

## Western Heritage

The Wichita Western Heritage Tour is unique in that it includes not only the traditional elements of the 'Wild West', but also the art, animals and plants of the time. A tour of these sites gives an opportunity to experience first-hand the pivotal role Wichita played during one of the most exciting periods of our nation's history. The legendary names, well-known places and celebrated events that helped tame the American West and build a new nation. Step back in time. Pick the sites of most interest to you and experience the Old West.

**Old Cowtown Museum** – Located on the banks of the Arkansas River, Old Cowtown Museum lets you walk the streets of 1865-1880 Wichita. The historic 17-acre open-air museum reflects a young city in transition. The raw frontier lifestyle that had conquered the Indian Nations was itself being overtaken by farmers and families.

**Mid-America All-Indian Center** – Distant drums still call Native Americans to this special meeting place. The museum here preserves and showcases the heritage of many native tribes of North America. The adjacent Native American Indian Village features authentic lodge pole structure and teepees. The 44-foot tall, 50-ton metal *Keeper of the Plains* sculpture, created by Wichita artist Blackbear Bosin, rises 30 feet above the confluence of the Big and Little Arkansas Rivers in silent tribute to the Native Americans who lived and hunted here. "The Keeper" stands as the symbol of Wichita. It is especially beautiful at night when five fire pots are lighted (at specific times seasonally; subject to weather and river conditions)

**Great Plains Nature Center** – The Center offers visitors the opportunity to experience the beauty and uniqueness of the wildlife and habitats of the Great Plains. Interactive displays, a wetland observatory, dioramas featuring full-bodied bison and pronghorn sheep and a 2,200-gallon aquarium are highlights of the Center.

**Charles M. Russell Gallery** – "Heritage of the West" – Located within the Wichita Art Museum, the collection is comprised of twenty-six original paintings, watercolors, drawings and bronzes by the frontier's most famous artist. In an era before photography was common, this "old master of the old west" captured both the romance and the detail of his time.

**A Prairie Garden** – Located within Botanica, The Wichita Gardens this garden features native plants and grasses. Seasonal displays include buffalo grass and big and little bluestem, the grasses that nourished the great herds of bison.

**North American Prairie Exhibit** at the Wichita Sedgwick County Zoo – Wild animals were among the many dangers faced on the frontier. They were also an important source of food and clothing. This exhibit features several species of animals that roamed the prairies years ago, including bison, grizzly bear, black bear, elk, pronghorn, cougar, river otter, bald eagle and more. A boardwalk through a stream-side woodland adds special charm to this exhibit.

**Chisholm Trail Exhibit** at the Wichita Sedgwick County Historical Museum – Jesse Chisholm was the very embodiment of the collision of two great societies. Born in 1805 to a Scottish father and a Cherokee Indian mother, Jesse was an in-law to Sam Houston and ancestor of Will Rogers. He established a trading post near present day downtown Wichita. His ancestry enabled him to blaze a trail south to Mexico through the Indian Territory. His "Chisholm Trail" would make possible the great longhorn cattle drives from Texas to the railroads in Kansas in the 1860-1870s.

## Western Heritage (continued)

**Buffalo Bill Monument & Gravesite** – An impressive monument on the high ground of this pioneer cemetery, marks the final resting place of William Mathewson, the “original Buffalo Bill” and last of the old scouts. Mathewson was an adventurer, entrepreneur, sharpshooter, linguist, Indian fighter, hero and ultimately Indian peacemaker.

**Chisholm Trail Historical Marker** – Sitting on the northwest corner of Douglas Avenue and McLean Boulevard in downtown Wichita, this weathered limestone monument marks the spot on the Chisholm Trail where the “walking river” of Texas Longhorn cattle met the Arkansas River, the final natural barrier on their epic journey. Between 1867 and 1874 over 3,000,000 head of Longhorns were driven up the trail.

**Shepler’s, The World’s Largest Western Store** – In 1946 Harry Shepler acquired the J.W. Gibson Harness Co., a one-room saddle and harness shop established in 1899. Today, Shepler’s is leading the industry in western wear retailing with over 20 stores across the country, a western catalog distributed worldwide and an online store featuring western boots, jeans, shirts, hats, souvenirs and home décor.

**Eaton Hotel** – Opened January 1887 as the Carey House, this early Wichita landmark was considered to be the finest, most luxurious hotel between Kansas City and Denver. Perhaps the most famous visitor was prohibition crusader Carrie Nation, who on December 27, 1900 smashed the hotel’s swank basement level Carey Annex bar.

**The Diamond W Wranglers at Old Cowtown Museum** – Experience the very best in western stage show. Enjoy the tight harmonies and homey comedy of the world-famous Diamond W Wranglers.

**Prairie Rose Chuckwagon Supper** – Located just 15 minutes east of Wichita on the historic Chisholm Trail. Barbeque dinner included prior to the show, performed by the Prairie Rose Rangers. Western Chuckwagon Suppers are served Thursday, Friday and Saturday– except Thanksgiving, and December 23rd through 30th \* Gospel Chuckwagon Suppers are served the 2nd & 4th Sunday of each month – except Easter.