The mission of the Ad Valorem Division of the Oklahoma Tax Commission is to promote an ad valorem property tax system which is fair and equitable to all taxpayers by implementing standard valuation methodology, tax law conformity, and assessment administration compliance.

"IAAO Zangerle Award Winner: 1997 and 2010"

Oklahoma Ad Valorem FORUM

Volume XIX, Issue XII ● December 2010

Director's Notes:

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and Holiday Wishes from the Ad Valorem Division. We hope that this is an enjoyable time of year for everyone and you are enjoying all the fun things going on in December.

The State Board of Equalization (SBOE) had a good session for its December 1, 2010 meeting. This really was an historic last meeting of a State Board that has done an excellent job. Every single member of the current State Board will be leaving. For the June 2011 meeting, we will have only one member (Governor-elect Mary Fallin) who has previous service on the Board. It will require new educational efforts to help the Board with its important responsibilities.

The State Board accepted the Ad Valorem Division findings on the Equalization Study. The State Auditor and the Ad Valorem Division have issued notices and orders on the various counties working on their compliance status. The State Board amended the recommendation on Caddo County to make it clear the county needs to continue in its progress to resolve compliance issues by the December 2011 meeting or be placed at Category 3. For additional details on Category #3 noncompliance, please refer to 68 O.S. Section 2830 as amended.

I appreciate the efforts of the counties involved in compliance issues right now. It's our hope we can accomplish significant progress by the June State Board of Equalization (SBOE) meeting. As you know, it takes a significant effort to get back into compliance, and we appreciate the effort to accomplish all that work.

Improvement and concern letters will go out about mid-January 2011. Please discuss those letters with your assessment and equalization analyst assigned to your county, Glen Blood or Joe Hapgood. The letters are an early warning and a reminder to focus your efforts on good values, good records and good assessment practices. Many of these letters have reported the same problem for several years in a row without any progress, and they may become compliance issues.

The Business Personal Property Guide for 2011 has been posted on the web site. We expect to finalize it by January 1, 2011 after the Commission reviews the final draft and comments. We are pleased with all the input we have had this year from industry, county assessors, and ad valorem recipients. Thanks go to Larry Rawlings and the Personal Property Section staff Patty Heath, Doug Brydon, and Paula Gibson for their efforts.

We've scheduled a new Assessors Orientation meeting after the first of the year. The County Assessor officers will attend, and we are expecting all the newly elected assessors (including some who were appointed earlier) to attend. We've scheduled it for January 20-21, 2011 in Oklahoma City. Cathy Gibson has sent out an initial notice. We're looking forward to the new-old assessors who've worked in the office before and are familiar with the process as well as the new-new assessors who are new to county government. CLGT will be helping us with the program as well as the officers.

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Continued from page 1 "Director's Letter"...

As the year ends, we're reminded that it's about the people, not the other stuff. County assessors and deputies, county treasurers, company taxpayers, and Center for Local Government Technology (CLGT), Cooperative Extension, the County Assessors' Association and the Oklahoma Tax Commission have all continued a solid working relationship in the last few years. We're looking forward to more of the same in 2011. Thanks to everyone for helping us complete all the year-end reports to the Legislature.

We appreciate the hard work of all county assessors and deputies working to improve the Oklahoma ad valorem system. We've accomplished some good things this year, but we can always do better and achieve more. That's the challenge for the coming year. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Jeff Spelman, CAE
Ad Valorem Division

P.S. "It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed.." Anwar Caddo, Ad Valorem Philosopher who thanks Theodore Roosevelt for the idea.

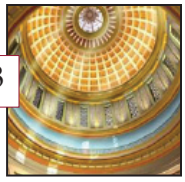
As we finish up this year, where do we stand in the wide world of mapping?

For the "2011 Mapping Support DVD-ROM's", we have downloaded the 2010 aerial photos for all 77 counties. We will have the scanned government surveys on file with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management downloaded for every county. These fractional government lot surveys cover a history of close to 140 years! We will have all the city, school district, precinct, and etc. boundaries updated by January 1, 2011. And, we will continue to include an installation copy of the free TatukGIS map viewing program that you can give to anyone wanting to look at your mapping data and aerial photos outside of the office.

Over the course of the last couple of years, we have been steering away from TatukGIS in the office due to the general difficulty of the program to search by parcel number or section. We have installed MapServer in its place in 26 counties thus far (including 10 MIMS counties). Since the base code is "open source", we have customized it to contain most of the features found in the older ArcExplorer we used to supply and in the current TatukGIS. This "open source" program allows us to customize each copy to match the needs of each office. If you want it in your office, let us know.

We also have training opportunities in either ArcGIS or MIMS. We have had 3-4 ArcGIS classes a year for the last few years at the CLGT computer lab in Stillwater. This lab is available because OSU has a site-wide license for all their computer labs for ArcGIS (which is currently the mapping standard worldwide). The CLGT/OSU lab does not have MIMS installed/licensed. However, a MIMS county can request to host a 2-3 day training session. We would make that session available to 2-3 surrounding MIMS counties as well. We have not had a MIMS training session requested for the last couple of years, but we still offer it. If you want to host a MIMS session, let us know. If you have suggestions for training dates for 2011 for ArcGIS in Stillwater, advise us of that as well.

Remember: (I was reminded of this head banner quote from the 'Perry Daily Journal', my hometown newspaper, by events of the last few weeks) "To Avoid Criticism…Say Nothing…Do Nothing…Be Nothing!"



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International Association of Assessing Officers
OKLAHOMA CHAPTER

Dates for the 2011 Assessors' District Meetings have been Set:

May 6: N.E. - Lisa Smart, Chair (Okmulgee County)

May 13: S.W. - Donna Giddens, Chair (Greer County)

May 20: S.E. - Tim Trent, Chair (LeFlore County)

May 27: N.W. - Mandy Snyder, Chair (Noble County)

New Assessors' Orientation to be Held in January

The Oklahoma Tax Commission will be conducting an orientation program for new county assessors. Although all county assessors are welcome to attend, the topics to be discussed will be of most interest to those who have limited knowledge of the functions of the assessor's office.

An overview will be provided on a variety of topics such as statutorily required reports, equalization studies, computer-assisted mass appraisal, the Tax Commission's role, and much more. Staff will also be present from the Center for Local Government Technology (CLGT) which includes the County Training Program (CTP) and the County Computer Assistance Program (CCAP).

Attendance is required for new assessors unless excused prior to the event in keeping with 19 O.S. §166. This statute provides that a written request for an excused absence be submitted and approved prior to the meeting. Staff members are welcome to attend, and you are encouraged to bring a staff member, if possible.

The training will be held in the Country Inns & Suites located at 3141 N.W. Expressway in Oklahoma City. The hotel sits in front of Founders Tower, a round high-rise building, which is a good directional landmark for those of you who may not be familiar with the area. The hotel is a few blocks east of the Integris Baptist Hospital.

When making guest room reservations, ask for the block of rooms reserved for the Oklahoma Tax Commission to ensure you receive the room rate of $79.00. Rooms are blocked for the nights of Wednesday (19th) and Thursday (20th). If you want a room an extra night before or after the training sessions, the hotel will honor the $79.00 rate if space is available. The hotel's telephone number is 405-843-2002. Please make your room reservations by **Friday, January 14.** It's important to get your purchase order for payment to the hotel as soon as possible.

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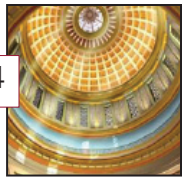

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The program will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, January 20 and conclude at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, January 21.

Complete the registration form below for each person who will attend and send to us by January 14. You may fax it to 405-521-0166, or mail it to this address:

Oklahoma Tax Commission
Ad Valorem Division
P. O. Box 269060
Oklahoma City, OK 73126-9060

We look forward to getting acquainted with you. Call us if we can be of assistance in any way. Our number is 405-319-8200. Cathy Gibson and Cyndi Heath are available to answer your questions about the training session.

2011 Assessors' Orientation Registration
January 20 & 21, 2011

Print, Type or Fill-in and Print

Name: _____

☐ Assessor ☐ Deputy

County: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Receive the "Forum" by Email:

To receive the "Ad Valorem Forum" by email, please forward your email address to Cyndi Heath at cheath@tax.ok.gov.

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ASSESSOR TRAINING ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

Course	Date		Time	City	Hotel Location
	Begin	End			
Unit 1 (Introduction to Assessor's Office)	1/25/2011	1/28/2011	Tuesday, 1:00 - 4:30 Wed & Thurs, 8:30 4:30 Friday, 8:30 12:00	Tulsa	Hampton Inn 7852 W. Parkway Blvd. Tulsa, OK (918) 245-8500
Board of Equalization Training	2/9/2011	2/9/2011	Wednesday, 8:30 - 4:30	Norman	Hilton Garden Inn, Norman 700 Copperfield Drive Norman, OK 73072 (405) 579-0100
Unit 2 (Real Property Appraisal)	2/22/2011	2/25/2011	Tues, Wed &Thrs, 8:30 - 4:30 Friday, 8:30 - 12:00	Tulsa	Hyatt Place Tulsa South 7037 South Zurich Ave. (71st & Yale) Tulsa, OK 74136 (918) 491-4010
Board of Equalization Training	3/10/2011	3/10/2011	Thursday, 8:30 - 4:30	Tulsa	Hampton Inn 7852 W. Parkway Tulsa, OK (918) 245-8500
Unit 3 (Mass Appraisal)	3/15/2011	3/18/2011	Tues, Wed &Thrs, 8:30 - 4:30 Friday, 8:30 - 12:00	Tulsa	Hyatt Place Tulsa South 7037 South Zurich Ave. (71st & Yale) Tulsa, OK 74136 (918) 491-4010

Oklahoma City Tops the List of Most Affordable

By Francesca Levy (Forbes)

Oklahoma may be best known for wind sweepin' down the plain and corn that's as high as an elephant's eye. But there's a lot more going on in the Sooner State than Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals would lead you to believe.

Just consider the state capital, Oklahoma City: It has good schools and universities, friendly residents and an unemployment rate well below the national average — 6.3 percent compared with the nationwide 9.5 percent. Thanks to good jobs and low cost of living, the Oklahoma City metro area ranks as America's Most Affordable City.

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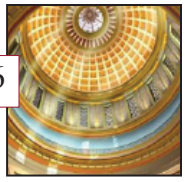

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Continued from page 5 "Oklahoma City Tops the List"...

In compiling the list, researchers looked for cities that had a balance of cheap living and economic prosperity — places with solid job markets, but where costs aren't prohibitive. All 10 of the cities on the list boast relatively low unemployment rates, inexpensive groceries, health care, transportation and housing. In short, they're desirable destinations all around. The other 9 cities ranked as follows:

2. Pittsburgh, PA
3. Buffalo, NY
4. Rochester, NY
5. Nashville, TN
6. San Antonio, TX
7. Houston, TX
8. Louisville, KY
9. Birmingham, AL
10. Austin, TX

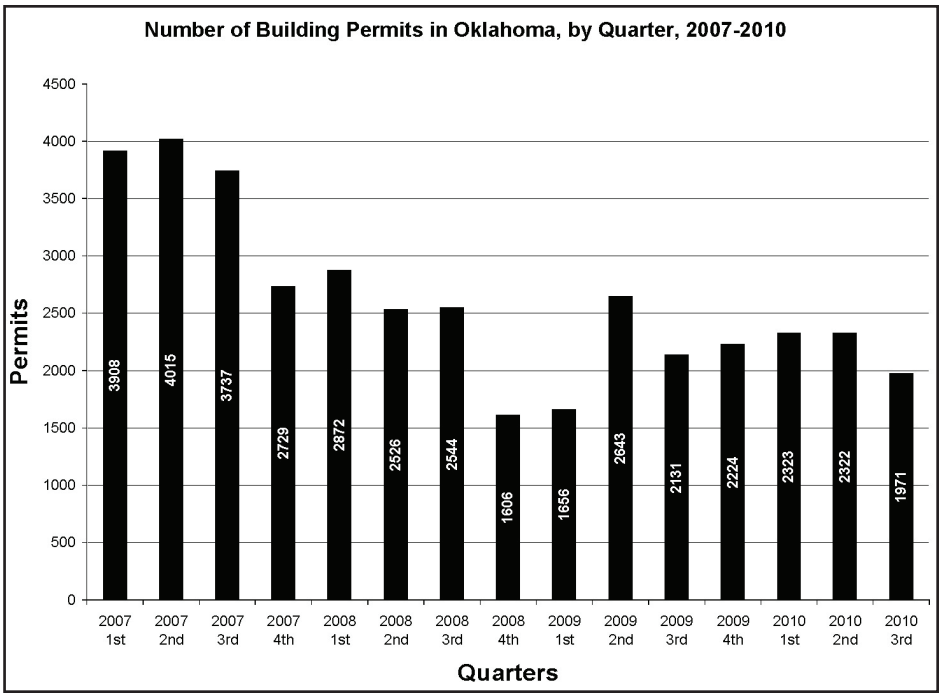
Metro cities with populations of at least 100,000 were ranked based on the cost of a basket of goods and services, including groceries, health care and transportation, as of the second quarter of 2010. Also measured were the monthly costs of housing as a percentage of household income, using 2009 data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Affordability means more than just the ability to buy a cheap box of cereal. No matter how low prices are, it doesn't matter much if your wallet is empty and your next paycheck is only hypothetical. In these cities, costs have stayed down but residents have held onto steady incomes and decent jobs, making them a true bargain.

Building Permits

A Key Economic Indicator

One measure of the state's halting recovery during 2010 can be seen in building permits, a leading economic indicator used to track the housing industry. The 1,971 permits issued in the third quarter of 2010 was down 10.3 percent from 2009 and was the lowest number since the first quarter of 2009. For the first nine months of 2010, a total of 6,616 building permits were issued, a 3 percent increase from 2009 but still well below pre-downturn levels.



Oklahoma Policy Institute, November 2010
Source: Economagic.com

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Focus on Delaware County

Delaware County Courthouse, located in Jay, OK

Delaware County was created at statehood in November 1907. Cherokee natives had previously named the surrounding area Delaware District.

The county lies on the western slopes of the Ozark Plateau, an area of forests, prairies, and farm land. The Grand River and Elk River are the major water courses in the county's northern portion, while Flint Creek and the Illinois River drain in the southern part. The Ozark limestone holds no oil nor any minerals but provides an abundant supply of water. The county's total land and water area is 792.33 square miles.

Natural Falls near West Siloam Springs

At 1907 statehood the new county's only sizable community was a settlement named Grove, which had grown up around Grove Springs. The town already supported a newspaper, the Grove Sun, and a railroad branch terminal. Despite Grove's location at the county's extreme northern edge, state officials designated it as the county seat.

However, a movement soon emerged to relocate the county seat. Because of the poor road conditions, residents of the southern part of the county resented traveling thirty miles, which took two days in a horse-drawn vehicle or even in an automobile, to conduct their legal business.

The Delaware County Improvement Association set out to move the county seat closer to the county's center. A parcel belonging to committee member Claude L. "Jay" Washbourne was selected. As a mixed-blood Cherokee, Washbourne was exempt from the federal restrictions hindering the alienation or sale of his land. He immediately gave ten acres on which to construct a town. The Association appointed him the townsite committee's chair. It platted the town, reserving a central block for a courthouse, quickly constructed a frame building and then applied to the U.S. Postal Service for a post office. Submitting the required three town names from which to select (Center, Jay, and Washbourne), postal authorities chose Jay for its brevity.

The wooden courthouse mysteriously burned, tempers flared, guns appeared, and the governor called out the military. A judge ruled in favor of the Jay plat, and in 1912 the records went into the Jay courthouse. Nevertheless, Grove citizens complained about the difficulty of holding court at Jay because of poor roads and insufficient accommodations.

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Continued from page 7 "Focus on Delaware County"...

From the early settlement days, the town of Grove kept one important asset, the Arkansas and Oklahoma Railroad. Workers laid tracks to Grove from Rogers, Arkansas, in 1900, and the next year investors sold the line to the St. Louis and San Francisco Railway system. The railroad was the chief means of moving people and agricultural products until automobiles and trucks brought service to an end in 1940. The Great Depression affected the area, as it did the nation. Anyone who was able-bodied went to work for the Civilian Conservation Corps or the Works Progress Administration which built Grove Community Center.

Sailboat Bridge, located in Grove, OK, crosses Grand Lake

In the late 1930s new hope came to Grove, when a dam was to be built across Grand River. Construction and related work immediately brought jobs for many local residents, along with dreams of thirteen hundred miles of shoreline. Gates on the dam closed in 1940. Heavy rains filled the lake quickly, and Grove emerged with water on three sides and only one land route out of town. Eventually bridges were built. One uniquely designed structure was built in 1939 and named Sailboat Bridge. Due to heavy usage and deterioration, the bridge was replaced in 2001 with two new two-lane bridges, one using sixteen of the old bridge's original piers. The new bridge is one of only a few segmental-type bridges ever built west of the Mississippi River. At 3,044 feet in length, the new Sailboat Bridge remains the state's second-longest bridge over water, surpassed only by Roosevelt Bridge over Lake Texoma.

Hildebrand-Beck Mill circa 1920

At the turn of the twentieth century subsistence farming served as the principal occupation in Delaware County. Much changed in the century's first two decades. Better transportation, refrigerated railroad cars, new farm equipment, and agricultural education brought improvements. The value of dairy products rose and egg production increased. Over time, labor-intensive row crops and grains gave way to cattle. In the 1970s poultry, mainly broilers, became a key product. In 1997 there were 1,303 farms covering 364,620 acres. The value of agricultural products sold that year was $94 million, approximately two-thirds of which were poultry products.

After World War II a boom began; tourism and retirement became big business. In 1965 Green Country, Incorporated, formed to coordinate promotion and development of sixteen northeast Oklahoma counties. By 2000 the three largest occupation groups, each at 23.4 percent of the labor force, were (1) management, professional, and related occupations; (2) production, transportation and material moving occupations; and (3) sales and office jobs. Service occupations involved 15.9 percent, while farming and related jobs involved only 1.8 percent.

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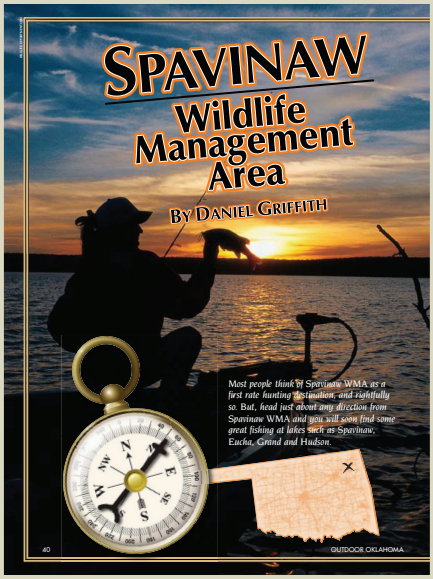
Continued from page 8 "Focus on Delaware County"...

While the county seat, Jay, has seen decline in timber, farming, and stock raising, its largest payrolls are in the government (county, state, and federal) and school employment. The town also derives income from recreation and tourism at nearby Grand Lake. The area's quality of life has attracted many retirees. In 1998 Jay citizens secured a county-wide, four-year, half-cent sales tax and raised more than $4 million to rehabilitate the county's courthouse while preserving historical architecture. In 2003 the city maintained a home-rule charter form of government.

In 2004 the census revealed that while rural counties were losing population, Delaware County was the fifth-fastest-growing in the state. This was influenced by tourism, a tight labor market, and aggressive action to attract employers, as well as a rising economy in adjacent northwest Arkansas.



Cover of 2006 Outdoor Oklahoma Magazine, highlighting Spavinaw Wildlife Management Area. Before being purchased in the 50's, Spavinaw WMA served as a homestead during Oklahoma's introduction into statehood.

The county offers several recreation areas and historic sites.

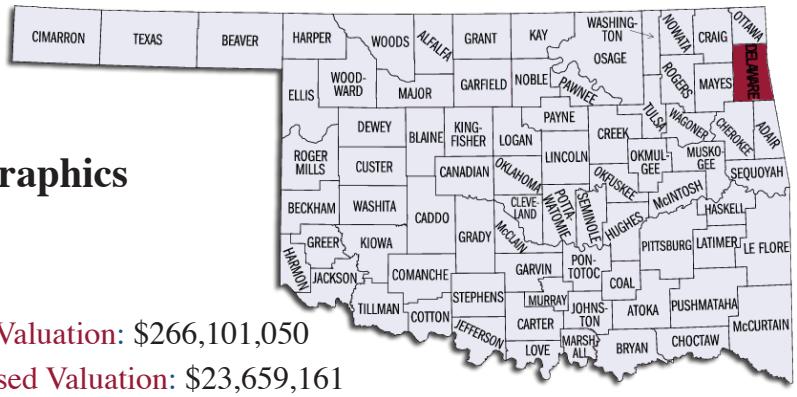
- Just south of Lake Eucha is the 14,316 acre Spavinaw Wildlife Management Area.
- State parks include Honey Creek at Grove and Bernice at Bernice, Lake Eucha south of Jay, and Natural Falls near West Siloam Springs.
- Har-Ber Village, a large museum, is west of Grove.
- Near present Oaks is Moravian Springplace Mission.
- Grand Lake is located just west of Grove, has 1300 miles of shoreline and 46,500 surface acres. Grand Lake is one of the top bass fishing lakes in Oklahoma. Grand Lake offers golfing, sailing, camping, water sports, and 4x4 trails.

Six regional properties have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places:

- Polson Cemetery, west of Southwest City, Missouri, is the burial place of Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Stand Watie.
- Northwest of Grove in the Seneca-Cayuga area is the still-active Splitlog Church built by Mathias Spitlog.
- The Hildebrand-Beck Mill stands on Flint Creek just north of U.S. Highway 412 east of Kansas, Oklahoma.
- The Talbot Library and Museum in Colcord displays artifacts and provides genealogy resources.

Notable natives of Delaware County include:

- Lee B. Smith (1844-1917), an adopted Cherokee who served on the Cherokee Nation Council and was the county's first state legislator.
- John H. Gibson (1861-1940) owned the Grove Sun and served in local and state offices.



Delaware County Demographics

Population: 39,146
Area: 792 square miles
2009 Real Property Net Assessed Valuation: $266,101,050
2009 Personal Property Net Assessed Valuation: $23,659,161