

# CHANDLER'S PHILLIPS 66



Photograph by Brennen Matthews

**T**he residents of Chandler, Oklahoma, hold a clear esteem for their town's history and its relationship with Route 66. Considering that it holds multiple locations on the National Register of Historic Places, they should! However, one location is possibly a little more incognito than others: the town's historic Phillips 66 gas station. Its peculiar design has made it something of a benchmark in Chandler and among tourists, and its recent string of restoration efforts has made it a symbol of what some are willing to do to preserve evocative structures on Route 66.

The hunter-green colored building with orange-and-blue detailing around the door and window frames, and the steep, pitched gable roof on the corner of Manvel Avenue — Historic Route 66 — and East 7<sup>th</sup> Street, is hard to miss. At one point in time, three 10-foot-tall gas pumps stood on the island out front. The Phillips 66, or Station #1423, was built by the Phillips Petroleum Company in 1930 in the Type B cottage-style architecture, one of 500 to be developed by the company between 1927 and 1938. This particular station is currently among the last few structures of this design still standing. Its pattern resembled the kind of houses you would have seen in the area, and that is not by coincidence. "Gas stations tried to have a unified design to brand them," said Jerry McClanahan, Route 66 artist and historian. "Some neighborhoods objected to having an ugly station since these roads [went] through residential neighborhoods. So, the developers wanted something that could blend into the area."

The station operated as a Phillips 66 until 1967, then in 1972, Bill and Janean Westfall took over and ran it for the Skelly Oil Company. In 1979, they went into business for themselves as Westfall Oil Co. and it would later be rebranded as Getty in 1983, and then as Texaco until 1992, when it finally closed shop, following Janean's retirement. Bill had passed away in June 1982.

The building, which had come to be locally known as the Westfall station, sat vacant until 1999 when Chandler local, Bill Fernau, and his company, Patina Properties, bought it from Bill and Janean's son, Todd Westfall, with plans to restore it back to its original Phillips 66 state.

"Bill Fernau owned it for quite a while, and he patiently collected everything that would be needed to restore it," said McClanahan. "There was a two-bay brick addition built on the side in the '50s, but he had that removed so that it could be listed on the National Register."

Ultimately, Fernau sold the station to another Chandler native, Larry Braswell, who owned it until 2019 when it was foreclosed on by the bank. That is when Shane and Sarah Massie came along. In October 2019, the Massies entered negotiations to purchase the station from the bank and the deal finally closed in January 2020.

"The guy who was the president of the bank at the time wanted a local person to own it. He wanted somebody who would take care of it and bring it back to what it once was," said Shane Massie, current owner of the Phillips 66 station. "For there to be derelict buildings and things of that nature, it doesn't sit very well. I bought another building out of foreclosure, and since I had done it before, I was relatively comfortable with the process."

Since they've acquired the station, the Massies have been working diligently, painstakingly reinstalling the multi-colored roof tiles back to the original orange, green, and blue Phillips 66 color scheme.

While restoration efforts are often commissioned through grant writing and donations, the Massies pay for everything out of pocket, so their efforts face some gaps in time, especially following the pandemic. The Massies also own Big Willy's Hot Dogs, a food truck and catering company, and their business, like most others, took a hit, resulting in a pause in restorations. Slowly, they are getting back to restoring the station, with specific efforts being made to change out the windows and the exterior lights.

The historic Phillips 66 gas station still has work to be done, but it's steadily on its way to being in a condition reminiscent of how it looked back in the 1930s. Its ownership might have changed hands over the past few years, but it is clear that those who carry the keys also carry the respect for the past, and a hope that the old-fashioned imagery remains a mainstay for travelers coming through Chandler.