

MUSEUM

# BILLBOARD

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Celebrating American Roadside Advertising

## COLCORD SIGN—THEN AND AT REMOVAL STAGE

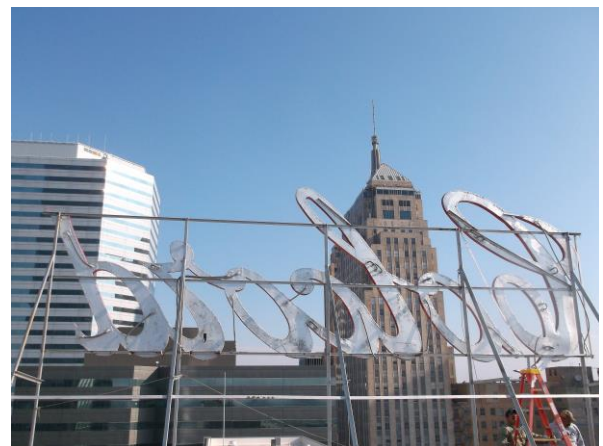


Photo credits:

Jim Gleason, OK County Assessor's Office



## The Colcord Sign: New Acquisition

Luxurious from its beginnings in 1910 to today, the Colcord was the first skyscraper in Oklahoma City. At 12 stories, it was built by architect William Wells for owner Charles Francis Colcord, a former U.S. Marshal and prominent businessman. It was constructed of reinforced concrete at the request of Colcord, as he had witnessed the devastation resulting from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

Up until recently, no one would have considered Oklahoma a hotbed of earthquakes! How could he have known that 100 years later Oklahoma would be earthquake-prone?

It was originally supposed to have two wings, as seen from this postcard/rendering from 1909. But only one was built. It was also supposed to be a hotel, but actually started life as an office complex. It wasn't until 2006 that it finally became a hotel.



1909 depiction showing 2 wings

The current Colcord owner, Devon Energy Corporation, made the decision in late 2014 to update the iconic, single-sided, single-stroked neon signs. They decided to have the north elevation sign completely removed and the other retrofitted with LED lighting.

The neon tubing and guts of both signs plus the old channel-style metal letters of the north elevation sign were donated to the Billboard Museum Association in 2015. The sign itself is 12 feet by 36 feet.

The signs were, as near as we can determine, the first neon signs in Oklahoma City and among the earliest in the United States. We hope further research will more firmly date the neon signs and place them in sign context. It appears so far the neon signs may date back as far as 1913.

It has been noted that the shape of the sign itself is based on Mrs. Colcord's signature.

We are estimating it will take \$2,895.00 to reassemble the pieces and place on a rolling frame. Donations are accepted!



1913 depiction showing 1 wing and south-facing sign, possibly neon



## Union Bus Station Sign has Temporary Home



Although the Union Bus Station in downtown Oklahoma City is gone, the sign has been saved and is slated for renovation. While awaiting renovation, the sign is being temporarily stored at our Billboard Museum Association's warehouse. We are pleased to offer this iconic sign safe shelter!



### Did You See That?

If you are a sign/billboard aficionado, you probably noticed a historically accurate scene in last year's World War II era movie, *Unbroken*. Main character Louis Zamperini was in a childhood fight scene in a railroad yard. Behind them were billboards from an early, slower era when the image scale was more compact and stacked and aimed at pedestrian and train traffic.

Here is a similar image:



Photo credit: OAAA Archives, Duke University

## Oklahoma Billboard History

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) has a collection of correspondence and photos dating from 1965 documenting permitted billboards on Oklahoma highways. Board members Bill Condon and Justin Booher visited the agency and were able to make copies of pertinent documents and some images for our archives. The first permitted sign under the new Highway Beautification rules was granted in 1973 for the First Baptist Church of Caddo.





In 2016, we hope to recreate this awesome 1940s billboard!  
*Image courtesy of OAAA Archives, Duke University*

Become a member and help the Museum become a reality!  
 Your contributions enable this currently all-volunteer organization to grow. Donations of any amount are also accepted to help restore the signs that have been acquired as well as further the mission of the museum. Thank you!

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