

The Jefferson Highway Oklahoma Tour Guide

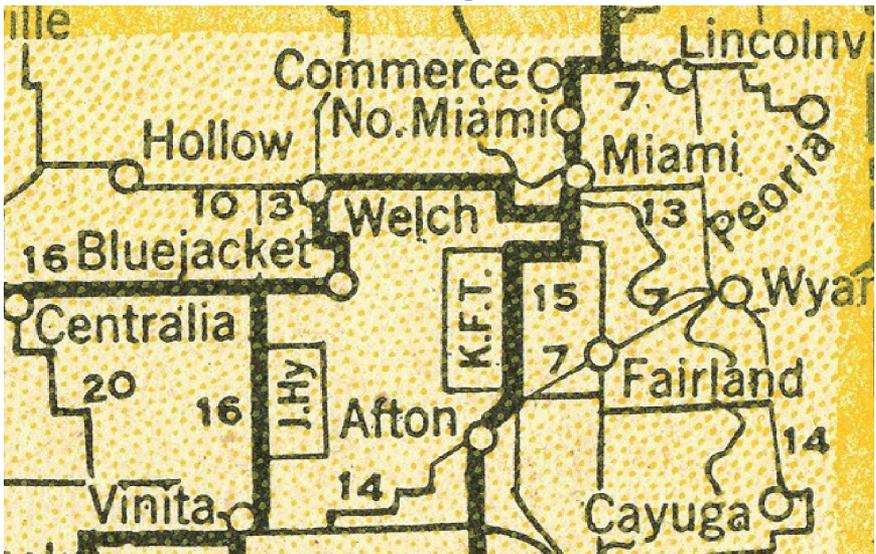


JEFFERSON HIGHWAY—OKLAHOMA TOUR GUIDE

The Tri-State area of Southwest Missouri, Southeast Kansas, and Northeast Oklahoma is a historic lead and zinc mining district. Production began in the 1850s-60s in the Joplin - Granby area of Jasper and Newton counties of southwest Missouri and continued until the closure of the Picher, Oklahoma mines in 1967. Today, the EPA's Tri-State Mining District Superfund Site covers 2,500 square miles (1.6 million acres) in the three state area, including the Tar Creek Site around Picher.

If you have some extra time during your JH tour, you should take time to see Galena, Riverton and Baxter Springs, Kansas, all three located on historic Route 66. Each town has several places of interest for the "Road Scholar" that are worth the short detour.

A predecessor to the Jefferson Highway in Oklahoma is the Texas Road. This is an old cattle driving route that predates any highway in the area. A majority of the old JH is also the route of the Missouri, Kansas, & Texas Railroad (MKT or Katy, or Union Pacific, as it is known today.) A lot of the towns along the way were established first as railroad stops, most around 1871 to 1873.

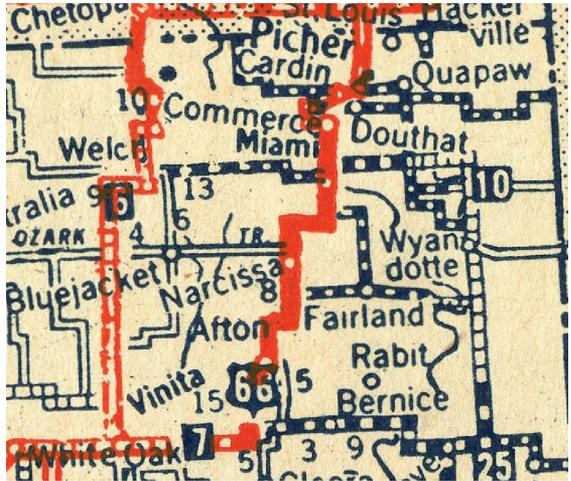


Picher to Vinita on the JH - 1923 Clausson Map

There are two ways to enter Oklahoma from Kansas. If you are traveling through Baxter Springs Kansas, you will stay on Hwy 69 Alt, aka Rt 66.

This route will take you through Quapaw. Named for the Quapaw Indian Tribe, this small town is fading mining town of the Tri-State area. However, the town displays several nice murals on its buildings that deserve a stop for a photo opportunity.

Quapaw is also home to the Spook Light, a dancing ball of light seen on a bluff called Devil's Promenade. Though the "spook light" is located in the Quapaw area, it can only be viewed east of the town and is often referred to as the Joplin Spook Light or the Hornet Spook Light, both cities in Missouri.



*Picher to Vinita - new numbered highways
1927 Clausson Map*

If you're passing through Quapaw on July 4th, the city holds the oldest Indian Pow-Wow in the United States at Beaver Springs State Park. For more than 130 years, the celebration has been taking place and is said to be worth the stop.

The old JH actually enters Oklahoma on Hwy 69 from Treece, Kansas in to Picher, Oklahoma, named after O S Picher, owner of Picher Lead Company. The small town, incorporated in March 1918, is gone now, officially dissolved November 26, 2013. Once a booming mining town boasting a population of more than 14,000 people, there were fewer than 20 folks claiming Picher as their home town when the town ceased to exist. Chat piles (mine waste) rise more than 200 ft above the ground and are visible from Alt 69. At the intersection of Alt 69 and Hwy 69, you will turn west heading towards Commerce.

Commerce, another mining town, is the boyhood home of Mickey Mantle. In the late 1940's Mantle played three years with the Baxter Springs Whiz Kids. In 1949, while playing a baseball game in the park in Baxter Springs, Mantle hit a ball into the Spring River. Later, when the game was delayed by a rainstorm, Mantle was approached by Tom Greenwade, a scout for the New York Yankees, who signed Mantle. Mantle's boyhood home, located at 319 S. Quincy, still stands, including the leaning shed where he practiced his throwing and batting. In 2010, local officials dedicated a big statue of Mantle, following through on a powerful swing, next to Mickey Mantle Field at Commerce High School. The statue stands along a newer alignment of Route 66 on the south side of town.



Cal Campbell

Commerce, Oklahoma was also the scene of one of Bonnie and Clyde's notorious escapades on April 6, 1934. While fleeing from the murders in Grapevine, Texas, their Ford got stuck in the mud. Attempting to flag down a motorist at gunpoint, the car fled and reported the incident to Police Chief Percy Boyd and Constable Cal Campbell in Commerce. When the officers arrived at the scene, Cal Campbell had been shot and killed in the gun fight. Chief Percy Boyd was wounded and then taken as a hostage. He was later released a few miles south of Fort Scott, Kansas. Constable William Calvin "Cal" Campbell is buried in the GAR Cemetery in Miami.

Continuing south, the road becomes Main St in Miami. Miami, pronounced "My-am-uh," takes its name from the Miami Indians and became the first chartered town in Indian Territory. As the first town in Indian Territory, several Native American tribes still make



Miami - 1907

their home in the area including the Miami, Modoc, Ottawa, Peoria, Seneca-Cayuga, Wyandotte, Quapaw, Eastern Shawnee and Loyal Shawnee. Miami is rich in Native American history and is home to nine Native American Tribal Headquarters.

There are several attractions in Miami. One of the most photographed is the Coleman Theater at 1st Ave NW and Main Street. Built in 1929, it was one of the grandest buildings in the area. Now restored and used by the community for various events, it also houses the Friends of the Coleman: “We don’t own anything. We hold it in trust for the next generation.”

If a museum tour is in your plans, the Dobson Museum on A St SW is home to numerous Native American & Mining Artifacts. With over 5,000 artifacts and collectibles, you will leave full of knowledge about the early days in Ottawa County.

At the stopligh, there are a couple of choices. The main highway will be Hwy 10/69 heading west. If you would like to see some of the older highway, you can continue south across Hwy 10 on Hwy 125 and cross the Neosho River at Riverside Park. At the Miami Fairgrounds, turn west on to E 110th Rd (aka 12 Ave SW).

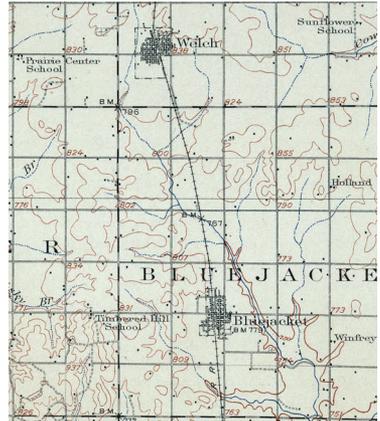
The JH route heads west and the old Rt 66 would have continued south. This would take you to the last section of the original nine foot wide “Ribbon Road” that is listed as an Oklahoma National Historic Landmark. Although claimed by Route 66, this section of the road predates that highway by several years. Legend has it that when the road was built, Oklahoma’s budget was tight, so rather than covering half the mileage, they covered half the width. This remarkable piece of vintage pavement is also called the “sidewalk



highway” and zigzags for 13 miles between Miami and Afton. If you plan to travel this short stretch of the road, use caution if it’s been raining or if you have an oversized vehicle. The only town that existed on this nine foot roadway was the small community of Narcissa which was established in 1902.

If you turned at the light and stayed on Hwy 10/69, you will turn west on to Hwy 10/59 (Hwy 69 continues south). If you took the other route, you will come to a stop sign at Hwy 10/69. Either way, if you cross the highway and you'll be on the same road heading west on Hwy 10/59 towards Welch.

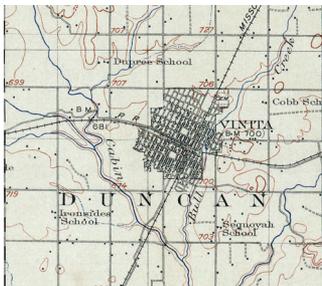
Welch was established circa 1888 in the Cherokee Nation by D. B. Nigh, who leased the property from Frank Craig. The Katy came through the area in 1871 and in 1891 the railroad built a switch on Nigh's property, providing a shipping point for local hay and grain. Incorporated in 1909, it is today a town with a population of about 600 people.



Welch & Bluejacket - 1912

On the east side of Welch, the original JH appears to have gone south on St Louis St (S 4440 Rd) for two miles, jogging across the Union Pacific railroad tracks, then back east one mile on E 120 Rd. The old road would have then turned south on to S 4450 Rd for three miles to Bluejacket. These are gravel roads, so you'll want to just stay on Hwy 10/59 to Hwy 2 and head south there, bypassing Bluejacket.

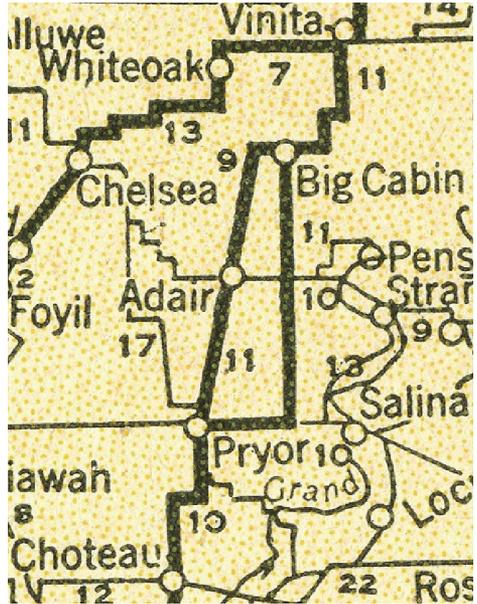
Although Hwy 2 bypasses Bluejacket, it was once a JH town, so here's a little history about the town. It was named after the first postmaster and Shawnee Chief, Rev. Charles Bluejacket. It was also a town on the MKT, incorporated in 1894.



Vinita - 1912

At the corner of Hwy 2 and Hwy 25, there once stood a pyramid shaped mile-age marker, one of twelve built by the Ozarks Trails Association, marking the distance to cities across the US. This area is known as Pyramid Corners. The marker disappeared in the 1930's.

Continuing south on Hwy 2, it's a straight shot in to Vinita. Originally known as Downingville and The Junction, Vinita was established in 1871 by Col. Elias Cornelius Boudinot. The city was incorporated in 1898 as Vinita to honor sculptor Vinnie Reams, whose famous works can be seen in the Oklahoma State Capitol. Vinita was also the first city in Oklahoma to have electricity! Clanton's Cafe, a Vinita standard, opened in 1927 to serve travelers.



Vinita to Choteau - 1923 Clausson Map

Hwy 2 joins Hwy 60/66/69 and heads west out of town. About three miles west of Vinita, Hwy 69 turns and heads south towards Big Cabin. Another MKT town, Big Cabin was named after the “big cabin” used by the American Indians. The incorporation process was started in 1926, but not completed until 1958!



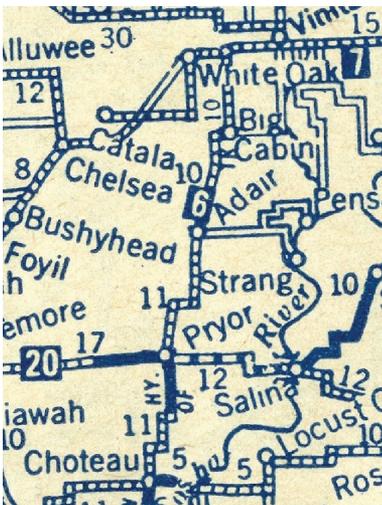
Adair Train Depot

Continuing south on Hwy 69, the next town is Adair which was incorporated in 1897, and named for two prominent Cherokee brothers, William Penn Adair and Dr. Walter Thompson Adair. Both men had served in the

Civil War in Confederate Gen. Stand Watie's First Regiment of Cherokee Mounted Volunteers. The MKT arrived in 1872 along with the first settlers to the area.

Probably the event that is remembered most about Adair is the fact that the Dalton Gang robbed a train here in 1892. In what was their most daring deed to date, on Thursday July 14, 1892, eight members of the Dalton Gang held up the Missouri-Kansas-Texas train at Adair, I.T. Unknown to the gang was the special detachment of eight railroad guards that was on the train. In command was J. J. Kinney, chief of railroad detectives and Capt. J. H. LeFlore, chief of the Cherokee Indian police. Upon seeing that the robbery was happening, the guards unloaded from the train on the east side of the train - the opposite side of the depot. Several of the bandits had been positioned on that side and a brief gun battle took place.

With their work in the train finished and the gun battle ensuing, the bandits proceeded to make their get-away. With bullets whistling about, the bandits made their way down through town. Doctors W. L. Goff and Youngblood had been sitting on the porch of the drug store near the depot. Both men were hit by stray shots several times. Dr. Goff's wound proved to be fatal. Also wounded were Capt. Kinney and Capt. Leflore. Their wounds were not serious and both men recovered. The railroad and express company promptly offered rewards "for the capture and conviction" of \$5,000 for each participant in the robbery.



Vinita to Choteau - 1926 Clausson Map

The next town on the Katy and JH route is Pryor. Captain Nathaniel Hale Pryor, who was married to an Osage woman and served as an agent to the Osage people, was among those settling northeastern Oklahoma. He established a trading post on Grand River, shortly before the Union Mission was established 5 miles southeast of present-day Chouteau in 1820. Originally named Coo-Y-Yah, Cherokee for Huckleberry, it was renamed Pryor

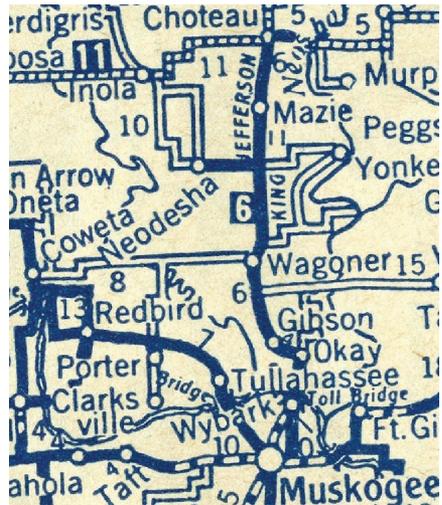
Creek, the name of the local railroad station (named for the creek). Due to confusion in distinguishing handwritten mailing addresses to Pryor Creek and Pond Creek, the U.S. Postal Service name for the city was shortened to Pryor, but remains officially named Pryor Creek.

Nathaniel Pryor was a pioneer of the Three Forks area in north-eastern Oklahoma. Born in Virginia, but his year of birth is uncertain, Pryor was about twenty-three years of age when he married Margaret Patton in 1798. He was probably a widower when he joined the Lewis and Clark expedition at Louisville, Kentucky, in October 1803. After serving as a sergeant in the expedition, he became an ensign in the First Infantry, U.S. Army, in 1807. He left the army in 1810 but reenlisted during the War of 1812. As a captain in the Forty-fourth Infantry he served under Gen. Andrew Jackson at the battle of New Orleans.

The Mayes County Museum is located in the former Pryor Katy Depot. It has many exhibits of the area's history and its American Indian populations. Pryor is also home to the Mid America Industrial Park and Rocklahoma, an annual rock concert.

Choteau is the next town on the JH tour. Named for a prominent fur-trading family, Choteau is yet another MKT town, originally known as Cody's Creek.

Around 1900, a number of Amish farmers arrived in the Choteau area and they have grown and prospered. As of 2011, the Choteau community numbered 4 church districts and around 600 people.



Choteau to Muskogee - 1926 Clausson Map

Most of the first Amish to settle at Chouteau came from Ohio. The Chouteau Amish are known for its liberal use of tractors, which, unlike most Amish, they use in the fields. Tractors are considered a necessity due to the difficult-to-work soil in the region.

In addition to farming, the Chouteau Amish run a variety of businesses. They build Amish furniture of the highest quality. The Amish Cheese House and Bakery in Choteau



Amish Cheese House & Bakery

is a great stop for sandwiches and shopping for many different food items. The Dutch Pantry in Chouteau has a great reputation. Hearty, simple, honest, good food is what's on the all-you can eat buffet here. The catfish, meat loaf, other mains etc., are all delicious and great examples of basic American cuisine at its best. The atmosphere is basic, but also brightened by another uniquely American presence; the friendly Amish ladies who run the place. It is totally worth it for visitors or locals.

Crossing Hwy 412, the next town is Mazie. History is vague at best concerning the origins of this town. Historical references are made to the town, but there seems to be no “history” of the town available. Wikipedia describes Mazie as a “census-designated place” (CDP) in Mayes County, Oklahoma, United States. The population was 91 at the 2010 census, almost unchanged from 88 at the 2000 census.”

Wagoner is the next metropolis along the tour and is the first town incorporated in Indian Territory in 1896. Wagoner sits at the crossroads of the MKT and a branch of the Missouri Pacific. Wagoner's citizens and the Wagoner County Historical Society have preserved many territorial-era homes (six listed on the National Register of Historic Places), and the city owns a downtown history museum. Annual, city-sponsored celebrations include Summerfest Carnival,

Fourth of July in the Park, Holiday of Lights, featuring home tours, and musical entertainment in the Civic Center theater.

From Wagoner, there are a couple of routes we can take to Muskogee. The main route today would be Hwy

69 south. If you would like to take the old route, take Cherokee St east to S McQuarrie Ave. Stay to the right and cross the railroad tracks and you will be on Hwy 16. About five miles south of Wagoner, we'll pass through Gibson Station. Another three miles and we'll be in Okay OK.



M-K-T Depot - Wagoner OK

This area was first settled in 1806 as a trading post on the Verdigris River. The railroad gave the name Coretta to a switch near the present town of Okay and a post office was designated. In 1900, the post office was redesignated “Rex” then redesignated “North Muskogee” in 1911. The town grew and the postal designation became Okay in 1919, honoring the O. K. 3-Ton Truck and Trailer manufactured there by the Oklahoma Auto Manufacturing Company. The ruins of a stone building that once stood at the southwest corner of town, near the Verdigris River, became a symbol of Okay’s role in early-day industry. The building’s first occupant was the Rex Stove Manufacturing Company. The building also housed a meat packing plant, the J. B. Woods Plow Works, the Oklahoma Auto Manufacturing Company, and finally, in 1929, the Okay Airplane Company.

Just south of Okay, Hwy 16 curves back to the west, crosses the Verdigris River, under the Muskogee Turnpike, and across the Arkansas River. Looking to the west side of the road, you’ll see the old JH route bridge crossing the Arkansas. Built in 1922 by the Vincennes Bridge Company, this 1100 foot long bridge consists of four Parker through trusses and one Parker pony truss.

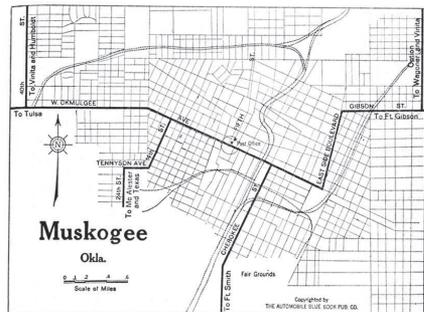
Muskogee was established in January 1872 as a railroad station at the top of the grade for the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway that ran beside the famous Texas Road. This road, running through Oklahoma to Texas, was traveled by hundreds of thousands of families and freighters. Muskogee incorporated part of the Texas Road into the town as Cherokee St.

Muskogee, originally located solely in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation from which it took its name, was the only depot allowed by that nation (town boundaries have since expanded to include parts of the old Cherokee Nation). Railroad contractors obtained permission to erect a post office and called it Muscogee Station, a name the town carried for about twenty years. Thereafter, Muskogee came into use. The town incorporated on March 19, 1898. In 1900 the population stood at 4,254.

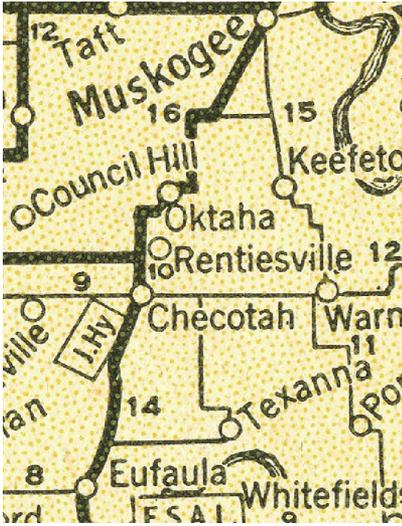
Muskogee also became the location on March 1, 1889, of the first federal district court established in Indian Territory. In 1894 the Dawes Commission located in Muskogee to administer the enrollment of members of the Five Civilized Tribes. In 1894, oil wells were drilled near Muskogee. Oil was first struck near the town's east side on October 30, 1896, at a depth of 1,200 feet.

It appears that the JH route enters Muskogee on N York St, turns west on Gibson St, south on East Side Blvd, then west again on E Okmulgee Ave. Off of Okmulgee Ave, the original route did a jig-jog south on 14th St, right, then left, then right again on Tennyson, west to 24th St. Today, it would probably be easier just to keep heading west on Okmulgee to 24th St, then turn south. Stay heading south on 24th St until the road dead ends. Turn right and get on Hwy 69 to continue south.

Just at little more than a mile down the road, as Hwy 69 turns



1920 Map of Muskogee



*Muskogee to Eufaula
1923 Clausson Map*

to head due west, Oktaha Road will turn to the left heading towards Summit. Now you are back on the two lane highway with the railroad tracks on your left (east side) which is the original alignment of the old Texas Road and the JH.

Summit, platted as South Muskogee in 1910, had a post office as early as 1896. One of more than fifty All-Black towns of Oklahoma, Summit is one of thirteen Black towns still existing at the end of the twentieth century.

The town may have been named Summit because it was the highest point on the railroad between Arkansas and the North Canadian rivers. The many businesses in Summit before World War II included a cotton gin, filling station, grocery, and garage. Although not incorporated until 1980, the town has always been self-governed. The 1990 census listed 162 residents; in 1999 the town completed a new community center and remained optimistic about future growth.

Five miles south of Summit, the road will make a slight right turn near Oktaha and go under Hwy 69. On Aug 6, 1900, the Oktaha Switch post office opened. It was named after Oktarharsars Harjo, a Creek citizen. Oktaha was incorporated three years later and a mayor-council form of government prevailed through the twentieth century. Its population rose to 335 in 1920 and then began a sixty-year decline. Since 1980 its population has again risen to 327 in 2000. Many Oktaha citizens have excelled locally and nationally as rodeo performers. Ted Yochum, who moved to Oktaha after establishing his rodeo career, became a world-champion bulldogger. Artist and sculptor Willard Stone hailed from Oktaha.

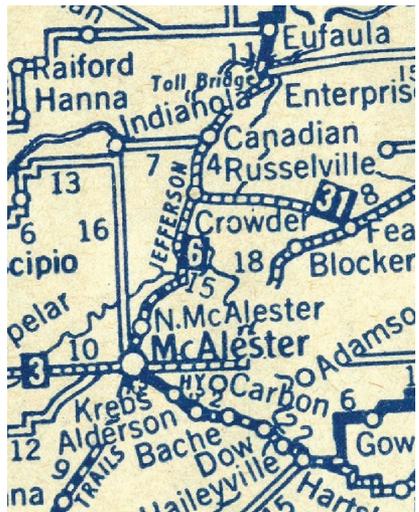
A couple of miles past Hwy 69, the road turns due south and heads in to the town of Checotah. Located in McIntosh County, the town lies at the crossroads of U.S. Highways 69 and 266 and just north of Interstate 40. In February 1872, workers for the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway established a railhead at present Checotah on the old Texas Road in the Creek Nation, as they built tracks southward toward the Red River. The location became “Checote Switch,” named for the Creek Chief Samuel Checote. Later, a mapmaker erroneously spelled it “Checotah.” As the railroad builders moved on, the first tiny depot became home for a telegraph operator and site of the community’s first post office.

On this thoroughfare, near present Checotah, lies the Civil War’s Honey Springs Battleground (the largest conflict in Indian Territory, fought July 17, 1862). Along this same general path the federal government laid out the post-World War I international Jefferson Highway.

Continuing south on Old Hwy 69, Eufala will be the next JH town on the route. Since the Old Hwy 69 runs sporadically, the “new” Hwy 69 will have to be utilized to cross the Canadian River and Eufala Lake and to continue heading south towards McAlester.

The JH towns of Canadian and Crowder will be bypassed, although a short detour will take you in to these towns.

The March 24, 1832, Treaty of Cusseta provided land allotment and some federal compensation for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation emigration from Alabama to Indian Territory. The boundaries included the land between the confluence of the North and South Canadian rivers.

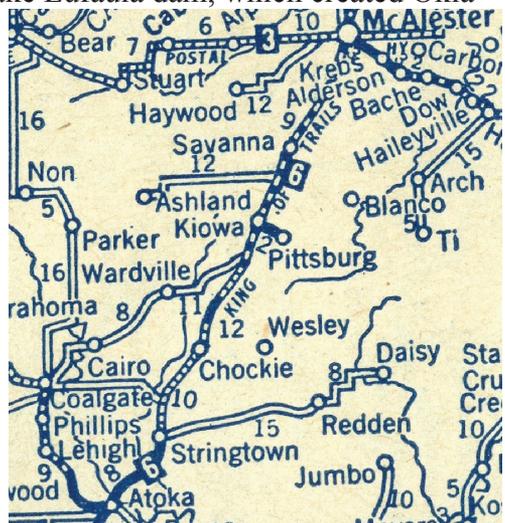


*Eufala to McAlester
1926 Clausson Map*

In 1872, Eufaula emerged as a town when the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway established a railhead at the site, near North Fork Town. George W. Ingall, Indian agent for the Five Civilized Tribes, suggested the name Eufaula, after a Muscogee tribal town in Alabama. Spring floods washed out the bridge that a railroad company was building over the South Canadian River. The rebuilding delay brought people and materials to the developing town.

Eufaula's Indian Journal is the oldest continuously published newspaper in Oklahoma. On June 1, 1876, M. P. Roberts printed the first issue of the newspaper in Muskogee, with William P. Ross as editor. Alexander Posey, poet, journalist, and political humorist (Fus Fixico persona), became owner-editor in 1902. By 1911 Eufaula boasted three banks, two newspapers, electricity, waterworks, and telephone services, as well as numerous professionals and businesses. The 1910 population stood at 1,301 and reached 2,073 by 1930.

On September 25, 1964, Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson traveled to Oklahoma to dedicate the Lake Eufaula dam, which created Oklahoma's largest-capacity lake (3,798,000 acre-feet at the top of the gates), nicknamed the "gentle giant." In 1946 Congress had approved the Lake Eufaula project on the Canadian River for flood control, water supply, hydroelectric power, navigation, and recreation. Located mainly in McIntosh and Pittsburg counties, with small portions in Haskell and Okmulgee counties, the lake has six hundred miles of shoreline and 102,200 surface acres. The dam, constructed



*McAlester to Atoka
1926 Clausson Map*

The dam, constructed

under the supervision of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from 1956 to 1964, had an initial cost of \$121,262,000. The lake's maximum depth is eighty-seven feet, and the mean depth is about twenty-three feet. Within a drainage area of 47,522 square miles, major sources are the waters of the Canadian, North Canadian, and Deep Fork rivers. The dam is capable of generating ninety thousand kilowatts of power.

On the north end of McAlester, Bus Hwy 69 takes off to the west. This will more correctly represent the old JH. This will take you for a short drive into Old Town McAlester. This is the original town-site and it is now the Antique District, located just north of town. The original site of McAlester and its first post office is now the location of numerous antique shops in the old stores that first welcomed the train. Approximately six to eight shops are within a two block area, with easy walking between shops.

McAlester is the county seat of Pittsburg County, Oklahoma. The population was 17,783 at the 2000 census. It is currently the largest city in the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, followed by Durant. The town gets its name from J.J. McAlester, who later became Lt. Governor of Oklahoma. He was immortalized as a character in the novel True Grit, which was then made into feature films in 1969 and 2010.

McAlester is the home of the Oklahoma State Penitentiary, former site of an "inside the walls" prison rodeo from which ESPN's Sports Center once broadcast. Sometimes Oklahomans refer to the state prison simply as "Big Mac" or "McAlester," and the town is referenced in that manner in the opening pages of The Grapes of Wrath when Tom Joad was released from the penitentiary and hitchhiked home.

The crossing of the east-west California Road with the north-south Texas Road formed a natural point of settlement in Tobucksy County of the Choctaw Nation. James Perry who emigrated from Mississippi to the Indian Territory first established a settlement

at the intersection of the two roads in 1838. The town there was named after Perry by being called Perryville. At one time, Perryville was the capitol of the Choctaw Nation and County Seat of Tobucksy County.

A unique winery is located in McAlester. This boutique style winery is set in the former Newton Jewelry Store of McAlester. This building was built in 1901, with curved glass windows and murals painted by a local artist. The wine labels are also original watercolor paintings done by an award winning local artist, Paula Anderson. It is located in the heart of downtown McAlester; our winery features our own exclusive wines, cheeses, gourmet food items, and home decor. We have been in business for over 7 years, but our family has been making wine for over 5 generations. You may want to stop and taste the award winning “Wines From the Heartland” at Whispering Meadows.

The U.S. Highway 69 Business Route through the McAlester area is about 8 or 10 miles long. It is the Jefferson Highway’s original route through town and basically followed the old MK&T railroad. This area is known for the Italian Restaurants that were developed by the descendants of the early settlers who came to McAlester to work in the coal mines. One of the better known ones is Gia Comos, which is located on the U.S. Highway 69 Bypass on the east side of McAlester. Almost everyone has a favorite Italian Restaurant in McAlester or Krebs, just east of McAlester.

When you leave McAlester to continue your trip south, your only choice is Hwy 69 to Savanna. You will cross the intersection with the Indian Nation Turnpike and traffic is heavy in that area.

Savanna can trace its origin to a rural settlement in the Choctaw Nation of the 1860s. A post office was established in the town on May 5, 1876, and in the 1880s, after coal mining developed, it became one of the larger towns in Indian Territory. An early point on the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway between Denison, Texas, and Parsons, Kansas, Savanna supported a school, churches,

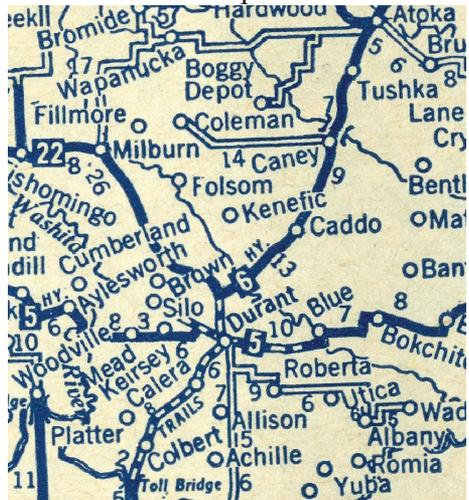
a good hotel, stores, a doctor, a loading platform at the railroad, a bank, a cotton gin, and a jail. Savanna is adjacent to and east of the U.S. Army Ammunition Plant (opened in 1943 as the U.S. Naval Ammunition Depot.) This is one of the largest employers in that area and many people commute to work at the depot.

The next JH town is Kiowa. With a population of about 700 people, this is mostly ranch country. According to certain reports, the McIntire family has ranched in this area of Pittsburg County, Oklahoma for a number of years. Therefore, Kiowa claims Reba as one of their own. The nearest hospital is McAlester and she was born there.

Reba Nell McEntire was born on March 28, 1955, in McAlester, Oklahoma, to a family of champion steer ropers. While growing up, McEntire and her three siblings spent time traveling to and from their father's world championship rodeo performances. Their mother, Jacqueline McEntire, nurtured her children's musical talent. During their many long car rides, they would pass the time by learning songs and harmonizing.

Reba began her career in the music industry as a high school student singing in the Kiowa High School band, on local radio shows with her siblings, and at rodeos. While a sophomore in college, she performed the National Anthem at the National Rodeo in Oklahoma City and caught the attention of country artist Red Steagall. He brought her to Nashville, Tennessee, where she signed a contract with Mercury Records a year later in 1975. She released her first solo album in 1977.

Hwy 69 will continue south through Stringtown and in to



Atoka to Durant and the Texas State Line
1926 Clausson Map

Atoka.

Stringtown is the second largest town in Atoka County. The town is notable for the Mack H. Alford Correctional Center, a medium-security prison.

Clyde Barrow and one of his gang members killed a deputy sheriff at a dance in Stringtown. . . . There is a Historical Marker on the west side of the highway that is rather difficult to see. “Near this place on Aug. 3, 1932 Atoka County Sheriff C.G. Maxwell and Deputy Sheriff Eugene Moore were involved in a shoot-out with Clyde Barrow, Raymond Hamilton, and Everett Milligan. The incident occurred when the two lawmen tried to arrest the men at a dance in Stringtown. As the lawmen approached, the threesome opened fire killing Moore instantly and severely wounding Maxwell.”

Atoka was founded by the Choctaw Indians in the 1850s and named for Captain Atoka, a leader of the Choctaw Nation and the signer of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, which began the process of re-locating the Choctaw people from Mississippi to Oklahoma in 1830. The name “Atoka” is derived from the Choctaw word hitoka (or hetoka), which means “ball ground” in English. He is believed to be buried near the town of Farris. Atoka is the site of the oldest Catholic parish in the Indian Territory, the oldest chapter of the Freemasons in Oklahoma, and the oldest chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star in Oklahoma.

A “must stop” is the Confederate Museum before you get to the town. It is on your left, and hard to see, so watch closely as you near the edge of town. Parking is adequate at the museum and the staff members are friendly and helpful. The Jefferson Highway was a major road for this town and the museum staff was very familiar with the old highway. They have some interesting displays, plus some books about Bonnie and Clyde. The story of the event as told by eye-witnesses to the shooting in Stringtown differs from the inscription on the historical marker.

Hwy 69 joins Hwy 75 in Atoka and continues south through Tushka, located five miles southeast of Atoka in Atoka County. Prior to development, the area provided a hunting ground for the Choctaw. By 1872, the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway began building tracks five miles south of Atoka and a settlement by the name of Peck Switch began. Tushka has existed under four names. The first was Peck, Indian Territory, where the first post office was established in 1903. By 1905, it was changed to Lewis, named for Charles Lewis, the first postmaster. In 1909, the town's name switched to Dayton. Later that same year, Tushka, a Choctaw word for warrior, replaced Dayton.

The first public structure was a small one-room combination school and church. Citizens donated the funds to construct it. Jim Butler provided the land for the community cemetery. By 1907, the town was surveyed and platted. In 1908, the first telephone system was installed. The short-lived Lewis Agitator served as the local newspaper. By 1913 there were three churches and twelve businesses, including a hardware store, grocery, dry goods, implement store, cafés, barbershop, bank, lumberyard, blacksmith shop, theater, telephone office, drug store, courthouse, and two doctors.

Tushka's first incorporation came in 1915 and lasted for twelve years. The 1920 census registered 248 residents. During the Great Depression, a faltering economy and fires that burned most of the businesses almost destroyed the town. Because of World War II many of the residents left for work in California and never returned. Tushka reincorporated in 1968. The 1970 population stood at 230, rising to 358 in 1980. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the town had a pre-kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade school system, many businesses along Hwy 69/75, a Baptist Church, a police department, a volunteer fire department, and a community building. In 2000, the population stood at 345.

The old highway is accessible just south of Tushka. This road will take you on Bus Hwy 69 through Caney and Caddo. Watch for the “Y” in the road just north of Caddo, where the Old Hwy will jog to the right over the railroad tracks, then continue south in to Caddo. On the north side of Durant, watch for the Old Hwy, also known as Caddo Hwy, to turn left before you reach Hwy 69/75. This is known as Bus 69 Hwy or Armstrong Road here.

A wooded area with flowing streams and fresh-water springs attracted the early townbuilders. The village received its name from the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway switch, called “Caney Switch.” The town’s first post office was established on June 20, 1888. In 1904, Harvey Brown and R. R. Hall organized the First Bank of Caney. The original school was a one-room building located on the south side of town. In 1910 a two-story school was built on the north side of the community. The 1910 population stood at 295 residents. In 1911 Caney boasted five general stores, a cotton gin, two drugstores, a lumberyard, a restaurant, and the bank. The town has supported four newspapers: the Choctaw News, the Caney News, the Caney Democrat, and the Caney Leader; none continued into the 1920s.

Municipal court was held in the basement of a two-story building called Akers Hall. In the early 1920’s, Caney added two more banks and two hotels. In 1920, the population peaked at 432 residents of a thriving, growing city. However, the Great Depression, three major fires, and two major tornadoes stunted the town’s growth. With each natural disaster, Caney has lost its business interests. In 1930, the population had dropped to 274, then to 252 in 1950, and to a low count of 128 in 1960. Since 1970, the census figure has consistently remained around two hundred. In 1983, the Cimarron Cellars Winery began producing wine in the area, continuing its operation into the twenty-first century.

Located in north central Bryan County, Caddo is north of Durant on U.S. Highways 69 and 75, approximately two miles south of the Atoka County border on a branch of the Blue River. The town was

named for the nearby Caddo Hills, site of an 1808 battle between the Caddo and Choctaw, in a low range of hills two miles southeast of the town. The engagement was a major defeat for the Caddo. The area was formally part of the Choctaw Nation.

Caddo is the oldest town in Bryan County. The Choctaw Nation originally used the site as a court town, and on the first Monday of each month they gathered at the site to air complaints or to stand trial. The location became a stopping place on the trail between Fort Smith and Fort Sill. Maj. Aaron Harlan built a store nearby. Caddo owed its growth to the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway, which built a line through the Choctaw Nation in 1872. Katy engineer Ben Munson staked out Caddo Station. In October 1872, Big John Scullin and his Irish laborers laid the first track into the site. A post office was established December 19, 1872, with W. S. Burke as postmaster. By 1873, about four hundred people had clustered around the depot. The rapid population influx meant that some residents had to live in tents. Caddo was a communications hub in early years.

Incorporated in 1898, Caddo appeared to be the most populous and promising town in the region. One of its most successful citizens was merchant and noted cattle raiser Wilson Nathaniel Jones, later chief of the Choctaw. When the St. Louis and San Francisco Railway began to build an east-west line across the Katy tracks, the merchants raised land prices, causing the railroad officials to decide to build the tracks through Durant. This made Durant the fastest growing city, and it became the county seat. Caddo was left behind.

In 1930 Caddo's population stood at 933 but slowly dropped to 814 in 1960. In 1973 the town celebrated its centennial. Planning committee chairperson was favorite son James Pinckney "Cowboy Pink" Williams, a lieutenant governor and state treasurer. At the end of the twentieth century Caddo's major industries included ranching operations and one of the state's largest fish hatcheries. The 2000 census recorded a population of 944.

Durant is the next JH town of any size. The old highway enters the town from the north side on Bus Hwy 69/Caddo Hwy. Just east of Hwy 69, Bus Hwy 69 turns south on Armstrong which will take you to N 1st Ave. Turn left (south) on N 1st Ave to Main St (Hwy 70), turn right on Main, then turn south again on S 9th Ave - all roads that should be marked as Bus Hwy 69.

Occupation of the townsite of Durant began in November 1872 when a wheelless boxcar was placed on the east side of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway tracks. In 1873, Dixon Durant erected the town's first building, a wooden store, on the east side of the boxcar. Named "Durant Station" for his family, it was shortened to Durant in 1882.

Since the first settlers came to the area, agriculture has remained the town's economic base. The primary commercial crops were peanuts, cotton, wheat, and cattle. By 1902 there were eight churches, sixteen groceries, sixteen physicians, five hotels, fifteen attorneys, an ice plant, and numerous other businesses. Growth continued rapidly, due to a rapid influx of mixed-blood Choctaws and whites. Very few full-bloods lived in Bryan County at the time. In 1999 the state legislature proclaimed Durant "the Magnolia Capital of Oklahoma," and the town annually hosts a Magnolia Festival the weekend following Memorial Day. Oklahoma Gov. Robert L. Williams resided in Durant. In 1975 Chief David Gardner located the headquarters of the Choctaw Nation in the former Oklahoma Presbyterian College buildings. At the beginning of the twenty-first century Durant continued to grow with wholesale, retail, and light manufacturing businesses supported by one of the top-ranked public school systems in the state.

The last two JH towns in Oklahoma are Calera and Colbert. Hwy 69/75 is still the highway of choice here as the old pavement is gone. Calera is located south of Durant on U.S. Highway 69/75 in Bryan County. Originally called Cale, Indian Territory, the town was built in 1872 when the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway

built through the Choctaw Nation. Named for railroad official George W. Cale, its earliest beginnings were a livery stable, grocery, cotton gin, and school for local farmers. All of the buildings lay on the east side of the tracks. On November 30, 1889, the first post office was established, with John C. Womack as postmaster. Ten years later Dr. John A. Sterrett, a Troy, Ohio, entrepreneur and member of the Choctaw Townsite Commission, and Butler S. Smiser commissioned a survey for a townsite. In 1899 the town was christened Sterrett, but Katy officials refused to accept the name and referred to the site as Cale Switch or Cale. The dispute continued until 1910, when the townspeople compromised on the name Calera.

By 1907 statehood the city had moved west of the tracks. Office buildings, banks, and businesses were constructed with Main Street serving as the major road north and south to Durant and Colbert. This became Highway 69/75. A newspaper, the Sterrett Sun, served the town. It was owned and printed by J. R. Moore. Later the Calera News, which failed in the 1920s, reported to the community. William Bondies operated one of Calera's first major industries, a prairie hay and grain business. He owned scales to weigh the hay and grain being shipped on the railroad. For a number of years the area was a large national supplier of prairie hay.

The town's population stabilized in the 1920s (703 in 1920) and then began to decline. As more citizens moved to larger towns for jobs, the city gradually became a farm community, depending upon peanuts, cotton, and hay. In 1940 the population was 597; a resurgence began in the late 1960s, with a 1970 mark of 1,063. In 2000 the census recorded 1,739.

Located in southern Bryan County, Colbert lies on State Highway 91, near its intersection with U.S. Highway 69/75. The establishment of Fort Washita in 1844 and Armstrong Academy in 1850 preceded Colbert's founding. A post office was established with Walter D. Collins as postmaster on November 17, 1853.

The town's name honored Benjamin Franklin Colbert of the Colbert family, descendants of a Scottish family who had intermarried into the Chickasaw Nation. In 1848 Colbert moved to the area to build a home on the Red River. A wealthy cotton farmer, he owned twenty-five slaves. In 1853 he secured permission from the tribe to run a ferry across the Red River. In 1858 the community became a stop for the Butterfield Overland Mail. Colbert agreed to transport the stages and passengers over the river for free and to maintain the road. The line stopped first at Nail's Crossing on the Blue River and then at Carriage Point or Fisher's Station, named for Fisher Durant, the Choctaw who ran the station, before entering Colbert from the west.

The ferry operated until B. F. Colbert later sold his interest in the ferry to the Red River Bridge Company. At the ferry site in 1892 the company completed a toll bridge, but it was destroyed by a flood in 1908. In 1915 the company rebuilt the bridge and by the 1920s charged seventy-five cents per vehicle. Later, a proposal for a free bridge occasioned the Red River Bridge War. Because of a federal injunction filed by the Red River Bridge Company against the Texas Highway Commission, Texas Gov. William W. Sterling ordered the Texas Rangers to prevent the opening, prompting Oklahoma Gov. William H. Murray to call out the National Guard. In 1931 the federal courts settled the issue, after the Texas legislature passed a bill that allowed the bridge company to sue the state.

In 1872 the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway built through Colbert to Denison, Texas. Attracted by cotton and peanut farming, settlers moved to the area in greater numbers. In 1899 the town was platted by the Dawes Commission. In 1906 the First National Bank was organized by Dr. W. H. McCarley, a physician. The Colbert Times served as the community's newspaper in the 1910s. In 1940 the town had a population of 602, which rose to 671 in 1960, and by 1980 stood at 1,122. Nearby Lake Texoma creates an inflow of tourist dollars to bolster the economy. The Colbert's Ferry site is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR 72001057). The 2000 census reported 1,065 inhabitants.

Cross over the Red River and you are in Texas!

North-south routes included the Atlantic Highway and the Pacific Highway along the coasts and others, such as the Evergreen Highway (Portland, Oregon, to El Paso), the Jackson Highway (Chicago to New Orleans), the Jefferson Highway (Winnipeg to New Orleans), the King of Trails Highway (Winnipeg to Brownsville, Texas), and the Meridian Highway (Winnipeg to Houston).

1924 - The Jefferson Highway, designated as State Highway 6, extended from Chetopa, Kansas, through Vinita, Pryor, Wagoner, Muskogee, Checotah, Eufaula, McAlester, Atoka, and Durant to the Red River.

1926 - U.S. 73 (the Jefferson Highway, generally the route of the Texas Road/Shawnee Trail and original State Highway 6, redesignated U.S. 69 in the 1930s)