

3 Rivers Historian

Summer 2001

A Journal of the Three Rivers Museum

V. 4, No. 3

Museum Offers Summer Learning Series

THE THREE RIVERS Museum has been offering a series of lectures, book signings and other special presentations in its conference room at the Midland Valley Depot in downtown Muskogee throughout the summer.

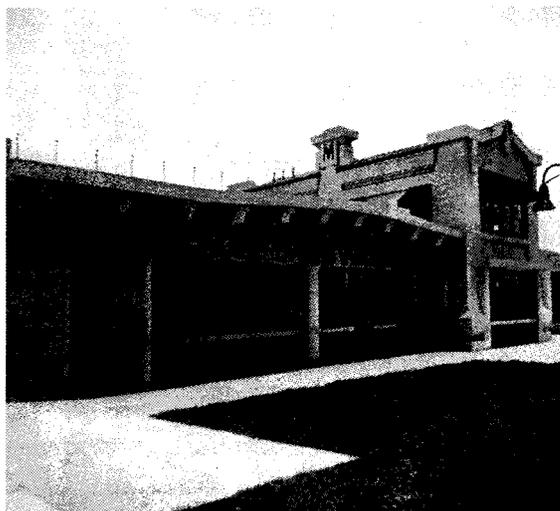
“We want to appeal to a broad array of interests,” says the museum’s director, Linda Moore. “We will try to have something for everyone.”

The first in the series of special programs at the museum was author Jim Etter who spoke to a capacity crowd in the museum’s conference room on Saturday, April 14. Mr. Etter has written several books about the history of the Three Rivers region.

After his presentation, Etter signed copies of his latest book, *Thunder in the Heartland — Parables from Oklahoma* which is a collection of short fiction pieces based on fact. Locations cited in the book include Muskogee, Oktaha, the Cookson Hills, Lake Eufaula, Okmulgee and Tahlequah.

Authors of a newly published book about Congresswoman Alice Robertson held a book signing at the museum on Saturday, July 14.

Bob Burke and Dr. Reba Collins collaborated on the book *Alice Robertson: Councilwoman from Oklahoma* which includes extensive



The Three Rivers Museum hosts several guest authors this summer.

quotes from her own writings.

On Thursday, August 16 author Art Burton spoke to a lunchtime gathering at the museum. His topic of discussion was Bass Reeves, the first African-American U.S. Marshal in history.

Burton has written a book on Reeves that will be published in 2002. He has also authored books on African-American and Native American outlaws and lawmen in Oklahoma.

His book *Black, Buckskin and Blue* chronicles the buffalo soldiers who served in forts in Oklahoma. It is being considered for a feature film on African
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**Three
Rivers
Museum
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**Museum
News
Briefs**

New Web Page Developed

The Three Rivers Museum has developed a new website at www.3riversmuseum.com. The web page features news about the museum, articles about the region's history, and upcoming events.

Visit the website to keep current on everything happening at the Three Rivers Museum. E-mail can be addressed to "staff" at the website.

This site was designed by Amber Hoffman, daughter of board member Jerry Hoffman and his wife, Paula.

Education Packets Available to Schools

In an effort to promote visits to the museum by our area students, a group of educators, including Delores Grober, volunteer and retired English teacher; Dianne Hill, board member and current chair of the History Department at Muskogee High School; and Paula Hoffman, third grade teacher at Tony Goetz Elementary School, compiled a list of questions and answers for students.

The questions are taken from material in the exhibits and the answers can be found in the exhibits as well.

These packets are being distributed to the teachers so they can prepare their students, in advance, for a trip to the Three Rivers Museum. Copies of the packets are also being sent to Superintendents of Schools in area towns.

Guests Visit from Around the World

The Three Rivers Museum has been open to the public for approximately six months and during that time visitors from 35 states have signed our guest book.

The total number of visitors so far has been 1,330. We have also had guests from Germany, Canada, Australia, and two monks from Thailand.

It's a Boy!

Congratulations to Roger and Tammy Bell upon the birth of their son Russell Louis Bell. Roger is the chairman of the Three Rivers Museum. Mother, father and newest museum member are all doing well.

Summer Learning Series

continued from page 1

Americans in the West.

The museum plans to continue these special events into the fall. Other projects in the works include a live KBIX radio broadcast from the museum and a jazz musical presentation. A "Railroader's Day" is also being planned. Dates and times will be announced as they become available.

Museum members are encouraged to join the public at large in attending these special events.



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P.O. Box 1813 ♦ Muskogee, OK 74402

918/686-6624 ♦ www.3riversmuseum.com

published quarterly by Three Rivers Museum
copyright 2001

Editor-in-Chief: Roger Bell Managing Editor: Jonita Mullins

Design and Production by JM Publishing
323 N. 13th St. ♦ Muskogee, OK 74401 ♦ 682-0312

Sutton Family Pioneered Boynton

by Ellen "Cowboy" Johnson

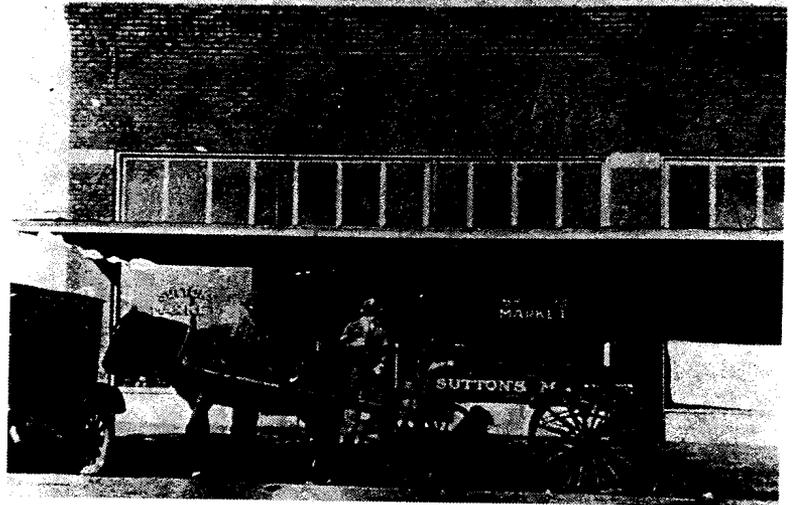
SILVERY SHADOWS from a full moon danced across the dewy prairie as a small boy of ten with somber brown eyes saddled his pony in the barn behind the Sutton house in Boynton, Oklahoma. It was 1923.

The brown and white spotted horse whinnied, tossed his mane and stamped his hooves, anxious to make their familiar trek. The boy and his pony trotted four blocks to the main street and turned left. At the Boynton Hotel, Archie Sutton picked up a bundle of *Muskogee Phoenix* newspapers.

The pony knew the route; so the reins lay loosely across the saddle horn. One by one, the boy tossed the morning paper to residences of the oil boomtown with 1,400 in population.

Archie's grandparents, Marion and Thomas Bronson (T.B.) Sutton, came to Boynton in 1905 from Carroll, Iowa. T. B. was mayor of Boynton twice before statehood and the first Muskogee County Commissioner serving the Third District. His Republican platform included good roads and bridges. A steel bridge over Cloud Creek still stands two miles east of town as proof of his word.

In 1922, Boynton had the Francis Vitrified Brick Company, Transcontinental Oil Refinery with a capacity of 10,000 barrels per day, two



Sutton's Market was an early day business in Boynton, Oklahoma

banks, a drug store, good schools, a post office, grain mill,

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The Sutton Home

The Suttons bought a magnificent three-store cedar home in 1914 and it has been continuously occupied by the family since then. Franklin Miller built it in 1901. It is obvious that Miller employed master craftsmen for 100 years later the doors and windows are straight and the hardwood floors are even and solid. The house is a treasure. It has 12 rooms and a beautiful mahogany staircase.

The builder, Franklin Miller, was cashier at that time for the First National Bank of Boynton. It had been organized in 1903 by A.W. Patterson and A.C. Trumbo, both of Muskogee. Miller was also a prominent realtor in Muskogee County known as "the land man." Miller came to Indian Territory from Warrensburg, Missouri, as a land and emigration agent from the Missouri Pacific Railroad, laying out townsites along the train route.

Our Mission

The Three Rivers Museum has been established to tell the complete story of the founding, settlement and development of the Three Rivers area of Oklahoma.

The museum will actively seek to collect, preserve, research, exhibit and interpret a collection of historic artifacts. We will serve the visitors and residents of the area through these efforts as well as through educational programs and special events.

The Three Rivers Museum hopes its work will establish a respect for the region's past and will contribute quality and value to its future.

Three Rivers Quiz

Test your knowledge of Three Rivers History with our trivia quiz.

1. What town is considered the oldest permanent settlement in Oklahoma?
2. What U.S. President gave a campaign speech at Muskogee's Spaulding Park?
3. What was the original name of the town of Taft?
4. What was the first railroad to cross through Indian Territory and the Three Rivers region?

Answers

1. The town of Salina, established as a trading post by A.P. Chouteau
2. Harry S. Truman gave his Muskogee speech in 1948.
3. The town of Taft was first named Twine after a prominent African-American pioneer.
4. The first railroad was the Missouri, Kansas & Texas, known as the KATY

Three Forks Trading Post cont.

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Bogey met with quick opposition from the Choctaw who hunted in the area. The Choctaw were fierce rivals of the Osage and Bogey's trade with the Osage was considered a threat to their hunting territory.

On January 6, 1807, a band of Choctaw warriors, led by Chief Pushmataha, attacked Bogey's post. They carried off all Bogey's merchandise, robbed him of his guns and equipment and took all the furs and pelts the Osage

had brought in for trade. The Choctaw hauled Bogey's entire operation away on his own boats! He estimated his losses at \$9,000.

The Choctaw were not able to halt trade in the region, however. Other traders followed Bogey into the Three Forks area, including Nathaniel Pryor and A.P. Chouteau for whom the towns of Pryor and Chouteau were named.

The Three Forks area was the first in Oklahoma to be settled and continues as a crossroads for trade to this day. ▼

Sutton Family cont.

The Three Rivers Area

two cotton gins, five churches and a dozen stores.

James Edward Sutton, Archie's father, ran Sutton's Market in downtown Boynton from the late 1920's through World War II. Many stories are told about James.

"Father had a pet goat," Archie recalls with a grin. "The goat would follow Dad into the house and sit next to him on the sofa while he fed it pieces of tobacco!"

Charles Hill, friend and caregiver for Archie, chuckles about other incidents.

"If James had an argument with his wife, Mary May, when he came home from the store at night, he'd toss his hat inside the front door and wait a few minutes. If Mrs. Sutton didn't throw it back at him, then he'd go in!"

Hill adds, "James should also be remembered for helping poor families during the Depression when the oil played out and the land became a dust bowl. Even the wells dried up. Local farmers couldn't grow crops so James delivered food baskets to the needy.

"My father was a good friend of his and once Mr. Sutton brought us food when we were going hungry. You don't forget those things!"

Maston Steven Hill, Charles' father, came to Indian Territory from Ozark, Arkansas with five covered wagons and 100 head of cattle. In 1901 the Hill family with eleven children settled on Dirty Creek near Oktaha. Their families have remained close all these years.

Archie Sutton, a bachelor, has suffered health problems the last few years but gets a twinkle in his eyes when sharing stories of early Boynton. He graduated in 1933 from Boynton High School and earned a certificate for 12 years of perfect attendance!

His favorite activity was basketball. In fact, Sutton served as scorekeeper for high school basketball games as well as a member of the school board for 33 years.

In 1965, Hill asked Sutton to help with bellman duties at Fountainhead Lodge in Eufaula. He made \$87 in tips the first day and was ready for work again at 2:00 a.m. the next morning. Sutton retired from the Lodge after 18 years.

Like other settlers of Muskogee County, the Sutton family of Boynton left a lasting impression on the fertile prairie and the history of this region.

What makes up the Three Rivers Area? It is defined to include Muskogee County, all the counties that border Muskogee County — Cherokee, Haskell, McIntosh, Okmulgee, Wagoner — as well as Southern Mayes and Western Sequoyah Counties.

The Three Rivers Museum hopes to collect and preserve historical artifacts from this entire region. Contact the museum if you have something to donate at 686-6624.



A crowd gathered in downtown Boynton in June 1909 for a log rolling contest.



Sources
for
Three
Forks
Trading
Post

Three Forks Site of Earliest Trading Post

by Jonita Mullins

After Bernard de la Harpe visited the Three Forks region in 1719, the French flag flew over the area. Following on the heels of explorers such as La Harpe, came traders who were eager to establish themselves in the lucrative fur business.

The French had established trade treaties with the Wichita and Caddo tribes of the area, in part to counterbalance the Spanish treaty with the Comanches.

The French ruled the region they called Louisiana from their port city of New Orleans. St. Louis, established by the Chouteau family, was also an important trade site for the French. A third early trading area was Arkansas Post where the Arkansas River meets the Mississippi.

From these locations, French fur traders spread out along the rivers of the region. Many built cabins on the river banks and intermarried with the Indians.

French rule of the Three Rivers area ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1763 which gave the Louisiana Territory to Spain. The Spanish ruled from trading posts at San Antonio and Santa Fe.

However, Spanish traders never aggressively moved into the Three Forks region. The only Spanish effort in Oklahoma was to establish a wagon road from Santa Fe to St. Louis. The area remained under Spanish control until 1800 when it reverted back to France under Napoleon.

Because of the demand for fur by the French, the Indians of the area became professional fur hunters. Bales of beaver, otter, raccoon and bear fur were shipped out of



Oklahoma in pirogues (log canoes) and on flatboats.

As the more aggressive Osage Indians began to move into the Three Forks region — to increase their hunting grounds — the Wichita were pushed back from the Arkansas River to the Red River.

The Osage traded with Auguste and Pierre Chouteau of St. Louis. The Chouteaus had been given a monopoly on trade with the Osage in 1794. But in 1802 their license was revoked in Missouri.

The Chouteaus convinced the Osage to leave their villages in Missouri and settle in the region of the Three Forks so trade could continue. Three thousand Osage agreed to move and the Wichita and Caddo were completely driven out of the area.

In 1803, France sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States. Almost immediately explorers were sent out to map the region because the boundaries had never been clearly established.

While Lewis and Clark were dispatched to explore the northern rivers of the territory, Zebulon Pike was commissioned to travel and map the southern rivers.

In the summer of 1806, Pike left St. Louis and traveled across the prairie to the Arkansas River (in what is now Kansas). While he continued up the river, he dispatched his second in command, James Wilkinson, to travel down the Arkansas. Wilkinson and a party of 5 soldiers, followed the Arkansas south, traveling in pirogues

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*Oklahoma:
Footloose and
Fancy Free*
by Angie Debo

*The History of
Oklahoma*
by Arrell M.
Gibson

*This Is Three Forks
Country*
by Phil Harris

*Oklahoma: Land of
the Fair God*
by Odie B. Faulk

Welcome to These Museum Members

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP continues to grow. We would like to welcome all our (◆) new members and those who have renewed their membership in the past three months. Thank you for being a part of the Three Rivers Museum.

Individual

- ◆ Betty Begun
- ◆ Katherine Biggs
- ◆ Ruth Box
- Richard Carr
- ◆ Cynthia Price Cohen
- Mildred Cousins
- ◆ Michael Cristantiello
- Mrs. C.N. Curl
- Dorothy Fite
- Elizabeth Gibson
- Myra Vanderpool
- Gormley
- ◆ Walter Grober
- Gladys Horner
- Elva Johnson
- Tommie Sue Leahy
- ◆ Hugh Meredith
- ◆ Dorothy Pack

- James & Emma Lee Bankhead
- Betty Barger
- ◆ Al & Beva Bergstom
- Fred & Dorothy Bliss
- ◆ Jo & Ira Collins
- ◆ Sue & Jerry Collins
- ◆ Phillip & Terri Erwin
- Jack & Genevieve Farr
- ◆ Earl Graves
- Holloway Blueprint
- Dave & Dale Holloway
- Charles Ingersoll
- ◆ Clarence & Nancy Mayberry
- David & Billie Lynn Miller
- Dan & Kristy Newell
- ◆ Carlile & Linda Roberts
- Bud & Kit Stewart
- Gordon & Dorothy Swanson
- Tid & Virginia Neely Sweet
- Revere & Mary Young

- Children's Clinic
- Nick & Laurie Fuller
- ONG
- Walter Stoddard, Jr.
- Virginia Taylor

Benefactor
Miriam Freedman

Patron
Golda Martin

Sponsor

- ◆ Body Craft Supply, Inc.
- Pioneer Abstract & Title
- Betty Brown Rawlins
- Tim & Lela Robison
- Trust Company of OK

Sustainer

- Johnston Terminal
- Muskogee Federal Credit Union
- Mr. & Mrs. W.S. Warner, Jr.
- Waterloo Industries
- Fanne Lu Yaffe

Family

- Ernest & Marty Anthis
- Mitchell & Fleeta Baker

Builder

- Troy & Modine Baker

THREE RIVERS MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP

You can be a part of history! Join the Three Rivers Museum today. Your annual membership fee entitles you to a membership card, subscription to the quarterly journal, free admission to the museum and a 10% discount on purchases in the museum gift shop.

Please complete this form and mail with your check made payable to the Three Rivers Museum.

___ Individual Membership \$25 ___ Family Membership \$35 ___ Builder Membership \$100
___ Sponsor Membership \$250 ___ Sustainer Membership \$500

NAME:

ADDRESS:

PHONE:

Clip or copy and mail to: Three Rivers Museum
P.O. Box 1813, Muskogee, OK 74402



Wally Waits: Long-time Supporter of Museum

The Three Rivers Museum is always looking for historical artifacts pertinent to the Three Rivers area of Oklahoma.

A representative from our Museum Development Committee would be happy to meet with anyone who would like to make a donation of such artifacts.

Please call us at 686-6624 about making a donation to the Three Rivers Museum. Together we can preserve the past for future generations.

Editor's Note:

The "Three Rivers Historian" needs your historical articles. If you have information on historical events, people or places in the Three Rivers area, please submit them to:

Three Rivers Historian,
Attn: Managing Editor,
P.O. Box 1813,
Muskogee, OK
74402.

Or you can send us an e-mail at www.3riversmuseum.com

Wally Waits served on the Three Rivers Museum's Board of Directors from 1993 until his recent retirement from the board in 2001. He has been an enthusiastic support of the museum in its developmental stages while the board searched for a location to house its archives and exhibits.

Wally served on the Museum Development Committee and there helped with building its artifacts to over 10,000 pieces today. He worked with the executive director, Linda Moore, in starting the museum's extensive cross-referenced database for those artifacts.

"Wally has been a great asset to our museum's development," says chairman Roger Bell. "His work and leadership have been invaluable. I sincerely

appreciate all that he has done for our collection development and his strong involvement on our Board of Directors."

As an employee of the Muskogee Public Library, Wally comes in contact with many people conducting genealogical and historical research. Through these contacts, he has been able to introduce many people to the Three Rivers Museum, some of whom have become members or donors of artifacts.

Wally has also contributed numerous articles on Three Rivers history to this newsletter.

Though Wally has retired from the Board of Directors, he will continue to actively support the museum and its future endeavors. The board appreciates all that Wally has contributed to the museum's success thus far.

Three Forks Trading Post cont.

cut from cottonwood trees.

Wilkinson's account of this exploration is the first American account of Northeastern Oklahoma. He reported passing several Osage villages as well as a number of Cherokee and Choctaw hunting parties.

Wilkinson made a side trip along the Cimarron River which he named the Saline because the Osage mined salt from along its marshes.

On December 23, 1806, Wilkinson's party rested at an Osage village located between the Verdigris and Grand Rivers where they join the Arkansas.

As Wilkinson's group continued

down the Arkansas, they met Joseph Bogey traveling upriver from Arkansas Post. Bogey, a French trader, had secured a license to trade with the Osage in the Three Forks area.

With a large boat loaded with goods for trade, and a crew of 12 men, Bogey continued up the Arkansas to the mouth of the Verdigris. He entered the river in a deep stretch of still waters below the Verdigris Falls (near Okay) and here established his trading post. It is believed that this post is the first white settlement in Oklahoma, though Salina in Mayes County can claim to be the first permanent settlement.

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