When it comes to fairs, festivals and all-around good times, Oklahomans know how to have more fun than anybody. As Sheila Samples writes in “Watermelon, Anyone?”, if you know where to go — and when — the doggondest, old-fashioned, down-home, good-time country time is waiting for you in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma Today has selected a few of the best summer festivals in this issue and points you in the right direction. Now all you have to do is show up, relax and enjoy.

COMING IN THE FALL ISSUE Oklahoma is horse country, and Oklahoma City claims the title of “Horse Show Capital of the World.” Oklahoma Today spotlights the horse industry — horse farms and the fanciest sale barn anywhere — as well as the impact of horses on allied industries, horse racing, trail and recreation riding.
Some say it started with the Brothers Kroutil.

When a couple of young Czechoslovakian immigrants came to the newly opened Oklahoma Territory, they built a grain elevator in the settlement soon to be known as Yukon. Other Czechs also migrated to the young territory in the land runs of the 1890s, north from Texas and south from Nebraska and Kansas. Because many had been farmers in their native country, they grew wheat in the new land and found a decided advantage in taking their grain to a place where business could be negotiated in the native tongue. Before long, another grain mill, small businesses and services were established by Czech-speaking proprietors, and the Yukon population soon was studded with central European names full of y's and z's and rolling r's.

By the middle of the 20th century, Yukon was populated by second- and third- and fourth-generation Americans, Czech Hall still was full every Saturday night with people who loved to dance to the familiar songs of the old country, but the number was dwindling of those who could still remember the traditional movements of...
the old folkdances and sing the old songs in the old language. And the younger generation didn't seem much to care.

The seeming lull in ethnic pride among the young was, as it happens, only temporary. The proof again will be provided on Saturday, Oct. 4, when young and old alike will present the best and most colorful of their Czechoslovakian heritage for the 15th annual Czech Festival in Yukon.

First held in 1966, the festival is envisioned “as a way to keep alive the Czechoslovakian heritage and movement in the community,” said Paul Stejskal, a director and former president of Oklahoma Czechs, Inc., sponsors for the event.

The festival begins officially at 10 a.m. with a half-mile-long parade proudly proclaimed to be one of the largest in the state. The parade features not only Czech organizations, but representatives of other ethnic groups and an all-American assortment of floats and marching bands.

The end of the parade signals the beginning of an afternoon of entertainment on the grounds of Yukon Czech Hall, located at the corner of Fifth and Cedar. (Strangers to town may
find it easiest to follow the crowd, passing booths selling everything from souvenirs to soft drinks.)

Traditional costumes, music, dancing, handcrafts and food—including klobasy, a spiced sausage made especially for the festival according to an authentic old recipe, and kolaches, the justly famous fruit-filled pastries—will provide figurative feasts for the eyes and ears and a literal one for the mid-section.

And what's a festival without a queen? In addition to the standard royal requirements of beauty, poise, character and talent, Czech Queen candidates must possess a bit of Czech blood—and have pride in the possession, Stejskal noted.

Clad in the colorful garments of the Czech provinces of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, many dancers will be under the watchful eye of LaVerne Benda, who has been teaching Czech folkdances for 30 years.

For concentrated tradition, the dance to watch is the beseda, the Czech national dance. A perennial crowd favorite, the dance offers swirling skirts, tapping toes and changing rhythms that slide from waltz to polka. In fact, 12 different folkdances are incorporated into a 16-minute performance for which the steps haven't changed since the dance was developed during a surge of Czech nationalism in the early 19th century.

The beseda is danced with four couples to a circle, similar to American square dancing, and at least three circles will perform the carefully rehearsed routine.

"It must always be the same," Mrs. Benda stressed.

In addition, the dancers will perform seven other folk dances. Most tell a story, Mrs. Benda said, "at least, if you understand the words."

For example, "Annie in the Cabbage Patch" enacts the tale of a young woman picking cabbage and putting the heads into a basket. Along comes a young man who stomps on the unpicked leaves in her garden.

You'll pay for that, pay for that, pay for that, Annie sings, in a translation of the lyrics.

The man replies, I'm not going to pay for that, pay for that, pay for that. I'd rather go to war.

The verses and the dance continue in what could be construed as a musical condensation of centuries of historical struggles by Czechoslovakia against authoritarian conquerors.

"I first learned the beseda when I was 13," Mrs. Benda said. "Some people from Czechoslovakia passed through this area in the 1920s and they taught the lady who later taught me. I've taught the dance to over 200 couples in the past 15 years."
"I'm just one part of the chain, and now I'm looking for someone to pass that next link to."

She worries about another of the links with the past, the intricate embroidery and traditional handcrafts that are sold at many booths.

"So much of the beautiful handwork is done by older people, and they can do less and less as they face eye surgery or other problems. But," she urged, "if you get there early, there will be lots to choose from."

Her favorites among the crafts to be sold include small dolls dressed in peasant costumes hand-made by a 78-year-old woman, embroidered items and hand-lettered Czech proverbs. Stejskal mentions a woodcrafter who burns intricate designs on sections of tree trunks.

When the sun is down, the booths are empty and the musicians have dispersed, the festivities can continue for the price of dinner. Many Yukon restaurants will offer traditional Czech menus.

The festival is celebrated on only one day—always the first Saturday of October—but preparations and pride continue from one autum to the next. In addition to the year-round rehearsals of dancers of all ages and members of Czech bands, Czechoslovakian language lessons are offered to growing numbers of adults. The months preceding the festival may be especially busy for handcrafters, as well as for mothers intent upon keeping their children dressed for the festival in traditional, if easily outgrown, costumes.

At least 90 percent of the people who choose to wear costumes make their own, usually selecting the details of decoration customary to the region from which their ancestors came, Mrs. Benda said.

For women, that includes a colorful, flowing skirt and white apron topped by a wide-sleeved blouse and dark velvet bodice. The headdresses provide information to the on-looker, however.

"If a woman is married, she wears a small cap with a bow on it," Mrs. Benda explained. "If she is unmarried, she will wear a band of flowers with ribbon streamers. The flowers mean she is 'ripe for plucking.' A man's hat is decorated with feathers. Each long feather stands for a girlfriend of an unmarried man. When he is married, the feathers are short. They say he's been 'cropped.'"

Caps, flowers, long feathers and short all will abound at the beseda, because beseda is more than a dance to be danced that day. For as many as 30,000 people of all ethnic backgrounds who are expected to attend, beseda is the reason for going to the Czech Festival.

Besides being the name of a dance, the word beseda translates into English as "to get together and be happy."
Grab on to your Stetson,
Tie your red kerchief

LET'S ROD
August is rodeo time in Okmulgee, which means a three-day, pure-D western party, topped off by the biggest black show in the Southwest.

The town (pop. 17,500) will kick up its heels for the 25th Annual Okmulgee Championship Rodeo, Aug. 8 and 9. The annual event is a combination OU-Texas weekend and New Orleans Mardi Gras celebration — in cowboy clothes.

Some 6,000 out-of-town spectators will pour into town for the rodeo. Many will make it a week-long vacation of high school class reunions, family get-togethers and camping on Lake Okmulgee.

When the two-mile rodeo parade snakes through town Saturday afternoon, a crowd of 10,000 will clog the street to see some 800 prancing horses and 20 roundup clubs in flash and fringe from Kansas, Texas, New Mexico and throughout Oklahoma.

The parade struts to the Okmulgee County Roundup Club Arena (40 acres located southeast of town on US 75) where 150 hard-riding cowboys get down to the serious business of rodeoing.

"Here is where the pavement ends and the West begins," says rodeo announcer Charles Evans.

Rodeo is all that remains of the Wild West frontier. Last year more than 13 million paying fans made rodeo one of the most popular spectator sports in the nation.

Rodeo's roots are traced to riding and roping contests between rambunctious trail drive outfits. Buffalo Bill Cody staged the first successful rodeo and Wild West show in 1882.

Today, some 3,000 rodeos are held annually. Okmulgee, with 30 percent of its population black, hosts one of the largest and oldest black rodeos.

Although the contest has been integrated since 1967, the Okmulgee rodeo is still predominantly black. Black professional cowboys are given special dispensation to compete against the amateurs, and this brings the country's top hands to Okmulgee: bareback rider Freddie "Skeet" Richardson from Houston, and Dallas's bull riding champion Myrtis Dightman, the first black cowboy to qualify for the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association's World Finals.

Grit isn't limited to the pros in the arena. Two young amateurs riding a hot streak are Tim LeBlanc, 17, of Okmulgee, and his calf-roping competitor from Tulsa, Michael Jackson, 16. Last year, Russell Bolton, a young bull rider from Taft, thrilled the crowd. In a sport where contest-
ants are “old” at 30, a crowd favorite is a creaky cowboy called, “The Outlaw Kid,” nearly 50.

In the steer wrestling event, rodeo’s fastest sport, the man to beat is Clarence LeBlanc, an Okmulgee native and one of the top bulldoggers in the world.

Most bulldoggers are big enough to hunt bears with a switch. At six feet and 175 pounds, LeBlanc is small for a steer wrestler. He represents the new breed of professional cowboy—college educated, well trained and athletically fit.

Despite an ominous desperado moustache, LeBlanc is a personable 28-year-old athlete who stays in shape by running two miles a day and lifting weights.

It pays off. He’s leading the International Rodeo Association in steer wrestling. Last year he won the best bulldogging average at the IRA Finals.

The way he does it, wrestling a 700-pound steer to the ground in three seconds (LeBlanc’s career record), looks as easy as eating striped candy.

“If you do it right, it’s not hard at all,” he drawled. “But every time you make a mistake you feel it.” One mistake left a pinched nerve in his back, which laid him up for two months.

Rodeo contestants are rugged individuals who buy their own equipment, pay their own transportation and entry fees. As Will Rogers pointed out, “Nobody is paid a nickel but the winners.”

Throughout the Okmulgee rodeo’s 25-year history, the announcer’s voice of Charles Evans of Tulsa has drifted down over the bucking chutes. He cracks jokes about the state’s pretty girls, urges the overflow crowd to drive carefully (“Remember, the life you save may be your mother-in-law”) and spins a friendship between the fans and the cowboys.

Evans has worked black rodeos all over the nation. He was the announcer at the New York event featured in the 1972 documentary, “Black Rodeo.” Muhammad Ali appeared in the film, riding a tame bull and quipping, “Not only can I ride him, but I can get off and whup him.”

The bulls at the Okmulgee arena are anything but tame. Elmer Anderson, stockman from Guthrie, provides rodeo bucking and roping stock known to give cowboys a run for their money.

The bucking horses are the superstars. “Only one in 50 makes it,” Anderson said. On the ranch, bucking horses have the personalities of little children. In the arena, they’re professionals who enjoy their job of unseating cowboys, he said.

This year, Okmulgee rodeo fans can watch for bareback bronc Happy Hour (a 10-second ride on him seems like an hour) and saddle back bronc star Wilburton Mt.

The stock for steer wrestling are a special tough breed from Mexico. “You could turn them out on the highway,” Anderson said, “and they could survive on the grass that grows up through the cracks.”

Rodeo’s most feared animal is the bucking bull, nearly a ton of dynamite on the hoof. Even at home they’re vicious, Anderson said. When they’re riled up in the arena, they’re worse.

Anderson provides rank bulls. At last year’s Okmulgee rodeo, only two bull riders out of 40 qualified during the two nights of bull riding events.

This year’s bull riders can dread drawing Skip of Smoke or Fat Albert, the roughest of the lot.

Historians would say a black rodeo is an authentic part of the Old West. Nearly 5,000 black cowboys drove cattle up the Chisholm Trail; one cowboy out of seven was black.

The first man shot in Dodge City was a black cowboy known as “Texas.” The first man jailed in Abilene was a black cowboy. Western history is filled with notorious black cowboys: bronco buster Isom Dart; champion
roper Nat “Deadwood Dick” Love, who rode into a saloon and ordered two drinks—one for him and one for his horse, and Albert “Speeks” Williams, a cattle rustler who hole up with Butch Cassidy.

One of the most famous was Bill Pickett who invented bulldogging in 1900. He often bulldogged bite ‘em style, bringing down steers with his teeth until he had a smile like a jack o’lantern. Zack Miller of the fabulous 101 Ranch called Pickett “the greatest sweat and dirt cowhand that ever lived, bar none.” Pickett’s career bulldogging record was eight seconds; his average salary was $8-12 a week.

When the Okmulgee rodeo began, growing out of informal Sunday afternoon jackpot ropings, black cowboys were a scarcity. In the 1950s, the Okmulgee County Roundup Club had trouble finding enough black cowboys to put on a show.

Now the rodeo draws more people than horseflies in May. For the Saturday night go-round, 5,000 fans are packed into the arena; another 1,000 have to be turned away.

One thing hasn’t changed. When the rodeo is over, everybody goes downtown to Fifth Street’s string of clubs and cafes as bright as glass beads. From the Sunset Cafe to the White Sands Club, rodeo fans party far into the night, play honky-tonk music and plan next year’s rodeo.
Seeds soar when spitters shoot for world record

WATERMELON, AN

PHOTOS BY FRED MARVEL
Oklahoma's sun people are fun people. Once spring is out of the way, Okies clamber and scramble from storm cellars and attack summer with the fervor of a gang of Attilas about to sack Rome.

Put your money back in your pocket. Inflation literally takes a summer holiday once you're away from the clang and clamor of city hawkers. In Oklahoma, if you know where to go—and when—the doggondest, old-fashioned, down-home, good-time country time is waiting for you.

You can “town hop” across the state and never do it all in just one summer. From rodeos to dog shows, from barbeque that's “elbow licking good” to square dancing in the streets, an Oklahoma summer is one long “all day singing and dinner on the grounds.” It's a non-stop county fair.

If you think you can spit a watermelon seed farther than 57 feet, you’ll blow “Big D’s” Russ Foster out of the Guinness Book of Records. And, you can have at least two shots at Foster's record—at seed-spitting contests held in Pauls Valley June 28 and in Weatherford July 4.

The friendly rivalry between the two Oklahoma towns—like the contests in question—gets bigger and better each year.

It's all Ken Reid's fault. Reid, publisher of the Weatherford Daily News (and former owner of the Pauls Valley newspaper), claims to be the “World Chairman of the Watermelon Seed Spitting Championship Association (WCWSSCA), Inc.”

Reid chartered the organization in 1963 while living in Pauls Valley. "But when I moved to Weatherford in 1972, I forgot to take the charter with me. Now,” he accused, “the Pauls Valley boys won't give it to me. Weatherford's seed-spitting contest is the largest in the state, but when I ask for the charter (which is right-
Seeds soar

fully mine), they say they don't know where it is . . .”

“Sure, we know where it is,” countered Bob Martin, Pauls Valley chamber of commerce manager. “The charter is where it belongs—in Pauls Valley, and that’s where it’s gonna stay.”

Martin says the Pauls Valley seed-splitting contest is a separate event, although it’s part of a week-long western celebration.

“Pauls Valley is the International Rodeo Association (IRA) headquarters,” Martin said. “Thousands of people who come to ‘rodeo’ converge on the West Parking Lot in downtown Pauls Valley Saturday afternoon before the rodeo finals for free watermelon and the seed-splitting competition.

“This watermelon thing gets bigger each year,” Martin said. “It’s sponsored by the Lions Club, but everybody gets into the act. We’ve had winners from all over the United States. Our defending champ is from Pennsylvania.

“But here in Pauls Valley,” Martin said meaningfully, “spitters can’t take advantage of wind like they do in Weatherford. You can’t spit a seed off a cliff—you must have real splitting skill to win at Pauls Valley.”

Meanwhile, back in Weatherford, Reid concedes that the wind does, indeed, favor Weatherford spitters, and agrees that it takes a great deal of skill and practice to develop the art of “soaring seeds.”

“I didn’t start the contest for fun at all,” Reid explained. “It was an experiment, with scientific and educational aspects that still haven’t been fully delved into.

“You can learn everything you need to know about ballistics trajectory—by plotting the course of a watermelon seed in flight,” Reid insisted.

“And, it’s a study in genetics, too. It takes a special type of tongue—one that will curl just right—to spit a watermelon seed. Not just anybody can do it.”

Reid maintains that watermelon spitters have a lot to offer the educational world. “Although sometimes, just for fun,” he grinned, “we take a spitting team to Pauls Valley and blow them out of the county. You can believe me,” Reid assured solemnly, “because anything I say is gospel.”

Weatherford’s “scientific experiment” began with the Bicentennial celebration five years ago, and will be a part of the July Fourth blow-out this year. The whole town is gearing for a real old-fashioned, ‘let’s hear it for America,’ get-together in Weatherford’s Rader Park, northeast of town.

Reid says there will be events such as a stock horse show, fireworks, baseball and softball games, homemade ice cream, greased pig competition, tug of war over a waterhole, a dance at the tennis courts—and, of course, the streets will be lined with watermelon, ready to slice and eat.

Although the Pauls Valley-Weatherford seed-splitting charter is suspect, the WSSCA has charters worldwide, including three in Australia.

If you’re really “into” watermelon, why not go first class, and head for the Watermelon Capital of the World?

Rush Springs, located south of Chickasha in the southwestern part of the state, is serious about its watermelon. It doesn’t matter if you live in Taos, N.M., or in the heart of the Bronx, that grin-shaped slice of sweet, rosy melon you ate probably came from Rush Springs.

There’s no seed-splitting contest here, and the merrymaking, which will begin early Saturday, Aug. 9, is an outpouring of sheer joy at yet another successful harvest.

Farmers bring bumper crops to be weighed, judged—and eaten. Throughout the day, Rush Springs’ 1,400 denizens mingles mingle with, and entertain, the 14,000 who come from more than 100 Oklahoma towns and cities, from every state in the union and from as many as 15 foreign countries. Many come at mid-week for the Wednesday-through-Friday rodeo preceding the festival and are “home folks” by Saturday.

The Watermelon Festival is sponsored by the Rush Springs Lions Club, and has been an annual “get together” for politicians, farmers, beauty queens and hungry kids since before World War II.

According to festival “ramrod,” Cicero Bernard, the festival has been held each year since 1940 except for three years during the war. It’s held at Jeff Davis Park east of Rush Springs.

“It’s still an old-fashioned celebration,” Bernard said. “We have every type of booth imaginable, from those featuring homemade quilts, jams and jellies to snow cones and hot dogs.”

But the lofty watermelon is the star of the show. The “crack” and “splat” of the luscious, meaty melon being cut can be heard at every turn. More than 40,000 pounds (20 tons!) are given away. The pungent smell overpowers even that of the cotton candy and caramel apples being hawked at the carnival that whirls non-stop throughout the long, lazy day.

“Although our Watermelon Queen is elected early in the summer and has traveled around the state promoting the festival, she’s crowned here in August,” Bernard continued. He added that Miss Oklahoma was on hand last year to do the honors.

Bernard said the program varies from year to year, and committee members plan it year-round. There is always music, from bluegrass to country to rock—floating from an outdoor pavilion out across the small town and into the fields beyond. Oklahoma City’s popular Senior Citizens band will be on hand again this year, making music with everything from gourds to tubs.

Such events have historically been a great setting for legislators to do a little “politicking,” and this year is no exception. Bernard said Oklahoma’s political candidates will be allotted a “brief” 15-20 minutes to say, “I am the greatest . . .”

“All except Spencer,” Bernard chuckled, referring to his famous brother. “Since he’s not running for anything this year, we aim to keep him busy slicing watermelons.”

Oklahoma’s Lieutenant Governor doesn’t mind that a bit. He’s been a member of the festival program for years, and rolling up his sleeves and passing out his city’s famous product is all part of his state’s summer fun.

“It’s a great way to make friends,” he grins. “It’s impossible to be stiff and formal when you’re up to your elbows in watermelon, and up to your heart in fun.”
Canoeing Is Wet’N Wonderful

Generally canoes slip quietly between the wild flower-dotted, tree-lined, grassy banks of gurgling streams in eastern Oklahoma. But on July 19 members of the OK Canoers will churn the waters of Lake Thunderbird, near Norman, during their seventh annual canoe festival.

Canoes will race backwards, with crews standing up (above) and also with them paddling by hand. They will even compete with canoes filled with water. In the kangaroo race, no paddles are used, but the boat moves forward with crew members bending and straightening their knees while standing on the gunwales.

Expert canoeists will demonstrate jousting (right), canoe sailing, kayak paddling and the Eskimo roll. Sandwiched in are tips on water safety.

Anyone can enter the contests with canoes, paddles and life preservers provided by the OK Canoers, or you can bring your own. The action begins at 2 p.m. in the Clear Bay area of Little River State Park off SH 9.

It’s almost guaranteed—no one will be left dry.

PHOTOS BY RICHARD GARRITY
Labor Day weekend in a little frontier town in Southwest Oklahoma is the season for gunplay and horseplay, the big annual shootout, rodeo, real pit barbecue, and the world championship buffalo chip throwing contest.

The occasion is the Cache Frontier Days birthday celebration. The little frontier town is Eagle Park on the northwest edge of Cache, the “Gateway to the Wichita Mountains,” 15 miles west of Lawton.

More than 5,000 people converge at Cache to see the parade, the carnival, high school kids performing in the Pink Garter Saloon, the rodeo and rodeo dance. The celebration, Aug. 29-30, is a community effort sponsored by the Cache Chamber of Commerce.

The tree-shaded amusement park, on the banks of West Cache Creek, is noted for its collection of historic early day buildings, including the Star House, former home of Comanche Chief Quanah Parker.

The park has more than 100 camper hookups, with water and electricity, at $2.50 to $3 per night. There is no fee for primitive camping or picnicking. Wichita Mountains campsites are located a few miles north in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, noted for its buffalo, Texas Longhorns, elk and rugged scenery.

Cache Frontier Days is billed as the birthday of Cache. But citizens are a bit uncertain as to the town’s actual birthdate. The first post office was established Jan. 11, 1902, four months after the opening of Southwest Oklahoma to settlement. Its name was Quanah, in honor of Quanah Parker. The first train arrived Feb. 12, 1902.

The name was ultimately changed to Cache to avoid confusion with Quanah, Texas, also on the railroad line. Some old settlers say the celebration is an outgrowth of annual fall roundups on the Wichita preserve when ranchers with grazing leases rounded up cattle, separated them and celebrated with a barbecue and picnic which grew into the community Frontier Days.

The pit barbecue is a big part of the celebration. The fire is set in the pit about 8 p.m. Friday, the time the first rodeo starts. Volunteer cooks such as
Don Colwell, superintendent of schools, and Bobby Paul nurse the fire all night and at 6:30 a.m. Saturday put the meat on grills set over the hot coals.

They turn the meat with pitchforks all day Saturday, and the beef is served at 5 p.m. Last year celebrants consumed three beeves that dressed out at a total of 1,500 pounds. The price of the meal last year was $2.50 per plate.

Cache banker Ben Moore says the entire affair brings in about $10,000 and nets 8 to 10 percent. The Chamber of Commerce uses the money to furnish $500 to FFA and 4-H club premiums and $250 for about 750 sacks of Christmas candy for children and the elderly.

Pies and other home flavored refreshments are sold throughout the day at booths set up by school and civic groups. High school music students entertain patrons at the "Pink Garter Saloon."

The world championship buffalo chip throw, open to all, begins at 2:30 p.m. Saturday. Banker Moore proclaims himself the chief procurer of buffalo chips, which he selects at the Wichita refuge.

Oklahoma governors, the commander of Cache's neighbor, Fort Sill, and the Lawton mayor have competed. Last year three Army generals tried their strategy. More than one general has seen his buffalo missile crumble before takeoff or explode in mid-air. Winners are presented genuine buffalo chip plaques, painted gold.

The western shootout at 4 p.m. Saturday is a live donnybrook, wilder and more authentic looking than anything a movie or television screen can show. About 25 men and 10 horses stir up dust and gunsmoke. The cast includes people who are civil service workers, firemen, students, Job Corps employees and contractors on other days of the year. But they are outlaws and lawmen, western gunmen all, the day of the shootout.

When the smoke clears, most of the guys in black hats and white hats, too, are lying on the street. A decade ago when the shootouts started the cast members had a hard time at rehearsals remembering who shoots who.
Cache Frontier Days

"After we get shot, what do we do next?" one of the bad men asked at rehearsal.

"Well," said Charley Thompson, a plumbing contractor who was wearing a big white hat and playing sheriff, "You better get up and take your bows."

"Yeah, we better get up," said another. "They'll always wonder if we're really dead if we don't."

Eagle Park Amusement Park was started in 1957 and is a family corporation, owned and operated by Mrs. Cora Woesner, her son Herb, daughter Kathy, son-in-law Wayne Gipson, and the Gipson children, Wayne Jr., 18, and Ginger, 14.

Wayne Jr., at age 11, was operating the Tilt-A-Whirl when a bystander remarked, "He's awfully young to be running that, isn't he?" His father answered, "I don't know. He's had five years experience."

The park has 20 traditional rides, a skating rink, a reptile house operated by Frank Bryce that includes 160 snakes, with 52 on display; campsites, souvenir shops, restaurant, and several buildings used frequently for family reunions and company picnics.

The owners hope to have their narrow-gauge Eagle Park Railroad mine train in operation this season. The line will be one mile long and a ride will last about 20 minutes. The flat cars, to be converted to excursion cars, are 25 feet long and came from the World War II ordnance works at Chouteau.

The track, larger than traditional amusement train track but smaller than regular, was found in Alaska, shipped by boat to Los Angeles and by rail to Cache.

The larger steam engine is a 16-ton model made in Germany in 1913 and used by the Germans in the Black Forest in World War I. The smaller, a 1937, 12-ton engine, was also made in Germany.

Eagle Park's Old Town is a remarkable collection of historical buildings that attract hundreds of visitors. The town was the setting for two recent movies, "Charge of the Model Ts," based on Mexican raids into South Texas in 1914, and "Fast Charlie ... The Moonbeam Rider," based on a cross country motorcycle race in 1919.

The historic buildings include:

1. Star House, the 12-room, two-story, 60-foot square home of Quanah Parker, "last chief of the Comanches." The mansion, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, was built about 1885 for the chief by ranchers Tom Burnett, Dan Waggoner and Cal Suggs. The home was a gift to Parker because of his successful efforts in securing grazing rights for the cattlemen on the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache reservation.

2. Saddle Mountain Baptist Church, built in 1903, and Dining Hall, built in 1895, were part of the Saddle Mountain Indian Mission. The church, moved to Eagle Park, is still in use as the Pete Coffey Memorial Church, composed of Indians of the Mennonite faith. Services are held every Sunday, and the public is welcome.

3. The First Headquarters Office of the Wichita National Forest is a small frame building constructed in 1908 at the federal preserve which became the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.
4. Old Frisco Depot From Cache, built in 1902.

Original Picket House, one of the temporary buildings constructed at Fort Sill for use while the permanent native limestone buildings were under construction. Thirty-foot bridge timbers were slid under the Picket House so it could be moved intact from Fort Sill 15 miles west to Eagle Park. The post oak logs were obtained from the east slope of Mount Scott, according to some reports. They were placed vertically rather than horizontally be-
cause the tree trunks were not long enough for traditional horizontal construction.

_Sunnyside School_, built in 1902 south of Cache, was made to a standard design furnished by the State. The material at the time cost only $300, and most of the construction labor was donated.

_Two 1902-vintage homes_, the John Hopp house, built by a furniture store operator and gold mine promoter, and the Dunning House, built by a grocer, originally stood in Lawton.

_The Frank James House_ was built near Fletcher shortly after the turn of the century. Frank James, brother of Jesse, lived in the house many years, and his son Robert lived there until the 1930s.

_First Doctor's Office From Cache_ was used by Doctors Towsley and Stamps.

Other park buildings include an authentic reproduction of Buffalo Hall, Las Vegas, N.M., saloon; a reconstructed barber shop and print shop of the Cache newspaper; the reconstructed Orient Drug at Blair, with original fixtures; a livery stable, and a reproduction of the Original Red Store, the traders store which was located between the present site of Lawton and Fort Sill.

The park is open each year from Easter to Labor Day, with powwows, rodeos, playdays and other events scheduled through the season, climax ed by the Cache Frontier Days. In this museum village of real buildings from yesterday, visitors gather to renew old friendships, remember their roots, eat, and have a good time.

The scenario varies from year to year in the big Cache shootout, but you can count on the guys in the black hats for badness, and the guys in the white hats for saving the day. J. T. Coody, banker and survivor of many of the Cache ritualistic shootouts, says there will be a bank robbery this year at Eagle Park, "more than likely."

And will the outlaws be caught and hanged on a hanging tree in the Old Town Square?

"More than likely," Coody drawls.
A hare and hound race was featured during a balloon rally in Bartlesville last October. In this race, balloonists tried to hit a target with bean bags. Crowds gather to watch the balloons being inflated and launched at the rally (below).

Bright, colorful hot air balloons will float across the sky this summer. Since this ancient sport has gained renewed interest, balloons may be seen drifting about on most any calm day.

Bartlesville hosted a balloon rally during Octoberfest last fall with another planned for this year. Tulsa also plans a rally, and balloons regularly drift above spectators at Owen Field in Norman during University of Oklahoma football games.

But setting dates and times for balloon rallies is not easy in Oklahoma—for good reason. Pilots prefer to take off with a wind below 10 miles per hour.

About 40 state pilots are now licensed to fly the 15 balloons registered with the Federal Aviation Administration.
Balloons are not new, even in Oklahoma. One flew over Hollis in 1907 as part of that city’s celebration of statehood.

Launching the balloon requires a crew of five. Portable fans first inflate the nylon bag. Then hot air from the propane burner mounted on a wicker basket below is directed into the balloon.

As the balloon is released from its tethers, it rises slowly and quietly to move before the wind. Its ascent and descent are controlled by the heat of the burner.

If the winds are right, the balloonists will rally in Tulsa June 21-22 and in Bartlesville Oct. 18-19. Free rides are sometimes offered to onlookers.

And then they’ll fly so high, they almost reach the sky . . . pretty bubbles in the air.
Deep in the forests of southeast Oklahoma the woodsmen are sharpening saws and polishing skills.

It's almost time for another Kia-michi Owa-Chito, the Festival of the Forest, a three-day fun event set for June 27-29 at Beavers Bend State Park, north of Broken Bow.

Stiff competition among loggers and sawyers, some of them using the tools of years gone by, highlights this annual outing started seven years ago in one of Oklahoma's most scenic settings.

The festival, which is free, is much more than a series of games for foresters, though. It also features continuous entertainment through the weekend, with singing star Charly McClain as the headliner, a four-state art show with several hundred entries and $2,400 in prizes, a new series of contests for VIPs called Owa-Chito Superstars, canoe races on the wide and clear Mountain Fork River, Choctaw dancers performing in colorful costumes, a half-dozen different demonstrations of forestry skills, exhibits depicting the heritage of the mountainous timberland of southeast Oklahoma, and a variety of contests open to all festival-goers, ranging from nail driving to horseshoes to tobacco-spitting.

This is Choctaw country, and Owa-Chito translates roughly from Choctaw to mean a big hunting trip. The hunt is for family fun and excitement,
both of which can be found in full measure.

Prizes for the forestry competition have been increased this year to $1,500, and a hundred or more woodsmen are expected to compete in the seven events, performing their skills mostly under the scrutiny of a stop watch, with the three finalists then competing again on Saturday afternoon, June 28, for the top prizes and state championship certificates.

Kiamichi Owa-Chito is believed to be the largest competitive event for woodsmen in the southern pine forests.

Competition will be in the following areas:

- **Double-bucking**, which pits two-man teams sawing through approximately two-foot thick pine logs with hand pulled, cross cut saws.

- **Jack and Jill bucking**, featuring man-and-woman teams on cross cut saws, which were used throughout the forests until about 30 years ago when the chain saw came into its own.

- **Limited chain sawing**, with top sawyers using the same saw to slice pie-like slabs off a monstrous oak log.

- **Bow sawing**, or pulp wood sawing, using a one-man saw to rip through smaller pine logs.

- **Axe-throwing** from 21 feet, a fun event for the woodsmen who still are skilled with the double-bit chopping axe.

- **Load-binding**, or the art of tying securely a load of logs on a truck-trailer rig, using chain and cable.

- **Choker-setting**, which is hooking up five heavy logs with cable to be skidded out to a road for loading.

Many foresters will compete in two or more events, pushing for a high total under an Owa-Chito point system. The man with the most points will be crowned "Bull of the Woods" at the end of the day, with a special plaque and special recognition.

It will take some doing, though, for a new "bull" to wrest the crown away from big Bob Burns, 50, Broken Bow. The logging superintendent for Weyerhaeuser Company grew up just across the state line in Arkansas, the son of a blacksmith-turned-timberman. He has spent his lifetime in the woods, sawing, chopping and competing.

Bob Burns and his short, blonde wife, Corrine, who is stronger than she looks, can handle a cross cut saw better than most anybody. So far, at least.

Bob Burns has won the "Bull of the Woods" title the past two years, primarily on his sawing speed, and Corrine Burns has been on the winning Jack and Jill sawing team every year since the festival was started in 1973. One year she and her husband took on two-man teams in the double-bucking event, and beat them all.

Directing the forestry contests from the very beginning has been John Manz, 40, Weyerhaeuser's regional woods manager who once was a champion tree-topper in the Pacific northwest. Each year at Owa-Chito he climbs some 70 feet into the air and gives the festival crowd a heart-thumping demonstration of how to top a big pine tree.

Manz could sub as a daredevil until one comes along. He is a mountain-climber and a cross-country skier. The former Marine pilot was seriously injured in Viet Nam, when his airplane blew up with fire in the cockpit.

All kinds of forestry skills will be on display at Kiamichi Owa-Chito.

Lester Rishel, who is on the Pennsylvania State University faculty and a wizard with a chain saw, will carve an Indian family out of logs during the three-day festival.

Pat Donaho of Weyerhaeuser Company will demonstrate precision tree-falling.

Claude Cockrell of Broken Bow will operate an old-time cedar shake mill, and there will be demonstrations of log-peeling and shingle-cutting.

The Forest Heritage and Education Center of the South at Beavers Bend is a unique showplace for the southern pine forest industry, and its participation in Kiamichi Owa-Chito festivities add much to the weekend event. The Forest Heritage Center sponsors Rishel, Cockrell and others.

The Owa-Chito Art Show is held in the Forest Heritage Center, which also has special exhibits and films.

Expected to participate in this...
year's forestry show is Harry Rossoll, noted Atlanta, Ga., artist who is painting a series of large murals that tell the story of the development of the forest. Four of Rossoll's dioramas are now hanging in the Forest Heritage Center and a fifth is nearing completion.

The Forest Heritage Center also is headquarters for the Oklahoma Forestry Association, which is headed this year by Manz. The association also is assisting with Owa-Chito.

Approximately 20,000 persons are expected to turn out for at least part of the festival program, which starts at 4 p.m. Friday, June 27, and continues until 4 p.m. Sunday, June 29. The festival is spread out over a sizable area in the park, with action in several "rings" at the same time, so large turnouts can be accommodated.

The two shows on Friday and Saturday nights will be held in the Beavers Bend Amphitheater on the bank of the Mountain Fork. A five-level amphitheater stage sits near the water between two large white oak trees. The wide river with cypress trees shooting up out of the water, and a 350-foot rocky bluff form a striking backdrop to the amphitheater. Festi-

val veterans often bring blankets, cushions or lawn chairs for comfort while watching the show from the gentle grassy slope beside the river and stage.

The Friday night show will open with Miss Jean Star and The Band of Angels from Tulsa, a nine-member variety music group that plays swing jazz and rock as well as country music. The group has performed in both Nashville and Las Vegas.

Starring in the Saturday night show will be Charly McClain, a Memphis girl who hit the bigtime about a year ago and now is becoming known as the "princess of country music." Her hit songs include "Men," "Let Me Be Your Baby" and "That's What You Do To Me."

A "Battle of the Bands" will take the place of the old fiddlers contest held at previous festivals.

This competition, along with other daytime music, Choctaw dancing and contests, will be at the Center Stage in Youth Camp No. 1 at Beavers Bend. The camp is nestled along the Mountain Fork just below the Broken Bow Dam.

Choctaw influence is strong at the festival, just as it is across southeast Oklahoma. A Choctaw girl, chosen in competition among high school students, will serve as Owa-Chito princess. Festival goers, seeking adventure in eating, can circle the hamburger and hotdog stands and choose a Choctaw concession. There such dishes as "tonchi labona," made from cracked corn and lean pork, will be sold.

Many festival folks will camp in Beavers Bend, or in Hochatown State Park a few miles north along the shore of Broken Bow Lake, or in other...
Bob Finch, Broken Bow park manager for the Corps of Engineers, said some 5,000 persons—equaling the population of the nearby town of Broken Bow—will be camped around the deep lake which is noted for its good fishing and pine-lined shore.

Some will come early or stick around after the festival long enough to try their luck at lake fishing, or a float trip on the Mountain Fork River, or a leisurely walk along the area's two nature trails or the 25-mile hiking trail, or a chance to explore some of the scenic and historic areas of Kiamichi Country.

A few miles up the lake from Beavers Bend is Cedar Creek Golf Course, part of Hochatown State Park. It is the newest and prettiest of the state-operated golf courses.

A few miles further north, on the upper end of Broken Bow Lake, is the Wilderness Area controlled by the state Wildlife Conservation Department. About 17,000 acres with stands of virgin timber, kept in a state of wildness, can be explored.

Other lakes in the area include Pine Creek, Raymond Gary and Hugo to the west, Cedar and Wister to the north, and DeQueen, Gillham and Dierks to the east.

East of Broken Bow on the Mountain Fork explorers will find Oklahoma's biggest tree, a huge cypress that stands 120 feet tall and is 45 feet around. It may be the biggest tree east of the Rocky Mountains.

A person can get an eyeful of beauty in southeast Oklahoma. Especially during the Festival of the Forest weekend.

Bob and Connine Burns are a winning team in the cross-cut saw Jack and Jill bucking competition (upper left). Looks like a ringer! (upper right). In the choker-setting contest, logs are hooked with cable to be skidded out of the forest (center left). Taking dead aim with an axe is Dennis Brandt (center right). Claude Davidson slices of a pie-like slab (lower left). Melvin Gibson competes in load-binding (lower right).
The University of Oklahoma Press has reprinted seven volumes and published three new books on American Indian history and culture this spring. Each is fascinating reading.

Four books relate tribal history, religious ceremonies and culture of the Cheyennes.

**SWEET MEDICINE** by Peter J. Powell, $89.50, is a major work in two volumes. Although this sounds imposing, each is highly readable. Volume I describes the great spiritual tragedies in Cheyenne life, the loss of the Sacred Arrows and the desecration of the Sacred Buffalo Hat. Details of how the Sacred Arrows and Sun Dance sacred rituals are performed today are given in the second volume. Photographs and diagrams illustrate each step. Cheyenne theology and sacred traditions are also related by the author, a Catholic priest who participated many times in the ceremonies.

**EARLY DAYS AMONG THE CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHOE INDIANS** by John Seger, $4.95 and $8.95, is an account of the author's personal experiences while working among the Cheyennes and Arapahoes. Originally published in 1924, Seger tells about life as it was—without embellishment.

The difficulty of the adjustment of the Cheyennes to the white man's road is portrayed vividly in Seger's account. He bluntly describes the lack of understanding, human frailty, courage, honesty and compassion on both sides.

**THE PEACE CHIEFS OF THE CHEYENNES** by Stan Hoig, $14.95, traces the history of the Cheyennes from Minnesota in 1860 as they moved to North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and finally located in western Oklahoma and the Texas Panhandle.

The peace chiefs met annually as the Council of the Forty-Four. The chiefs found themselves struggling against overwhelming military forces, disease, debauchery and the decline of the buffalo, their source of livelihood.

The author, a journalism professor at Central State University, writes biographies of many of the 19th Century chiefs. Photographs of the chiefs are included.

**CIVILIZATION AND THE STORY OF THE ABSENTEE SHAWNEES** by Thomas Wildcat Aldord, $5.95 and $12.50, was originally published in 1936. It relates the firsthand experiences of a Shawnee Indian born in 1860, who grew up in a remote portion of Indian Territory not far from present Shawnee.

Aldord describes the customs and institutions of Indian society in his early years. The tribe sent him and another young man to Hampton Institute, Va., to learn the white man's ways. Their exciting train ride east and adjustment to the school are part of this story.

**THE QUAPAW INDIANS, A HISTORY OF THE DOWNSWAMP PEOPLE** by W. David Baird, $19.95, focuses on their ways of coping with both the internal and external forces affecting them. The author is chairman of the Oklahoma State University Department of History.

**A HISTORY OF THE CREEK INDIANS** by Angie Debo, $8.95, originally printed in 1941, describes Creek society, its folkways, religious beliefs, politics and wars.

**SACAJAWEA**, by Harold P. Howard, $5.95, is a biography of the Shoshoni Indian woman who was a guide and interpreter for the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Northwest in 1804. More memorials have been set up to honor her than any other American woman.

**INDIAN RAWHIDE**, An American Folk Art by Mable Morrow, $24.50 and $12.50. Not only does this book give details for preparation and uses of rawhide, its view of the life of Indian women and their philosophy of teaching and child training are unique. Drawings, designs and rare photographs are especially interesting.

**AMERICAN INDIAN ARCHERY** by Reginald and Gladys Laubin, $12.50, tells how to make and shoot bows and arrows. Photographs, history and lore of the craft also are included.

**WILL ROGERS’ DAILY TELEGRAMS, The Roosevelt Years; 1933-1935**, $14.95, has been released by the Oklahoma State University Press. The fourth and last volume in this series includes the cowboy philosopher's daily telegrams during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt from March 5, 1933, to Rogers' death on Aug. 15, 1935.

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**LETTERS TO EDITOR**

1980. Your format is excellent and the selection of your free-lance writers is most superior.

I sincerely wish you all the success in your duties as editor of one of the finest magazines I have ever read.

I would like to extend to you and your staff my favorite Spanish toast, “Salud y amor y dinero y tiempo para gozarlos.”

With my best wishes from a transplanted Oklahoman,

LeRoy Thomas
Escondido, CA 92027

P.S. My sons, daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are still living in Oklahoma.
The U.S. Olympic diving team will be recognized when Bartlesville hosts the United States Outdoor Diving Championships Aug. 19-23. This is the first time the national diving competition has been held in Oklahoma.

Michele Hain of Oklahoma City will defend her three meter springboard championship title during the meet at Frontier Park. Michele placed first in the women's division in Decatur, Ala., last year. She also won the Swedish Cup last summer.

Members of the Olympic diving team are expected to be among the 200 divers competing in the one meter springboard, three meter springboard and 10 meter tower contests. Championships will be awarded to both men and women.

ABC-TV plans to show the tower diving finals live beginning at 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 23. The top eight divers will compete in the springboard finals Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. Recognition of the U.S. Olympic team, clown diving and other entertainment are planned for Friday evening.

A beautiful collection of French paintings from 1830 to 1930 will be exhibited at Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa, May 25 through July 27. The international touring exhibit is from Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.

A Century of French Masters includes works by such well-known Impressionists as Degas, Cezanne, Monet, Renoir and Toulouse-Lautrec.

Less than two dozen people in the world still speak Lenape or the Delaware Indian language fluently. Because she is interested in preserving the Lenape language and the traditional ways of the Delawares, Nora Thompson Dean, known as Touching Leaves Woman, has authored a cassette tape/booklet language series. This may be the only such instruction series for an American Indian language spoken in Oklahoma that is available.

Now 72, Mrs. Dean sells the language series through her shop, Touching Leaves Indian Crafts, 927 Portland, Dewey, OK 74029. The second tape for lessons three and four has just been released.

The ultimate in fishing comfort may be floating down on Lake Texoma. Your own travel trailer or RV can be driven onto a Camp-A-Float barge or you can rent the Camp-A-Float equipped with its own travel trailer. Then as captain of the ship you can cruise all over the 89,000 acres of Lake Texoma with all the comforts of home, swimming or fishing from the deck.

The Camp-A-Floas at Willow Run Resort also are available with or without picnic tables and barbecue grills. These have an awning, benches and a spacious deck, large enough to hold 26 people. Sounds like a neat idea for a dance or a family reunion. Bring the fried chicken, go swimming and leave the flies on shore!

The biggest headache for tent camping has been resolved by several of the state parks. You can now rent a tent, already up and in place, equipped with two cots, mattresses, an outdoor grill and even a flourescent lantern.

All you have to bring for a good time are the hot dogs, a coffee pot for breakfast, and a wide-awake 10-year-old, eager to try out all his or her scout cooking skills.

The tents are only $10 per night. The rent-a-tents are available at Robbers Cave, Keystone, Great Salt Plains, Boiling Springs, Osage Hills, Quartz Mountain, Great Plains, Wister, Arrowhead, Sequoyah, Tenkiller and Greenleaf state parks. And, yes, you need reservations for both tent and Camp-A-Floas programs.

For tent reservations, call the state park or the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department reservations office at (405) 521-2464. Camp-A-Floas can be reserved at (405) 924-6240.

A fascinating photo exhibit of pioneer life in Oklahoma is touring the state. Produced by the Oklahoma Image Project, the exhibit depicts the daily lives of the settlers.

Overlooked in most Oklahoma history books are the contributions of different ethnic groups to the state's heritage. Photographs of blacks, Indians and Mexicans as well as European immigrants bring to light their role in the state's culture.

The exhibit of 500 photographs will be displayed in Muskogee, McAlester, Ardmore, Lawton, Altus, Hollis, Enid and Ponca City during the summer. Governor Nigh opened the exhibit at the State Capitol and it has been shown in Tulsa.

The same project also produced the booklets, Newcomers To A New Land, which record the history of 10 ethnic groups who played a major role in settling the state.

Oklahoma Today will be celebrating its 25th anniversary this winter, and a special issue is being planned. Twenty-five things that everyone ought to see or do in Oklahoma will be the theme of this issue.

How about sending us your list of unusual places and events in the state? Be sure to include some we might not think of as well as the better known attractions.

More later on Oklahoma Today's gala celebration.
SANTA FE TRAIL

DAZE

CELEBRATION

FEATURES UNIQUE PANHANDLE TOUR:

Dinosaur footprints,
Prehistoric pictographs,
Kenton Store, and
Black Mesa Area

BY KENT RUTH

Kent Ruth writes history and travel columns for The Daily Oklahoman and also is a free-lance writer.
Puns, generally, are to be discouraged. Especially poor ones.

But in the case of Boise City we’re going to do as some politicians do—rise ABOVE principle. And recommend that Panhandle county seat’s Santa Fe Trail Daze Celebration.

The county-wide gala is scheduled for June 5-8 (see box). It features such fun-and-games traditional as queen crowning and square dances, craft shows and costume competitions, rodeos and musicals plus the World Championship Posthole Dig-Off. All in all, it promises to be a rip-roaring good show.

But we’re recommending it, poor pun and all, not just for the celebration itself. Frankly, we hope the attendant whoop-la serves to persuade more down-state Sooners to visit this far northwestern corner of Oklahoma June 5-8 or any other time.

For too long now isolation has made Cimarron one of the most neglected of our 77 counties. This is a shame, because in many ways it is also one of the most interesting.

Today, then, let’s consider the case for a soon-as-possible, get-acquainted visit. And if that calls for a bit of extra effort, so be it. As the little man in the commercial says, “It’s darn well worth it.”

First off, our highest, westernmost county is a 1,832-square-mile rectangle, some 54 miles east-west by 34 miles north-south. It counts 4,145 souls, boasts just two—in incorporated towns.

One is Keyes, an agricultural community that owes much of its economic health and well-being to a $12.5-million helium plant built in 1959 by the U. S. Bureau of Mines. The other is Boise City, the county seat.

Cimarron, let it be duly noted for Guinness fanciers, is the only county in the United States to border on four states. That would be Texas on the south, New Mexico on the west, Colorado and Kansas on the north.

(Should the county ever decide, in a pique, to secede and go it alone—as the entire Panhandle tried to do as “The Territory of Cimarron” in the 1880s—it could add Oklahoma to claim five states.)

Boise City, itself something of a geographical anomaly, claims its own gee-whiz superlatives. Only 35 miles from Kansas, 18 miles from Colorado, 27 miles from New Mexico, and 15 miles from Texas, it is closer to the capital city of the first three of those states (Topeka, Denver and Santa Fe) than it is to Oklahoma City.

As for the Boise City school district, it is the state’s largest. And its athletic teams must surely be one of the very few in the country to regularly play a five-state schedule.

Adding historical spice to this geographical chowder is the fact that Boise City began as a monumental scam following statehood in 1907.

Operating out of Guthrie, three promoters organized the Southwestern Immigration and Development Company. They laid out a handsome paper city near the center of the county and promptly started selling lots at $45 each.
Circulars showed the townsite—a windmill surrounded by a vast expanse of naked rangeland—as having well-lighted paved streets with trees and sidewalks. Three railroads, they assured would-be investors, were on their way, the better to haul off bale-to-the-acre cotton, 45-bushel corn and 65-bushel wheat.

Some 3,000 lots were said to have been sold, all over the country, before the law caught up with them. It was 1912 before they changed their place of residence to Leavenworth. But their town survived. And in time it began to fulfill at least some of its promise. It was designated county seat in 1908. It counted all of 350 people by 1925 when the Santa Fe finally arrived. And three years later it put up the impressive two-story brick courthouse in the square that still seems to dead-end every highway entering the “city,” which now has a population of 1,993.

No scam whatsoever is involved in the Santa Fe Trail Daze Celebration. The gala is just what it claims to be—a four-day card of informal activities, sufficiently varied to offer something to nearly everyone. Including free pancakes!

There are races and contests for the athletically inclined. A flower exhibit, antique car show, arts and crafts displays and much more for the more sedentary.

And music. A sacred music program in connection with the Thursday night Queen Coronation, a Friday night Hee Haw-style show, plus square dance and teen dance, a fiddling contest on Saturday, along with the big community-wide headliner dance featuring Jacky Ward.

Unusual—and, so far as we know, unique—feature of the celebration, however, is the free bus tour of the Kenton area. That is the county’s northwestern corner.

The tour leaves Trail Daze headquarters on the square at 8 o’clock Friday morning. And dramatizes for the visitor what it is that (1) gave Cimarron County its niche in history and (2) makes it such an interesting travel mecca today.

Camp Nichols may or may not be on the bus route this year. Its scattered stones, marking the 1865 outpost established by the redoubtable Kit Carson, are on privately owned land not easy to find. But it is one of the state’s few National Historic Landmarks.

It existed, briefly, to protect the Santa Fe Trail’s Cimarron Cutoff, which slashed across the northwestern corner of Cimarron County. Eroded trail ruts still exist in several places. As do at least three autograph-rock sites—trail-side cliffs scarred with the Kilroy-like carvings of 19th century travelers.

Tucked away in a protective cave—and unpublicized, such is the threat of vandalism today—is even an apparently authentic “CORONATTO 1541” inscription. And antedating Coronado by untold centuries are the numerous pictographs of prehistoric Indians.

A sampling of these treasures will
be shown tour-bus visitors. Along with even more ancient features like the famed Dinosaur Quarry, from which more than 18 tons of bones have now been removed over the years. And stream-bed rock formations bearing fossilized dinosaur footprints.

Other tour features include fanciful erosion sculptures like Old Maid Rock and the Wedding Party; the site of Robbers Roost, an outlaw hangout from Civil War days; Hallock Park with its Indian relics; lava-capped Black Mesa, its 4,973-foot crest representing Oklahoma's highest point; Black Mesa State Park, and the historic near-ghost of Kenton.

A rambunctious saloon town in the mid-1880s, when it was known as the Cowboy Capitol, Kenton is now reduced to a post office, a pair of churches, a few residences, and one of the state's most picturesque business establishments. A stop at Kenton Store and a chat with John Duncan, its 99-year-old proprietor, is a step back into "Territory of Cimarron" days.

The state park, on the other hand, is strictly modern and functional except for the exhibit of petrified logs from the area. Lake Carl Etling covers much of its 269 acres to provide fishing and boating. The rest of the park offers a grab-bag of Panhandle attractions: birds and wildflowers to enjoy, fossils and arrowheads to hunt for, caves and lava formations to explore along with picnic and camping facilities.

Motel accommodations in Boise City are somewhat limited, but a more than adequate selection can be found in Guymon. Anyone planning a visit at celebration time would be wise to make reservations. For more information write the Boise City Chamber of Commerce, Box 1027, Boise City, OK 73933.

And if you do get to go, try to make that Saturday afternoon Posthole Dig-Off. Better yet, why not plan to enter it?

There are four classes: men, women, boys and girls 14 and under. Posthole diggers are provided, along with a plot of virgin prairie and three minutes.

Who knows, you might set a new world's record. Present men's record, set in 1978 by Terry Thrall of Boise City: only 39 inches!

1980 Santa Fe Trail Daze Celebration

June 5, Thursday
Barrel Racing, Team Roping
Queen Coronation and Sacred Music Program

June 6, Friday
Free Bus Tour of Kenton Area Trail Daze Musical, Square Dance, Teen Dance

June 7, Saturday
Free Pancakes and Coffee Games and Contests, Parade, Antique Car Show, Horseshoe Pitching, Fiddling Contest, Dance with Jacky Ward

June 8, Sunday
Community Worship Services 11th Annual Little Hombre Rodeo
The landscape of northwestern Oklahoma varies from Roman Nose Resort (upper left) to the Gloss Mountains (upper right), from the Little Sahara State Park (lower left) to Canton Lake (lower right).

MAJOR COUNTY
FREE FAIR

Mennonite cooking,
Old-time Threshing,
Quilters' Corner
Entertain Visitors

BY VIDA LEE BOWLES
Vida Lee Bowles is editor of the Fairview Republican.
September is fair time in Oklahoma. Excitement builds. Individuals and families get their entries ready to compete with neighbors.

The winners at county fairs go on to state fairs in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, so nervousness and frustration abound. But there also is lots of fun as the champions are chosen.

Like other county fairs across the state, the Major County Free Fair in the northwestern Oklahoma town of Fairview will have magnificent animals and ribbon-winning exhibits. But home-made Mennonite foods, old-fashioned threshing demonstrations, an antique quilt display plus ice cream frozen in full view make this fair special.

Visitors to the fair usually look over the animals and exhibits first. They often follow the judges and intently watch as decisions are made and ribbons and trophies awarded. The intricate seams of hand-made garments are discussed. It is noted that jelly "tips just so much." The features that make a champion animal are pointed out. They judge the art work in their own minds as they say, "I may not know what's good, but I know what I like."

After the exhibits, there is the excitement of a midway, the thrill of a horse show, old-fashioned steam and gas engines to admire, contests such as skillet throwing, horseshoe pitching, apple peeling and nail driving to watch or participate in and special entertainment.

This year the county fair board plans to have the prison band from McAlester perform one night. The Fairview High School award-winning band also will play, and old-time country gospel singing will ring through the rafters.

The tantalizing aroma of good food will draw crowds to the concession stand where women from the Saron Mennonite Church will serve homemade food. Money from this annual project is used for up-keep of the country church, the same building where their parents and grandparents worshipped.

Fair-goers also are treated to threshing demonstrations using power from a steam engine. They will watch, and maybe be allowed to help, as the straw is hand tied with an old-fashioned baler.

Elda and Henry Martens, the couple responsible for the steam and gas engines at the state fair, are collectors of early Oklahoma machinery. They also own a railroad depot, and they keep many of their machines near the depot on an acreage close to Fairview's airport.

The Martenses are members of Oklahoma Steam Association, and at fair time friends from this association come to Major County to help with the threshing and baling demonstrations.

Preparations for this activity start in May when the wheat in the county ripens. The Martenses buy about two acres of uncut wheat from a farmer, cut it a little green with a binder pulled behind a tractor, shock it, let it dry and then bundle it for use at the September fair.

Dallas Womack, a long-time Fairview mechanic and collector of old engines, also has some of his hobby machines at the fair. He takes care of the engines and tractors while Mr. and Mrs. Martens work with the threshing and baling demonstrations.

Another demonstration popular with visitors comes when Mrs. Martens fills an old, six-gallon ice cream freezer with cream, eggs and flavoring. A gas engine is used for energy to turn the liquid into a tasty treat for the audience.

One year at the fair, Mrs. Martens and her mother and sisters presented a demonstration of ethnic Mennonite cooking. This year they plan to have an international foods day and tasting time.

This will include Mennonite and Lebanese foods made famous in Fairview by local cooks, as well as a
demonstration by friends of the Mar-
tenses who come from Holland and
India. Bangladesh foods will also be
featured since the Martenses daugh-
ter, Joyce, recently returned home
from two years there and wants to
show her new-found cooking skills.
Perhaps other countries also will be
represented.

The fair board, made up of individ-
uals from all over the sparsely popu-
lated county, is particularly proud of
the quilters' corner.

A quilt entered under the rules of
the extension service must have been
made during the past year by the
person entering it, but the quilters'
corner goes beyond this.

Any quilt made by anyone at any-
time may be brought to the fair for
display. In this way visitors are treat-
ed to seeing some beautiful handwork
which may have been done by some-
one's great-grandmother.

Near the quilt display, a pieced but
unfinished quilt is set up. Visitors can
sit and work awhile. Beginners are
given special tips on quilting by local
masters of this art.

The program for the fair varies each
year, but there is some continuity.

The fair queen is chosen at a talent
contest on Tuesday night. Wednesday
and Thursday afternoons are devoted
to taking entries, judging and the
horse show at the rodeo grounds. Fri-
day night the grand champion
animals are selected, prizes are given by
local merchants to visitors registered
at the various commercial booths and
entertainment is presented.

The fair grounds are located near
the city park in the only part of Fair-
view that isn't flat. The well-kept park
with shade trees, picnic areas and
play equipment provides a restful re-
treat from the crowds which fill the
two buildings and cover the fair-
grounds.

Vacationers camping at Canton
Lake, only 15 miles southwest of Fair-
view, often drive in for a day at the
fair. They also may visit other at-
tractions in the area.

The Gloss Mountain State Park,
located on SH 15 northwest of Fair-
view, offers the opportunity to see an
area before it is developed. Created
as a state park just last year, little
work has been done.

Plains and abrupt buttes rise 50 to
175 feet above the valley floor. Hikers
to the top of the buttes are afforded
an excellent view of the Cimarron
River as it winds across the coun-
tryside a few miles to the north. A vari-
ety of vegetation and wildlife is
found in the park.

Oklahoma's only remaining sod
house is located 15 miles north of
Fairview on SH 8. Preserved inside a
humidity-controlled building, the
house is furnished authentically and
is open to visitors Tuesday through
Sunday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Northwest of Fairview near Way-
noka is the Little Sahara Recreational
Area. The shifting sands provide a
perfect setting for dune buggy rides,
and competition will be stiff during
the annual Labor Day dune buggy
races there.

To the south lies Roman Nose State
Resort, set in a rugged, wooded can-
yon area near Watonga.

The county has interesting small
towns full of friendly people eager
to tell stories about the history of the
area. Part of that history is reflected
in the Major County Free Fair.
By Micki Van Deventer

By late June, the pilgrimage begins.

The fairgrounds and the football stadium gradually fill up with campers, tents, and yes, even a few old-fashioned teepees.

The occasion is the annual Pawnee powwow, a mid-summer rite steeped in Indian history and culture. Outsiders, who attend the powwow, may only superficially appreciate the bold colors and rhythmic sounds that are the hallmarks of this event.

For the Pawnee Indians, however, it is a homecoming that pays homage not only to their Indian tribal roots but also to their patriotism and devotion to their country.

It is four days of revelry and plenty of friendship. It is four days of ancient dances, Indian chants, arts and crafts—all mixed with just enough of the white man's commercialism to bring on a crowd.

This year, July 3-6, the 34th annual Pawnee Indian Homecoming will be much the same as in past years, according to John Knifechief, president of the Pawnee Indian Veterans, Inc., the association that sponsors the free event.

For two years Knifechief has served as the PIVI president, a post that is far from honorary, since it requires the leader to make sure each powwow is bigger than the last one. Each PIVI president is assisted by four Indian women's clubs.

It is a task that keeps Knifechief busy year round. But it is also one that comes easily for him.

Until a few years ago, Knifechief, his wife, two sons and a daughter were among the star performers at Disneyland. Knifechief managed the Indian shows in that fairyland setting. And in his off hours, he and his family took their Indian show all over California.

"It was my hobby," Knifechief recalls, "my job away from work."

He has given the powwow a little Disneyland razzle-dazzle, although he is reluctant to admit it.

Actually, he confides, he would rather be performing in the center of the arena with his peers than running the powwow. He still sings the old time-honored Indian songs in the powwow "every chance I get," he said, laughing.

The songs and the dances, after all, are what lure the public back each year to this small town where history, legend and Indian ways are king for four days.

To the Pawnees, who number 2,214, the homecoming is a significant link with the past. Tribal members come from all across the United States, the east and west coasts and Canada to participate. It also attracts Indians of almost every other tribe, many of whom travel the summertime powwow circuit.

The homecoming is a time, too, when many of the old-timers continue to swap the stories on which they were weaned.

They remember well the tales told by their ancestors about how the Pawnees migrated from Texas across Oklahoma and into central Nebraska prior to the 18th century.

There were four bands of them called by the odd-sounding names of Skedee, Chauée, Petahaurat and Kitahaki.

They know the stories of the bad years for the Pawnees—1849 when Asiatic Cholera struck down 1,234 of them, and 1900 when war, disease and old age were triple jeopardies that reduced their numbers to a twilight figure of 650.

And so the homecoming is a celebration of great magnitude.

The crowds are predictable, Knifechief says. At least 5,000 people attend the marathon dancing and singing contests. And he remembers the 1971 homecoming as a record-breaker. More than 35,000 people registered.

Pawnee old-timers still talk wistfully of that figure.

The week before the powwow opens, most of the Indians have already staked their claim to a patch of the fairgrounds property and erected their living quarters.

Pawnee Chief publisher D. Jo Ferguson says it's been that way since the end of World War II when a group of Pawnee Indians who served in World War I decided it was time to pay respect to their patriotism.

It was 1943, and Frank Young Eagle, the architect for the homecoming blueprint, and James Sun Eagle sponsored a feast for the leading men and women of the tribe in October. They had the support of tribal leaders, and it was there that plans for the special war dance for the veterans of World War II were formed.

During the war years, the war dance committee sponsored similar feasts and dances as a way to entertain the young men who returned home on furlough. Members of the tribe and friends donated beef, groceries and money to the big homecoming celebration. Today the event costs more than $15,000 to stage with the state picking up the tab for a third of the costs.

But welcoming the warriors was not new even in 1943.

The Pawnees have traditionally welcomed warriors home from the battlefields. In fact, it was during the Indian Wars, when a peace-loving Pawnee scout battalion served with the U.S. Cavalry that the first tribute was paid to the Pawnee warriors.

It was then that warrior societies, backed by the entire tribe, began holding special prayers and war dances.

Thus the ceremony of honoring the warriors became the embryo, as the Pawnees call it, of the annual homecoming.

When the first official one was held
in 1946, the festivities were fashioned after the American Memorial Day observance. It was dedicated to the trail of honor left by Pawnee warriors who had served the U.S. flag from Wyoming to Korea.

More than one memorial float in the Saturday morning mile-long parade has been dedicated to the Pawnees' role in wartime, particularly on Iwo Jima.

And every dance that is performed is reminiscent of the Indian heritage. It is those dances, unrivaled in their authenticity, that provide the powwow's showcase. The encampments that circle the fairgrounds are just window dressing for the real attraction.

There is perhaps no sight in Oklahoma that is more colorful or poignantly breathtaking than when 700 Indian dancers are moving their bodies to a precise cadence that has its roots in cultural traditions dating back several centuries.

Admittedly, some of the drama of the powwow is lost on the red man's white brothers.

Knifechief admits, "It is hard to explain how the Indians feel about the songs and dances that have such great meaning to them. But we can always tell that the non-Indians like the color and action of the dances."

There is an excitement that is almost electric in its appeal as the competitions begin for the best performers in the straight or fancy dancing contests.

The straight dancing is the heart of the powwow. Here the steps are traditional, reflecting the old ways of the tribe and performed by dancers attired in buckskin or cloth and only a few feathers.

Fancy dancing is more familiar to the tourist. Dressed in bright feathers and beaded costumes, each dancer tries to catch the well-trained eye of the judge. This intricate style of dancing allows for more creativity.

Naturally, time has brought changes to the powwow. And not all of them have been happy ones. Knifechief admits the white man's culture has eroded the symbolism of the Pawnee traditions.

It gets harder each year, he says, to interest young people in the rituals that were as familiar as breathing to their ancestors.

"We worry a lot about that," Knifechief says. "But you can't push young people."

Some can be lured to participate in the contests by the carrot of prize money if they win. But those dollars are harder to come by these days, Knifechief notes.

Knifechief and his war veteran friends are patient, however. "An old Indian chief once said, 'When it's time, the young people will want to learn the old ways.'"
They take that tribal maxim as gospel. And so they prod gently to encourage their children to learn the dances and songs. But they never push too far.

What they have done is start a tiny tots competition that is held during opening night ceremonies. It is "a pleasure to watch," Knifechief says. It gives children, who are too young to know much of the history laced into the powwow, an opportunity to perform while wearing the costumes. They may, or may not, be familiar with the rituals.

This is a teaser for the other events—the selection of the Pawnee Indian Princess on Friday night, the all night dancing on Saturday and the Sunday night finale when the contests determine which Indians will win the top titles for another year.

Sunday night is more than just the closing for this annual extravaganza of pageantry. Unique and plaintive chants are sung as a backdrop to the dance steps that have been so carefully learned and painstakingly preserved.

These dances are like a centerpiece for the Pawnee Indian festivities, flashy, colorful reminders that come out of the past once a year to nudge the Pawnees to an even greater appreciation of their Indian heritage.

But there also is meaning in the rituals for their guests who stand as mute observers while a page from history is repeated.

The drama of the dances and the songs remind them, too, that here are the remnants of a proud people whose sense of patriotism and brotherhood was never limited by ethnic race or color.

And that is the message of each year's Pawnee Homecoming.
## Entertainment Calendar

### Indian Events

| June | 5-7 | Pioneer Powwow & Rodeo, Okmulgee |
|      | 5-8 | Sequoyah Intertribal Powwow, Elk City |
|      | 10-12 | All Indian Fair, Fairgrounds, Anadarko |
|      | 19-21 | Hub City Powwow, Clinton |
|      | 26-29 | Osage Indian Dances, Pawhuska |
|      | 27-28 | Little River Powwow, Little Axe |
| August | 4-6 | Quapaw Powwow, Quapaw |
|      | 10-13 | Pawnee Indian Homecoming, Pawnee |
|      | 11-13 | Feathers & Buckskin Society Powwow, El Reno |
|      | 17-20 | Tonkawa Tribal Powwow, Tonkawa |
|      | 21-24 | Tulsa Powwow, Mohawk Park, Tulsa |
|      | 22-24 | Wichita Tribe Powwow, Anadarko |
|      | 29-31 | Ottawa Powwow, Quapaw |

### Drama/Music

| June | 1-7 | "The Sunshine Boys," Community Theatre, Lawton |
|      | 5-14 | "Fiddler On The Roof," Community Theatre, McAlester |
|      | 6-22 | "Boom Servide," Theatre Tulsa, Tulsa |
|      | 7-22 | "Oklahoma!" & "Dust On Her Petticoats," Discoversland, Tulsa |
|      | 15-21 | "A Night In Venicia," Lawton |
|      | 16-17 | "Hello Dolly!" Lyric Theatre, Oklahoma City |
|      | 18-20 | "The Four Poster," Muskogee Little Theatre, Muskogee |
|      | 21-24 | Davis Film Festival, Davis |
|      | 24-25 | "Trail of Tears" & "The Cherokee Kid," Tsa-Ly-Gi, Tahlequah |
|      | 26-29 | The Music Man," Lyric Theatre, Oklahoma City |

### July

| 4-7 | Powdershorn Park Bluegrass Festival, Lawley |
| 8-19 | "Applause!" Lyric Theatre, Oklahoma City |
| 8-19 | "The Sound of Music," Town & Gown Theatre, Stillwater |
| 10-20 | "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Philbrook, Tulsa |
| 17-20 | Midsummer's Night's Fair, Norman |
| 18-20 | Round Spring Park Bluegrass Festival, Lawley |
| 22-24 | "Kiss Me Kate!" Lyric Theatre, Oklahoma City |
| 24-27 | All Night Singing Under The Stars, Holdenville |

### August

| 2 | Konawa All Night Gospel Sing, Konawa |
| 5-16 | "Oliver!" Lyric Theatre, Oklahoma City |
| 6-10 | Grants Salt Creek Bluegrass Festival, Hugo |
| 29-30 | Seminole All Night Singing Sing, Seminole |

### September

| 12-28 | "Verdict!" Theatre Tulsa, Tulsa |

### Water Sports/Races

| June | 1 | TransArm Professional Road Race, Hallet Track, Tulsa |
|      | 10-12 | Wagoner Lake Festival, Wagoner |
|      | 28 | Drag Boat Races, Cleveland |
| July | 4-5 | Nat'l Dune Buggy Races, Little Sahara State Park, Waynoka |
|      | 5-6 | Ponca City Grand Prix, Ponca City |
|      | 20-27 | Sports Club of America Bonus Nat'l, Hallet Race Track, Tulsa |
| August | 15-17 | Nat'l Championship Super Stock Outboard Motor Races, Lake Eufaula |
|      | 21-23 | Nat'l Moto-Cross Races, Ponca City |
|      | 29-30 | Nat'l Dune Buggy Races, Little Sahara State Park, Waynoka |
| September | 1 | Great Raft Race, Sand Springs, Tulsa |
|      | 20 | Illinois River Canoe Race, Tahlequah |

### Fruit Festivals

| June | 29 | World Championship Watermelon Seed Spitting Contest, Pauls Valley |

### Fairs & Festivals

| June | 1-2 | Cypress Community Festival, Durant |
|      | 1-7 | Western Week, Checotah, Oklahoma |
|      | 5-8 | Santa Fe Trail Days, Bixby City |
|      | 6-8 | Love County Frontier Days, Marietta |
|      | 8-14 | Bello Starr Festival, Wilburton |
|      | 14-15 | Canterbury Art Festival, Edmond |
|      | 20-21 | Reunion Days & PeeWee Rodeo, Stigler |
|      | 26-28 | Green Corn Festival, Bixby |
|      | 27-29 | Kiawmchi Owa-Chito Festival, Broken Bow |
| July | 30-July 5 | Blue Mountain Western Festival, Hartshorne |

### Rodeos & Horse Events

| June | 3-7 | RCA Rodeo, Hugo |
|      | 6-8 | Little Britches Rodeo, Sayre |
|      | 12-14 | Bob Crosby Memorial Rodeo, Cheyenne |
|      | 14-15 | Will Rogers Rodeo, Claremore |
|      | 15 | Johnson Memorial Steer Roping, Pawhuska |
|      | 19-21 | RCA Rodeo, Durant |
|      | 20-23 | Creek Nati All Indian Rodeo, Okmulgee |
|      | 21-22 | Oklahoma Pippin College Show, Fairgrounds, Oklahoma City |
|      | 26-29 | High School State Rodeo Finals, Fairgrounds, Oklahoma City |
|      | 28-30 | IRA Rodeo, Pauiy Valley |
| July | 30-July 5 | State 4-H Light Horse Show, Fairgrounds, Oklahoma City |

### July

| 3-5 | Fred Lowery Memorial Rodeo, Lenapah |
| 4-5 | PCA Rodeo, Hinton |
| 4-6 | All Indian Rodeo, Shroud |
| 10-12 | IRA Rodeo, Wynnewood |
| 14-20 | Greater Oklahoma Hunter-Jumper Horse Show, Fairgrounds, Oklahoma City |
| 17-19 | Cimarron River Stampede Rodeo, Waynoka |
| 17-20 | International Round-Up, Colorado, Pawhuska |
| 26-Aug 2 | Nat'l Paint Horse Show, Fairgrounds, Oklahoma City |
| 30-Aug 2 | RCA Rodeo, Ada |

### August

| 3-9 | Jr Quarter Horse Show, Expo Square, Tulsa |
| 7-9 | IRA Rodeo, Sallisaw |
| 8-9 | Oklahoma Rodeo, Okmulgee |
| 20-24 | Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo, Vinita |
| 21-23 | 101 Ranch Rodeo, 101 Ranch, Ponca City |
| 26-27 | RCA Rodeo, Elk City |

### September

| 5-7 | Oklahoma State Prison Rodeo, McAlester |
| 20 | All Girl Rodeo, Cheyenne |
| 26-27 | Inter-Collegiate Rodeo, Claremore |