



# Three Rivers Historian

Summer 2004

A Journal of the Three Rivers Museum

V. 7, No. 3

## Museum Holds First Sports Day

The Three Rivers Museum hosted its first Sports Day on Saturday, July 17. The event was held in conjunction with a special exhibit titled "Three Rivers Athletes" that ran for most of the month of July.

The Three Rivers region of Oklahoma has an outstanding sports legacy and has produced many top athletes down through the years. Over 50 athletes from the area were highlighted in the sports exhibit.

Stars in football, baseball, rodeo, golf and more were featured as well as outstanding teams who have played in Muskogee and other Three Rivers area towns.

The sports exhibit and Sports Day garnered the attention of the media as well. Both the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix* and Fox 23 News from Tulsa covered the event.

On Sports Day, lectures were scheduled for the morning and afternoon. Royce Parr of Tulsa, spoke at 10:00 a.m. on baseball in Oklahoma, particularly noting the many players who were from the Three Rivers Region. Parr is co-author of the book *Glory Days of Summer: The History of Baseball in Oklahoma*.

In the afternoon, museum chairman Roger Bell focused on Muskogee Cen-



Visitors talk with museum director, Linda Moore, about the Sports Day display.

tral High School's all-star football team of 1951. He spoke at 1:30 on the championship season that produced many star players, some of whom were at the museum for Sports Day.

Also attending the one-day event was Muskogean Porter Reed who played in the Negro Leagues for such teams as the Detroit Wolves and the Omaha Rockets. Reed has been inducted into the Negro Leagues Hall of Fame.

A sports cards and collectibles show was also a part of the event, bringing in collectors for the museum's first Sports Day, which may become an annual event at the museum.



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#### Marketing:

Jonita Mullins

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Bud Stewart  
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*Emeritus Director:*  
Delphia Warren

## Museum News Briefs

### Museum Hosts Railroad Day

Three Rivers Museum hosted its third annual Railroad Day on Saturday, May 15, 2004. The event brought more than 150 people to the museum to enjoy a number of exhibits relating to railroad history.

Local railfan Tom Harrington loaned the museum a model steam engine for the event. Telegraphers Seaborn Reich and John Cato demonstrated how telegraphs worked for the railroad.

Collector Michael Fowler of Tulsa displayed a collection of railroad timepieces and other memorabilia. And railroad modelers Jeff Andrews, Ron Gemmin and John Vecchio returned with their model train layout set up the main exhibit hall.



*This collection of vintage railroad timepieces was on display for Railroad Day.*

Dr. John Fike of Texas A & M University lectured on railroad history in the conference room. The museum's vintage switch engine was open for tours and volunteer Bob Bornfleth answered questions about the train.

Children's games set up on the museum grounds rounded out the day. Next year, Railroad Day will be held on Saturday, May 14. Make plans to attend.

### Depot to Get Water Tower

Three Rivers Museum's neighbor, the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame located across the street in the Frisco Freight Depot, will soon be getting an eye-catching addition.

Koch Industries has donated a water tower, located in Jenks, Oklahoma, to the Hall of Fame. It will be painted with the Hall of Fame logo and erected behind the Frisco Depot.

Water towers were a necessary part of all the old railroad depots because the steam engines required large amounts of water to operate. The Frisco and Midland Valley Depots are part of Muskogee's Historic Depot District.

### Business Donates Copier

Ron Gemmin with Premier Office Systems has donated to the museum a copy machine for use in its office. The museum staff extends its thanks to Ron and Premier Office Systems for this generous gift.

### Got Ghosts?

The Three Rivers Museum is planning a Ghost Stories Tour for October. We're looking for a few good ghost stories in the Muskogee or Fort Gibson area. If you know of an interesting ghost story relating to history, call the museum and tell us about it at 686-6624.

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918/686-6624 • [www.3riversmuseum.com](http://www.3riversmuseum.com)

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# Early Missions In Indian Territory



## The Three Rivers Area

*Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from Missions and Missionaries by C.W. "Dub" West*

### Union Mission

The first mission in Indian Territory was Union Mission, located near present Mazie. It was originally established to minister to the Osages, but when it was discovered that it was located in the Cherokee Nation and was close to the Creek Nation, it attempted to cater to all three tribes.

The hardships and difficulties of the early missionaries were numerous. In the first place, travel to the mission field was slow and hazardous. This was previous to steamboat on the Arkansas River, and keelboats were used.

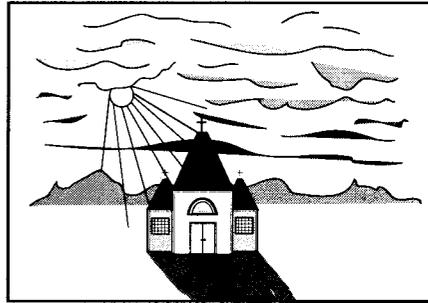
It was necessary to travel in the fall and winter in order to have enough water to float the boats. Even then snags often damaged the boats enough that they sank.

You can imagine the discomfiture and sickness resulting from the cold, wet weather. Two women died during the trip and most of the party became ill.

When the advance party arrived November 15, 1820, there were no buildings to serve as shelter. They began the erection of buildings to house themselves and to construct enough shelter to house the entire group.

The remainder of the contingent arrived February 18, 1821. They began the erection of additional buildings. One of the handicaps of the construction was the scarcity of timber.

Epaphras Chapman was superintendent of the mission. In a report to the Secretary of War (who had jurisdiction over Indian Affairs), Rev. W.L. Vaille gave the personnel of the mission as follows: "The number is 9 males and 7 fe-



males. Of this number there at present in our establishment are 4 families.

"Mr. Chapman is engaged in learning the Osage language. Mr. W.C. Requa is learning the language and teaching school. Mr. Spaulding, who is a teacher, occasionally labors on the farm. Mr. Fuller has the care of the farm.

"Mr. Woodruff with a white apprentice, performs the blacksmith work. Mr. Redfield has charge of the buildings assisted by Mr. George Requa. We have a good physician, Dr. Marcus Palmer who came out with the family."

The cemetery at the mission filled rapidly. Rev. Chapman died before four years had passed. Mr. Redfield buried his wife and several of his children in the lonely spot.

During the early days of the mission Joseph Revoir, a nearby storekeeper was murdered. Most disheartening of all, the Osages did not take to the ways of the white men and failed to patronize the mission.

The last communication we have concerning Union Mission was a letter dated March 27, 1832, addressed to the Secretary of War Lewis Cass. "Our usefulness has been great since the Treaty with the Cherokees, in consequence of becoming contiguous, and our being able to embrace some of the Cherokee and Osage children in the same school and also a portion of the Creeks, since

*continued on page 4*

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.



## Friends of the Thomas- Foreman Home

Jim & Billie Alexander  
 Roy & Lin Barmore  
 Bethany Bowline  
 Charles & Winnie Bowman  
 Bradley Funeral Home  
 Kathryn Burke/Marion Weber  
 Mary Ann Burrows  
 C&L RV Center  
 CHS Class of '46  
 H.C. & Suzanne Chancellor  
 James Crotty  
 Joel Cousins  
 Margo Dollar  
 Jim Egan Trust  
 Max & Peggy Eversole  
 Harmony House  
 Lonnie & Dianne Hill  
 Howard & Lillian Jayne  
 F. Merton Jeanes  
 Kirshner Foundation  
 Loftis Furniture  
 Moffitt Parker & Company  
 Muskogee Convention & Tourism  
 Muskogee Co. Historical Society  
 Muskogee Daily Phoenix  
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 Service League  
 Bill & Kathleen Settle  
 Jennifer Sparks  
 Ronnie & Nita Spradlin  
 Jon & Martha Stoodley  
 Marie Wadley  
 Warren Weakland  
 Drew Wilcoxon

# Early Missions In Indian Territory

they have removed into the neighborhood. For the last three years our usefulness has been greater than at any period previous to this, and the prospects are as good now as they have been.”

In spite of the optimism of this last letter, Union Mission ceased to exist officially in 1835. Some of the personnel remained on the grounds, and it became almost an inn for travelers on the Texas Road.

Washington Irving and his party tarried there a few days. Isaac McCoy used it as a stopover while he was surveying the land in this area and organizing Ebenezer Mission. Rev. Samuel A. Worcester used it for a few months, and the first printing in present Oklahoma was done at Union Mission.

In spite of its short existence, Union Mission accomplished a great deal and served to pioneer the mission effort among the Five Civilized Tribes. Years later the true worth of the mission was realized when a former pupil of the mission was instrumental in bringing about a peace treaty with the Plains Indians. He credited his training at Union Mission as having a lasting influence upon him.

### Dwight Mission

The second mission to be established in present Oklahoma was Dwight Mission. Dwight had originally been located near present Russellville, Arkansas, having been established in 1820, and was the first mission among the Western Cherokees.

## 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 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.

# Early Missions In Indian Territory

Chief Tahlonteeskee, who had removed to Arkansas a short time before, returned to the east in the fall of 1817 to ask the American Board of Missions to establish a mission among the Western Cherokees.

Rev. Cyrus Washburn stated, "In the fall of 1817, I was instructed to commence my journey to Arkansas to establish a mission among the Arkansas Cherokees." Rev. Washburn arrived January 3, 1820.

The site of the mission was selected August 25, 1820. The mission was named in honor of Rev. Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College and one of the organizers of the American Board of Missions.

Dwight moved to its present location in 1829, coinciding with the removal of the Cherokees from Arkansas to the new Cherokee Nation. Its first buildings were those that had been used by Chief Walter Webber for his mercantile operation.

Illness and death as well as need of other missions caused a constant turnover in the personnel of Dwight.

Dr. Marcus Palmer was associated with Dwight for a period but was transferred to Fairfield Mission. Miss Ermina Nash, Samuel A. Worcester's second wife, was a teacher at Dwight, and Rev. R.M. Loughridge, who established Koweta and Tullahassee Missions, spent some time at Dwight.

More than 50 missionaries served Dwight during its first 30 years in the Cherokee Nation. Dwight Mission celebrated its 150 anniversary of coming to Oklahoma in 1979.

## Fairfield Mission

Fairfield Mission was a branch of Dwight Mission. It replaced Mulberry Mission, which was located on Mulberry Creek in Arkansas.

Fairfield Mission was unique among the missions in that it was established and continued throughout its existence as a result of the intense desire of the Indians to have a mission of their own.

Many of the other missions were received by the Indians rather reluctantly, sometimes even opposed. In the case of Fairfield, it has been observed that Dwight had something that they desired but was too removed and besides, they wanted a mission of their own.

Fairfield was removed from Arkansas to the new Cherokee Nation near the present community of Lyons in Adair County in November 1829. Dr. Marcus Palmer, who had been in charge of Mulberry Mission was made superintendent of the new location.

Walter Webber, one of the Chiefs of the Cherokees, was one of the best friends Fairfield Mission had. He had been one of the most warlike of his people in the early days, leading at least one raid on the Osages. In his later years . . . he became one of the most earnest advocates of a peaceful Christian life.

The last mention we find of old Fairfield Mission was in the Journal of Reverend Armory Nelson Chamberlain. He traveled all over the Territory preaching and distributing literature. When we realize that his feet had been frozen and he hobbled on mere stubs, we can appreciate the true devotion of [these early missionaries.] ▼

*Fairfield was unique among the missions in that it was established and continued as a result of the intense desire of the Indians to have a mission of their own.*

## Where Is the Three Rivers Museum?

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](http://www.3riversmuseum.com)



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## 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.*



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## Tales from Three Rivers

### O-K Truck Factory Gave Okay Its Name

**W**hile Okay, Oklahoma would never rival Detroit for automobile production, it did make quite a mark on the automotive industry with the O-K Truck. This sturdy product proved to be a popular model following World War I.

The O-K Truck was manufactured in a rock building that had been constructed of native sandstone in 1907. It was built to be a meat packing plant for the cattle ranches in the area, but never actually served that purpose.

It stood empty and uncompleted near the little town of Rex (an early name for Okay) until 1910 when a Mr. McDaniel from Ohio bought it, finished the building and began a stove manufacturing business there. Rex Stoves were produced from 1910 to 1912. Following that, plows were manufactured at the plant until 1915.

The Oklahoma Auto Manufacturing Company acquired the building and moved into it in 1916. Production of trucks began that year and continued through the 1920s. The company employed 100 men and turned out about three trucks a day. They produced a 1-ton, 1 ½-ton and 2-ton truck.

The 1-ton model was a four-cylinder, 29.8 horsepower truck with a three-speed transmission. The trucks had solid rubber tires and wheels with wooden spokes. The cost on the trucks averaged \$1,295.

The O-K Trucks were completely assembled at the Okay plant except for the engine which was manufactured elsewhere. The trucks sold well throughout the country. In fact, business boomed right after World War I.

In 1919, the plant was so busy it fell behind in meeting orders and buyers would come to Okay to save time in de-

livery of the trucks. Dealerships for the truck were located throughout the Midwest and even as far as the West Coast.

By the late 1920s, however, the economy was slowing and truck sales fell off. The company floundered in financial difficulties and finally went out of business in 1927. Several unfinished trucks were parked in a field near the sandstone building until they were finally sold for scrap.

But the O-K Trucks on the road kept running. They were so well built that they continued to be used as a farm and oilfield workhorse until the 1940s.

After auto manufacturing ended, the rock building was converted to an airplane factory for a brief period. It produced a monoplane with two open cockpits. The plane had a wingspan of 26 feet and was fabric covered. It was powered by a five-cylinder radial engine with 110 horsepower. The fuselage was welded steel tubing and the wings had spruce spars.

In all, only three planes were ever built at the Okay plant. An O-K Truck towed the first plane that was produced out to a nearby pasture for a test flight in 1928. The wings had to be mounted on the plane out in the pasture. The test flight drew quite a crowd – people lined the road to watch the event.

But before the business itself could get off the ground, the Wall Street Crash of 1929 brought everything to a halt. The Okay Airplane Company went out of business that year. The building and all equipment of the company were sold. Ruins of the automotive/airplane factory still stand in Okay today. ▾

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## Contact Us

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**

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## Three Rivers People

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### Edward Warren Serves His Community

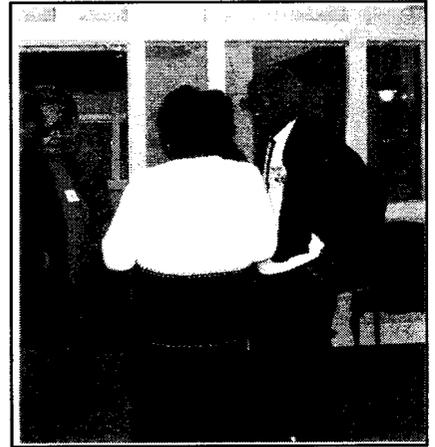
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The newest member of the Three Rivers Museum Board of Director is Edward Warren of Muskogee. With his wife, Tessie, Mr. Warren is involved in many community projects and has been recognized as an outstanding volunteer in Muskogee.

Besides serving as a director for Three Rivers Museum, Edward is also a part of the Habitat for Humanity organization.

Edward is part of a large musical family and plays in a jazz band when he isn't busy with his volunteer activities.

"We appreciate the level of commitment to serving the community



*Edward Warren, left, visits with guests at a reception at Three Rivers Museum.*

that Ed brings to Three Rivers Museum," says chairman Roger Bell.

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## 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.

Violet Blair brought to the museum several mortgages incurred by the Midland Valley Railroad dated from 1910.

Red Ferguson contributed a newspaper article about Hardy, Oklahoma, a small town on the Midland Valley Railroad.

The museum displayed the article, which included information on Patty Page, who grew up in Hardy where her father worked for the Midland Valley. This artifact was displayed during Railroad Day this past May.

Adelaide Johnson brought the museum numerous items relating to Alice Robertson who had been a friend of her family. Mrs. Johnson also included items from her father's law office.

George Young, Jr. gave the museum early day photo of Wainright, Oklahoma.

Janey Boydston, David Shelton, Joan Armstrong Crotty, Porter Reed and others all contributed items for our recent Sports Day.

Thanks to all who have donated artifacts!