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Oklahoma's 2018 Most Endangered Historic Places Announced

Preservation Oklahoma, Inc. (POK) announced the 2018 list of Oklahoma's Most Endangered Historic Places at the Page Woodson Community Room, on Monday, May 7. Since 1993, Preservation Oklahoma has recognized historic sites across the state at risk of demolition or deterioration, raising awareness of the need to protect Oklahoma's historic resources. This exhibit is presented by Kirkpatrick Foundation and Cherokee Nation. While inclusion on the list does not guarantee protection or funding, it can be a key component in mobilizing support for the preservation of historic sites.

"We hope to raise awareness about the historic sites and preservation issues addressed in this list, which has historically been a powerful mechanism for saving significant buildings and structures," says Cayla Lewis, Executive Director. "This year, we are also sharing success stories through this list, as a way to showcase the preservation efforts made by many across the state. We hope that the sites on this list will have a positive impact from inclusion."

This list was selected by a group of preservation professionals from nominations submitted by the public. An exhibit of the 2018 List will travel to numerous locations across the state to continue the discussion about the need to preserve these historic buildings. The Kirkpatrick Foundation and the Cherokee Nation generously funded the event and traveling exhibit.

The 2018 List of Oklahoma's Most Endangered Historic Places are:

Edwards Store, Red Oak: Edwards Store, established in 1850, is one of the few remaining original structures that were stage stops on the Butterfield Overland mail and stage line from St. Louis to San Francisco from 1858 to 1861. Stage passengers were served meals at this location. Thomas Edwards established the trading post on the Fort Smith-Boggy Depot Road, and it later became the original post office and site of the town of Red Oak. The structure is of "dog trot" design typical of the 19th Century and built from hewn logs. Edwards Store is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Edwards Store was on the Most Endangered Places list in 2013.

Drown Family Farm, Baum: This property provides a unique look at early settlement life in Oklahoma, during the period of Indian Territory, before statehood and after and has

been in the Drown Family since 1939, located in the unincorporated community of Baum in Carter County. The early history of the property is centered on notable Chickasaw citizen, John Thomas, who was believed to have received the property as his allotment for being a Chickasaw citizen. This area that became Oklahoma was a part of the French Empire between 1682 and 1763 and again in 1800. The United States acquired the territory in 1803 as part of the Louisiana Purchase, and many of the structures on this property date between the periods of 1820 and 1840. The property has been vacant for the past 15 years and nature has begun reclaiming the grounds and structures. The impact to the community is to preserve a piece of early history that not only affects Oklahoma but also the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations and the United States.

Esslinger Home, Broken Arrow: Home of J. Houston and Dora Esslinger, this home was built in 1911 on the western edge of the new Haskell State School of Agriculture campus. W.R. Sullivan, who owned a local brick company, handpicked bricks for this house. Esslinger was the first president of the college. In 1916, The President's home served as a dorm for about 30 girls as well as the president and his family. This house resides on College Street, originally named for the college and is now the only remaining property related to the school. Community leaders hope that with the inclusion of this list, they can build community support and preserve their heritage.

Haskell County Courthouse, Stigler: The Haskell County Courthouse was built in the Art Deco style in Stigler, Oklahoma. It is currently the hub for local county government but has lost its original majesty and may be subject to closure due to its outdated heating and cooling system. This structure also has historical significance for its controversial move of the Ten Commandments monument, originally on the lawn of the courthouse but was thought to conflict with Separation of Church and State, so was moved 600 feet east to private property.

Haskell County Courthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

Founders National Bank, Oklahoma City: The Founders Bank building is one of Oklahoma City's best examples of mid-century modern architecture, and it's the only known design of the architect and former Bruce Goff student, Bob Bowlby, in the area. Although the building was expanded in the 1990s, it remains a beloved local icon and an incredibly fresh design today.

The Bank of America that was a long-term tenant in the former Founders National Bank building moved out of the space in 2017, and the property was listed for sale that October. The structure sits in the middle of a large undeveloped lot and, the fear is that a developer will buy the building and demolish it in favor of new development.

WestHope, Tulsa: Westhope is one of only three Frank Lloyd Wright designed buildings in Oklahoma. Built in 1929 for his cousin, Richard Lloyd Jones, Westhope is larger than most Frank Lloyd Wright designed houses, containing over 8,000 square feet of floor

space. WestHope was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. WestHope was also on the Most Endangered Places list in 2014.

Route 66 Signs, Statewide: Route 66, the Mother Road, has many historic structures along its nearly 375-mile route across Oklahoma. Tourists from all over the United States and beyond travel along Route 66 hoping to catch a glimpse of yesteryear and feed their nostalgic dreams of simpler times. Many Route 66 signs are well cared for by thoughtful owners, but so many others are being neglected or are poorly maintained by owners who may not realize the joy they bring to passing motorists. Route 66 structures and sites have been on our Most Endangered Places lists multiple times.

19th-Century Military Sites, Statewide: Oklahoma was home to a wide variety of 19th-century military sites, from early frontier forts to Civil War battlefields to late 19th-century cavalry outposts. These sites can provide valuable information about life in the military that is not otherwise captured in historical records. Military sites have long been the targets of metal detector hobbyists, who have taken a massive toll on the archaeological integrity of sites by removing artifacts from their original context, thus compromising our ability to reconstruct the sites and learn about the activities that created them. By contrast, controlled archaeological investigations at sites such as Fort Gibson, Fort Towson, and Honey Springs Battlefield have provided valuable information about daily life at these sites.

Schools, Statewide:

900 N Klein , Oklahoma City: In 2017, the Oklahoma City Public School Board voted to designate this building, formerly the administration building, as surplus property. This 97-year-old building in the core of Oklahoma City had served as the district's administrative offices since 1955. This building currently had major mechanical and structural issues and as in disrepair. Before it became the administration building, its roots begin as Roosevelt Junior High.

Saved: Page Woodson, Oklahoma City: Page Woodson serves as a success story for redevelopment and is now home to affordable housing and apartments. Page Woodson, former Douglass High School, was purchased in 2013 by a development group led by Ron and Jason Bradshaw, after being vacant for 20 years. The Bradshaws garnered community support, working closely with the JFK neighborhood where the building is located in Oklahoma City. Page Woodson was originally Lowell School in 1910, an all-white school, before turning into Douglass High School, an all-black school, in 1934.

Theatres, Statewide:

Riverside Studio, Tulsa: Riverside Studio in Tulsa, also known as Tulsa Spotlight Club or Spotlight Theatre was built in 1928, designed by architect Bruce Goff in the Art Deco International Styles. The Riverside Studio was listed in the National Register for Historic Places in 2001 and was included in the Most Endangered Places list in 2015.

Ralston Opera House, Ralston: Ralston Opera House was built in 1902 out of native sandstone by A.M. Harry. Ralston is home to just over 300 people and 16 miles from Pawnee. It was once the home of a hardware store, as well as the opera house on the second floor. Ralston Opera House was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. It is currently in disrepair and its future uncertain.

Castle Theatre, Pryor: Construction of the Castle Theatre was started in the fall of 1941. The building was to be a 1000 seat theater, made of Mayes County native stone and designed to resemble a castle. The building withstood the damage of the destructive Pryor Tornado of April 27th, 1942. In May 1958 the building was remodeled and donated to the City of Pryor. For almost 60 years, the facility was used for proms, school & family reunions, weddings, and teen recreational activities. In 2016, the theatre suffered major leak damage and had an uncertain future.

Saved: Tower Theatre, Oklahoma City: Tower Theatre opened in 1937 and is one of Oklahoma City's last original movie houses, with an auditorium and its neon marquee shining over Uptown 23rd Street district in Oklahoma City. Tower Theatre was an active theatre up until 1989. Marty and Mike Dillon who began renovations purchased the building in 2005. In 2014, Oklahoma City development group Pivot Project stepped in to complete the project. In 2017, Tower Theatre returned as a live music and event venue.

About Preservation Oklahoma, Inc.:

Preservation Oklahoma, Incorporated, is the state's only private, nonprofit membership organization that is dedicated to promoting, supporting, and coordinating historic preservation activities throughout the state. Preservation Oklahoma's mission is to promote preservation statewide. Founded in 1992, Preservation Oklahoma is a Statewide Partner with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and works on joint projects with the Oklahoma Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

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