Above: Sculptor Paul Moore has created a tribute to Oklahoma's five land runs for the state's centennial. This bronze sculpture is only part of the finished project.
On November 16, 2007, Oklahoma celebrated its centennial—100 years of statehood. Many celebrations were held, and projects were undertaken around the state to mark this milestone and to recognize the diversity of the Oklahoma experience and spirit.

Cities, towns, schools, and organizations spent countless hours planning for the event. Many projects across the state that were completed in time for the celebration will enhance Oklahoma for years to come. The Oklahoma Land Run Monument in Oklahoma City is a dramatic work—one of the world’s largest—of forty-six giant bronze sculptures. Tulsa unveiled a Jazz Hall of Fame and a Memorial of Reconciliation to the 1921 Race Riot. The Standing Bear Park Project in Ponca City recognized the famed Ponca chief, and Lawton dedicated a Buffalo Soldier mural. These are but a few of the numerous projects undertaken.
Museum Muses

Over 800 attractions are listed throughout the state on the Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department’s web site at www.travelok.com. Included in the attractions are more than 250 museums and 114 historic homes, historic sites, and landmarks.

Oklahoma’s Six “Countries”

For tourism and marketing purposes, Oklahoma is divided into six regions or “countries.” The regions are Red Carpet Country in the northwest part of Oklahoma; Green Country, northeast; Kiamichi Country, southeast; Lake & Trail Country, south central; Great Plains Country, southwest; and Frontier Country, central. Each “country” has a wealth of events, activities, and attractions to explore.

Fair Facts

In 1845, near Tahlequah, the Agricultural Society of the Cherokee Nation held the first fair in Oklahoma. Muskogee hosted the first “state” fair, called the Indian International Fair, in 1874. The first Oklahoma Territorial Fair was held in Oklahoma City in October 1892, and the first Oklahoma State Fair was held in the year of statehood, 1907.
The shaping and blending of cultures in Oklahoma has gone on for far longer than the last hundred years. The word culture refers to the way of life of a group of people. Many cultures had already intertwined and melded before statehood, as our land was settled in a very piecemeal fashion.

Native Americans already living on the land were joined by other Indian tribes who had been forced to relocate to the area. The American Indians were soon joined by Euro-Americans and African Americans as the land was opened to settlement. Others from Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America now also call Oklahoma home, making this a melting pot of many and varied cultural traditions.

The process has not always been easy by any means. But through a great deal of effort on the part of many, the result is a strong and proud state. The diversity of different ideas, customs, skills, arts, foods, and beliefs has produced a kaleidoscope of events. The numerous festivals and events held across Oklahoma throughout the year celebrate the many cultures and the unique history of our state.

Rodeos

One event that is held in virtually every part of the state is the rodeo. Today’s rodeos have evolved from the informal contests American cowboys held at the end of the long cattle trails in the 1800s. Those contests included some of the many tasks that had to be performed on the ranches—roping, horse breaking, riding, herding, branding, and more.

Rodeos are the only national spectator sport originating entirely within the United States.

Above: More than a hundred rodeos take place in Oklahoma throughout the year. Bull riding is just one of the events you’ll see.
The early Spanish influence, including the cattlemen known as *vaqueros*, helped set the stage for the modern rodeo. As the open range and cattle drive era ended, many cowboys took jobs with the new wild west shows. The 101 Ranch Wild West Show and Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show both helped define the pageantry and showmanship of modern rodeo. Aspects of the wild west show were eventually combined with cowboy competitions that were held in many small towns.

The Range Round-Up in Guthrie is an event that showcases working cowboys from some of Oklahoma’s largest and most historic ranches as they compete for bragging rights. The Old Settlers Picnic at Velma, established in 1890, claims to be the oldest, free open rodeo in Oklahoma.

**Music**

Music soothes the soul and is common to all cultures worldwide. Our rich cultural diversity results in a variety of musical tributes. Our festivals feature bluegrass, western swing, jazz, folk, country, pop, and other musical styles, plus fiddlers and square dancers. The Charlie Christian International Jazz Festival in Oklahoma City, the Woody Guthrie Folk Festival of Okemah, the Oklahoma Mozart International Festival in Bartlesville, and Bob Wills Day at the State Capitol are only a few of the many musical events held each year.
Indian Heritage

Our American Indian heritage is celebrated throughout the year with a number of events. Modern powwows are a celebration of this heritage. Powwows, which usually last for several days, include singing, dancing, eating, and, sometimes, trading. The Kiowa hold a Black Leggings Society Dance in Anadarko and the annual Gourd Clan Powwow in Carnegie. At the Gourd Clan Powwow, tipis and arbors are set up near the bank of the Washita River, reminiscent of days long ago. The Tinker Inter-Tribal Council Powwow in Midwest City honors veteran warriors. Other powwows are held by the Tonkawa, Cherokee, Apache, Comanche, Quapaw, Sac and Fox, and many other tribes.

Many other events commemorate Oklahoma’s Indian heritage. Muskogee is the site for events that celebrate the traditions of the Seminole, the Choctaw, and the Chickasaw. The Choctaw Storytelling Festival is held at Crowder. The American Indian Exposition at Anadarko has been a tradition for many years. Red Earth Native American Cultural Festival in Oklahoma City is one of the largest events of its kind in the United States. Okmulgee is the site for the celebration of the Muscogee Creek Nation. The “Trail of Tears Drama” at Tahlequah depicts the triumphs and tragedies of a Cherokee family. The Kanuche Festival in Tahlequah features an ancient traditional food made with hickory nuts. A Flint Knapping Seminar in Pawnee demonstrates the very old skill of making stone tools.

Spiro Mounds State Archaeological Park hosts many events during the year. Archaeologists believe the ancient people may have used some of the mounds to keep track of solar events and the changing of the seasons. Visitors can learn the history of the mounds during a one-mile walk and find out why they align with the solstice and equinox sunsets.

Battle Sites

Several Civil War battles were fought on Oklahoma soil. Period life can be seen at reenactments where you can hear the cannons as they might have sounded during battles. Walk through the camps of sutlers (those who sold food and other items to the soldiers) and the tents of soldiers. Hear historical speakers, and learn about life during this era.

Every three years, there is a reenactment of the Battle of Honey Springs at the historic site near Checotah. The site commemorates
the location of a Union Army victory on July 17, 1863. A candlelight tour in Checotah includes a series of scenes depicting life in Indian Territory during the Civil War.

**The Frontier Era**

The pre-1840s life of mountain men, trappers, and craftsmen is reenacted at the Kiamichi River Rendezvous at Antlers. The Fort Washita Fur Trade Era Rendezvous at Durant depicts the 1820-1840 fur trade era of the American West. Reenactors at the Dripping Springs Rendezvous in Okmulgee demonstrate frontier skills and crafts. In Tombstone Tales, historical reenactors portray some of the colorful individuals buried at the territorial Fort Reno Post Cemetery. Members of the Saltfork Craftsmen Association demonstrate blacksmithing skills at the historic shop at the Pawnee Bill Ranch and at other locations around the state.

**Harvest Celebrations**

*Harvest*, the time when a ripened crop is gathered from the field, has been celebrated since prehistoric days. A successful crop meant food for the coming winter. Our agriculture heritage is celebrated around the state. A few of these events are AgriFest in Enid, the Oldies Club Tractor & Vehicle Show in Hennessey, the Pawnee Steam & Gas Engine Show, the Great Plains Antique Tractor Show of Hobart, the Farming Heritage Festival at Shawnee, the National John Deere Two-Cylinder Show in Fairview, and the Billings Wheat Country Festival. Golden Harvest Day at Colbert includes displays of antique tractors and implements and demonstrations of early-day farm life including threshing, binding, rock crushing, corn shelling, saw milling, hay baling, and plowing.

Fairs go hand in hand with harvest festivals. Community fairs provide entertainment and social gatherings, as well as an opportunity to earn bragging rights for having the “best” in crops or foods. One of the oldest community fairs in the state is the Mountain View Free Fair, which began in the early 1900s. Oklahoma City and Tulsa both have outstanding state fairs each year. Rides, midway games, exhibits from near and far, shows and music, and, of course, food are all a part of these fairs.

At some festivals, fabulous foods are the featured attraction—from chili to fruits to chocolate to even oysters. Prague and Yukon both
celebrate their Czechoslovakian heritage with festivals that feature kolache pastry and kielbasa sausage. Chandler and Tuttle, both home to major dairies, have ice cream festivals. Jay has a huckleberry festival, while McLoud spotlights the blackberry. Both Porter and Stratford hold peach festivals. Sweet strawberries are the object of an annual festival at Stillwell. Rush Springs and Valliant are home to watermelon festivals. Black-eyed peas take center stage at a Hollis event, while one of Oklahoma’s favorites, fried okra, is featured at Checotah. Community efforts at the Fried Onion Burger Day Festival at El Reno result in a record-setting hamburger weighing over 850 pounds and measuring 8.5 feet in diameter. Grape festivals are growing in popularity as vineyards become more widespread. A 40-foot pecan pie is made at Okmulgee’s Pecan Festival. Stillwater hosts the Zucchini Festival. You can see a form of molasses being produced at the Sorghum Festival in Wewoka. The Fantastic Oyster Fry in Frederick has been held since 1952 and offers fresh oysters from the Gulf of Mexico. Norman’s Chocolate Festival offers mouth-watering delicacies. Pawhuska hosts the National Indian Taco Championship. Cordell celebrates fall with a Pumpkin Festival. The year can be topped off with a sip of wassail at Guthrie when the town recreates a Victorian holiday in December.

**Trails and Rails**

Trails and roads have crisscrossed the land we know as Oklahoma for hundreds of years. The Chisholm Trail Days in Kingfisher feature living history at recreated 1800s encampments. Duncan celebrates another leg of the famous trail with the Chisholm Trail Cowboy Festival & Chuckwagon Cookoff. Vici spotlights the Great Western Trail. Cimarron County features the Santa Fe Trail Daze. The Oklahoma Bicycling Society sponsors the Tour de Trees in Eufaula for those who want a more leisurely view of the countryside.

Railroads are celebrated at the Santa Fe Depot in Shawnee. Railroad Day at Muskogee honors the rich railroad history of the Midland Valley Depot.

More miles of the famed Route 66 highway run through Oklahoma than any other state. Many communities in the state honor the “Mother Road.” Sapulpa and Vinita are two of the many towns that have Route 66 special events, which often include car shows and road cruises.

Vintage aircraft can be viewed at the Will Rogers Fly-In in Oologah and at the Fairview Fly-In.

**Flora and Fauna**

Bats, snakes, and birds—oh my! The abundance of wildlife, some that live here year round and some that migrate through, is the object of special events in every corner of the state. Watches for the majestic eagle are held at various locations, and Vian hosts a loon
watch. Boiling Springs State Park, Freedom, and Jet have Watchable Wildlife Weekends. Mexican free-tailed bats are the objects of bat watches at the Selman Caves near Freedom. Grove hosts the Pelican Festival. The “Fangtastic” Rattlesnake Hunt is an annual event in Waurika, as are similar hunts in Waynoka, Okeene, and Apache. Fishing derbies held at our many lakes and waterways are also commonplace. Where else but Antlers would host a Deer Festival?

A rose is a rose, unless it’s at the Rose Rock Festival at Noble. Beautiful flowers are the reason for the Azalea Festival in Muskogee, Ponca City’s Iris Festival, Dogwood Days Festival in Idabel, Tulips A Bloom Festival in Blackwell, the Magnolia Festival in Durant, and the Canna Festival in Carnegie. Dig for selenite crystals at the Birding and Crystal Festival at Jet. Enjoy the Sand Fest at Waynoka, and sand drag racing at Little Sahara State Park.

Other Celebrations

Some of our many colorful cultures are spotlighted in festivals throughout the state. Several communities hold Germanfests where the food fare features schnitzel sandwiches, bratwurst, sauerkraut, and apple strudel. The Scottish Games and Gathering in Tulsa is a multiclans event with Celtic crafts, pipe and drum competitions, Highland dancing, and Scottish foods. Oklahoma City hosts the Irish Arts Oklahoma Feis, a Gaelic event with costumes and Irish step dancers. McAlester celebrates with the Italian Festival. Lawton is one of many
Deep in the heart of the Kiamichi Mountains in southeastern Oklahoma where the flora and fauna are lush, you will find an abundance of opinions on the existence of a very large creature known as “Bigfoot.” In spite of not always agreeing on whether such a thing does exist, Honobia residents celebrate the possibility with the Honobia Bigfoot Fall Festival. The festival includes storytellers, searches for Bigfoot, games, music, arts and crafts, and food.

Bigfoot (sometimes called “Sasquatch”) stories have echoed through the mountains for years, not only in Oklahoma, but also in the logging camps in the Pacific Northwest. The 8-foot-tall (or 12 foot in some stories), hairy, ape-like creatures leave trails and evidence for those who believe. Recorded stories of Bigfoot sightings in Oklahoma have been around since 1849, when the manlike beast was seen by a trapper along the Little River near Eagletown. Other “sightings” have been reported through the years in the thickly forested areas of the state. Then there are those who consider it an 8-foot tall tale of fun folklore. In any event, it’s reason enough for a fall festival.

Oil reigns as king at Black Gold Days in Glenpool, Gusher Days in Seminole, and the Oil Patch Jamboree in Drumright.

Celebrate the Wind Festival is held at Shattuck. Bixby hosts the Green Corn Festival, while Blair has a Boll Weevil Bash. Robbers Cave Fall Festival at Wilburton draws hundreds of law-abiding people.

Guthrie, the state’s first capital, celebrates statehood each year on November 16. There’s a reenactment of the inauguration of Oklahoma’s first governor, Charles N. Haskell, and the symbolic wedding of Miss Indian Territory and Mr. Oklahoma Territory.

These are only a few of the festivals and events that take place each year in our special state. Our festivals and events are not only fun, but they also tell us much about our great state.

**It’s Your Turn**

1. Name two elements of culture.
2. Give two examples of Oklahoma festivals that celebrate other cultures.
Oklahoma is also a treasure trove of historic sites and museums. Historic sites are locations where important events took place. Museums provide a snapshot of our cultural and natural heritage, and they offer an interactive way to better understand our history. Museums of all sizes can be found in every part of the state. Many museums offer online virtual tours for those who can’t visit them in person.

The new, state-of-the-art Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City celebrates the varied events and experiences that make us Oklahomans. The story of our colorful shared heritage unfolds in four major galleries and several outdoor displays.

Exhibits in Oklahoma museums cover the spectrum from everyday living to once-in-a-lifetime events. Some unique items include “Little Rascals” memorabilia at Boswell, windmills at Shattuck, the Dewey County jail, items from the movie *Twister* at Wakita, an exhibition on lawyer and gunfighter Temple Houston (son of Sam Houston of Texas) at Woodward, information about the first Boy Scout troop at Pawhuska, items from the movie *Dick Tracy* at Pawnee, Chelsea’s pre-cut Sears Roebuck home, the 1929 Coleman Theatre in Miami built for $600,000 in 1929, Pawnee Bill’s Ranch near Pawnee, and an actual World War II submarine, the U.S.S. *Batfish*, at Muskogee.

**Prehistory**

Discover what Oklahoma was like some 300 million years ago at the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History in Norman when you walk among the dinosaurs. Other exhibits depict how the early people in Oklahoma lived. Ancient artifacts of the Caddo and Choctaw people and a cast skeleton of a colossal dinosaur found nearby can be seen in the Museum of the Red River in Idabel. The fascinating culture of the prehistoric Caddoan people is interpreted at the Spiro Mounds Archaeological State Park in LeFlore County. Dinosaur tracks can be seen near the Black Mesa in the Panhandle when you explore...
the Kenton Mercantile or the Cimarron Heritage Center in Boise City. Ancient artifacts and fossils can be found in many other museums in the state.

If you’re interested in world history, visit the Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art in Shawnee. There you’ll see Egyptian, Greek, and Roman art objects from the Middle Ages and Renaissance, including two mummies, plus Native American, African/Oceanic, and Eastern cultural artifacts.

**American Indian**

Tribal museums and cultural centers help tell the American Indian story in Oklahoma. Visitors can tour the Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah year round, while the Tsa-La-Gi Ancient Village living museum is open during summer months. Indian City U.S.A. in Anadarko is one of the Southwest’s largest American Indian museums and includes seven village replicas. You can also find tribal museums for the Delaware, Wichita, and Apache Indians in Anadarko. Muskogee is home to the Five Civilized Tribes Museum and the Ataloa Lodge Museum. Other tribal museums include the Seminole Nation Museum in Wewoka, the Kiowa Tribal Museum in Carnegie, the Osage Tribal Museum in Pawhuska, and Bigheart Museum in Barnsdall. Oklahoma City’s American Indian Cultural Center and Museum is one of the newest additions. It celebrates the diversity of Oklahoma’s Native American people.
Frontier Era

The Three Rivers Museum in Muskogee preserves the multiethnic history and heritage of an important era in Oklahoma’s early commercial history. The history of the Chouteau family is intertwined with the Three Rivers area, as told in the Chouteau Memorial Museum in Salina. One of the many early-day explorers in Oklahoma was writer Washington Irving, whose trail through our state is told at Ripley.

The reverent Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in Roger Mills County belies the events of November 27, 1868, when Lt. Col. George A. Custer and the 7th U.S. Cavalry attacked the Southern Cheyenne village of Chief Black Kettle. The site interprets the events of that fateful day. Life in a frontier fort during the mid-1800s can be relived at Fort Towson Historic Site in Choctaw County. Visitors can also walk through the nearby Doaksville Site, the former Choctaw Nation capital. Still an active army base, Fort Sill also has a storied history that’s told in the Fort Sill Museum, which includes the guardhouse that held the Apache warrior, Geronimo. The home of the last chief of the Comanche, Quanah Parker, is located in nearby Cache. Fort Washita in Bryan County was built in 1841 to provide protection for the Choctaw and Chickasaw against enemy raids. Several period reenactments are held at the fort, and artifacts are on exhibit. Other 1800s posts, Fort Gibson and Fort Supply, also offer a look at frontier life, as does historic Fort Reno in Canadian County.

Below: Several historic forts display artifacts of the period. These are on display at Fort Gibson.

Something Extra!

In the 1800s, women in Oklahoma sewed fishing weights into the hems of their long skirts because of the wind.
Civil War Sites
Several Civil War battles were fought on Oklahoma soil. The Battle of Honey Springs Historic Site near Checotah was won by the Union Army on July 17, 1863. The Union Army of the frontier included not only white troops, but also a large number of American Indians and the 1st Kansas Volunteer Infantry Regiment, a regiment recruited from former black slaves. Another historic site commemorates the Cabin Creek Battle near Adair, and the Confederate Memorial Museum at Atoka highlights the Battle of Middle Boggy.

Trails and Rails
Follow the route of the trail over which thousands of cattle were moved in the heart of Oklahoma from Texas to Kansas at Chisholm Trail museums in Waurika, Duncan, and Kingfisher. The Jones & Plummer Trail Museum is in Beaver, and the Buffalo Museum includes artifacts and an exhibit on the Fort Dodge Trail Crossing.

A number of museums feature the 1893 Cherokee Strip Land Run, including those in Blackwell, Perry, Alva, Enid, and Grant and in Alfalfa County. A race like no other opened the Unassigned Lands on April 22, 1889, and that event is one of many spotlighted at the Oklahoma Territorial Museum in Guthrie.

Railroads played a large role in Indian Territory, and many depots became museums when tracks were abandoned. The MK&T (Missouri, Kansas & Texas) Depot in Hominy, the Katy Depot in Checotah, the Frisco Depot in Antlers, and Santa Fe depots in Cheyenne and Waynoka are among several that serve as museums. Shawnee’s Santa Fe Depot Museum is in a spectacular 1903 Romanesque-style building. The Canadian County Museum complex in El Reno’s Heritage Park includes the restored Rock Island Depot.

Route 66 museums in Elk City and Clinton, as well as Route 66 landmarks along the famed road, preserve a moment in the American experience.

African Americans
African Americans searching for new beginnings came to Oklahoma in record numbers, creating more all-black communities than anywhere else in the country. Boley, one of twenty-seven all-black towns, features a historic district that was founded as a camp for black railroad workers, a historical museum, and the now-closed Farmers & Merchants State Bank, the site of an attempted robbery by gangster Pretty Boy Floyd.
Famous Oklahomans

Several museums are devoted to Oklahomans who have gained fame. These museums include the Will Rogers Memorial in Claremore, the Gene Autry Oklahoma Museum in Gene Autry, the Tom Mix Museum of Dewey, the Henry and Shirley Bellmon Library and Museum in Billings, the Governor Seay Mansion in Kingfisher, the T. B. Ferguson House of Watonga, the Peter Conser House in Hodgen, Sequoyah’s Cabin near Sallisaw, the Jim Thorpe House at Yale, the White Hair Memorial near Ralston, and sagebrush artist Augusta Metcalfe Museum of Durham.

Urban Regions

Tulsa is home to several world-class museums. These include the Philbrook Museum of Art, housed in the 1927 Tuscan-style estate of oilman Waite Phillips; the Gilcrease Museum collection of American Indian and western art; the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame and the Geoscience Center.

Oklahoma City also has a variety of museums. There are the renowned National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum; the Harn Homestead, which was claimed during the Great Land Run of 1889; the all-inclusive Omniplex arts and science museum with the Red Earth Indian Center and the International Photography Hall of Fame and Museum; the State Capitol; the Oklahoma City Museum of Art; the Firefighters Museum; and the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. The last tells the story of the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

Other Museums

Called “the Little Smithsonian,” the Woolaroc Museum and Wildlife Preserve near Bartlesville, the country home of oil baron Frank Phillips, showcases outstanding paintings, sculptures, and artifacts. A replica of Oklahoma’s first commercial oil well, the Nellie Johnstone #1, is also found in Bartlesville, and Barnsdall has the Main Street Oil Well. Other commercial ventures also merit museums such as Pitcher’s Mining Field Museum and the Coal County Historical and Mining Museum in Coalgate.
Among the thousands of Cherokee Indians who were forced to relocate to Indian Territory were George and Minerva Murrell. George was a native of Virginia. Minerva, niece of Principal Chief John Ross, was from a wealthy Cherokee-Scottish family. They married in 1834, two years before the beginning of the Trail of Tears march.

The Murrells built their plantation home in 1845 in Park Hill near Tahlequah. They called their home Hunter’s House, because of George’s love of fox hunting. Chief Ross built a home one-half mile east, called Rose Cottage. The two homes were a hub of social and political activity. The Murrells left their home in 1862 when Civil War skirmishes got close.

The restored mansion, the only remaining antebellum home in Oklahoma, contains original and period artifacts and furnishings. The home is open to the public. An annual Lawn Social recreates the early-day life at the plantation with skits and period dancing, music, and games.

Above: Although the area around the Murrell Mansion was occupied by both Union and Confederate forces, the Murrell Mansion escaped destruction.
Enterprising journalists hauled printing presses by wagon and railroad across the forest and prairie, often setting up a newspaper shop in a tent. Guthrie’s Oklahoma State Capital Publishing Museum exhibits many original territorial furnishings and printing equipment. Newspapers are also featured in the museums in Carmen, Collinsville, and Hominy.

Auto-related collections can be found at the Hajek Motorsports Museum (vintage dragsters) in Ames, the High Car Museum of Ponca City, and Darryl Starbird’s National Rod & Custom Car Hall of Fame in Afton.

Sports and those who excelled in them are also highlighted. Venues include the Mickey Mantle Exhibit in Grove, Guthrie’s Oklahoma Sports Museum with hundreds of items from over three hundred state athletes, and the National Softball Hall of Fame Museum in Oklahoma City.

The engineering marvel that created a port in land-locked Oklahoma can be seen at the Arkansas River Historical Society Museum in Catoosa. The history of the Arkansas River and McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System and the Tulsa Port of Catoosa is a fascinating look at human possibilities.

Air and space museums can be found in both Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Oklahoma City is also home to the Ninety-Nines Museum of Women Pilots, an international aviation organization established in 1929 with Amelia Earhart as the first president. The Thomas P. Stafford (astronaut) Air and Space Museum is in Weatherford.

The fabric and heart of Oklahoma come from people like you, and a number of community museums show what everyday life was like for our grandparents and great grandparents. These and so many other museums in our state are just waiting to be explored.

**Something Extra!**

The Tulsa Port of Catoosa is the largest inland U.S. port and the northernmost ice-free port in the world.

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**Above:** The building that now houses the Oklahoma State Capital Publishing Museum in Guthrie was one of the first in the state to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**It’s Your Turn**

1. Name two museums that celebrate famous Oklahomans.
2. Name two historic sites that commemorate Oklahoma’s frontier era.
An ethnic group is a group of people who share common traditions, beliefs, and patterns of living that can include language, religion, customs, characteristics, history, and food. Many ethnic groups and individuals have come to Oklahoma seeking new beginnings or new opportunities.

French explorers, Jewish merchants, Polish miners, and hundreds of other groups and individuals have all had an impact on Oklahoma and have helped it become the great place to live that it is today. While the different groups celebrate their unique backgrounds, as a whole we celebrate our state. With each generation, our ethnic population contributes to our Oklahoma heritage.

American Indians

The name Oklahoma is derived from two Choctaw words, okla and humma, which combined mean “red people.” Oklahoma is home to the headquarters of thirty-nine different tribes and nations. Descendants of the original sixty-seven tribes that inhabited Indian Territory still live in the state, giving it the second-largest American Indian population in the country (behind California). Tribal cultures vary greatly, and each tribe has its own traditions, beliefs, and native language.

Some of Oklahoma’s first tribes were the Wichita, Comanche, Plains Apache, and Quapaw. New cultures were introduced by the forced relocation of hundreds of American Indians. Some tribes were able to select their land in Indian Territory, but most were forced to live in certain areas. Indians adapted and changed, but they didn’t lose sight of their basic values. Festivals, museums, and cultural centers help the Indian Nations pass along their proud heritage to younger generations.
African Americans

African Americans’ arrival in Oklahoma spanned many years. Some came with early explorers; others came as slaves to Indian plantation owners. Some black troops saw action during the Civil War, and they later became known as the “buffalo soldiers.”

It was estimated that 7,000 blacks lived in Indian Territory after the Civil War. Many former slaves came to the Territory after the war, when pamphlets promised a “black paradise.” They came as settlers, farmers, workers, cowboys, and gunfighters. They built twenty-seven all-black towns in Oklahoma. As with several rural Oklahoma communities, some of these towns no longer exist.

British and Irish

Many Europeans were already in America when white settlement in Oklahoma began in earnest in 1889. Because of intermarriage between Europeans and Indians, some people of British (including English, Scottish, and Welsh) and Irish descent came to Oklahoma during the early 1800s when the Five Tribes were resettled from the East. Others came as traders and trappers. Many early Irish served in military posts. After the Civil War, Scottish cattlemen leased Indian grassland, and some Irish laborers helped build railroads or worked coal mines. British and Irish miners helped establish the coal industry in southeastern Oklahoma.

By 1900, there were 4,290 English, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh in the Territory. Like most ethnic groups, many came as family units. Early-day British Protestants easily established themselves in the state. Hennessey and Deer Creek (Oklahoma County) were home to many early Irish residents. One Irishman changed the name of Edgewood in Chickasaw country to the Irish name of Erin Springs. In 1910, most of the British and Irish population was rural; by 1920, the majority resided in urban areas.

Italians

Italians first came to Oklahoma and the coal mines in 1875. While most Italians were miners in the counties of Pittsburg, Coal, Latimer, and Okmulgee, a small group moved to the Fort Cobb area to farm. A large number of Italians emigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. By 1910, over 2,500 lived in Oklahoma, with 85 percent of those living in coal-mining towns in southeastern Oklahoma, especially the

Above: African Americans make up almost 8 percent of Oklahoma’s population today.
McAlester and Krebs area. The Italian heritage is still celebrated in Krebs. Some Italians left the mines to establish such businesses as grocery and dry goods stores, blacksmith shops, and restaurants. One family started a macaroni factory in McAlester. Pietro Piegari changed his name to Pete Prichard and worked in the coalfields until an accident halted his mining career. He then started making and selling “Choc” (Choctaw) beer and later added Italian dishes to the business called “Pete’s Place.”

Germans and Germans from Russia

The largest number of foreign-born immigrants in Oklahoma were German in language and culture. Most came directly from Germany. Some were German-speaking people born in Switzerland or Austria; others were Germans who had lived as foreign colonists in Russia for many years. One in eight Oklahomans today claim German ancestry, which is more than any other ethnicity, including American Indian.

The cheap land available in Oklahoma appealed to many Germans who had already migrated to America. The land runs, lotteries, and allotments attracted thousands of Germans, and they settled throughout the state, although a large number settled in ten north-central counties. Germans from Russia settled primarily in the western third of the region. Most of the Germans were farmers, and Germans from Russia were largely responsible for bringing wheat to the new land. Some Germans were shoe cobblers, cabinetmakers, butcher, bakers, watchmakers, and blacksmiths. Germans were known for their work ethic, but they also found time to form social clubs. Tulsa and Lawton continue to have active German clubs.

Czechoslovakians

The lure of land also brought Czech families to areas west, east, and north of Oklahoma City. This group was very successful at farming, and all members of their large families helped.

The Czechoslovakians partly emigrated to America to preserve their culture, which was being threatened in their home country. Polka music and good food are a continuing part of the Czech culture.

Hispanics

The Hispanic and Latino population started slowly, but it now ranks as one of the fastest-growing groups in Oklahoma. Indian raids brought
some Mexicans into the area as captives in the 1800s. Poor economic conditions in Mexico led many to search for better opportunities in Oklahoma. Some of the first Hispanics who arrived after statehood worked as laborers in the coal mines and railroads and on farms and ranches.

Hispanics retain strong generational ties within their families. While Spanish may be spoken in some households, in others English is the main or only language spoken. Traditional Mexican food is part of many religious celebrations and colorful fiestas for special days.

**Asians and Pacific Islanders**

Another population group that has seen significant growth includes Asians and Pacific Islanders. Chinese immigrants had made their way to America in the late 1800s, and a few were in Oklahoma by statehood. After the Vietnam War, many Vietnamese fled their country and were sponsored by groups across the United States. Some made new lives in Oklahoma, primarily in urban areas. Oklahoma City has a growing Asian District with a variety of businesses and shops.

**It’s Your Turn**

1. Where does the word *Oklahoma* come from?
2. Which ethnic group(s) help establish Oklahoma’s coal industry?
Before the widespread air travel of the twentieth century, the only way to cross the oceans to get to North America was by ship. The journey could take 6-14 weeks across turbulent waters, often with inadequate food supplies (usually bread, biscuits, and potatoes) and rancid water. The ships were cramped and uncomfortable, and sometimes there were serious outbreaks of diseases. Thousands of Irish died of typhus on their way to America. Several ships were lost at sea due to fires and shipwrecks. In spite of the tremendous hardships, immigrants continued to pour into America.

Ships with immigrant passengers landed at various ports in the new country. From 1820 to 1892, more than 10 million people first set foot on American soil at Castle Garden in New York, America's first official immigration center. Another 22 million passengers entered the United States through Ellis Island and the Port of New York from 1892 to 1924. Access to these passenger lists is available online at www.castlegarden.org and www.ellisisland.org.

Above: This is the main hall at Ellis Island, where immigrants lined up in front of these desks upon their arrival. Left: Ellis Island has been undergoing restoration since 1982.
Chapter Review

Summary

- In 2007, Oklahoma celebrated one hundred years of statehood with many events and projects.
- The many cultures in Oklahoma are a blend of hundreds of years of settlement by many different peoples.
- Oklahoma’s vast diversity of cultures lends itself to a kaleidoscope of events celebrating the unique history of our state.
- Oklahoma’s American Indian heritage is celebrated through powwows, dances and dramas, story-telling festivals, the Red Earth Festival, and other events.
- Civil War battles and rendezvous are part of many reenactments held yearly.
- The earliest festivals throughout the world were a celebration of the harvest. Oklahoma continues this tradition through festivals and county and state fairs that feature important crops, livestock, foods, music, wildlife, and famous trails.
- Oklahoma is a treasure trove of museums and historic sites featuring prehistory, the American Indian, the West, ethnic groups, sports, and famous Oklahomans.
- Oklahoma has many ethnic groups including African Americans, American Indians, Irish, British, Italians, Germans, Hispanics, Czechs, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and several others.

Vocabulary

Write a definition for the following words, showing that you understand the meaning of each word.

1. centennial
2. culture
3. diversity
4. ethnic group
5. powwow
6. rodeo

Understanding the Facts

1. Name three ways that Oklahoma’s centennial was celebrated.
2. How did rodeos become a part of our culture?
3. Where would you go to attend an Indian powwow? What would you expect to see there?
4. Identify four festivals that emphasize special crops grown in Oklahoma.
5. What famous highway that crossed Oklahoma was known as the “Mother Road”?
6. Name the largest museum in the state dedicated to the cowboy and the West.
7. To what ethnic group in Oklahoma do you belong?

Developing Critical Thinking

1. Why do you think Oklahoma would provide funds for an agency to promote Oklahoma’s culture?
2. Your town is celebrating a festival. What are the benefits this festival will provide for your community?
3. Explain how our state has benefited by having a diversity of cultural and ethnic groups.

**Applying Your Skills**

1. Interview three people from three ethnic groups other than your own. Name at least two things about their culture that are different from yours.
2. Family traditions are a part of our culture. Write a short description of a tradition of your family. This may be anything from going to a family reunion to visiting your grandmother on Thanksgiving to ordering pizza every Monday night.
3. Make a special-interest map of some of the Oklahoma festivals mentioned in this chapter. Mark each location with a symbol representing the festival (i.e., a strawberry for the Stilwell Strawberry Festival). Create a legend on your map identifying your symbols.
4. Create a brochure about Oklahoma culture and tourism that would be appropriate to send to other states to promote Oklahoma.
5. What event or activity, moment in history, etc., in your town or area of the state could be the focus for a festival or celebration? Explain why you have chosen this and how you would celebrate.
6. Research one of the historical sites found in the region in which you live. Interview local residents about their knowledge of the site. Use local library or media center resources to find out more about the site.

**Exploring Technology**

1. Search the Internet for recipes from the different ethnic groups in Oklahoma and plan an International Food Festival featuring these dishes.
2. Using genealogy web sites, such as usgenweb.org and rootsweb.com, create a family tree of your ancestors as far back as you can go. Include places where they were born if possible.

**Building Skills Using Your Textbook**

**Making proper use of your textbook** is an important skill. Your textbook has two parts: the narrative, which tells the story of the state of Oklahoma, and the visual information (illustrations, maps, charts, and captions), which makes the narrative come alive.

The narrative is divided into sections. Within the sections, the major headings are large, bold, centered, and underlined. Lower-level headings are set in boldface capital letters and boldface italics. These headings help you organize the information in the chapter. If you scan the headings before you begin to read, you may better understand the plan of the chapter.

Once you begin to read the chapter, read the narrative straight through and answer the questions labeled “It’s Your Turn.” This will help you check your understanding of what you have read. Then study the photographs and captions and any maps and charts. Photographs help you visualize some of the people, places, and events in the chapter. The captions may point out important information about the photograph or provide more information. Maps and charts summarize information provided in the chapter.

Try these activities with this chapter and the other chapters in the textbook.

1. Prepare an outline of Chapter 1 using the headings in the chapter.
2. Look at the figures and illustrations in the chapter. What information do they provide? How do they help you understand the narrative?