

Oklahoma Chapter – Butterfield National Historic Trail Association (OK-BNHTA)

Awareness and interest in the Indian Territory segment of the Butterfield Trail continues to grow. Read on for some exciting updates!

1958 Butterfield Centennial Covers Donated



John Frizzell's restored Concord stagecoach. Photo courtesy Oklahoma Historical Society

A prominent citizen of Red Oak, Oklahoma, recently donated a complete set of 1958 Butterfield Centennial postal covers to the Red Oak Library. Among stamp collectors, or philatelists, a “cover” is a stamped and addressed envelope or post card sent through the postal system to create a collectible item. Walter Squires acquired the set as a seven-year-old when the centennial celebration was underway. Squires also owns two additional sets belonging to his parents, Alfred and Edith Squires. Each includes covers from post offices along the entire route of a seven-state caravan recognizing the 100-year anniversary of the Butterfield Overland Mail.

The caravan traveled from Tipton, Missouri, to San Francisco along the Overland Mail route from September 16 to October 10, 1958, mirroring the timing of the Overland Mail stagecoach's inaugural journey. A bus, “U.S. Highway Post Office No. 1,” picked up mail at two

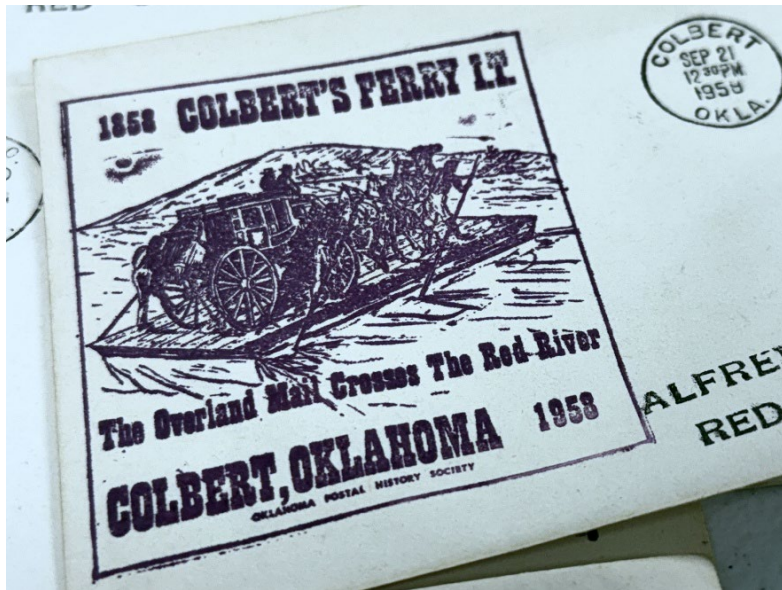
hundred post offices along the route and, along with Oklahoman John Frizzell's restored Concord stagecoach, led the convoy. Festivities greeted the entourage in communities along the way. The stagecoach was actually carried between towns by truck and semi-trailer and unloaded and hitched to a four-horse team for local parades.

In Oklahoma, Governor Raymond Gary proclaimed “Overland Mail Days” on September 19 and 20, the two days the first Butterfield stage spent in Indian Territory. The procession entered Oklahoma September 19 and made it to Durant on September 20, although its arrival there was delayed more than two hours thanks to mud and heavy traffic. The horses were exhausted and the coach had to be brought in on the trailer.

Along the route, postmasters applied special markings or “cachets” to outgoing mail placed on the caravan, and numerous post offices in Oklahoma created their own designs. Red Oak's was a side view of a stage coach, with four horses galloping toward the left of the envelope. Colbert's large cachet displayed a stage coach on a flat bottom ferry being poled across the river. Oklahoma towns on the caravan route were Spiro, Panama, Shady Point, Poteau, Wister, Fanshawe, Red Oak, Panola, Wilburton, Gowen, Hartshorne, Haileyville, Dow, Bache, Alderson, Krebs, McAlester, Savanna, Kiowa, Stringtown, Atoka, Tushka, Caney, Caddo, Durant, Calera and Colbert. A number of these were near, but not actually on, the original Overland Mail route.



Red Oak Cachet, 1958



Colbert Cachet, 1958

Choctaw Nation Tours Latimer County Butterfield Sites with KEDDO and Wilburton Chamber

By Hannah Royce, CEO, Wilburton Area Chamber of Commerce and Projects Director, KEDDO

On June 25, 2025, a group from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's Governmental Affairs team—led by Director Sara Jane Smallwood Cocke—joined regional planners for a full-day heritage tour across Latimer County, with a focus on the historic Butterfield Overland Mail route and its significance to Southeast Oklahoma.

The tour was organized and led by Oliver Skimbo, Regional Transportation Planner for the Kiamichi Economic Development District of

Oklahoma (KEDDO) and Projects Director for SERTPO (Southeastern Regional Transportation Planning Organization), and Hannah Royce, CEO of the Wilburton Area Chamber of Commerce and KEDDO Projects Director. With a focus on community-led heritage and transportation planning, Oliver designed the route to begin at Edwards Store, one of Oklahoma's oldest surviving commercial buildings and a notable Butterfield-era stop. From there, the group visited sites including Holloway's Station, Riddle's Station, and Mountain Station—each offering a lens into the layered history of Indigenous leadership, travel, and frontier development.



Choctaw Nation Tour Group at Edwards Store

Also included on the tour were the Degnen 21 Mine, a former majority-Black coal site shaped by Choctaw and immigrant labor, and the final resting place of Principal Chief Thompson McKinney, emphasizing the region's deep ties between governance, landscape, and legacy. The tour supports ongoing discussions about trail development, tribal-led interpretation, and future heritage tourism—particularly as the region looks toward integrating historic corridors like the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail with regional projects like

the [True Grit Trail](#) and SERTPO's long-range planning framework. Please take a look at the [SERTPO website](#) and survey to help them shape the future of transportation in Southeast Oklahoma.

Resources shared during the tour included Denny Spradlin's song "[Along the Butterfield Trail](#)" (inspired by Susan Dragoo's book, *Finding the Butterfield: A Journey Through Time in Indian Territory*) and a video recorded with the late Earl Shero at Mountain Station. With strong support from local leaders and volunteers, this event served as both a celebration of place and a call to build new partnerships rooted in shared history.

<https://www.truegrittrail.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/632468585655434/permalink/1045326291036326/?mibextid=wwXIfr&rdid=yUuzsuOHetd7FKxu#>

<https://www.sertpo.org/>

Echoes of the Trail: Celebrating Butterfield History with Vintage Campers

By Tammy G. Parks, Choctaw Country Vintage Trailer Club

This year the Choctaw Country Vintage Trailer Club hit the trail—literally and figuratively—with two Butterfield-themed rallies that blended vintage trailers with rich, hands-on history. The group's spring and summer gatherings were full of community, camaraderie, and stories tied deeply to the historic Butterfield Overland Mail Route in LeFlore and Latimer counties.

In April, the club hosted *Echoes of the Butterfield Overland Mail Route: A Vintage Trailer Rally on the Trail* at Lake Wister State Park. Each campsite was assigned and provided a custom handmade sign representing a real Butterfield stage stop from Oklahoma, Arkansas, or Texas. It was a fun and visual way to connect with the places and people that once powered the westward mail delivery system.

"Sharing these signs with our campers was one of my favorite parts of rally prep," said rally host Tammy Parks. "It gave everyone a sense of place and purpose—and sparked a lot of great conversations about the original route."

The Butterfield spirit enlivened the weekend with creative touches like a camper-to-camper postcard delivery system, led by Jr. Mail Carrier, Carson, age 8, who took his job seriously and kept the mail moving in costume all weekend. A mailbox decorating contest and horseshoe tournament featured fun historical twists—like the "Midnight Run" blindfold toss, and the "Stagecoach Showdown" using authentic mule shoes. Winners received

certificates complete with tongue-in-cheek Butterfield quotes and references.

On Friday, attendees hit the road for a special visit to the historic Edwards-Hardaway Cabin and Store near Red Oak—the only standing Butterfield structure left in Indian Territory. They were welcomed by June Chubbuck, Shannon Foster, and other volunteers/family members, who shared stories and background about the site's legacy. Guests enjoyed period folk music from the Oklahoma-based group, *Loco Focos*, a tour of the cabin and grounds, and lunch from Dawn's in Red Oak, served outdoors on the cabin grounds to simulate a classic Butterfield trail meal stop. Sitting beneath the same trees where passengers once



Locos Focos at Edwards Store

rested and refueled gave everyone a unique perspective on the hardships and rhythm of stagecoach travel.

Back at camp Saturday night, author and historian Dr. Bob Crossman presented a captivating talk, sharing stories pulled from original letters, journals, and newspaper accounts. He also brought along authentic Butterfield mail artifacts—including envelopes and a rare newspaper article describing the route’s inaugural journey. It was truly a highlight of the weekend. “Dr. Crossman didn’t just talk about history—he made us feel like we were riding that stagecoach right along with the passengers,” said one camper. “You could almost hear the wheels creaking and feel the dust in your teeth.”

In June, it was back to the trail for *An Outlaw’s Retreat: A Vintage Trailer Gathering* at Robbers Cave State Park. With 22 trailers in attendance, the weekend balanced Butterfield history with the legendary outlaw stories of the region. On Friday morning, the group revisited the Edwards Store for a second private tour—because once is never enough.

In addition to learning about the Butterfield stop itself and its role in early frontier life, June Chubbuck shared the story of a notable visitor to the Edwards Store: William Woods Averell, a young U.S. Army officer who traveled the route near the cabin and later chronicled his journey in *Ten Years in the Saddle: The Memoir of William Woods Averell, 1851–1862*. That evening, attendees gathered in the President’s Dining Room at Eastern Oklahoma State College in Wilburton for a special presentation by Oklahoma author and historian Susan Dragoo. She expanded on Averell’s account, highlighting his vivid descriptions of the region and the colorful characters he encountered. His story added a rich, personal layer to the site’s significance—and tied in perfectly with the Outlaw’s Retreat theme, as Averell would go on to play a major role in Civil War operations and frontier military life. Susan also detailed her research and travels along the Butterfield Route, drawn from her book *Finding the Butterfield: A Journey Through Time in Indian Territory*.

“This was the most meaningful rally I’ve ever attended,” said a camper from Tulsa. “I’ve traveled the Butterfield route in pieces before, but this weekend helped me connect the dots in a new and personal way.”

Saturday brought more fun: a private guided hike to Robbers Cave led by a park interpreter, the Relics and Rods car show in downtown Wilburton, a vintage trailer crawl, and a festive smash burger potluck back at camp. That evening, attendees found the perfect spot in the town of Wilburton for a big fireworks show—their way of lighting up the trail one more time.

The Choctaw Country Vintage Trailer Club was formed in 2023 and has quickly grown to nearly 250 members from across the region who share a passion for vintage travel trailers, Oklahoma’s scenic backroads, and the simple joy of camping in good company. Since forming, the club has hosted nine rallies, with its tenth planned for Fall 2025. Between the two Butterfield-themed events, the group welcomed 37 campers from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Missouri, and New Jersey—proof that the story of the Overland Mail Route still resonates far and wide.

As the trailers rolled on, so did the stories—echoing across campsites, trails, and historic stops. These rallies serve as a reminder that history isn’t just found in books—it’s in the people who gather to remember, celebrate, and keep it alive.

Archaeological Investigations at Butterfield Properties Completed

In March, the Oklahoma Archaeological Survey (OAS) complete the fifth of five non-invasive archaeological investigations on the Indian Territory segment of the Butterfield Overland Mail route. Their work was funded by a grant from the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Surveys were completed at Walker’s Station, Holloway’s Station, Nail’s Crossing, Boggy Depot and Colbert’s Ferry. Dr. Amanda Regnier and Dr. Scott Hammerstedt oversaw the work, which included high precision mapping of artifacts and features on the ground surface and various geophysical investigations in selected areas. Preliminary results show possible

confirmation of the location of the station house at Walker's and identification of the location of structures at Holloway's.



Scene from the historic Boggy Depot Cemetery

Recommended Reading

Just weeks after the last Butterfield stagecoach passed through Indian Territory, at the dawn of the Civil War, a young U.S. Army officer was sent on a secret mission to the Indian Territory with orders for Colonel William H. Emory to evacuate his troops to Kansas. In the process, Lieutenant William Woods Averell traveled 1,000 miles from Washington, D.C. by train, stagecoach and horseback, evading secessionist pursuers and enduring a grueling physical ordeal. Read about Averell's harrowing adventure in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, at

<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc2123780/>

We Want Your Feedback!

Are there topics you would like to see covered in more depth in the newsletter? Do you have information to share about the Butterfield in Oklahoma? Contact us at

oklabutterfield@gmail.com or the chapter leaders listed below:

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Resources

National Park Service site for Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail: <https://www.nps.gov/buov/>.

NPS also has an app that provides a very useful mapping function for the Butterfield. Go to the App Store, search for the NPS parks app and download to your phone!

Literature and other resources for the Oklahoma segment of the Butterfield Trail:

<https://susandragoo.com/butterfield-oklahoma/>.