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 IX ● September 2010

Director's Notes:

We enjoyed meeting with everyone who attended the County Officers and Deputies (CODA) meeting last week. I thought the break-out session was good, especially since we had room to move around in the larger venue. (Thanks to the County Assessors' officers who talked to the CODA Board) It was also terrific to see Evelyn Bradley looking well and talking to everyone. The CODA sessions were good this year.

One of the fun things to write about this month is the Ad Valorem Forum's winning our second Zangerle Award as best IAAO newsletter. The Ad Valorem Forum has been an enjoyable project. (The first director's letter was May 1994 now totaling 159 letters so far.)

The Forum has been around since 1994 shortly after I started as Ad Valorem Director. Carol Prewett suggested the title. Joe Hapgood was editor when the Forum won its first Zangerle in 1997. We put it on-line in 2004, and Cathy Gibson took over editorship duties shortly thereafter. She works hard on it each month and works closely with Robert Stewart in Communications who does the lay-out and graphics. We won in the monthly newsletter category along with Kansas which does a quarterly newsletter. Next year Gail Hedgcoth should nominate the "Ad Valorem Bore 'Em."

Oklahoma has been doing well with our IAAO participation. Wade Patterson did an excellent session on social networking and may move up to Chair of the Communications Committee. Other Oklahoma members—Monica Schmidt, Daniel Jenkins, Brittney Marshall, Mike Weddle, Gary Snyder, and Doug Warr, AAS attended.

Annual Conference in Tulsa went well. Our overall enrollment was over 455, down a little bit from last year, but still good with all counties represented. We put on over 5,637 student instruction hours, which demonstrates the efficiency to getting everyone in one place for several intense days of training. As usual, thanks to CLGT ATAP (Gary Snyder and Doug Warr) and CCAP (Scott Warren, Carol Bomhoff, and Johnny Caldwell) as well as the county assessors and deputies who worked hard that week.

We are looking forward to our first meeting on the Personal Property Schedule. We're hosting a session next week on concerns in the schedule on methodology used to gather our information. We've received no comments thus far on methodology changes.

Mike Isbell and I appreciate everyone who called in with questions about their public service valuations over the last few months. It helps our Public Service Section when you put concerns in writing. We also appreciate the help from the company representatives in tracking down answers. There are some areas where we can improve communication between all parties concerned.

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

Keep working on your Visual Inspection Plans. Remember those are due the first working day in October. Many of those are already in our office. As I said at the CODA meeting, be sure and follow the template on the web site and call Joe Hapgood if you have any questions.

We appreciate all the hard work of the county assessors and deputies this year. We all share a responsibility to make the ad valorem system better than it was when it was given to us. Efforts to constantly improve taxpayer service are extremely important, and we appreciate everyone who has made it happen.

Jeff Spelman

"There are good ideas badly implemented and there are ideas that are, well, really bad, rotten ideas."

International Association of Assessing Officers
OKLAHOMA CHAPTER

"Ad Valorem Forum" Wins IAAO Award

The International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) presented the 2010 Zangerle Award to the Oklahoma Tax Commission, Ad Valorem Division for its monthly newsletter titled the "Ad Valorem Forum".

The "Ad Valorem Forum" goes out to county assessors and deputies, other county officials, companies, and several other groups. It serves as a communication tool for current events, OTC updates, IAAO Oklahoma Chapter news, county assessors education, state tax issues and more. Published since 1994 under the leadership of Division Director, Jeff Spelman, CAE, the newsletter is entirely digital and is emailed to those on the mailing list.

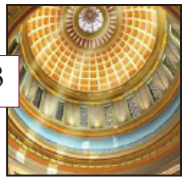
2010 Zangerle Award

The Ad Valorem Division participated in establishing a nation-wide newsletter exchange through IAAO to electronically trade newsletters with Kansas, Idaho, Minnesota, Iowa, and several other states.

Cathy Gibson is the editor and works with Robert Stewart in the Communications Division who puts together the lay-out and the colorful graphic design. Joe Hapgood was editor before Cathy when the Ad Valorem Division won its first Zangerle Award in 1997. Kansas, Oklahoma and Minnesota are the only states that have won a Zangerle more than once.

Mr. Spelman accepted the award on behalf of the division at the IAAO 76th International Conference on Assessment Administration held in Orlando, Florida, on August 30, 2010.

Left to Right: Troy Frazier, Joe Hapgood, Cathy Gibson, Robert Stewart and Jeff Spelman.



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Oklahoma Housing Market Mixed

According to recent data from the Oklahoma Association of Realtors, the average cost of a home in Oklahoma has decreased by 2.7 percent compared to second quarter 2009.

In second quarter 2010 the average cost of a home sold was $141,279 compared to $145,263 in 2009. Statewide, 13,340 homes were sold in second quarter 2010.

This is 9.6 percent more than the number of homes sold in second quarter 2009 in which 12,171 homes were sold. The average Days-on-Market was 114.

The Oklahoma Association of Realtors® reports residential sales activity from multiple listing services across Oklahoma using information provided from local boards and associations.

Recent National Association of Realtors® reports show second quarter median home price figures for Oklahoma City increasing 7.5% over second quarter 2009, with a median sales price of $149,900.

Results for Tulsa were a bit different than those for Oklahoma City. Median home price figures there remained unchanged from 2009, showing a median sales price of $133,200 for second quarter 2010.

Source: Oklahoma Association of Realtors

LOCAL BOARD	SECOND QUARTER 2010 TOTAL			
	Homes Sold	Average Price	Average DOM	Average Median Price
Ada	125	$107,212	161	$86,883
Altus	90	$117,068	106	$109,167
Bartlesville	242	$139,801	45	$125,600
Cushing	46	$88,099	193	$65,667
Duncan	121	$98,624	118	$88,000
Edmond	933	$222,151	75	$189,499
Enid	211	$126,201	105	$97,633
Lawton	427	$136,122	74	$128,633
Mid-Del-Moore*	468	$123,170	58	$120,759
Muskegee	165	$99,240	97	$95,747
Norman**	422	$174,033	87	$149,081
North Central	99	$109,408	178	$98,333
NE Oklahoma	206	$169,205	161	$126,750
OKC Metro***	4,862	$135,480	75	$132,600
Shawnee	181	$99,953	105	$87,833
SE Oklahoma	198	$113,795	113	$97,283
Southern Okla.	144	$130,034	160	$116,792
Stillwater	257	$148,025	104	$137,386
Texoma	96	$113,594	181	$98,000
Greater Tulsa	3,889	$153,690	97	$138,467
Western Okla.	120	$115,399	94	$110,506
Woodward	38	$127,265	115	$85,842
TOTAL	**13,340**	**$141,279**	**114**	**$113,021**

Statewide MLS data represents local boards from the following communities: Ada, Altus, Bartlesville, Cushing, Duncan, Edmond, Enid Metro, Lawton, Mid-Del-Moore*, Muskogee, Norman**, Northeast Oklahoma, Oklahoma City Metropolitan***, Ponca City, Shawnee, Southeastern Oklahoma, Southern Oklahoma, Stillwater, Texoma region, Greater Tulsa, Western Oklahoma and Woodward. Statistics are compiled from their respective local board reports. The data is not intended to reflect all real estate sales activity across the state. The Oklahoma Association of REALTORS® is not responsible for the accuracy of the data contained in this report.

* Data for Midwest City - Del City - Moore Association of REALTORS® is included in Oklahoma City Metropolitan Association of REALTORS®. ** Data for Norman Board of REALTORS® includes Purcell Board of REALTORS®. ***Data for Oklahoma City Metropolitan Association of REALTORS® includes Edmond Board of REALTORS®, El Reno Board of REALTORS® and Midwest City-Del City-Moore Association of REALTORS®. Some duplication of numbers may exist. ****Data for Texoma Board of REALTORS®, Median Price, is not available at this time.

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Have you been feeling a little dizzy lately? Are you loosing your sense of direction? Are you feeling a little off keel? Maybe it's because the magnetic north pole is moving on us!

In fact, the magnetic north pole, what all compasses point to, is moving. According to the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, the magnetic north pole has moved over 650 miles during the 1900's. Since 1970 its rate of movement has increased to 25 miles a year.

For as long as anyone has known, the magnetic north pole has been in Canada. If its current rate and direction of movement continues, the magnetic north pole will be in Siberia in 50 years. However, according to Wikipedia, it is expected to veer from its current course and slow back down.

In addition to the magnetic pole's general movement northwesterly, it moves in a rough elliptical pattern each day. This ellipse can have a 50 mile radius.

So, do not get too excited when that deeded instrument bearing does not match your mapping. Chances are it never will!

Remember: That which does not kill us only postpones the inevitable!

County Computer Coordination Committee September Meeting

The "4C" meeting was held September 15, 2010 at the Biltmore Hotel in Oklahoma City in conjunction with the County Officers & Deputies Fall Conference.

Some computer problems occurring in counties using Windows 7 have been fixed, including icons disappearing off the desktop on county computers.

One remaining issue with Windows 7 is the difficulty with the CAMA F9 summary screen not automatically opening in Acrobat Reader. A PDF file is still created from the F9 summary, and it is recommended that printing be done using a special icon that can be placed on the desktop, which launches the Acrobat Reader Program and opens the last file created from the F9 summary. Putting the icon on the desktop will allow access to the Acrobat Reader PDF file without exiting CAMA.

A CAMA update with some program enhancements will be installed in Major County around October 1 for testing. The new CAMA update is compiled in a new version of Micro Focus Cobol.

Once installed in all the counties later this fall, the new CAMA update will allow many good options from which to print F9 property summaries. Printing can be all in one batch PDF for a range of parcels, or printing can be a single PDF for each parcel. The F9 property summary can be with or without pictures. It is recommended that F9 cards for the field appraiser to use be printed without values on them. If the value is on the card, it causes the appraiser to be influenced to make adjustments to the data being collected instead of just collecting what he sees.

On the AA side, work has been done on the owner/dump program which dumps the names and addresses to the treasurers. The update may be out in the next 2 or 3 weeks.

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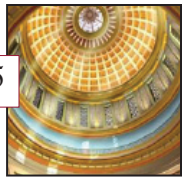

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Continued from page 4 "4C September Meeting"...

CCAP conducted its first treasurers meeting last week in Stillwater and attendance was very good. These meetings are termed "design reviews" and deal with what the program should look like. Based on its success, they plan to do about 2 meetings a year with the treasurers. Feedback was positive that they would like to have more training. CCAP is considering doing design review meetings for assessors.

An AA program update will be going out. It will include updates for assessors and treasurers at the same time. Compiler updates will be ready in the fall. No file layouts have changed. There are no changes to Report Writer.

Some computers in the counties are running slowly. This often goes hand-in-hand with employees using the internet or syncing their phones to the internet at work. Removing weather icons from the computers will help. It was recommended that counties make written policies regarding computer use.

It was brought to the committee's attention that a problem exists regarding TIF districts. A school district levy is applied to the TIF district levy. If the school district has a sinking fund, then the TIF district gets the money and this may raise questions regarding constitutionality. TIF districts in the 5-year exemption program get the reimbursement from the State, too. That amounts to a lot of money for Tulsa and Oklahoma Counties.

The next "4C" meeting is scheduled on October 12 at 10:00 a.m. in the Ad Valorem Division office.

When Things Go Wrong...

Computers, power backups, and servers will all die from time to time. Here are a few friendly reminders of things you can check to ensure that you are ready when things go wrong...

Do you have a working tape backup? Do you have a tape drive that works? Do you have good, writeable tapes? Do you check the backup log from the server? Not having a daily backup can result in losing days, weeks, or months of data entry and analysis in your AA or CAMA systems!

Do you have an off-site backup? Generally, if you do not have a working tape backup, you do NOT have a current, off-site backup. Usually, the easiest off-site backup is a tape backup in a safety deposit box at the local bank (or at least a tape backup taken home). You may have off-site backups with vendors, but those backups may be months old. Not having a regular, off-site backup can result in losing days, weeks, or months of data entry and analysis in your AA or CAMA systems! All it takes is one "natural" disaster to destroy all your data.

Each computer, server, switch, and hub should be plugged into a battery backup. Most battery backups have battery powered outlets and surge protected ONLY outlets. Make sure that the computer, server, switch, or hub is plugged into the battery powered outlet. Not having EVERY computer, server, switch, and hub plugged into working battery backups can result in lost or corrupted data in your AA or CAMA systems. You can plug your monitors and printers into the surge protected outlet. NEVER plug a printer into the battery powered side along with a computer, etc. Printers will wear out battery backups quicker than anything else.

Space heaters and other appliances should NEVER be plugged into battery backups. These should probably never be plugged into the same wall outlet as your battery backup.

Are you testing your battery backups monthly? Simply log your computer out of any programs, unplug your battery backup from the wall outlet, sit back, and see what happens. The battery backup should squeal,

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Continued from page 5 "When Things Go Wrong"...

beep, or make some other annoying noise. The computer should continue running. (If your monitor is plugged into the surge protected side of the battery backup, it will die. For testing purposes, the monitor should be plugged into another power strip that is connected directly to the wall outlet.) If the battery backup does not keep your computer up running for at least a few of minutes, it is BAD! Not replacing the BAD battery backup can result in lost or corrupted data in your AA or CAMA systems!

Thumb drives, USB drives, flash drives, San Disks, etc. all store data magnetically. Make sure that they are NEVER placed around magnets or magnetic fields. This includes placing them around microwaves, radios, or any major electrical appliances.

For good security practices, if you are leaving your computer for any length of time (potty break, etc.) and do not want to lose where you are working at in AA or CAMA, do a Control-Alt-Delete and then click on "Lock Computer". This will bring your computer back to the Windows login screen. Just use your regular login to get back in. This does not change your desktop; so, everything will still be there when you get back.

For good security practices, NEVER have a sticky note with the words "user:" and "password:" placed in plain sight.

Focus on Blaine County

Blaine County was one of several created by the Land Run of 1892 on land formerly on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation. Grover Cleveland was president at the time. Designated as County "C" in 1890 before the Land Run, Blaine was adopted as the county name in November 1892 in honor of James G. Blaine, U.S. Senator, House Speaker, and Republican presidential candidate in 1884.

The Blaine County Courthouse, located in Watonga, Oklahoma, was completed in 1906 at a cost of $42,137. Listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings, it is one of the few courthouses built before statehood.

After the Louisiana Purchase (1803) which included present Oklahoma, explorers and traders traversed present Blaine County along the rivers. Before the Civil War, Jesse Chisholm had established a salt works in present Blaine County in order to trade the commodity with the Plains Indians. Blaine County is the site of the first gypsum mill in Oklahoma Territory, the Ruby Stucco Mill. Southard, located in the north central part of the county, is the site of one of the purest gypsum deposits in the United States. The U.S. Gypsum Company is the largest industrial plant in the county.

Early settlers opened towns and farmed the sandy-loam soil. They grew wheat, corn, cotton, oats, Kaffir corn, broomcorn, sorghum, hay, and Irish potatoes. Cotton gins, mills, and grain elevators soon appeared in the towns of Geary, Greenfield, Hitchcock, Okeene, and Watonga. The outcropping of gypsum attracted at least six plaster mills with a plant established at Southard in 1905.

Cattle drives from Texas to Kansas followed the Caldwell Trail, which was situated west of Cantonment.

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Blaine County population peaked at 20,452 in 1930. During the 1930s several New Deal programs helped employ county residents. Through the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), young men built Roman Nose State Park which opened in 1937. Another CCC camp worked on soil conservation at Geary. The Watonga National Guard Armory, schools and libraries were among the Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects benefiting the county.

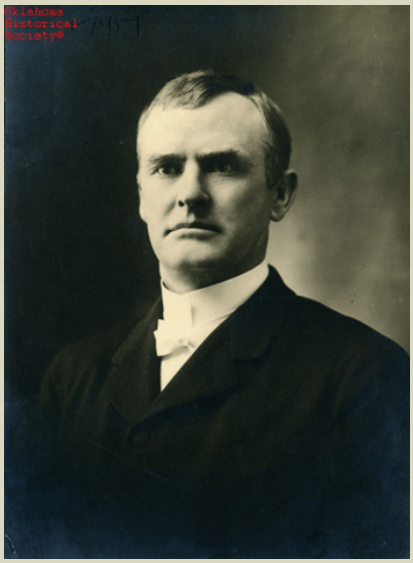
Roman Nose State Park, located in Watonga, Oklahoma

The county seat, Watonga, developed from a tent city. The town was named for Arapaho Chief Wa-ton-gha, whose name meant Black Coyote. A post office was established in 1892. Constructed in 1906, the Blaine County courthouse is one of several that predate statehood.

Watonga was a rowdy frontier town in the early days and outlaws roamed the area, using the rugged gypsum canyons of Roman Nose Park as their hideouts.

At 1907 statehood, the local economy depended on the surrounding wheat-producing area. Rural residents and town dwellers supported an opera house, a bottling works, four banks, three hotels, nine doctors, and more than a hundred other service providers. Electric light service and a city water system were operational. The presence of three elevators, a creamery, and two wagonyards indicated the importance of agribusiness. By 1920 the population had declined slightly because of a post-World War I, agricultural depression, and migration of residents to larger cities.

Early settler Thompson B. Ferguson and his wife, Elva Shartel Ferguson had participated in three land runs and moved permanently to Watonga, Oklahoma Territory, in 1892. They established the Watonga Republican newspaper as a joint endeavor, and Elva participated in every aspect of the work. In 1901 President Theodore Roosevelt appointed Thompson Ferguson as the eighth territorial governor of Oklahoma Territory. According to legend, Roosevelt asked if there was one honest man in the entire territory that he could depend on to do the job, and Ferguson's name was presented for consideration. When Ferguson received the appointment, the couple moved to the capital at Guthrie.



Thomas B. Ferguson

During Ferguson's administration, he did the following:

- Addressed deficit spending was eliminated and he strongly supported increasing funds for education and prison reform;
- Organized the Board of Agriculture; pressed for legislation setting qualifications for persons teaching school in Oklahoma;
- Championed the "herd law" requiring land to be fenced to prevent herds of cattle from damaging or destroying settlers' crops.
- Was also responsible for a law allowing osteopaths to practice in Oklahoma and upgrading Oklahoma's mental institutions.

Perhaps his greatest contribution was his unwavering devotion to the cause of immediate statehood for Oklahoma Territory. Ferguson was governor from November 1901 until January 1906, longer than any other territorial governor.

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The Fergusons returned to Watonga and full-time newspaper work in 1906. After Governor Ferguson's death in 1921, Elva managed the newspaper alone until she sold it and retired in 1930. She was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1933. Near the end of her life she received many honors, including Oklahoma Mother of the Year in 1946. She died in Watonga in 1947.

Elva Ferguson's reminiscences of territorial politics, Indians, outlaws, and frontier life provided the basis of Edna Ferber's novel Cimarron, published in 1930. When RKO Studios developed a motion picture from the novel, Ferguson served as a technical advisor for the newspaper print-shop scenes. In 1937 Ferguson published her own account of newspaper life in early Oklahoma, entitled They Carried The Torch: The Story of Oklahoma's Pioneer Newspaper (1937) and also helped establish the Watonga Public Library.

1931 movie poster for Cimarron

By the 1930s three cotton gins and three grain elevators served the surrounding agricultural community. A new post office building, completed in 1937, was selected to receive a mural as part of the New Deal art project. Commissioned artist Edith Mahier painted the mural depicting Chief Roman Nose and other Cheyenne on the day of the land run in 1892. Diamondback Correctional Facility, a private prison, opened in November 1998.

Rich in picturesque history, Watonga has retained its beautiful turn-of-the-century architecture. Accepted into the Oklahoma Main Street Program in 1997, Watonga is restoring many of the downtown buildings to their original beauty

Watonga's notable citizens include

- Theresa Hunt Tyler, the town's first dentist, at a time when few women practiced that profession.
- Native son Clarence Nash provided the voice of Walt Disney's cartoon character Donald Duck.
- Earnest Hoberecht, war correspondent and author of Asia is My Beat (1961) and Tokyo Romance (1947).
- William Cunningham, director of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Oklahoma Federal Writers' Project and author of The Green Corn Rebellion (1935).
- Sidney Stewart, who wrote Give Us This Day (1956), an autobiographical account of being a World War II prisoner of war.
- Dr. Earl D. McBride, prominent bone specialist and founder of the McBride Clinic and Bone and Joint Hospital in Oklahoma City, once resided in Watonga.

The Watonga Cheese Factory opened for business in 1940 in a building formerly occupied by an ice and electric plant. It was the only cheese factory in Oklahoma and was the focus of one of the State's best-known festivals. In 2007 tropical

The old Watonga Cheese Factory building that was destroyed during Tropical Storm Erin in 2007. The cheese makers moved to Perryton, Texas in 2010.

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storm Erin brought 80-mile-an-hour winds and 9 to 11 inches of rain to Watonga. The cheese factory was one of the buildings in the path of destruction. The owners deemed the structural damage too extensive to repair and moved the business to Perryton, Texas in 2010.

The International Association of Rattlesnake Hunters has headquarters in Okeene which is also the site of the Jaycees Annual Rattlesnake Hunt.

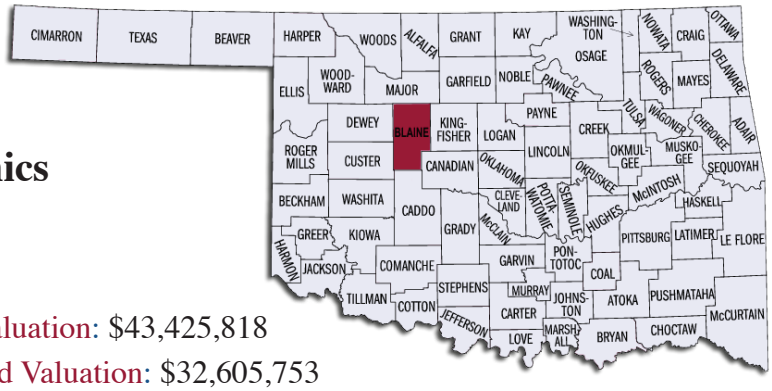
The Canton Lake was named for a pioneer Army post, or "canton-ment", which was the halfway point between Fort Reno and Fort Supply. Deactivated in 1882, the post also served as a Mennonite school for Indians. Canton Lake hosts the Walleye Pike Rodeo and Fishing Derby annually. The Canton hunting area provides some of the best hunting in the state.

Roman Nose State Park is located six miles north of Watonga. At 540 acres, the Park is the smallest in Oklahoma with a lodge. It has unusual geological formations, rich Indian history, and variety of recreational attractions.

Jesse Chisholm Grave Site, located in Geary, Oklahoma

The following sites in Blaine County are listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

- Blaine County Courthouse - Watonga
- Cantonment - Canton
- Jesse Chisholm Grave Site - Geary
- Cronkhite Ranch House - Watonga
- Thompson Benton Ferguson House - Watonga
- Gillespie Building - Geary
- Noble Hotel - Watonga
- Old Plant Office Building, U.S. Gypsum Company - Southard
- Old Salt Works - Southard
- Public Water Trough - Okeene
- Shinn Family Barn - Okeene
- Sooner Co-op Association Elevator (West) - Okeene
- J. H. Wagner House - Watonga
- Watonga Armory
- Okeene Flour Mill - Okeene



Blaine County Demographics

Population: 11,976
Area: 920 square miles
2009 Real Property Net Assessed Valuation: $43,425,818
2009 Personal Property Net Assessed Valuation: $32,605,753