

WASHINGTON IRVING: HE SLEPT HERE?



Courtesy of the Oklahoma State Senate Historical Preservation Fund Inc.

In his book, "A Tour of the Prairies," Washington Irving wrote of encountering an Osage village on the bank of the Arkansas River near present-day Tulsa. "Our arrival created quite a sensation. A number of old men came forward and shook hands with us severally; while the women and children huddled together in groups, staring at us wildly. ..." The painting is by Wayne Cooper.

Author wrote of travels

By SHAUN EPPERSON
World Staff Writer

Before Oklahoma could be found on any map, author Washington Irving captured readers' imaginations with his account of a wilderness adventure in the future state.

Born in Manhattan in 1783, Irving is best remembered for the short stories "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle." However, he traveled through what is now Oklahoma in 1832 and published "A Tour on the Prairies" a few years later.

The writer decided to explore the frontier after meeting Henry Leavitt Ellsworth, who was to assume the post of U.S. Indian commissioner. Ellsworth invited Irving to accompany him to Fort Gibson to tour what would become Indian Territory.

The author and his companions on the 35-day adventure arrived at Fort Gibson in October 1832, before departing to catch up with an Army expedition that had left days earlier.

Some historians say Irving and his party camped in what is now Bixby and again in south Tulsa. The party then, according to historians, stayed at a site near Tulsa's Owen Park. A marker stands at Easton Street and Vancouver Avenue where it is believed the group stayed.

From Tulsa, the party traveled to a site Irving called Bear's Glen near Lake Keystone, historians say. After leaving Bear's Glen, the party followed the Cimarron River to the Stillwater area and then to what is now Norman. Weary and short on supplies, the group returned to Fort Gibson.

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Courtesy, Oklahoma Arts Council

Explorers and other early visitors are illustrated in "Discovery and Exploration 1541-1820," a mural painted by Charles Banks Wilson in the state Capitol.

EXPLORING OUR PAST

European adventurers who passed through

FRANCISCO VASQUEZ DE CORONADO

Country: Spain
Expedition: Coronado in 1541 led an expedition into what would become the state's Panhandle, becoming the first European explorer in Oklahoma. Coronado sought the famed cities of Cibola, rumored to be rich with gold, but did not find the riches for which he searched.

HERNANDO DE SOTO

Country: Spain
Expedition: A year after Coronado's journey through the Panhandle, de Soto explored what would become northeastern Oklahoma. In addition, his party traversed the areas of present-day Arkansas and Kansas. Although Oklahoma was claimed by Spain, and later Mexico, neither formally settled it.

ROBERT CAVELIER, SIEUR DE LA SALLE

Country: France
Expedition: La Salle was born in France and emigrated to Canada

Expedition: In 1682, La Salle traveled by canoe down the Mississippi River to claim it and surrounding lands for the king of France.

La Salle made the first complete exploration of the river, discovering the mouth of the Mississippi. He claimed all lands drained by the river, including Oklahoma, for King Louis, giving the lands the name Louisiana.

La Salle died without establishing a colony at the mouth of the river. He was killed in 1687 by angry colonists after they settled on the coast of Texas.

JEAN-BAPTISTE BENARD SIEUR DE LA HARPE

Country: France
Expedition: La Harpe in 1719 was given authority by French officials to further explore "Louisiana."

He was assigned to explore, trade with the native people and establish a link with the settlements of New Mexico in the West.

La Harpe set up camp in Texas but personally led an expedition northward into eastern Oklahoma. His party, which probably included a few Indian guides, several soldiers and others, first traveled across McCurtain, Choctaw, Pushmataha, Latimer and Pittsburg counties, by many accounts.

Although the party's route has been disputed, historians say La Harpe then crossed the Canadian River near what is now Eufaula, pushing through McIntosh County and the western parts of Muskogee and Wagoner counties before reaching Tulsa County.

By many accounts, La Harpe was well-received by villages of Wichita Indians along the Arkansas River near present-day Leonard.

ZEBULON PIKE

Country: American

Expedition: Pike's influence on Oklahoma was indirect. In 1806, Gen. James Wilkinson sent Zebulon Pike to explore the southern part of the Louisiana Territory. Pike sent a party, which included General Wilkinson's son, Lt. James Wilkinson, down the Arkansas River from Kansas.

The party was supposed to explore the lands and befriend local Indians. At the "Three Forks" of the Arkansas, Verdigris and Grand rivers, Lt. Wilkinson met with an Osage leader, who told Wilkinson he wanted the government to establish an outpost at the mouth of the Verdigris River.

Wilkinson recorded the leader's request in his report. Pike, upon completion of his explorations, suggested that the land of present-day Oklahoma be set aside as Indian territory.

OIL: PROSPERITY FLOWED



Courtesy of the Oklahoma State Senate Historical Preservation Fund Inc.

Before the drilling and production of oil, American Indians were using petroleum found in Oklahoma for medicinal purposes. Petroleum was evident on the outcroppings of many water springs and streams. This painting, "The Magic of Petroleum," is by Wayne Cooper.

Wells oiled the way to statehood

By RUSSELL RAY
World Staff Writer

Oil propelled Oklahoma to statehood 100 years ago.

Huge oil discoveries near Tulsa and Bartlesville lured thousands to Indian Territory in a quest for wealth. As production grew and the industry prospered, Oklahoma became a state and Tulsa was on course to become the "oil capital of the world."

The first recorded oil well in Oklahoma was completed in 1859. But the find was accidental. The operator was drilling for saltwater, not oil.

Nearly 40 years later, the Nellie Johnstone No. 1 — the first commercial oil well in Oklahoma — was drilled near Bartlesville. The 1897 discovery ignited a rush that led to a series of big oil finds in the state, including the Red Fork, the Glenn Pool, the Seminole, the Cushing and the Oklahoma City Field.

The Glenn Pool, discovered in 1905, wasn't the biggest oil discovery in Oklahoma. But for a time, it was the nation's largest producing oil field. The discovery well flowed at about 85 barrels a day.

"The Glenn Pool brought attention to the state," said Larry Nation of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists. "It also brought money and people."

The Cushing Field was discovered in 1912 and the Oklahoma City Field was discovered in 1927. For a time, the Oklahoma City Field was the nation's

Where does oil come from?

According to one theory, oil comes from prehistoric plants and animals, which died long ago and are buried below the Earth's surface. Through heat and pressure from the Earth's crust, those plants and animals were transformed into chemicals known as hydrocarbons — oil and natural gas.

"Those deposits naturally seep to the surface," said Larry Nation of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

Others believe oil comes from the Earth's mantle, the layer of rock sandwiched between the Earth's crust and core. Proponents of this theory contend oil originates from magma. If this theory is true, oil may be more abundant.

largest oil field.

Rapid development of the Oklahoma City Field led the state to enact a comprehensive conservation law, the first of its kind in the nation.

Oil production in the Sooner State peaked in 1927 at 278 million barrels.

But years of production have depleted the state's once-mighty oil fields. Despite higher prices, Oklahoma oil production continues to decline.

Last year, Oklahoma oil production fell to a 93-year low 61 million barrels. The petroleum industry produced less Oklahoma oil in 2005 than in any year since 1912, state records show.

Oklahoma Centennial Special Section

During the year leading up to Oklahoma's 100th birthday, the Tulsa World will publish five special sections:

Territory Days (pre-statehood) Nov. 5, 2006

Statehood and Oil (1907-32) Jan. 28, 2007

Depression, Dust and War (1933-57) March 25, 2007

Hello Legal Liquor, Goodbye Oil (1958-82) July 15, 2007

Oklahoma Centennial — 100 Years (1983-07) Nov. 11, 2007

Online

Read the 1907 edition of the Tulsa World that celebrated statehood and all of the centennial features appearing in the paper. www.tulsaworld.com/centennial.asp

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First people were hunters and artists

By SHAUN EPPERSON
World Staff Writer

Thousands of years ago, ancient hunters may have stalked big game where Tulsa and Oklahoma City now stand.

From Ice Age nomads to ancestors of modern American Indians, this land had been home to many people, millennia before European explorers arrived.

Although some evidence suggests that the earliest people were here more than 30,000 years ago, the first well-documented inhabitants arrived some time around 12,000 years ago, some researchers say.

These Ice Age nomads possibly traveled from Asia to Alaska across a land bridge. Traveling in small groups, they likely followed mammoth and bison species, which they would have hunted with stone-tipped spears.

At the Domebo site in Caddo County, spear points were found near mammoth bones. At a bison kill site in Harper County, some of the earliest examples of painted artwork in North America were found.

Toward the end of the Ice Age, the summers would have been cooler and wetter than in the present day. The western part of the state and the Panhandle area may have supported grasslands and woodlands, while forests prevailed in the east.

While not all inhabitants of prehistoric Oklahoma forged lasting connections to the land, some modern-day Oklahomans likely have ties to some of the state's earliest people.

The Wichita and Caddo tribes, researchers have said, can trace their lineage to the prehistoric inhabitants of the state.

Wichita and Caddo ancestors lived in villages of thatched-roof houses and raised corn, beans and other food. Caddo, Wichita, Osage, Quapaw and other tribes were here when the first European explorers arrived.

The Spiro Mounds of LeFlore County: While other sites hold important clues to what life was like in prehistoric Oklahoma, perhaps none is as renowned as the Spiro Mounds complex in LeFlore County.

The 12 earthen mounds, located on the bank of the Arkansas River, include one burial mound, a pair of temple mounds and nine other mounds.

The site may have started as a small village before the mounds, other ceremonial areas and expanded settlements were constructed sometime between A.D. 850 and 1350.

Some say the mounds were created for Caddoan-speaking leadership who participated in the Mississippian Culture, which was a confederation that included a large number of leaders from differing affiliations.

Those who lived in the area may have been ancestors of Caddo, Wichita, Kitsai or Tunica, researchers say. Other research suggests that the inhabitants of the Spiro Mounds area aren't linked to any of those groups. Excavation of the mounds yielded evidence that the people who built them traded extensively with other groups.

Artifacts included trade goods such as copper and shell beads. The copper likely was from the Great Lakes region, whereas the shell beads and other items were probably from the West Coast and the Gulf of Mexico.