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The Cowboy Announces Three Days of Western Fun for Memorial Day Weekend

Boley Rodeo Day and the 35th Annual Chuck Wagon Festival, presented by Dogwood Foundation, bring rodeo history, chuck wagon cooking, live music, art, storytelling and family activities to the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum May 22-24.

OKLAHOMA CITY, [May 13, 2026] – The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum will host three days of family-friendly Western experiences Memorial Day weekend. The weekend begins Friday, May 22, with Boley Rodeo Day, a special one-day celebration of Black rodeo history and the legacy of the Boley Rodeo.

The celebration leads into the Museum's signature Memorial Day weekend event, the 35th Annual Chuck Wagon Festival, presented by Dogwood Foundation, which returns Saturday, May 23, and Sunday, May 24.

Together, the events will offer a weekend full of art, history, live music, storytelling, food samples, demonstrations, family activities and interactive experiences celebrating the legacy of the American West.

Boley Rodeo Day will honor the history and impact of the Boley Rodeo, recognized as the nation's oldest Black rodeo, through rare film footage, photography, art, rodeo demonstrations, live music and the transformation of the Museum's Prosperity Junction into Boley Main Street. The celebration takes place the day before the Boley Rodeo begins in Boley, Oklahoma.

The weekend continues with the 35th Annual Chuck Wagon Festival, one of The Cowboy's signature family events and a beloved Memorial Day weekend tradition. The two-day festival will feature chuck wagon food samples, Indigenous food samples, hands-on activities, artist

demonstrations, live entertainment, storytelling, history interpreters and opportunities to explore the Museum indoors and outdoors.

“For 35 years, families have made the Annual Chuck Wagon Festival part of their Memorial Day weekend tradition, and this year we’re proud to expand that celebration with Boley Rodeo Day,” said Seth Spillman, chief marketing officer at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. “Together, these events honor the depth and diversity of the American West through rodeo history, music, storytelling, art and food while creating an unforgettable weekend for our guests.”

Boley Rodeo Day is free with Museum admission or membership. Chuck Wagon Festival tickets are available in advance at a discounted rate, and Museum members and children under 12 receive free admission.

Boley Rodeo Day

Friday, May 22, 2026

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Free with Museum admission or membership

Boley Rodeo Day brings the spirit of Boley to The Cowboy with a full day celebrating Black rodeo history, art, music and storytelling. For one day only, Prosperity Junction will become Boley Main Street, bringing the story of one of Oklahoma’s most important Black towns to life inside the Museum’s turn-of-the-century Western town through historic imagery, self-guided stops, QR-code storytelling, artist displays and a photo exhibition featuring work by Garrett Augustus, Brian Edwards, Eyakem Gulilat, Leondre Lattimore, Jakian Parks, Nicol Ragland and Seth Stern.

Guests also will be among the first to view “Like Father, Like Son,” by photographer Seth Stern. Unveiled during Boley Rodeo Day in the Atherton Gallery, the work will become a permanent part of the Museum’s collection.

From 12:30 to 3 p.m., acclaimed Western artist Thomas Blackshear II will present a live painting demonstration in the Annie Oakley Center. Blackshear received the 2024 Ann Noble Brown *Prix de West* Purchase Award at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum for his oil painting, “A Much Needed Break,” placing his work in the Museum’s permanent collection.

The day also will include a roping demonstration with IPRA World Champion Danell Tipton and will close with a high-energy outdoor Cowboy Concert from Grammy Award-winning artist, singer, songwriter and producer Tony Williams.

Known professionally as The WRLDFMS Tony Williams, the Oklahoma City-born artist’s music bridges gospel, soul, R&B, hip-hop, funk and pop. He will perform with a five-piece brass band, two keyboards and a 30-member choir.

For more information, visit thecowboy.org/boley-rodeo-day.

Boley Rodeo Day Schedule

10 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. – Boley Main Street in Prosperity Junction

10:30 a.m. – Unveiling of “Like Father, Like Son” by Seth Stern, *Atherton Gallery*

12:30 to 3 p.m. – Painting Demonstration with Thomas Blackshear II, *Annie Oakley Center*

1 to 3:15 p.m. – Roping Demonstration with IPRA World Champion Danell Tipton, *Arena/Gardens*

3:30 to 4:30 p.m. – Cowboy Concert with Grammy Award-Winning Artist Tony Williams, *Western States Plaza*

The concert is made possible by the Oklahoma Arts Council in partnership with Project 2020 Foundation and the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

35th Annual Chuck Wagon Festival

Saturday, May 23, and Sunday, May 24, 2026

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

\$25 in advance, \$30 at the door

Free for Museum members and children under 12

The 35th Annual Chuck Wagon Festival will bring a full weekend of Western and Native American history, art and cuisine to the Museum. The festival will include seven chuck wagons, one Indigenous food station, 10 demonstrating artists, five interpreters and storytellers, three stages with 12 performances and 15 activity stations serving approximately 7,000 people during Memorial Day weekend.

Families can enjoy chuck wagon food samples, Indigenous food samples, crafts, music, artist demonstrations, storytelling, history interpreters and hands-on activities throughout the Museum grounds. Activities include bandana design, leather stamping, rope making, watercolors, archery, mural coloring and sarsaparilla samples. Guests can also treat themselves to snowcones, pony rides, and facepainting, for an additional charge.

Guests can also experience live demonstrations in sculpture, painting, basket weaving, leather working, quilting, pottery, beading and flint knapping. History interpreters will bring figures and stories of the West to life, including Stagecoach Mary, a Seminole trapper, a Buffalo Soldier and Bill Pickett.

John R. Erickson, author of the popular “Hank the Cowdog” children’s book series, will also appear Saturday, May 23, for talks and book signings.

Chuck Wagon Festival Schedule Highlights

On Saturday, May 23, guests can enjoy a full day of live music, demonstrations and family-friendly presentations across the Museum. Highlights include music from Kyle Dillingham and Cowboy Jim Garling, storytelling and presentations including “Understanding Regalia” with Graham Primeaux, “Buffalo Soldier Storytelling,” “Medicine Show,” and “Seminole Stories” with Jake Tiger, and Dutch oven cooking demonstrations.

John R. Erickson, author of the beloved “Hank the Cowdog” children’s book series, will appear Saturday in the Special Events Center for two talks and book signings, from 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. and 1:30 – 2:45 p.m.

On Sunday, May 24, the festival continues with musical performances by the Oklahoma Opry Band and Cowboy Jim Garling, along with “Understanding Regalia” with Graham Primeaux, “Medicine Show,” “Bill Pickett Storytelling,” “Seminole Stories” with Jake Tiger, and Dutch oven cooking demonstrations.

Festival programming will take place throughout the Museum, including the Town Square Stage, Buffalo Bill Stage, Annie Oakley Center, Joe Grandee Gallery and Special Events Center.

Advance tickets to the Annual Chuck Wagon Festival are available now at a discounted rate. Museum membership offers additional savings for families and includes free admission to the Annual Chuck Wagon Festival as well as access to Museum events and exhibitions throughout the year.

For the full schedule and to purchase advance tickets, visit thecowboy.org/chuckwagon.

About the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City is the nation’s premier institution dedicated to the history, art and culture of the American West. Founded in 1955, the Museum houses an internationally renowned collection of more than 28,000 Western and Native American art works and artifacts, including the world’s most extensive collections of American rodeo photography, barbed wire, saddlery and early rodeo trophies.

Through its exhibitions, programs and scholarship, the Museum preserves and interprets the evolving story of the West, illuminating the people, traditions and ideas that continue to shape American culture. With more than 10 million visitors from around the world, it stands as a leading authority on the enduring legacy of the American West.

A recent RegionTrack study found the museum will generate \$313 million in economic impact for Oklahoma this decade, including \$170 million in direct benefits through 2028 and \$143 million in spillover effects, underscoring its role as both a cultural landmark and an economic driver. For more information, visit thecowboy.org.