

Vinita Celebrates 150 Years!

How Vinita celebrated 150 years

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

Fifty years from now, a time capsule will be opened when Vinita celebrates its 200th- or Bicentennial anniversary, and a copy of this special souvenir edition will be inside to tell the story of how this community celebrated its 150th birthday every month in 2021.

Following a life-changing pandemic which struck the world in 2020, Vinitans were still trying to reach some semblance of normal life again.

Most businesses and everyday life were affected adversely, and many citizens were weary of a year of canceled events. Even the Vinita Area Chamber of Commerce, which is usually the spearheading organization for community events, was basically in hiatus.

So local citizens came together and formed the 150 Fest

committee and began recruiting business and community leaders to come up with a way to celebrate Vinita all year long.

This edition is a compilation of the monthly events and also includes some reflections from city and community leaders on Vinita's past, present, and hopeful future.

Thanks goes to all those who were willing to put together some fun and interesting events, as well as to all those who turned out to celebrate and experience community pride.

It is a collective hope that 50 years from now Vinita's citizens will still have the same zeal for its unique qualities and culture, and continue to be the kind of place you can make a decent living, enjoy your safe neighborhoods, and raise your children and grandchildren.

For those reading this 50 years from now, it's your turn to carry the torch and continue making Vinita a bright spot in Oklahoma.



Brittany Selby and son, Presley, show off the Vinita 150 commemorative t-shirts that were sold by the 150 Fest committee as souvenirs and a fundraiser to help host events throughout the year.

Vinita celebrates Sesquicentennial birthday with year-long celebrations

Compiled by **Angela Thomason and Vanessa Hicks**

The City of Vinita and its citizens began celebrating Vinita's 150th birthday in November of 2020, kicking off events with the VHS FFA members planting 150 bulbs donated by Piguet's Prime Time in beds near the South Park fountain. Tulips, hyacinths and daffodils bloomed in April of 2021 as one of the many commemorations of Vinita's 150th birthday throughout 2021.

A 150 Fest committee was formed in 2020 by local citizens and different organizations and individuals representing a variety of backgrounds volunteered to sponsor events each month of 2021 to commemorate different aspects of Vinita's unique history and culture.

From January through December the Eastern Trails Museum sponsored a 150 Fest Banner Project: "History on Display," which was a drive-by guide to 21 historic images of Vinita, Oklahoma

In January events started with the Vinita Art Crawl and Art Show and Coloring Contest in Downtown Vinita, presented by the team of Daniel Coonfield and Brittany Selby.

In February Vinita Schools students compiled a documentary "Hornet Alumni Stories" featuring several former students and their memories of Vinita Schools. The 150 Fest team coordinating this was the Vinita High School Service Learning class.

In March the community participated in the 150 Fest Escape Room that received a great response and was coordinated by 150 Fest Team Chris Neal and Barbara and B.K. Stecklein

Also in March, all the departments at the Craig County Courthouse collaborated to present displays of courthouse, including history of 4-H and OHCE in Craig County.

In April the fun moved to the Vinita Municipal Airport for a Fly-In and Community Day, enjoyed by hundreds of spectators, coordinated primarily by City Clerk Brian Prince and Craig County Cruisers who also brought several vehicles for display.

In May history buffs had fun participating in the 150 Fest Scavenger Hunt designed and coordinated by Vinita High School history teacher Chris Neal. A long list of clues to find

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Celebrations cont. from page 1A

historic landmarks kept players busy for weeks. The team of Lesia Smith, Becky Bruce and Lisa Washam named the History Buffs won was the winner of the competition, guessing 37 of 50 clues.

The City of Vinita and local law enforcement also held the 150 Fest Badges and Bobbers fishing event at the Vinita Lake Park which will hopefully be the beginning of an annual event for youngsters.

- In June the annual Vinita Route 66 Festival became a 150 Fest event including a special Vinita Birthday Party, a community photo taken from a drone to place in a time capsule, sponsored by Vinita Friends of Route 66.

Also that month, Chicks N Chaps held a 150 Fest Color Me Pink 5k & Fun Run and later in the month a Vinita 150 Fest Disc Golf Big/Little Doubles tournament was held at Vinita North Park, coordinated by VHS instructor Chris Neal

- In July, the annual July 4th celebrations were combined as a 150 Fest fireworks show, coordinated by the Vinita Daily Journal with Ad Executive Janet Link spearheading the event.

- In August, the Will Rogers Rodeo Parade commemorated Vinita's birthday with the theme "We're Back in the Saddle Again" Celebrating 150 years of History. The City of Vinita's float featuring the mayor, city workers and their families featuring Vinita's new city logo won the Commander's award.

- In September the biggest event featured the Lee/Coats Law's 150 Fest Showdown by Lee/Coats Law and Vinita Rotary Club, featuring a mounted cowboy shooting competition and exhibition at the Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo grounds. Rotarians sold calf fries as a fundraiser for the Craig County Swiftwater Rescue Team. It also featured a free concert after at the legion. This event was coordinated by Lee/Coats Law attorney Lauren Crudup, who is a champion mounted shooter.

Also that day, a 150 Fest Harvest Festival was held by the Home of Hope on the Home of Hope front lawn.

- In October the 34th Annual Oktoberfest at the Holy Ghost Catholic Church /and Craig County Cruisers Route 66 Car Show were official 150 Fest events.

That month the organization called One Church held a Flashback Family Fun Night in South Park coordinated by the 150 Fest team including Pastor Robert Sanders of Alive Church and sponsored several local churches in Vinita.

- In November, the Cherokee Nation joined the celebration and hosted the Vinita 150 Fest Cherokee 7 Clans Coloring Contest for kids and a Vinita Birthday Party in the Vinita Breezeway featuring guest speakers Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr., Vinita Mayor Chuck Hoskin and Cherokee Nation Deputy Speaker Victoria Vazquez. The event also included live music by the Cherokee Adult Choir in conjunction with Native American Heritage Month.

Also that month, the Vinita 150 Fest Century Houses Tour was presented by the Vinnie Ream Cultural Center. The event was coordinated by Debbi Myers and Vinnie Ream Cultural Center members. History buff Ronnie Harlan gave talks on the history of several century-old homes on a walking tour.

- Also in November, the American Legion Auxiliary hosted a special Veteran's Banner project by the American Legion, and the streets were lined with banners of past and present local veterans.

- In December, the Live at the Ream group held a 150 Fest Christmas at the Ream sponsored by the Vinnie Ream Cultural Center and donated canned goods to Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

To conclude the 150 Fest events in 2021, a "Holiday Harmonies and Harps" concert was performed at the First United Methodist Church featuring the playing of vintage sheet music titled "Vinita" and featuring the VHS Blue Notes, as well as professional harpists. This event was coordinated by Dr. John Myers and donations were presented to CASA services.



Photo by Angela Thomason

Gerald Floyd won a ribbon for his scrap metal and mixed media sculpture "Iron Sculpture" entry in the People's Choice category of the Vinita 150 Fest Art Contest. The art was on display at the Vinita 150 Art Crawl held in downtown Vinita. His art was displayed at the Vinitian Gallery operated by artist Daniel Coonfield.

Vinita Art Crawl celebrates local artistic talent

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

Beautiful weather in January made for a nice outing for those who attended the Vinita 150 Fest Art Crawl, hosted by the Vinita 150 Fest committee and several local sponsors.

The event kicked off the celebrations planned for each month of the year to commemorate Vinita's Sesquicentennial - or 150th birthday.

Six businesses hosted the venues for artwork that was displayed by local people of all different ages.

A variety of art mediums including drawings, paintings, photography, sculptures and other forms of art were displayed at the Crystal Ballroom, the Vinitian Gallery, The Coffee Shelter, Solid Rock Realtors, Danny Lankford's gym, and the Vinita 150 Fest building.

In addition, a few artisans had their items set up in Vinita's Route 66 Breezeway.

The art crawl venues offered refreshments and an arm band to take to the 150 Fest building to receive a commemorative Vinita 150 Fest coffee mug, as well as have the chance to pur-

chase other souvenirs.

The Art Crawl was co-chaired by Vinita 150 Fest committee members Daniel Coonfield and Brittany Selby, and also hosted by Vinita 150 Fest coordinators Aaron Simmons and Vanessa Hicks.

Coonfield said, "I thought it was the best art crawl I've ever experienced and I've been to several of them all over the U.S. It was a success and I loved how the community came out. The weather was wonderful and helped make it a nice time. I was happy to see this event centered on art and building on community and Vinita history. I felt like the turnout was fabulous and look forward to more events this year."

The Art Crawl festivities started off with an awards ceremony for those who entered the Vinita 150 Fest Art Contest as well as a children's coloring contest.

Hicks announced winners in the four categories of the contest, which were: Best Image of Vinita's Strength; Best Use of Historic Topic/Vinita Through the Ages; Most Creative Use of the 150 Fest Logo; and People's Choice.

First place winners were awarded a cash prize sponsored by local businesses and the City of Vinita, and other placers were presented with ribbons for their winning entries.

Bill Irons, who entered a marker and pen entry entitled "Rodeo" was the first place winner in the Best Image of Vinita's Strength category, with Merri Mooney winning second place for her "Longhorn" photograph entry.

Lucy Fortner, who entered a mixed media piece entitled "24 Vinita People" was first place winner of the Best Use of Historic Topic/ Vinita Through the Ages category; Randy Cogburn won second place with the photograph entry entitled "Bricks"; and B.J. Mooney won third place with her photography entry called "Buffalo Landscape."

Cole Culp won the first place prize for a yarn art entry in the Most Creative Use of the 150 Fest logo category.

Roni Grimmert won first place in the People's Choice category for her pottery sculpture "Red Pitcher"; Kyerstin Ramsey placed second for her mixed media entry called "Blue Girl"; Kimberly Heckenkemper placed third for her acrylic painting entitled "Love of Cars"; Gerald Floyd placed fourth for a scrap metal and mixed media sculpture "Iron Sculpture"; and Falon Green placed fifth for her watercolor entry.

Coloring contest winners included: 0-3 age group: Mason Lane age 3; 4-7 age group: Saige Hayes age 4; 8-11 age group: Savannah Smith age 10; 12-14 age group: Cole Culp age 13.

Some of the businesses who sponsored prizes for the art contest and coloring contest included: Lucille's Flowers & Gifts, Shout & Sack, New Start Nutrition, 66 Apparel, and Clanton's Cafe.



Photos by Angela Thomason/VDJ

Local artist Bill Irons, center, was the first place winner for his entry (shown below) in the "Best Image of Vinita's Strength" category for his marker and pen piece, entitled "Rodeo" as part of the Vinita 150 Fest Art Contest. He was presented with a cash prize by event coordinators Daniel Coonfield, left, and Vanessa Hicks. The art was featured in the Vinita 150 Fest Art Crawl held in downtown Vinita to kick off Vinita's Sesquicentennial.



Photo by Angela Thomason

The Coffee Shelter's Falon Green, along with her new arrival Freedom Joy, hosted one of the locations for the Vinita 150 Fest Art Crawl held Saturday. Green also received a third place ribbon for her art entry in the art contest as part of the art show festivities. This event kicked off the first celebration planned for the year as part of Vinita's 150th birthday.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

VHS art instructor Kimberly Heckenkemper placed third for her acrylic painting entitled "Love of Cars" in the People's Choice category of the Vinita 150 Fest Art Contest. It was featured in the Vinita 150 Fest Art Crawl on display at Solid Rock Realtors held downtown in January to kick off Vinita's Sesquicentennial celebrations slated for the year.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

Thirteen-year-old Cole Culp was the winner of the Best Use of Vinita 150 Fest Logo category in the Vinita 150 Fest Art Contest. He was presented with a nice cash award and other prizes by Vinita 150 Fest committee members Daniel Coonfield, Vanessa Hicks, and Brittany Selby at the historic Hotel Vinita Crystal Ballroom during the Art Crawl held in downtown Vinita on Saturday.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

This colorful piece of yarn art was designed by 13-year-old Cole Culp and won first place in the Best Use of Vinita 150 Fest Logo art category.

Mayor's Message: A reflection of Vinita's Sesquicentennial

by Chuck Hoskin, Sr.
2/14/2022

Happy 150th Birthday Vinita, it is my honor to serve as your mayor. We have reflected, reminisced, and celebrated much over the course of this year-long celebration of your 150 years. It culminates with the publication of this special edition of the Vinita Daily Journal. Thank you for the opportunity to take a look back and then forward together.

In 1870, the year Vinita was established, Oklahoma was not yet a state, but was within a larger area of land called Indian Territory. It was reserved by the United States federal government primarily for the relocation of Native Americans from their original lands, an outcome of the 18th and 19th century federal policy of Indian removal.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Indian Territory had been reduced to the boundaries of the state of Oklahoma and the residents of the territory were members of the Five Civilized Tribes that had been relocated there from their original homelands.

The Cherokee Reservation included much of the northeast portion of Indian Territory (I.T.). Importantly, the Cherokee Nation had granted the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad and the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway permission to cross these Cherokee lands of Indian Territory. In 1870, Vinita was established at the crossing of these two major railroads by Cherokee citizen Elias C. Boudinot.

At the end of the Civil War, U.S. policy toward the Five Civilized Tribes would shift again, this time to one of assimilation. In 1889, the Curtis Act was passed by Congress which was an amendment to the Dawes Act removing the authority of the courts of the Cherokee Nation.

From this legislation, Vinita was incorporated as a town within the Cherokee Nation, I.T. in 1898 and a Cherokee named Thomas Buffington served as the first mayor of incorporated Vinita and was later elected chief of the Cherokee Nation.

The Curtis Act also initiated the process of distributing communal property held by

the Cherokee Nation to individual members of the tribe.

This is where my family's story in Vinita begins.

This community has been home to my family since 1903 when my grandmother Nellie Hoskin was assigned her Cherokee land allotment and, together, with my grandfather Ned, began carving out a life from the Little Cabin Creek bottoms just east of town. Together, they had five boys: Ned, Jr., Elijah Lodge, Dennis, Neal, and my father Sam.

Prior to moving North with Nellie, Ned (Horseskin) Hoskin had been a dealer of general merchandise in the Goingsnake District of the Cherokee Nation in present-day Stilwell. Once they arrived in this area, in addition to farming, he sold fish in Vinita at the Southwest corner of Illinois Avenue and Wilson Street in front of the bank that once operated there. My parents Sam and Sammie Hoskin would eventually marry and begin raising a family on that farm, continuing another generation's connection to Vinita.

Agriculture has always been an integral part of Vinita's identity. From supplying small family farms like ours to those with large swaths of land for crops and ranches, Vinita has always been a center of commerce for the agricultural community surrounding it. I remember tagging along with my dad to the livestock auction that has continued to operate in Vinita every week and attending the annual Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo.

Vinita is the oldest city on Oklahoma's stretch of Historic Route 66. I remember trips to town on Saturdays with my dad to buy supplies for the week. He would always point out the out-of-state license plates and make note that this was because of the folks who would travel through Vinita on Route 66. At the time, I thought that Vinita must be the gas station capitol of the world because if you ran out of gas anywhere in town, you could always just coast to the next station.

I began my formal education at the one-room schoolhouse Cobb School after following my older sister so

many times that Mrs. Minson decided to let me stay. When we moved to town at my mother's urging to the corner of East Canadian Avenue and 4th Street, I attended elementary school in the Attucks School building.

I am a proud Vinita High School graduate and was fortunate to have made many memories from days spent with teachers and friends in the old high school building that once stood on West Canadian Avenue, the new high school built on Miller Street and Flint Avenue (present-day Ewing Halsell Middle School), and Sacred Heart Academy.

Vinita is the community that I returned to after service in the United States Navy. I worked as an Ironworker like my dad and eventually went to college becoming a teacher and coach as a Vinita Hornet, working as a Letter Carrier walking the streets of Vinita along the way.

I have raised two children here and have a third working her way through school as a sixth grader now. My wife Stephanie shares my passion for education as a teacher who also began her career in Vinita and continues now through her own home-grown education consulting business. She also shares my passion for our community through her volunteer work and as a member of the Vinita City Council (2017-present).

Vinita's citizens are among those that I have represented during my time in public service as a member of the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council (1995-2007), member of the Oklahoma State House of Representatives (2006-2018), and now as the mayor of the City of Vinita (2019-present).

It is supreme irony to me that the great-grandson of Cherokees who faced forced removal to Indian Territory in the 19th century would later serve the tribe as an elected official in the 20th century. That same progeny would have a desk upon which to write and vote on legislation in the Oklahoma Capitol that was created after that forced removal, and then he would serve as the mayor of the city near the land assigned to his Cherokee grandmother.

This history of Vinita is



Vinita Mayor Chuck Hoskin, Sr.

complicated, serendipitous, and, quite simply, interesting. From the tragedy of federal Native American policy to westward expansion with the railroads, to agricultural development, to the proliferation of automobiles and the building of Route 66; Vinita is a rich tapestry of historical moments forged together by people. People who kept striving. Striving for a better life for themselves and their family and for a better community.

From this legacy, our work continues.

We see the resurgence of Cherokee influence and culture with the Nation's investment in their state-of-the-art healthcare facility which has been a great asset to our community during the Covid-19 pandemic. The new Anna Mitchell Cultural and Welcome Center will open this spring telling Vinita's story, which is a Cherokee story, to visitors near and far.

The railroads are still here, and so are the trains. Our community hosted a whistle stop from Union Pacific's Big Boy steam locomotive that delighted both kids and kids-at-heart. We are enjoying the best relationship between city government and the railroads that I have ever known. We have partnered to clean up right-of-ways and improve adjacent streets and crossings and we will continue to build on these improvements as we move forward.

Our community is still a center of commerce for the area's agricultural community. From feed stores to farm supply, banking and insurance, our restaurants feed ranch hands, and our shops service farm equipment. Vinita heartily supports the families, farms, and ranches that continue to supply food to America's table.

America's main street is also Vinita's main street. We will continue to find ways to

invest in Historic Route 66 and support the local merchants and retailers that call Vinita home. They rely on customers and our work to grow the Don Yarger Industrial Park with a 170-acre expansion, strategic planning, and marketing efforts will help strengthen our main street.

Vinita has excellent healthcare access, childcare availability, a focus on improving our parks, streets, and other quality of life indicators. We have a vibrant cadre of social service agencies and churches that work tirelessly to support those on the margins who need a hand up.

I am proud to be from Vinita. I am thankful for the resilience of my forebearers and will keep working to turn a tragic page of American history into more pages written of striving and progress for the people who call Vinita home now and into the future.



Photo by Brittani Lierle/VHS

VHS Leadership Class students Carmen Dintelmann, Cooper Osburn, and Cenia Lor interviewed Mayor Chuck Hoskin, a Vinita native, for a documentary being compiled as a 150 Fest celebration of Vinita Schools history during the month of February.



Photo by Misty Deffenbaugh

As part of the Vinita's 150Fest, these FFA members - Tristan Kauffman, Carmen Dintelmann and Keaton Gilman - planted 150 bulbs donated by Piquet's Prime Time in beds near the South Park Fountain in November 2020 so that tulips, hyacinths and daffodils would bloom in March or April as just one of many commemorations of Vinita's 150th birthday throughout 2021.

Courthouse celebrates 150 Fest with historic displays of Vinita's rich history as county seat

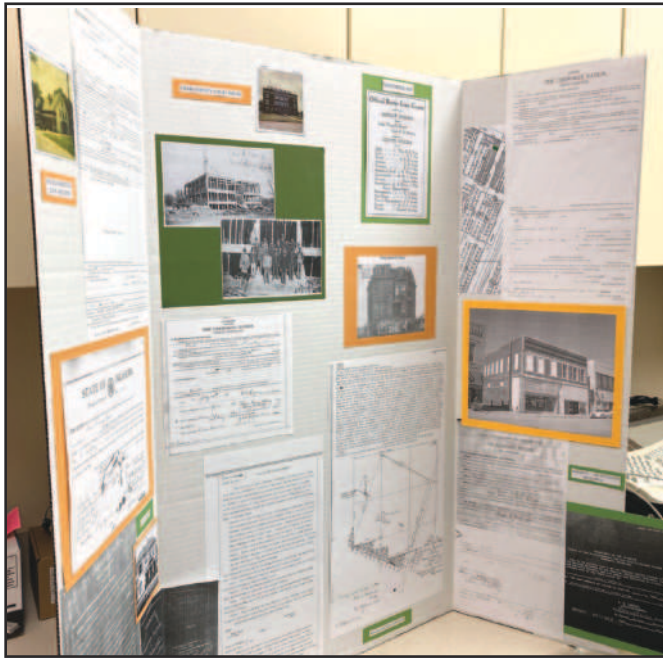
Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

As part of the continued celebration of Vinita's 150th birthday this year, a new display was featured during the month of March in 2021.

All the departments at the Craig County Courthouse collaborated to present several displays of courthouse history.

Organizers from each department, including the Treasurer and Assessors office, Sheriff's Department, Court Clerk's office, County Clerk's office, OSU Extension, and Election Board contributed to the displays which were set up in the lobby area of the courthouse for viewing.

The displays featured historical court documents, old files, vintage photos of the courthouses, old letters, as well as photos of all the sheriffs in Craig County history from 1907 to present day.



With Vinita being the county seat, much of courthouse history is tied to Vinita, and many memories of the transactions and activities that went on in the courthouse, both old and new, were on display for visitors to enjoy.

While the displays for viewing in the lobby featured a lot of copies of the original documents, due the fragile nature of some of them, the originals were available to view in person at the different department offices, if requested.

A collection of Vinita High School musings

Compiled by VHS history instructor Chris Neal

A collection of 150th anniversary musings from Vinita High School as students gaze into what may yet be 50 years from now and ponder on what has already been (with a teacher's response):

On Vinita's 200th anniversary some things will change...

- Taco Bell and DoorDash are harbingers of imminent growth. (What do I see in the distance? Is that you, Chick-fil-a?)
- The future will change the shape of the school. (Maybe a pyramid?)
- School will be virtual. (let's hope not)
- Society will collapse. (over my dead body)
- Some of the teachers will probably be dead. (most likely during the collapse of society)
- Paper and pencil will no longer be used. (After the collapse of society, students

will write on stone tablets with their own blood)

- Robot teachers...and a robot DJ (Can I go to the restroom? - Negative, the T-1000 will definitely try to reacquire you there.)

And some things will stay the same...

- Having good times and goofing off with buddies. (Hear, hear!)
- The plumbing in the bathroom will still stink. (no comment)
- The Hornet in the front lobby will still be there. (May it be so!)
- There will still be country dudes running around the school. (No school on Rodeo Day!)
- Mrs. (Jody) Skinner, Coach (Scott) Mattison, Doug (McMeen), and Mr. (Allen) Forrest will still be here. (If Vinita could only be so lucky!)
- The food will still be

bland. (no salt for your food pellets)

Things to be remembered...

- Scotty B (Littlefield) as announcer/DJ (The Legend!)
- Hornet Olympics (Coach Mattison's legendary relay run a few years back)
- The fight song will live on! (We hail, all hail!)
- The rise of the heely gang. (that's how we roll)
- Students and staff helping out people in need. (The Hornet Way!)
- I can't even remember what happened last week. (not surprising)
- The vending machines kept breaking down. (future generations will feel your pain)
- The covid pandemic brought us together and made us grateful for the people and things we used to take for granted. (Shout out to the legendary Class of '01)

VHS students, instructors compile Vinita school history documentary

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

Vinita High School students and staff were busy learning about Vinita's school history and compiling a special documentary for the Vinita 150 Fest's February celebration of Vinita's 150th birthday.

The month of February's celebration focused on Vinita school history, with the primary focus on Vinita High School, according to coordinators.

VHS students in leadership and history classes worked on the documentary about Vinita High School history to present to the public for viewing in the 150 Fest headquarters building on Vann Street.

Tristan Kauffman, a leadership student under the direction of VHS instructor Brittani Lierle, coordinated efforts with other students to interview several people in the community.

Kauffman said, "We are interviewing around 32 different people who have been involved in the community, many who grew up in Vinita and attended Vinita schools. Some of them have stories about their own experiences and some tell about the history of Vinita schools that their parents and grandparents told them. We also have been going through old yearbooks and other publications to find interesting facts about Vinita High School and its history."

Although the main focus has been on Vinita High School, Kauffman added that other school history was also being added into the documentary as they interview more people.

VHS instructor Brittani



Photo by Brittani Lierle/VHS

VHS Student Leadership member Tristan Kauffman goes over yearbooks and publications dating back to 1911 to put together a documentary as part of the 150 Fest celebration of Vinita Schools history for the month of February.

Lierle's student leadership classes put in the hours with the videotaped interviews, while history instructor Chris Neal had students researching vintage documents, and broadcasting instructor Elijah Sooter assisted with the compilation of the video documentary. Other instructors also contributed through interviews or having students research history as well.

Kauffman said after the video was complete they also hoped to have it available for view online.

"We've been visiting with teachers who grew up here as well as the mayor, who attended here and taught

here. We have a lot of first hand accounts of what school was like for them, as well as stories about what Vinita schools were like for their parents. We did a virtual interview with Jacqueline Bullock who attended Vinita schools and was the first female All-Stater. We also found interesting stories from an old yearbook dated 1911. It's been really interesting to hear about our school history," she explained.

Kauffman said that about 30 students and teachers worked on the project for a couple of months in preparation for their part in the 150 Fest celebrations.

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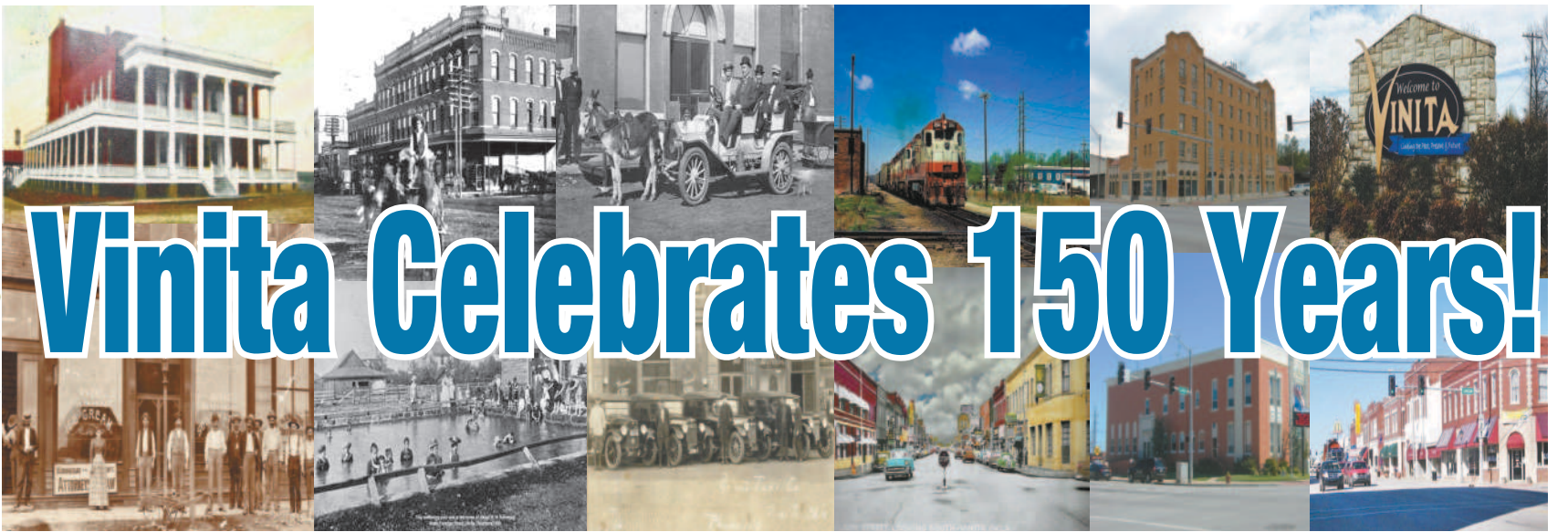
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Vinita 150 Fest Escape Room was a big hit with Vinita history and mystery-solving fun for all

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

How would you, with the help of a few friends, have liked the chance to foil a modern-day bank robbery that was inspired by none other than Pretty Boy Floyd and the famous Bonnie & Clyde?

The Vinita 150 Fest Committee invited the public to its Escape Room challenge set up each Friday and Saturday night in March for only \$5 per group, with cash prizes awarded to the top three groups that solved the mys-

tery and foiled the crime in record time.

The Escape Room was located in the 150 Fest building at 139 S. Vann Street.

Groups of two to six people signed up online for a one-hour session to play the whodunnit-style game.

Vinita High School history instructor Chris Neal along with history class students, with inspiration for the Escape Room storyline created by VHS English and German instructor Barbara and her husband, B.K. Stecklein, made this a fun event for the

community as another way to celebrate Vinita's 150th birthday.

Barbara Stecklein explained that the storyline premise for the Escape Room: "Pretty Boy Floyd planned to rob a bank in Vinita. Bonnie and Clyde volunteered to create a distraction for him during the robbery but he declined their help. He was arrested shortly thereafter, and the plot never happened. Years later someone comes across this plan and decides to carry it out."

Those in the Escape room had to solve the puzzles and

clues to find the location of a bomb and how to diffuse it.

The groups participating used their collective knowledge of history and sleuthing skills to figure out the clues and solve the challenge within the one-hour session.

For those who have never tried out an Escape Room, this one is designed as a series of puzzles and challenges that build on each other to lead the group to solve the challenge; in this case, to dif-

fuse a bomb that is about to go off in a bank and thwart a crime.

Some of the clues had some relevance to Vinita history, as well as other historical figures and historic locations. But the entire game was confined to the room.

Neal explained, "The whole concept is for a family or group to work together to solve the clues and to have fun. When signing up to play there were multiple

level games to play based on the experience and age of players. For beginners, there were fewer limits to the clues given and smaller kids will be able to enjoy playing. For those who are more competitive, and want a chance to win prizes, there were fewer clues given to them."

The event was such a hit, it ran several weekends longer than planned due to public interest.

More Vinita High School Musings from students compiled by VHS history instructor Chris Neal

The following are thoughts from students with responses from teacher in parentheses

How VHS was different 50 years ago?...

- Without phones everyone was more social. (no argument here)
- Hallway bullies and brawls...just like the movies. (Do you feel lucky, punk?)
- They got to chat with friends at their lockers. (Were lockers better than I remember?)
- Not smoky in the bathrooms. (Smokin' in the Boys Room originally came out in 1973, so...)
- The trends and styles were different. ("Hot Pants" will still get you dress coded)
- Simpler times, simpler school, simpler sports... (Nostalgia ain't what it used

to be!)

- During the Cold War they were probably still learning about how terrible the Russians were/are. (I hear reenactment groups get together and hide under desks on the weekends)
- People weren't so touchy about certain things. (good thing no one was sensitive about Vietnam or anything else back then)
- According to my dad, it snowed everyday and was 167 degrees. They also had 50 8-page assignments an hour. (that checks out)

Advice for the future...

- Don't let time fly by... make time for things that are important.

• Don't waste your time worrying about other people's opinions.

- Best of luck...you will have more history to learn.
- Just follow in my footsteps.
- Don't talk during announcements in Mr. Neal's class.
- Stay on top of your work, but don't forget to have fun.
- Don't be scared to be yourself.
- Live life, breathe air, I know somehow we're gonna get there.
- Turn in your freaking work. It should be easier for y'all since you guys have Apple iBrains.



Photo by Kamron Miles/Hornet Media

VHS students from history instructor Chris Neal's class display the various placards used as part of the 150 Fest Escape Room, coordinated by the school district as a Vinita 150th anniversary community event.



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Vinita 150 Fest Fly-In and Community Day included plane rides, a ping pong drop, a car show, and guest parajumpers

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

A windy day on Saturday kept temperatures a little cool, but didn't deter hundreds of visitors from coming out to the 150 Fest Fly-In and Community Day held at the Vinita Municipal Airport in April.

The event included many planes on display for viewing, as well as a car show display by the Craig County Cruisers and Tulsa Camaro Club.

A few food vendors made it out, but several canceled due to weather, so many visitors took part in the chili feed for pilots, which offered chili and dessert for a \$5 donation.

Pilots were on hand to offer visitors an aerial tour of Vinita for a fee, and these went on throughout the day.

Around 1:50 p.m., a surprise exhibit of four parachuters landing on the grassy area near the runway was an added treat for those who were gathered and ready to catch a winning ping pong ball.

Five hundred balls were released over the crowd, and 250 prizes were given out to those with winning numbers on their ping pong balls.

Two grand prizes were given out for an aerial tour of Grand Lake for three.

Event coordinator Brian Prince reflected on the festivities on

Monday morning.

He said, "First of all, we were so thankful to those who came out to support another 150 Fest event celebrating Vinita's birthday. We had a lot of people come out who had never visited our airport before, and I think it was a great way to introduce aviation to our kids and others. From the feedback we got, many had a great time and want to see this event come back, so we are already making plans for next year."

Prince thanked all those on the fly-in team who helped coordinate the planes, car show and more.

"With this being our first event like this, we tried to time it on a weekend that didn't conflict with other fly-ins to try to get more pilots to come visit," said Prince. "The weather was windy and a little cooler than we hoped, but we were really happy for the turnout, and we learned a little bit more about how we can improve it for future events like this."

Prince said only five pilots brought their planes in, but several local pilots opened up their hangars so visitors could view their planes.

"With this being a free event to attend, I think it attracted a lot of people who had never been out to the airport, or hadn't been in many years," said Prince. "We had several people who, after they took a ride in a plane, wanted to find out how to go about getting a pilot's license. But it wasn't just young

people. Rita Havenar came out and took a plane ride for her 80th birthday."

Prince said that they were able to conduct over 60 flight tours, with two to three passengers going up in each flight, so overall he felt the event was a success.

"Not only did this event give some people a new interest in aviation, having the Craig County Cruisers and Tulsa Camaro Club out here helped form some new friendships and the Tulsa Club is interested in coming back to Vinita this summer to participate with the Cruisers in their annual Route 66 Car Show," he added.

Prince said that the parajumpers who performed just before the ping pong drop were from a group out of Springfield, Missouri, that does exhibitions all over, and came to the fly-in as a free exhibition.

Prince said that in making plans for another event like this in the future, organizers hope to add more food vendors and other activities for everyone to enjoy.

Prince said, "We are just really happy overall with the turnout, and we want to thank all the businesses who donated the 250 prizes which were given away, as well as all those who helped coordinate this, including Pelivan, which offered free shuttle rides to vehicles. We are looking forward to making it bigger and better next time."



Photo by Denton Thomason/VDJ

Ten-year-old Jayden Bowers had a blast flying over town in pilot Troy Friend's Cessna 182 during the Vinita 150 Fest Fly-In and Community Day held at the Vinita Municipal Airport. "I love planes," a smiling Bowers said after landing from his ride.



Photo by Denton Thomason

City Councilor Danny Lankford (right) congratulated Claude Jochman for winning Best of Show for his 1913 Model T Ford at Vinita 150 Fest Fly-In and Community Day held at the Vinita Municipal Airport.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

The crowd attending the Vinita 150 Fest Fly-In was anxiously waiting for a plane to fly over and drop 500 ping pong balls which had numbers that matched 250 prize giveaways donated by local businesses.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

Para jumpers from a group out of Springfield, Mo. performed a jumping exhibition as a special surprise right before the flyover ping pong drop during the Vinita 150 Fest Fly-In held at the Vinita Municipal Airport.



Photo by Sherri Cornwell

Local resident and retired business owner Rita Havenar celebrates her 80th birthday with a plane ride at the Vinita 150 Fest Fly-In & Community Day.

150 Fest Scavenger Hunt had many participants searching for clues related to Vinita history

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

Around 17 teams competed in part one of the 150 Fest Scavenger Hunt held May 15, starting off at the 150 Fest building.

Vinita High School history and government teacher Chris Neal gave out the rules and instructions to those who arrived to receive their list of clues.

The clues were all destinations in Vinita that had some historic connection. Each team, once figuring out the meaning of the clue, was instructed to take a selfie photo and upload it to the 150 Fest website for proof that the clue was solved.

The fun adventure led teams all over Vinita, and the History Buffs team, made up of Lesia Smith, Becky Bruce and Lisa Washam, won first place for guessing 37 of 50 clues correctly and sending a photo for each destination found.

The second-place team was Patti's Private Eyes, led by Patti Zimmerman, and the third place team was the Crazy Culp team made up of the Shane and Melinda Culp family.

The top three teams won a nice cash prize to top off the fun adventure.

A Best Photos award went to the Big Juice team made up of high school students including Loudan Hicks, Tanner and Tyler Floyd, Trevor Williams, Caitlyn Jinks, Carson Best and Maggie Lynn.

Because all 50 clues were not deciphered, part two of the Scavenger Hunt continued, opening up the field for anyone who did not get the chance to participate on May 15.

The clue list was then made public, along with a hint to go along with 25 of them, and any individual or team wanting to participate could do so by taking their group photos at the destinations related to the clues.

One of the clues was changed due to the name of the building changing in the middle of the contest. All clues are for locations, were able to be found in or around the greater Vinita area. Teams attempted to solve as many clues as possible by taking a photo of their entire team at the location of each clue.

It was possible that more than one place could seem to fit a clue... in order to get credit, they had to find the location that the clue-master selected. Rules included: 1) Follow the law and stay safe; 2) No trespassing on private property; 3) Entire team must be in each photo... no dividing the list up.

In July, Don and Cora Roberts won a special trophy for guessing all of the clues correctly in the extended 150 Fest Scavenger Hunt.

The photos of all 50 locations were posted on the 150 Fest and Vinita Daily Journal Facebook pages for those still trying to guess all the answers.

Vinita 150Fest Scavenger Hunt Clue List

- #1: Mother Road Sigil Anywhere in Vinita (different answers possible) (A Sign!)
- #2: Lasso A Semi on I-44? (Watch 'em while you eat)
- #3: Sesquicentennial Building (150)
- #4: M-Shaped Building (By the tracks)
- #5: Rusty Muses (For Boys and Girls)
- #6: Tree Fort of Tiny Hornets (Hide and Seek at Hall-Halsell)
- #7: Score A Touchdown For The Hornets! (You got this one!)



The History Buffs team, (from left) Lesia Smith, Becky Bruce and Lisa Washam, was the winner of the 150 Fest Scavenger Hunt on May 15, guessing 37 of 50 clues and marking their destination finds with a photo.

- #8: Tony Hawk's Playground (Scooters too)
- #9: Doing things OSHA's "Way" (La Patria)
- #10: New Home of Original "VHS" (Letters VHS)
- #11: Towering Hornet (Thirsty?)
- #12: Lady of the Plains (Ring in the Hour)
- #13: Breezy Path (Shortcut)
- #14: Namesake Scenic Shoreline (It's not Grand Lake)
- #15: Trail of the Rising Sun (Legacy of the Past)
- #16: All 50 Are Here (Four Square)
- #17: Where Did the Hornet's Nest Go? (Recess)
- #18: Steel Cross (The Junction)
- #19: Wall of Fame (I'm Green with Envy)
- #20: Header (Think like a cowboy)
- #21: EAT (Neon)
- #22: Play Ball With an Original Boston Hero (It's Revolutionary!)
- #23: Frolf (Play catch with chains)
- #24: Frank Lloyd Wright's Inspiration (When it's turned on)
- #25: The Big Dawg (Get it!)
- #26: Rock of Ages or Years? (Blue and White)
- #27: Brewing 1907 on the Corner (Signpost)
- #28: Don't Eat the Little Goat (Not a burrito)
- #29: Eddie's Grocery (Sunny Days)
- #30: More like "Creekside" (Elementary, My Dear Watson)
- #31: Pay Your Toll With Cheese?(Wedges)
- #32: Uncle Sam's 6x6 (GI Go)
- #33: Home of the Warriors (Warriors and Hornets Unite)
- #34: Only 11/11 Rough Rider (Behind all the Others)
- #35: They Aren't ALL Ladies (Build Upon The ___)



Photo by Chris Neal

Don and Cora Roberts won a special trophy for guessing all of the clues correctly in the extended 150 Fest Scavenger Hunt. They found locations in Vinita related to 50 clues and posted photos of each place.

- #36: Don't Cry, Baby (Let's Build a Bridge out of Her)
- #37: Rooty, Toot, Toot (4th of July Parade)
- #38: Marking the Passing of 100 years of statehood (TicTok)
- #39: A Shelter for Man's Best Friends (Kitty Hands)
- #40: Spanish Eclectic (Lofty Goals)
- #41: Round Centennial Placard (Newsworthy)
- #42: Never Met a Highway I Didn't Like (Monumental Clue)
- #43: Drive in to the Lariat (Now Open Sundays)
- #44: 1110 W. (A Cultural Clue)
- #45: Rainbow Chasers Meet FDR (Tasty Locale)
- #46: Classical Revival (A Method to My Madness)
- #47: CCC Twin Rigs (Pay the Piper)
- #48: Center Stage (Grand Marquee)
- #49: One-Legged Rodeo Mount (Pink)
- #50: Arrest of Oconostota (Stamp of Approval)

Special Vinita 150th birthday celebration commemorated at Route 66 Festival



Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

"Elevating Vinita's place on Route 66 is what the festival is really all about," said Stephanie Hoskin, chairman of the Vinita Friends of Route 66, the organization which coordinates the annual festival in Vinita.

Last year's 7th annual Vinita Route 66 Festival was coupled with Vinita's 150th birthday celebration on Saturday, and featured several fun activities throughout the day and evening.

Miserably hot and humid weather may have deterred some from getting out in the heat on the Saturday event, but those attending earlier in the morning or who came out to the Friday and Saturday night block parties and carnival enjoyed cooler venues.

Hoskin said, "The first tip of the hat goes to the incredible volunteer core with the Vinita Friends of Route 66 and to those who jumped in to help put on this event. The City of Vinita went above and beyond preparing the downtown area and getting our parks ready, new paint on streets, refreshing the Route 66 shields overnight before the festival. From our street department, to our solid waste, to our firefighters and law enforcement who set up the staging, blocked streets, and had everything ready to go."

She also thanked all the festival sponsors and vendors who participated this year.

The carnival, provided by Pride Amusements, received a lot of visitors after setting up last Wednesday. It offered four nights of rides, games and carnival foods.

Hoskin added, "The carnival was well-attended, and will be back next year."

The Broken Aces band entertained at the Friday night block party, set up center stage in the Oklahoma State Bank parking lot, and kids enjoyed the activities in the Kids Zone with inflatables and bungee jumping.

Food Truck Alley offered festival food treats, and Piguet's Prime Time sold out their Steak Under the Stars event at the

Vinita Breezeway.

Saturday morning brought a lot of car enthusiasts out early to view the large array of vehicles lined from Canadian to Delaware, at the Route 66 Car Show sponsored by the Craig County Cruisers.

"We had over 104 entries in the car show which was a record, so we were happy to see that continue to expand each year and bring in visitors from all over," added Hoskin.

Other early attendees participated in the early morning Chicks N Chaps Color Run.

Vendors of all types had tents set up all down the 100 block of Main Street for local shopping.

Entertainment was ongoing at center stage featuring live performances by the Gym Dandies, music by the Vinnie Ream players, and a talent show emceed by Tony Nash of the Vinita Boys & Girls Club.

Hoskin gave a special shout out to James Selby who emceed the stage all through the event, and thanked the entertainers who braved the heat during midday temps that reached 102 heat index.

Police gave kids who came with bicycles a chance to participate in a short bike safety program and then led them on a quick parade up and down Wilson. Other kids could stop by the Vinita Breezeway and make an LED 150 Fest button as a fun project at the STEAM Alley setup.

At around 1:30 p.m., the Vinita 150th birthday celebration

was commemorated at center stage featuring Mayor Chuck Hoskin and wife Stephanie Hoskin, as well as members of the Friends of Route 66.

Special guests Cherokee Nation Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. and First Lady January Hoskin were there to commemorate the birthday celebration in their hometown.

Senator Micheal Bergstrom and State Representative Rusty Cornwell and wife Sherri were also in attendance.

Cherokee Nation Treasure Tommy Wildcat began the celebration with a flute presentation, followed by local historian Ronnie Harlan, who gave a brief history of Vinita.

Chief Hoskin gave a proclamation and introduced the Friends of Route 66. Those gathered at center stage were then photographed by a drone flying above, to capture the historic occasion which will be placed in a time capsule.

The public was then invited for free birthday cake and Dr Pepper to celebrate Vinita's 150 years.

The action started back up later when Mark Chamberlain and Whiskey Poet Society took the stage for the second block party to conclude the festival.

Hoskin said organizers will meet in a couple of weeks to go over details and plan for next year, and thanked all those who came out to make this year's event a great one.

Commemorate Route 66 Festival and 150th celebration t-shirts were designed and available on demand at 66 Apparel.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

Local historian Ronnie Harlan gives an overview of Vinita history to commemorate the city's 150th birthday celebration at the 7th annual Vinita Route 66 Festival held in downtown Vinita in June.

Vinita began its history as a railroad junction in the heart of the Cherokee Nation

by **Ronnie Harlan**

This is the 150th anniversary of the founding of Vinita. In May 1871 the first railroad reached the site of what is now Vinita. The Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad (MK&T or Katy) was the first to reach Indian Territory. An agreement with the Department of Interior and the Cherokee Nation was reached, that whatever railroad company reached the Kansas Border would have exclusive with to go across Cherokee lands southward. The MK&T reached the border first.

They wanted to build across Indian Territory through to Texas to the Gulf of Mexico.

The railroad officials thought the site was beautiful. They wanted to build a station about 30 miles south of the Kansas border. Here on the prairie a typical tent and shanty town spun up overnight. Railroad freight buildings, themselves were enough to get a town going. The first MKT train rolled in to town in May of 1871.

It was about five months later when the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad (later the

Frisco) built westward from Missouri to intersect with the Katy (MKT). They called it "The Junction" in the early days. This was the first name people called this frontier Indian Territory town.

Early on, the town was called Downingville, named after the current Cherokee Chief at the time, Lewis-Downing.

Later, the site of the actual intersection of the two railroads was changed. At that time, a famous Cherokee representative and legal council got the name changed to Vinita after a friend Lavinia Ream, a famed sculptress who was nicknamed Vinnie. His name was Elias Boudinot.

So Vinita came into existence 6 years after the Civil War. Born in the heart of the Cherokee Nation, Vinita's colorful story had started. The railroad junction was ready to become a new trading and shipping point for the northern part of the Cherokee nation. The railroads brought people to Vinita who wanted to start new lives, start businesses, and raise their families.



Photo by Angela Thomason

Cherokee Nation National Treasure Tommy Wildcat gives a flute presentation to kick off the birthday celebration of Vinita's 150 years at the center stage of the Vinita Route 66 Festival held downtown in June.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

Six-year-old Aubree Weatherby of Langley gives the bungee jump a try in the Kids Zone set up in the OSB parking lot, which was the center stage area for the 7th annual Vinita Route 66 Festival held in downtown Vinita.



Photo by Denton Thomason/VDJ

Eight-year-old Dominic Brooks prize he won from a game booth at the Route 66 Festival Carnival.



Photo by Denton Thomason/VDJ

Vinita Mayor Chuck Hoskin, Sr. and Cherokee Nation Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr. display the proclamation celebrating Vinita's 150th birthday during the 7th annual Vinita Route 66 Festival held in June.



150 Fest Disc Golf Big/Little Doubles Tournament promoted father/son fun



Photo by Vanessa Hicks/150 Fest Committee

Owen Neal was one of 26 competitors in the Vinita 150 Fest Big/Little Doubles Disc Golf Tournament on June 26 at the Vinita North Park. The rain did not keep players away as teams arrived from as far away as Oklahoma City, Coweta and Tulsa. The tournament was set up with a beginner and family friendly format where teams consisted of one youth and one adult. The event was part of a worldwide series of events known as the Trilogy Challenge. Neal held off all challengers in an exciting Closest To Pin contest to take home the prize.

Journal sponsored annual 4th of July Fireworks Show as part of 150 Fest celebrations



Photo by Angela Thomason

What could be more patriotic than a red, white, and blue cotton candy burrito? Alena Hilderbrand, 6, tried out one made by the Ropin' Flamingo Italian Ice, which sold all their Italian ices and teas and cotton candy at the Vinita 150 Fest Fireworks Show this at Memorial Stadium. The cotton candy burrito included cotton candy filled with Italian ice and topped with candy.

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

Hundreds turned out to Memorial Stadium in Vinita on July 1, for the annual Vinita Fireworks Show coordinated by the Vinita Daily Journal as a 150 Fest project for Independence Day.

The gates and concessions opened around 7 p.m. so folks could come early, grab some food and sit in the stands to enjoy before the fireworks begin around dusk.

As the last of the donations were collected to finalize the \$15,000 goal for Vinita's 150 Fest and Independence Day Fireworks celebration, VDJ's Janet Link thanks all those in the community who stepped up to make sure that the community had a nice fireworks show.

The City of Vinita and several local businesses donated toward the event to provide the local fireworks show, with free admission, kicking off a series of 4th of July events around the northeast Oklahoma area.

The fireworks show was presented by Jeffrey Gardner of Schneitter's Fireworks.

Those arriving earlier



Photo by David Burgess/VDJ

Fireworks light up the sky over L.P. Williams Field at Memorial Stadium last July during Vinita's annual fireworks show, hosted as a 150 Fest event by the Vinita Daily Journal.

could purchase burgers and hot dogs by the Vinita Lions Club and Vinita cheerleaders, or enjoy a cool treat by Ropin' Flamingo, including Italian ice, shaved ice, ice coffee flavored teas and lemonades, as well as cotton candy and special cotton candy 'burritos'. Cowboy Kettle Corn also

offered kettle corn, fried pickles and funnel cakes.

The Vinita Fire Dept. provided a cooling area with sprinklers set up for kids to play and adults to cool off.

Local Scouts performed the presentation of colors to start off festivities, and James Selby emceed the program building up to the fireworks show.

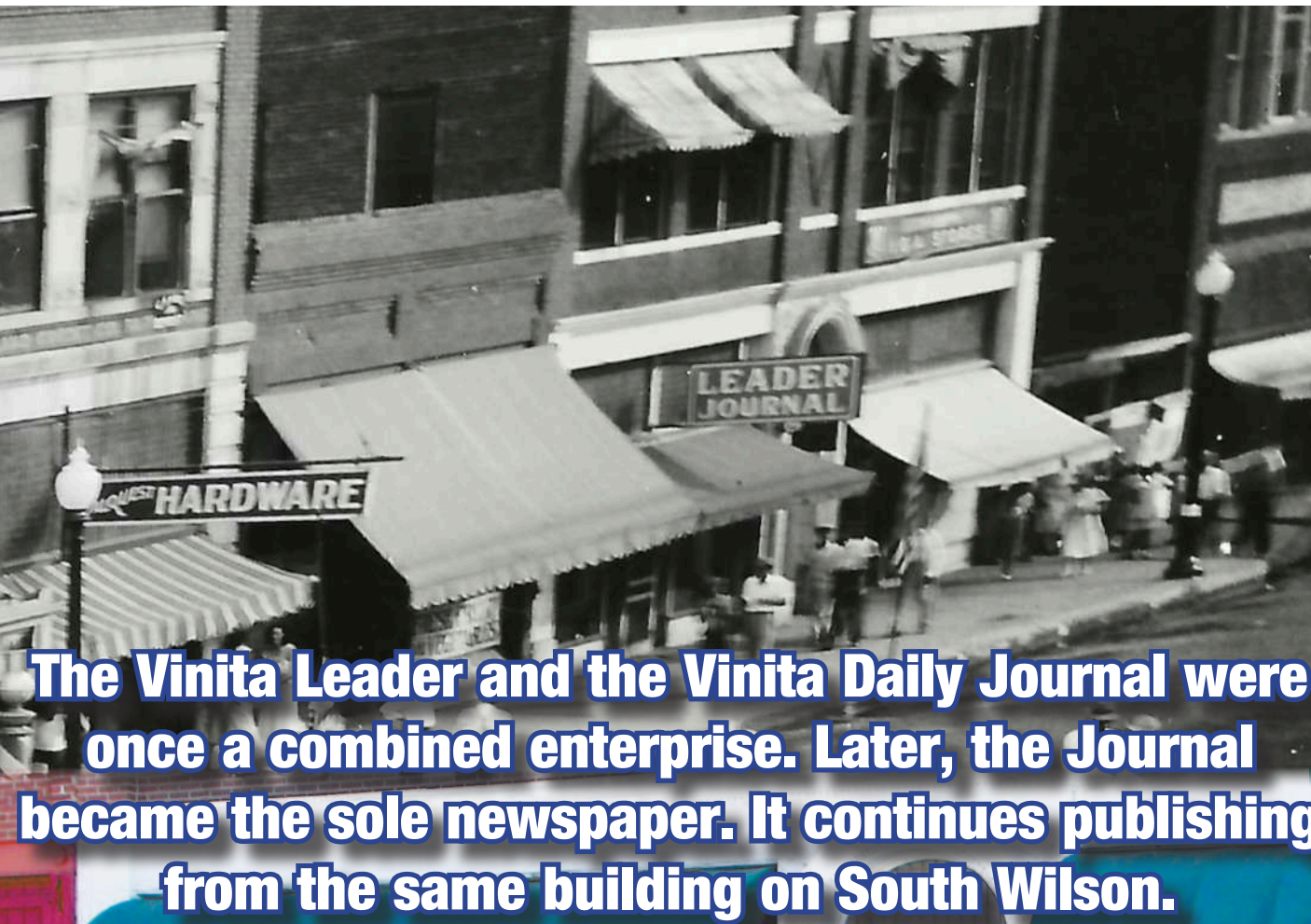


Oklahoma State and Federal Legislators sent their congratulations to the City of Vinita on its 150th birthday in the form of citations and commendations, including, from top left, clockwise, U.S. Senator James Inhofe, U.S. Senator James Lankford, Gov. Kevin Stitt, U.S. Rep. Markwayne Mullin, State Senator Micheal Bergstrom, and State Rep. Rusty Cornwell.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

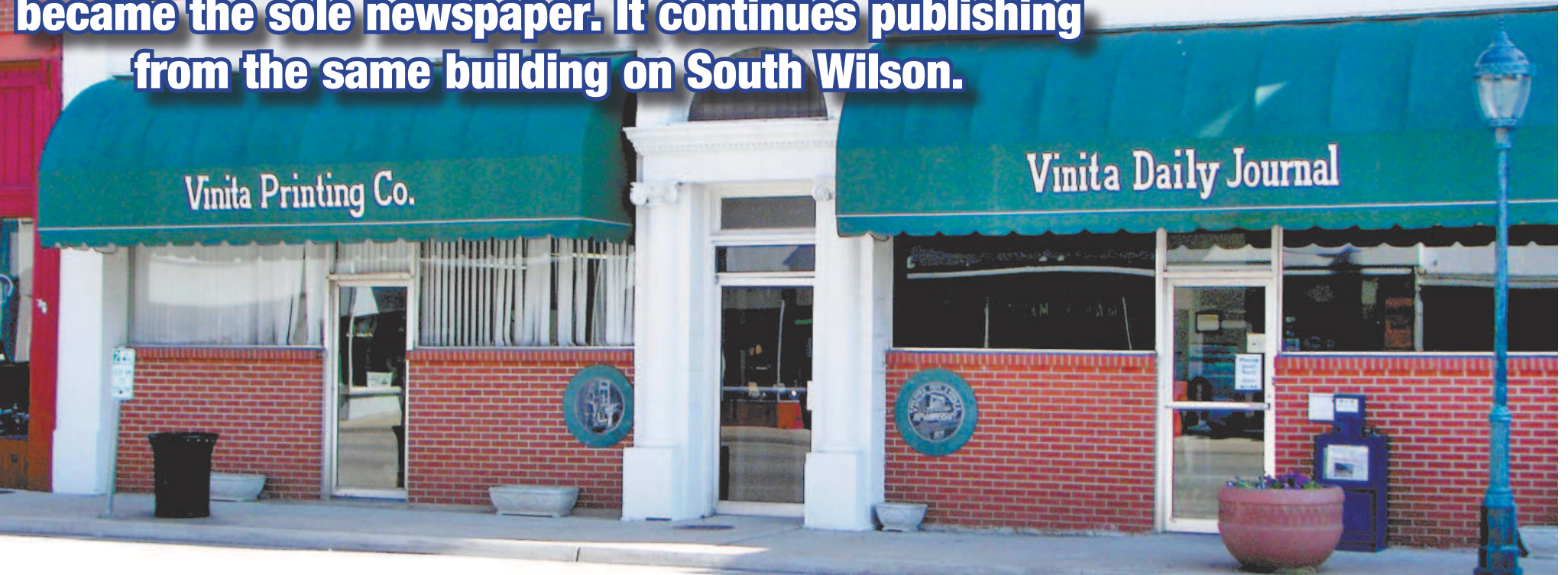
Lt. Michael Korb, president of Vinita Firefighters Local 2814 donated \$250 on behalf of the firefighters union to the Vinita fireworks show, accepted by Vinita Daily Journal's fireworks coordinator Janet Link. The fireworks show, celebrating Independence Day and Vinita's 150th birthday, was set for Thursday, July 1, at L.P. Williams Field at Memorial Stadium.



The Vinita Leader and the Vinita Daily Journal were once a combined enterprise. Later, the Journal became the sole newspaper. It continues publishing from the same building on South Wilson.

Did You Know?

- The Vinita Daily Chieftain was started in 1898.
- The Vinita Daily Journal was established right about the time that this part of the country changed from Indian Territory to the state of Oklahoma in 1907.



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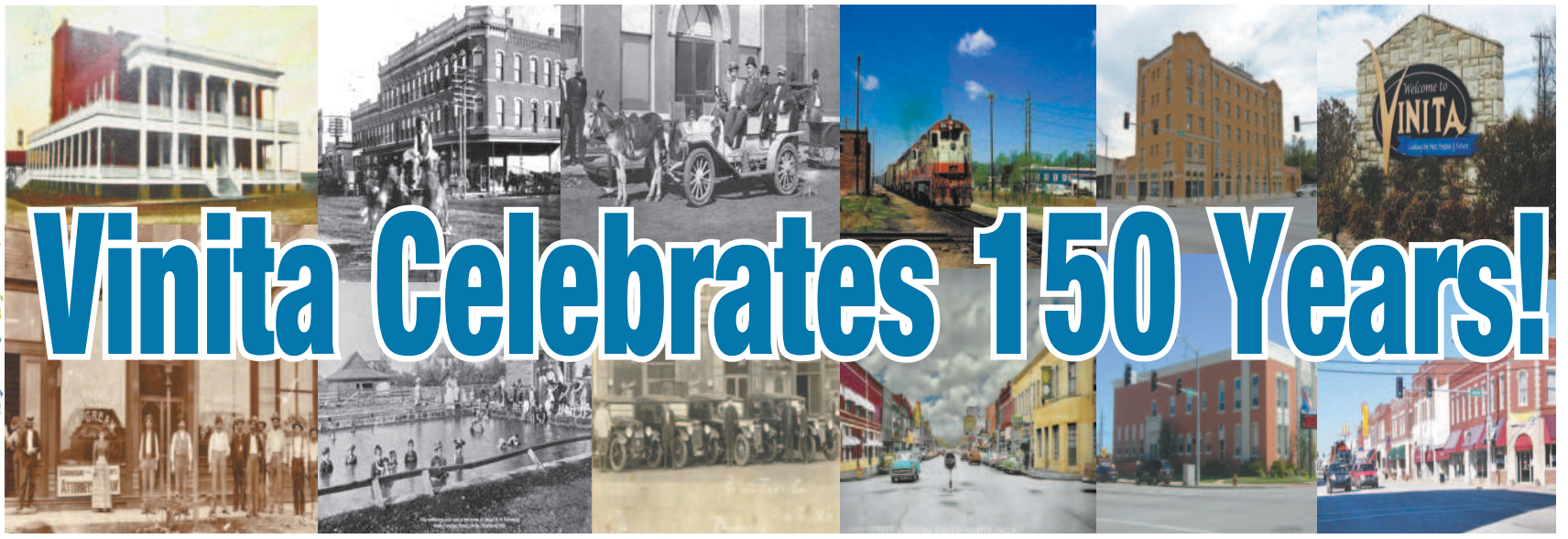


Photo provided by Kathleen Duchamp/Eastern Trails Museum Director

Gail and Denny Cresap stand at Ewing Halsell Middle School with two large historic banners they donated in June 2021 as part of Vinita's 150th birthday celebration. The images are of the Halsell mansion (left) which stood where Ewing Halsell Middle School is today and Mr. Halsell on horseback (right). Gail Cresap's aunt, Helen Campbell, was Ewing Halsell's business manager and close family friend.



Cresaps, Eastern Trails Museum create 'Drive-by History'

by Kathleen Duchamp/Eastern Trails Museum
Denny and Gail Cresap collaborated with Eastern Trails Museum to create a "drive-by history museum". Through the Cresap Family Foundation, the museum obtained funding to purchase and install over 20 enlarged photographs depicting Vinita's history.
"We read the Vinita Daily Journal everyday and that's how we learned about the museum's efforts to reach the community through these large photographs," said Gail Cresap recently.
She added, "I was born in Vinita and Denny's family came here in 1951. We are both interested in Vinita's history and this was a good way to share that interest with everyone."
Kathleen Duchamp, Eastern Trails Museum director added,

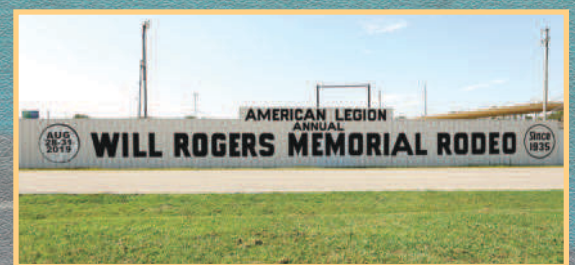
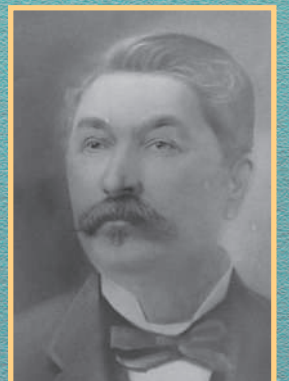
"This project started when the museum was closed during the pandemic and the idea grew from there, thanks to the Cresap-family."
Duchamp continued, "Gail spent many days of her childhood at the Halsell Ranch with her aunt, Helen Campbell, and Mr. Halsell. That personal interaction is an important historical-connection."
Twenty enlarged historic images were installed in a 3 block area downtown. A free souvenir guide with map and brief descriptions is available at Eastern Trails Museum, Vinita Public Library, Vinita Daily Journal, and City Hall lobby.

Long Term Memory

On Jan. 29, 2022, Jane Gillett Price turned 102 years old. She was born in Vinita in 1920 and in her words, "I've lived here all these years and I don't believe there is a better place in the whole country."
Ewing and Lucile Halsell, of Vinita's foremost pioneer family, were good friends with Jane's parents. She remembers Christmas parties at the Halsell mansion when she was a girl.
Jane Price is one of Vinita's treasured seniors. She shares her memories of Vinita with clarity, accuracy, and good humor, especially for someone who is over 100 years old.
She won't be around for Vinita's next big birthday in 2071. But several interviews with her are digitally recorded and stored in the Eastern Trail Museum archives. What a delight is in store for future historians and anyone interested in Vinita's rich past.

CHEROKEE NATION CELEBRATES THE CITY OF VINITA'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Founded by Cherokee citizens in 1871, Vinita is an important economic, political and cultural community within the Cherokee Nation. Cherokee citizens also founded one of the earliest and continually operating newspapers in Cherokee Nation in Vinita, known today as the Vinita Daily Journal. Vinita continues to be a valuable partner to Cherokee Nation, through partnerships on economic development, infrastructure, housing and the preservation of Cherokee Nation history and culture.



Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation



Bryan Warner
Deputy Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation



Victoria Vazquez
Cherokee Nation Council
District 11



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Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

Vinita Mayor Chuck Hoskin Sr. waves from the City of Vinita's float with city employees' family members depicting all the different essential services the city offers its citizens. This float featuring the new Vinita logo was the winner of the Commander's Award at the 84th annual Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo Parade held in downtown Vinita in August.



Photo by Darlena Roberts/870Sports

Haley Proctor gives an amazing performance with her horse Clyde in her ring of fire act, a highlight of the LeelCoats 150 Fest Showdown cowboy mounted shooting competition Saturday night at the Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo Arena.

150 Fest Showdown Cowboy Mounted Shooting event 'wildly successful'

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

An estimated crowd of over 1,000 attended the LeelCoats 150 Fest Showdown at the Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo Arena in Vinita on Saturday, Sept. 25, and those who attended were not disappointed in the spectacular show.

The cowboy mounted shooting competition, which was the first of its kind to be held in Vinita, brought in competitors from all over the U.S. who were qualifying to compete in world championships.

Event coordinator Lauren Crudup, a mounted shooting competitor and an attorney with LeelCoats Law Firm, was overjoyed at the turnout for the event, which served as both a Vinita 150 Fest celebration and a fundraiser for the Craig County Technical Rescue Task Force and the Vinita Rotary Club senior scholarship program.

Crudup, who has been competing for over 14 years, rallied over 68 riders to qualify to compete in the Showdown which kicked off at 7 p.m. Accomplished riders of all ages arrived early in the day for heat trials to narrow down the competition to 46 who competed and performed before the crowd.

One world record time was broken by Claremore rider Collin Esau, who rode the fastest pace while shooting targets in the arena at a time of 9.648 seconds.

Starting off the Showdown, Tiffany Dixon of Wellston rode horseback on Chexie, who was named Horse of the Year by the Mounted Association and carried the American flag.

The national anthem was sung by Austin Markham, who had flown in from Nashville, where he recorded his

first solo album, 'Me'.

To complete the patriotic tribute opening, specialty act trick rider Haley Proctor swept through the arena standing on horseback decked out in red, white, and blue and carrying a flag shooting fireworks.

Proctor was the specialty and halftime performer, riding her horse Clyde to perform a Liberty Act and the ring of fire jump.

Vinita Rotary Club members and Austin Brown State Farm manned concessions and offered calf fry dinners, hamburgers, hot dogs and drinks to help raise funds for senior scholarships.

Vinita Senior Rotarians and NHS students from Vinita High School also volunteered time to help with the event.

Crudup said she was overwhelmed by the community support shown for an event like this, which was her first shoot to coordinate.

"Our shooters were welcomed and commented about how much fun it was and how great the community of Vinita is. They ate at Clanton's and commented on the great hospitality shown to them. There were so many in the community who did things in the background without fanfare or recognition, and we couldn't have done it without them," said Crudup.

The top three riders with the best times were: Collin Esau of Claremore with a 9.648 second run, winning \$980; Brett Borkowski of South Dakota with a time of 9.798 seconds, winning \$588; and Josh Ingle of Alabama third with a time of 10.189 seconds, winning \$392.

Crudup said, "Considering they race across the arena and shoot 10 bullets at targets on horseback going as fast as possible, these guys all did it

in less than 10 seconds."

Josh Lee and Cassandra Coats of LeelCoats Law Firm were also ecstatic about the turnout of the event.

Lee said, "I think you could say it was wildly successful and turned out to be much bigger than we expected. We could not have done this without the help of Vinita Rotary Club, the Legion, the Journal for all the publicity, and all of our sponsors. By 6:15, we noticed the parking lot filling up already so we knew it was going to be a great turnout."

Coats added, "My kids and family had a wonderful time, and enjoyed the face-painting and watching the event...it was great to be part of bringing something new to Vinita, setting a benchmark and opening up possibilities for a spectacular event like this. We never dreamed that one of our employees who has a 'weird hobby,' as we put it, would be able to bring something like this to our town, so it was wonderful."

Lee said several people commented that the show was inspirational for locals who like riding and target shooting.

Sponsors for the 150 Fest event included: LeelCoats Law, Matthews Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram, Vinita Daily Journal, C&L Supply, Bob Hart Chevrolet, Piguet's Prime Time, Daylight Donuts, Oklahoma State Bank, Brian Kelly-Oklahoma Farm Bureau Insurance, Luginbuel Funeral Home, BancFirst, Elliott Truck Line, Inc., Park Hills Motel & RV Park, Thoroughbred Financial Solutions, Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, and Junior's Wrecker Service.

Commemorative t-shirts from the event were available through 66 Apparel.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

Mural artist Jessica Stout paints scenes of former Vinita schools on the Worcester monument at the southeast corner of the Will Rogers Elementary school grounds, which will be part of a small park area in that corner.

Monument features Vinita schools history

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

A project was started in 2021 as mural artist Jessica Stout, of Miami, was commissioned to paint scenes of former Vinita schools on a monument at Will Rogers Elementary school that was erected in 1967.

This project, which was

part of the Vinita 150 Fest, is something Eastern Trails Museum and the Cresap Family Foundation partnered to create.

It is a tribute to Worcester Academy which was a missionary school built in 1883 by missionaries for the education of Indian children.

The paintings on the mon-

ument make up phase one of a project that will eventually include a small park with brickwork surrounding the monument which will be able to be enjoyed by the public.

Being in that corner of the playground, it will serve as a natural tourist segue from the Craig County Veterans War Memorial across the street.



Photo by Robert Sanders

Hallie Brewer takes a swing at a colorful pinata at the 150 Fest Flashback Family Fun Night at South Park in October coordinated by local churches.

Below is a collage of photos of locations that were answers to the 50 clues given in the 150 Fest Scavenger Hunt, provided by Chris Neal, who was the clue-master of the event.



Did you know? Eastern State Hospital was an innovative treatment facility for people with mental illness. It opened in 1913 and in 1955, it had 2,500 patients.

Chief Hoskin reflects on Vinita's deep ties to Cherokee Nation



Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr.

by Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr. My hometown of Vinita is a proud Cherokee town with a bright future. Last year's Vinita 150 Fest reminds us why. Vinita was founded during a pivotal time in Cherokee his-

tory. In 1871 the Trail of Tears, as well as our remarkable resurgence after that painful and destructive event, was within the living memory of many of the Cherokees who founded this town.

At Vinita's birth, Cherokee Nation was only beginning to heal from the injuries inflicted by the American Civil War. A great, but battered, Indian nation was once again rebuilding.

Vinita's founding in 1871 opened a new chapter in Cherokee history. Our post Civil War treaty with the United States, along with the unrelenting pressure of migration and commerce, gave rise to the railroads and outsiders into our territory. Vinita, of course, owes its founding to that railroad crossing we all know so well. Yet, in the wake of war and in the face of pressure, Vinita's founding was a moment of optimism and hope for the Cherokee people.

Vinita's founding posed an important question: Could Cherokee Nation continue to thrive in a rapidly changing world, a world of emerging industries, an interdependent world, and a world of the familiar and intensifying pressure of an expanding United States?

The effort to answer that question was derailed within three decades after Vinita's founding. Vinita prospered in its early years and so did the Cherokee Nation. But, changing federal Indian policy and the pressure to impose the new state of Oklahoma over tribal lands would be too much to bear.

The 20th century saw the near destruction of my beloved Cherokee Nation, even as my beloved hometown continued to grow. It was a century during which my grandfather, a full blood Cherokee and third generation Vinitan, would raise his family here. It was also a century which for nearly 70 years the federal government would bar him and his fellow Cher-

okees from even voting for their own Chief. My grandfather probably never imagined his own grandson would one day be the Chief.

The last quarter of the 20th century marked a resurgence of the Cherokee Nation. Due to a change in federal Indian policy in the 1970s the federal government took its boot off of Cherokee Nation. Since then, as we always have when allowed to self govern, the Cherokee people and their government has thrived. Not coincidentally, our friends and neighbors have thrived as well.

That is why last year's Vinita 150 Fest brought me so much joy. It brought me joy as a resident and as a father who, along with our First Lady January, has raised a sixth generation of the Hoskin family in Vinita. It brought me Joy as Chief because Vinita 150 Fest marks the beginning of our next chapter. The hope and promise on which Vinita was founded 150 years ago, as an ambitious Cherokee town, remains.

Vinita's next chapter is that of a vibrant town in the Cherokee Nation reservation poised for growth. My hometown is one that boasts massive investments in tourism, healthcare, infrastructure, housing and education by the country's most dynamic and progressive Indian nation. It is a town in which Cherokees and non-Cherokees work together to build a strong community. All of the aspirations of Vinita's Cherokee founders, and so many more of our collective hopes and dreams, can be realized in the decades ahead.

As Chief, and as a Vinitan, I was proud to participate in Vinita 150 Fest. If I live long enough- I will be 96 years old- I hope to be at Vinita 200 Fest. Whether I make it or not, I am confident that Vinita's best days, and the best days of the Cherokee Nation, lay ahead of us.

Cherokee Nation celebrated 150th birthday with Vinita

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

Members of the Cherokee Nation, including Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr., Deputy Speaker Victoria Vazquez and Mayor Chuck Hoskin, Sr., participated in a celebration of both the 150th birthday of Vinita and Native American Heritage Month in November.

This special Cherokee Nation 150 Fest event took place in the Vinita Route 66 Breezeway in downtown Vinita on Sunday afternoon, attended by a modest crowd to take part in the celebration of Vinita's history and the deep ties to the Cherokee Nation that the city has had since the beginning.

Chief Hoskin talked about how special he felt to be from Vinita and to be able to serve as Principal Chief noting

the last Principal Chief from Vinita was Tom Buffington, who was a major part of Vinita's history 122 years ago.

Hoskin spoke of how important Vinita has been to the Cherokee Nation and how the deep ties of shared history continue today in a modern society that has seen the Cherokee Nation become an important source in Vinita for opportunity, health care services, job and career sources, art and culture, and much more.

Mayor Hoskin also spoke about the strides made the past 150 years in Vinita, and how Vinita has benefited from the partnerships and support of the Cherokee Nation.

Deputy Speaker Victoria Vazquez, who was instrumental in coordinating the event, spoke about Vinita's

history and the contributions made to the Cherokee Nation through preserving Cherokee art and culture through the arts.

Special music was performed by members of the Cherokee Adult Choir, and a proclamation was announced by Daughters of the American Revolution member Johnabeth Frost, depicting Vinita's long history and relationship with the Cherokee Nation.

As part of the celebration, prizes were awarded to local children who entered and won in the 7 Clans Coloring Contest.

Those attending were then treated to cake to celebrate the event, and artwork by Cherokee artist Kindra Swafford was erected in the Breezeway for viewing.



Photo by Angela Thomason

Four men from Vinita have been inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame: Judge James Davenport, Cherokee Chief Tom Buffington, Judge W.H. Kornegay, and newspaper publisher O.B. Campbell.

Cherokee Nation Deputy Speaker Victoria Vazquez, a Vinita native, welcomes attendees of Sunday's 150 Fest Cherokee Nation celebration of Vinita's 150th birthday and November Native American Heritage Month. The celebration was at the downtown Vinita Route 66 Breezeway.

100, 150, 200

Reprinted from Kathleen Duchamp's column *Inside the Museum*

When Cherokee Chief Chuck Hoskin addressed the partygoers at Vinita's birthday party last Sunday, he mentioned that in fifty years the town would be two hundred years old.

He hoped to be helping people even though he would be ninety-six.

Wow. The notion of this youngish, agile, public figure at ninety-six years old made for some daydreaming about what the prospect of the year 2071 holds for the rest of us.

First, let's get the queasy part out of the way. Lots of the people who were at the party (and some of you who are reading this) will be long dead by the time Vinita's two-hundredth birthday rolls around. There's that.

But now for the upbeat part:

The children at the birthday party were awarded prizes in a coloring contest. The youngest of the winners will be fifty-four and the oldest will be sixty-one.

Will these kids remember the Cherokee choir singing a happy birthday song for Vinita? Will there still be a traditional choir?

Today's VHS students learning Oklahoma history will be in their late sixties. Will they still own the 150 logo footballs that were thrown into the stands at half-time?

How about the artists who submitted their work for the 150 Fest Art Crawl? Will they remember that sunny January day when downtown was buzzing with artistic tributes to the town?

Young passengers on board flights at the Fly-In last spring. Will they be flying in 2071, maybe as a pilots themselves?

How about the owners of historic houses who learned interesting facts about their homes and shared them with friends, neighbors, and the idly curious.

And for the collectors: there were souvenirs, all plastered with the now recognizable 150 logo on t-shirts, sweatshirts, coffee mugs, hats, doggie sweaters, key chains, footballs, and shopping bags.

Looking now at the opposite end of the timeline, there are quite a few people who remember the one-hundredth birthday in 1971. All the celebrating took place during Rodeo Week. A big square dance on Main Street on one night followed by a lavish historical pageant at the rodeo grounds for the next two nights.

A style show of antique costumes with musical accompaniment took place in South Park. And then there was a quirky game for the men that involved not shaving or buying "shave permits".

The souvenirs included commemorative plates, bumper stickers, lapel buttons.

Who were the centennial organizers back in 1971? Here is a partial list of the mostly male, mostly business owners who coordinated the 100th birthday:

O.B. Campbell, Jack Luginbuel, Price Parker, Francis Goodpaster, Sam Seabolt, Duke Logan, John Mahoney, Bob Hartley, Bob McSpadden, Willie Harlan, Jerry Ruark, Harry Wyatt, Keith Carter, Merlin Sharp, Jack Taylor, Richard Kennedy, Dick Lowery, and Mrs. George Coffey.

The Centennial Celebration back in 1971 is still remembered fifty years later by those who were there (and in souvenirs, photographs, newspaper clippings).

And there is confident expectation that the year-long One-Fifty Fest (originally known as Sesquicentennial but that's such a mouthful) will also be remembered 50 years later.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VBJ

This beautifully decorated home at the intersection of Smith and Delaware in Vinita was one of 38 homes that are at least a century old and was part of the 150 Fest Century Homes Tour set for Nov. 12 and 13.

Did you know? In the 1930's, Vinita had five federal highways through town.



Photo by Angela Thomason

A group stops to view the Starks home on South Smith and hear about its history, with guidance from local historian Ronnie Harlan and 150 Fest committee chair Aaron Simms. It was part of the Vinnie Ream Cultural Center's 150 Fest Century Home walk/drive-by tour conducted over a weekend in November.

Did you know this about Vinita?

- The Grand Opera House opened in 1907 and became the Grand Theatre in 1938. Later, it was remodeled to serve as City Hall.
- Vinita was the first town in Oklahoma/Indian Territory to have electricity.
- Vinita's elevation is 699 feet.

150 Fest Holiday Harmonies and Harps benefit concert a rare treat

Angela Thomason
Journal Reporter

The 150 Fest Holiday Harmonies and Harps benefit concert held in December was a rare treat for those who attended.

The concert, held at the First United Methodist Church, was coordinated by the 150 Fest committee and CASA of Northeast Oklahoma, featuring several talented artists from the area.

One of the featured performances that kicked off the program was the first public performance by pianist Jan Schaub of a ragtime solo written in 1908 by Egbert Van Alstyne titled 'Vinita.'

Dr. John Myers, who emceed the event, said the sheet music which was found in a collection of antique documents owned by Dr. Danny Lankford was most likely never heard by anyone in Vinita.

The ragtime solo was upbeat and fun to hear, reminiscent of the music that was common in that era.

This performance went along with the celebration of Vinita's 150th birthday.

Following that were wonderful performances by professional harpists Linda Barton Paul and Annie Mocha of Twice as Nice Celtic Harp Duo, as well as duet performances on cello and harp featuring Dr. Paul Fuhrmeister and Tammy Willcox of The Twin Rivers Duo.

The audience listened to the mesmerizing sounds of Celtic music, jazz, and classic Christmas melodies that are often only heard at large-scale concert venues.

Harpist Linda Paul, who has performed nationwide and is a Will Rogers Hall of Fame inductee, also gave a brief talk on the history of the music they performed as well as the unique design of the harps.

The Vinita High School Blue Notes Show Choir under direction of Shelley Reed concluded the musical performances with Christmas favorites, ending with a salute to Vinita's birthday with a choreographed version of 'Get Your Kicks on Route 66.'

The entire concert was free to the public, but was also held as a benefit for CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Northeast Oklahoma, which supports advocates for abused and neglected local children.

CASA of Northeast Oklahoma Executive Director Angela Henderson gave a short video presentation of how CASA services can positively impact the lives of children by not only providing help to foster parents, but also in reuniting children with parents who have overcome obstacles such as addiction.

FUMC Pastor Andrew Haire, who also serves on the CASA board, thanked all those who attended the event and for the support shown by those who donated to this worthy cause.



Photo by Angela Thomason

Professional harpists Linda Paul and Annie Mocha, of Twice as Nice Celtic Harp Duo, give a mesmerizing performance at the 150 Fest Holidays Harmonies and Harps event held at the First United Methodist Church in December 2021.



Photo by Angela Thomason/VDJ

Volunteers who spearheaded monthly events during Vinita's 150th anniversary celebration all last year were recognized at a special 150 Fest reception held at the Vinita Public Library Heritage Room on Tuesday. Those who attended were (from left): Chris Neal, Sammie and Brian Prince, Amber Knoll, Barbara Stecklein, Debbi and John Myers, Robert Sanders, Vanessa Hicks, Kathleen Duchamp, Misty Bingham, and Danny Lankford. Others who were unable to attend included Aaron Simms, Brittany Selby, Daniel Coonfield, Victoria Vazquez, Janet Link, Cassandra Coats, Lauren Crudup, Shelby Stewart, and B.K. Stecklein.



Photo by Misty Deffenbaugh

This time capsule donated by Chris Highsmith of Highsmith Funeral Home, will contain a copy of this souvenir edition to be opened 50 years from now- in 2071.

