



The WPA Guide to 1930s Oklahoma

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The WPA Guide to 1930s Oklahoma was published in 1941 as the final volume in the Federal Writers' Project American Guide Series. Despite the passage of years it still offers travelers in the region an opportunity to see the state from a refreshed perspective.

Oklahoma follows the standard WPA guide format; it is divided into three major sections covering the history and background of the state, describing its principal cities, and presenting carefully plotted automobile tours. Perhaps the most interesting and pervasive element of Oklahoma's history is the former Indian occupation of this region. The Five Civilized Tribes--Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles--held the territory for many years before allowing white settlement, and Native American influence on the state's culture remains prevalent today. Because the Oklahoma territories were not opened to pioneers until 1889, the memory of early settlement and statehood was still strong when the guide was first published and the first generation of Oklahomans were told their stories.

In addition to reminding us of the unique heritage of Oklahoma, the guide book also provides important documentation of the state during the 1930s--that time of economic depression that threatened even the hardest pioneer spirit. With its discussions of industry, labor, transportation, agriculture, and education, the guide offers a particular insight into the life and lifestyles of Oklahomans of that era. Likewise the descriptions of the cities are vivid pictures of the state's twelve major settlements, dependent in large part on prosperity that flowed from the oil business.

And the cities, of course, lead the way for the automobile tours. Twenty-two such tours are laid out to permit the traveler--whether on the road or at home--to traverse the state accompanied by keen observations and insightful explanations. Several of the tours include the border cities in Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas--making this volume truly a find for today's regional explorers.

This reprint edition both restores an originally composed, but deleted, essay by the historian Angie Debo, and adds a new introduction by Anne Hodges Morgan.

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