and smelter and escorted the miners to the reservation line. A few days later Williams and 26 associates sued in Judge C. F. Irwin's El Reno court. The judge ruled the Indian agent failed to obey the court and the miners had legally staked their claims.

By the spring of 1901 mining reports were rampant. What was to be the last great land opening in the West was imminent. The townsites of Lawton, Anadarko, and Hobart were surveyed for the August land lottery.

The miners would need a post office, and E. A. Williams sent in the name Otter Creek, but that was rejected since one by that name already existed. Williams' daughter Lleuela was soon to marry Frank Wildman, and as a promoter of the mines, his name was a natural.

The name Wildman was accepted, and the miners went to work even though the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Reservation had not yet opened to settlement. By May Wildman was platted, shafts were down to 40 feet, and no less than 500 men were about. Wildman was the first town in the new land.

The Wichita Mountains, forbidden to the gold seeker for so long, spawned its own great gold rush with the opening of the reservation in August 1901. Miners' camps and tent cities mushroomed from one end to the other. Estimates of 2,000, then 3,000 hard-rock miners were made as veterans from western mining camps flocked in.

The camps were many. Between 1901 and 1904, more than 2,500 mine shafts were dug over the Wichita Mountains. Today only foundation ruins and shallow mine shafts remain, piquing the curious.

Gold seekers erected a 25-ton water-jacket smelter next to the Lyon Lode on the edge of Wildman, four miles southeast of Roosevelt. Today only a caved-in shaft and chunks of slag remain.
ty of hikers in the area.

Windlasses and shaft houses dotted the craggy landscape. Wagons loaded with supplies rumbled over the rugged mountain trails. Writing for the *New York Times*, reporter W. R. Draper exclaimed that “fully 20,000 persons have been into the mountains since the opening; 6,000 claims are staked; the Wichita Mountains have begun to draw like the Klondike.”

Most of Wildman's businesses lined Main Street a half-mile south of Nest Egg Mountain. Next door to the hotel was A. J. Meers' Mining Exchange office. Town founder E. A. Williams was secretary of the Wildman Mining & Milling Company. Nearby was his famous Lyon Lode, sunk years before by parties unknown.

Today only a caved-in shaft and chunks of slag remain from the 25-ton smelter erected next to the Lyon Lode.

In the heart of the mountains Meers bustled at the base of Mount Sheridan, then in late 1902 was forced out of the Forest Reserve and replanted just north of Medicine Creek. It boasted two hotels, butcher shop and meat market, grocery store, the Mt. Sheridan Drug Company with the Mt. Sheridan Miner press in the rear, clothing store, saw mill, Miners' Supply House, City Restaurant, black-smith shop, livery stable, and seven doctors. The Women's Christian Temperance Union accounted for there being no saloons.

Of all the Wichita gold camps, only the lone store of Meers survives, a half-mile northeast of its original location. Now famous for its hamburgers and home-made pies, the store also serves as a post office.

A mile east of Mount Sheridan, Dr. S. J. Hardin built a saw mill to cut timbers for his 13 mines, the deepest being the Lost Lead where he sunk $19,500 in a 108-foot shaft. It took a carload of machinery to equip his extensive operation.

Nearby was Hale's copper mine. James Hale was a seasoned Colorado miner and as early as 1884 he and his wife, Bessie, staked their claims in the Wichitas. In '89 he discovered copper so pure he could whittle it with a knife and estimated its value at $100,000. By the opening the team had located 27 claims.

Craterville nestled three miles northeast of Cache. With 300 miners, optimism ran high when the Florence Mine assayed 61% zinc, 8% lead, and $58 per ton in gold. A mile away sprang up West Craterville. Among them was assayer Kit Carson, who claimed to be a grandson of the famous scout.


Camp Doris lay three miles west of Golden Pass on Panahua Creek. Founder John Patterson, a veteran of Cripple Creek, his wife, Elizabeth, and daughter, Doris, made their home a favorite spot for Wednesday and Saturday night entertainment with an organ imported from Illinois. President Roosevelt visited them while on his celebrated wolf hunt in 1905.

Today a barren mound of tailings and gaping shaft remain from Patterson's Lucky Strike mine on Panther Creek, just west of Osage Lake.

Everywhere talk was of the latest strikes. The Galena Mine near Panther Creek reportedly sold for $25,000. The Cold Lode Mine north of Cache was purchased for $10,000 in late 1903 and eight men were at work on day and night shifts at a depth of 90 feet.

Plans were optimistic. The Lawton & Craterville Electric Railway was chartered to lay tracks into the mountains. The Lawton & Wichita Mountains Electric Railway followed as did the Wildman Central & Wichita Mountain Railway.

Gold fever ran high. In late 1903 Wildman miners shipped 25 tons of ore to the Denver smelter from the Oaks, Gold Coin, and Peach Blossom mines with gold values running $9 to $14.20 per ton when gold was $20 per ounce.

Every new strike echoed through the mountains. "Dutch Bill" made his in early 1904. William Larve was his real name, but the sobriquet seemed to fit the gangling German who had mined over the West and Mexico. When the dynamite fumes cleared his mine, the Elizabeth, a pocket of gold gleamed and he hurried it to an assayer. It tested at $850 per ton and "Dutch Bill" thought his fortune made.

He constructed a crude arrastra or ore-grinder in the fashion of its Spanish inventors, with circular stone trough and grinding stones hung from a horizontal pole hitched to burros. At six to 10 revolutions per minute, the arrastra could crush one to three tons of ore in 24 hours in preparation...
GOLD SEEKERS

for separating the gold and silver with mercury. It was one of three in the mountains.

The circular stone trough can still be seen on the south bank of Cedar Creek, a half-mile southeast of Mount Sheridan.

In 1904 Cripple Creek miners sold their Tunnel Site Mine to the Pennington brothers for $5,000. Driven into solid granite on the east bank of West Cache Creek, the miners struck a pocket assaying $2,760 to the ton in gold and $60 a ton in platinum. The tunnel was driven 110 feet into the mountainside, a mile below present Camp Boulder in the Wildlife Refuge.

Later E. A. Williams and banker Frank Wildman announced plans for erecting a $17,000 reduction plant, a 50-ton cyanide mill with roaster. A low-lying hill a mile south of Wildman was chosen for the construction of the massive concrete steps down the mountainside with its deep, circular trough atop. A tramway spanned from it a quarter-mile east to the Gold Bell Mine being sunk beyond 100 feet.

Several camps constructed smelters to more cheaply process their ore. Sam Remer erected the first large smelter near his Snake Mine southwest of Mount Sheridan. One fall Sunday afternoon in 1904, 500 miners gathered at his camp on Blue Beaver Creek to view the new smelter going up, and speech making was highlighted with a brass band.

By October Remer received six large bullion pots which would hold 50 pounds each. Each pot bore the identification: S. S. REMER, REMER'S CAMP cut into the molding face. His mine was down 86 feet. The outside of the smelter was made from mountain rock with a base 6½ by 8½ feet, while the inside was lined 12 feet high with firebrick, equipped with steam and gasoline engines and blower.

Crumbled ruins and chunks of coke and slag remain today.

The Mineral Kingdom reported that under adverse conditions, the furnace ran 40 tons of ore in 41 hours. Some 1,200 pounds of bullion were gathered using nine tons of fluxing and seven tons of coke. Tests showed $400 per ton in gold and nice showings of silver, copper, and platinum.

John Pearson dreamed of yet a larger smelter. He founded Camp Homestead southeast of Golden Pass on a ridge of Mount Sherman where he sank a shaft 50 feet deep with a 25-foot drift. In September 1905 the towering brick furnace was completed at a cost of $10,000. Denver firebrick lined the inside, then St. Louis firebrick, and ordinary brick on the outside forming walls two feet thick and 20 feet high with steam-powered blower. The furnace loomed on the mountainside and could be seen for miles around.

The smelter was readied to handle 25 tons of ore daily. With two carloads of coke and fluxing on hand, the furnace was heated for 24 hours, then ore fed into it from the mine above. When the bullion tap was opened, two molds were filled with 187 pounds of alloy testing out at $287.50 per ton in gold and silver. One bar was exhibited in the window of the City National Bank in Lawton.

Pearson sent the bullion to Philadelphia to be refined and on New Year's Day of 1906, the results arrived. Two bars of copper weighing 35 pounds, one silver ingot of 17 ounces, and one gold button with a total value of $20.44 from less than a ton of ore. Pearson estimated it cost $5 a ton to mine the ore, run it through the smelter, and have it refined, and they had 275 tons piled at the smelter. Ruins and a huge mound of tailings today lie southeast of Ketch Lake.

The Bonanza Mining Company at the head of Fawn Creek Canyon erected its smelter below the Bonanza Mine on the north side of Mount Lincoln and connected the two by a tramway. With a new Redfield hand drill, two men averaged one foot a day at a cost of $4.75 per foot. Today a huge mine dump clings to the canyonside just south of Wildlife Refuge headquarters.

In 1910 the Gold Bell Mine near Wildman's massive cyanide mill was abandoned. The Wichita bonanzas never materialized and although grizzled sourdoughs guarded their claims as if worth fortunes for years to come, the Wichita mines joined the legion of other forlorn gold camps in the West.

Today only dim memories remain of the dauntless gold seekers and the towns they founded. Crumbling ruins yet speak of the massive ore mills and smelters they erected, and caved-in shafts yawn from one end of the Wichitas to the other in mute testiomy of that golden era.

At the spry age of 95, Mrs. Frank Wildman summed up her husband and father and the kind of men they were. Frank was a gambler, she said. He always took a chance on tomorrow. E. A. Williams was a dreamer. His pot of gold lay at the end of every rainbow.

Gamblers and dreamers. It took their vision, their daring, and men like them, to carve out a piece of the last frontier in what was Oklahoma's great gold rush.
Delores Buffalo Takes Us To Indian City

Time: Almost any time, any day.
Place: Indian City, Anadarko, Oklahoma.

Black eyes alert, Delores Buffalo picks up her brightly decorated walking stick and waves forward the group gathered about the door of Indian City's combination store/museum.

"Okay, let's go!" she commands, striding purposefully towards a cluster of tipis a hundred yards away.

Leather Indian ties hold a thick lock of her neatly parted graying hair on either side of her wrinkled face. An everyday working outfit—brown blouse, pink skirt and vest appliqued with brown patterns—attests to her skill as a seamstress and her love of Indian design. Calf-high brown moccasins cover leg muscles taut as those of an athlete.

Thus begins another tour of Indian City's 160-acre tract, led at the same proud and steady pace as always by the attraction's most experienced guide, the woman who's served longer than any other member of the staff.

Mrs. Buffalo long ago adopted a no-nonsense approach where her tours are concerned. Quick to put down any tourist who shows disrespect for Indian ways, she's equally quick with the clever insight, the understanding word to a child, the helping hand to an older visitor—though that visitor, very often, may be younger than she is.

The tour makes its first stop beside the tipis.

Mrs. Buffalo knows a great deal about tipis. She made these. Although her tribe, the Otoe-Missouri, traditionally lived in log cabins, like many other tribes they now have adopted the tipi as a temporary camp shelter. Mrs. Buffalo learned how to construct a tipi as a young girl from Mary Buffalo, the Kiowa woman who was later to become her mother-in-law.

For years, Mrs. Buffalo and her husband, Homer, kept a tipi in their yard near their house, where it provided cool comfort in the summers before air conditioning. Homer even retreated to its privacy in winter, building a fire inside and spending long hours in craft work or meditation.

Mrs. Buffalo and her husband made the original Indian City tipis. Mrs. Buffalo did the canvas covers, while Homer helped put up the poles and raise the tipis.

About 20 years ago, they also built the last buffalo-hide tipi constructed in Oklahoma. It took about 15 buffalo skins and close to a month to make. Mrs. Buffalo sewed it entirely by hand with buffalo sinew.

Mrs. Buffalo has also made tipis for the American Indian Exposition and the Southern Plains Indian Museum at Anadarko.

The tour moves on... to the Funeral site with its two typical Plains Indian elevated scaffolds. The bodies are wrapped in buffalo hides with the fur next to the body. Material possessions of the dead person, such as a brave's horse and bow and arrows, are tied to poles to accompany the body in death.

"The world of today is no different than the world of yesterday," Mrs. Buffalo observes, pointing out that eventually each body will return to the earth.

She also explains that not all Indians placed bodies on scaffolds. The farming tribes, for example, buried their dead.

Again, the tours moves on... to the Pawnee earth lodge, built around eight poles set in a circle... the wickiup of the Chiricahua Apaches, an igloo-like structure framed of willow branches... the Navajo hogan... the great, domed Wichita grass house... the Caddo mud lodge, framed in cane... the Kiowa winter camp, a tipi surrounded by a wall to protect it from chilling winds... the memorial to the famous Kiowa, Hunting Horse... the Pueblo adobe house, cool in summer, warm in winter.

For each, Mrs. Buffalo has a proper story and sometimes a joke or two. Like the one about the trio of swaggering braggarts who made themselves particularly obnoxious, yet were obviously nervous at the thought of snakes.

"I told them this land was full of snakes," she recounts, eyes dancing.
“Maybe they thought that meant poison snakes. Anyhow, when we went into the Navajo hogan, I saw a big, harmless bull snake up in the roof rafters, sunning itself just over those loudmouths’ heads. But those big talkers, they didn’t notice it right away. I sort of figured maybe I better get out before they did, so I didn’t wait on ’em, just walked out the entry.

“About that time, one of those fellows spotted the snake. It was a good thing I’d gotten out first, because all three of those great big men ran for the door at the same time and they knocked each other down into a heap right across the doorway.”

There’s Indian lore in her comments, too. How buffalo hide was scraped to make buckskin—and the fur kept to stuff pillows. The way the Wichita made birds out of corncobs and feathers and hung them above the fireplace to catch upward drafts, like modern mobiles. The manner of building a fire so all the ashes fall together on one side of the fireplace and the smoke rises straight up to the hole in the roof.

When a visitor asks, “What do Indians eat?” she answers dead-pan, “I’m an Indian. About three or four months ago I was eating steak. Now the white man’s prices got so high I’m barely eatin’ at all.”

Learning the things that have made Mrs. Buffalo such a successful guide have taken a lifetime. Most of her knowledge comes from personal experiences. She’s even traveled to visit the Pueblos and the Navajos to get to know them first-hand.

Mrs. Buffalo has been at Indian City since it opened in 1955. Originally, she and her family lived in the Kiowa winter camp during the summer months as part of an attempt to show the houses in actual use in the traditional way of the past.

In 1958 she became a guide. She’s been at it ever since, walking 30 to 40 miles a day as she makes seven, eight, or more 45-minute tours through the summer heat. In the winter, even when it’s bitter cold, she leads three or four groups of hardy tourists. It helps keep her healthy, she says. “There’s nothing wrong with me. I don’t take pills, and I don’t get colds.”

It’s plain that Mrs. Buffalo enjoys being a guide.

“I’ve had lots of other offers,” she observes, “but they’re inside. I like this because it’s outside, and I meet nice people and in the winter when there’s not too many coming, I have time to do crafts. Besides I don’t get bored because there’s always something different every day.”

Crafts are important to her. Born Jan. 1, 1912, in Noble County, seven miles east of Red Rock, she learned beading from her mother.

“I had three brothers and two sisters—one sister died young—but I was the only one interested besides my mother and grandma.”

Later, she attended Chilocco Indian School at Chilocco, Ok. But in crafts she continued self-taught, learning by observation and trial-and-error.

“I guess I’ve made over 400 tipis in my life,” she says.

In addition, she knows how to tan hides and does needlework and featherwork, as well as beadwork. Her son, in turn, is a painter, who also decorates tipis. And her daughter, following in Mrs. Buffalo’s path, does craft work.

But life isn’t all work and no play. She loves to go to pow wows and dances.

“I used to work here all day and dance all night,” she recalls.

That’s the way it was before her husband’s death in 1968. Now she still enjoys festivities, but goes less frequently out of respect for Homer’s memory.

At the tour’s end, visitors gather around the Indian dancers and musicians who perform each day from June to Labor Day, wander over to get soft drinks or hamburgers or Indian bread, examine articles on display—many contributed by Mrs. Buffalo—in the museum, or buy souvenirs from the shop. Many visitors will purchase necklaces, watchbands, ladies’ bags, or other items beaded by Mrs. Buffalo in her own unique patterns.

Mrs. Buffalo has noticed a change in non-Indian attitudes lately. More and more, they reveal a positive outlook where Indians are concerned. Many come looking not just for souvenirs, but for ideas they can use to survive in the modern world. For example, they’re interested in the underground construction of the Pawnee earth lodges or the passive solar heating of the Pueblo adobe dwellings.

But now another tour group is forming. Paul Paddlety, a Kiowa who’s been at Indian City for the past eight years, may take it out. Or Rudy Oheltoint, another Kiowa and a war dance champion with five years off-and-on service, or Joe Pewo, a Comanche-Cheyenne, the latest addition to the guide staff, who’s been here a year.

So that makes it time for Delores Buffalo to take a break, grab a little rest, maybe do some craft work till it’s her turn to lead another group. But as she starts to leave, she pauses.

“As an Indian, you’re proud of what you are,” she declares. “That’s why I like it here. Indian City is the history of the American Indian!”
On a cold, gray December day, a small group of rather strange looking men stood on the steps of the Chapel of the Holy City.

Except for one who differed only in that he wore a white shirt, all the men wore bib overalls with red-and-white checked gingham shirts. Every minute or so, one of the several women inside the chapel would pop out, give a questioning look from beneath her ruffled collar and—shivering—would disappear in a swirl of red and white.

With bemused, worried faces, the men watched the narrow, rutted trail winding down through massive granite rocks, scrub oaks and cedar. The wedding should have been over by now, but the congregation was lost in the mountains.

The groom, cheeks ruddy from a buffeting north wind, unhooked his thumbs from the shoulder straps of his overalls. "Ya know," he said, cheerfully slapping an embarrassed late arrival on the back, "this is the first time BOTH the bride and groom were left waiting on the church steps—"

The pioneer wedding of Karen Louise Parker and Anthony David Howell was just one of perhaps 150 that take place each month in the raw-nature setting of the Holy City in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge near Lawton.

Karen, from Farmington, N.M., said she and Anthony "found" the Holy City while driving through the mountains and discussing their future. "It was perfect," Karen said. "I was raised in the mountains, and I wanted to be married in the mountains. And we just couldn't bring silk and satin and commercial things to this lovely place."

Anthony, who'll live with his bride in Henrietta, Texas, agreed, and added gratefully that he was more "comfortable in overalls anyway."

The Rev. J. R. Ensey, pastor of Life Tabernacle, Wichita Falls, Texas, said officiating at the unique event was "moving." And the entire wedding party was somehow all in it together.

"Karen's dad and the matron-of-honor's father are brothers," Anthony set out to explain. "Their mothers are sisters, so this makes Karen and her matron double cousins AND sis-

ners-in-law 'cause the matron's husband is my brother . . . Oh, well, heck," he trailed off. "It's all legal anyway."

The chapel, built in 1936 along with most of the buildings in the magnificent natural amphitheater in the Wichitas, is a favorite spot of people from all over the world. Weddings are especially popular, and there have been as many as eight in one day.

The chapel's native granite stone walls are four feet thick and support two towers four stories high. Walls, ceiling, floors are all brilliantly painted in joyful colors. Fleecy clouds, angels who appear to hover and fly, Gabriel and his golden trumpet—all overheard, hand-painted by Lawton artist Irene Malcolm.

Malcolm devoted 10 years to decorating the chapel. Surrounding the interior are 12 recessed portraits of the apostles as she saw them.

She decorated the pews with wood carvings. She framed the arch over the chapel entrance in hand-made tile clusters of purple grapes and green leaves. But her masterpiece is an eight-foot tile sculptured with a prayer written by St. Francis of Assisi more than 700 years ago.

According to Frieda Sage, Holy City hostess, tourists stream in year 'round as much as 1,000 a day. "On a pretty summer weekend, it's more like 5,000 a day," Sage said.

Sage said people come to the Easter Sunrise Service at the Holy City from as far away as Sweden, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada and China. She said it's a far cry from the first service in 1926 when she and a handful of Medicine Park Congregational Church members followed Rev. Anthony Wallock up a mountainside to sing hymns at sunrise.

The house in which Sage lives was built for Wallock and he lived on the farm until his death in 1948. A granite stone lodge is available for receptions and meetings. The entire Holy City and all its activities are run on donations.

Like a tower of light, the massive, 8,000-pound white marble Christ of the Wichitas beckons from a mountain top perch to all who pass through the Wildlife Refuge. The statue, twice lifesize, was imported from Italy and stands 24 feet tall with its natural stone and concrete base. It was dedicated at the Holy City in November 1975.

Taped hymns coming from the chapel waft over the Holy City from sunrise to sunset all year long. On a clear day, God's "mountain music" can be heard for miles, and it's a hardened passerby who is not bewitched by the Pied Piper strains.

Coming up in August is the annual Gospel Sing event in which gospel groups from a five-state area, as well as from Nashville, Tenn., and Las Vegas, Nev., will converge on the hillsides surrounding the Holy City. Singing will begin at sunset and last until dawn.

To get to the Holy City, turn north on Hwy. 115 west of Lawton and continue through the Wildlife Refuge. From the H. E. Bailey Turnpike, exit west on Hwy. 49. Directional signs are posted on both routes.

For information about the Easter Sunrise Service or any Holy City activities, call Frieda Sage, 405-429-3361.
Cathi Thurston, Norman, riding Little Rigby, jumps over an Italian Bank during the Artillery Hunt.
TRADITION FOLLOW THE ARTILLERY HUNT

By Sheila Samples

SPRING 1980
Some may need introductions, but everyone has fun at a

RED ROCK CANYON
FAMILY REUNION

Once a year they come — from Texas, Kansas, New Mexico, Louisiana, California, Mississippi and many towns in Oklahoma. Their destination is scenic Red Rock Canyon State Park. Their purpose, a good old-fashioned family reunion.

For 12 years, the Pitts-Wright family has been coming to Red Rock Canyon, which is located south of Hinton in northern Caddo County. Before that they would meet each year at a different family farm. It is something that has been going on for as long as family members can remember.

Families have been coming to Red Rock Canyon for countless decades. It was used by various Indian tribes as a protected place to escape the winter winds sweeping across the prairie. Families going west in wagon trains along the old California Trail used the canyon as a stopover, a place to water their livestock in the spring-fed creek and a place to rest in the cool shade of the canyon’s 100-foot walls. The trail they used to bring their wagons down into the canyon is still visible on the canyon’s east side.

But the Pittses and the Wrights along with their Robinson and Stidham cousins, come in cars and motor homes and pickups. One California Pitts came to his first reunion last year in an 18 wheeler, stopping over while on a cross-country haul.

The Pittses and the Wrights, like many Oklahoma families, find their annual reunions to be the glue which holds their far-flung families together. They trace their family back to Tishomingo County, Mississippi. An 1850 census showed 14 families living in the county, including the Pittses and the Wrights. It seemed the two families were on good terms for there were four Pitts-Wright marriages in the years following the census.

One Pitts-Wright couple moved to St. Augustine, Texas; another to Wise County, Texas. And two couples moved to Butcher Knife in the Chickasaw Nation, which is now the town of Atlee in present-day Jefferson County.

The four Pitts-Wright marriages prospered and many children were born to the pioneering couples. As a result, there are hundreds of descendants, many of whom renew families ties each year at Red Rock Canyon.

The Oklahoma branches of the family had frequent get-togethers over the years. Like many families, they gathered for weddings and funerals. And eventually, it became the custom, according to Gene Wright of Oklahoma City, for the family to assemble once a year to celebrate Grandfather Lloyd Wright’s birthday. The first reunion Gene can remember attending was held when he was about five or six on the Tom Wright farm near Waurika.

It has been through the efforts of Gene and a cousin from Snyder, Sidney Pitts, that the four widely scattered branches of the family have been united. Over 30 years ago, the two men decided to compile some sort of family record. Thus began an ongoing project that traces the Pitts-Wright clan from its Mississippi days to the present and has revealed the identities of some earlier forebearers whose lives date back to the 1700s.

But unlike many family genealogy studies, this unique family record includes oral histories of family members—the kinds of family stories that used to be told by grandparents to grandchildren but now often die with the passing generations. These oral histories are written in the Pitts-Wright family book, thus making a permanent record of the large and small events that shaped lives and comprised the history of this family.

The first oral history was recorded in 1947 when 90-year-old Aunt Susan “Sook” Pitts Robinson told of her life, including stories of her 11 children. Aunt Sook is long since gone, but her pages are there in the 340-page book along with pages from many other family members, many of whom are also now deceased. Their stories are preserved for their descendants to read, enabling them to gain some appreciation for the lives of those who came before them and providing a sense of family that is often missing in today’s world.

The book includes copies of many family photographs, some taken before the turn of the century. One photograph shows a reunion that took place near Atlee in 1900. One of the books has been added to the Oklahoma Historical Society collection. There are 265 more of these Pitts-Wright books scattered in as many households throughout the nation.

Many of the family members bring their books with them annually to Red Rock, where new pages—the result of new research—are distributed. Some bring the books so they can thumb through the pages to discover

BY JUDITH WALL

Judith Wall is a Norman free-lance writer.
RED ROCK CANYON STATE PARK was visited by more than one-half million people last year. Oklahomans and out-of-staters alike have found the park to be a delightful place to camp or picnic. The park’s Group Camp, which is used by the Pitts-Wright family for their annual reunion, may be reserved by contacting the park superintendent at Box 502, Hinton, OK 73047; or calling (405) 542-6344. Rent for the camp is $50 per day for groups up to 30, with a $1 charge for each additional person. Special rates are available for organized groups such as churches and scout troops. There are 125 partial hookups for campers available at the park for $3 a day, with the park’s five full hookups renting for $4 a day. In addition, there are areas set aside for tent camping, and picnic facilities are located in shady areas throughout the canyon. Red Rock Canyon is located one-half mile south of Hinton on U.S. 281, only four miles from I-40.

where the cousins and other relatives fit into their complicated family tree. And the book provides a convenient place to record new addresses learned at the reunion.

The Pitts-Wright reunion begins on an October Friday about noon. The first few hours are spent putting away supplies in the Group Camp Kitchen and assigning beds in the camp’s 10 cabins. The Group Camp at Red Rock Canyon serves as an excellent place for such gatherings and has facilities for 160 people, including a dining hall and a fully equipped kitchen. The camp is located on the floor of the canyon at its north end. There are approximately 100 family reunions held each year at Red Rock which use either the Group Camp or the park’s five group shelters and 130 camper hookups.

After the “settling in” at the Pitts-Wright reunion, duty rosters are prepared, and everyone who is old enough and able enough is assigned kitchen and clean-up chores for the weekend. The rest of Friday is spent greeting new arrivals and in warm fellowship. Sometimes introductions are necessary when newly discovered family members put in their first appearance at a reunion, for Gene Wright and Sidney Pitts are always looking for new kinfolk. Friday afternoon is also when the games begin—softball, football and tag for the more active; dominoes, cards and croquet for the others.

Saturday morning, the “brag table” is set up in the dining hall. This is a place for handicrafts to be displayed and around which directions and patterns are exchanged. Squares for a friendship quilt are also displayed in the dining hall. Many of the women make these squares during the previous year, stitching their names and the date along with the pattern. A drawing is held among the quilt makers, and the winner of the squares brings her completed quilt to a future reunion.

The 400-acre park is especially enjoyed by the younger family members. There is a pool for swimming and a creek for wading, but the red sandstone walls of the canyon are the biggest attraction for active youngsters. The walls provide a challenge for energetic climbers with paths to follow, crevices to explore, lizards to capture and wildflowers to gather. A five-mile hiking trail follows the rim of the canyon, which many geologists think was formed by a prehistoric earthquake. The canyon is a real surprise for first-time visitors since the surrounding countryside gives no clue of the ½-mile-long canyon that lies hidden below its flat surface.

After a day of hiking, swimming, climbing, exploring and ball playing, the family is ready to sit down and be entertained at Saturday night’s special “happening,” for it is time for the annual Pitts-Wright Talent Show. Music, singing, dancing and skits provide the program for the evening.

Sunday morning’s big breakfast is followed by a devotional service, which is highlighted by the singing of traditional hymns. Sunday afternoon is the time set aside for the family’s yearly business meeting. Officers for the following year are elected, and plans are made for the next reunion.

Sunday evening finds many family members packing up and leaving, although some linger until Monday morning. It is the time for goodbyes. Most will not see each other again until next year when time for the reunion at Red Rock rolls around once more. But they leave each year a little richer than they came, richer for the strengthening of family ties that bind them one to another.
HISTORIC QUARTZ MOUNTAIN RESORT

By John Davis

REMOTE

FASTINATES HIKERS
Ninety years ago, C. B. Wilson, an early settler in southwestern Oklahoma, often took long hikes among the Wichita Mountains around the present Quartz Mountain State Park.

"At that time," he said once, "there was nothing to see but the grand beauty of the Wichita Mountains unmarred by white man except for the few woodchoppers who were so few in number that they amounted to little more than the woodpeckers that darted among the trees."

The white man is considerably thicker today, but the grand beauty and remoteness of the red-granite Wichitas remains unchanged. Rising spectacularly above the flat plains, they resemble great piles of red gravel—where the gravel are boulders of many tons each. Climb to the top of any one of them, and you get a grand view of Lake Altus and the North Fork of the Red River and Devil's Canyon and neighboring peaks—an area so full of legend and history that it's almost like a spoor left behind.

Spanish conquistadors came through there, following the Great Spanish Road from Santa Fe down the North Fork toward Louisiana. Mexican miners dug for gold in Devil's Canyon and on Kings Mountain and Twin Mountains and—so the legend goes—were slaughtered by Indians, and their lost mines and treasures are still waiting to be found.

For millennia Indians camped in Devil's Canyon, issuing from it to wage war on other tribes and white settlers. George Catlin, the famous painter of Indians, painted a village there in 1834. And there in 1868 the Indians and U.S. Cavalry fought the battle of Soldier's Springs.

Today, the rugged granite buttes are a favorite with hikers and mountain climbers.

"It reminds me of hiking above the timberline in the Rockies where vegetation is scrubby and weatherbeaten," said Tom Creider, a state parks planner. "Rocks dominate the scene as you climb. The whole area is rich with history. I like to climb to the top of a ridge and let my imagination wander and picture myself in those early times."

To mountain-climber Eric French, an employee of the Backwoods, a wilderness outfitter in Oklahoma City, the area is a miniature Colorado.

"It gave me a taste of what Colorado was like before I got to Colorado," he said. "It doesn't have the great vertical height of the Rockies, but it's rugged. It'll give an experienced mountain climber a good workout."

Too, he likes the easy access to the trails.

"You park your car and start climbing. In a lot of places you have to pack in a mile or so. And when you come down hot and tired, you can jump in the lake for a swim," French noted.

Oddly enough, the swimming beaches on the lake's north shore resemble ocean beaches with playpen-colored sand and some 20 acres of sand dunes to hike among.

"A lot of our customers come from the Texas Panhandle which is flat as thunder," says Leon Hicks, retired owner of an abstract company who works as a room clerk at the park lodge. "They come from flat country and just can't believe it. It's like a sudden oasis. They say they just didn't know there was anything like this around. Last year a couple were staying on the hill side—most people want on the lake side—and I thought I was helping them to change their room. But they said they wanted on the hill side to watch the little deer play."

Guests staying at the lodge or camping in the park have an amazing array of sports to choose from. The nine-hole golf course is open all year. In the lake there's sailboating, water skiing, and fishing for crappie, black bass, sand bass, catfish, and walleye pike. Swimmers use the lake, an outdoor pool, and an indoor heated pool at the lodge. The lodge also has two tennis courts and a game room with pool and ping-pong tables and pinball machines. And guests can rent horses, bicycles, and go-carts.

The New Horizon Trail gives easy access to the top of a granite ridge and a great view, seemingly, for a hundred miles around. For the easy trail, take the left fork at the small rock building at the trailhead. Others climb directly up the mountain's red granitic face. It's spectacular from the bottom, with the great red granite slabs covered in places with greenish yellow lichen. The footing on the granite rocks is firm, and there are enough slanted paths that even small children scoot to the top where gnarled, stunted cedars seem tied in
knots to survive the wind. 

The great thing about the Quartz Mountain buttes is that you can pick a path with your own degree of difficulty, easy or hard. You'll see a family walking up one slope while next to it there'll be climbers rappelling up an almost vertical face.

Just outside the lodge is a twin-peaked butte with an easy trail up the saddle and harder climbs to the peaks. With a shake of his head, Rex Hefner, manager of the lodge, said, "I've seen kids sitting in the dining room, and in 15 minutes the whole bunch will be up there on top of it."

The 45-room lodge sits on a granite ledge jammed between Quartz Mountain and Lake Altus. From middle May until after Labor Day, it has an hour-by-hour recreation schedule handled by a recreation specialist. There are golf and tennis tournaments, volleyball, badminton, archery, croquet, swimming, nature programs and literally dozens of other activities. They're aimed mainly at keeping the kids amused but many adults participate, too.

In the lodge's new amphitheater are presented bluegrass music, dramas, choral music, and, during the first two weeks in June, concerts by the Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute. This two-week workshop permits 200 talented youngsters to study with nationally famous musicians, actors, poets, and artists, with free concerts given on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday nights.

Despite the summer activity, the lasting impression of Quartz Mountain — and its main charm — is its remoteness. It isn't close to a large metropolitan area, and a lot of people simply have not discovered it yet. In some respects it is unchanged since the early settlers found artifacts of previous sojourners—Spanish swords and knives, Indian arrowheads and stone tools, U.S. Cavalry spurs and brass buttons.

One of the most remote areas — Devil's Canyon — remains virtually untouched. The state owns most of the canyon, but access from the west is privately owned, and hikers should enter the canyon from the north.

Hikers at Quartz Mountain still find arrowheads, and from time to time wave action on Lake Altus uncovers new artifacts. One discovery was the grave of William Gruber, chief bugler for the 19th Kansas Cavalry, under General Custer's command, who was killed in a hunting accident March 5, 1869. Low water at the lake revealed the bones of a human foot protruding from the sand.

Investigators opened the grave and found U.S. Army buttons, boot nails, corroded percussion caps, and a human skull with a bullet hole in the left temple. From these items the investigators were able to pinpoint the death to one described by Private David L. Spotts of the 19th Kansas in his diary, "Campaining with Custer." Spotts wrote that a fellow soldier was shooting at a prairie dog, and the bullet went wild and struck Gruber in the head.

The next morning, Spotts wrote: "Reville at 4 o'clock and breakfast before daylight. Our chief bugler was buried, with honors of war, before the sun came up."

A bronze plaque commemorating that footnote of history stands near the lodge on the lake shore.

Jeff Briley walked along the sand dunes of the Lake Altus-Lugert north shore, stopping occasionally to muse over a rare plant, an animal track, or simply observe the deftly sculpted rise and fall of the dunes.

Rain, low clouds and smoky fog had shrouded Quartz Mountain State Park throughout the November morning, deepening and enriching the brilliant colors of the land. Yellow, green and gray lichen flecked the pink granite of the nearby mountains. Cottonwood leaves literally gleamed pure gold. Stands of tall prairie grasses reflected a color of burnished copper, and outcroppings of aromatic sage ran like quicksilver veins against the rust of the earth.

It was quiet mid-week, with flocks of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl comprising the bulk of the park's visitors. For Briley, it was the perfect opportunity to reflect upon the land and his duties of bringing the people closer to it.

Briley is one of three state park naturalists, and in his own words, "hopefully the advance force of what will become a widespread program throughout the state."

A young man, trim and bearded, enthusiastically enamored with the outdoors, Briley has spent more than
The Quartz Mountain State Park Naturalist Program is offered throughout the year by appointment with Jeff Briley. To schedule a program, write him at Quartz Mountain State Park, Rt. 1 Box 21, Lone Wolf, OK 73655 or phone (405) 563-2238. Notice of special programs is posted on the bulletin board at Quartz Mountain Lodge.

two years preparing a mental textbook on the ecology, geology and prehistory of the Quartz Mountain region. It is an enormous task, requiring a refined sense of purpose. Somehow, Briley must be ready to field questions from a visiting natural scientist and at the same time relate to the searching observations of a wide-eyed 4-year-old child.

Briley believes many visitors to Oklahoma state parks have a strong yearning for closer contact with the natural world, yet lack the basic knowledge or the opportunity to do so.

He is quick to point out that Oklahoma's parks are a treasure of plants and animals, of birds and soils, of rocks and spaces. These things, he believes, are what people truly yearn for when they seek an escape to the outdoors.

Briley says the swimming pool, tennis courts and concrete picnic pavilions are often over-utilized in the parks, not because they are preferred over hiking or nature study opportunities, but because they are more familiar, and maybe more comfortable in that respect, for the urban-oriented tourist.

We discussed that aspect, walking along the dunes of the north shore. Briley pointed out the litter accumulating in the area. He said many off-road vehicle groups had wanted the area opened to their particularly destructive brand of motorized entertainment.

Briley said he had encountered an almost magic transformation among groups he had guided, practically an enchanted attitude adjustment.

At first, he said, visitors seemed ill at ease simply walking or stopping quietly to observe a rare plant or watching the way wind and water carved drifting sand into an abstract work of art.

Then he said the orchestration of natural sight and sound began to flow throughout the visitors, and
PHANTOMS OF DEVIL’S CANYON

An aura of mystery hovers over Devil’s Canyon, a remote, rugged gap between Flat Top and Soldier Spring mountains on the far western end of the Wichitas, opposite. Stretching 1-1/2 miles southwestward, the ghostly canyon empties into the North Fork of Red River a few miles downstream from Quartz Mountain State Park.

Today all but the mouth of the canyon lies within park land. Visitors wishing to hike in the upper canyon should check at the Quartz Mountain Lodge for directions, and enter the canyon from the north.

Devil’s Canyon lies enshrouded in both history and legend. The canyon was the rendezvous of the government’s first peace mission to the Wichita Indians in the summer of 1834 when the U.S. Dragoons, some 180 cavalrmen under Col. Henry Dodge, found the Wichitas living at the mouth of the canyon in 200 grass lodges.

Devil’s Canyon and its craggy environs may have been the home for prehistoric peoples centuries ago. On the south side of Soldier Spring Mountain in a cavern formed by huge boulders, inhabitants of a time immemorial painted a life-sized human figure with legs spread apart and hands reaching upward.

Between 1874 and 1885, six million head of cattle moved over the Western or Dodge City Cattle Trail, which skirted the east side of Soldier Spring Mountain and the west side of Tepee Mountain to the north.

Texas geologist W. F. Cummins explored Devil’s Canyon in 1891 and excavated the crumbled abode of a long-forgotten city Cummins believed was once a Mexican settlement.

Legends yet whisper of a Spanish ship that anchored at the mouth of the canyon, of mines hidden when Indians massacred the Spanish inhabitants, of a cave with ashes used for a smelter, of skeletons clad in heavy armor. Story and photo by Steve Wilson.
If the walls of the Old Medicine Park Hotel could talk, what tales they might tell!

And Ruby Leath (You can call her Grandma) likes to imagine what they might say. She often amuses herself and the waitresses in the Old Plantation Restaurant with made-up yarns of bygone days in the hotel, which recently was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Grandma and her husband, Rex, opened their restaurant in the old hotel ballroom 13 years ago. They've been restoring it ever since, and Grandma doubts if they'll ever finish their restoration.

But considering the hotel's condition when the Leaths took it over, they've come a long way. They took over the property in 1966, the Leaths had to move 50 bales of hay and three loads of sand from the hotel. In addition, they hauled off 30 loads of trash. Then, they started their restoration.

It's been hard work, but it's been fun. They've had only eight days vacation from the place since they took over, and Grandma attests she was glad to get back. They usually close the restaurant the week before and the week after Christmas, but they stay there and work.

Grandma is a history buff, and she likes to imagine how things were in the 1920s, when Medicine Park was a thriving summer resort, established by the late Sen. J. Elmer Thomas. He filed a claim on land about where the State Fish Hatchery is located, where he had camped out with friends soon after coming to Oklahoma in 1901. He built a two-room house on the land and spent weekends there.

Later, with a partner, H. J. Lloyd of Altus, Thomas acquired about 900 acres along Medicine Creek. By 1908, they had cleared title to the land and

on July 4, 1908, opened the Medicine Park Summer Resort and Health Spa. Thomas moved his cabin to the center of the park, about the same location as the old hotel stands today. It served as a kitchen, and meals were served under a large tent with wooden floors.

Thomas and Lloyd sold the park in 1913 to D. L. Sleeper and Associates of Tulsa. Sleeper built the large frame hotel, but he died, and the property reverted to Thomas and Lloyd, who built rock additions to the hotel and cobblestone store just north of it. Thomas became the sole owner in 1920, went to Congress in 1922 and sold his interest in the park in 1926.

Medicine Park was the "in" place to go in the '20s, says Mrs. Audrey Routh of the Lawton Heritage Association which helped to get the old hotel and restaurant building in the National Register of Historic Places. There were properly chaperoned house parties, and some of the best orchestras of the '20s played in the ballroom, she recalled. At first, families came in buggies to Medicine Park, but by the '20s they were driving open touring cars over uncertain roads for summer outings.

The park drew political conventions, and the Oklahoma Press Association built a clubhouse in which to hold its meetings.

It was a grand era, past but not forgotten. Almost every day someone who had been there in its heyday comes into the Old Plantation to eat and to reminisce. And the tales they've told Grandma! For instance, the upstairs hotel had brass beds, marble-top tables and some "fancy ladies."

One story is that a fancy lady lured a traveling salesman upstairs, where he was murdered for his money and buried in the basement. Another is that there was a whiskey still in the basement, and when a government agent started poking around, he was murdered and buried in concrete in the basement. Grandma listens with a gleam in her eye. She'd like to go digging in the basement, but Rex won't let her.

And while visitors recall the past and its rumors, they can dine on fresh catfish or country fried chicken or charcoal broiled steaks. Or they can have fried jumbo shrimp or oysters, all served with salad, baked potato or French fries and plenty of Grandma's hot rolls. Hamburgers, pizza and fish-stick sandwiches are also on the menu.

The Old Plantation draws its clientele mostly from Lawton and Fort Sill. It sometimes hosts regional tourism meetings or special parties.

While business is usually good during the week, customers fill the 150 seats inside and stand in line outside to get in on weekends. The food isn't fancy, but it's good. And probably the memorable thing about eating at Old Plantation, folks say, is Grandma's homemade hot rolls, so popular that Rex and Grandma include the recipe on their business cards.

The Old Plantation is open from noon to 9:45 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and noon until 8:30 p.m. on Sunday.
IN THE SPRING
GO HUNTING
FOR FISH

BY BOB BLEDSOE

Bob Bledsoe is outdoor editor for The Tulsa Tribune.

The hunter who impatiently counts summer's hot days until leaves begin to turn, or the frustrated fisherman who weary of sitting on the bank waiting for his bobber to disappear, may welcome a different diversion at such times.

As anyone who hunts or fishes knows, critters are sometimes hard to find, and fish can be even harder. But many times, when most hunting seasons are closed and conventional fishing techniques fall flat, the outdoorsman or woman can liven things up by combining those two pursuits and go hunting for fish.

Hunting for fish? That's right.

Bowfishing, an old sport that is enjoying a boom in popularity, can be the answer to the doldrums in outdoor activity. And one of the best times of the year for bowfishing is rapidly approaching.

In spring, when most Oklahoma reservoirs and rivers are swollen with spring rain run-off, shorelines rise and cover bottomland fields and pastures with shallow, muddy water. When the water spreads out over the fields, so do the rough fish, especially the carp.

That's not to say that bowfishing isn't productive at other times and other places, but when the carp go to forage in flooded grain fields, bowfishing is at its prime and a shooter may arrow a hundred pounds or more of fish, even though he may not be the most proficient archer around.

In fact, one of the most attractive aspects of bowfishing is that you need not be a skilled archer to score in this game. Most shots are taken at very close range. Pinpoint accuracy is nice, but not necessary.

On a good day, when the carp are spawning or moving on flooded shallows, one might miss three of every four shots all day long, and still wind up with more fish than he can carry home. And while some may scorn rough fish species as not worth carrying home, others disagree. Some even prefer "rough" species, like flathead catfish or buffalo, to game fish like bass or crappie, when it's time for dinner.

And, like it or not, Oklahoma waters are teeming with rough fish. In some lakes and streams populations of carp are so high that bass fishermen fear their impact on bass reproduction. That concern is lent credibility by state fisheries biologists who confirm that bottom-feeding species like carp can interfere with gamefish spawning.

Scavenger fish root like hogs along the bottom of the creeks and lakes, stirring up clouds of mud and silt to darken the water. Bass need clearer water to spawn successfully, and the added turbidity caused by carp can, in some cases, result in fewer young game fish being hatched each year.

In the past three or four years, bowfishing has picked up thousands of new fans across the country, and...
HUNTING FOR FISH

ture to the good old American way, archery and fishing tackle manufacturers are capitalizing on the boom. Many companies, including one Oklahoma firm, are manufacturing and marketing lines of specialized equipment for the bowfisher. And as any outdoorsman can attest, archery tackle is second only to fishing tackle as an industry dominated by gadgets.

Though quite an array of equipment is now available, one of the best things about bowfishing is that the basic equipment needs are simple and inexpensive. An old "stick" bow, a couple of fiberglass fish arrows and some type of reel or line-storage spool is the basic rig. The compound bow, a boon to big-game bowhunters, is not needed for bowfishing.

If one wants to devote more resources to the sport, he or she can purchase balanced bowfishing "systems," like the one manufactured by Jim Dougherty Archery in Tulsa.

Dougherty's "Fish Getter" system consists of a heavyweight, spincast fishing reel spooled with strong, braided line, a small rod and a reel seat that screws into the bow, and a specially designed arrow.

In choosing equipment, cost is a prime consideration for many of us anyway. A bowfishing outfit adequate for nearly every situation one might encounter in Oklahoma waters can be put together for only $25 or $30, if the buyer shops around.

A second-hand, recurve bow in the 30-to-45 pound draw-weight class is a good place for the beginner to start. If, later on, one wants to go in search of bigger game, like the 200-pound alligator gar that bowfishermen frequently take from the waters in the Coastal Plain of south Texas, a heavier bow will be needed. But for most Oklahoma bowfishing, the lighter weight bows are adequate.

That aspect of bowfishing makes it more attractive to women. That is, many women who might enjoy other forms of bowhunting are prevented from doing so because they can't pull the heavier bows needed for, say, deer hunting.

But many youngsters and women can handle the smaller bows and match their bowhunting fathers and husbands shot for shot in bowfishing.

A bowfishing tournament staged last spring on Oklahoma's Fort Gibson Lake was won by a husband-wife team who bested the rest of the nearly all-male field and won a new fishing boat for their troubles.

A boat is handy, sometimes necessary, if one is to bowfish on reservoirs like Foss, Altus-Lugert or Waurika, where it may be needed to search hundreds of acres of water to find an active group of fish. However, the majority of bowfishing is done while wading or walking the banks.

Some bowfishermen customize their john boats or bass rigs for bowfishing, adding shooting platforms to front and rear decks. Some install spotlights or gas lanterns that illuminate the water surface around the boat for night shooting. A variety of trappings, all aimed at making the sport easier, can be installed on bowfishing boats. At tournaments, like the Fort Gibson event, contestants shoot from a mixed assortment of watercraft ranging from "swamp boats" powered by airplane engines to standard bass boats and lightweight john boats.

But many carp, buffalo and catfish are found in waters where a boat can't go—in the upper ends of small, crooked creeks, or in backwaters separated from big lakes by levees and culverts. Oklahoma is veined with small creeks and sloughs that teem with rough fish. Sometimes, rough fish are all that's there, because the water is too warm and turbid for other species.

Most of the feeder streams and creeks that empty into the Washita, South Canadian and Red Rivers in Southwestern Oklahoma are big producers of carp and similar fish. In late summer, when such streams begin to shrink and fish are trapped in holes along the narrow stream beds, an archer can sometimes shoot a dozen or more carp without walking more than a few yards up and down the shore.

Oklahoma laws limit a bowfisherman's harvest to rough species only. That classification includes carp, river carpsucker, flathead catfish, buffalo, white bass, drum, gar and spoonbills or paddlefish.

Some people shun eating fish of any kind because they dislike picking the meat from the tiny bones. But with larger fish, like those frequently harvested with a bow and arrow, little bones are not a problem. And smaller carp or buffalo can be pressure cooked, like salmon. The process softens the bones which can then be safely eaten.

It's not uncommon to harvest a stringer full of rough fish that weigh more than five pounds each, but it's a rare occasion these days when an angler catches more than one gamefish in that class.

In Oklahoma, bowfishermen can also harvest frogs and turtles. Frog hunting with a bow and arrow can be one of the most rewarding outdoor pursuits available in the state, and it's easier than it sounds. In an evening of farm-pond hunting, a pair of hunters can supply frog legs enough for a feast. Have you priced frog legs in the supermarket deli lately?

A state fishing license is needed for bowfishing. Also, bowfishermen should get a copy of the "1980 Oklahoma Fishing Regulations" pamphlet published by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. The pamphlet is free and is available at most fishing license dealers.
Exploring the museums of Southwestern Oklahoma is a fascinating way to learn about settlement of the great American West. For this area is steeped in the legends and lore of the Plains Indians, the U.S. Cavalry, cowboys and homesteaders, and each of the museums reflect this.

Initially, Fort Sill was established to maintain order on the Frontier among the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Indians who were rounded up by the federal government and placed on a reservation within the boundaries of what is now called Great Plains Country. This came after the Treaty of Medicine Lodge was signed in 1867. Fort Sill was established two years later.

Today, little more than a century later, the Plains Indians have been integrated into society, the reservation no longer exists, and Fort Sill trains its soldiers in the use of modern artillery.

A full day can be spent touring the Fort Sill Museum complex. Forty-five of the original stone buildings have been preserved, including Sherman House where all of its commanding generals have lived since 1871. The Fort Sill Museum with 26 buildings is not only the largest in the U.S. Army but also the largest in Oklahoma. And there are more sites at Fort Sill, 11 in all, listed in the National Register of Historic Places than at any other military base. Among the sites are three Apache and one Comanche cemeteries.

The famous Comanche chief, Quannah Parker, his white mother, Cynthia Ann Parker who was captured and raised by the Indians, and his sister are buried on the Chiefs Knoll of the Fort Sill Cemetery. Several who signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty also are buried there.

Parker introduced the widespread Native American religion, which combines Indian tradition and Christian religion and uses peyote legally in its ceremonies. His story and that of the Apache chief, Geronimo, are told through exhibits in the Geronimo Guardhouse, part of the Fort Sill Museum.

 Implements used by Indian women not so long ago also are displayed there—a hide scraper, bone awl for sewing, mano and metate for grinding corn into flour and a cradleboard.

Parker's Star House has been restored and furnished and is on exhibit along with other historic buildings at Eagle Park, an amusement park in nearby Cache.

Of course, Fort Sill is primarily concerned with military history and includes the popular outdoor Cannon Walk as well as exhibits on its early days as a cavalry outpost. A Field Artillery Half Section, complete with live horses, limber, French 75 and troopers in vintage uniforms, often participates in parades.

Traveling from Fort Sill into Lawton on U.S. 281, one will pass by the Fort Sill Indian School, the Fort Sill Indian Hospital and the Comanche Reformed Church, evidence of another chapter in Indian life. Many of the professional educators, medical doctors and nurses working there are descendents of the Plains warriors.

In Lawton, the Museum of the Great Plains exhibits Indian clothing and tools. Other exhibits tell of fur traders and Spanish explorers who traded with the Wichitas and Comanches in the 1700s.

Frontier life is depicted through farm implements, an old depot and
steam locomotive. The museum's Frontier Village has a general store, newspaper, blacksmith, doctor's and dentist's offices. The original India-
oma bank also is on display.

Much of the museum's efforts are focused on evidence of prehistoric man, discovered during recent excavations. Uncovered were the remains of a Native American female and child who had lived more than 6,000 years ago. The museum was the first to discover a mammoth killed in Oklahoma by early man, the Paleo-Indian, about 11,200 years ago at the Domebo site in Caddo County.

Several museums in Anadarko depict the Plains Indian culture and history. Arts and crafts are displayed in permanent and changing exhibits at the Southern Plains Indian Museum. One wall of the sales shop is covered with beaded medallions created in the museum workshop.

Next door is the National Hall of Fame for Famous American Indians where bronze busts of Indian leaders are displayed outdoors. The walls of the Federal Building in downtown Anadarko are decorated with murals painted by artists Mopope, Asah, and Anchiah.

Indian City with its authentic dwellings features dancing, a large arts and crafts shop and an excellent museum of Indian artifacts. The Philomathic Museum in Anadarko's old railroad depot also exhibits collections of items used in the daily life of Indians and homesteaders.

Tours can be taken of the oldest Indian school in the country while you are in Anadarko. Founded in 1871, Riverside has students from all over the United States.

Some 76 miles west of Anadarko on SH 9, an enormous mosaic is being chiseled in downtown Granite. Called the Giants of the Great Plains, the 100 by 125-foot granite structure will honor Will Rogers, Sequoyah and Jim Thorpe, all outstanding Oklahomans of Indian descent.

Continuing west is Mangum, once the capitol of famed Old Greer County, Texas. The half-dugout beside the Old Greer County Museum and Hall of Fame provides realistic atmosphere when Ray Babb serves up a pioneer meal of beef stew, corn bread or hot biscuits and old-fashioned sorghum, honey and home-made jelly.

The meal is cooked with cast-iron utensils on a Batchelor wood stove. Home-canned fruits and vegetables line the walls of the dugout, which is lighted with kerosene lamps. Eight diners can be served, but arrangements must be made in advance.

South of Mangum at Altus is the Museum of the Western Prairie, which has just opened a new wing adding 4,000 square feet. Like the pioneer half-dugout home, the museum is built into the side of a hill. An actual half-dugout has been restored on the museum grounds. Exhibits portray life on the prairie for gold miners, cattlemen, homesteaders and Indians.

The famed Chisholm Trail cut through the eastern edge of Great Plains Country. And the Chisholm Trail Historical Museum at Waurika tells the story of drovers and cowboys while on the trail, and the influences of Indians, the U.S. Marshals, homesteaders and barbed wire.

Chisholm Trail exhibits also are included in the Stephens County Historical Museum at Fuqua Park in Duncan. Exhibits from the area oil boom days are a major part of this museum.
A series of booklets, entitled Newcomers to a New Land, has been written by a group of distinguished historians and published by the University of Oklahoma Press; $2.95 and $3.95. In less than 100 pages, each booklet tells why particular ethnic group members decided to settle in Oklahoma, where they lived, how they earned a living and what role they played in the history of the state. Ethnic groups included are Blacks, Indians, Germans, Germans from Russia, Poles, Jews, Czechs, Italians, Mexicans and immigrants from the British Isles.

Particularly interesting is the volume on Blacks in Oklahoma, which begins with their arrival over the Trail of Tears with their Indian masters. Black history is told through the contributions of individuals in organizing libraries, education, rodeo, music, church, politics and other areas.

A primary purpose of the author of Indians in Oklahoma is to offset misconceptions about Indian people. He describes the impact of Indian values on their approach to life, their sense of humor, their social events and their family ties. He points out the diversity among the descendants of Oklahoma's 67 tribes.

Probably few Oklahomans are aware of why Poles settled in Harrah, Bartlesville and McAlester, but the Poles in Oklahoma explains that most came to escape Russian domination, including priests who emigrated from Nazi prison camps.

The Jews in Oklahoma is the first published on Jewish history in the state. It describes the institutions, publications and other efforts they have made to retain their identity, and their contributions to the arts and general civic welfare.

The booklets are part of the Oklahoma Image project, sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries and the Oklahoma Library Association and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Each includes historic photographs not previously published.

Native Oklahomans will enjoy reading about people they know or whose names are familiar in each of the booklets. The general reading public as well as students of history should find them fascinating.

AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURE: An Anthology, edited by Alan R. Velie and illustrated by Danny Timmons; Univ. of Okla. Press; $15.95, cloth; $6.95, paper. The first half of this book is stories and songs, selected from Native American literature—composed by Indians for Indians and told originally in an Indian language. A selection of speeches by Indian warriors to whites gives another view of the history of the West. The section on contemporary poetry and fiction includes excerpts by James Welch and Scott Momaday as well as younger writers.

MEDICINE MAN by Bill Burchardt; Doubleday; $7.95. The former editor of Oklahoma Today spins an exciting yarn about a young Mexican boy captured when a band of Kiowas raids his town. His name, Jorge, becomes Kor-Kay, and he becomes the tribe's Medicine Man under the careful instruction of his Kiowa grandfather. Many years later he is forced to choose between his Mexican heritage and his adopted culture.

WILL ROGERS by Betty Blake Rogers; Univ. of Okla. Press; $14.95, cloth, $5.95, paper. This biography, written in 1941 by the wife of Will Rogers, has been reissued with a foreword by Reba Collins, curator of the Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore. Mrs. Rogers gives behind-the-scenes insight into Will Rogers the man as distinguished from the image.

LANGSTON UNIVERSITY: A History by Zella J. Black Patterson; Univ. of Okla. Press; $12.50. While still living in tents and soddies, Langston farmers and their wives raised money through auctions, bake sales and donations to purchase 40 acres to build Langston University in 1898. Through her personal recollections and extensive research, the author tells of Langston's successes and problems with political interference, insufficient budgets and inadequate facilities.

THE QUARTER RUNNING HORSE: America's Oldest Breed by Robert Moorman Denhardt; Univ. of Okla. Press; $20. The Quarter Horse was developed to meet the varying needs of owners. The ideal was exemplified in Clabber, a horse who "likes three things: to eat, to run, and to rope." This book traces the evolution of the Quarter Horse from the earliest equine imports into the colonies to the formation of the American Quarter Horse Association in 1940. It charts the big money-winners in later years.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor: Thank Oklahoma Today staffer, Erma Kemp, for her assistance with our recorded feature on Will Rogers and the state of Oklahoma.

Your Oklahoma Today magazines were a big help. Enclosed is the Talking Magazine on the life of Will Rogers. We will be doing an upcoming feature on the state of Oklahoma in 1980.

Thanks, Erma. Your assistance was much appreciated.

John Treolo
Christian Record Braille Foundation, Inc.
Lincoln, NE 68506

Editor: Thanks for reminding me again; I didn't listen before. I know this is a good magazine on articles all about our wonderful Oklahoma.

Bring more on tourism so we can learn of the many places of interest each issue! The program on tourism when Gov. Nigh was lieutenant governor was appreciated by us.

Clara B. Coale
Okemah, OK 74859

Editor: Thank you for reminding me to renew my subscription. I agree with you this is one of the most interesting and finest magazines I know.

Being born in Oklahoma near Crowder City, I still feel dear and near to my own home state. My late husband, Joseph Ashmore, was also born in Oklahoma near Quinton. He loved his home state and all three of our daughters were born in Oklahoma.

Will Rogers was my husband's and my favorite writer. We have visited his museum in Claremore. Thanks again and note my change of address.

Orva Ashmore
Oak Harbor, WA 98277
A small group of adventurers will be viewing Oklahoma over the handlebars of bicycles as they travel 242 miles across the western part of the state this spring.

On May 4 the adventure begins. The caravan of bikes and support vehicles will leave the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha for the 20-mile ride to Lake Chickasha.

The one-way bike tour will wind through western Oklahoma with the trail leading the bikers to Red Rock Canyon State Park, Roman Nose State Park, Canton Reservoir, Seiling, Little Sahara State Park and Alabaster Caverns State Park.

When the group reaches the end of the trail on May 10, it will be within 17 miles of the Kansas state line. A convoy of trucks and vans will drive the bikers back to campus.

For additional information on the bike trip, contact Prof. Hal Weisbein, USAO, Chickasha.

Oklahoma’s most famous woman will celebrate her 50th birthday next month, and she hasn’t added a wrinkle since the day she was born.

Since April 22, 1930, the famous Pioneer Woman Statue, cast in bronze, has stepped forthrightly into the future, clutching her Bible in one hand, and grasping the hand of her young son in the other.

The statue stands on 51/2 acres of land in her own state park in Ponca City, a gift to the state from oilman/philanthropist and former governor, E. W. Marland. The Pioneer Woman Museum is also on the grounds.

The 17-foot statue cost $300,000, including $10,000 to each of 11 other sculptors submitting models in competition. The winning model was selected in a nation-wide vote during a tour of 12 of the nation’s outstanding museums.

Today, the Pioneer Woman Statue continues to remind visitors from all over the world of the courage, self-reliance and determination of the women who helped settle America’s Frontier.

The flat, open prairies of western Oklahoma where jackrabbits used to run today provides a field for an even faster animal—the racing grayhound.

More than 200 kennels in Jackson, Tillman, Greer, Kiowa, Beckham and Woodward counties participate in the multi-million dollar industry, according to Fred Scoggins, Altus. At least 100 kennels are in Jackson County alone, he said.

The dogs, worth an average $1,700 each at racing age, compete in tracks all over the country. They fly over tracks in Miami, Boston, Seabrook, N.H., Portland, Phoenix and Denver, and frequently win top money.

The owners, whose incomes annually range around $100,000, also count breeding as a major portion of their income. Scoggins has one dog which has brought in more than $400,000 in stud fees. Most kennels keep about 150 dogs.

Scoggins said visitors are welcome at his training track where the young dogs learn to compete by chasing artificial rabbits—a rubber toy covered with a bit of fur.

“That’s for the birds!” is no put-down for folks who live in Waurika. For if ever a town was, it is.

With a population estimated at 2,000, the Jefferson County seat ships from 8,000 to 15,000 parakeets each week to Florida where they are sold all over the world. Living in the Waurika area are from 300-500 bird breeders.

Gary Scott, who may be the biggest bird breeder in the country, buys from area breeders 8-11 a.m. each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday plus two Thursdays a month. He says this would be the best time for visitors to see his operation at Scott’s Feed & Pet Supply Co. at the north end of Pine Street.

Scott also buys and sells finches, cockatiels and love birds as well as bird feed and supplies. He currently pays $4.25 for “normals” and $4.75 for “rare” parakeets. The rares are albinos with red eyes, pure golden yellow lutinos with red eyes and harlequins—a spotted bird. Normal parakeets come in all colors.

Waurika has recently requested a grant from the federal government to build an airport so the birds can be flown to market. The industry annually brings in $3 million to the area—and that ain’t bird seed!

And, speaking of birds, an interesting place to visit at Fort Sill is the Martha Songbird Sanctuary. The sanctuary was named for the last passenger pigeon used by the Army. The species is now extinct, killed by man. Martha died in the 1930s.

The sanctuary, which is located across the street from the Fort Sill Officers Club, is allowed to exist in a natural state that is best for songbirds. Weeds grow and dead trees rot. Insects thrive under these conditions and provide food for the birds.

The beautiful quilt on the cover of our last issue was a project of the women of Medford. Reflecting the patriotism of the Bicentennial year, it was designed and sewed together by the Progress Club, quitted by the Senior Citizens Center Sewing Club, and raffled off to raise funds for civic projects. The proud owner is Mrs. Betty Kelly, also of Medford. Somehow this identification got left off the December issue, and we knew our readers would want to know.
ENTERTAINMENT
MUSHROOMS IN
SOUTHWEST OKLAHOMA

Fine arts, festivals and country music feature big name stars

BY BILL CRAWFORD

Bill Crawford is fine arts editor for The Lawton Constitution.

No longer considered a cultural wasteland, sprawling Southwest Oklahoma is fertile ground for the performing and visual arts.

The era of touring Chautauqua shows has long since faded into the past, replaced with live theater, symphony orchestra and chamber music, ballet, museums, quality art shows, festivals and country music concerts, featuring big name stars.

The past decade has produced an avalanche of entertainment and cultural events plus facilities in which to house the arts, keeping pace with the Oklahoma City and Tulsa metropolitan centers.

Oklahoma's fast-growing Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute at Quartz Mountain State Park, near Altus and Lone Wolf, is approaching the scope of such prestigious summer arts study camps at Interlochen, Mich., and Tanglewood, Mass.

The Summer Arts Institute, June 1-15, offers ballet, modern dance, acting, mime, painting, photography, printmaking, poetry and orchestra to selected students, ages 14-18, studying under big name professionals in the various arts disciplines. Students from 85 communities across the state studied at the camp last year.

"It is my hope that Quartz Mountain can become the Tanglewood of Oklahoma, a place where the public comes to enjoy outdoor performances and art exhibits," OSAI director Mary Frates said. "If the program continues to develop, it should become a tourism resource for Southwestern Oklahoma and a general plus for the entire state."

Community theaters thrive in the Great Plains County area with Grandfield's Harvest Playhouse in Tillman County the smallest community in Oklahoma supporting an amateur theater.

Southwest Oklahoma arts councils sponsored spring and summer festivals, and arts and crafts shows attract large crowds of the area's diverse population—farmers and ranchers, industrialists and American and foreign soldiers stationed at Fort Sill, near Lawton.

As Oklahoma's No. 3 city, Lawton is recognized as "the entertainment hub of Southwest Oklahoma," where the arts thrive in a healthy cultural climate.

The State Arts Council of Oklahoma in 1979 recognized Lawton and its city council as being the first city in the state to fund an executive city arts director post with tax dollars. The Lawton Arts and Humanities Council, directed by Randy Lee Mayes, coordinates the arts in Lawton and sponsors touring performances.

Lawton and Fort Sill talent blends to offer the combined civilian-military community a wide variety of entertainment.

Centers of activity in Lawton are the 1,534-seat McMahon Memorial Auditorium in Elmer Thomas Park and the newly-opened $4 million plus Louise D. McMahon Fine Arts Center, which houses the Art, Speech-Drama and Music Departments on the Cameron University campus. Included in the complex is a 500-seat theater, opened last fall.

Here's a capsule of entertainment available in the Lawton-Fort Sill area:

The Lawton Community Concert Association, in its 38th season and among the oldest subscription concert series in the U.S., is the banner under which professional musicians, singers and dancers perform in McMahon Auditorium. A season of five attractions runs from September through April or May. Contact for season subscriptions and schedules: Muriel Mustain, 716 N. 36th St., Lawton.

Lawton Community Theatre, now in its 28th season, is Southwest Oklahoma's oldest performing arts group, located in the city-owned John Denney Playhouse, 1316 Bell. Musicals, dramas and comedies are produced from September through May under the direction of Irby Darnell, former State Arts Council of Oklahoma programs director. Ten productions are featured this season on two series—a main season and a series of contemporary, adult plays.

Lawton's own Candice Earley, Broadway musical and soap opera star, returns as guest star in the Judy Holliday role in the musical, "Bells Are Ringing," to be produced at LCT July 18-26. For ticket and season information, write Irby Darnell, LCT, Box 42, Lawton.

Lawton Philharmonic Orchestra, in its 18th season, performs September through May in McMahon Auditorium, 801 Ferris. The 75-member orchestra, conducted by Dr. Jack Bowman, director of Cameron University
bands, is composed of Lawton-Fort Sill musicians, Cameron students and imported professional musicians from the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

Big name guest artists, such as Van Cliburn, Eugene Fodor, Doc Severinsen, Peter Nero, Eileen Farrell and others, perform each season with the orchestra.

Young People’s Concerts also are presented by the Lawton Philharmonic, which plans to tour Southwest Oklahoma communities next season.

The current season closes April 12 with eminent composer Vincent Persichetti guest conducting the orchestra in a concert, featuring guest artist Thomas Bacon, French horn player. A summer pops program by the Philharmonic is scheduled June 14. For tickets and season information, write Paul Batchelor, Philharmonic Manager, McMahon Auditorium, Box 522, Lawton. (Upcoming for 1980-81 are guest artists actor Vincent Price, former Lawtonian Gwendolyne Jones of the San Francisco Opera and two performances of “The Nutcracker” by the Tulsa Ballet Theater.)

Lawton Ballet Company is completing its first season of performances in McMahon Auditorium. For details on next season, contact director Caroline van Rossum Dubisky, Academy of Classical Ballet, 6202 Oak, Lawton.

Southwest Oklahoma Opera Guild sponsors performances by professional touring opera companies and concentrates on educational opera programs and charter bus trips to view operas in Tulsa, Dallas and Santa Fe. The SOOG is sponsoring “Madame Butterfly,” Texas Opera Company, Houston, April 25, in McMahon Auditorium. For more details, contact Joy Critz, 7514 Stonegate Drive, Lawton.

Fort Sill’s Cabaret Supper Theatre, in its eighth season, draws on talent from Lawton and the historic military post, staging an average of seven productions a season, including original musicals by Lawton playwright, Dr. James H. Brock. A buffet dinner is served at 7 p.m., followed an hour later by performances. For season and ticket details, contact directors Raymond Shermeyer and Andrew Walton, 2933 Marcy Road, Fort Sill.

One of the largest and best known events is the American Indian Exposition, to be held Aug. 11-16 at Anadarko. Indians from tribes all over the United States come to participate in parades, ceremonial dances, horse racing and arts and crafts.

Cameron University’s Music Department annually sponsors a 20th Century Musical Festival in the Fine Arts Center on campus, which also is the site of jazz, band and choral concerts.

The 1980 Festival, April 10-12, features Dr. Persichetti conducting, lecturing and moderating seminars on his works and other American composers. For program schedule, contact Dr. George Smith, Music Department Chairman, Cameron University, Lawton.

Another popular annual event is the Lawton Jazz Fest, which featured Buddy Rich and Orchestra in February. The late Stan Kenton and Woody Herman orchestras have headlined past jazz festivals in Lawton.

FESTIVALS

Lawton’s annual Arts for All Festival is the largest arts and crafts show in Southwest Oklahoma. This spring, the festival moves from the Great Plains Coliseum to the new Central Mall in the downtown area, attracting artists and craftsmen from throughout Oklahoma and Texas. Dates are April 11-13. For entry forms and more information, contact JoAnn Puckett, Festival Coordinator, 4 S.W. 71st St., Lawton.

The second annual Altus Arts Festival at the Museum of the Western Prairie, scheduled April 12-13, is one of the major projects of the Jackson County community’s Shortgrass Arts and Humanities Council.

Other arts festivals in Southwest Oklahoma are held each spring in Walters and Hobart (dates to be announced). Frederick’s annual side-walk art show is scheduled Sept. 27.

Scheduled for June at the Lawton Public Library Plaza is “Rhythms and Reflections—an Ethnic Festival.” At least nine different ethnic groups will be represented with traditional performing and visual arts and crafts during the popular festival that is being held this summer for the second time. The annual German-American Club Oktoberfest is set for October.

THEATER

Southwest Oklahoma community theaters, in addition to Lawton, are active in Altus, Hobart and Grandfield. Theaters are being reorganized next fall in Duncan and Frederick. For 1980-81 schedules, write the theaters in care of chambers of commerce in the respective towns.

Duncan supports an active Community Concert Series, now in its 15th season. The current season ends with “An Evening With John Raitt,” March 20. Concerts are held at 7:30 p.m. in the Duncan High School Auditorium. For next season’s schedule, write to Dwayne Brittain, 405 E. Chestnut, Duncan.

COUNTRY MUSIC

Southwest Oklahoma is not exempt from the country music craze sweeping the country.

The Lawton Country Convention Center, near Lake Lawtonka in the Wichita Mountains area, is the home of country and western music shows, featuring name entertainers. For schedule, contact Chuck Dickens, Meers.

The Duncan Optimist Club winds up its third Gospel and Country Music Series March 1 with a concert by the Plummer Family of Branson, Mo., in the Duncan High School Auditorium. For the 1980 schedule, contact Ernest Hay, Duncan Optimist Club, Duncan.

The Ozark Country Jubilee from Springfield, Mo., will be presented in concert by the Stephens County Sheriff’s Posse at 6:30 and 9 p.m., May 16, in the Duncan High School Auditorium. For ticket information, contact Bob Nisbett, Box 191, Duncan.

Top name country music entertainers will be booked later this season in the Country Star Ballroom, now under construction north of Marlow on Highway 81. For events schedule, contact Jim Littrell, Marlow.