

**SPECIAL LINKS OF INTEREST**

[The Ancient Crossttimbers Consortium](http://www.uark.edu/misc/xtimber)  
<http://www.uark.edu/misc/xtimber>

[The Nature Conservancy](http://www.nature.org/oklahoma)  
<http://www.nature.org/oklahoma>

[Oklahoma Native Plant Society](http://www.usao.edu/~onps)  
<http://www.usao.edu/~onps>

[Tulsa Audubon Society](http://www.tulsaaudubon.org/)  
<http://www.tulsaaudubon.org/>



# What Is The Keystone Ancient Forest?



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

- What Is ?** |
- Location !** |
- History** 2
- Top 10** 3
- Visit** 3
- Map** 4

It's a nature preserve in the making! The preserve conserves a beautiful example of Oklahoma's diverse landscape, including 300 year-old cedars and 500 year-old post-oak trees. This 1,300-acre old-growth forest remnant represents what the "cross timbers" eco-region of our state looked like for centuries, and properly managed, will do so for future generations to come. The preserve also provides native habitat for a diverse collection of naturally occurring plants and wildlife. The short, stout oaks of the Cross Timbers were not ideal for lumber production, so the original Cross Timbers have often survived on steep terrain that was unsuitable for farming.

Literally thousands of ancient post oak can still be found in this region, and there is no doubt that the



Cross Timbers is one of the least disturbed forest types left in the eastern United States.

Many public and private land managers do not realize that ancient forests survive extensively across the rugged terrain of the Southern

Plains, but in their defense, the Cross Timbers do not satisfy the stereotype for ancient forests, which remains fixated on giant redwoods or massive hardwoods.

The Cross Timbers are drought-stressed woodlands, populated by low-stature, slow-growing trees, many of which predate not only statehood, but also the birth of the United States. Thousands of 200- to 400-year old post oak survive in the Cross Timbers, and red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) trees over 500-years old have also been found on fire-protected bluff-lines. Our failure to understand the ancient Cross Timbers is contributing to the ongoing destruction and fragmentation which is a major threat to the viability of this ecosystem and to the biodiversity, water quality, and recreational values it supports. The project is made possible by willing landowners, the City of Sand Springs, the State of Oklahoma and The Nature Conservancy.



## Location !

It's located along the eastern shoreline of Lake Keystone. Portions of the property are in both Osage and Tulsa County. The City of Sand Springs owns the property. The Parks and Recreation Department has



taken the lead on this project in hopes of opening the preserve to the general public for visitation through its parks system. If you need additional information or help with directions, please contact our offices at 918-246-2561

# Historical Significance

Washington Irving



1783-1859  
online-literature.com

*This juncture was a major “stepping-off” point for ancient Spanish explorers, Native Americans and recent travelers heading west*

From a human history point of view, the confluence of the Arkansas and Cimarron Rivers is a major historical feature in Oklahoma. These two rivers come together just a few miles southwest of the preserve, and the confluence is roughly visible from atop the property. This juncture was a major “stepping-off” point for ancient Spanish explorers, Native Americans and recent travelers heading west.

In the fall of 1832, American author Washington Irving (“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”) joined a military expedition leaving Fort Gibson to follow the Arkansas River and circle across present day Oklahoma. Irving joined the expedition to write about what he saw

on the journey. His book, titled “A Tour on the Prairies” is perhaps the first white-man written account of Oklahoma, the Sand Springs area and of course the mighty Arkansas River. In this 174-year old account, Irving describes the bountiful landscape, Native American Indians, buffalo and more. In October of 1832 this military party camped somewhere very close to the modern site of the Keystone Ancient Forest, or perhaps on the exact site itself.

From a natural history perspective, the site is important too! Here you can find a protected example of Oklahoma’s cross-timbers ecoregion that surrounds the Sand Springs area. Certainly there are other examples of cross-timbers

left today, but this landscape is slowly becoming consumed by urban sprawl...the Keystone Ancient forest Preserve shall be protected for generations to come.

Thanks to a collection of forward thinking visionaries, the Keystone Ancient Forest Preserve has been officially set aside and protected. All of the human and natural history of the site will be available for future visitors to enjoy. It’s a project that had taken years to bring along and will continue to unfold in the future.



"We came upon the banks of the Arkansas [River], at a place (near Tulsa) where tracks of numerous horses, all entering the water, showed where a party of Osage hunters had recently crossed the river on their way to the buffalo range . . . ." "A little farther on, we reached a straggling Osage village, on the banks of the Arkansas. Our arrival created quite a sensation. A number of old men came forward and shook hands with us severally; while the women and children huddled together in groups, staring at us wildly...." The scene in the painting portrays the parties' camp the evening of the encounter at the Osage village. "...several Osage Indians, visitors from the village were mingled among our men." "We gave them food, and, what they relished, coffee; for the Indians partake in the universal fondness for this beverage, which pervades the West." - A Tour of the Prairies, Washington Irving, 1835.

*Washington Irving Meeting the Osage* by Wayne Cooper was dedicated on March 16, 1998 the commission was managed by the Oklahoma State Senate Historical Preservation Fund, Inc.

The painting is located inside the Oklahoma State Senate lounge on the fourth floor of the Oklahoma State Capitol and can be viewed daily from 8:30-5:30 when the Senate is not in session.



# Top 10 Things You Should Know

## “Top 10” Things you should know before you request a visit to the Keystone Ancient Forest:

- 1) Recreational trails will be under construction this fall, and continuing for approximately 2 years
- 2) Trails used today are an intermediate step to open the site for visitation, and **ARE NOT currently A.D.A. accessible**
- 3) Failure to meet the 10-person large group requirement may result in denied requests for visits in the future
- 4) Keystone Ancient Forest Trail Guides are authorized representatives of the City of Sand Springs
- 5) Visitors are expected to follow guidance and instruction provided by the Trail Guides.
- 6) As a nature preserve, visitors should dress appropriately for sun, insects and wildlife
- 7) Visitors may not bring unwanted trash, containers or other items beyond the parking area.
- 8) Group hikes may be cut-short or terminated for visitor behavior or actions deemed un-safe by the Trail Guide.
- 9) Trail Guides will serve as hosts only, escorting your group onto and off-of the property.
- 10) For Teachers—You are encouraged to prepare lesson plans for your students. Trail Guides will be prepared to answer questions of a general nature about the trails, the forest and the project.

**“To ensure a quality hike at the Keystone Ancient Forest, reservations will only be accepted online for groups of 10 or more to visit the forest.”**

**Teachers!  
Due to the rugged terrain we can only accept requests from school groups currently enrolled in the 4th grade level and above.**



## To Arrange For A Visit

1. simply e-mail us at [visitancientforest@sandspringsok.org](mailto:visitancientforest@sandspringsok.org)
2. include in your request the date, time and duration of the planned visit
3. include contact email and telephone information for confirmation of your visit
4. list the total number of persons in your visit
5. list any special request considerations (remember there are currently only primitive trails available at this time)

[visitancientforest@sandspringsok.org](mailto:visitancientforest@sandspringsok.org)



# Keystone Ancient Forest Preserve Map

