



# Oklahoma

Land of Opportunity

BERNSEN

THE PEOPLE OF OKLAHOMA



# Oklahoma

Land of Opportunity



Bonnie McDonald

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# To the Students

**Diversity perhaps best describes Oklahoma,** its history and people. Variety is found in Oklahoma's geographic features, dramatic weather and climate changes, multicultural settlement, and economic development. Diversity is certainly one of our state's strengths. One can think of Oklahoma as a state in the center of the nation, not only geographically and environmentally, but culturally as well. North, south, east, and west all meet in Oklahoma. To be an Oklahoman is to understand a love of the land, the mingling of many cultures, the tragedies of natural and man-made disasters, the ambition and hard work of building for the future, and a striving for democratic ideals. The Oklahoma spirit helps us not only keep going in tough times, but also improve as a result of adversity.

Oklahoma's long and fascinating history resembles that of the other American states in many ways, but it also had exceptional circumstances that created a unique identity unlike any other. People often have preconceived ideas about places where they have never visited or lived. Some people have misconceptions about Oklahoma, but when they take the time to visit they find very caring, genuine, and friendly people. The Oklahoma standard is becoming known worldwide. Oklahoma historian Angie Debo believed that the history of Oklahoma contained all of the experiences that went into making the nation. She wrote, "The one who can interpret Oklahoma can grasp the meaning of America in the modern world." As our state continues to grow, more and more people are learning of the many opportunities we have.

This textbook is only a starting point for learning about the great state we call home. It will help explain both the successes and failures of the past, and we can grow from both. While it's impossible to include every event from the past five hundred years, the book will help you learn how Oklahoma's many past experiences have caused it to become the state it is today. Your ancestors, the people in your family history, have been the energy in the developing landscape of their history. It's your turn now! What decisions will you make and what opportunities will you seize to shape the future of Oklahoma?



**Above:** The flags of Oklahoma and the U.S.A. **Page i:** *Thanks for the Rain*, by the famous cowboy artist Joe Beeler, was dedicated at Woolaroc in 1987. **Pages ii-iii:** The rotunda of the Oklahoma State Capitol. The new dome was completed in 2002. **Pages vi-1:** Red Rock Canyon State Park in Caddo County is a favorite destination for climbers.

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