



PHOTO © COURTESY OF TULSA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Back to Tulsa

Hereford youth will convene in Oklahoma's second largest city July 4-11 for the 2009 JNHE.

by **Kindra Gordon**

This year's Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) kicks off on the Fourth of July in Tulsa, Okla. It will be fitting to be in Tulsa on Independence Day because the city's history has been shaped by many in search of the American dream.



Creek Council Oak Tree

Early settlers

Tulsee Town, as it was first called, was established in 1836 by the Lochapoka Creek Indians, who had been forced out of the southeastern U.S. They followed what's called the "trail of tears" until they arrived here

and dreamed it would be a better place. The town's birthplace is at the Creek Council Oak Tree (18th Street and Cheyenne Avenue), where the Indians kindled a ceremonial fire using live coals they had carried from their homeland over the trail of tears. The revered tree still lives today.

African-Americans soon came to Tulsa, as well, to start new lives. Land runs and freedmen allotments offered blacks the opportunity to quickly become landowners, farmers and businessmen.

Early settlers also discovered that Tulsa sat in some of the best cow country in the land. Ranching is still a viable industry in the region today. Just north of Tulsa is the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, where even the buffalo still roam.

By the early 1900s, the discovery of oil and the dreams of those who came in search of it fueled Tulsa. Oil brought the wealth that merged Tulsa's cow town image with cosmopolitan tastes — and this unusual combination is what makes Tulsa unique today.

Tulsa treasures

Many of Tulsa's sites and museums honor the city's rich cultural past. Tulsa was a city before Oklahoma was a state. Through the years, it has earned many nicknames: "The Oil Capital of the World," "America's Most Beautiful City" and "The Birthplace of Route 66." Among the historic city's highlights, look for these:

Tulsa's **Gilcrease Museum** (www.gilcrease.org) is one of the country's best facilities for the preservation and study of American

art and history. It houses the world's most comprehensive collection of art of the American West, including an unparalleled collection of Native American art and artifacts. In addition to the Gilcrease exhibits are its beautiful themed gardens on 23 acres surrounding the grounds.

The Golden Driller (21st Street and Pittsburg Avenue) was built in 1966 for the International Petroleum Exposition. This 76-foot-tall symbol of an oilfield worker pays tribute to Tulsa's oil history. It is one of the world's largest free-standing statues.

Cain's Ballroom (423 North Main) has been a popular nightclub in Tulsa since the 1920s — especially for country western aficionados. Often referred to as the Carnegie Hall of country western music, it was here that Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys unveiled their western swing music and played such hits as "San Antonio Rose" and "Take Me Back to Tulsa." Other musical legends who performed at Cain's include Hank Williams, Earnest Tubbs, Tennessee Ernie Ford and Patsy Cline.



The Golden Driller

Route 66 (11th Street, from east Tulsa through downtown to west Tulsa, and on to Sapulpa) — The historic highway to the West passed through Tulsa. Many one-of-a-kind sites can still be found along Route 66 in the Tulsa area, from Lyon's Indian Store to the Bama Pie Co.

Outside town

A few miles west of Tulsa in the town of Claremore is a memorial to Oklahoma's favorite son, Will Rogers. The museum showcases Rogers' personal belongings and a movie theater where you can watch "The Ropin' Fool" and other classic movies starring the beloved cowboy humorist.

An hour north of Tulsa at Bartlesville is the place where oil was first discovered. At Johnstone Park visitors can see a replica of the Nellie Johnstone No. 1 —

Oklahoma's first commercial oil well, drilled in 1897. Just outside of Bartlesville is the Woolaroc Museum and Wildlife Preserve, a 4,000-acre ranch established in 1925 by oilman Frank Phillips. Today it's part Western art museum, part wildlife preserve, part nature trail. The museum houses 10,000 works of Native American and Western art and artifacts.

For a true Western taste of Oklahoma, visit Discoveryland (www.discoverylandusa.com). Here, cowboys race onstage astride real ponies as Rodgers and Hammerstein's classic musical "Oklahoma!" is performed in the outdoor amphitheater. The musical "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" is also performed during the summer. Before the shows, you can chow down at the cattleman's ranch dinner, ride a pony, watch Native American dancing or shop the Indian trading post.

For more details about Tulsa, visit www.visittulsa.com. **HW**

Just for kids

Tulsa also offers some great kid-friendly destinations. The Oklahoma Aquarium (www.okaquarium.org) features 200 exhibits of ocean creatures and more than 1 million gallons of water.



At the Tulsa Zoo and Living Museum (www.tulsazoo.org), visitors can trek through rain forests and the frozen tundra that is home to penguins. Located on 78 acres within Tulsa's Mohawk Park, the zoo displays nearly 1,500 animals, many of them rare and endangered. A favorite stop is the Chimpanzee Connection, which allows up-close encounters.

For something unique, the Tulsa Air and Space Museum (www.tulsaairandspace.com) not only features a varied display of aircraft but also offers the Electric Sky Theater/Planetarium. The multimedia display creates a three-dimensional journey through space, showcasing a multitude of stars, planets, asteroids and galaxies.



Bell's Amusement Park and the Big Splash Water Park are two of Tulsa's favorite spots among kids. Both offer loads of fun for thrill-seekers.

And, what summer day wouldn't be complete without a big scoop of ice cream? At Blue Bell Creameries (www.bluebell.com), you can take a tour



and see how the ice cream is made and then top it off with what Blue Bell claims is the "Best Ice Cream In The Country." **HW**