

3 Rivers Historian

Spring 2004

A Journal of the Three Rivers Museum

V. 7, No. 2

Downtown Tour Draws Attention

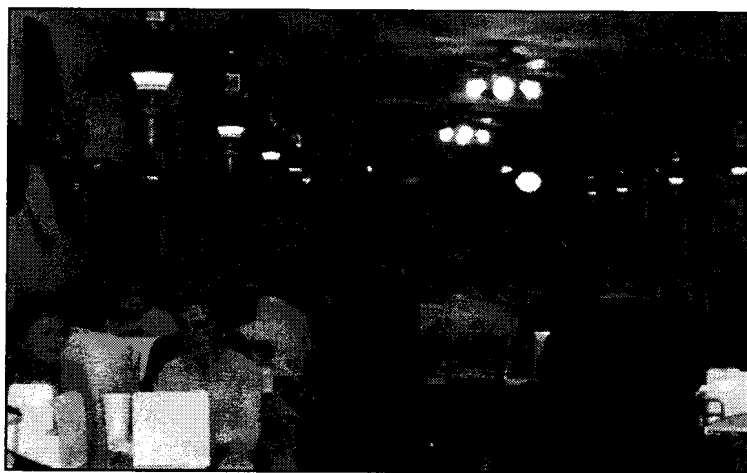
The Three Rivers Museum hosted its first Downtown Muskogee Walking Tour on Saturday, April 17. The tour began at the Midland Valley Depot at 10:00 a.m. with a computer presentation by tour director and board chairman Roger Bell.

Roger outlined Muskogee's development beginning in 1872 through its raucous wild west days and its more settled times as Indian Territory's most important and progressive city. After this presentation, the 33 tour participants divided into two groups to walk through downtown Muskogee to see where its history happened.

The walking tour started with the historic depot district, then moved up Main Street where most of Muskogee's earliest mercantiles, liveries and other businesses were located.

From Main Street the tour continued along Court Street, recalling Muskogee's significance as the site of the first federal court in Indian Territory and where the Sequoyah Convention was held in 1905.

The tour participants stopped for a lunch break on Third Street, then continued along Broadway to State Street with a visit inside the Severs Building, at one time Muskogee's most lavish and beautiful hotel.



These "History Explorers" enjoy lunch at Club Lunch in the historic McKibban Building.

From the Severs, the tour continued to Okmulgee Avenue with a stop at the only remaining downtown theater — the Roxy — where participants enjoyed an old black and white western starring Muskogee's own Clu Gulagher.

From the Roxy the tour group traveled Second Street along the once thriving black business district. Here a stop at the first Muskogee fire station gave participants a look at a trolley car being restored as well as some vintage fire engines. After this stop, the walking tour continued back to the Three Rivers Museum.

Response to this first downtown walking tour was very good. Most of

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Three Rivers Museum Board & Staff

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Museum News Briefs

Museums Host Local Teachers

Muskogee's five museums joined together in February to offer Teachers Day to Muskogee Public School teachers. Muskogee's Convention and Tourism Office sponsored the event.

The Teachers Day gave local educators the opportunity to tour two of the museums — the Five Civilized Tribes Museum and the Three Rivers Museum. They also were given presentations on Ataloa Lodge Museum, the Thomas-Foreman Historic Home and the USS Batfish War Memorial.

Work Starts on Elgin Street

After several delays, work to re-surface Elgin Street has begun. This street runs in front of the Three Rivers Museum and has been torn up for months. The city removed the asphalt on the street to reveal the original bricks underneath.

Unfortunately, the bricks were too deteriorated to leave uncovered. The street will be covered with asphalt, with some bricks along the curbing left exposed for a historic flavor. A section of railroad track will be placed in the intersection of Third and Elgin between the two depots in the Depot District.

Black History Month Exhibit Well Received

During the month of February — National Black History Month — Three Rivers Museum featured a special exhibit called "History: In Black & White."

The exhibit was created by the museum's executive director, Linda Moore, and featured 30 prominent African Americans from the Three Forks region of Oklahoma.

The museum also offered in its conference room a biographical video on Dr. John Hope Franklin, a native of Rentiesville, Oklahoma. Dr. Franklin is author of the book *From Slavery to Freedom* and is one of the most honored historians in America.

The Three Rivers Museum is dedicated to offering a multi-cultural approach to Oklahoma history and this exhibit was well received as a part of that effort.

Downtown Walking Tour Deemed a Success

the tour participants were from the Muskogee area, but visitors from Missouri, Texas and Minnesota were also involved.

James Puz of Wynona, Minnesota had been working in Muskogee for a few months. He attended the tour hoping to get ideas to take back to his own community. Many local participants expressed the hope that Muskogee will take more pride in its history and do more to preserve its historic buildings.

With such a good response, the museum plans to offer the Downtown Walking Tour again in the future. The museum staff also welcomes suggestions for other walking tours we might offer.

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220 Elgin ♦ Muskogee, OK 74401

918/686-6624 ♦ www.3riversmuseum.com

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Muskogee: An Unorganized Village

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from The Biography of an Oklahoma Town, by Grant Foreman

Early day Muskogee had no paved streets as this photo shows.



In 1876, Muskogee had one church, the Presbyterian, of which Rev. John Elliott was pastor. One passenger train a day was due to arrive from the north at 6:45 in the morning and one from the south at 7:55 in the evening.

The stage for Okmulgee, Wewoka, Sac and Fox Agency, Shawneetown, and Kickapoo left at noon Mondays and Thursdays and returned Wednesdays and Saturdays.

In the early seventies Muskogee furnished the most convenient railroad facilities to Fort Smith. The two towns were connected by stage service of the El Paso Stage Company that carried passengers and the mail.

In June 1871, the El Paso Stage Line was advertising four-horse stage service from Fort Smith by way of Fort Gibson and Baxter Springs, Kansas to Neosho, Missouri, the current terminus of the Atlantic and Pacific Railway, where trains could be boarded for St. Louis.

There being as yet no railroad in [Indian Territory], stage service was advertised by way of Fort Gibson to Boggy Depot, Fort Arbuckle, Tishomingo, and Fort Sill with connections to principal points in North Texas.

In another year, however, passengers from Fort Smith took their trains at Muskogee. The *Western Independent* advertised in April 1872, fine, four-horse stages leaving Fort Smith at 6:30 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, arriving at Muskogee at midnight. This scheduled run in seventeen and a half hours proved too strenuous, and the time

was extended in October from 5:00 a.m. one day to 11:00 o'clock the next day.

G. T. Sparks, the local agent for the stage company at Fort Smith, advertised in the *Herald* through tickets good for passage by stage from Fort Smith to Muskogee and from there by rail to St. Louis, Chicago and eastern cities.

Thus, while Muskogee furnished transportation for Fort Smith, the latter, being at the terminus of the first telegraph line in the country dating from about 1858, furnished Muskogee with news of the world through the *Fort Smith Herald*.

That paper transported by stage to Muskogee, kept the residents of this village advised of happenings in the outside world, and at the same time its readers learned of the merits of "Doctor Crook's Wine of Tar for breast, side and back"; and of "Doctor Simmons' Liver Regulator"; and they were admonished to purify the blood with "Doctor Crook's Syrup of Poke Root."

Three lawyers advertised in the *Indian Journal* that they practiced in the courts of the Cherokee and Creek tribes, the commissioner's court, and the United States Court at Fort Smith.

Four doctors also advertised, one of whom was located at "Chalybeate Springs," seven miles south of Muskogee. Emigration through Muskogee on the Texas Road was said to be "enormous."

The railroad company filed with the Creek agent May 17, 1876, a plat of

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The Three Rivers Area

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 re-

gion. Contact the

museum if you

have something to

donate at 686-6624.



Friends of the
Thomas-
Foreman
Home

- Jim & Billie Alexander
- Roy & Lin Barmore
- Bethany Bowline
- Charles & Winnie Bowman
- Bradley Funeral Home
- Kathryn Burke/Marion Weber
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- CHS Class of '46
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- Muskogee Rotary Club
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- Marjorie Paxson
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- Jim & Karen Ritchey
- Forney Sandlin
- Service League
- Bill & Kathleen Settle
- Jennifer Sparks
- Ronnie & Nita Spradlin
- Jon & Martha Stoodley
- Marie Wadley
- Warren Weakland
- Drew Wilcoxon

Thomas-Foreman Home News

The Thomas-Foreman Home has seen an increase in visitorship this spring as more people become aware of this historic Muskogee treasure.

Rich Mountain Community College in Mena, Arkansas has brought three classes studying the history of the Ozarks to the Thomas-Foreman Home over the last two months.

The classes have consisted of seniors over age 60 who take the history course as part of the college's community education program. Teacher Naomi Thompson has brought her classes to the Thomas-Foreman Home because of their interest in the Dawes Commission. Grant Foreman came to Muskogee to work on that commission.

Join the Friends of the Home

Your donation to Friends of the Thomas-Foreman Home will help us maintain this Muskogee treasure. All money sent to the Thomas-Foreman Home is kept separate from Three Rivers Museum funds. Please complete the form at right and mail to:

Friends of the
Thomas-Foreman Home*
1419 W. Okmulgee Ave.
Muskogee, OK 74401

Thank you!

*Friends is a 501c3 corporation. Your contribution is tax deductible.

Yes, I want to help save the Thomas-Foreman Home!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Please mark your donation level below. Donors will receive the Home's quarterly newsletter **The Trellis** and free admission to the Thomas-Foreman Home.

___ \$20 Individual ___ \$30 Family
___ \$100 Builder ___ \$250 Friend
___ \$500 Sustainer

Make checks payable to Friends of the Thomas-Foreman Home.



An Unorganized Village

Where Is the Three Rivers Museum?

ground claimed by it for depot purposes; the space claimed was two thousand feet long and four hundred feet wide. The plat was accompanied by a list of names of individuals occupying part of the ground and the company asked for their removal.

N.B. Moore, a prominent Creek Indian, was in possession of a part, on which he had permitted F.H. Strokey to conduct an eating house under a Creek permit obtained by Moore.

The day the plat was filed, Major J.J. Upham of the Fifth Infantry, then acting as Creek agent, ordered Strokey to move. A week later Moore appealed to the Secretary of the Interior for protection against the claim of the railroad company; and thus another perplexing problem engaged the responsible authorities.

In 1876, thirty thousand dollars worth of pecans were shipped from Muskogee on the Missouri-Kansas & Texas Railway. Wild pigeons were still abundant. A visitor wrote of seeing on a ware room floor four thousand being packed for shipment to St. Louis.

That same year, 1876, the people of Muskogee saw approaching from the west a cavalcade of twenty wagons loaded with strange visitors. The wagons contained ninety Sioux Indians, including six women, two Cheyenne, three Arapaho men and one woman.

The invasion was a peaceful one, however. Headed by their Sioux chiefs, Red Cloud and Spotted Calf, they were brought by government agents A.G. Boone, J.W. Daniels and E.A. Howard to look over the country with a view to settling here.

At Okmulgee they had a friendly

council with the Creeks. Delegations from the company were received in the House of Kings, where they were addressed by Lochar Harjo, whose speech was interpreted into English by Legus Perryman, from which another interpreted it into Sioux.

They then came on to Muskogee, where they filled three passenger cars of a train that took them north on their homeward journey. Nothing came of their visit.

A photograph of Muskogee made in 1879 . . . shows a prairie bare of either tree or shrub; over this bleak expanse are scattered a few buildings identified .

. . . as follows: residences of a colored barber, the station agent, Dan Harvey, roundhouse foreman, and I.D. Highleyman, claim agent.

[Also identified] Smith and Angler's store, later occupied by F.B. Severs; residence of A.W. Robb, manager of J.A. Patterson's store; and four blocks west of the

railroad, about the corner of the present Fourth and Broadway, a residence was occupied by J.Q. Tufts, as the Union Indian Agency.

[The photo also included] section house; depot; four-stall roundhouse and tank; residence and office of Dr. George W. Cummings, first physician in Muskogee; James Mitchell's railway eating house; Strokey's restaurant; J.A. Patterson's store and warehouse; Major John Foreman's wind gristmill; Joshua Ross's haystack and barn.

In the picture appears the Texas Road, over which passed daily hundreds of wagons drawn by oxen, mules, and horses. Great herds of north-bound cattle over this road were also familiar sights.

"A photograph of Muskogee in 1879 shows a prairie bare of either tree or shrub."

The museum is located in downtown Muskogee at 220 Elgin. Take Hwy 69 to Okmulgee Ave. Then east on Okmulgee Ave. to 3rd St. Then go south on 3rd St. to Elgin.

We're on the Web!

Stay up to date with Museum News and Special Events by visiting our website at www.3riversmuseum.com



Our
Mission



Tales from Three Rivers

“Paid in Full”

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.

In the early 1870s, Muscogee was in its infancy with only a few scattered businesses and homes built around the depot that had been established by the Missouri-Kansas & Texas Railroad (the KATY). Located about three miles to the west of this little windswept prairie town was the Creek Agency near Fern Mountain.

This Agency had long been the hub of commerce in the Creek Nation. It was here that the Indian Agent, the official representative of the United States government, had his residence. Not only did the Creeks come to the Agency to conduct their business with the government, but also to trade at the mercantile stores – those tents and lumber shacks that had sprung up around the Agency.

One of the first merchants to move his mercantile business from Creek Agency to Muscogee was James A. Patterson. Shortly afterward, the Creek Agency also moved into the new town.

With the railroad depot and the Indian Agency located within their community, Muscogee businessmen were optimistic about seeing their town grow in commercial and political importance.

But, according to Alice Robertson, a newly appointed agent to the Five Civilized Tribes did not come with an interest in the town of Muscogee. This agent sought to establish the Union Agency about 12 miles south of Muscogee.

Even at this time, the man and some of his cronies recognized that it was only a matter of time before Indian Territory would be fully opened to white settlement and tribal ownership of land would end. They hoped to position themselves in a town of their making to profit from these changes.

Over the dining table in their favorite eating establishment, the Indian agent and

his friends plotted their strategy. A source of water would be important for the agency so digging a well would be their first order of business.

Something in their covert conversations over the next few weeks aroused the suspicions of the proprietor of the eating house. Not only were they planning to move the Agency, but they were also planning to convince the railroad to move its depot.

The well they were digging was now completed. The Agency would soon be moved if something wasn't done to stop them. The proprietor realized this plan would not only ruin the town of Muscogee, but would put him out of business as well.

Keeping this information to himself, the restaurateur made his way to the Patterson Mercantile and placed an order for a large barrel of salt to be delivered to his eating establishment as soon as possible.

At dusk that evening, a friendly railroad conductor loaded the man and his salt barrel onto the caboose of a train heading south.

The next day when the agent and his force of men took the train to inspect their new well, they found something odd. The water in the well appeared clean and clear, but it was as salty as seawater. Their plan to move the Agency had been defeated by one quiet, but resourceful businessman.

Some time later the owner of the eatery was sent a bill for the barrel of salt. He took the bill to Mr. Patterson and explained the circumstances that had led to such an unusual purchase and what had been the result of its use. Mr. Patterson marked the bill, “Paid in Full.”



Thanks 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

- Ronald Barton
- Margaret Cain
- Christine Cannarsa
- Margo Dollar
- Barbara Downs
- Orville Eaton
- Dorothy Gardner
- ♦ George Garrett
- Harriet Jayne Garrett
- Leisha Haworth
- Kathy Hewitt
- Gene Hyden
- Bonnie Jennings
- Adelaide Johnson
- Elva Johnson
- J. Wm. Keithan
- Barbara Lang
- Jim Lemley
- ♦ Mary Malone
- ♦ Muskogee Parks Dept.
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- ♦ Adaina Riley
- ♦ Cathy Roberts
- Jared Roberts
- Kay Baim Shapiro

- ♦ S.D. Stewart, Jr.
- Margaret Vardeman
- Delphia Warren
- Betty Weaver

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- Frank & Faye Dean Boydston
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- Paul & Telitha Day
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- Ross & Barbara Staggs
- Nancy & Phil Stolper
- Fred & Jean Truster
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- Marion Weber/Kathryn Burke
- Charlie & Brenda Wilbourn

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- Janey Boydston
- City of Muskogee
- ♦ Betty Jo Fite Hays
- Dorothy D. Hays
- Muskogee Daily Phoenix
- ♦ Forney Sandlin
- ♦ Bill & Kathleen Settle

Sponsor

- Acme Engineering
- Bank of Oklahoma

Sustainer

- Pumps & Controls

New in the Whistle Stop Gift Shop

Public Enemies: America's Criminal Past by William Helmer with Rick Mattix
 "Helmer and Mattix unravel the myths and mysteries of America's 'golden age' of gangsters."



We also carry other books on local history by local authors. Come by and see our selection!



If you're shopping for a train enthusiast, the Whistle Stop has the best selection of train-related items in Muskogee.

Museum members receive a 10% discount!

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
 220 Elgin, Muskogee, OK 74401



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

A representative from the Museum would be happy to meet with anyone who would like to make a donation. Please call us at 686-6624.

Museum Hours:

Wed. thru Sat.
10:00 a.m. to
5:00 p.m.

Call about group
reservations
and rates

686-6624

Summer Events Loaded with Fun

The Three Rivers Museum will offer summer events that are loaded with fun for the entire family.

On Saturday, May 15, we'll host our third Railroad Day. This year we'll commemorate the Midland Valley's 100 years in Muskogee. This rail line began in 1903, but reached Muskogee in early 1904 and built its depot and headquarters here.

Railroad Day will feature our 1940s diesel engine, model train layouts, a telegraph key demonstration, railroad timepieces, speakers on railroad history, a kids fun zone and barbecue lunch on the flag plaza. Come out to our annual Railroad Day and bring your whole family!

◆◆◆

The museum will continue the fun with a special exhibit that will run from June 16 to July 10 called "The Old Ball Game."

The Three Rivers region is rich with sports history and this exhibit will highlight some of the memorable events, teams and individual players that are a part of this colorful and exciting history.

Photos, programs, tickets, trophies and many other items will make up this unique exhibit. All the sports enthusiasts in your family will want to come and see.

Recent Acquisitions

The Three Rivers Museum continually receives artifacts relating to the history of the Three Forks region. Some of our most recent acquisitions speak to the wide variety of historical subjects that the museum can cover.

We cannot list every item, but wish to give you a small sampling of what we have received. The museum staff is grateful to every donor who has shared an artifact with us.

J.J. Skieth donated a "sadiron" and ice hooks on behalf of his grandchildren Paisley and Camden Skieth.

Adaina Riley and William McBee contributed railroad books and timetables. They are both members of the local retired railroad workers organization.

Robert Gaddy gave the museum an old photograph of a lumberyard once located in Muskogee near the Midland Valley Depot.

Cona Tackett contributed photos from Tony Goetz School.

Micki Brown offered the museum a 1928 Traffic Laws of Muskogee booklet.

Rosemary Rice brought a beautifully framed watercolor painting of the three edifices of St. Paul Methodist Church.

Barney Williams gave a copy of the History of Muskogee Schools booklet. He had it autographed by Central High School graduates from 1927 to 1970.

Thanks to all who have donated artifacts!