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New Song Celebrates the Oklahoma Centennial

Stillwater, OK. A new song is helping Oklahoma kids imagine what life was like one hundred years ago when their state was admitted into the union. Award-winning children's songwriter Monty Harper penned the song as a teaching tool and a celebration of his state's centennial. It took him a year to write, and he is now offering the song as a free download from his website.

The song, entitled "1907," features many carefully researched details about life at the turn of the century, including Oklahoma's original statehood celebration. Harper did much of his research using microfiche copies of century-old editions of the Stillwater News Press, which was founded in 1889. "It was really fascinating," says Harper. "I would get lost in those old newspapers - especially the ads - and forget that I was trying to write a song!"

"But the details I collected really made the song come to life for me," he continues. "All kinds of new wonders were becoming available at that time, such as air conditioning, electric lights, long distance telephone connections, and even horseless carriages. I read about the first automobile in Stillwater, which was shown at the Payne County Fair. They were offering rides for a nickel each."

All those details and more are featured in the song, but still, according to the singer, the most memorable thing about 1907 is that Oklahoma became a state.

"Our statehood story is really fascinating, too," says Harper. "I learned that we were two territories and that the Indian Territory nearly became its own separate state called Sequoyah. So at the statehood ceremony in Guthrie, which was our original capitol, they performed a mock wedding between a cowboy and an Indian to symbolize the two territories coming together as one state. That had to go in the song!"

The "1907" song can be found online at MontyHarperSongcast.blogspot.com. Those curious about the songwriting process may also wish to download the "1907" songcast, an audio program in which Harper shares more details about the making of the song. The song itself is available in MP3 format, along with lyrics and guitar chords.

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Harper has written several previous songs that also teach Oklahoma history. These include “Oklahoma Land Rush, 1889,” “Oklahoma Heroes at the Library,” and “Boom Town,” all of which can be found on his latest CD, *Get a Clue*.

More songs are included in Harper’s live program, “Oklahoma CenTUNEial Celebration,” which has received official recognition from the Oklahoma Centennial Committee. He performed the program more than fifty times for libraries during the summer and is currently bringing it to elementary schools across the state. “The original Oklahoma songs were the best part about the program,” says Patty Young, youth services librarian at the Mustang Public Library. “The children were learning about Oklahoma history as they sang their hearts out.”

Harper began writing and performing songs for kids in 1989. His songs and recordings have received many accolades including two Parents’ Choice Awards, two NAPPA Honors Awards, various Children’s Music Web Awards, an iParenting Media Award, a Kids Radio Mania Family Favorite Award, and several Unisong International Songwriting Competition awards.

For more information, including Harper’s performance schedule, visit www.MontyHarper.com.

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