



# A Page from the Past

## Indian City U.S.A.

photos and text  
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**H**ISTORY, culture and folklore of the great Indian tribes which once roamed the western plains are being preserved in Indian City, U.S.A., a unique outdoor museum near Anadarko, Oklahoma. The museum was built by the citizens of Anadarko with the help of community planners, anthropologists and alumni of the University of Oklahoma.

This popular attraction, now five years old, came into being because of many tourists who had come to Anadarko, "The Indian Capital of the Nation," and expressed disappointment at not finding evidence of primitive Indian life. Outlanders seemed to forget that times have changed for the Indians, too. Yet the Indians themselves felt a need for preserving the lore of their ancestors.

Thirty units make up Indian City, located two miles southeast of Anadarko on U. S. Highway 62. Indians who live in modern houses, drive late model automobiles and avidly watch television—especially when O.U.'s Big Red is on the warpath—come to the City and put on traditional tribal gear to relive and retell the story of their past.

Helping to re-create this story are personnel drawn from the



Backing the Indian City enterprise are civic leaders such as Joe McBride, Jr., Wallace Kidd, Carl West and George Moran, here conferring with Dixon Palmer, leader of the ceremonial dancers.



His face etched by nearly a century, Frank Bosin, respected Kiowa elder, is one of the few remaining who can remember the way of life on the Southwestern plains which has been recreated at Indian City.

Carrying on the tradition of the Kiowa, Dixon Palmer shows his son, Dixon Randy, the correct way to hold the dancing wand. Palmer's daughter, Wanda, watches the proceedings from beside her play tent.



more than 10,000 Indians living in or near Anadarko, where the Wichita agency was consolidated with the Kiowa, Apache and Comanche agencies in 1878. Anadarko, a corruption of the Caddo word, *na-ak-ko*, was the name of a Caddoan tribe.

Standing as it does on Tonkawa Hill, where an Indian battle was fought in 1862, the City is located in the heart of Indian country. This site was once a part of the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache reservation and is an area long rich in history and lore of these Indians. From Tonkawa Hill can be seen the grounds of the American Indian Exposition held annually in August, the permanent center of the Southern Plains Indians Craft and Exhibition and the Indian Hall of Fame.

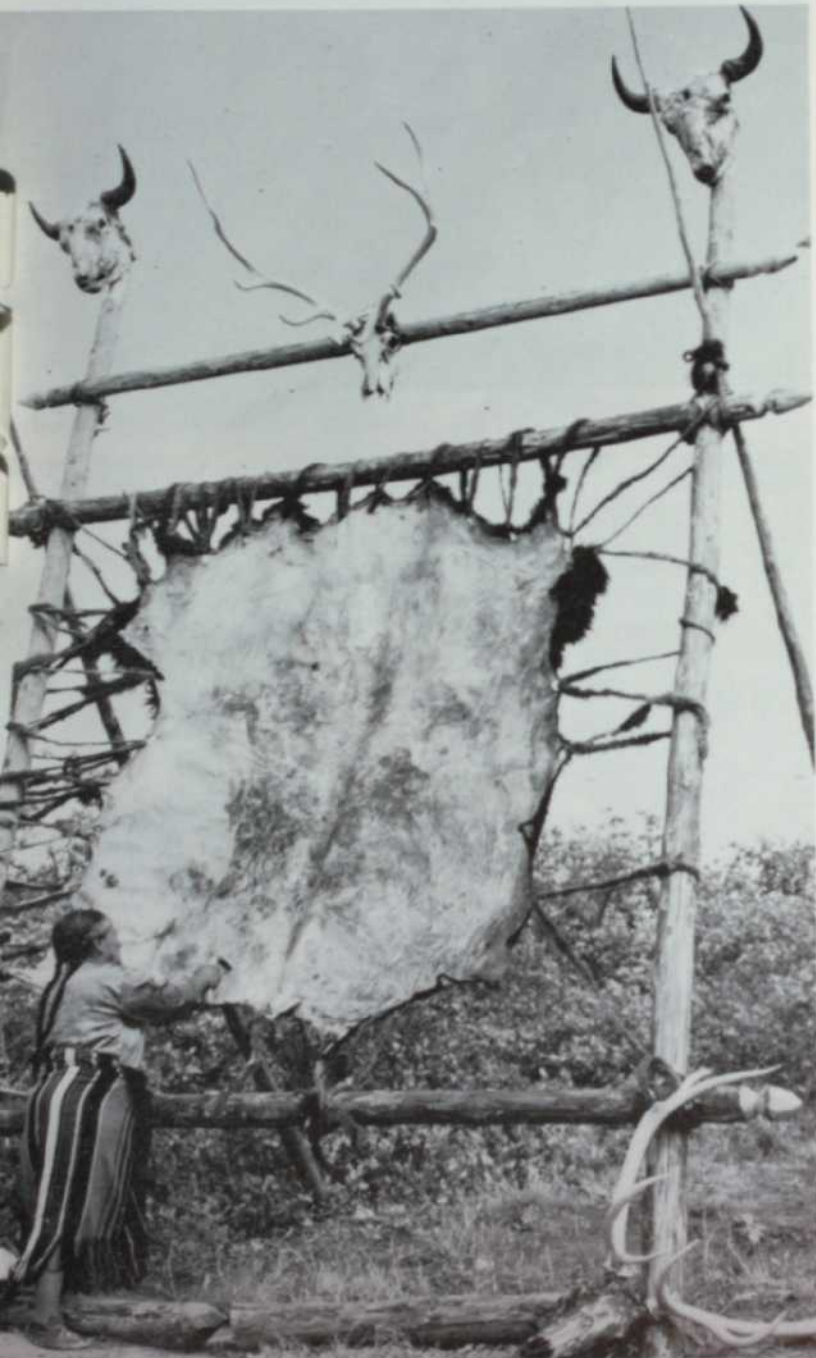
The story of Indian City is the story of a joint community and University of Oklahoma enterprise. Preliminary work toward the City was done about six years ago by the Institute of Community Development under the direction of Dr. Leonard M. Logan. Logan's office at the University prepared plans for development of the City, and the citizens of Anadarko underwrote the cost.

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Visitors to Indian City are impressed by the size of the buffalo hide stretched upon this huge pole frame for fleshing and curing processes.



Sacred objects of a Pawnee household are placed on an altar along a inside wall of the lodge, a large, sturdy structure covered with sod.

O.U. alumni were among the members of the original board of directors, and two are now on the governing body, Joe W. McBride, Jr., '51journ, and Carl West, '27bus. Wallace Kidd, '37journ, associated on the *Anadarko Daily News* with Joe McBride, Jr., and his father, Joe W. McBride, Sr., long-time member of the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents, has also played a significant part in the growth of this unusual undertaking. Kidd is now vice president and member of the executive board of the University of Oklahoma Association.

The Indian City project had its beginnings in 1954 when the citizens of Anadarko formed an organization aimed at "fostering and promoting the traditions, culture, way-of-life and heritage of the American Indian in a place where he might re-create his dance, his work, his play and his religion."

Townpeople donated money to start the project, a state charter was obtained and an option taken on the 160 acres of rolling land. The directors selected seven tribes—Caddo-Delaware, Cheyenne-Arapaho, Comanche, Fort Sill Apache, Kiowa-Apache, Kiowa and Wichita—to represent the many tribes which roamed the Anadarko area before and after the Five Civilized Tribes were removed to Oklahoma. Actual villages of these peoples were reproduced, grouped according to their tribal patterns. Both agricultural and nomadic tribes were depicted.

The construction of Indian dwellings had always followed definite patterns handed down from generation to generation. Since modern Indians rarely build or live in the traditional tribal habitations, no plans or specifications were available among the tribes. Much research was necessary on the part of University anthropologists who drew plans and accurate specifications for



This framework for an Apache wickiup, ready for its covering of yucca leaves or willows, is part of the permanent tribal exhibit.

the dwellings and guided the citizens' organization.

The citizen committee's aim to make the village authentic and to meet the approval of the Indians themselves created special problems even after specifications were completed. Much of the material originally available to the Indians could no longer be found in the Anadarko area.

George Moran, manager of the museum, who has supervised construction of all the dwellings, was faced with the problem of how to obtain "authentic" and non-commercial materials. For the framework of each Wichita grass house he needed many cedar and pine poles, each 45 feet long; for thatching, tons of swamp grass no longer growing in abundance in the area, and dozens of hides from which rawhide thongs for lashing could be cut.

Before the materials were assembled many state and federal agencies in Oklahoma and neighboring states were drawn into the project. Poles for the houses were obtained in Oklahoma and New Mexico, and two years were required to harvest the 10,000 bundles of grass from along Sugar Creek, north of Anadarko, for thatching the Wichita houses. Moran obtained 75 hides from longhorn cattle, buffalo and elk taken on federal game preserves where a limited number of animals are slaughtered annually as part of the herd control.

The City was built with Indian labor. A large Wichita grass house took six men working three months to complete.

The basic construction was finished and the City dedicated in 1955. Two Navajo hogans have been added this year, and an Osage bark house is planned. (The Plains Indians had contact

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A pole ladder is used by the Indian women to reach the drying racks several feet above the ground in the Wichita section of Indian City.



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Re-enacting homemaking tasks of their ancestors, one woman repairs a cradle board while her companion grinds corn with mortar and pestle.



with the Navajo tribes to the west and the Osage Indians of the forest areas to the east.)

Since dedication, nearly half a million people from all parts of the United States have visited this living museum.

Tours leave the main lodge every few minutes and the Indian guides' informal commentaries, based upon a manual prepared by the University, help visitors to understand customs, modes of hunting, crop raising and habitations of the plains people. Indian dances are performed daily during the summer at the council fire ring in the valley below the main lodge, or at the stomp grounds on the hill where guests may sit in the shade of brush arbors.

Visitors are encouraged to take their own photographs of the colorfully costumed dancers and guides and of the dances and ceremonies. Thus at this center where Indians are preserving their history, culture and folklore, the interested tourist is not only seeing something of the old Southwest but can take home photographic proof of an historic way of life.

A familiar sight on the early plains was the signal pole bearing votive emblems which protrudes from the smoke hole of a Pawnee earth house.