

# OKLAHOMA CENTENNIAL

# RED DIRT, BLACK GOLD

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Oklahoma's first quarter-century as a state was an exciting time. Beneath the red dirt, awaiting discovery, was oil. A rope-twirling Cherokee cowboy thrilled audiences. A Sac & Fox youth was proclaimed the world's greatest athlete. And a sultry blues singer danced nude in a moonlit oilfield.



~ 1907-1932 ~



Courtesy of the Oklahoma State Senate Historical Preservation Fund, Inc.

"Oklahoma is now a state," declared President Theodore Roosevelt as he signed the statehood proclamation at 10:16 a.m. on Nov. 16, 1907. Only a delegation of government clerks from Oklahoma and newspapermen were in the cabinet room as witnesses, as illustrated in this painting by Mike Wimmer. As the president blotted his signature, one of the witnesses said, "Mr. President, give me the blotter." Roosevelt is depicted handing the blotter to Albert Hammer of Enid.

## Story continues that seal was stolen

By **MICK HINTON**  
World Capitol Bureau

OKLAHOMA CITY — Many an Oklahoman has heard the story that at statehood, the official state seal was stolen from Guthrie in the dark of night and taken to Oklahoma City, assuring that city would become the capital.

"Some say the seal was hidden in the governor's laundry," said James Onkst, a Guthrie tour guide who shows people around the old convention hall in the first capital city.

Alas, historians say that much of this story surrounding the state seal is a myth, and the exchange was a peaceful one.

Oklahoma had become the 46th state in

the Union when the order was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907.

Three years later, the first governor, Charles N. Haskell, had called an election for June 11, 1910, to select a new location for the capital, although an act had been passed several years earlier saying removal of the capital site could not occur until 1913.

At the time of the vote, Oklahoma City's population was about three times that of Guthrie's. When the vote tally showed Oklahoma City had won, Haskell ordered that same night that the seal be moved.

Some years after the removal, Earl F. Keyes, a records clerk in the office of the Secretary of State, came forward to set the record straight on the peaceful exchange.

Keyes said early in the morning of June 12, he and W.B. Anthony, the private secretary to the governor, went to the office where the seal was kept. Keyes got the seal out of the vault and handed it to Anthony, who got back into a Cadillac touring car and returned to Oklahoma City.

Haskell declared the Huckins Hotel in downtown Oklahoma City to be the site of the Capitol, where it remained until the new Capitol was completed in 1917.

The Capitol was designed to have a dome, but legislators decided there was not enough money. Some of the public was concerned about the expense during World War I; others claimed the intended funds were used to build a university hospital instead.

The issue of whether the Capitol needed a dome ebbed and flowed during the next decades.

Gov. Henry Bellmon wanted a dome. It was Gov. Frank Keating who organized a campaign to get private contributions for the dome, estimated to cost about \$22 million. The state kicked in the last \$5 million, prompting criticism from some members of the public.

Bellmon had expressed hope the dome would be ready for Oklahoma's 2007 centennial celebration. It was completed earlier, in time for statehood day on Nov. 16, 2002.

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### WHAT'S INSIDE

During the period from 1907 through 1932, big things were happening in Oklahoma. Tulsa was calling itself the "Oil Capital of the World." Eccentric politicians were keeping Oklahoma amused. And already, some of her people were becoming known throughout the nation and the world.



Billy Parker: boy aviator. **CE-6**



Boomtown sweetheart. **CE-9**



Where there's a Will. **CE-10**



Hollywood Mix. **CE-12**



Jim Thorpe: the greatest. **CE-14**