



NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame

Michael Wallis and Quintus and Mary Herron

By *Linda D. Wilson*

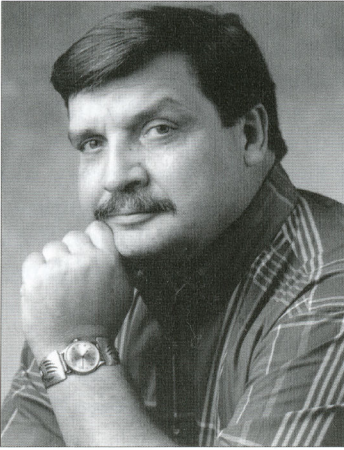
Since 1993 the Oklahoma Historical Society has annually honored up to four individuals, both professional and amateur, in its Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame. Recipients are selected on the basis of their contributions to the preservation, collection, interpretation, and dissemination of Oklahoma history. This criteria was first published in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 72 (Summer 1994).

Early honorees included Grant Foreman, Joseph B. Thoburn, Muriel H. Wright, Edward Everett Dale, and Angie Debo. In addition to historians, the award has been bestowed on artist Charles Banks Wilson, Cherokee genealogist Emmet Starr, author John Joseph Mathews, and Apache and educator Mildred Imach Cleghorn. The inductees are honored at the Awards Banquet held during the Oklahoma Historical Society's Annual Meeting in April each year. In April 2009 Donald Green, Marvin Kroeker, Michael Wallis, and Mary Jane and Quintus Herron were inducted into the Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame. Green and Kroeker were featured in the spring issue of *The Chronicles*, and Wallis and the Herrons appear in this issue.

Michael Wallis

Born in 1945 in St. Louis, Missouri, journalist and popular historian Michael Wallis has honed his writing skills since he won an essay contest as a youngster. His prize included two tickets to attend a St. Louis Cardinal baseball game. He and his father garnered a limousine ride to the game, and Wallis sat in the dugout with "Stan the Man" Musial. On that memorable day he received two autographed baseballs, one from Musial and the other from Ken Boyer.

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Wallis quickly came to the conclusion that “this writing is not a bad racket.”

Wallis’s other special childhood experiences include shaking hands with television celebrities Hopalong Cassidy and the Cisco Kid. As a young boy Wallis peddled newspapers along a stretch of the Mother Road, Route 66, which was close to his St. Louis home. He attended a number of public and private schools before joining the U.S. Marine Corps. Wallis received his higher education at numerous

colleges and universities, including the University of Missouri at Columbia. In 1978 he moved to Miami, where he worked as a special correspondent for *Time* magazine’s Caribbean Bureau. His top stories covered the Cuban refugee exodus, crime, and drug smuggling.

While Wallis developed his writing into a paying vocation, he worked at diverse occupations. He has been a ranch hand, a bartender, a hotel waiter, a social worker, a printer, and a ski lodge manager. As his literary career flourished, he published in national magazines and newspapers such as *Time*, *Life*, *Smithsonian*, *Texas Monthly*, and the *New York Times*. He has written at least eighteen books and is a contributing editor for Oklahoma’s official state magazine, the bimonthly *Oklahoma Today*. Representative of his articles published in *Oklahoma Today* are “Welcome to Hamburger Heaven,” “The Museum That Route 66 Built,” and “Ride to Live, Live to Ride: The Harley Davidson Experience in Oklahoma.”

Wallis expresses his love for Oklahoma in his published works as well as at his public speaking engagements. His books include *Way Down Yonder In the Indian Nation*, *Writing From America’s Heartland* and *Oklahoma Crossroads*. He has written biographies of prominent Oklahomans Wilma Mankiller, Waite Phillips, Frank Phillips, and Charles Arthur “Pretty Boy” Floyd. His current hometown has been the focus for *Meet Tulsa* and *Oklahoma Today* articles, “The Gilcrease and Philbrook Come of Age: A Pair of World Class Exhibits Bring Tulsa’s Museums to the Fore” and “Sophian Choice.” Wallis and his wife Suzanne Fitzgerald have lived in Tulsa since 1982.

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Movie goers, especially those with young children, will recognize Wallis's distinctive voice as the sheriff in *Cars*, the 2006 Pixar animated film. The front grille of his character was shaped to resemble Wallis's distinguishing feature, his moustache. Wallis's life's achievements include numerous honors and awards. He is a member of the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame. For his literary works that enlighten others about the Sooner State and his genuine expression of his love for Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Historical Society names Michael Wallis to the Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame.

Books

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- Route 66: The Mother Road*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.
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- With Wilma Mankiller. *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Beyond the Hills: The Journey of Waite Phillips*. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Heritage Association, 1995.
- With Suzanne Fitzgerald Wallis. *Songdog Diary: 66 Stories From the Road*. Tulsa, Okla.. Song Dog Books, 1996.
- With David Fitzgerald. *Oklahoma Crossroads*. Portland, Ore.. Graphic Arts Center Publishing, 1998.
- The Real Wild West: The 101 Ranch and the Creation of the American West*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- With Jack Parsons. *Heaven's Window: A Journey Through Northern New Mexico*. Portland, Ore.. Graphic Arts Center Publishing, 2001.
- With Marian Clark. *Hogs on 66: Best Feed and Hangouts For Road Trips on Route 66*. Tulsa, Okla.. Council Oak, 2004.
- With Suzanne Fitzgerald Wallis. *The Art of Cars*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006.
- One Step Over the Line "Billy the Kid."* Santa Fe: New Mexico Tourism Department, 2007
- With Brian Gomsak. *Meet Tulsa*. Greensboro, N.C.. Pace Communications, 2007
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- "Welcome to Hamburger Heaven [a guide to Oklahoma's best hamburger joints]" *Oklahoma Today* 45 (April/May 1995).
- "The Museum That Route 66 Built." *Oklahoma Today* 46 (March 1996).
- "The Gilcrease and Philbrook Come of Age: A Pair of World Class Exhibits Bring Tulsa's Museums to the Fore." *Oklahoma Today* 48 (January/February 1998).
- "Ride to Live, Live to Ride: The Harley Davidson Experience in Oklahoma." *Oklahoma Today* 49 (January/February 1999).
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- "Sophian Choice." *Oklahoma Today* 51 (July/August 2001).

Quintus and Mary Jane Herron

Native-born Oklahomans Quintus and Mary Jane (Hinkel) Herron have spent their lives contributing to the economic and civic growth of the southeastern part of the Sooner State. In 1946 Quintus Herron, his father Leonard, and his brother Joseph founded Herron Industries in Idabel. The husband and wife team organized Idabel's Museum of the Red River in 1974.

Quintus Herron was born in Idabel in 1923. Ten years later his family moved to Stillwater where he graduated from highschool in 1941. That fall he enrolled at Oklahoma A&M College (now Oklahoma State University), but the advent of World War II interrupted his higher education. He went to work at Consolidated Aircraft in San Diego, California, in 1942, and enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1943. Herron served as an aviation navigation instructor in the corps until 1945. The following year he married Mary Jane Hinkel in Stillwater. In 1951 he graduated from Oklahoma A&M College with a degree in forestry.

Herron returned to Idabel and worked for fifty-six years to develop Herron Industries into a successful corporation. During his lifetime he established the Herron Research Foundation for archaeological research in 1974. This organization has gradually evolved to offer educational support and cultural learning to the citizens of McCurtain County. In 1976 Quintus became chair of the board of the newly organized Forest Heritage Center. With his wife's help and the board's support, he has guided that center into the Forestry History Center in Beavers Bend. In 2007 he resigned as chair but remains as an active board member. He remains active at the Herron Industries' office, at the Museum of the Red River, in the de-

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velopment of the MHH Community Conference Center, and the planning and design of the Mary Herron Pedestrian Nature Park.

His life partner, Mary Jane Hinkel, was born in 1926 in Stillwater. She was the daughter of Florence and John W Hinkel and the granddaughter of Nell and John P Hinkel, land rush pioneers and publishers of the *Stillwater Daily Press*. Like her husband, Mary Jane Herron also graduated from Oklahoma A&M College.



With a fine arts degree, she worked as a county bookmobile librarian for the southeastern region of Oklahoma and as the women's page editor for the *McCurtain Gazette*. She and her husband were founding members of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Idabel.

Mary Jane Herron is best remembered for her daily work at the Museum of the Red River, which expanded from 4,000 square feet to 17,000 square feet. The facility became a major tourist attraction in southeastern Oklahoma and gained a national reputation for its extensive collections and diverse exhibits. She actively supported the Idabel Regional Arts Council and its performing and visual arts programs. She raised purchase funds for art to enhance the public area of the E. T. Dunlap Higher Learning Center and was instrumental in establishing an endowment fund for the Oklahoma Museums Association.

Herron actively participated in state and regional organizations by serving on boards, presenting papers, taking part in museum symposia, and counseling young professionals. In 1998 the Oklahoma Museums Association presented her the coveted Laura McDonagh Streich Award. She and Quintus have received the Kiamichi County Heritage Award, the Distinguished Historian Award from the McCurtain County Historical Society, the Idabel Chamber of Commerce Citizens Award, the Stanley Draper Distinguished Service from the Oklahoma Heritage Association, and the Governor's Excellence in Arts Award. Mary Herron died at age eighty-one on April 22, 2007, but her legacy continues with the completion of the Mary H. Herron Community Conference Center in February 2009. The Herrons' son lives in Idabel, and their daughter

resides in Tucson, Arizona. They have grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

For the Herrons' lifetime of establishing and promoting state museums and for improving the educational and cultural facilities in southeastern Oklahoma, the Oklahoma History Society names Quintus and Mary Jane Herron to the Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame. In accepting the award on the behalf of himself and his late wife, he commented that she "was responsible for at least half of everything we did. It was the pleasure of our lives to do these things."

Lincoln's Legacy in Oklahoma

By Richard Sias and Bob L. Blackburn

The State of Oklahoma joins the rest of the nation in celebrating the legacy of Abraham Lincoln during the bicentennial of his birth on February 12, 1809. Through educational programs, speeches, publications, and performances, we hope to raise awareness of Lincoln's impact on our history and the relevance of his message for our lives today. Black Oklahomans represent a significant aspect of the state's history. The earliest were slaves who arrived with the Five Tribes during their Removal from the American South. After the allotment of Indian lands in the second half of the nineteenth century, freedmen became farmers. Migrating from other parts of the United States, other African American settlers also took up farms and made homes in Oklahoma Territory during and after the Land Run of 1889. Within only a few years, more than fifty All-Black towns existed, and the Tulsa and Oklahoma City black communities thrived. Thirteen of the All-Black towns still exist.

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