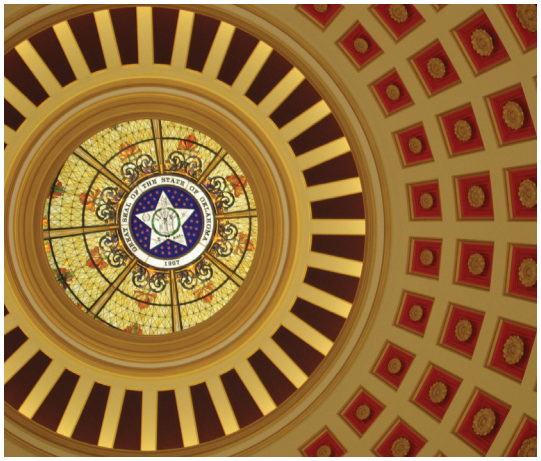

The mission of the Ad Valorem Division of the Oklahoma Tax Commission is to promote an ad valorem property tax system which is fair and equitable to all taxpayers by implementing standard valuation methodology, tax law conformity, and assessment administration compliance.

Oklahoma Ad Valorem FORUM

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Director's Notes:

We enjoyed meeting with everyone who attended the County Officers and Deputies (CODA) meeting last week. I made it to the Friday morning session. I understand that the break-out session on Thursday went well, but I was not there to defend myself from any jokes at my expense. My friends with the airlines were treating me to some hospitality in Dallas while they took two hours to re-program their on-board computer. Something about safety first.

I really enjoyed attending the IAAO Conference this last week. I always learn something and the quality and depth of IAAO sessions is really impressive. We often find information or programs that we can use in our Annual Conference. As a result of state government budget issues, I paid my own way, but the IAAO Chapter assisted with the conference registration. Thanks very much.

Oklahoma has been doing well with our IAAO participation. Wade Patterson did an excellent session on social networking and is serving on the Communications Committee. Ronnie Funck, Monica Schmidt, David Tinsley, Gary Snyder, and Doug Warr attended. Larry Stein who was Master of Ceremony last year and did a great job was unable to attend because of county budget concerns.

Speaking for those who attended, I thought that we all had a good experience, meeting lots of different assessors and deputies, other state officials in our neighboring states, CAMA/GIS experts, and academic experts who are extremely knowledgeable about the ad valorem system. I particularly enjoyed one conversation I had with the head assessor for the country of Iceland. (Just for the record, his CAMA system does not have a field for air conditioning. Ninety percent of the 300,000 citizens in Iceland have homes powered by thermal heating from underground geological activity.)

We hosted a Personal Property Schedule session on September 24 to review concerns regarding the methodology used in the schedule. The session makes the process more transparent and open. We had a good turnout and gathered some useful information. Thanks to all who participated.

I appreciate everyone who called in with questions about their public service valuations over the last few months. It helps us when you put it in writing. We also appreciate the help from the company representatives in tracking down answers. There are some areas where we can improve communication between all parties concerned.

We appreciate all the hard work of the county assessors and deputies this year. We all share a responsibility to make the ad valorem system better than it was when it was given to us. Efforts to constantly improve taxpayer service are extremely important, and we appreciate everyone who has made it happen.

Jeff Spelman

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Continued from page 1 "Director's Letter"...

"Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

Anwar Caddo, Famous Ad Valorem Philosopher. Quote borrowed from Jerry Stone, Oklahoma County Deputy Assessor, who borrowed it from Alfred Lord Tennyson.

IAAO Fall Conference

Oklahomans at IAAO Conference were David Tinsley, Ronnie Funck, Monica Schmidt, Jeff Spelman, Gary Synder, Wade Patterson, Daron Frederickson (Chesapeake). Not pictured is Doug Warr who was taking the photo.

Monica Schmidt is outnumbered 4 to 1 standing between Doug Warr, Gary Snyder, Jeff Spelman and Wade Patterson.

Waiting for the next session to begin are Jeff Spelman and Wade Patterson on the first row, Doug Warr, Gary Snyder and Daron Frederickson on the second row.

Gary Snyder, Jeff Spelman and Doug Warr take time from visiting the exhibitors' booths to enjoy box lunches.

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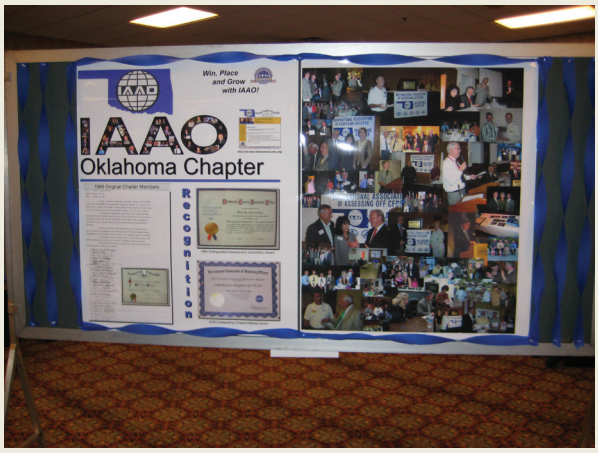
IAAO Fall Conference Oklahoma Chapter Display



The Oklahoma Chapter of IAAO entered a "Wall of Fame" competition with some other IAAO Chapters at the IAAO conference in Lousiville. Each chapter displayed some of their activities and membership projects using pictures and posters. Monica Schmidt, Gary Snyder, Ronnie Funck, Doug Warr, Wade Patterson, and David Tinsley put the display together on site. Jeff Spelman whose flight was late arrived to provide some encouragement.

Mike Morrison, IAAO Chapter President, had a terrific giant sized poster prepared that showed snapshots of chapter activity, historical documents of the Chapter's first charter in 1985, the first Outstanding Chapter Award from 1988, and the most recent award in 2006. One of the most interesting displays was a list of the names of those people that signed the very first Chapter Charter.

The competiton was won by the Canadian Institute Chapter. Monica Schmidt wanted to go on record protesting, claiming that the Oklahoma Chapter should have won. (We came in fourth or so.)

We did get several compliments on our presentation from the judges. Thanks to Mike Morrison for putting the material together and hunting down the historical information on the Chapter.

Manufacturing Reimbursement Monies Released

All counties receiving exempt manufacturing reimbursement money have been authorized to distribute those monies without any limitations or special reporting requirements.

Beginning with the August 4th reimbursement authorized from the Governor's Discretionary Federal Stimulus Fund, there were a series of bulletins issued detailing special reporting requirements specifically tied to those funds.

As of September 3 the complications and concerns that arose from the use of the stimulus funds have been successfully resolved. The funds sent in August do not constitute stimulus money. The funds may be used for any lawful purpose to which payments from the Ad Valorem Reimbursement Fund may be applied. No additional reporting requirements are required of the county treasurer.

Payments from the fund will continue on a monthly basis until the balance for each taxing jurisdiction is paid in full. The Ad Valorem Division estimates the final payment will be made in December 2009.

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In our continuing efforts to supply you with the best mapping support money won't buy, we are pleased to find more free stuff! We have already told you that the U.S. Bureau of Land Management is making the scanned section surveys available online. We are in the process of downloading those for you and hope to have the entire state downloaded in time for the next Mapping Support DVD.

The Bureau of Land Management is also now making available new quarter-quarter, section, and township mapping layers. These layers take into account the fractional government lots and their acreages as well as the different surveys and the issues of when these surveys abut each other. Looking at these mapping layers, they are much more accurate then the section grid we have been giving you each year on the Mapping Support DVD's. Plus, unlike the section grid in MIMS (which you cannot sell or give out!), this one is public domain. This means that there are no licensing concerns, and these layers can be given to others freely.

We also are doing remote, internet based computer mapping support. We remotely assisted Love and Noble counties in June, Jackson and Pawnee in July, and Major and McClain in August. We even did close to a week of one-on-one training with Beaver County in August. The primary reason for using this approach is because there is no travel expense. In this very, very, tight budget time, this is the biggest reason imaginable. We are still planning to visit up to three counties a month (and still keep in our budget), but if you need help, this is now another option.

We are looking forward to another ArcView training session at the computer lab at the CLGT building in Stillwater on November 17-19. Please use the CLGT ATAP online registration (yes, the November class is listed). If you have any questions, please give us a call.

Remember: The secret goal of every abstractor, surveyor, and lawyer is to submit at least one deed that is impossible to map.

The mission of IAAO is to promote innovation and excellence in property appraisal, property tax policy and administration through professional development, education, research, and technical assistance.

IAAO Chapter Meeting

A Message from Mike Morrison, IAAO Chapter President

The IAAO Oklahoma Chapter will meet during the Assessor's Fall Conference at the Biltmore Hotel in OKC. We have scheduled our annual "dutch" luncheon for Thursday, October 29, 2009 inside the Blue Ridge & Cumberland rooms. This year we have 2 rooms, so we can spread out a bit and not be so cramped. I'll send out an email as time draws near with details of our guest speaker. So mark your calendar and bring a co-worker or associate and introduce them to a great group of folks and a wonderful buffet style lunch. We love new faces.

Contact me at (405) 713-7148, Email: MicMor@OklahomaCounty.org

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New Assessor Information

The new county assessor for Garvin County is Beverley Strickland. Beverly officially took over the reins from Evelyn Bradley on September 1. All the contact information for Garvin County will remain the same.

The new Washita County Assessor is Clayton Twyman. Clayton is to take over as assessor the August 1. He replaces Janie Bellah who retired July 31. Contact information will remain the same.

The new Creek County Assessor is Nikki Wedel. Her e-mail address is vswedel@sbcglobal.net. She took office May 1.

The new Blaine County Assessor is Ronda Greer. Ronda has been appointed to take over July 1. Rosemary Neely's last day was June 30. The contact information for Blaine County will remain the same.

Garvin County Assessor Retires

Evelyn Bradley retired from her position of Garvin County Assessor effective September 1, 2009. She had served in this capacity since January, 1991.

Evelyn's service as assessor extended into her involvement with the county assessors' association. She held several positions on the board including various committees, president of the association and numerous times as district chair.

We extend our best wishes to Evelyn as she ventures into a new phase of her life enjoying her family and hobbies.

Beverly Strickland has been appointed to serve as Garvin County Assessor.

Representative Wes Hilliard recognizes Evelyn Bradley's service as county assessor with a proclamation from Governor's office, Oklahoma House of Representatives and State Senate.

Evelyn and new assessor, Beverly Strickland, with staff of Garvin County Assessors' office.

Schedule for GPS Classes

The GPS (Global Positioning System) classes provided at the CLGT office in Stillwater. The dates for the 4 training sessions are September 22, 23 and October 21, 22. Each class is one day in length.

Go to CCAP website, http://ccap.okstate.edu to enroll. Please indicate your county name, the name of who will be attending and verify which date. Class size is limited to 24 attendees.

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Mark Your Calendar

• Oct. 21 & 22	GPS one-day training CLGT, Stillwater
• Oct. 28-30, 2009	Assessors Annual fall conference in OKC at Biltmore
• Oct. 29	IAAO Chapter Meeting, Luncheon Biltmore Hotel, Oklahoma City
• Nov. 20, 2009	Retirement Party for Debbie Gentry Woodward County Assessor

Dates	Classes
• Sept. 2 - 4	Data Collection of Residential Property CLGT Building, Stillwater
• Sept. 22 – 25	Unit 2 (Real Property Appraisal) Hilton Garden Inn, Norman
• Oct. 15	Excel for Assessors CLGT Building, Stillwater
• Oct. 20 – 23	Unit 3 (Mass Appraisal) Hilton Garden Inn, Norman
• Nov. 4 – 6	Advance Income Approach Hampton Inn, Tulsa
• Nov. 10	IAAO Residential Construction and Design TBA
• Nov. 17 – 20	Unit 4 (Income Approach) Hilton Garden Inn, Norman
• Nov. 17 – 19	OTC, ARCView Map Training – Troy Frazier CLGT Building, Stillwater
• Dec. 1 – 4	Unit 5 (Business Personal Property) Holiday Inn, Ardmore
• Jan. 14 – 15, 2010	Unit 7 (Ag Land Valuation) Hilton Garden Inn, Norman

Receive the "Forum" by Email:

To receive the "Ad Valorem Forum" by email, please forward your email address to Cyndi Heath at cheath@tax.ok.gov.

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"4C" Meeting Held in September

Debbie Gentry chaired the County Computer Coordination Committee meeting on September 16, 2009, at the Biltmore Hotel. The meeting was held in conjunction with the fall meeting of the County Officers and Deputies Association.

The committee discussed the need for clarification of the various codes and their proper use in the value transfer process. An update is being prepared which will be sent to the counties in a couple of weeks. It will include several scenarios of the ways the new codes can be used. It was noted that counties need to be using the "future year" as it is the easiest feature to use.

Adjustments to CAMA Windows are being addressed with Bill Wadsworth. He is working on the Draw and F9 screens as well as the procurement of a license agreement for MicroFocus Cobal. Some work is being done to clean-up of tables and batch files that affect history and ensure it functions properly. Glen Blood expects to test the updates in a couple of local counties before distributing it county-wide. It should be available for installation around the first of November.

Documentation for several applications is being rewritten to accommodate revisions. Glen will send the new MicroFocus documentation to Scott Warren. This can be used on the old system as well as the new. No counties at this time have asked for the new "future year" feature as they prefer to wait until yellow screen is available which will help with the data entry process.

Scott Warren has finished the treasurers' update and is completing the cap code update to allow for continued data entry. He pointed out that the value over-ride with future year can only contain the amount to be added to the market value. He expects to have the update completed in the next couple of weeks.

Since many counties have new assessors and employees, there is a need to go back to rudimental training so that everyone has a basic understanding of the programs. OTC provided quarterly training materials can be updated for the new personnel.

GPS classes will be provided at the CLGT office in Stillwater. These one-day classes will be held September 22 & 23 and October 21& 22. Bob Springer will be the instructor, and each day will provide five credit hours. An example of GPS usefulness is that a list of sales can be entered, and the GPS will plot the best route to get from one to the next. Registration can be made on the CLGT website.

Jim Kelley announced that his office is picking up the exempt properties in Pittsburg County and measuring them. This information is important in case of disaster to assist FEMA and to provide data for grants, etc. He noted that on the commercial screen, in the fields that do not apply (such as bedrooms), a zero must be entered before the data would be accepted. More than one zero is required in some fields. Glen Blood said the flexibility factor was originally added by request, and now it is creating other issues. He made a note to see what can be done to alter this feature.

The next 4C meeting will be held on October 28, 2009, at the Biltmore Hotel. This will be conjunction with the County Assessors' fall conference.

Focus on Okfuskee County

Named for a Creek town in Cleburn County, Alabama, Okfuskee County was originally part of the Creek Nation, Indian Territory. Much of its history is tied to that of the Creek Nation.

From 1802 to 1825, this land was termed the "Missouri Territory" and was open to exploration and settlement. By 1825, it was closed to white settlement and established as a United States Indian Reservation. The Creek Nation owned and governed this area from 1859 to near statehood. The land was allotted to individual Creek Nation citizens, including the freedman.

Oklahoma became a state in 1907. Several towns vied to be the county seat of Okfuskee County including Weleetka and Castle, Okemah has always had that distinction and was chosen as county seat in an election held August 27, 1908. Okemah was named after an Indian chief.

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Okemah was platted by a group of Shawnee residents March, 1902 on land belonging to Mahala and Nocus Fixico, full blood Creek Indians who had no legal right to sell their holdings, but who did anyway. This apparently made no difference to the promoters.

April 22, 1902 the formal opening launched the town into an instant business success as the first plows broke the fertile area, described in Washington Irving's "Tour of the Prairies" 60 years earlier.

The town was incorporated in 1903. In the spring of 1904, when restrictions on sale of townsite lots were removed, the Indians were paid $50 an acre for their land by trustees who were authorized to give legal deeds to the purchasers who claimed title.

Okfuskee County Courthouse located in Okemah, OK

In its first week, the city already had the following stores: four general merchandise, two hardware, one 5 & 10 cent store, three drug stores, four grocery stores, three wagon yards, four lumber yards, three cafes, one bakery, two millinery stores, four livery barns, three blacksmiths, two dairies, two cotton gins and two weekly newspapers.

There were eight doctors, four lawyers, two walnut log buyers, and one Chinese laundryman. Two hotels were quickly put up, including the three story Broadway hotel which set the city apart as an important town in early-day Oklahoma.

The town of Boley, founded in 1904 on 80 acres of land belonging to a Creek freedman, is one of the few black towns remaining in the United States. Established to demonstrate the ability of the black community to govern itself, it thrived for many years before the Farmer's State Bank was robbed and in the process D. J. Turner and the mayor of Boley were shot and killed.

Oil and gas have been produced in Okfuskee County since around 1914 when the Prairie Oil and Gas Company drilled a well near Paden. Three years later an oil well was opened near the town of Okfuskee. During the 1920s other wells were drilled near Bearden, Micawber, Okemah, and Pharoah. In 1930 the population peaked at 29,016, probably due to the increased oil and gas production.

In addition to the petroleum industry Okfuskee County's economy has also been based on ranching and farming. In the early 1900s the county had one-fourth of its surface covered with timber, and one-half was under cultivation in the production of cotton, corn, oats, hay, Kaffir corn, and potatoes.

Before 1907 statehood education in Okfuskee County was limited to tribal schools, a few subscription schools, and some rural schools. Around the turn of the twentieth century rural schools first appeared in Tiger Flat, Okfuskee, Alabama, Tuskegee, Hickory Ridge, Paden, Bearden, and Mountain Grove. By 1909 twenty-six additional schools were established. In September 1909 the Okfuskee County High School opened in Paden, in the far western part of the county but closed in 1935 due to lack of funding. Postsecondary education was provided at the Creek-Seminole College in Boley and the Creek-Seminole Agricultural College, northeast of Clearview. The Okemah Junior College was established in 1933. At the turn of the twenty-first century the towns of Okemah, Boley, Weleetka, Mason, and Paden had primary and secondary schools.

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Most noted resident was American songwriter folk music legend Woody Guthrie who was born in Okemah. In his lifetime, Woody Guthrie wrote nearly 3,000 song lyrics, published two novels, created artworks, authored numerous published and unpublished manuscripts, poems, prose, and plays and hundreds of letters and news article which are housed in the Woody Guthrie Archives in New York City. The tunes "Oklahoma Hills" (Oklahoma's official state folk song) and "This Land is Your Land" are among his many hit songs.

An annual event in Okemah is the Woody Guthrie Folk Festival which is affectionately known as "WoodyFest". Participants frequently drive long distances to be a part of the free music festival.

Other notable residents of Okemah:

- Leon Chase Phillips became the 11th governor of the State of Oklahoma.
- William R. Pogue, astronaut.
- Thlopthlocco Tribal Town, a federally recognized Indian tribe

The following sites in Okfuskee County are listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

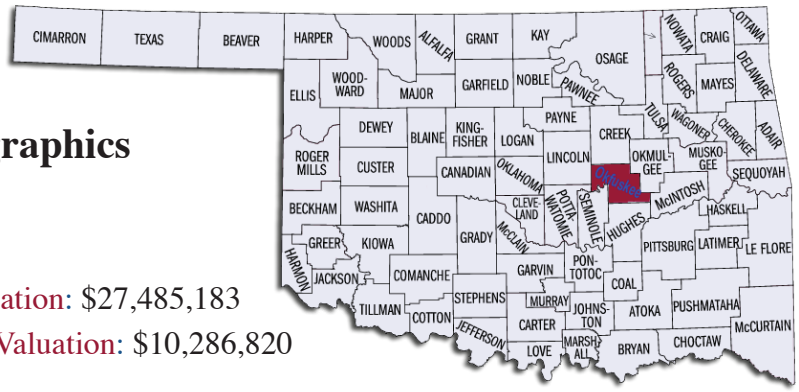
- Boley Historic District, Boley
- Woody Guthrie House, Okemah
- Okemah National Guard Armory, Okemah
- Okfuskee County Courthouse, Okemah
- Weleetka Town Hall and Jail, Weleetka

Painted on a wall adjacent to the park is this mural illustrating the life of Woody done by artist, DeAnna Wilson.

The Woody Guthrie Statue was dedicated at the 1998 Free Folk Festival and placed in a memorial park in downtown Okemah.

Okfuskee County Demographics

Population: 11,679
Area: 628 square miles
2008 Real Property Assessed Valuation: $27,485,183
2008 Personal Property Assessed Valuation: $10,286,820



NOTE: Although Woolaroc Ranch is listed as a tourism destination near the Bartlesville area, the ranch itself is located in Osage County.