

# Heritage Tour

## #1 - The WILL ROGERS HOTEL

The fireproof structure of concrete and steel originally contained 78 rooms and 7 apartments. During World War II, it was designated as a bomb shelter. Mineral water baths called "radium water" were an important part of the hotel's service.

In the lobby is a statue of Will Rogers, *I DON'T TELL JOKES. I JUST WATCH THE GOVERNMENT AND REPORT THE FACTS*, representing his career in radio broadcasting. Rehabilitation of the Will Rogers Hotel, now the Will Rogers Center, was completed in 1997 and contains 38 apartments.

Visitors are welcome to view the lobby and second floor.

Monday - Saturday 10:00am - 5:00pm

Group tours may be arranged, with a three-day advance notice.

Call for more details. 918-343-0045

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## #2 - J. M. DAVIS ARMS & HISTORIC MUSEUM

The museum contains the world's largest collection of guns with over 20,000 on display. It is also the home for a large collection of John Rogers statuary, a stein collection, swords, saddles, Indian artifacts, World War I posters, and antique musical instruments.

The collection, originally located in the historic Mason Hotel, now belongs to the State of Oklahoma. Before Mr. Davis died, he stipulated that his collection must remain in his beloved city of Claremore.

Open Monday - Saturday 8:30am - 5:00pm & Sunday 1:00pm - 5:00pm  
Closed Christmas & Thanksgiving admission is by donation.

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## #3 - J. THE BARTLEY MILAM HOME

1775 Camden is a private home that was originally built by J. Bartley Milam, Principal Chief of the Cherokees. The Cherokee government had been dismantled in 1907 when Oklahoma became a state. In 1941, Milam was appointed Chief for a year by Franklin D. Roosevelt and was reappointed until his death in 1949.

His main goals were to reconstruct the tribal government, and the preservation of Cherokee property, and historical manuscripts. Please respect the privacy of the present owners.

#### **#4 - ROGERS STATE UNIVERSITY**

When Oklahoma was granted statehood, the first legislature established Eastern University Preparatory School, which opened on College Hill in Claremore in 1909. This school was to prepare Indian students for the University of Oklahoma. The only building on campus was Preparatory Hall this domed structure was completed in 1911.

In 1919, the Oklahoma Legislature eliminated EUPS, and in its place established Oklahoma Military Academy, hailed as the "West Point of the Southwest". The first 40 students lived in tents during the fall and winter of 1919 - 1920 until Meyer Hall could be built. This building with the large columns in front was named for Maurice Meyer, the first Oklahoman killed in action in the First World War.

On the second floor is the Oklahoma Military Academy Museum which is open to the general public. Currently, the museum is open the same hours as the campus offices but it is available for special tours or functions. In 1971, in response to the growing educational needs of a rapidly developing technological and industrial economy, OMA was replaced with Claremore Junior College which further evolved into the institution it is today: Rogers State University.

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#### **#5 - WILL ROGERS MEMORIAL**

Will Rogers Memorial was built on the lofty hillside of 21 acres that Will Rogers purchased in 1911. In the foreground is the tomb of Will Rogers chiseled with his famous quotation: "I never met a man I didn't like." Built of native limestone, the regal museum hosts a dozen theaters or television kiosks; a famous saddle collection; fine art and artifacts depicting the life of one of America's most unusual humorist- philosophers, Will Rogers.

Born in 1879 on a frontier ranch, Will Rogers used his cowboy trick roping talents to enter show business rising from Wild West shows to vaudeville. He was always proud of his Indian heritage and was called "The Cherokee Kid". He was the toast of Broadway for a decade in the Ziegfeld Follies. Will Rogers became a major syndicated newspaper columnist; author of six books; star of 71 motion pictures, and America's premier radio commentator. An airplane crash took Will's life in 1935.

Admission is free, donations are appreciated.

The museum is open 8:00am - 5:00pm

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#### **#6 - CLAREMORE LAKE**

The Claremore Lake features picnic areas, fishing areas, & boat ramp. One of the docks is designed for children and is handicap accessible.

Directions to the lake: From downtown Claremore travel East on Blue Starr Drive 2 miles.

In 1938, the WPA constructed a unique two-story boat house on the lake. The first floor has one room with a chimney. The lower level, where boats dock, contains a small room the Claremore police once used as a jail. The water in Lake Claremore is fed by Dog Creek, named for Dosage Chief Black Dog, one of the three main chiefs of the Dosage tribe when they dominated the area.

## **#7 - RADIUM TOWN**

George Eaton owned the first oil company in town. In 1903, he was drilling east of town for oil or gas. Instead, he found "rotten-egg-smelling" water. Dr. W.G. Williams had the water analyzed for medical use and then marketed it as a cure. Bath houses were built and "radium water" baths became Claremore's biggest industry. The bath houses are now closed, and the area is in a stage of disrepair. The wells remain and are just waiting for the right investors to take up the dream of better health through the magical cure of mineral water.

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## **#8 - KELLER BATH HOUSE**

The Keller Bath House located at 7<sup>th</sup> & Lavira. The two-story brick bath house has beautiful ornate wrought iron trim and was built in the 1900's. Once called the Mendenhall Bath, House, one could get a radium water bath for 25¢.

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## **#9 - SWAN'S DAIRY**

This dairy had its beginning in 1923 with one cow. In 1951, Swan Dairy started selling Grade A Raw Milk in 1 gallon bottles and continues today. The first milk was 50¢ a gallon. Cheese is also produced at the dairy.

Visitors are welcome to view Oklahoma's finest milk as it comes directly from the cows to a pre-cooler and then to a tank cooler and bottled. The cows are not given hormones, and the pastures are not chemically sprayed. The raw milk is routinely tested by the State Health Department.

Afternoon milking is from 3:00pm - 5:00pm daily.

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## **#10 - WOODLAWN CEMETERY**

The oldest marked grave in the cemetery Elijah Hicks, born in Georgia in 1797, was a Captain of one of the 13 detachments on the "Trail of Tears". In 1839, he settled where Woodlawn Cemetery is now located.

This area had previously been occupied by Dosage Chief Black Dog. Hicks, was a delegate to Washington and served as President of the Cherokee Senate. He died August 6, 1856. The Rogers County Historical Society provided an exact replica of the original stone that had suffered the ravages of time.

## **#11 - BELVIDERE MANSION**

This magnificent Victorian mansion was started circa 1902 by John M. Bayless. He moved here from Missouri. He also built a three-story Opera House, the Sequoyah Hotel, and an athletic building with an indoor swimming pool. Only the Belvidere remains today. He soon brought his wife and 7 children to Claremore. He died in 1907, six months before the mansion was finished.

Many of the materials used to build the mansion were brought from the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. In the 1930's, the mansion was purchased and made into apartments. It is presently owned and is being restored by the Rogers County Historical Society.

The mansion is decorated for Christmas season around the first of November until the middle of December. It is filled with arts and crafts, antiques, gifts.

Call for the "Christmas at the Belvidere" schedule. New at the Belvidere is a year-round Victorian gift shop, featuring new and antique furniture and gift items. The mansion is open for shopping and touring Thursday - Saturday from 10:00am - 4:00pm

Group tours by appointment Call for more information: 918-342-2693

Admission is free, donations are appreciated.

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## **#12 - FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

Located on the Northeast corner of 4th & Chickasaw; the First Presbyterian Church occupies a corner lot in one of Claremore's oldest residential areas.

The congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Claremore was organized in 1887 and services were held in homes until the Gothic Revival style building was constructed in 1902, 5 years before statehood. In the 1950's and 1960's, three changes were made. The original gothic tracery windows were replaced with stained glass windows, a 40' x 40' social and educational wing was added to the southeast side of the structure and a bell tower was placed atop the stone tower.

In spite of the additions, it is one of the oldest religious structures in Northeastern Oklahoma that has retained its original appearance.

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## **#13 - CARRIAGE HOUSE BED AND BREAKFAST**

Carriage House Bed and Breakfast located across the street from the Presbyterian. The main house, circa 1910, is the traditional turn-of-the-century style with a large wrap around front porch and second floor balcony. All the rooms reflect the owner's interest in antiques. One of the two guest rooms is decorated with keepsakes from Paris.

When the main house was originally built, the carriage house was also built to house the horse-drawn carriage. It has been converted into a one bedroom house complete with kitchen and bath. This is the perfect place for the couple who would like a special, private getaway weekend.

## **#14 - OLD WILL ROGERS LIBRARY**

Old Will Rogers Library now occupied by the City of Claremore. A year before his death, Will Rogers donated his lots in downtown Claremore with the understanding that they were to be sold to the government for a post office site, and the money from the proceeds of this sale to be used to build a city library. After his tragic death, the family allowed the structure to be named for him as a tribute to his unselfishness and community spirit.

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## **#15 - LYNN RIGGS MEMORIAL**

Located in the South wing of the old library is the Rollie Lynn Riggs Memorial. Born in 1899 3 miles Southwest of Claremore in Indian Territory, he became an internationally famous author and playwright of "Green Grow the Lilacs", from which the musical "Oklahoma!" was adapted by Rodgers & Hammerstein.

The play, set in 1900 in Claremore, is a vibrantly descriptive and colorful tale of life in Indian Territory. Lynn's mother died when he was two years old. As a child, he often visited his Aunt Mary, and she became the basis for the character, "Aunt Eller" in the play...even down to the butter churn and sassafras tea.

In his Oklahoma plays, Riggs depicts primitive Oklahoma people and writes authentic Oklahoma dialect with wonderful spirit and rhythm. Many of the characters were based upon his own family and close friends from the Claremore area.

The play provided an outlet for eleven cowboy and folk songs that Riggs remembered from his youth. According to Oscar Hammerstein, "I should like to go on record as saying that Mr. Riggs' play is the well-spring of almost all that is good in Oklahoma. I kept many of the lines of the original play without making any changes in them at all for the simple reason that they could not be improved on Lynn Riggs and Green Grow the Lilacs are the very soul of "Oklahoma!"

Lynn Riggs died in 1954 and is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery. The Lynn Riggs Memorial houses the original surrey with the fringe on top from the movie, "Oklahoma!"

The memorial is open Monday - Friday until 4:00pm Saturday 1:00pm - 5:00pm  
For group information, call 918-627-2716.

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## **#16 - THE PINK HOUSE**

**The Pink House** restaurant located on 4th Street, 1/2 block east of the old library. The house was built circa 1902. In 1983, Kay Grubbs opened this very popular restaurant.

It is open for lunch Monday - Saturday 11:00am - 3:00pm  
Private parties for evenings may be arranged one week in advance.

## **#17 - CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

The Christ Presbyterian Church occupies the northeast corner at 5th & Weenonah. The church was purchased from the First United Methodist Church in 1990. In 1882, a one-room frame building was constructed after \$500 was given by the Methodist General Conference to erect a house of worship.

The church was served by "Circuit Rider" preachers until 1907. Through the years, additions were made to the one room structure. A ground-breaking ceremony was held in 1939 for the stone building, and the frame structure was removed. The educational building was added in 1967.

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## **#18 - PATTI PAGE STREET**

This street was named for the famous singer as she was born in Claremore, but moved to Tulsa at a very early age. Her name was Clara Ann Fowler.

She began her singing career on a radio show called "Meet Patti Page", sponsored by Page Milk Company. She adopted the new name for her personal appearances with orchestras and bands. Her record, "Tennessee Waltz" is second only to Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" as the largest selling record in history.

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## **#19 - ROGERS COUNTY COURT HOUSE**

Located on the corner of Patti Page Blvd and Missouri is the Rogers County Court House. The county dedicated its first Court House in 1941, 34 years after statehood. The decision was made to purchase the property and went to the vote of the people. The bond issue failed twice but finally carried on the third try. There have been several additions to the original building.

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## **#20 - ARMORY**

The Oklahoma National Guard Armory was built by the WPA in 1936 during President Franklin D. Roosevelt's term and was constructed by local Claremore residents with the sandstone unearthed in Oklahoma. During the 1940's, it was Teen Town after the Friday night football games. During the week, it was used by the National Guard. For some years, the high school held their basketball games there until a new gym was built in 1953. In 1973, the City of Claremore purchased the building for \$25,000 as a recreation center.

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## **#21 - WILSON HARDWARE**

In 1902 Wilson Hardware was established as a family owned business and remained so until 1985. Little has changed architecturally in the interior making it a well preserved example of this time period. The building is now occupied by the Antique Peddler's Mall at 422 W. Will Rogers. Most of the buildings in this area of town were built during the period of 1904 and 1925.

## **#22 - BROWN BRICK BUILDING**

The brown brick building at 411 Will Rogers Blvd. has featured several clothing departments since 1916. Inlaid white, red, and green octagonal tiles on the exterior entry spell out "gents" and "ladies" and are all still intact. The staircase led to offices upstairs formerly occupied by Dr. Kaho's dental office and Holtzendorff's law office.

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## **#23 - FIRST HOSPITAL IN CLAREMORE**

Ann's Cleaners at 401, a large two-story brick, housed a variety of businesses, but the second floor is best remembered as the first hospital in Claremore established by Dr. Meloy.

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## **#24 - WILL ROGERS BRONZE STATUE**

Located at 300 West Will Rogers is the life-size bronze statue of Will Rogers sitting on a park bench reading the Claremore Progress Newspaper.

The Rogers County Historical Society presented this statue, *ALL I KNOW IS WHAT I READ IN THE PAPERS*, to the City of Claremore in 1996.

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## **#25 - ANDY PAYNE MONUMENT**

Andy Payne a Cherokee Indian who was born on a ranch between Claremore and Foyil, OK.

In 1928, 274 runners from all parts of the world gathered at the starting line in Los Angeles to participate in the International Transcontinental Foot Marathon. The race would follow Highway 66 and would pay \$25,000 to the winner. The press dubbed this the "Bunion Derby". Three and a-half months and 3,422 miles later, Andy was declared the winner at the finish line at New York's Madison Square Garden. He used the money to pay off the mortgage on the family farm.

In 1934, he became the Clerk of the Oklahoma Supreme Court and held that office until retirement.

When you reach "66" and 28A, turn south, and you will be on the main street of Foyil and a portion of the original Route "66". Go two blocks, and a monument to Andy Payne is displayed.

## **#26 - WORLD'S LARGEST TOTEM POLE**

Located on Highway 28A near Foyil, OK you will find the World's Largest Totem pole. It was the creative genius of Ed Galloway who developed the park as a monument to the American Indian.

The nine acre park also includes Galloway's eleven-sided "Fiddle House" that previously housed his hand-carved fiddles. Throughout the park are various sizes of colorful totems, displaying the Indian Folk Art.

Picnic areas can be enjoyed in the beautifully kept grounds, and the parking is plentiful. Contributions to the donation box keep the restoration in progress.

Open daily from dawn to dusk.

Group tours available by appointment.

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