

A PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD



Carrie Coppernoll sorts photos at the Oklahoma Heritage Association's Gaylord-Pickens Museum.

PHOTO BY BRYAN TERRY, THE OKLAHOMAN

VOLUNTEERING | SORTING PICTURES GIVES REMINDERS OF STATE'S OIL PAST

Some of the photos were so old I felt nervous touching them.

I tried to handle each picture as little as possible as I sorted through dozens and dozens of reminders of Oklahoma's oil history.

I volunteered at the Oklahoma Heritage Association this week, and I had the chance to see history up close. Bethany Monhollon, museum services coordinator for the Gaylord-Pickens Mu-



books, and now they needed to be sorted again. The sorting would be easy, she said. Just alphabetize by topic or city.

I sorted through dozens and dozens of old photos. The photos were fasci-

workers — a family of men drenched in oil standing outside their wooden shack, a mother holding her baby in front of their tent, an oil worker who was smoking and testing the ground to see if it was strong enough to hold oil equipment.

Some pictures had information scrawled on the back. Others had nothing. The unlabeled ones were like lost children, separated from the people who could recog-



team of horses — hopefully somebody knew who they were.

Alphabetizing isn't the most fun job in the world, but the subject was in-

the Gaylord-Fickens Museum, pulled a giant stack of 8-by-10 photos out of a file cabinet.

They'd been used by authors to illustrate their

The photos were fascinating. I probably sorted more slowly because I looked at nearly every one. My favorites were of families and oil-field

people who could recognize them. The smiling faces outside the mess hall, the blackened faces next to the rigs, the grimaces of men steering a

But the subject was incredible. It was so exciting to see such fragile reminders of the past and be a part of their preservation.



AT A GLANCE

OKLAHOMA HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

Oklahoma Heritage Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Oklahoma's history and encouraging pride in the state. It runs the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum. Volunteer opportunities include tour guides, teachers, administrative workers, and gardeners. For more information, call 523-3231 or go to www.oklahomaheritage.com.