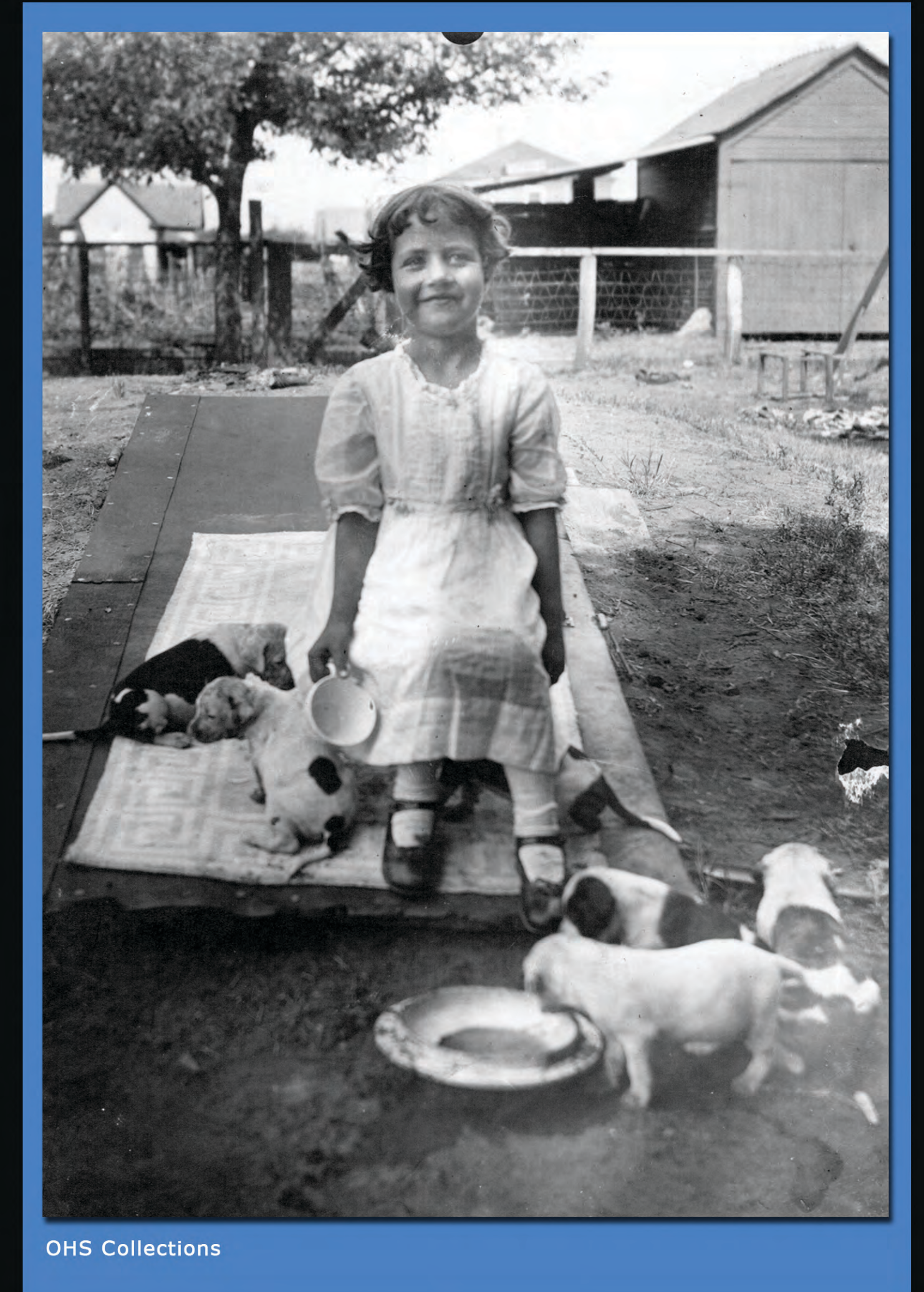


“Where They Went”: A Photographic History of Oklahoma Animals

This exhibit *“Where They Went”: A Photographic History of Oklahoma Animals* features photographs curated from the Oklahoma Historical Society’s photographic archives. The images represent just a few of the many photographs that visually express the friendly kinship between humans and their domestic and farm animals throughout Oklahoma’s history.

The inspiration for this exhibit is the Kirkpatrick Foundation’s 2018 “Safe and Humane: A New Vision” conference on animal welfare, and Will Rogers, who once said, “If dogs don’t go to Heaven, then when I die, I want to go where they went.”



Since pre-history, animals have emerged and disappeared in Oklahoma - sometimes naturally, and sometimes through the actions of humans. Bison, jackrabbits, and antelopes naturally migrated to this land, drawn by the climate, and they began to adapt to the evolving conditions over time. Plains Indians acquired horses that originated with Spanish colonists. The Plains tribes were hunters who used animals to sustain their diet, for shelter and clothing, and for hunting implements. When other tribes were relocated to Indian Territory throughout the 1800s, they brought with them cows, sheep, pigs and other livestock. At the opening of Oklahoma Territory, settlers brought with them not only livestock animals, but also domesticated pets.

Throughout time, humans and animals have migrated and evolved together in an interdependent cycle, so relationships naturally emerged between the two species. From the Plains tribes to those relocated to Indian Territory, Americans Indians shared a respect toward animals that was integrated into their spiritual fabric. The bison and other game animals were regarded as especially sacred, and the tribes expressed gratitude for their sacrifice to provide food and shelter for their people. Tribes formed bonds with their domestic livestock animals and pets - protecting, sheltering, and feeding them in exchange for their gifts of wool and buckskins; milk, eggs and meat; and transportation and companionship. One writer mused “The buffalo gave of his own body, to be used in so many ways: as food, clothing, shelters, and tools. Of all the abundance of the Earth, the corn and buffalo were seen as special gifts from the creator.”