

**Transfer of Chickasha Armory
City of Chickasha
Oklahoma Army National Guard
1000 Hours Tuesday
3 June 2008**

Heritage of the Chickasha Armory – COL David W. Brown

The Oklahoma Territorial Militia, and after statehood in 1907, the Oklahoma Army National Guard use to meet in various places such as school buildings and lodge halls. They rented the upper floors of downtown buildings for weapon storage and trained in open fields outside of town.

By the 1930s, it became readily clear that permanent drilling and training facilities were needed. Across Oklahoma, towns donated or purchased land for the proposed armories. These National Guard armories, like this one, became an integral part of the town and of the citizens who lived there.

The Oklahoma National Guard's facility engineers can provide volumes of details about this building's construction. But this building is more than the simple sum of concrete, mortar, blocks, and wood. It has a heritage that I would like to review with everyone here today.

To the citizens of Chickasha and of this Great State of Oklahoma, this Armory represents much more. To the soldiers who were assigned here, this building was their home base. From here, National Guard soldiers went forth in times of flood, tornados, and other natural disasters to answer the cry for help from the citizens of Oklahoma.

Countless lives have been saved throughout Oklahoma because of the actions of the soldiers based in this Armory. Individuals and families in desperate straits have been rescued. Those in need of food and water have been fed and taken to shelter. Lost children have been found and returned to their loved ones. Homes and businesses have been guarded and protected following natural disasters until their owners could safely return.

This armory and its predecessor belonged to the 158th Field Artillery Battalion which was part of the famed 45th Infantry Division. During World War II, the soldiers from Chickasha served in North Africa and then landed in Sicily as part of General Patton's Seventh Army. From Sicily, they

landed on the beaches at Salerno, Italy, and later, at Anzio. In August of 1944, these soldiers from Chickasha landed on the beach in Southern France and once again joined General Patton as part of his Third Army in its race across Europe and into Germany.

After the end of World War II, the Division returned home to Oklahoma only to be called upon again to serve in Korea during the Korean Conflict. It would be forty years before the Nation called again upon the National Guard soldiers from Chickasha.

Newly equipped with the Multiple Launch Rocket System, the First Battalion 158th Field Artillery was rushed to Southeast Asia where it was a part of the famous "Hail Mary" left hook that punched through Iraqi resistance and in one hundred hours, raced to within firing range of Bagdad in Operation Desert Shield / Desert Storm.

Even now, seventeen years later, the soldiers that only recently walked in these halls and stood in formations on the drill floor, are preparing once again to answer their Nation's call and deploy later this year to Iraq.

Untold numbers of citizens of Chickasha and its surrounding farms and towns have served here as Oklahoma National Guard soldiers. It is these citizens and the generations before them who have created the heritage of this Armory.

The heritage of community service that surrounds this facility is the result of the exemplary actions of these citizen soldiers who answered their community's, their state's and their nation's call with hard work, sacrifice, dedication, and compassion for those in need.

It is more than appropriate, if not fitting, that this Armory, with its heritage for service to the community, be returned to the community, so that it may continued that tradition and history of service.