Dr. Angie Debo

“Oklahoma’s Greatest Historian”
Historians are virtually unanimous in their recognition of Angie Debo as the first practitioner of what is known today as the New Indian History. Consider for example Western historian Richard White’s assessment of her legacy: “In a real sense, she invented the ‘new’ Indian history long before there was a name for it. She gave Indians a history that was more than victimization. In her books Indians were creative and resilient people engaged in a struggle to control their own lives and destinies.” 1 Noted Pottawatomi scholar Terry P. Wilson, author of Teaching American Indian History (1993) concluded that while “largely disregarded at the time, Debo’s work nonetheless foreshadowed the new Indian history of the postwar period.” 2 Pulitzer Prize-winning author Larry McMurtry observed that “Debo had the ability, uncommon in an American historian, to deal with tragic subjects movingly but unsentimentally, with a kind of Roman lens.” 3 Other scholars, however, have been less generous. One of the founders of the New Western History, Patricia Nelson Limerick, wrote of Debo’s Prairie City: “While a comparison to Jekyll and Hyde would certainly overstate the case, there do seem to be two public record Angie Debo: Angie Debo #1, the justly-famous, often-reprinted, often-cited author who wrote critically and openly about the cruel, manipulative process of dispossession that made the modern state of Oklahoma possible, and Angie Debo #2, the much less famous, much less reprinted, much less cited author, who wrote cheerfully about pioneer courage and determination and who made and retained an easy peace with the frontier history associated with Frederick Jackson Turner.” 4

The answer to this seeming paradox probably lies with Debo’s inclusive vision of westward expansion. The daughter of nineteenth-century pioneers who struggled to wrest a living from an unsettled land, Debo personally witnessed the processes described by Turner. Of Oklahoma’s first generation of settlers she wrote: “They know from their own experience the throes of settlement at Jamestown; the first harvest, the church, the Pilgrim Fathers; the constitution-making of the Founders of the Republic; the promotion and the railroad-building in the era of western settlement; oil, and the industrialism of the modern age, and the repercussions of world-shattering events. One generation had experienced all that and so that compressed the whole experience of American history into the lives of this one group of people.” 5 But the depth of Debo’s intellectual curiosity also easily transcended the limitations of Turner’s frontier thesis, and of her approach to history she wrote: “When I start on a research project I have no idea how it will turn out. I simply want to dig out the truth and record it. I am not pro-Indian or pro-anything, unless it is pro-integrity. But sometimes I find all the truth on one side of the issue.” 6 And as they have from the onset of her career, her readers today still appreciate the soundness of her research, the clarity of her writing, and the sincerity of her motives in searching out the truth.

Kurt Anderson, Ph.D., Research Professional, University Archives, Edmon Low Library, Oklahoma State University.
A Biographical Sketch
as written by herself

[Note: Tan passages contain added context and were researched and written by Dr. Kurt Anderson, 2017.]

I was born on a farm near Beattie, Kansas, January 30, 1890, in 1895 I was taken from the Beattie vicinity by my parents to a farm about twenty miles south of Manhattan. In 1889 my father bought a farm near Marshall, Oklahoma Territory, and brought his family—my mother, my younger brother, and me—there in a covered wagon. We arrived on November 8, 1899, and I have a distinct memory of the cold, sunny day, the lively little new town, and the greening wheat fields we passed as we lumbered slowly down the road to our new home. I attended rural one-room schools in Kansas and Oklahoma; passed a territorial examination and received a common school diploma at the age of twelve (1902); and then waited hopelessly around for a high school to open. I finally got one year of high school in the village school at Marshall, riding 3½ miles on my pony, then waited around some more. There was no library, no magazines, and only the one book our parents managed to buy for each of us children as a Christmas present.

Dr. Angie Debo - “Oklahoma’s Greatest Historian”

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During 1924-33 I was a member of the history department of the West Texas State Teachers College (now West Texas A&M University) at Canyon. The following year (1933-34) I served as curator of the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum on the same campus. During this time I worked on my doctorate at the University of Oklahoma, receiving my degree in 1933. My doctoral dissertation was published as The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic by the University of Oklahoma Press in 1934. It was awarded the John H. Dunning Prize of the American Historical Association and was so well received by reviewers that I resigned from my academic position and went into freelance writing. During this time of writing I had some institutional connections one summer on the history faculty at Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College at Nacogdoches, Texas; some summers on the history faculty of Oklahoma State University (then Oklahoma A. and M. College), and a year or more as state director of the Federal Writers Project in Oklahoma.

In 1927 Angie was inducted into the Pi Gamma Mu National Social Science Honor Society. Tragically, on October 3, 1931, her brother Edwin died of Hodgkin’s disease. The years from 1934-1946 were some of Angie Debo’s most productive. Beginning in 1934 she researched and began writing what arguably became her most important work, And Still The Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes. Two years later she completed the manuscript. In 1937 she worked alongside Grant and Carolyn Foreman with editing and conducting interviews for the WPA Indian-Pioneer Project. They later became two of her dearest friends, and their joint project resulted in the Indian-Pioneer Papers.

Finally I became sixteen, then the legal age for a teacher’s certificate. I took another territorial examination and started out as a rural school teacher, teaching in Logan and Garfield counties near Marshall. Then Marshall finally worked up to a four-year high school, and I went back and graduated with the first class in 1913, at the advanced age of twenty-three. There followed two more years of rural teaching. Then I entered the University of Oklahoma in 1915, and was graduated in 1918. There my college major was history, and I came under the influence of Edward Everett Dale and looked ahead to a career of historical writing. I continued teaching, however, I served as village principal at North Enid one year (1918-19), then taught history four years in the Enid High School (1919-23).

During her time in Enid, Angie Debo received the first of many honors that she would earn throughout her long career. In 1920, she was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society. In 1923, she was selected to receive the American Policy of Isolation. It was published in 1924.

I spent the year 1923-24 at the University of Chicago, receiving my master’s degree in 1924. My master’s thesis turned out well and was published (with J. Fred Rippy, my supervisor, as co-author) in the Smith College Studies in History, under the title, The Historical Background of the American Policy of Isolation. It was published in 1924.

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Angie Debo’s years at Oklahoma A&M (Oklahoma State University after 1958) were as eventful and productive as any period of her life. In 1949 the University of Oklahoma Press published Oklahoma: Foot loose and Fancy-free. Funded in part by a Rockefeller Fellowship, it did not turn out the way her sponsors had hoped; and the disappointment felt by Edward Everett Dale over the final product sorely strained his relationship with Angie. Nevertheless, the rift was soon healed following Dale’s attendance at a reception honoring Angie and the book’s release at the Edmon Low Library in Stillwater. In that same year she conducted a survey of social and economic conditions in the full Blooded settlements of the Five Civilized Tribes for the Indian Rights Association. [Terminology can change over time. Today, “Five Tribes” or “Five Tribes of the Mississippi Culture” are preferred terms for their neutrality.]

In 1950 Angie was inducted into the Oklahoma Memorial Association’s Oklahoma Hall of Fame. The following year she published the results of her survey in The Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma: Report on Social and Economic Conditions. In 1952 she began writing a column entitled “This Week in Oklahoma History” for the Oklahoma City Times, became a book reviewer for the New York Times, found herself immersed in Gamma Theta Upsilon, a national professional geographical fraternity, and initiated into Delta Kappa Gamma, a national honor society for women teachers. After years of frustration trying to find a publisher for her edited version of Oliver Nelson’s memoirs, to Angie’s immense relief the Arthur H. Clarke Company finally published them in 1953 as The Cowboy’s Southwest: being the reminiscences of Oliver Nelson, Freighter, camp cook, cowboy, frontiersman in Kansas, Indian Territory, Texas and Oklahoma, 1878-1893. Sadly, Angie suffered yet another deep personal loss in 1954 with the death of her mother, Lina, following years of declining health. Two years later, Angie once again immersed herself in her work on behalf of Native Americans as she became a member of the board of directors of the Association on American Indian Affairs, and under its auspices conducted a survey of the effects of the Relocation policy on Oklahoma’s Indians. As Angie’s tenure at newly-rechristened Oklahoma State University reached its end, she began editing the Oklahoma Indian Newsletter and celebrated Angie Debo Recognition Day in her hometown of Marshall. Then, happily retired from OSU, Angie made her first overseas trip to Europe and the U.S.S.R.

The tumultuous decade of the 1960s saw Angie as active as ever. Following a trip to Mexico in the summer of 1960, the Oklahoma Historical Society awarded her an honorary life membership. In 1962 Debo’s edited version of Horatio B. Cuthmann’s History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Nachtie Indians was published, the Soroptimist Club of Oklahoma City awarded her a Certificate of Contribution to Oklahoma City, and she resumed her travels with trips to Canada and England. Three years later Angie found herself teaching at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 1966 she visited Africa. In the final year of the decade she participated in Marshall’s first annual Prairie City Days held in her honor, and traveled to Alaska, a trip which inspired her to spend the next six years lobbying successfully for the land rights of that state’s native peoples.

Royalties from the 1970 publication of A History of the Indians of the United States and Genocrome: The Man, His Time, His Place in 1976 at last afforded Angie Debo the elusive financial security for which she had worked so hard, and her well-received biography of Genoromo, in particular, brought her ever greater recognition as a writer. The Border Regional Library Association honored Angie with its Southwest Book Award for Biography in 1977. One year later she received the Wrangler Award from the Western Heritage Association of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and the Southwestern Library Association 1978 Book Award. Other tributes to her life and work included a lifetime membership in the Oklahoma Writer’s Federation, in 1978, and the Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History in 1979.

Angie Debo’s last years capped her career with still greater honors as well as a documentary film featuring highlights of her long and productive life. In 1980 Oklahoma State University held a reception in her honor. From 1981-1985, OSU faculty members Gloria Valencia-Weber and Glenna Matthews interviewed Angie for an oral history project which, in conjunction with those conducted by the Institute for Research in History from 1982-1986, provided the basis for an installment of the PBS American Experience series titled Indians, Outlaws, and Angie Debo. In 1982 Oklahoma State University established the Angie Debo Award for Oklahoma History, and she received an honorary lifetime membership in the Payne County Historical Society. A year later Angie was inducted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame, Hereford, Texas, and she received a Distinguished Service Citation from the University of Oklahoma Alumni Association. In 1985 the Cherokee Nation designated her an Ambassador of Goodwill, she received a Certificate of Recognition from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and, in what was perhaps her proudest moment, the State of Oklahoma hung her portrait in the Rotunda of the State Capitol – the first woman so honored. Angie received the Achievement Award from the American Association for State and Local History in 1986. In 1987 the American Historical Association granted her its Award for Scholarly Distinction, and in January 1988 Oklahoma Governor Henry L. Bellmon presented it to her at a special ceremony at her home in Marshall.

Angie Debo passed away on February 21, 1989, and was buried at North Cemetery in Marshall.

Dr. Anderson’s Note on Sources
I derived all of my information from three primary source collections which are archived at the Edmon Low Library at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. These collections are available for use by researchers and the general public upon request:

Angie Debo Collection
Collection No. 88-013

Dale-Debo Correspondence
Collection No. 94-023

Interviews with Angie Debo, 1981-1985
Collection No. 85-013

Dr. Angie Debo - “Oklahoma’s Greatest Historian”

Angie Debo, rural school teacher, with her students (ca. 1906). Photo WM471.2-01b-1. Courtesy Debo—OSU Archives.

Angie Debo (1947), Oklahoma A & M College, Queenie Tate 25, where the library’s map collection was located. Photo 0 1007/39-01. Courtesy Debo—OSU Archives.
**Angie Debo Biographical Timeline**

**Timeline by Heather M. Lloyd; additions by Karen Neumier and Kurt Anderson**

**1890-1918**

- **1891** Born near Beatie, Kansas, to Edward P. Debo (b. 1862) and Lina E. Cooper Debo (b. 1865).
- **1891** Brother Edwin F. Debo born.
- **Nov. 1899** Debo Family moved to Marshall, Oklahoma Territory.
- **1902** Received common school diploma.
- **1906** Attended one year of high school.
- **1907-1910** Obtained teacher’s certificate and taught in rural schools near Marshall, Oklahoma.
- **1913** Graduated from Marshall High School.
- **1915-18** Attended one year of high school. Sold the family farm, bought a hardware store, and made for a life worth living.” —W. David Baird, Ph.D.

**1918-1928**

- **1918** Received bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Oklahoma, Norman.
- **1919-1919** Principal, Village School, North End, Oklahoma.
- **1919-1923** Taught history at Senior High School, Enid, Oklahoma.
- **1923-1924** Graduate student at the University of Chicago.
- **1924** Received master’s degree in history with an emphasis in international relations from the University of Chicago. Publication of The Historical Background of the American Policy of Isolation.
- **1924-1933** Member of the history department, West Texas State Teachers College, Canyon, Texas. Taught a high school associated with the college. Studied toward her doctorate at the University of Chicago and worked on her dissertation.
- **1926** Brother Edwin married Lily Elizabeth Henneke of End.

**1931-1935**

- **1931** Brother Edwin Debo passed away. Buried at North Cemetery, a few miles from Marshall, OK.
- **1933** Received the Doctor of Philosophy degree in history from the University of Oklahoma. Dissertation entitled “History of the Choctaw Nation: From the Close of the Civil War to the End of the Tribal Period.”
- **1933-1934** Curator of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, West Texas State Teachers College, Canyon, Texas.
- **1934** Publication of Debo’s doctoral dissertation as The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic. Began a career as a freelance writer. Moved back to Marshall, Oklahoma.
- **1934-1936** Conducted research and completed manuscript for And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes, funded by the Social Science Research Council.
- **1935** Taught summer school at Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College, Nacogdoches, Texas.
- **1936** Completed manuscript for The Rise and Fall of The Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma: Report on Social and Economic Conditions.

**1935-1941**

- **1937-1939** Researched and wrote The Road to Disappearance: A History of the Creek Indians, funded in part by a grant from the Social Science Research Council.
- **1937-1939** Participated in editing and conducting interviews for the WPA Indian Pioneer Project which resulted in the Indian Pioneer Papers.
- **1938-1939** Supervised the Federal Writers Project in Oklahoma.
- **1939** Published And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes after some revisions made to the manuscript.
- **1940** Publication of And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes after some revisions made to the manuscript.

**1943-1949**

- **1943** Publication of Tutla: From Creek Town to Oil Capital.
- **1944** Publication of Praise City: The Story of an American Community, Debo’s only work of fiction, based on the history of Marshall and nearby towns. Father Edward P. Debo passed away. Buried at North Cemetery, a few miles from Marshall.
- **1944** Taught summer school at Oklahoma A&M College.
- **1945-1947** Served on the faculty of the Oklahoma A&M College Library as curator of maps.
- **1947-1947** Published the only work of fiction, based on the history of Marshall and nearby towns. Father Edward P. Debo passed away. Buried at North Cemetery, a few miles from Marshall.
- **1948** Received bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Oklahoma. Dissertation entitled “History of the Choctaw Nation: From the Close of the Civil War to the End of the Tribal Period.”
- **1947-1947** Curator of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, West Texas State Teachers College, Canyon, Texas.
- **1949** Published Oklahoma: A History of the Five Tribes of Oklahoma.
- **1949** Taught summer school at Oklahoma A&M College.
- **1949** Taught summer school at Oklahoma A&M College.
- **1949** Taught summer school at Oklahoma A&M College.
- **1950** Taught summer school at Oklahoma A&M College.
- **1950** Taught summer school at Oklahoma A&M College.
- **1951** Published The Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma: Report on Social and Economic Conditions.
- **1952-1954** Wrote “This Week in Oklahoma History” for the Oklahoma City Times.
- **1954** Mother Lina E. Debo passed away. Buried at North Cemetery, a few miles from Marshall.
- **1955** Taught summer school at Oklahoma A&M College.
- **1956** Published Oliver Nelson’s The Cowman’s Southwest: Being the Reminiscences of Oliver Nelson, Frontier: Camp Cook, Cowboy, Frontiersman in Kansas, Indian Territory, Texas, and Oklahoma, 1870-1883, edited by Debo.
- **1956** Taught summer school at Oklahoma A&M College.
- **1957-1959** Taught Oklahoma history at Oklahoma State University.
- **1958-1959** Published Oklahoma Indian Newsletter.
- **1960** Visited Mexico for a summer seminar.
- **1962** Publication of Horatio B. Cushman’s History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez Indians, edited by Debo.
- **1962** Visited Canada.
- **1963** Visited England.
- **1965** Taught at the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- **1966** Visited Africa.
- **1969-1969** Member, Board of Directors, Association on American Indian Affairs.
- **1975** Appointed member of the Oklahoma Bicentennial Commission.
- **1976** Publication of Genomics: The Man, His Time, His Place.
- **1980** Reagination held in Debo’s honor, Oklahoma State University.
- **1982-1986** Film for Institute for Research in History for PBS American Experience Series.
- **1988** Angie Debo passed away on February 21 and was buried on February 24 at North Cemetery, Marshall. Governor Bellman ordered flags flying over state agencies to be lowered to half mast.

**“Angie Debo, one of Oklahoma’s most astute observers… demonstrated that history as a profession was a sacred calling and made for a life worth living.” —W. David Baird, Ph.D.**

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(Timeline photos, References 11-18, p.33)
When he was nine years old, his father moved to what is now Greer County, Oklahoma, near the Kiowa-Comanche reservation. At the age of ten he attended a school taught by a woman with a fine library and a love of English literature who, over the course of the four-month term, inspired Dale to see the history of his frontier region through the romantic lens of Dickens, Scott, and Cooper. At the age of seventeen, he earned an eighth-grade diploma from the Board of Education of the Territory of Oklahoma. Then, after trying his hand at cowboying, ranching, and picking cotton for wages, he passed an examination at the county seat, received his certificate, and accepted his first job as a school teacher in a one-room country school at thirty-five dollars a month for a three-month term. Two years later Dale became the principal of a six-teacher school, and soon thereafter began to attend summer sessions at the territorial normal school (Dale referred to it as Harvard two years later where he earned a master’s degree a month for a three-month term). Two years later Dale became the principal of a six-teacher school, and soon thereafter began to attend summer sessions at the territorial normal school (Dale referred to it as ‘the nut-normal’ school at Edmund). He subsequently graduated with a high school diploma and then, by continuing his studies whenever he could find time away from teaching, received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1911. A promising scholar, Dale enrolled at Harvard two years later where he earned a master’s degree in the spring of 1914. He then returned to the University of Oklahoma as an instructor in the history department where he met Angie Debo, the woman who would later become his most accomplished student and one of his closest friends.

Dale’s influence on Angie’s life and career began the moment she first attended one of his undergraduate history classes. Believing at first that she wanted to major in English, Dale’s sophomore class in American history quickly convinced her otherwise. At Harvard, Dale had come under the direction of Frederick Jackson Turner, the brilliant scholar whose “frontier thesis” so clearly articulated the process of westward expansion which Dale had himself experienced growing up in Texas and Oklahoma. When Dale joined the faculty at the University of Oklahoma, he inspired his own students with Turner’s passion for historical research. Dale showed his students how to take notes, organize material, and format outlines. Instead of simply allowing his students to work on their term themes on their own and then hand them in, Dale spent the entire semester teaching them the same techniques of historical investigation and writing that he had been taught at Harvard. It was Dale’s dedication to his profession that Angie later credited as the main reason why she changed her major and graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a bachelor’s degree in history.

With her degree in hand, Angie gained even more experience as an educator before becoming a student once again. The 1918-1919 school year saw her serve as the principal at the Village School in North Erid, Oklahoma, and for four years after that she taught history at Erid’s Senior High School. Then in 1923 Angie began her work in international relations at the University of Chicago under the guidance of J. Fred Rippy, graduating the following year with a master’s degree in history with an emphasis in international relations. In the meantime, Dale had returned to Harvard under Turner’s supervision once again, and by 1922 had become a Doctor of Philosophy. Soon thereafter he rejoined the faculty at the University of Oklahoma, and, in the same year in which Angie graduated with her master’s degree, he became the head of the history department. The following year the two began to correspond by mail, a practice they continued for the next forty-seven years.

From 1924 to 1933 Angie was a member of the history department of West Texas State Teachers College, Canyon, Texas, and although Angie shared with Dale her initial satisfaction at having found employment, her correspondence soon began to express an interest in pursuing further graduate study. In a letter to Angie dated January 5, 1928, he assured her that she would be welcomed back to the University of Oklahoma, and before the year was out she had enrolled there under his supervision.

While she always credited Dale with suggesting the topic of her dissertation, entitled History of the Choctaw Nation from the Close of the Civil War to the End of the Tribal Period, their correspondence throughout the time she worked on it revealed her unwillingness to accept any criticism of her writing even when it came from her own respected advisor. In a letter dated October 14, 1931, in which he tried to soften her criticism of her work, Dale explained that he could not imagine arguing with Professor Turner, the director of Dale’s thesis, and that he had long ago vowed never to argue again with a student about anything in a dissertation. But then in the same letter he offered his sincere condolences over the death of Angie’s brother Edwin as a measure of his personal affection for her.

Before she had even received her Ph.D. Angie wrote to Dale in December of 1932 that she planned to apply for a fellowship to research and produce, as she put it, “a study of the process by which the land embraced in the old Indian Territory passed out of the possession of members of the Five Civilized Tribes to whom it was allotted, and into the possession of the whites.” One month later Angie appealed to her mentor for a letter of recommendation for an open position in history at Western Reserve University. Dale willingly complied with her request, and from that time forward unfailingly wrote letters of support in her behalf both to prospective employers and to sponsors of fellowships such as the American Association of University Women, the Social Science Research Council, Houghton Mifflin, and Alfred A. Knopf.

In September 1933 Angie wrote Dale with good news. She informed him that despite her troubles at West Texas State Teachers College she had found employment “of a sort” as curator of the Pipestone Plains Historical Museum. She also let him know that Joseph Brandt, University of Oklahoma Press director, had secured approval for the publication of her dissertation, titled The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Nation.
From 1934-1936 Angie researched and wrote what she always thought was her most important work, and Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes (1940). Unfortunately, however, the resistance she encountered from the University of Oklahoma Press over its publication permanently altered their relationship with Dale. Ironically, not only had it been Dale who had earlier suggested the subject to her for a possible dissertation topic, he had also been instrumental in helping Angie secure the fellowship from the Social Science Research Council which made it possible for her to write the book. But when she uncovered how corrupt the process of allotment had been in Oklahoma, as well as the fact that many of the principal grafters she exposed were still living and still prominent in the state’s affairs, the university press refused to publish it out of a fear of being sued for libel. Sadly, while it was actually a protege of Dale’s, Professor Morris Wardell, who had recommended that the book not be published, Angie always held her mentor personally responsible. Whether or not she ever suspected Wardell’s role in rejecting the book, she knew it was a disqualification—being a woman—she reminded Dale of her straight Preston to whom she had recently lost. But while she was very frank regarding her one failure, her sensitivity was not one she had: “Although I do not care to grant.” He did not, then or ever.

Therefore no occasion for embarrassment if I have made one request . . . [and] it is to your interest and encouragement that a new element into the pleasantest relationship I have found in all my academic career . . . [and] it is to your interest and encouragement that a new element into the pleasantest relationship I have found in all my academic career . . . [and] it is to your interest and encouragement that a new element into the pleasantest relationship I have found in all my academic career . . . [and] it is to your interest and encouragement that a new element into the pleasantest relationship I have found in all my academic career . . . [and] it is to your interest and encouragement that a new element into the pleasantest relationship I have found in all my academic career . . . [and] it is to your interest and encouragement that a new element into the pleasantest relationship I have found in all my academic career . . . [and] it is to your interest and encouragement that a new element into the pleasantest relationship I have found in all my academic career.

But perhaps she had another reason for the dedication beyond mere gratitude. By this stage in their relationship, Dale had moved beyond addressing her letters “Dear Miss Debo” or “Dear Dr. Debo;” he now addressed her “Dear Angie.” After the first time he had done so she wrote: “I am so pleased with your informal address that I am thinking of framing the letter. I hope you will continue the good habit.” He did, although he never extended to Angie his permission to address him as anything other than “Dr. Dale.”

Two years after the publication of Prairie City, Angie secured a Rockefeller Fellowship at the University of Oklahoma under the supervision of Savoie Lottinville, Brandt’s successor as director of the University of Oklahoma Press, and chairman of the Committee on Fellowships of which Dale, too, was a member. Angie had received the fellowship to write her interpretation of the spirit of Oklahoma, and the qualifications—being a woman—she reminded Dale of her straightline to which was itself an indication of his overall assessment of her manuscript. He added that she should “be able to deliver the completed manuscript within twelve months at most.” But when Angie replied: “I hope you are right about the time required—and remove that. But I always feel safer to allow myself a little latitude in time and money,” Dale responded sharply that “as to time and money—... the amount you indicate is considerably more than we have ever yet allocated to anyone else.” It was only the beginning.

Twelve months later Angie submitted her manuscript for review by the committee. Dale returned it with his wish that she would “not be offended by anything in my comments because you know that my only desire is to be of service if possible.” Nevertheless, the title of Dale’s memorandum, “Oklahoma: Where the Tall Superlatives Grow,” was itself an indication of his overall assessment of her manuscript. He concluded by saying that “it will take more hard work to make this book the best you can do. And don’t be stubborn and insist on your own wording or pet phrase. Only a genius like G.B.S. [George Bernard Shaw] can afford to be disagreeable in his writing. You and I must write to please our readers as well as to inform them.”

Angie spent nearly a year revising her manuscript before resubmitting it. Somewhat surprised with the result, Dale wrote: “You have accepted far more of my criticisms and suggestions than I had any right to expect and naturally I think the manuscript is greatly improved.” And knowing how difficult it must have been for Angie to rewrite the work, he added: “I hope you do not feel that the situation is 'fear to tread' had not it been that the situation was very bad and I felt a certain measure of responsibility because of having suggested both the study and you as the proper person to do it.” He then concluded by saying that he was “deeply grateful for the evidences you have given of your continued friendship and goodwill.”

Finally, more than three years after she had received the Rockefeller Fellowship, Oklahoma: Foot loose and Fancy free (1949) was ready to go to the editor. Angie had in fact retreated as far as she intended. In a letter to the editor of the University of Oklahoma Press objecting to the many unauthorized changes that she had made to her manuscript, Angie wrote: “I am standing on my rights. I shall not allow anything to go out in my name that I cannot approve. It is better to have me check that understanding now. If the Press has any counter proposal to make, I am ready to listen, but the work as it stands now, is in a few places not acceptable to me, and I shall not accept it.” Then almost apologetically she added: “I hate to close on this note in the end she got her way, and whatever bitterness remained between her and Dale after publication of the book soon faded.

From 1947-1955 Angie worked as curator of maps at the Edmon Low Library in Stillwater, and soon after publication of Oklahoma: Foot loose and Fancy free the library staff held a reception in Angie’s honor. Her mother was there, and Dale was the guest speaker. In a letter to Angie soon afterward, Dale wrote: “It was a grand party and I ate there swelling with pride and of course taking to myself a little of the credit for your success,” although he then generously added: “I know that you owe any success you ever attained far more to your mother than you do to anybody else.”

Dale retired from the University of Oklahoma in 1952 after which, although he was no longer an active influence in Angie’s work, they remained the closest of friends. In a letter to her shortly after his death in 1972 he wrote: “It seems a long time since I have had a chance to go over the old times with you when you were my student, or when you received the prize money from Alfred A. Knopf, who had written me asking if I regarded your manuscript as history and I told him it certainly was. Please send me a copy of your book with bill attached and I will send you a check for it at once.” He then somewhat uncharacteristically signed off with “Love and best wishes to you always.” In her response to Dale and his wife, Rosalie, Angie wrote: “I am sending the book, but I am not sending you a bill. Please let me give you this book as a small indication of how much I owe you.” She also reminisced about her years at the University of Oklahoma under Dale’s tutelage and the lessons she had learned in his classrooms: “I think much of my later career in writing developed out of the techniques I developed then. It is my opinion that much bad historical writing is of faulty note-taking and organization—the very things I learned to avoid under your guidance. Love to both of you, Angie Debo

For Anderson’s note on sources, see page 7 of this book.

Dr. Angie Debo - “Oklahoma’s Greatest Historian” Dr. Angie Debo - “Oklahoma’s Greatest Historian”

Geraldine “Gerry” Schaefer and Angie Debo were dear friends. Gerry was a high school English teacher in Marshall and Covington, OK, and wife of Robert (Bob) J. Schaefer and mother of Ronald D. Schaefer.

The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic
Debo's doctoral dissertation, originally published in 1934, is a historical record of the Choctaw Nation’s people, “whose forced migration from their ancestral homes in the South to what is now Oklahoma and whose subsequent efforts from the Civil War to the close of the century to maintain an autonomous government and institutions form a distinctive and arresting chapter in the history of the West.”

And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes
First published in 1940, Debo’s classic work conveys the disastrous story of how promises to the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole nations were broken after passage of the Dawes Act of 1887. This book “fundamentally changed the way historians viewed, and wrote about, American Indian history.”

The Road to Disappearance
First published in 1941, “The Road to Disappearance tells for the first time the full Creek story from its vague anthropological beginnings to the loss by the tribe of independent political identity, when during the first decade of this century the lands of the Five Civilized Tribes were divided into severalty ownership.”

Prairie City: The Story of an American Community
First published in 1944, the fictional Prairie City offers a social history of the birth, growth, and life in a representative Oklahoma town, a composite, Debo says, of several “typical” communities in Logan county, including her hometown of Marshall and nearby counties. Well-researched and based on statistical facts, articles, and oral histories, the time period spans the Oklahoma Land Run of April 22, 1889, through World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. Debo covers various changes such as economic conditions, state and national politics, transportation, and community values and attitudes.
The Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma: Report on Social and Economic Conditions
First published in 1951 by the Indian Rights Association of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Debo described it as a “sequel” to her book And Still the Waters Run. For this report, Debo wrote, “The survey was conducted in the summer of 1949. Some time was spent at the Agency in Muskogee collecting statistical information, but most of the work was done in the field.” 35

A History of the Indians of the United States
First published in 1970, “... this book is an in-depth, historical survey of the Indians of the United States, including the Eskimos and Aleuts of Alaska, which isolates and analyzes the problems which have beset these people since their first contacts with Europeans. Only in the light of this knowledge, the author points out, can an intelligent Indian policy be formulated.” 32

Geronimo
Debo’s biography of the great Apache warrior, first published in 1976, was her final book. Several decades in the making, in the book’s preface, she said her “task was to explore Geronimo’s individual experiences, his motivations, his personal life and character.” 33

The Cowman’s Southwest: Being the Reminiscences of Oliver Nelson, Freighter, Camp Cook, Cowboy, Frontiersman in Kansas, Indian Territory, Texas and Oklahoma, 1878-1893.
Written by Oliver Nelson and edited by Angie Debo. Published in 1953 by A. H. Clark Co. in Glendale, CA.

Books Edited
The WPA Guide to 1930s Oklahoma
Debo served as a co-editor with John M. Oskison for this title originally published in 1941 as Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State. Entries were compiled by workers of the Writers’ Program of the Works Project Administration in Oklahoma. Oklahoma: A Guide was sponsored by the University of Oklahoma. Reprinted in 1986 as The WPA Guide to 1930s Oklahoma with the addition of Debo’s essay, “History,” which was omitted in the 1941 edition, and a new introduction by Anne Hodges Morgan.

History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez Indians
Written by Horatio B. Cushman and edited by Angie Debo. Published in 1962 by Redlands Press, Stillwater, OK.
The campus is unbelievably beautiful with the trees in their tenderest green. And a different Angie Debo meets me at every turn – the freshman so eager to enter college that she trembled until she could hardly enroll (and what a dark rainy day it was!), the disillusioned and lonely girl who carried on her studies, the horror and protest against the World War, the eager girl with the final cap and gown, the happy girl who returned for Phi Beta Kappa initiation, the graduate student, the lonely woman out of a job and carrying on research against all sensible reasoning, and so on and on. And from a personal standpoint – disregarding the horror of the world outside – my present residence is probably the happiest I have ever spent here.

In *Prairie City*, an historically accurate fiction book loosely based on the founding of Marshall, Oklahoma, Angie described the organization of public schools in 1891. She wrote that out of all the students, just “two or three found in their tattered books a mystic summons to a realm beyond the boundaries of time and space, and the urge for further schooling became within them a consuming flame.” She might have been describing her own experience. As a youngster, the school she attended only went through eighth grade, and she had to wait until the founding of Marshall High School to continue her education. In the film *Indians, Outlaws and Angie Debo*, she said this waiting was “one of the most miserable times of her life.”

In correspondence dated October 27, 1984, to Joseph A. Brandt (editor at Princeton University Press who, in 1940, published her book *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes*) she wrote, “…Learning to read at age five in a country school was a joyful experience for me. With no routine promotions I happily went through one McGuffy’s reader after another. And I think everyone who enjoys reading plans to write and some of them do. I planned my first book at age 7 — all about the flowers my brother and I saw on the Kansas prairie, but I lacked contacts and skills and guidance in rural Kansas and pioneer Oklahoma. I taught rural schools, graduated from the new little high school at Marshall, and finally made it to the University of Oklahoma at age 20. … ” In the same letter to Brandt, Angie said, “When I went to the Univ. of Chicago I had the aim of writing a thesis that would be published. And it was. Same of my doctoral dissertation at OU.”

In 1942, Debo was awarded an Alfred A. Knopf History Fellowship which helped fund her work on *Prairie City*. She spent some time at OU in Norman writing. Her stay on campus inspired this diary entry:

April 29, 1942

“I am extremely fortunate in my chance to stay at the Graduate House. The meals are so good I marvel at Mrs. Knox’s ability to finance them, the girls are capable and interesting, and there is every opportunity for study and quiet.”

“I worked on my book today, consequently I feel a little discouraged over the possibility of writing on such a complicated subject. I seem to remember that is my usual reaction in beginning a book.”

In an oral history interview, Glenna Matthews, Ph.D., shared that Angie “bristled” to Matthews’ comment that Angie’s “rural teachers must have not been very inspiring.” Matthews said that Angie “chided” her by saying, “They walked in glory among us. They represented the life of the mind.”

“… Learning to read at age five in a country school was a joyful experience for me. With no routine promotions I happily went through one McGuffy’s reader after another. And I think everyone who enjoys reading plans to write and some of them do. I planned my first book at age 7 — all about the flowers my brother and I saw on the Kansas prairie, but I lacked contacts and skills and guidance in rural Kansas and pioneer Oklahoma. I taught rural schools, graduated from the new little high school at Marshall, and finally made it to the University of Oklahoma at age 20. … ”

Angie’s college diplomas (descriptions, p. 18).
Angie Debo Awards and Honors Timeline

1920-1950s
1920
Inducted into Phi Beta Kappa.
1927
Inducted into Pi Gamma Mu National Social Science Honor Society.
1935
The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic awarded the John H. Dunning Prize of the American Historical Association.
1942
1946
Initiated into Delta Kappa Gamma, national honor society for women teachers.
1949
Inducted into Phi Beta Kappa.

1950-1970s
1952
Inducted into Gamma Theta Upsilon, national professional geographic fraternity. Initiated into Delta Kappa Gamma, national honor society for women teachers.
1953
Member of Phi-Kappa Phi honor society.
1956-1966
Member, Board of Directors, Association on American Indian Affairs.
1958
Angie Debo Recognition Day, Marshall, Oklahoma.
1961
Awarded honorary life membership in the American Historical Association.
1969
Queen of Prairie City, Marshall, Oklahoma.
1971
Received the award for best non-fiction for History of the Indians of the United States from the Oklahoma Writers Federation.
1972
Honored by Navajo Community College, Tsaile, Arizona.
1973
Received Distinguished Service Award from the Oklahoma Heritage Association.
1974
Awarded lifetime membership, Oklahoma Writers Federation.
1975
Appointed member of the Oklahoma Centennial Commission.
1976
Angie Debo Day declared in Canyon, Texas. Received the Henry G. Bennett Distinguished Service Award, Oklahoma State University. Received Pride of the Plainsman Award from Enid High School. Received Bicentennial Medal from the Oklahoma Library Association.
1977
Oklahoma Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) established the Angie Debo Award to "recognize those who have provided exceptional defense to the Bill of Rights throughout the year or throughout their lives."
1978
Received Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Received the Newsmaker Award from the Tulsa Chapter of Women in Communications. Received the Wrangler Award from the Western Heritage Association of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame for Geronimo: The Man, His Time, His Place.
1979
Received Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History. Awarded an honorary degree from Phillips University, Enid, Oklahoma.
1980
Reception held in Debo’s honor, Oklahoma State University.
1981
Received Award of Merit from the Western History Association.
1982-1986
Filmed by Institute for Research in History for PBS American Experience series.
1982
History Department, Oklahoma State University, established the Angie Debo Award for Oklahoma History. Received honorary life membership in the Payne County Historical Society.

1970s-1980s
1980
Received Bicentennial Medal from the Bicentennial Commission.
1981
Received Award of Merit from the Western History Association.
1982
History Department, Oklahoma State University, established the Angie Debo Award for Oklahoma History. Received honorary life membership in the Payne County Historical Society.
1983
Inducted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame, Hereford, Texas. Received Distinguished Service Citation of the University of Oklahoma Alumni Association.
1984
Inducted into the Oklahoma Women’s Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma Governor’s Advisory Commission on the Status of Women.
1985
Designated as an Ambassador of Goodwill by the Cherokee Nation. Received Certificate of Recognition from the Miccosukee Creek Nation. Honored by the State of Oklahoma by hanging her portrait in the Rotunda of the State Capitol.
1986
Received the Achievement Award from the American Indian Historians Association.
1987
Granted Award for Scholarly Distinction from the American Historical Association.
1988
Received Distinguished Service Award from the American Civil Liberties Union.
1989
Received Bicentennial Medal from the Bicentennial Commission.
1990
Inducted into the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame.
1991
Inducted into the Oklahoma Writers’ Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma Writers Federation.
1992
Inducted into the Oklahoma Women’s Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma Center for Poets and Writers.
1993
Inducted into the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma Center for Poets and Writers.
1994
Inducted into the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma Historical Society.
1994
Principal Chief Wilma Mankiller placed flowers on Angie Debo’s grave for befriending “the causes and rights of the Cherokee Nation far beyond any obligation of humanity.”
1995
Edmond Public Schools dedicated Angie Debo Elementary School.
1997
Received the Ralph Ellison Award from the Oklahoma Center for the Book.
2001
Inducted into the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma Center for Poets and Writers at Oklahoma State University-Tulsa.
2004
Oklahoma State University Library and Marshall, Oklahoma, dedicated as National Literary Landmarks in honor of Angie Debo. (see p. 28 in booklet).
2010
The Stillwater Public Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma, dedicated a life-size bronze statue of Angie Debo by sculptor Phyllis Mantik. (see p. 27 in booklet).

Posthumous
1988
Documentary film, Indians, Outlaws and Angie Debo, debuts on Public Broadcast Station (PBS) American Experience.
1996
Inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma Historical Society.
1997
Edmond Public Schools dedicated Angie Debo Elementary School.
2001
Inducted into the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma Center for Poets and Writers at Oklahoma State University-Tulsa.
2004
Oklahoma State University Library and Marshall, Oklahoma, dedicated as National Literary Landmarks in honor of Angie Debo. (see p. 28 in booklet).
2010
The Stillwater Public Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma, dedicated a life-size bronze statue of Angie Debo by sculptor Phyllis Mantik. (see p. 27 in booklet).
Angie Debo Diaries

Angie Debo’s diaries are part of the Angie Debo collection at the Oklahoma State University Archives. Her earliest diaries began with her childhood in 1898 and 1901.

She continued her diary writing from 1940-1942, then 1948 through July 3, 1987. In her entries she comments on everything from her daily activities, to her neighbors and friends, the Marshall community, the weather, historical and political events, people she knew, her travels, and her activism. Her words provide insight into her life and values, her sense of humor, and the time period.

Typewriters

Over the years, Debo commented in her diaries on her various typewriters, expressing her frustration when they didn’t work well or broke, or her appreciation:

October 29, 1940

“I bought a new typewriter yesterday, and I am using it for the first time this evening. It runs so smoothly, and the lines are so nice and straight. I wrote two books on my old one. Somehow I feel a strong attachment for a typewriter on which I have written books. There is no machine with which one enters into such apparent companionship. It is almost like the horse one rides, and of course every rider loves his pony. If I could afford to be sentimental and if I had the place to store it, I should never trade in an old typewriter. But I let Pegasus go after I had finished the CHOCTAW REPUBLIC, and now after AND STILL THE WATERS RUN and THE ROAD TO DISAPPEARANCE I have parted with the faithful Blitzen. I hope my association with my new friend, Ananias, will be as fruitful.”

Presidential Election

November 5, 1960

“Got up several times during the night to listen to election returns. Kennedy got necessary electoral vote when Minn. went to him at eight. I went out and scraped the Kennedy tag off my car, not wanting to gloat. Nixon more admirable in defeat than ever in victory. Cold day: I attended Guild but stayed away from lodge. Too busy.”

The Apollo 11 Moon landing

July 20, 1969

“...Watched the moon landing this P.M. Tense experience. Very moving when it succeeded. Time 3:17 P.M. Then watched the moon walk. Stayed up till 1:00 A.M. to see if the men were in contact & O.K.”

July 21, 1969

“I was pretty tired today but I couldn’t go to sleep because I had to help the astronauts. I tensed all my muscles to help them in the lift-off. Truly, I was worried. It would have been so terrible if anything had gone wrong. The whole thing has been moving beyond words.”

The Angie Debo Collection, housed in the Archives of the Oklahoma State University Library, consists of research material, including manuscripts of publications and presentations by Debo and related legal papers, correspondence, notes, etc. Unpublished manuscripts include some by Debo as well as Grant Foreman’s “The American Indian and the Law” and World War II correspondence. The collection also contains personal and business correspondence, and memorabilia, diaries, articles, newspaper clippings, awards, books, maps and photographs dealing with Debo’s writings and personal life.

The Angie Debo collection includes 92.25 linear feet of materials (59 records cartons, 3 document boxes, 13 oversized boxes, 10 map folders, 85 reels of microfilm [all in storage]; and awards, memorabilia, 593 books and furniture in the Angie Debo Room).

Through the OSU Library website, access to finding aids, and numerous photographs, and other materials are available; http://info.library.okstate.edu/c.php?p=151950&pt=997579

Dr. Angie Debo bequeathed her papers, books, and literary rights to Oklahoma State University, “with the sincere wish that anything which proves worth keeping in this bequest will be of use to future students of the University.”

The Angie Debo Collection, housed in the Archives of the Oklahoma State University Library, consists of research material, including manuscripts of publications and presentations by Debo and related legal papers, correspondence, notes, etc. Unpublished manuscripts include some by Debo as well as Grant Foreman’s “The American Indian and the Law” and World War II correspondence. The collection also contains personal and business correspondence, and memorabilia, diaries, articles, newspaper clippings, awards, books, maps and photographs dealing with Debo’s writings and personal life.
Several diary entries illustrate Angie’s activism toward the rights of Alaska natives. Author Larry McMurtry wrote, “In her seventies, fearing that what had happened in Oklahoma was about to happen again in Alaska, she roused herself to lobby for the Native Claims Settlement Act.” 57

November 1, 1969

“The typewriter did come on Mistletoe Express. I spent the day on odds and ends I had neglected. As soon as I get a full day I want to use the typewriter in behalf of the Alaska natives.”

November 4, 1969

“I wrote to members of Congress in behalf of Alaska natives....”

November 5, 1969

“Wrote the rest of the letters six in all, very carefully written to chairman of the committee, our senators and my rep. & to Pres. Nixon. Will not date the last and will hold it till response to his VietNam address tapers off. I also sent material to several friends who will write, I hope.”

November 23, 1970

“The University Press had an autograph party for me at Norman. Frances (I took me and Ramona down there. It was a nice party and I met lots of people. I slipped one of my mimeographed letters about the Alaska native land issue into every book I autographed.”

Capitol Portrait Dedication

January 9, 1985

“Rained all forenoon, cloudy and dark all day. A Creek woman (really a Euchee) with a nice voice called me. She is Miss Sunshine King who is in charge of the Creek Museum in the Creek capitol. Called to tell me how happy she is about the picture of Charles Banks Wilson is painting to put in the state capitol. She says all the Creeks appreciate the history of the tribe I wrote. It pleases me very much when Indians approve of my writing. My beloved Pat came by this evening.”

Updating Books

May 5, 1987

“It was cloudy this morning but cleared up and didn’t rain. We need rain very badly. I had to stop work on books to check my bank statement today. My working time is very short. I have finished my Creek history and want to start on Tulsa.”

June 23, 1987

“It was sunny all day – didn’t rain. I suppose most of the wheat is harvested by now. Nothing in particular happened. I have every one of my books brought up to their final form. I am not sure of the future of Tulsa. It went through only one printing. I have everything ready for a final one. I am hoping the OU Press will give it to Council Oak Books and Council will do a new printing as they did with Prairie City.”

Final Diary Entry

July 3, 1987

“Lovely day – not too hot. Nothing in particular happened.”

“...and I still think that that is the creative use of a life rather than to try to grab what one can.” 61

— Angie Debo

“...and I decided to commit that life. And I decided that service and integrity were the important things. That did dominate my choices, and I still think that that is the creative use of a life rather than to try to grab what one can.” 61

— Glenna Matthews oral history interview (Nov. 19, 2010).

The film Indians, Outlaws and Angie Debo was written and directed by Martha Sandlin, produced by Barbara Abrash and Martha Sandlin, and edited by Mona Davis. Principal consultants were Gloria Valencia-Weber and Glenna Matthews who conducted seventeen oral history interviews with Angie Debo between 1981 and 1985. 49

Part of the acclaimed WGBH American Experience series Indians, Outlaws and Angie Debo was first broadcast to a national audience on PBS in 1988. The documentary is structured around interviews with Debo in her nineties and chronicles her life and career. Highlights include an examination of the controversy surrounding her book And Still the Waters Run, which revealed how Oklahoma Indians were systematically defrauded of their land.

In 2011, the OSU Library presented one free copy of Indians, Outlaws, and Angie Debo to all Oklahoma public, school, tribal, and academic libraries (approx. 3,000 copies total). This distribution was limited by an agreement with PBS. Library patrons outside of Oklahoma might be able to borrow the DVD through interlibrary loan at their local library.
The Oklahoma Oral History Program of the OSU Library

The Oklahoma Oral History Research Program (OOHRP) was founded in 2007 as part of the Oklahoma State University Library, with the goal of documenting and making accessible the history of Oklahoma and OSU through oral history interviews. In written versions of history, the contributions and perspectives of many individuals and groups are left undocumented, and details and nuances are often excluded from the record. The methodology of oral history allows researchers to fill some of the gaps by interviewing individuals about their firsthand experiences and then making that material available to researchers and the general public.

In 2009, the “Spotlighting Oklahoma” Oral History Project was officially launched as a way to document the development of Oklahoma by recording its cultural and intellectual history. As a result, a series of individual oral history projects fall under the “Spotlighting” project, including several “Remembering Angie Debo” interviews. https://library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/digital/spotlighting-oklahoma/

In 2010 and 2011, Dr. Jennifer Paustenbaugh, former Associate Library Dean for Planning and Assessment, conducted five interviews for “Remembering Angie Debo.” These interviews offer personal insight into Angie Debo and her life and legacy. Dr. Paustenbaugh interviewed Gail McDonald, Dr. Gloria Valencia-Weber, Hugh (Pat) O’Neill, Barbara Abrash, and Glenna Matthews. Angie Debo’s civic engagement and love for her community are two qualities mentioned by several interviewees. Transcripts of these interviews are available through the OSU Library website. Additional “Remembering Angie Debo” interviews are in progress.

Barbara Abrash Interview (Nov. 18, 2010) (Was Head of Media Projects at the Institute for Research in History in New York City and co-producer of Indians, Outlaws and Angie Debo.)

“There were people who wanted her to be a certain kind of feminist, but she was a woman who did her work and cared about equality and cared about justice and whether it was men or women, you know, you should all work hard and go for equality and justice.”

Glenna Matthews Interview (Nov. 19, 2010) (Academic historian, with Gloria Valencia-Weber, conducted seventeen interviews with Debo and served as a principal consultant for Indians, Outlaws and Angie Debo.)

“…she had a very rich emotional life because of her community involvement.”

Gail McDonald Interview (April 14, 2011) (Served on the Oklahoma ACLU with Debo; helped secure funding for Indians, Outlaws and Angie Debo.)

“…we would have the most delightful time talking with Angie and hearing about her work. She was so well-read. She really challenged you to think about things and to be invested intellectually in issues. She was just a delight. I, of course, was very amazed by her.”

Hugh (Pat) O’Neill Interview (July 15, 2010) (Ph.D. O’Neill took two history classes at Marshall High School from Angie Debo in the early 1940s which led to a lifetime friendship. He and his wife Ramona lived near her in Marshall.)

“You could never visit with Angie that you didn’t feel like you came away with something you didn’t know previously.”

“When asked what characteristic was most prominently displayed in the Charles Banks Wilson portrait (at the Oklahoma Capitol), Angie said, ‘Drive.’”

Stillwater Public Library

1107 S. Duck, Stillwater, OK. http://library.stillwater.org/angie_debo_statue.php

The Angie Debo statue at the Stillwater Public Library was dedicated on Thursday, Nov. 18, 2010. “Oklahoma State University President Burns Hargis served as Master of Ceremonies and Oklahoma City University President Robert Henry and Chickasaw Governor Bill Anoatubby were guest speakers. Surrounding the base of the statue are seals of the 38 federally recognized Oklahoma Native American tribes. A Native American prayer and blessing by Dr. Pete Coser with helper Checotah Powliss was performed after the unveiling. Attendance at the event was over 200.”

“From start to finish, the statue project took three years. ’It began with a donation from former Library Director Debra Bennett to the Friends of the Stillwater Public Library. The Friends wanted to do something special with this donation and after committing additional funds they formed a community-wide committee to investigate the possibility of having a sculpture at the Stillwater Public Library which would be the first sculpture on Stillwater City property,’” stated Library Director Lynda Reynolds. “

“The committee, chaired by Friends past-president, Bob Darcy, sent out a nationwide request for proposals seeking a sculpture that would evoke a combination of libraries, reading, Stillwater, and Oklahoma. The committee received 16 nationwide proposals from 11 artists and selected Stillwater artist Phyllis Mantik and her proposal for a statue of Angie Debo.”

Stillwater, Oklahoma

OSU Campus

Dr. Angie Debo is one of the recipients of the Henry G. Bennett Distinguished Service Award. Names are engraved in granite beneath the statue of Henry G. Bennett located east of Whitehurst Hall and facing Library Lawn.

According to campus directories, Angie lived at the following Stillwater addresses:

(1947-1949) 619 ½ S. Lewis. Small frame house is occupied and located behind office of Pickens Auctions.

(1949-1953) 117 N. Knoblock. House is no longer there; current site of Qdoba parking lot.

(1953-1955) 520 W. Maple. House is no longer there; current site of Qdoba. Boarding housesmates were Vesta Etchison (Student Union Social Director), Mrs. O.N. Smith (OAMC Post Office Clerk), and Esther H. Anderson (OAMC Bursar’s Office Payroll Clerk). Their landlord was Mrs. Allnut.
Marshall, Oklahoma

The original quarter section of land that Angie’s father purchased in 1899 was “three miles south of Marshall, where I-74 intersects with Highway 51, and you go one mile west. It’s on the south side of the highway.” — Hugh O’Neill (7/15/2010). 75

Angie Debo with her parents at home (1940) 76, 200 N. Oklahoma. The house is currently occupied.

Additional Sites of Interest

Marshall, Oklahoma

On April 17, 2004, Angie’s hometown of Marshall was dedicated during the town’s 36th annual Prairie City Days celebration. The plaque is located on a red brick building on Main Street.

Angie Debo was a lay pastor and Sunday school teacher for many years. She became an active member of St. Paul’s church when the Methodist church (SE corner of N. Oklahoma and E. Market) closed. The Methodist church sits diagonally to Angie’s house.

Literary Landmark plaque is located on the red brick Marshall City Hall building, NE corner of Main and N. Kansas, about ½ block west of the Marshall Post Office on Main St.

Angie was instrumental in ordering and dedicating Marshall’s Centennial Marker (July 25, 1976), located on Hwy 74E. 78

Angie Debo, her parents, brother and his wife, and other family members are interred at the North Cemetery. Signage reads IOOF (International Organization of Odd Fellows). From Hwy 74, go west 2 miles on Bison Rd. From 74E, go north on Iowa/Macarthur two miles, then west ~1/4 mile. Enter the second gated entrance, look in the third row to your left. Angie is interred next to her parents. Her brother Edwin and his wife Ida are one row over. In 1987 Angie wrote that she has “15 family graves” in the cemetery.79

Angie Debo Literary Landmark, Edmon Low Library, 2nd floor center. Photo by Nina Thornton, OSU Library.

On October 1, 2004, the Edmon Low Library at Oklahoma State University was designated a Literary Landmark. Michael Wallis, historian, biographer, and honorary chair of Oklahoma’s Literary Landmarks project through FOLIO, served as the Master of Ceremonies and provided closing remarks. Sheila Grant Johnson, Dean of OSU Libraries, welcomed guests to the ceremony. Remarks were provided by FOLIO member Julia Brady Ratliff and President Tom Terry. Bernice Mitchell, Chair, Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women, introduced keynote speaker, Dr. Gloria Valencia-Weber, Professor of Law, University of New Mexico School of Law. http://info.library.okstate.edu/debo/landmark

On April 17, 2004, Angie’s hometown of Marshall was dedicated during the town’s 36th annual Prairie City Days celebration. The plaque is located on a red brick building on Main Street.

Additional Sites of Interest

National Literary Landmarks

Literary Landmarks,™ nationally designated sites honoring deceased writers, are granted through United for Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, http://www.ala.org/united/products_services/literarylandmarks.

In 2004, the OSU Library and Friends of Libraries in Oklahoma (FOLIO) oversaw the dedication of two Literary Landmark sites in Oklahoma that honor Angie Debo. FOLIO, a statewide, non-profit organization, has sponsored Oklahoma’s Literary Landmarks since 2001.

On April 17, 2004, Angie’s hometown of Marshall was dedicated during the town’s 36th annual Prairie City Days celebration. The plaque is located on a red brick building on Main Street.

Angie Debo was a lay pastor and Sunday school teacher for many years. She became an active member of St. Paul’s church when the Methodist church (SE corner of N. Oklahoma and E. Market) closed. The Methodist church sits diagonally to Angie’s house.

Literary Landmark plaque is located on the red brick Marshall City Hall building, NE corner of Main and N. Kansas, about ½ block west of the Marshall Post Office on Main St.

Angie was instrumental in ordering and dedicating Marshall’s Centennial Marker (July 25, 1976), located on Hwy 74E. 78

Angie Debo, her parents, brother and his wife, and other family members are interred at the North Cemetery. Signage reads IOOF (International Organization of Odd Fellows). From Hwy 74, go west 2 miles on Bison Rd. From 74E, go north on Iowa/Macarthur two miles, then west ~1/4 mile. Enter the second gated entrance, look in the third row to your left. Angie is interred next to her parents. Her brother Edwin and his wife Ida are one row over. In 1987 Angie wrote that she has “15 family graves” in the cemetery.79

Angie Debo with her parents at home (1940) 76, 200 N. Oklahoma. The house is currently occupied.

Angie Debo Literary Landmark, Edmon Low Library, 2nd floor center. Photo by Nina Thornton, OSU Library.

On October 1, 2004, the Edmon Low Library at Oklahoma State University was designated a Literary Landmark. Michael Wallis, historian, biographer, and honorary chair of Oklahoma’s Literary Landmarks project through FOLIO, served as the Master of Ceremonies and provided closing remarks. Sheila Grant Johnson, Dean of OSU Libraries, welcomed guests to the ceremony. Remarks were provided by FOLIO member Julia Brady Ratliff and President Tom Terry. Bernice Mitchell, Chair, Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women, introduced keynote speaker, Dr. Gloria Valencia-Weber, Professor of Law, University of New Mexico School of Law. http://info.library.okstate.edu/debo/landmark

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Additional Sites of Interest

Enid, Oklahoma

Enid is 36 miles northwest of Marshall. Angie worked in Enid 1918-1923. Throughout her life she traveled to Enid for such things as retail business and medical services.

Public Library of Enid and Garfield County, 120 W. Maine St.
The Library is a National Literary Landmark (Marquis James, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner) and on the National Register of Historic Places for its New Formalism Style of architecture. On Nov. 13, 1970, Angie wrote in her diary, “They had an autograph coffee for me at the Enid library. Winnie took me up. Maxine brought me back (after dark when I don’t drive). So many old friends came. And they bought 20 books and wanted more…” 82

The Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center, 507 S. 4th St.
Angie Debo exhibit, Ward & Meibergen Exhibition Hall, The Land & The People Gallery. “The Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center in Enid, Garfield County, Oklahoma, is a historical museum telling the fascinating story of the settlement and development of Northwest Oklahoma, beginning with the Land Run of 1893.” 83

The Railroad Museum of Oklahoma has “over one million pieces of railroad memorabilia, including a world-class collection of dining car china and silverware, a vast library of reference books, photos and videos, operating HO, N-scale, and Lionel model railroads,” along with The Yard’s collection of authentic train cars, cabooses, and crossing signals. 84

Enid High School, 611 W. Wabash.
Angie Debo taught at Enid High School and received the Pride of the Plainsmen Award in 1976. Enid attorney and history enthusiast Gary Brown compiled a history of Enid High School in 2004. 85

Dr. Angie Debo’s portrait was the first portrait of a woman to hang in the public area of the Oklahoma State Capitol. Oklahoma artist Charles Banks Wilson was commissioned by then State Representatives Robert Henry and Penny Williams for the painting. Wilson’s portraits of Will Rogers, Sequoyah, Robert S. Kerr, and Jim Thorpe also hang at the capitol.

Dr. Angie Debo’s portrait was unveiled on April 8, 1985, by Governor George Nigh.

Portrait Information: http://www.arts.ok.gov/Art_at_the_Capitol/Capitol_Collection.php?c=.cac&awid=50
(Due to capitol renovations, portraits are in storage until 2022.)

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Oklahoma State Capitol
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City

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Angie Debo diary entries (April 7-8, 1985 and 1986). 86
Courtesy Debo — OSU Archives

Mrs. Charles Banks (Edna) Wilson, Charles Banks Wilson, State Representative Penny Williams, and Dr. Bobby Woods, and Angie Debo (April 8, 1985). Photo # b64f130-06. Courtesy Debo — OSU Archives
In 2007, Governor Brad Henry quoted Angie Debo in his inaugural address:

“Some years later, in 1949, Dr. Angie Debo, our state’s greatest historian, also recognized that Oklahoma was a different kind of state and expressed in this way: ‘Oklahoma is more than just another state. It is a lens in which the long rays of time are focused into the brightest of light. In its magnifying clarity, dim facets of the American character stand more clearly revealed. For in Oklahoma all the experiences that went into the making of the nation have been speeded up.’ ”

Dr. Angie Debo sculpture by Los Moore-Nield (1998). Courtesy Debo Collection—OSU Archives. 89

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Dr. Angie Debo’s historical achievements were honored with the American Historical Association Award for Scholarly Distinction in 1987.

Dr. Glenna Matthews explained how the award was presented to Dr. Debo, “…Then I did receive the award on her behalf and I gave it to David Baird [Dr. W. David Baird, Dean Emeritus of Pepperdine University/Seaver College Howard A. White Professor Emeritus of History] who brought it back to Oklahoma, and then of course as you know, Governor Bellmon delivered it. Then she died in her sleep a few weeks after that. If you put this in a novel, people would say it strains belief. It was just such a perfect way to end a beautiful life. To have the governor of her beloved Oklahoma personally deliver this award.” — Glenna Matthews, oral history interview, (Nov. 19, 2010). 96

The purpose for this “Dr. Angie Debo: Oklahoma’s Greatest Historian” book is to educate and enlighten people about the life and important historical legacy of Dr. Angie Debo, thus highlighting the humanities through Oklahoma’s regional history and literary heritage. Book distribution included the Garfield, Logan, Kingfisher, Noble, and Payne Counties’ public, academic, and high school libraries and high school history teachers; Oklahoma tribal libraries and tribal college libraries; and participants of the Fall 2017 community project, “One Book, One Community: Enid Reads Prairie City by Angie Debo.”