

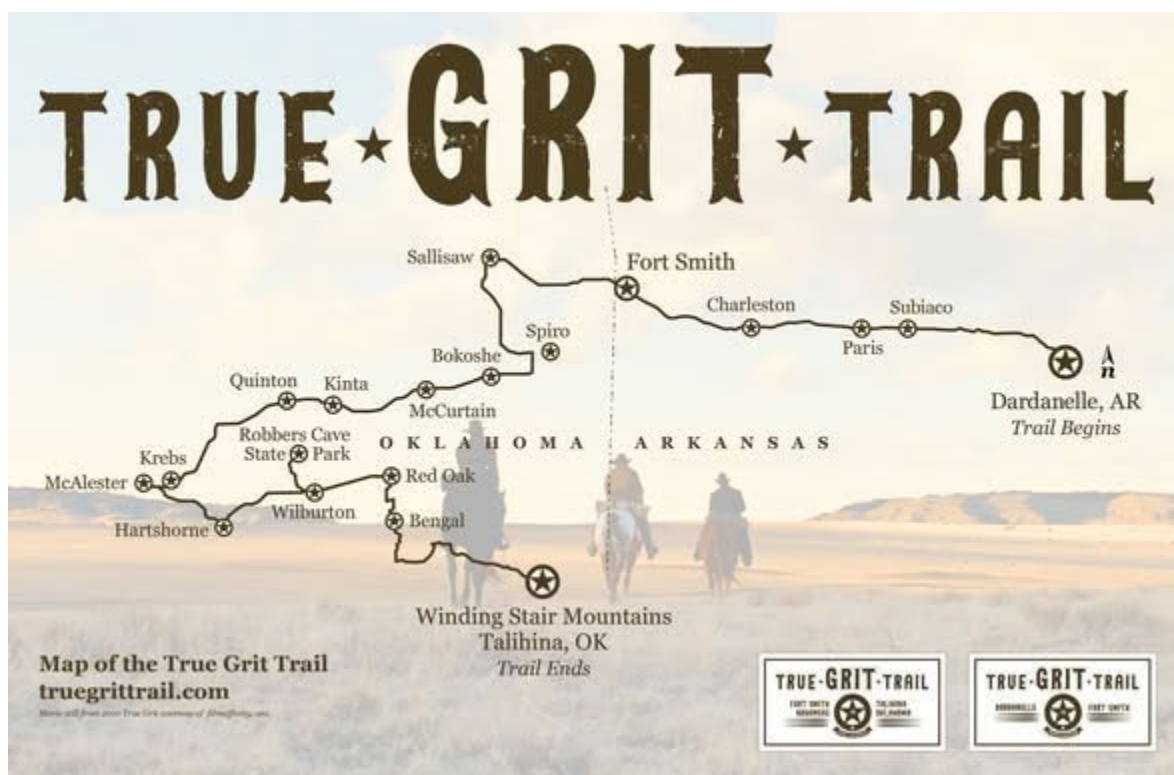
Oklahoma Chapter – Butterfield National Historic Trail Association (OK-BNHTA)

The Butterfield National Historic Trail association is rolling! Read below for the latest news!

Butterfield Represented at Bill Signing for True Grit Trail

Legislation signed by Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt in April has established the True Grit Trail in Oklahoma, creating a tourism corridor intersecting the Butterfield National Historic Trail in Indian Territory and providing new opportunities for synergy between the two trail promotion efforts. HB 1411, authored by Rep. Jim Grego, R-Wilburton, requires posting of signage on Oklahoma state highways to direct visitors to sites along the trail, reflecting locations in Oklahoma referenced in the 1968 novel by Charles Portis and major motion pictures in 1969 and 2010. The novel and movies take place in Arkansas and Indian Territory and a similar trail designation is already in place in Arkansas.

Trail organizer and promoter Michael Cathey of Indianola, Oklahoma, said, “We have been working for several years now for the official designation of the True Grit Trail in Oklahoma to link with our Arkansas friends in honoring Charles Portis' novel's characters’ (Mattie, Rooster & LaBouef) journey through western Arkansas and southeastern Oklahoma and to establish a new tourism and economic development route through the same. With the recent signing of the Oklahoma legislation we are excited that travelers will soon find themselves along the True Grit Trail.”



“I don't believe that it is happenstance that Charles Portis chose the route for his novel (Dardanelle, Arkansas to Talihina, Oklahoma) mirroring both the Trail of Tears and the Butterfield Trail,” added Cathey. “For the reader and movie viewer, even slight knowledge and awareness of these historic trails is the perfect setting for Mattie's redemption story to find the man who killed her father.”

“The True Grit Trail intersects with the Butterfield Trail at several points along both journeys in both Arkansas and Oklahoma. We look forward to our future work together along the trails!” said Cathey. Oklahoma communities located on both the Butterfield and True Grit Trails include Wilburton, Red Oak, and Spiro.

Butterfield representatives Susan Dragoo and June Chubbuck joined Cathey at the ceremonial signing of the bill in August. In addition to highway signage, the legislation also requires state agencies to collaborate to maintain information regarding the True Grit Trail on an online platform, such as maps, information on historical sites and historical context regarding the trail. For more information, see <https://www.truegrittrail.com/>



Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt signs a ceremonial copy of House Bill 1411, establishing the True Grit Trail in Oklahoma. Appearing left to right in the photo are: Rep. Jim Grego (Oklahoma House District 17), June Chubbuck (Edwards Store and Oklahoma Butterfield Trail), Monte Smith (Oklahoma Department of Transportation), Susan Dragoo (Oklahoma Butterfield Trail), Mike Cathey (True Grit Trail — Oklahoma), Zoe Reyes (Mattie Ross), Dr. Clarence Benes (Rooster Cogburn), Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, Oscar Quesada (J.J. McAlester), Leslee Quesada (Rebecca McAlester), Tom and Marilyn Shay (True Grit Trail — Arkansas), Joey and Lindsey Reyes (Mattie's parents), Sen. Warren Hamilton, (Oklahoma Senate District 7).

Second Annual Butterfield Conference and Annual Meeting Set

Our Second Annual Butterfield Conference and Annual Meeting has been set for November 5, 2026 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. on Zoom. Mark your calendars and watch for more details coming up soon!

Edwards Store Partners with Local Students

School is back in session and The Edwards Store, Inc. has announced a community partnership project with local students. Later this fall a crew of Eastern Oklahoma State College students will clear the west fence row and support the removal of trees that pose a danger to the cabin. This effort is also designed to protect the 1858 viewshed.

After the trees are cleared, students will assist artisan contractor William “Bill” Bailey with repairs to the roof damaged by an early spring storm. Bailey also will provide hands-on training in historical preservation construction techniques and together they will replicate the 1850s back porch roof fascia and ceiling. They will also restore the dogtrot cabin’s four gables. Students from the Red Oak public schools have been asked to research and design a plan for the historic interior of the cabin. The goal is to reflect the period when the passengers from the Overland Mail Company stage stopped there for a meal.

This effort is funded with matching grants from the Kilihoti Chapter (McAlester) Daughters of the American Revolution and the Oklahoma Rural Rehabilitation Corporation. Matching dollars come from donations made to the Edwards Store non-profit, for which organization leaders are tremendously grateful. Donations can be made at www.theedwardsstore.org.



All the recent work at the cabin has apparently caused a stir. The restless spirits are preparing for a haunting on the Butterfield Trail. Saturday, October 24 and Saturday, October 31, 2026 are the dates for a “Haunted Homestead” treasure hunt. During a guided jaunt through the shadowed woods from 6:00 pm–9:00 pm, visitors will search for items lost by mail road travelers, encountering their ghosts and other goblins on the quest for the missing cherished keepsakes. Follow the Edwards Store on Facebook for more details and join the fun.

Support the Trail

Thanks for supporting OK-BNHTA through your membership! We've now created an opportunity to make additional tax-deductible donations to support trail planning, promotion and preservation efforts. Use the link or the QR code below, and THANK YOU!

https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=BPTNYVU5KW9LC

If you are not a member, please join us! Go to

<https://www.butterfieldtrail.org/membership/>



Isaac Colbert's Place on Brushey



Stage Stand, Isaac Colbert's Place on Brushey, Photo by John Young Bryce, circa 1930. Courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society.

The Western History Collections at the University of Oklahoma contain records compiled by writers in the late 1930s for the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) Federal Writers Project. Among them are reports documenting stage stands, trails, and other historic sites. A stage stand and blacksmith shop pre-dating the Butterfield was reported in the Brushey community west of Blackburn's Station in present-day Pittsburg County, along the Fort Smith-Boggy Depot Road, which became the Butterfield route. The owner and operator

was Jim Colbert, called “Brushey Jim” to distinguish him from others of the same name in the Chickasaw Nation. His father, Isaac Colbert, had reportedly located on nearby Brushey Creek around 1842. As late as the 1930s, Isaac Colbert’s house was still standing. It was photographed about 1930 by John Young Bryce for the Oklahoma Historical Society and described by the WPA writer in 1938 as a double-log house in good condition, almost completely hidden by three immense shade trees in the yard.

Brushey Jim’s stage stand was located east of Isaac’s home and in 1938 its remnants consisted of a portion of a flag stone walk, an old well and an old rock chimney standing on the site of the first house made from the rocks of the original chimney. The flagstones and the chimney are still evident today, and the well is present although covered with pieces of an old car body.



Flagstone walk at Brushey Jim's, 2023



Old chimney at Brushey Jim's, 2023

Recommended Reading

Pick up a copy of Charles Portis’ novel True Grit at your local library or on Amazon. Even if you have seen the movie(s), it’s definitely worth a read. Here’s the Amazon link: <https://a.co/d/005Zplbx>

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 chapter leaders below:

Susan Dragoo, President, susan.dragoo@gmail.com, (405) 664-2253

Kim Hinson, Vice President, kahinson@choctawnation.com, (580) 380-6901

June Chubbuck, Secretary/Treasurer, june@sellsofpurple.net, (405) 535-2839

Resources

- Butterfield National Historic Trail Association: <https://www.butterfieldtrail.org/>
- National Park Service site for Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail: <https://www.nps.gov/buov/>.
- NPS also has an app that provides a 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/>.