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WOCS Annual “Hamburger Fry” Returns to Clinton and Elk City



Carey Carter (left) purchases Hamburger Fry tickets from Western Oklahoma Christian School students and siblings Barrett and Hadley Blatnick. The Clinton event falls on the same night as the Custer County Conflict football game.

Jena Skarda
WOCS Admissions

Not in the mood to cook dinner or just looking to grab a burger before heading off to your local football game? Make plans to eat at Western Oklahoma Christian School’s Hamburger Fry on Friday, September 26 at the Clinton Frisco Center

(101 South 4th Street). A second event will be hosted on Friday, November 7, at the Elk City Convention Center (1016 Airport Industrial). Lunch will be served from 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and dinner from 5-7:30 p.m. You can dine in or opt for the convenient carry-out meals.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under. The meal includes a hamburger or hot dog, chips, baked beans, dessert, and drink. The event falls on the same night as the Custer County Conflict football game—grab a burger before heading to the big game!

Entz Auction and Realty will host the online auction. Participants can view auction items at www.entzauction.com or scan the QR code for a full listing. Prepare to bid on a Kelley Jewelers gift certificate, Domino fuel gift card, thermal hog and coyote hunt, outdoor custom-built fireplace, or a house cleaning gift certificate. Additional items are being added regularly. Bidding opens on October 24 at 9 a.m. and closes November 9 at 7 p.m.

During the event, an on-site basket silent auction, bake sale, and raffle will run from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Basket themes include OU, OSU, OKC Thunder, Travel and Adventure, Coffee Lovers, and Christmas, to name a few. The bake sale will offer homemade cinnamon rolls, cakes, cookies, pies, and bread. The raffle features your choice of a Henry .22 rifle, a quarter of beef, or a whole hog.

“We look forward to this event each year. It gives us an opportunity to serve our communities while sharing the love of Christ through our students,” said Dora Miller, WOCS Head of School.

This event supports the Clinton, Weatherford, Elk City, and Hinton campuses of WOCS. For more information or to purchase tickets, contact WOCS at 580-323-9150.

About Western Oklahoma Christian School:
WOCS is a non-denominational Christian school founded in 1987. Initially holding classes in Bessie, two years later it moved to the current location in Clinton. The Weatherford campus was added in 2007 and the Elk City Campus in 2011. WOCS provides Bible-based academic instruction for students, beginning with pre-kindergarten and continuing through sixth grade. The school offers computer, art, music, physical education, and Bible classes in addition to the standard curriculum. WOCS is accredited through the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and the State of Oklahoma.



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Shirley Combs

Shirley Joann Combs was born on September 5, 1935, at her family home near Parallel in Dewey County, Oklahoma, to Jesse and Violet (Wanzer) Helzer. She passed away in Edmond, Oklahoma, at the age of 90 years and 11 days.



Shirley was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Lyle Combs; her brother, Jesse D. Helzer; her sister, Eileen Ames; and her brother-in-law, Jim Ames. She is survived by her son, David Lyle Combs and his wife Danielle of Owasso; and her daughter, Nancy Towne and husband Bret of Edmond. Also surviving are her grandchildren; Peter Lyle Towne and wife Taylor of Edmond; Patrick Towne of Edmond; Karsyn Baldrige and husband Jace of Broken Arrow; Presley Combs of Charlotte, North Carolina; Jagger Combs and fiancé Emma Clark of Moore; as well as four great-grandchildren; Parker Towne, Turner Lyle Towne, Keller Towne, and Jensyn Baldrige. Shirley is also survived by her brother, Gary Helzer and wife Monica of Los Angeles, California; her sister-in-law, Henrietta Helzer of Weatherford; and numerous beloved nieces, nephews, and other relatives.

As a child, Shirley worked on the family farm, milking cows, feeding livestock, and helping her mother run the household. She attended Parallel Country School for her elementary education and graduated from Thomas High School in 1953. After graduation, Shirley attended Southwestern State College, where she received a Business/Secretarial Certificate.

In 1956, Shirley married her high school sweetheart, Lyle Combs, and the two enjoyed 64 wonderful years together until his passing in 2020. During their marriage, Shirley and Lyle lived in Norman, Dallas, and Oklahoma City, eventually returning to Thomas in 1969. While Lyle continued to work in Oklahoma City and on the farm, Shirley meticulously maintained their home and lawn. In 1975, she and her sister-in-law, Norma Jean Fender Hight, co-owned and operated The Village Square clothing store on Main Street in Thomas until they closed it in 1985.

Shirley valued many things in her life, including her family, friends, and community. Above all, her first love was for the Lord God Almighty and our Savior Jesus Christ. She demonstrated this love through her kindness, compassion, and genuine concern for others. Shirley’s life was a reflection of her faith, and she showed her dedication to the church through her regular attendance, teaching Sunday School, preparing funeral dinners for decades, and assisting with the Community Thanksgiving Dinner for many years.

Shirley Combs will be remembered for her unwavering devotion to the Lord, her family, friends, and community. She was known for her grace, kindness, and the warmth she shared with everyone she encountered. Her family and her many friends will deeply feel her absence, but her memory will live on in their hearts.

James French

James Harold French, 85, of Custer City, Oklahoma, peacefully passed away on September 10, 2025, at the Clinton Veteran's Center.



James was born on August 28, 1940, in Longview, Texas, to Lindley and Evelyn (Cook) French. He graduated from Norris City High School in Illinois in 1958 and continued his education at Southern Illinois University.

In 1959, James enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, serving until 1963. During his time stationed in Oceanside, California, he met Barbara Jean Dunn, and they were married on August 3, 1963, in San Gabriel, California, after his honorable discharge.

James began his career with Texas Eastern Transmission Co. in Ohio for three years before joining Mobil Oil Corporation, where he worked as an Electrician and Technician for 28 years.

In 1977, he decided he would dedicated his life to the Lord and became an active member of the Trinity Baptist Church in Hugoton, Kansas. There, he served as a Deacon, teacher, youth leader, Bible study leader, and contributed to the AWANA children’s program.

In 1999, James retired from Mobil Oil and moved to Custer City, Oklahoma. He became a valued member of the Arapaho First Baptist Church and was actively involved with the Custer City Senior Citizens.

A passionate fisherman and camper, he enjoyed playing dominos, cards, and pitching washers, cherishing the precious moments spent with family. His beloved Boston Terrier, Puddin, was always by his side.

James is survived by his brothers, Lee French and wife, Vicki, Ray French and wife, Cui Luo Li (Mimi); sister, LaWanda Chain and husband, Neal; nieces, Michelle Chain, Lisa Chain, Latia Murray, Gina Miller and husband, Richard, Kara Cavitt, and husband Randall; nephew Tyrel French and wife, Heather; great nieces, Daisy Bryson, Kayla Moore and husband, Arron, Hope Rennels and husband, Connor, and Josey Cavitt; great nephews, Max Murray, Jake Cavitt, T.J. & Grayson French; great great niece, Olivia Rennels; great great nephews, Alex Moore, Jaxon Moore and Raylon Rennels, along with special friend, Minta Powers.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Buster and Evelyn French; his wife, Barbara; grandparents; siblings; niece Melissa; sister-in-law Sue; and great-nephew Arron Lee Murray.

James Harold French will be remembered for his devotion to his faith, family, and community, leaving behind a legacy of love and service.

Joan Morgan

Joan Ellen Morgan, beloved mother and community member, passed away on September 11, 2025, at the Corn Heritage Village in Weatherford, Oklahoma.



Joan Ellen Graft was born on December 30, 1939, to Rene and Mildred (Ashton) Graft. She pursued her education with great dedication, earning a master’s degree in education and a minor in music. She was a school teacher for most of her career and later served as a school counselor, positively impacting the lives of many students throughout her career.

An avid lover of music, Joan found joy in singing old hymns in church and was active in her church choir, often sharing her talent on the piano.

Joan is survived by her son, James S. Morgan and Tamira, of Custer City, Oklahoma; her daughter, Melissa J. Morgan of Amarillo, Texas; three grandchildren; and her cherished dog, Hank.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Rene and Mildred Graft, and her brothers, James R. Graft and Charles Emet Graft.

The family suggests those wishing to contribute to Joan’s memory may do so through Turning Point USA. Online donations may be made at <https://donate.tpusa.com>.

Joan will be remembered for her kindness, passion for music, and the love she shared with her family and friends.

Bob Bourlier

Bobby Gene Bourlier, a beloved figure and dedicated Soil Scientist, was born on May 18, 1932, in Custer City, Oklahoma. He passed from this earth, which he cared so much about, on September 11, 2025, in Norman, Oklahoma.



Bob’s lifelong commitment to the stewardship of our natural resources was evident throughout his distinguished career with the Department of Agriculture, where he served with honor until his retirement in 1994. His passion for the environment extended beyond his professional life to include outdoor pursuits such as hunting, fishing, camping, and farming. He also possessed a remarkable talent for woodworking, crafting beautiful cabinets, desks, gun stocks, lamps, and cedar chests. Among his cherished creations were intricate plant sculptures made from locally sourced rose rocks, which he generously gifted to friends and family.

After graduating from Oklahoma A & M (now Oklahoma State University) in 1954, Bob began his career as a Soil Scientist in Estancia, New Mexico, in 1955. His journey took him to Aztec, New Mexico, and later to Pawhuska, Oklahoma, where he worked for a decade before eventually relocating to Norman, Oklahoma, for nearly another decade of service.

A man of faith, Bob was raised in the Methodist tradition and remained devoted to his church community, actively participating in the First United Methodist Church in Pawhuska, McFarland Memorial United Methodist Church in Norman, and Independence United Methodist Church in Custer City. He generously donated his time, resources, and skills, contributing in various ways, from ushering to maintenance tasks, even building a closet for the choir robes in Custer City. Whatever was asked of him was given.

He is survived by his loving children: Marilyn (Tom) McAuliffe, Gina Harmon, Gary Bourlier, and Lora Bourlier (Richard Thomason). Bob took great pride in his grandchildren—Robert (Marilyn) Yarbrough, Justin (Michelle) Bourlier, Calla (Brett) McGee, Brody Tucker, Kerrigan Bourlier, Noah Smith, Robyn Smith, and Jordan Thomason—as well as his great-grandchildren, Xander Yarbrough, Rose Yarbrough, Kinsey Bourlier, and Jameson Hodge. Additionally, he leaves behind many nieces, nephews, cousins, and dear friends from Rivermont Independent Living in Norman, especially his beloved cat, Annie.

Bob was preceded in death by his first wife, Marilyn Geraldine Lorah, with whom he shared 45 wonderful years, his second wife, Loretta Jane Ashurst, who passed in 2023 after 22 years of marriage, and his son, Dr. Robert Eugene Bourlier. He was also predeceased by his parents, Cressley Leman Bourlier and Florence Catherine (Avery) Bourlier, along with his sisters Alma Louise (Harry) Jantz and Mary Anne (Parker) Ingram.

The family extends their sincere gratitude to Dr. Jonathan Bryan, Good Shepherd Hospice, and Cornerstone Care, for their excellent compassionate care of their father.

Bob’s legacy will live on in the hearts of all who knew him, as a compassionate steward of the land, a nurturing family member, and a generous friend.

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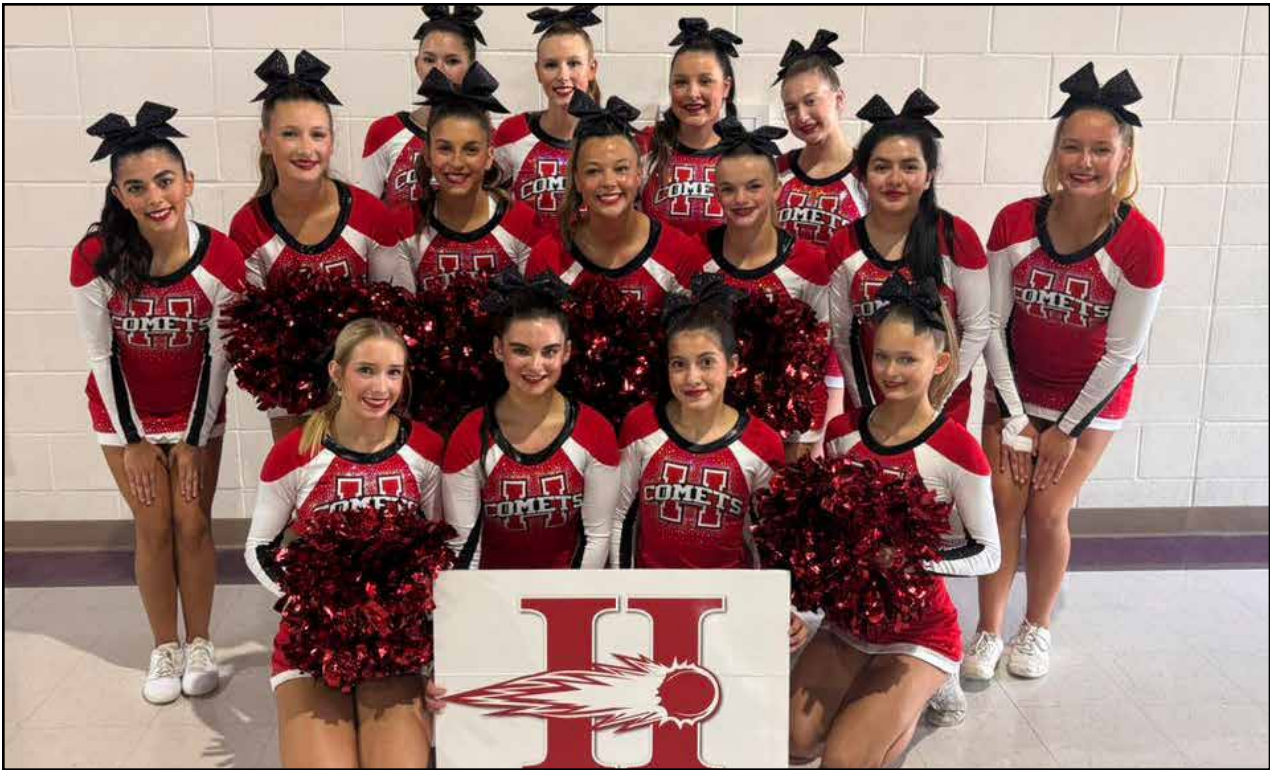
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Questions? Call Jimie-Wray Mead or Lyle Seitter at 405-542-6101

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The Hinton High School Cheerleaders have been named Regional Champions for the second consecutive year. The girls will compete for the State title on Saturday, September 27th at Union High School.

HIGHER GROUND

Is Your Future Bright?



Jim Morrison

As I enter the sixteenth year of writing this column, I want to express my appreciation to those newspapers that have chosen to include these weekly thoughts. I write, not because I have arrived intellectually or have certitude about everything I may say; I write because I am convinced that in the words of Elton Trueblood, (“Christianity) is the exciting venture of faith in which we bet that God really is, that this is His world, and that He is like Jesus Christ.” I believe it was Francis Schaeffer who said it another way,”the only basis for the Christian faith is because it is true.”

When Sheldon Vanauken and his wife were studying in Oxford, their encounter with C.S. Lewis caused them to reach the conclusion that if the truths about Christ being the Son of God were literally true, then it was the only truth really worth knowing. His being truly God in the flesh gave authority to what he said and the way he treated people. Being a follower of Christ is not to be “incidentally a Christian.” In the words of Trueblood, It encompasses all of life. It takes seriously the calling to be “on mission” for the sake of the Kingdom. It goes beyond morality although it certainly includes that. It is not just orthodoxy. The men who founded Southern Baptist Seminary, were themselves slave holders. It is to say with the Apostle Paul, “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all that those who live (in Christ) should no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and rose again.”II Cor. 5:14, 15

In our modern thought we have trivialized sin, diffused the wrath of God and soothed the torments of hell. When I read the biographies of early day missionaries like Hudson Taylor, Adoniram Judson and Lottie Moon I am amazed at their perseverance and passion. They could not rest knowing that vast multitudes were without a witness to the saving power of Jesus. No sacrifice was too great if it meant the Kingdom would be advanced.

Judson’s quote from his missionary days is true today. “The future is as bright as the promises of God.” Underground churches in China are risking their lives each time they meet. They have declared that they will die before they deny their Lord. I would offer the wager that their future is brighter than ours, because they have dared to trust God even to the point of the ultimate sacrifice while we know little of sacrifice that demands our loss of comfort.

This is not intended to lay a guilt trip on anyone. Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”(Matt.9:37, 38)

Pray that young people and young couples; yes even retired couples in good health will sense the call of God on their lives to give themselves to be workers in his harvest fields. “Their future is as bright as the promises of God.”

To comment: jhm82@outlook.com



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HOMECOMING WEEKEND EVENTS

OCTOBER 24
WELCOME BACK PARTY
6:00-8:00 PM: LUCILLE'S, WEATHERFORD

OCTOBER 25
HOMECOMING PARADE
10:00 AM: MAIN STREET, WEATHERFORD
BRUNCH & TAILGATE
10:00 AM-2:00 PM: TIMOTHY T. DAY BEC
TRAVELING BULLDOGS YELLOWSTONE TRIP INFO
11:50 PM TIMOTHY T.DAY BEC
50-YEAR ALUMNI RECOGNITION
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LOCAL AND

AREA NEWS



Mike Smith
News Director

SWOSU Names Martel and Brown as the Latest Bulldogs of the Week

BULLDOGS OF THE WEEK

Southwestern Oklahoma State Athletics



RED MARTEL
Freshman • Football



AZA'IN BROWN
Junior • Football

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Jon Chidester
SWOSU Media Relations

A pair of SWOSU Football players, Red Martel and Aza'in Brown, have been named the newest Bulldogs of the Week.

The weekly honor is presented by Wright Media, the official partner for SWOSU athletic livestreams and radio broadcasts.

Martel (Beggs, Okla.) rushed for 167 yards and two touchdowns in Saturday's win over Southeastern Oklahoma State, helping lift the Bulldogs to their first victory of the season. He averaged 10.4 yards per carry and broke free for scores of 44 and 66 yards.

His 167-yard performance ranks as the second-highest single-game rushing total in the Great American Conference this season.

Brown (Ennis, Texas) capped SWOSU's second-half defensive shutout with a 43-yard pick-six that stretched the Bulldogs' lead to 35-14 late in the fourth quarter.

He also added three tackles and recorded his first interception of the season.

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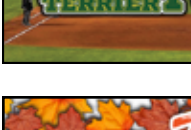
ELECTION RESULTS - There will not be a runoff this fall in the city of Clinton for the Ward 3 city council seat. Erin Adams received more than 67% support in a three-way race to win the seat outright. Voters in the Arapaho-Butler school district gave 64% support to a bond issue for an 8,000 square foot ag facility, a 3,000 square foot shop, and a 45,000 square foot asphalt parking lot that can double as parking for the elementary school. Meanwhile, in Butler, Mark Cobb got 61% of the vote in a race for the Board of Trustees.

ELK CITY / PROPERTY PURCHASE - The Elk City Commission has decided to purchase a piece of property formerly held by the Ramada Inn. “The old Ramada Inn has been closed down for six or seven years and has fallen into disrepair.” explained City Manager Tom Ivester. “It needed to be torn down, but the owner refused to do anything about it. So, the city [purchased] that 9-acre property at a tax sale for a little over \$30,000.” Ivester says he hopes the building can be torn down by Christmas and then can be marketed for potential economic development.

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CORDELL / PIGEONS - City of Cordell Mayor Phil Klierwer provided an update on efforts to address the pigeon infestation in the downtown square, stating that the current population has dropped by approximately 600. Additionally, the area has become “noticeably thinner.” Klierwer noted that although progress has been made, there's still work ahead. He hopes to see another 600 to 1,000 pigeons removed before the Cordell Pumpkin Festival on October 11th.

CLINTON / JOHNSTON RECOGNIZED - Clinton City Manager Robert Johnston was honored during the most recent city council meeting for receiving the 2025 Gerald Wilkins City Manager of the Year award. Johnston was given the award in June at the City Managers Association of Oklahoma (CMAO) conference. “Johnson has nearly 40 years of experience as an administrator of municipal government,” expressed CMAO President Justin Battle, who attended the council meeting to formally recognize Johnston. “He is highly dedicated [and] has served on a variety of boards. Robert Johnston is a prime example of the way city managers should operate.” Also present to show their support were Hobart City Manager Ashley Schlotterbeck, Mustang City Manager Tim Rooney, Woodward City Manager, Sean Barnett, and Woodward Assistant City Manager Michael Jones.

SWOSU / CUNNINGHAM - Acting President of Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Dr. Janet Cunningham, spoke at the most recent Weatherford Rotary meeting. “SWOSU is such a great institution, [and] my plan is to just keep things rolling along,” expressed Cunningham. “The work is not done in the president’s office anyway; it’s done in the rest of the campus.” Dr. Cunningham is serving as acting president while Dr. Diana Lovell is taking a leave of absence until January.

CARNEGIE / SCHOOL BOND - Carnegie school officials say the district is seeking support for a bond of just over \$4 million for a Wildcat Wellness Center. “We don’t have adequate facilities to allow for our female athletes to change in the current field house.” says Superintendent Randy Turney. “They’re going to the gym on another part of the campus to change before coming down, which hinders the coach’s ability to monitor all students.” Turney added that this wellness center aims to “give opportunities to all of our student athletes,” including the school’s football and cross-country teams. Utilities, plumbing and electrical issues have been challenges at the current fieldhouse. Passage of the bond would not result in a tax increase. Election day is October 14th.

SWOSU / CHARITABLE HUNT - The 6th annual SWOSU Charitable Hunt held earlier this month raised over \$44,000 for the benefit of the Parks & Recreation Management department. Proceeds from the hunt will be allocated to the Dr. Ken Rose Memorial Fund, which exists to help the SWOSU Parks & Recreation Management produce the next generation of conservationists.

WEATHERFORD / STAFFORD BB GUN - Weatherford Public Schools Superintendent Mark Harmon addressed parents after a student brought a BB gun to Stafford Elementary. Harmon explained why he chose to release a letter to families following the incident: “I didn’t want any rumors that it was a threat, or not a BB gun. That was the main reason why we put [a statement] out to begin with. Could I have put it out a little sooner? Sure...but I also have a responsibility to the [community]; I didn’t want to cause a panic.” Harmon says that when it comes to the discipline of students, there are certain details the school cannot disclose.

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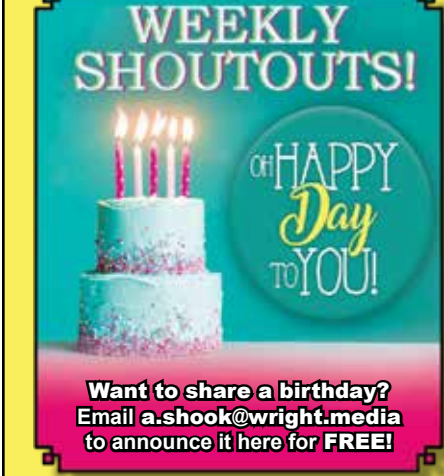
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Alfalfa, OK, Community Center “Bible Study,” Every Monday Night from 7:00 to 8:00 Hwy 58. Five miles South of Hwy 152. For more information contact (405) 643-9211. Free and Open to the Public.

OK Parkinson’s Alliance, monthly support group meeting the second Thursday of each month, excluding December, at 5:30 p.m. at Weatherford’s Pioneer Center, 1000 Gartrell Place. Patients, caregivers, family or friends are welcome. Questions? Contact OK Parkinson’s Alliance (405) 810-0695 or info@OKpa.org.

Iron Sharpens Iron is a Christ-centered adult support group every Tuesday night at 7pm. 233 E Main in Hydro, First Christian Church.

Happy Birthday Wishes for September 24 - Bryler Atchley, Hailey Berry, Maggie Fuchs, Lynnsi Outhier, Josh Pitzer, Zac Sandoval, Danielle Sargent; **September 25** - Stephanie Bradley, Parker Christian, Julie Funkhouser, Pat James, Kasey Jeffers, Luther Newman, Harold Tags, Jerry Waldrop, Tommy Wheeler, Micah Williams; **September 26** - Ray Bagby, Holly Bellamy, Jacqui Ivy, Whitney Littleton; **September 27** - Chandler Arriaga, Latisha Graybill, Larry Green, Erin Hinton, Justin Johnson, Fanny Lunsford, Matthew Murray, Tammy Pigg, Euline Sharp, Shelly Stephens, Vanessa Valli, Kacidie Wallace, Cara Jean Williams, Jane Wilson; **September 28** - Kayla Albert, Beth Bendure, Debbie Dehn, Pam Garrison, Mark Mapel, Margaret Meek, Marylou Mejia, Debbie Mosburg, Tracy Murray, Craig Price, Ginger Reed, Kaila Royalty, Hannah Sandoval, Lexi Sheperd, Kaye Soddors, Garla Wisdom; **September 29** - Darrell Coit, Westyn England, Bayley Forbes, Randy Goucher, Garret Graybill, Logan Guthrie, Nicole Horn, Shawn Lindsey, Ruth Mogg, Lars Sittingbear, Trinita Sparks, Tiara Tripp, John Yelloweagle; **September 30** - Karen Bragg, Carlos Diaz, Kim Hicks, Danny Lenaburg, John Nutry, Charlotte Perry, Sharon Snider, Charlene Tanner, Randy Wynn.

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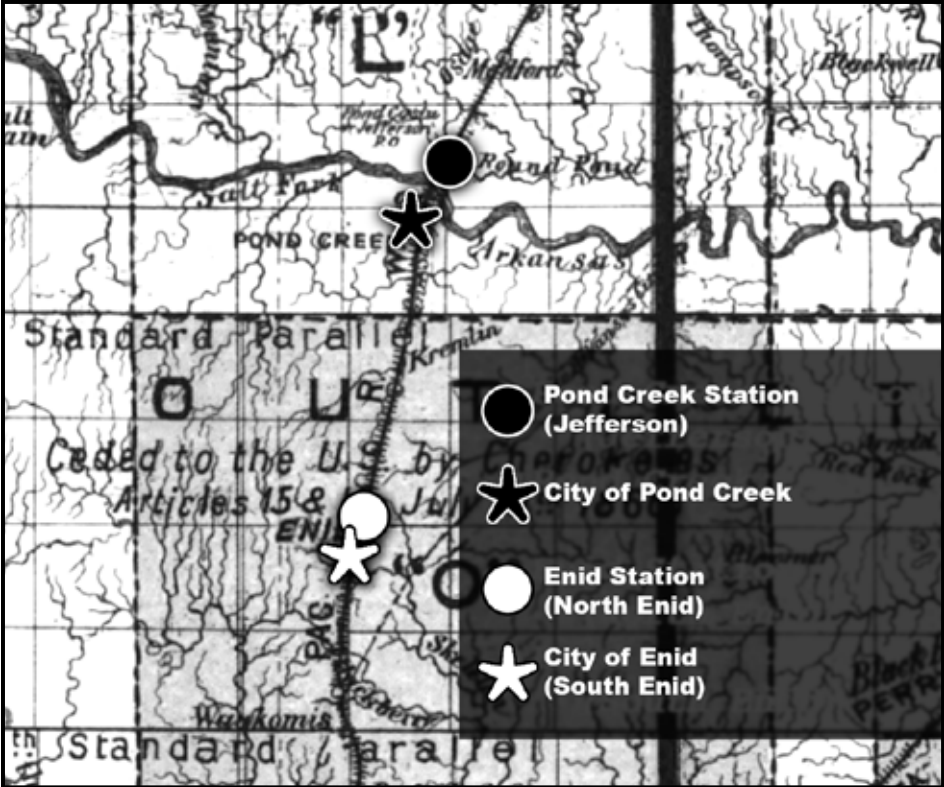
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Oklahoma History: A Tale of Two Enids (Part 1)



Provided by Hinton Public Schools

Photo: Frontier businesses on Broadway Street in Round Pond (the government town of Pond Creek), January 1894. New settlers pose in front of a saloon, restaurant, real estate office, and meat market. Towns like Pond Creek and Enid sprang up overnight after the 1893 land run, and their citizens were determined to defend their community’s survival when the railroad refused to stop.



Provided by Hinton Public Schools

Map of the contested territory in 1894, showing “L” (later Grant County) and “O” (later Garfield County) in the Cherokee Outlet. The Rock Island Railroad’s north–south line is marked, with stars for the railroad’s station towns and circles for the government-designated townsites. Enid Station (North Enid) lay about three miles north of the government’s Enid townsite.



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Chase Wright
Staff Writer

In the early 1890s, two fledgling Oklahoma Territory towns literally went to war with a powerful railroad company. The so-called Enid–Pond Creek Railroad War (1893–1894) was a fierce and chaotic conflict that pitted the citizens of Enid and Pond Creek against the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad (the “Rock Island Line”). What began as a dispute over broken promises—both towns had been promised railroad stops but were double-crossed—escalated into a Wild West-style corporate turf war. Amid dusty streets and fresh wooden storefronts, settlers took up arms and sabotage, tearing up tracks, obstructing locomotives, even exchanging gunfire with railroad crews. The conflict pulled in U.S. Marshals, federal troops, and Congress, making it one of the most dramatic chapters in Oklahoma’s territorial history.

The conflict’s roots lay in the 1893 opening of the Cherokee Outlet (often called the “Cherokee Strip”) to white settlement. In the 1880s, the Rock Island had built a line through Indian Territory along the old Chisholm Trail, setting up a few stations. Two key stops were Pond Creek Station (on Round Pond Creek) and Enid Station (originally Skeleton Station). These would soon sit at the heart of a growing dispute between the railroad and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Ahead of the land run on September 16, 1893, federal officials tried to preempt chaos by pre-selecting county seats for the new counties. They chose Pond Creek as seat of County “L” and Enid as seat of County “O.” Since Rock Island already had stations of the same names, many assumed those would become the official towns. But a problem arose: members of the Cherokee Nation claimed land allotments near the stations just before the run. Rumors spread that Rock Island officials had conspired with Cherokee allottees to grab land around the stations for speculation. Alarmed, the Department of the Interior abruptly shifted the official townsites a few miles away—creating two competing towns for both Pond Creek and Enid.

When the dust settled, there were four rival towns: “Railroad Pond Creek” and “Government Pond Creek,” and “Railroad Enid” (later North Enid) and “Government Enid” (three miles south, or South Enid). Settlers at the government-designated towns expected the Rock Island to stop and bring growth. Instead, they got betrayal: the Rock Island refused to stop at either site. Angered that its original town plans had been upended, the company gambled that if it ignored the new towns, settlers would be forced to return to the “railroad towns.” One official told locals bluntly, “No depots... You got depots north of you three miles. That’s what you’ll use.”

This set the stage for a showdown. By late 1893, residents of the government towns tried peaceful means. They petitioned territorial and federal authorities to force the Rock Island to establish depots. While the Oklahoma legislature and U.S. House supported them, the Senate—pressured by railroad lobbyists—stalled. A bill requiring the company to stop was sabotaged by an amendment forcing new county-seat elections, which panicked locals afraid of losing their seats. Political avenues hit a dead end. Meanwhile, the lack of train service was a daily burden. Settlers had to trek miles to the other stations for supplies, freight, or to catch a train. Even the mail became a battlefield.

When federal officials ordered the Rock Island to at least deliver mail, the company replied mockingly—installing mail cranes so bags could be snatched on the fly. Trains barely slowed down, often mangling mail pouches or scattering their contents across the prairie. Tensions simmered.

When diplomacy failed, citizens took matters into their own hands. South Enid passed an ordinance limiting train speed to 4 mph in town—a symbolic gesture. Rock Island ignored it. Residents waved lanterns and red flags, even placed dummies or debris on the tracks to signal trains. The crews simply plowed through. Each ignored signal fueled local outrage.

By spring 1894, things turned violent. Settlers began firing at passing trains. One account noted Rock Island trains were regularly “peppered with bullets and buckshot.” Conductors opened the throttle through town; passengers hit the floor. Porters warned travelers: it was “forty miles through hell to Hennessey.” When bullets didn’t work, some turned to dynamite. Reports surfaced of settlers placing charges on the tracks to frighten or slow trains. On April 9, 1894, outlaws tried robbing a train near Pond Creek Station, thinking the chaos offered cover. The robbery failed, and even some Pond Creek locals came to the train’s defense—underscoring that their fight was with the company, not crime.

The tipping point came June 5, 1894. In Pond Creek, after a freight roared through town at full speed, a crowd of over 100 citizens—many hastily deputized—rolled a wagon with a small building onto the tracks. The next train simply smashed through it. Furious, someone shouted, “Tear up the tracks!” In minutes, 900 feet of track had been destroyed. A southbound train carrying 30 cars of cattle approached the gap. Riders frantically waved red flags, but the engineer, thinking it was a prank, joked, “This time they’re trying a windmill.” Too late, he saw the missing rails. He and the fireman jumped. The engine derailed, cattle cars crumpled, and around 100 cattle were killed or maimed—yet the crew survived.

Incredibly, Pond Creek officials arrested the dazed crew for speeding. At the hearing, local leaders admitted they had sabotaged the track to uphold their ordinance. This jaw-dropping act finally stirred the federal government. The Rock Island president warned of “interference with interstate transportation.” The term “railroad war” was no longer just metaphor. Tensions only grew. On June 22, 1894, a blast destroyed part of the Salt Fork River bridge. Suspicion immediately fell on locals. A few days later, more shots were fired at a train, wounding a bystander. Pond Creek’s newspaper warned that only a \$300 depot was needed to end the crisis—but “the people are growing desperate.”

Then came July 13, 1894—Friday the 13th. In the night, unknown saboteurs sawed through the Boggy Creek railroad trestle near South Enid. At dawn, a Rock Island freight train hit the weakened bridge. The engine and tender cleared the gap—but the following cars dragged it back into a wreck. Tankers and lumber cars collapsed into the ravine. No one was killed. One shaken engineer, bruised and climbing from the wreck, told the crowd, “Yuh done a damn good job of sawing that trestle.”

That was the last straw; U.S. Marshals and troops were sent to restore order. The fallout will be covered in next week’s issue.

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MISSING BONNIE

Column by Maxine McCullough



I am a very old woman. I wasn't expecting to make a new friend at this age. But then I met Bonnie. Bonnie, cute with white hair in a short spikey do, make up just right, nails done and a sparkle in her eye? Her smile showed a slight space between her two front teeth that just added to her cuteness. She had a sense of humor that fit my left-of-center humor to a T. Bonnie was a few years younger than me, but everyone is younger than me, so that wasn't a problem. I've had lots of friends in my life and many more likeable acquaintances. Seldom do you find someone that immediately fits into your being, your personal space or whatever. We laughed at the same things. We laughed at each other and we laughed at ourselves.

We also had long, serious conversations about our past, our families and our spiritual path. In a short time our friendship grew into a very special relationship. Then, my friend Bonnie became very ill. It seems like just over night. Then she was gone.

Bonnie and I belong to a very special group of ladies that live here in our senior citizen area. We really like each other. We check on each other daily. We would meet on Bonnie's small porch where walkers would spill out onto the sidewalk or under a small tree that grows there.

We called our gatherings "therapy sessions." These sessions produced tales of our life and much laughter. Once Bonnie looked at me and said, I love you, I really do. Now, I'm not one for using the L word easily, but I looked back at her and realized I loved her too, I really did. So I told her so, my new friend that I had not expected to have at my age. Ladies, remember your high school girlfriends? It felt a little like that, With the help of her two wonderful daughters, the group is learning to live without Bonnie. We're all missing Bonnie but thankful for the experience of knowing her. Rest in Peace, our dear friend.

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SOUTHWEST TIRE

Bulldogs Break Through with Explosive Road Win at Southeastern



Jon Chidester
SWOSU Media Relations

For the first time since 2019, SWOSU Football defeated Southeastern Oklahoma State, earning a 35-14 road victory behind explosive scoring plays and a second-half defensive shutout.

The win is SWOSU's first in 2025, moving the Bulldogs to 1-2 after three weeks of the season.

Points came on big plays for the Dawgs, who scored on plays of 44, 66, and 54 yards, while also adding a 43-yard pick-six in the fourth quarter. Only two of SWOSU's scoring drives lasted longer than three plays.

After trailing 14-7 at halftime, the defense tightened up and did not surrender another point the rest of the way. The Bulldogs came up huge in the third quarter, limiting the Savage Storm to just

14 total yards across three possessions.

Entering the night, SWOSU had forced just one turnover through two games. Against Southeastern, the Dawgs came away with three — a second-quarter fumble recovery by Kelton Moore, along with two fourth-quarter interceptions from Jamori Ray and Aza'in Brown, who returned his INT 43 yards for a touchdown to seal the game.

Red Martel opened the scoring on SWOSU's first possession after the defense forced a punt. On a rush to the left sideline, he outran a defender in pursuit for a 44-yard touchdown — his first of the season.

Southeastern answered in the second quarter with two touchdowns to grab a 14-7 lead. Moore's fumble recovery nearly kept the game tied at 7-7

before halftime, but the Storm regained possession with 1:46 left in the half and marched 52 yards in six plays to score just before the break.

Coming out of intermission, SWOSU put together its longest drive of the night — a 15-play, 91-yard march capped by MJ Rivers finding Elijah Reed for Reed's first touchdown reception of the season to tie the score at 14-14.

On the next drive, Martel broke free again down the left sideline for a 66-yard touchdown run, giving SWOSU a 21-14 lead.

The Bulldogs' defense kept the Storm in check from there. Early in the fourth quarter, they delivered another critical stop on fourth-and-short to end a drive.

After a missed field goal, SWOSU's offense struck again when Rivers connected with Baylor Nash in stride for a 54-yard touchdown — Nash's first of the season — that extended the lead to 28-14.

Brown capped off the night with his interception return for a score in the closing minutes.

SWOSU finished with 197 rushing yards and 179 passing yards, outgaining Southeastern 376-335. The Bulldogs went 5-of-14 on third down and totaled 12 first downs compared to the Storm's 18. SWOSU did not commit a turnover while winning the takeaway battle 3-0.

Martel carried the ball 16 times for 167 yards and two touchdowns, while Rivers completed 11-of-15 passes for 179 yards and two scores. Nash hauled in four passes for 108 yards and his touchdown, with receptions of 34 and 54 yards.

Defensively, Zack Roberts paced all tacklers with 10. Delmonte Pryor forced the fumble that Moore recovered in the second quarter.

The victory sets up a Family Day matchup with Oklahoma Baptist next Saturday, September 27 at 6:00 pm in Weatherford.

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