

MUSEUM

BILLBOARD

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Celebrating American Roadside Advertising



**THE TAFT SIGN
RESTORATION—
WHAT A JOURNEY!**

*Photo credits:
Jim Gleason,
Anna Pease*



The Taft Sign Roadshow



President Kathy Anderson and Vice President Jim Gleason seated in front of the restored Taft Stadium marquee, Bethany 66 Festival.



Originally, the marquee was 2-sided, split out as a Y, and stood on poles in the parking lot in front of Taft.



Leon Wilson, at the unveiling of the marquee held March 31, 2016. He is standing by a photo montage that shows the steps involved in restoration.

Taa daa! The restoration of the Taft Stadium marquee sign is complete and the Billboard Museum Association was delighted to display it publicly for the first time at the Bethany 66 Festival on May 28, 2016. The Festival is a celebration of Route 66, Bethany's Main Street, also known today as the NW 39th Expressway.

At the Festival, former Taft students, people from the neighborhood, alumni, and even those who had merely driven by years ago, shared their fond memories of graduation ceremonies, stock car racing and football games. Before construction of the fairgrounds, Taft Stadium was the main venue for large-scale events, including military parades during World War II. All day long, Museum volunteers and visitors took pictures of folks and their families standing in front of the sign. Future possibilities for public display include Energy soccer games, corporate events, and festivals.

Familiar to students, parents, neighbors and stock car racing fans, the Taft Stadium sign once greeted visitors to the athletic field and track in Oklahoma City. The stadium was completed in 1934 as a WPA project and research indicates the sign was added shortly thereafter. The stadium has recently been renovated and is now home to the Energy, a North American Soccer League team. The sign's connection to Route 66 is its location along the historic Route 66 alignment that ran along North May Avenue between 23rd and NW 39th.

Billboard Museum members have kept up with the progress of the sign's restoration since it was rescued from a field two years ago. An anonymous donor covered much of the costs and G&S Services, owned by our vice president Jim Gleason, covered the rest. G&S also handled the extensive restoration. Total cost? \$19,000 and two months of intensive labor.

Credit also goes to Leon Wilson, who initially rescued the sign. He had the foresight to recognize the sign's historic value more than 20 years ago and ensured its safekeeping by storing it in his field.

Press Coverage of the Taft Sign

On March 31st, 2106, G&S Sign Services held a private unveiling of the sign for media and all those who were involved in the restoration and rescue of the sign. Here is the link for Galen Culver's coverage of the event on his series *Is This a Great State or What?*:

<http://kfor.com/2016/04/01/saved-and-restored-taft-stadiums-old-neon-sign-glows-again/>

Also check out the link for coverage of the Taft and other rescued signs from the *Oklahoman* newspaper by reporter Brianna Bailey:

<http://newsok.com/article/5499574>

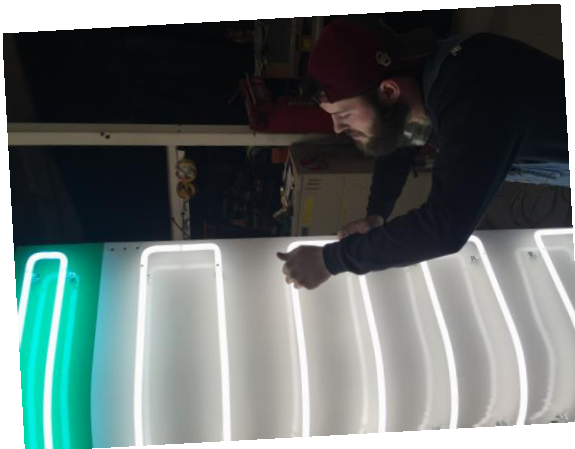
Following the event and press coverage, Jim Gleason was contacted by numerous local private collectors wanting to purchase the sign. He explained to them that this sign and others are being held with our not-for-profit organization in order to keep them local and public so all can enjoy.

Bottom line? Our signs will not be sold to private collectors. We want them to be on public display in a museum, for all to enjoy, and be kept local where their significance is appreciated.

Help us make our own museum a reality!



Restoration Snapshots...





In late 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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