

Tonkawa



Wheatheart
of Oklahoma

Visitors Guide

Published by the Tonkawa Chamber
of Commerce



Tonkawa: The Little Town with a BIG Heart!

A unique past, an intriguing present and an exciting future - that's Tonkawa! Native Americans, hardy pioneers, visionary educators, legendary oilmen, German prisoners of war and creative citizens have all left their marks on this city on the Salt Fork River.

Guided into town by the 25 foot lighted wheatheart on top of the Farmers Coop, you'll enter the historic downtown district. The picturesque Heart in the Park Labyrinth with its timeline of Tonkawa history and the Grand Heart Walk of art panels surrounded by personalized pavers are the latest additions to Centennial Park at Sixth Street and Grand Avenue, downtown Tonkawa. A number of historical monuments and three museums - the McCarter Museum of Tonkawa History, the Tonkawa Tribal Museum and the A.D. Buck History and Welcome Center - give glimpses of the history of the town and surrounding areas.

Tonkawa (the word translates as "they all stay together") takes its name from the Tonkawa Tribe, which was removed in 1885 to the area then known as Oakland Reserve and home of Nez Perce Chief Joseph and his band from 1879-1885. The town itself was settled by pioneers making the Cherokee Outlet Land Run of 1893 and was incorporated in 1894. Because of abundant wheat production in the area, Tonkawa styles itself "Wheatheart of Oklahoma."

The town entered the "Roaring Twenties" with the discovery of oil in the Tonkawa (Three Sands) Field in 1929. Briefly known as "The Billion Dollar Spot," Tonkawa's population swelled to 10,000 and several beautiful homes and churches built during this time still stand in the city. German prisoners of war were housed in a POW camp during World War II, and the site, now occupied by an industrial park, is identified by a stone marker engraved with a map of the original compound.

Northern Oklahoma College, established in 1901 as University Preparatory School, is the home of the Eleanor Hays Art Gallery, which hosts outstanding exhibits by Oklahoma artists throughout the academic year, and of the A.D. Buck History and Welcome Center. Its landscaped grounds, affiliated with the state botanical garden system, delight the eye with individual memorial gardens and sculptures. Numerous cultural events are open to the public.

Group tours are available, including live vignettes, entertainment, performing arts, dining at an historical site and more. Tours may be tailored for any time frame. Contact the Tonkawa Chamber of Commerce, 580.628.2220 or go to www.tonkawachamber.org for more information to make your visit to Tonkawa a memorable experience.

Santa Fe Depot

The Santa Fe Depot was built in 1899 as a 24' X 80' standard depot. The freight room addition on the north end was built in 1922 and the waiting room addition on the south end was completed in 1946. This local landmark was threatened by deterioration and, in 2008, was placed on the Most Endangered Historical Places List by Preservation Oklahoma.

The Tonkawa Santa Fe Depot Renovation Project was started by the Tonkawa Historical Society to preserve the old depot, located in the heart of Tonkawa. The depot is surrounded by the Centennial Park Gazebo, the Heart in the Park Labyrinth and the McCarter Museum.



Ken Crowder Photo



The committee has replaced the roof of the building and the outside has received a fresh coat of Colonial Yellow Paint - the original color of the Santa Fe Depot. Inside renovation has recently been completed. A caboose has also been moved in and restored to enhance the area, along with landscaping.

The committee's mission is to make the depot an attraction to our community and to continue the revitalization of downtown Tonkawa.

For additional tour information or to plan your next event at the Depot, contact the Tonkawa Historical Society, P.O. Box 27, Tonkawa, OK 74653, (580)628-2712



Northern Oklahoma College

Northern Oklahoma College, located at 1220 East Grand Avenue, stands ready to welcome visitors to its historic Tonkawa campus, established in 1901. Currently ranked in the top 150 public two-year institutions in the nation and the only one in Oklahoma selected by the Aspen Institute for Community College Excellence eligibility, Northern is more than a college—it is a cultural experience.

Tour the A.D. Buck History and Welcome Center at East North Avenue and Pine Street for an introduction to the college, including memorabilia telling NOC's story from its beginnings as a preparatory high school for the University of Oklahoma to the present. Hours are 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday when classes are in session, or call 580.628.6292 or 580.628.6789 for an appointment.

Stroll the beautiful landscaped campus grounds, affiliated with the Oklahoma Botanical Garden and Arboretum Statewide System, and enjoy the several memorial gardens. Metal sculptures and larger than life size statues add interest to the tree-shaded grounds. Strategically placed benches invite you to pause and enjoy the architecture of the buildings, the oldest of which predate statehood. Tune your radio to KAYE-FM 90.7, the student-operated station, to hear the latest hits.

Relax with a cool drink in the shade of the Heilmann Gazebo in front of the Kinzer Performing Arts Center (KPAC), one of the most impressive performing arts facilities in north central Oklahoma. The KPAC is home to the world-traveling NOC Roustabouts musical show troupe and the venue for numerous cultural events during the fall and spring semesters, including world-renowned artists as well as first-class student concerts, theatrical productions and art exhibits. The Redbud Jazz Festival celebrates the spring season; the annual Gala features guest artists from New York City.

In addition to housing Northern's Nursing program, which has been cited as a model school by the Oklahoma Board of Nursing, the Renfro Building provides a Community Center where civic organizations can host special events. The Renfro Lectureship Series sponsors renowned guest lecturers biannually to delight community audiences. Area youth enjoy athletic camps, Arts Adventure fine arts camps and leadership seminars in the summer.

The Wellness Center includes a weight room, indoor walking/jogging track and access to the indoor junior Olympic-size swimming pool. Community enrichment classes (no grade, no credit) include the Fitness program, in which area residents can use the Wellness Center facilities for a modest fee.

Dr. Cheryl Evans, the first female president in more than 100 years of the college's existence, heads Northern's three campuses: Tonkawa, Enid and the NOC/OSU Gateway Program at Stillwater. Friendly atmosphere, small classes, quality education and affordable cost are among the reasons students make Northern their Number One Choice. Enrollees ranging from high school age to senior citizens may work toward associate in arts, science and applied science degrees in numerous fields. Students have opportunities to discover and improve special interests and abilities and to develop the leadership and social interactive skills so necessary for success in life.

More information about Northern is available by calling 580.628.6200, visiting the college website with social media links at www.noc.edu or coming to the campus. Current postings of college events and schedules are always available on the college website calendar.



**Good Vibrations Car Show
August 29, 2015
Car/Truck/Motorcycle Show and Swap Meet**



Fourth of July



Downtown Trick or Treat Festival



**Olde Tyme Christmas Celebration
December 3, 2015**



Ken Crowder photo

Heart in the Park Labyrinth

Walk the paths of the internationally renowned Heart in the Park labyrinth from the cast-iron pausing stone at the entrance to the red heart-shaped goal and back to touch the wheat on the stone, leaving a bit of yourself with the Heart in the Park. Labyrinth walking can quiet the mind, slow the heart rate and promote stress relief and relaxation.

Located in Centennial Park at Sixth Street and Grand Avenue in the historic district of downtown Tonkawa, the heart-shaped labyrinth is outlined by a walking path bordered by a timeline of 100 engraved pavers recording Tonkawa's history from 1879 to 2007. The 45-foot diameter labyrinth, the only one of its kind in the world, is wheel chair accessible and is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at no charge. Picnic tables, park benches and a concrete-floored pavilion invite visitors to relax and enjoy the beautiful landscaped setting.

Heart in the Park is also a community place for performances, concerts, renewal of wedding vows, memorial services, temporary art displays, holiday observances and annual Earth Day activities, in addition to monthly Full Moon Walks. During the winter holiday season, the border is outlined in lights.

Constructed as Tonkawa's Oklahoma Centennial Project, the labyrinth was dedicated in October 2007. An entry plaza of original Tonkawa street brick features an engraved granite slab in the shape of the state. The four colors of the labyrinth paving stones symbolize the nearby Salt Fork River (blue), oil industry (charcoal), agriculture (gold) and the people of the area (brick red).

The iron pausing stone at the beginning of the seven-circuit path incorporates the Tonkawa Wheatheart logo and was cast by the Tonkawa Foundry. The golden limestone crossover at midpoint above the heart-shaped goal incorporates river flint from the early day Yellow Bull crossing on the Salt Ford. Brick plaques spell out the word Tonkawa and the phrases "They All Stay Together" (a translation of the Waco Indian name for the Tonkawa Tribe) and "Wheatheart of Oklahoma," the town motto.

Adjacent to the labyrinth, the Grand Heart Walk of colorful art panels depicts seven facets of area heritage: river, Northern Oklahoma College flame of education, oil derrick, Tonkawa Tribe water bird, farm, Tonkawa Schools Buccaneer and Tonkawa City Wheatheart. The panels are surrounded by engraved personalized pavers commemorating individuals, businesses and organizations whose contributions made the Centennial Project possible.

For many, walking the labyrinth is meditative and calming; others enjoy it purely for fun and exercise. While the path always leads to the center, its twists and turns are reminders of life's surprises and challenges.

Ken Crowder Photo



McCarter Museum

The McCarter Museum is the Tonkawa Historical Society Museum. Founded in 1972 by a small group of interested citizens, the Historical Society has, over the years, been responsible for the Chief Joseph Marker on Highway 60 east of Tonkawa, the Centennial Park, the Prisoner of War Camp Marker, the Heart in the Park labyrinth and the renovation of the Santa Fe Depot.

The museum is located at 220 East Grand Avenue in downtown Tonkawa. The original building was bought with substantial help from the McCarter family and was opened in 1997. A second, adjacent building was purchased in 2011 and has allowed for expansion of the museum. Displays are arranged in alcoves by themes such as Military, Three Sands, Religion, Public Schools, Tonkawa Tribe, and Camp Tonkawa. Admission is free and donations are accepted. Hours vary through the year and are posted on the door of the museum. Other hours are possible by appointment and phone numbers of those who may be available to help with tours are posted on the door.



Community Mural— “Listening Back, Dreaming Forward: The Rhythms of Tonkawa”

The 125-foot outdoor mural, located at the corner of Grand Avenue and Main Street, honors Tonkawa’s unique cultural history and dreams of things to come. The town was selected by Mid-America Arts Alliance (MAAA) from five candidates throughout the state as the site for the project, completed in June 2010. More than 100 local volunteers teamed with lead artist Dave Loewenstein and assistants Amber Hansen and Nicholas Ward from MAAA to research, design and help paint this sprawling visual poem representing the past, present and future goals of the community.

The five interrelated panels depict:

- 1) The delivery by airplane of newspapers highlighting events from Tonkawa’s history. A story told by Max Carr, who delivered newspapers from his airplane to rural Kay County farms, inspired the theme of this panel. Farms, oil fields and rivers can be seen.
- 2) Railroad Cisco of the Tonkawa Tribe describing to a group of students the tribe’s journey from Texas to Oklahoma in the 1880s and the Land Run that followed in 1893. Cisco was born on the train trip during the relocation.
- 3) A symbolic scene showing a representative group of Tonkawas playing a traditional drum nestled within giant hands cupped in the shape of a heart. The heart radiates waves of sound, memory and hopes back through history and forward into the future.
- 4) A group of local people around a table repairing, painting and reimagining the downtown. The Santa Fe depot and train caboose, the grain elevator and Heart in the Park labyrinth are featured.
- 5) A whimsical representation of Tonkawa’s creative spirit symbolized by figures setting the moon and stars (a nod to the downtown Christmas decorations) into a twilight sky. An outdoor movie projects the silhouette of a Buccaneer (Tonkawa High School mascot) on the screen behind them.



Dave Loewenstein photo

Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma

The Tonkawa were removed from Fort Griffin, Texas in October, 1884. They were transported by railroad from a station in Cisco, Texas, to a temporary stop at the Sac-Fox Agency near Stroud, Oklahoma. The entire Tribe wintered at the Sac-Fox Agency until spring, then traveled the last 100 miles by wagon fording many rain swelled river and axle deep mud caused by severe spring rains. They reached the Ponca Agency on June 29th and then finally to "Oakland" on June 30th, 1885. This was the Tonkawa "Trial of Tears". The Tribe has scheduled the date of its annual Pow-Wow to coincide with this historic date, the last full weekend in June.

The Tonkawa tribal enrollment is 618 with the Tribal headquarters situated on the west bank of the Chikaskia River, about 2.5 miles southeast of Tonkawa.

The tribe operates three Class II/III gaming facilities. The Tonkawa Casino - East is located on the Tonkawa Tribal Reserve, Tonkawa Casino - West is at the Interstate 35 and Highway 60 intersection and the native Lights Casino is located at Chilocco on north Highway 77. There is a tribal museum located at the Henry L. Allen Community Center. Call 580.628.2561 for additional information.



Parks/Recreation

Blinn Park—picnic areas, Splash Pad, playground, walking track, baseball, softball, soccer, sand volleyball, basketball

Centennial Park—picnic areas, gazebo

City Pool and Skate Park

Family Park

Northern Oklahoma College

Ray See Park—picnic area, playground

Points of Interest

Historical Register:

Masonic Lodge

Mahoney House

Monuments:

Chief Joseph—On south side of Highway 60, 0.8 miles north of Highway 177

Nez Perce Burial Ground— One mile south of Highway 60 on Allen Drive

Indian Burial Ground and Buck Bill Monument— 2 miles south of Highway 60 on Allen Drive

Jim H. Stone Horse Monument— south and east of Tonkawa on Highway 77



Ken Crowder Photo

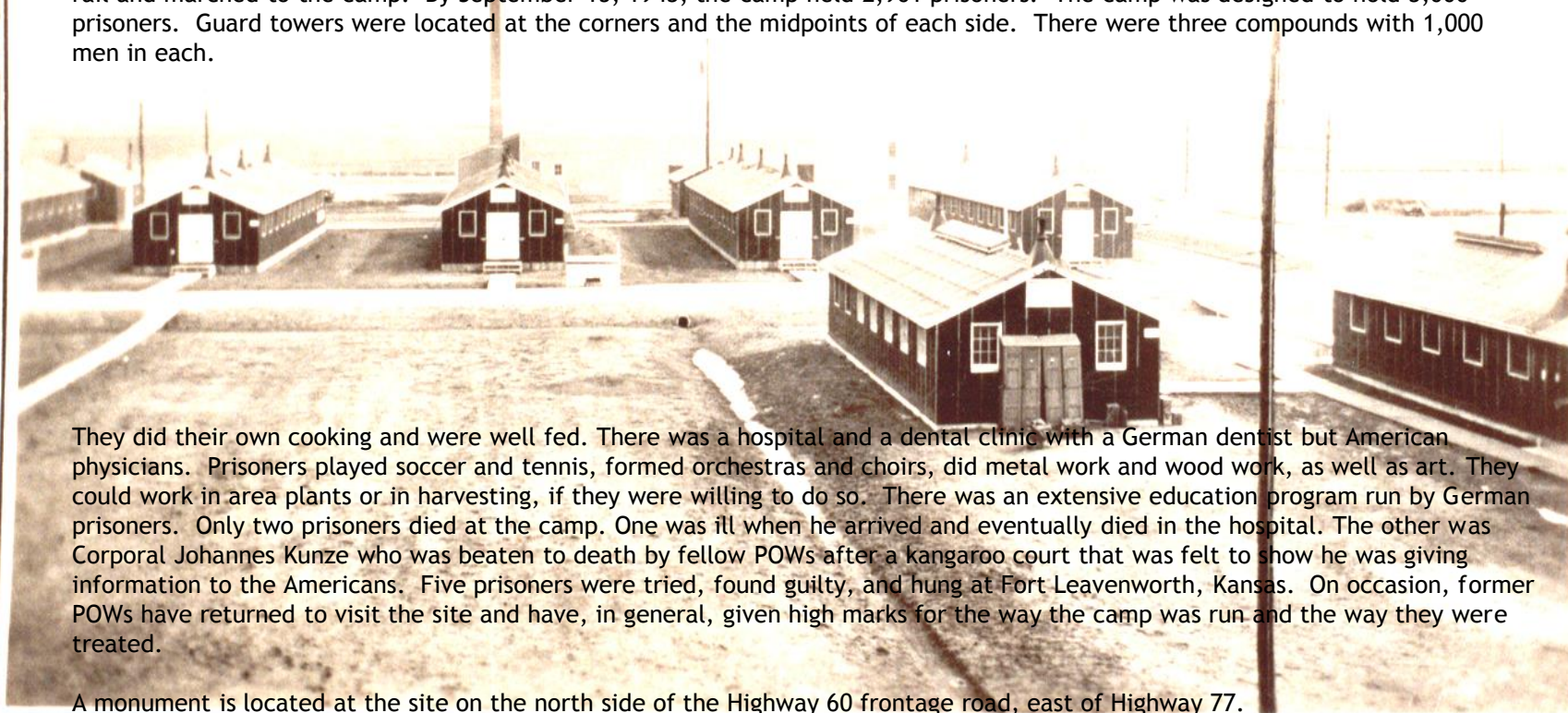
Salt Fork River Valley Farms & Ranches

The Big V Ranch, Silvertop Farm & Vineyards, the 101 Ranch Historical Site and Blubaugh Angus Ranch provide facility rentals, tours and farm and ranch products. The tours focus on the historical and agricultural evolution of the area. In 2010, Silvertop Farm was named the Outstanding Agritourism Attraction by the Oklahoma Department of Tourism. For information, call 580.304.4599

CAMP TONKAWA: German Prisoner of War Camp

In 1941, with the possibility of war seeming more and more likely, plans were made for the construction of prisoner of war camps. Alva, McAlester and El Reno had the first base camps built but, it became rapidly apparent that, many more would be needed. In April of 1942, a team of Corps of Engineers investigators selected a site on the north side of Tonkawa for a camp. It had suitable topography and soil, had rail service, a major highway, water, electric and sewer services available.

A section of land was purchased at an average price of \$106 per acre. By October, contracts had been let on the \$1.5 million project. It was said that every farmer in the county who could hammer a nail or saw a board was utilized in the construction. The camp had about 600 U.S. personnel and about 32 officers. On August 30, 1943, the first 1000 German prisoners were delivered by rail and marched to the camp. By September 15, 1943, the camp held 2,961 prisoners. The camp was designed to hold 3,000 prisoners. Guard towers were located at the corners and the midpoints of each side. There were three compounds with 1,000 men in each.



They did their own cooking and were well fed. There was a hospital and a dental clinic with a German dentist but American physicians. Prisoners played soccer and tennis, formed orchestras and choirs, did metal work and wood work, as well as art. They could work in area plants or in harvesting, if they were willing to do so. There was an extensive education program run by German prisoners. Only two prisoners died at the camp. One was ill when he arrived and eventually died in the hospital. The other was Corporal Johannes Kunze who was beaten to death by fellow POWs after a kangaroo court that was felt to show he was giving information to the Americans. Five prisoners were tried, found guilty, and hung at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. On occasion, former POWs have returned to visit the site and have, in general, given high marks for the way the camp was run and the way they were treated.

A monument is located at the site on the north side of the Highway 60 frontage road, east of Highway 77.

Retail/Services

Casey's General Store—convenience store 580.628.2828

Creative Photography 580.628.2025

Dollar General—discount store 580.628.3625

Evening Star Flowers and Gifts—antiques, florist, home decor, Bibles, children's clothing and toys 580.628-2050

Frames and Things—pottery, custom framing, art, jewelry 580.628.3400

Hardware Plus—hardware, paint, gifts, gardening supplies 580.823.4171

Jiffy Trip—convenience store 580.628.5248

Ken Crowder Photography 580.628.3400

Loves Country Store—travel stop 580.628.5335

Maverick Lanes—bowling 580.716.7144

Main Street Liquor 580.628.2646

Northern Oklahoma College Bookstore—apparel, snacks, stationary, books, technology, office supplies 580.628.6771

Owen Auto Supply—NAPA parts, tools 580.628.5366

Pilot/Flying J - travel stop 580.628.2934

Hammerheads —convenience store 580.628.3680

Tonkawa Indian Casino—2 casinos 580.628.2624

Tonkawa News—office supplies 580.628.2532

Venture Foods—grocery 580.628.2534

Lodging

Grand Avenue Executive Suites 580.445.1989

Hideaway RV Park 580.628.2112

Pecan Creek Lodge and RV Park 580.628.2227

Western Inn 580.628.2577

Bar/Restaurant/Dining

Alewa Deli—sandwiches, soups, salads, Mexican menu 580.628.3355

Birdlegs Bar 580.863.1106

Casey's General Store—pizza and sandwiches 580.628.2828

Chester's—chicken 580.628.2496

Copper Pot Catering/Northern Management Services—cafeteria and special event catering 580.628.2244

Hideaway Bar 580.628.2112

Lunch 'N Munch—grill, salads 580.628.3747

Mary's Grill—grill, salads, breakfast, daily specials 580.823.1027

Ochoa's Mexican Restaurant—Mexican 580.628.2840

Pilot—Taco Bell/Cinnabon/PJ's Fresh Market 580.628.2934

Simple Simon's Pizza—pizza, sandwiches, salads, wings 580.628.5381

Sonic Drive-In—grill, salads, ice cream 580.628.2535

Subway—sandwiches, salads 580.628.2496

TS Fork Restaurant—fine dining, entertainment, by reservation 800.928.1840

Tonkawa Donuts—donuts and other breakfast sandwiches 580.628.2923

Tonkawa Travel Plaza—Austin Blues BBQ and Hunt Brothers Pizza 580.628.2005

Churches

First Baptist Church

- North Main and East North Avenue, 580.628.2352
- Nathan Copeland, Pastor

First Assembly of God

- 206 North 2nd, 580.628.2663
- Kelly Coffey, Pastor

First Presbyterian Church

- South 4th and NOC Drive, 580.628.3943
- Reverend Phil Erwin, Pastor

Church of Christ

- East North Avenue and North Public, 580.628.5094
- Dr. Glenn Cope, Minister

St. Joseph Catholic Church

- 320 West North Avenue, 580.628.2416
- Reverend Benjamin Lwin, Pastor

Christian Life Church

- 115 West Grand, 580.628.2213
- Derrick Marshall, Pastor

Faith Baptist Church

- Fort Oakland
- Bill Vyers, Pastor

Tonkawa Bible Church

- 708 East Grand, 580.628.2478
- Stuart Milligan, Interim Pastor

First United Methodist Church

- East Grand and 4th Street, 580.628.2309
- Reverend Dr. Janice Sharp, Pastor

Tonkawa, Oklahoma City Map



indicates a gap in the actual distance.

Compliments of
**Tonkawa
Chamber of Commerce**
102 East Grand
580-628-2220
Tonkawa, OK 74653

