

Decatur County



A PIONEER STATUE stands guard at the top of Penn Avenue in Oberlin.

Brick streets, antique stores offer lots of fun

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

Filled with antique stores, an active downtown business district, brick streets and canopies, Oberlin, the seat of Decatur County, is nestled in the Sappa Valley and drenched in history.

With just a short jaunt off U.S. 36, travelers will find themselves in downtown Oberlin. The county was formed in April 1874, although Oberlin was not incorporated until 1885.

Pioneer families lived in dugouts at first, but later moved into sod houses. In 1881, the U.S. Land Office opened, bringing more people.

Oberlin and the county started to boom, with Main Street offering stores, shops, hotels and more, including an opera house.

Today, the brick streets still offer shopping, from appliances to clothes to memorabilia. At the south end of Main, history buffs will find the Last Indian Raid Museum.

The museum is named for a raid led by Dull Knife and Little Wolf, two Northern Cheyenne chiefs, on Sept. 29, 1878. The two war chiefs and a small group had escaped from an Oklahoma reservation. The tribes, which had been moved there after the Battle of Little Big Horn, wanted to go home.

Thirty-nine settlers were killed, including 18 in Decatur County, before the group was rounded up.

The event is remembered through artifacts at the museum and a monument in Oberlin's cemetery, on U.S. 36.

Although named for the Indian raid, the museum has much more to offer. The museum has 14 historic outbuildings including a country schoolhouse, filling station, sod house, grocery, train depot, blacksmith shop, livery, land office, the old Bohemian Hall, St. Mark's Church, jail, doctor's office and two display buildings.

The museum is growing. In the last six years the board, through donations, has been able to

move two buildings, the Bohemian Hall and St. Mark's, in from the country and Norcatour, respectively.

The hall, refurbished with insulation, bathrooms and a kitchen, is available for reunions, dances and meetings. It is used for gymnastics practice each week.

Up Main Street from the museum is the LandMark Inn, which was formerly a bank. It was later used as the courthouse and the town's telephone exchange.

Gary Anderson refurbished the building into a bed and breakfast. Visitors stay in rooms with Victorian furniture and other antiques. Mr. Anderson serves lunch in the Teller Room, except Sunday, and dinner Thursday through Saturday. The inn offers breakfast for the public on Saturday.

History isn't just inside the buildings, but can be seen on them.

On top of the Hirsch and Pratt law office on Main Street there are two tombstones. The markers, which face east, can be seen from the street.

The building once was owned by Curry Brothers, who had a tombstone shop. No one knows for sure how the stones ended up on top of the building.

Canopies were put in the downtown area around 35 years ago as part of a redevelopment plan. Under those canopies are stores and businesses owned and run by people who live in the county.

On some of the shops, visitors will see small metal doors where coal was shoveled into the basement decades ago, to be used for heat.

Oberlin isn't the only place to find history in the county. Near Traer is Elephant Rock, shaped like an elephant. The rock is part of the Ogallala formation and a landmark along the Ogallala cattle trail.

(Continued on Page 17)

Experience the Victorian West

in our Award winning Historic Inn featuring seven antique filled suites in an ornately restored Victorian Bank Building (circa 1886) in downtown Oberlin, Kansas

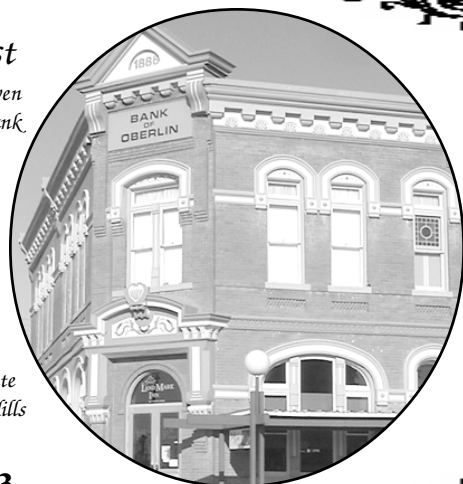
Amenities include

Teller Room Restaurant Vintage Exercise Room/Sauna
Within walking distance to antique shops/Indian Museum
9 Antique stores in Oberlin
Oberlin Mercantile Co. Gift Shop
Incredible Desserts

THE LANDMARK INN

Located in NW Kansas enroute to Colorado Rockies or Black Hills
at the Historic Bank of Oberlin

Toll Free:
1-888-639-0003



Your Stop on U.S. 36

for hunting, fishing and outdoor needs.



Save big on decoys, hunting apparel, shotguns and rifles, reloading supplies, hunting boots, bait, tackle, rods, reels and much, MUCH more!!

YOUR **ESTATE** AMMUNITION DEALER!

Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, Inc.

WHOLESALE SPORTING GOODS
502 Frontier Parkway, Oberlin, Kan.

Phone (785) 475-2201

Bob Woolsey and Joe Dejmal

www.dalesfishnfun.com



On the Highway in Oberlin
On your way to Sebelius, Strunk, Trenton,
Harlan County & Wilson lakes



Your TRAEGER Grill Dealer

- Taste the Difference • Healthier Foods
- No Flare Ups
- The Best Grill, Smoker & BBQ on the market today!
- We have accessories, pellets, spices
- Environmentally Sound



TEXAS STYLE

R & M Service Center

150 S. Penn Ave. • Downtown Oberlin
Friendly Sales and Service • (785) 475-2177