

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

1964 WINNER IN PUBLIC SCHOOL ESSAY CONTESTS: THE IDA F. HASLEY AWARD ON THE SUBJECT "THE CULTURE OF OKLAHOMA CITY"

The annual contest sponsored by the Oklahoma City Public Schools through its Director of Secondary Education for the best essay written by a twelfth grade pupil in the Oklahoma City public schools, on the subject "The Culture of Oklahoma City" has today become an event in the history of the Capital City, an event indicative of the increasing interest in local history and culture all over the state of Oklahoma. The question "What is culture of a place or a society?" should bring a reply that has a part in interpreting the history of a region.

"The Ida F. Hasley Award" from a special estate fund, for \$1,000 in cash annually has been given the twelfth grade pupil in Oklahoma City public schools whose essay on this City's culture has been judged the best among many papers on the subject entered each spring for the past five years. The winning essay in 1964 was classed by the judges as one of the best, if not the "top" essay, among the winning papers in the five-year period. The cash prize of \$1,000 in 1964 was awarded Howard Caldwell Davis of Oklahoma City, eighteen year-old senior of John Marshall High School for his essay.¹

The Culture of Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City is not just a place—it is a complex and many sided way of life which encompasses the cultural pursuits of thousands. Drama, modern art, recreation, higher education, and symphonic music are all significant fragments of the huge mosaic which is our society. The essential meaning of this mosaic is found not in its unity of purpose but in its fantastic variety. Our city flourishes as a cultural oasis in the barren Southwest, not because it encourages one or two aesthetic endeavors, but because it supports a multitude.

Let us examine, for a moment, several of those areas in which excellence of quality and enthusiastic public support have combined to establish and enhance Oklahoma City's reputation as a citadel of culture.

¹ Howard Caldwell Davis is the son of Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Davis, 1221 Washire, Oklahoma City. The winner of the award agreed to apply the \$1,000 toward his education beyond high school. The essay was written in the school subject of "Great Books," with Miss Katherine Gibson, teacher in John Marshall High School.—Ed.

The first field in which our achievement is distinctive is the mass media. WKY Radio and WKY-TV were among the first stations in the Southwest to begin regular broadcasting. Both have received many well-deserved awards for news presentation and public service. Each of the three national television networks boasts an affiliate in Oklahoma City. Eleven radio stations bring music daily into the homes and cars of our citizens. The Oklahoma Publishing Company has since 1903 kept Oklahomans throughout the state informed morning and night on current events, amusements, and fashions.

The second, and perhaps broadest, cultural category is recreation. There are shaded parks and sunny playgrounds; amusement parks in the summer and the deliriously exciting State Fair in the fall; country clubs, golf clubs, private clubs, and night clubs; boats and lakes for the sporting, swimming pools for the sun-loving; one of the nation's most fascinating and exotic collections of animals in captivity, the Lincoln Park Zoo; a score of deluxe restaurants to delight the heart and stomach of any gourmet; athletic fields for the players and stadiums for the spectators.

Civic organizations and activities are the third major aspect of Oklahoma City's cultural life. Many community service organizations (such as Rotary International and Kiwanis) find wide support here. The Junior Chamber of Commerce is constantly seeking ways to improve practices and enlarge potentialities in business. Women, too, are actively participating in charitable organizations. Sorosis and the Women's Society for Christian Service are shining examples of the civic spirit. Men and women devoted to other non-profit organizations including the Young Men's Christian Association and the Girl Scout program are engaged in the noble and selfless task of guiding our youth into manhood and womanhood along the path of patriotism and love of fellow man. Churches of over fifty denominations fulfill the spiritual needs of our community.

Education, the fourth, significant area of our culture, is the most important. Upon its success or failure to broaden the spiritual horizons of our community depends the future of all the arts and sciences in Oklahoma City. Its task is momentous in this decade. It must reach those who without it could not earn an adequate living, and it must inspire them to take their eyes from the ground to see and appreciate the beautiful in music or painting and the profound in literature.

Thus far its efforts have been truly impressive. A vast system of private and public, elementary and secondary schools makes possible the basic education of every child in the city. This system is supplemented by scores of other institutions of vocational training. There are night schools, business colleges, trade schools, and television courses on KETA-TV. The six branches of the Oklahoma City Public Libraries System bring edifying and instructive literature within the reach of everyone. The Library's Community Workshop promotes adult education in the numerous classes it sponsors in such widely divergent subjects as the Great Books and political science. The crowning achievement, however, in our educational system is Oklahoma City University. This rapidly expanding, dynamic institution has gained a magnificent academic reputation through the tireless efforts of its administrators and professors. And now, with the assistance of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the Great Plan, its prospects for emerging as one of the nation's foremost schools of higher learning grow even brighter.

The fifth area, the performance and appreciation of the fine arts, Oklahoma City has long been recognized as a consistent patron of art, drama, and music. The Arts and Sciences Foundation is weekly visited by hundreds who come to admire the work of distinguished artists. Many Broadway shows, including *Camelot* and *My Fair Lady*, are performed on the stage of the Municipal Auditorium, and Oklahoma City audiences invariably flock to see them. The Mummers Theater, often acclaimed for its brilliant productions of the unsurpassed caliber of *The Caine Mutiny* and *Hamlet*, has recently received grants from the Ford Foundation which now make possible its further expansion. Productions by high-school thespians, the Jewel Box Theater, and the O. C. U. players supplement and further enrich Oklahoma City's dramatic fare.

Of all the fine arts, music in all of its many forms has claimed the greatest popularity. Every Sunday morning more than 250 churches reverberate with the sound of choir and organ. Every Saturday night poignant and whimsical folk-songs are performed at the Buddhi. Choral groups, barber-shop quartets, and ballet troupes have all been enthusiastically received. Finally, here resides one of the world's great symphonic orchestras, the Oklahoma City Symphony, under the direction of Guy Francis Harrison.

These five areas constitute the structure of Oklahoma City culture, but not its essence. Its essence is to be found, not in works of art, but in the attitudes of our citizens. Our city presently thrives amidst the blossoming of a myriad of artistic endeavors. Yet it can only maintain its eminence if the present generation continues to support these endeavors by attendance, applause, and encouragement, and if the next generation of Oklahomans is given the superlative education which alone makes possible the creation and appreciation of culture.

THE OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HOST FOR THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE AND LOCAL HISTORY

The outstanding activity of the Oklahoma Historical Society in the autumn of 1964—October 29 to 31—was that of host together with the University of Oklahoma for the Twenty-fourth Annual Meeting of the American Association for State and Local History. Headquarters were at the Sheraton-Oklahoma Hotel, Oklahoma City, delegates attending this national meeting from all parts of North America. Staff members of the Oklahoma Historical Society received high praise for their cordial and efficient assistance to the visiting members of the American Association. The session devoted to the subject of "State Historic Sites" was of particular interest in the Oklahoma Society's statewide program of marking and maintenance of historic sites in the state, begun in 1949. Chairman of this session was Mr. K. H. Creveling, Director, Division of Development, Department of Conservation and Economic Development, State of New Jersey, Trenton. The panel discussion was opened by Mr. Elmer L. Fraker, Administrative Secretary, Oklahoma Historical Society, who gave the following paper:

STATE HISTORIC SITES:
WHO CAN BEST OPERATE AND CONTROL THEM

The discussion title for this panel, through its phraseology, might be considered to have eliminated any discussion; that is, of course, if we assume state historic sites should be operated and controlled by the state. It is to be asserted, however, that the intent of this discussion is to delineate reasons why any particular historic site should be controlled by a specific division of state government, or by a specific private organization.

It may sound trite and hackneyed, but it must be repeated that whichever state or organization can best do the job should do it. In other words, sites of national interest should be controlled by the national government, those of state significance by state government, and those of local interest by local governments. By the same token, it could be said that national societies and organizations should control certain sites of national significance, state groups of state significance, and local groups of local significance.

Throughout the Midwest, it is a rather common practice to place the care of historic sites in the hands of state historical societies. This seems to be a logical approach. Here in Oklahoma we have two agencies of state government that are caring for historic sites. Several of the most important historical structures and locations in Oklahoma are under the control of the Planning and Resources Board, while others are under the control and management of the Oklahoma Historical Society. This is a bad and difficult situation, because authority is divided and each division of sites is financed from appropriations secured by two different divisions of government. This leads to unequal financing and uneven administration. Through agreement of the State Planning and Resources Board and the Oklahoma Historical Society, the next Legislature is being requested to alleviate this situation by placing the control of all historic sites, owned by the state, under the direction and management of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

The foregoing illustration is used, because it is germane to the problem of who should control state historic sites. The determining factors in this instance have been that the Planning and Resources Board is primarily interested in parks, while the Historical Society, as its name implies, concentrates on historical matters. In the resolution requesting the aforementioned change, to consolidate all management of historic sites in the hands of the Historical Society, it was pointed out that the Planning and Resources

Board staff members were not trained in history and related topics, while those of the Historical Society did have the requisite training for determining what sites should be preserved and how to preserve and explain them.

It is our belief that municipalities and local groups should maintain and operate city and municipal historic edifices and sites. Such sites, of course, would be those having mainly local significance. For example, the home of an early mayor, whose reputation and name are familiar primarily in the local community, should be placed in the province of municipal control. Being from the Midwest and Southwest, our environment has probably made us prone to favor state controlled museums and historic sites over private control. The chief advantage is that once a site becomes the property of a state, it is most difficult for such property to be traded or sold. Furthermore, such sites are preserved because of state-wide sentiment, rather than some group urge or notion. Frequently nongovernmental organizations disband or become financially impotent.

Certainly no historic site should be maintained without proper inscriptions and word explanations. The more important ones should have a paid, trained staff in charge. When the state has control of a site, the historical society of that state, based upon the work of its researchers, can best create an accurate restoration, or preservation. There is far less pressure to bear in a state controlled historic site plan, than in one by an organization. Most states protect their historical societies by having them isolated from any form of political or social pressure. Organization controlled sites are all too frequently subject to the whims of some financing individual or firm, with the result that truth and accuracy may be sacrificed to please the donor.

Too much cannot be said of having trained personnel in charge of historic sites. It was our experience not too long ago to visit one of the outstanding historic restorations in the United States. The restorers had done an excellent job, but then it had been left to local club women to supervise and explain. These good little ladies, dressed in period costumes, with much self-importance, strutted and preened about the site, giving forth with well-memorized tidbits of information about this and that. But ask one of them a question about some item not on their memorized agenda, and the poor little dear floated off into space. Imagine a well-trained curator slapping the hand of some woman visitor who touched a drapery. It was done by a costumed old darling at the aforementioned place. Yes, the work of historic sites should be carried on by trained personnel, and

in most states that trained personnel is to be found on the staff of state historical societies.

Wealth in the hands of intelligent individuals and organizations has brought about, through private means, some of the finest restorations and preservations in the nation. Williamsburg is an out-standing example of this sort of development. When the wealthy donors are satisfied to furnish the funds and completely divorce themselves from management and technical decisions, great success has been attained. Any community is indeed fortunate to be the recipient of this type of historic site development and preservation.

If a historic site is important enough to be preserved, it is important enough to be cared for by professionals.

Administrative Secretary
—Elmer L. Fraker,

Oklahoma Historical Society
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

SONG IN SUNLIGHT GLEES,
"MY INDIAN TERRITORY HOME"

An unusual bit of early state history is reflected in the song, "My Indian Territory Home" dedicated to "Hon. Green McCurtain, Chief of the Choctaw Nation," found in the small book, *Sunlight Glees* published by The Eureka Publishing Company of Stigler, Oklahoma, the copyright date given in 1904. The book was for use in "singing schools" that were held in rural communities, such "schools" a part of the history of music and social gatherings of the people (blended Indian and white) for many years in Eastern Oklahoma. A copy of *Sunlight Glees* was brought in to the Indian Archives to show the song dedicated to Chief Green McCurtain, the owner of the book, Mrs. George Moore giving permission to have transcript copy of the song made for *The Chronicles*.

Old friends of Green McCurtain years ago told the Editor of his reciting Choctaw poetry and also, folklore in poetic form in Choctaw. It is known that the Choctaws in very early tribal days before they came west to make their homes were the poets and singers of the Southeastern Indian tribes. Something of Green McCurtain's personality and native grace and talent is glimpsed with the discovery of this song of sixty years ago, "My Indian Territory Home" dedicated to him. It turns our thoughts to a period

of Choctaw history that has had little notice. Choctaw leaders, generally, who were active in the 1880's, the 1890's and the years just before statehood have had little mention in history by the dominant forces that would take over the Indian Territory.

Many Choctaw leaders were persons of character that held their own against the intruding onslaught. Some Choctaw family names are known in the life and on the maps of the State of Oklahoma today, including the name of McCurtain that of the state's southeastern county bordered by Red River.

The name of the Choctaw McCurtain family (also found intermarried among some of the Chickasaw) is seen listed as "McCartain" in the British records in London, dating from the early 1750's. "McCurtain" was a white trader from Britain who came, settled and married among the Choctaws in Mississippi before the American Revolution. His descendant, probably his grandson Choctaw by blood, was Cornelius McCurtain who served as Chief of Mosholatubbee District, Choctaw Nation West, in 1850. He has the distinguished record of three sons—Jackson, Edmond and Green—, each of whom was elected and served as principal chief of the Nation at different times after the Civil War. Green McCurtain was born near Skullyville in 1848. Beginning at the age of eighteen, he was elected and served in many positions of trust in the Choctaw Nation, including four terms as "Principal Chief." He was the last elected Principal Chief under the laws of the Choctaw Nation (1904), and continued in this office by U. S. Government appointment after Oklahoma statehood, in the interest of unfinished Choctaw business affairs until his death on December 27, 1910, at his home in Kinta, Oklahoma. He was three-fourth Choctaw by blood, and was held in high regard by those who knew him—a man of fine physique, personal magnetism, intellectual endowment, ready wit and a great orator in the Choctaw language.

—(M. H. W.)

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Song in Sunlight Glee, dedicated to
"Hon. Green McCurtain, chief of the Choctaw Nation."

No. 76. MY INDIAN TERRITORY HOME.

(Dedicated to Hon. Green McCortola, chief of the Cheyenne Nation.)

A. J. O.

A. J. O.

1. In our own sun - ny land, On Co - lum - bi - a's strand
2. 'Tis a land rich in soil, Where there's coal and there's oil,
3. There are trees - talus and hills, There are foun - tains and rills
4. Springing up here and there, To use are seen ev - erywhere

When the mild - est balmy breeze gen - tly blow;
Mines of i - ron, sil - ver, an - thracite, lead, and gold;
And the spring and sum - mer flow - ers sweet - ly bloom;
There are rail - roads, fer - riss, mills, and yet there's room;

In our loved feathered elms, With its tu - bers sublime, Find our
There are prai - ries of green, Where the cat - tle are seen, Round our
Gongs of sweet - sing - ing birds, To the wood - lands are heard, At our
And our truth is the best, You can see it with each At our

D. B. Come and see where we live, And a sal - come we'll give At our

Fin. Chorus.

happy Indian Ter - ri - to - ry home, Ours homes we will bring Gladdest
happy Indian Ter - ri - to - ry home.

we - els shall sing, O'er the flowered hills and val - leys we will roam;

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