

3 Rivers Historian

Fall 1998

A Journal of the Three Rivers Museum

V. 1, No. 1

Acquisition of Midland Valley Depot Completed

AFTER months of negotiations, the city of Muskogee has purchased the old Midland Valley Passenger Depot located at 3rd and Elgin Streets in Muskogee. The depot will be renovated soon into modern facilities to house the Three Rivers Museum.

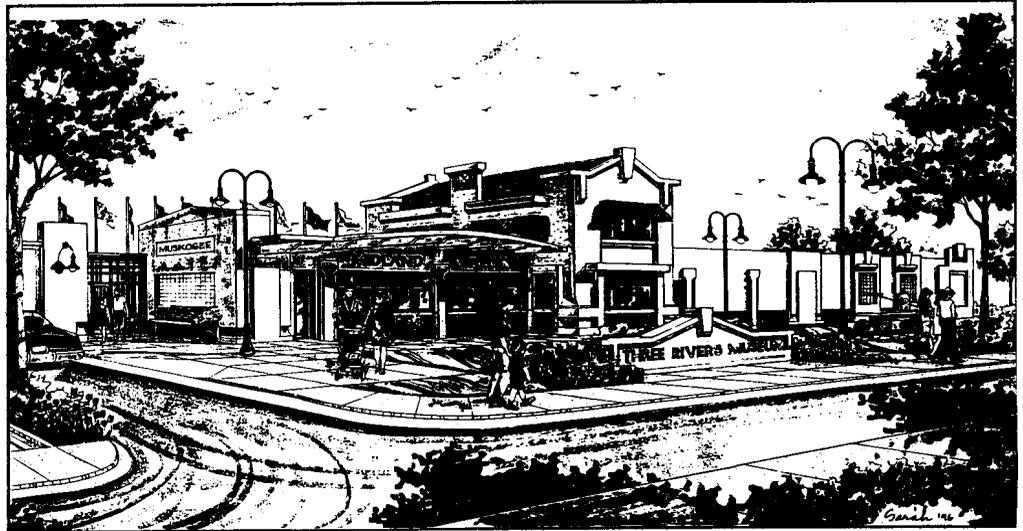
The museum and city of Muskogee have worked closely in acquiring federal grant monies of close to \$1 million through the Oklahoma Department of Transportation to be used for the renovations. A percentage of matching funds has been pledged by the city of Muskogee.

Designs for the museum have been developed by architect Mike Martin and await approval by the Three Rivers Museum Board of Directors and the Muskogee City Council. The old depot will house a gallery area, meeting room, gift shop, information center, public restrooms and museum office facilities.

"The museum board is very pleased with the architect's design," reports Roger Bell, board chairman. "We are looking forward to beginning the renovations on the depot property in the near future."

In addition to renovation of the actual depot, Mr. Martin's plans include renovations to the adjacent building recently vacated by Acme-Reese Air Conditioning which was also purchased by the city. This building will provide space for museum offices, artifact storage and exhibit preparation areas.

A museum requires that at least 40% of its building space be available for artifact storage. The Acme-Reese building will be a very



Architectural rendering of renovations to the Midland Valley Depot

cost effective means of obtaining that storage space and will allow for future expansion of the museum.

This metal fabricated building will be surrounded by a shell wall to match the depot. A glass passageway will connect the two buildings.

Visitors will first see an orientation area when they enter the museum. Nearby will be an information desk and public restrooms. The gift shop will be located in the former ticket office of the passenger depot. The east portion of the building, formerly the freight area, will be home to the main museum gallery.

The Three Rivers Museum will lease the site from the city and will be solely responsible for running the historic facility. In coming years, residents, tourists, school groups and others will be able to view the rich history of the Three Rivers area in this facility.

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Muskogee Celebrates Its Centennial

MUSKOGEE has commemorated the 100th anniversary of the establishment of its city charter throughout this year. Celebrations began in October of 1997 and will culminate with ceremonies at the Civic Assembly Center to erect a replica of the "Welcome to Muskogee" arch that once greeted visitors to the city.

The City of Muskogee — or Muscogee as it was originally spelled — has existed since 1872, but operated without a formal government until its charter in 1898. The government of the Creek (Muscogee) Nation existed then, but had authority only over tribal matters.

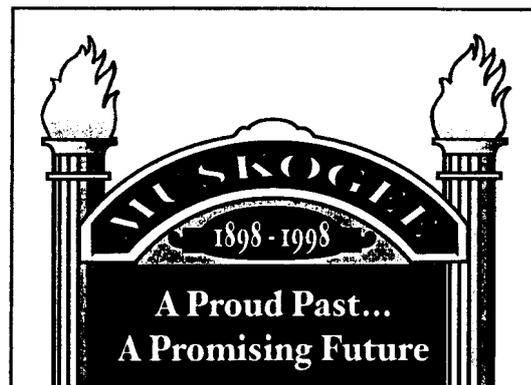
In 1871, the Missouri, Kansas and Texas (KATY) Railroad was built through Indian Territory from Kansas to Texas. Several towns sprang up along the rail line, including Muskogee. But there were no provisions for town sites and those investing in buildings within the town had no clear title to the land.

The Dawes Commission, authorized by Congress to enroll members of the Five Civilized Tribes and disburse land to those members, arrived in Muskogee in 1894. Within a few years, the Commission had distributed 20 million acres of land to 100,000 tribal members, including black freedmen who were also on the tribal rolls.

The task of distributing these lands was enormous. All the Indian tribes resisted the enrollment and allotments, forcing Congress to establish a federal court in 1896 to hear appeals regarding tribal membership. It has been said that of the 300 original residents of Muskogee, 150 of them were lawyers!

Because the Dawes Commission was headquartered in Muskogee, the city was established as a hub for Indian affairs and a U.S. government town. The establishment of a federal court, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office, the Veterans Administration and Hospital and Social Security Office in Muskogee all resulted from the Dawes Commission.

Before the oil boom of the early 1900's,



*The arch has become a symbol of
Muskogee's Centennial*

Muskogee was the most important city in northeastern Oklahoma. It was considered the capital of Indian Territory and vied with Guthrie, capital of Oklahoma Territory, for the site of the State Capital which eventually was settled upon Oklahoma City.

Oil was first discovered in Muskogee in 1896, but production did not begin for several years, largely because of the questions regarding ownership of land. The Muskogee Oil Refining Co. was formed in 1905 and was the first refinery in Oklahoma.

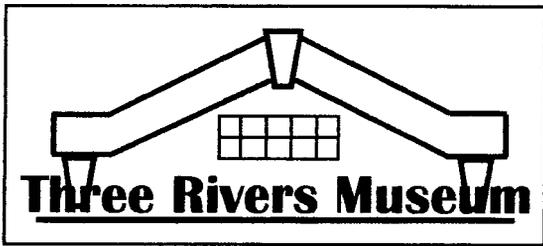
Muskogee led the way for growth and development in the early history of the state. It remains one of northeastern Oklahoma's most important cities and is poised to continue its growth and development for the next 100 years.

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The Making of a Museum

IT BEGAN as a dream in 1984 in the heart of Dorothy Ball and other like-minded citizens. The dream was to create a museum dedicated to preserving the history of the Three Rivers area of Northeastern Oklahoma.

Now after years of hard work, the museum is finally becoming a reality. Over these years museum members have worked to obtain a building in which to house the artifacts it has been collecting. The Midland Valley Depot and adjacent building (vacated by Acme-Reese Air Conditioning) will be used to display and store those artifacts.

Currently the museum has over 110 collections that have been donated by interested citizens. The Three Rivers Museum board is now making design plans for the exhibition of its artifact collections. The museum will primarily utilize topical displays that will be rotated on a regular basis. One goal of the museum is to include an interactive or educational exhibit within each topical display.

Some of the exhibit space will be designed

as permanent display space due to the display's importance or size. An overall plan for each exhibit will be created in advance of exhibit preparation.

The exhibits to be created will be selected by the Museum Collections and Exhibition Committee which will be responsible for their development and maintenance. This committee will select a coordinator for each display.

Some displays now in the planning stages include: "Rails Across the Three Forks" — the Railroad History of the Three Rivers Area; "Gone, but not Forgotten" — Remembering the Historic Landmarks of the Three Rivers Area; "History in the Cards" — an Exhibit of Three Rivers Post Cards; "Builders of our Heritage" — the Pioneers who Established Communities in the Three Rivers Area as well as others.

Years of hard work, dedication and preparation are finally making the Three Rivers Museum more than a dream. There is still much work to be done and the museum is seeking new members to become involved in this exciting project.

Our Mission

The Three Rivers Museum is a regional museum dedicated to the history of the Three Rivers area of Oklahoma by collecting, preserving and displaying documentary, physical and visual artifacts; by supporting research and publication of the region's history; and by developing and making available its resources to the public for education, information and entertainment. The Three Rivers Museum hopes its efforts will establish a respect for the region's past and will contribute quality and value to its future.

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 Business Membership \$100
 Sponsor Membership \$250 Corporate Membership \$500

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

Mail to: Three Rivers Museum
P.O. Box 1813, Muskogee, OK 74402



Museum News

You can visit the Three Rivers Museum at its Website on the Internet. Check us out at:

3riversmuseum.muskogee.ok.us

You'll find museum news, information on the museum's development, historical articles and photos, links to other area museums, and a comments page for your input.

In the future we hope to add our gift shop to the Website so you can order great gifts and souvenirs. Pay us a visit on the Web!

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 *3riversmuseum@oknet1.net*.

Three Rivers People

Linda Moore Catalogs Collections

Board member Linda Moore has volunteered nearly 1,200 hours toward cataloging the 5,000 artifacts donated to the Three Rivers Museum over the last few years. She is currently working on entering the cataloged information into a database on the museum's recently acquired computer.

Linda started her work in May 1997 and now has over 4,000 items entered into the database. The artifacts have been given to the museum by 70 donors interested in seeing the history of this area preserved for future generations.

Linda reports that some of the more interesting items she has cataloged include the 1895 Cherokee citizenship papers of Robert Owen, founder of First National Bank and

an "Elect Alice Robertson" campaign card.

With the help of her son — "the computer guru" — Linda has designed a database that will enable exhibit designers to access information on the artifacts by topic and location of their storage.

Linda's hard work will enable the museum to have displays ready quickly after the building renovations have been completed. Please give Linda a call at 686-6624 if you have something that you would like to donate to the museum.



Museum Wish List ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The creation of the museum's first displays will require that the museum obtain many historic items relating to the area's history. Below is a list of several items the museum desires for its first exhibits. Your help would be greatly appreciated in obtaining these and many other related items. Please call the museum at 686-6624 if you would like to donate any of these items.

Exhibits:

"*Rails Across the Three Forks*" — Celebrating the railroad history of the Three Rivers area

- ♦ Historic photos relating to all railroads that served the area (KATY, Midland Valley, K, O & G, etc.)
- ♦ Historic railroad equipment
- ♦ Railroad advertising equipment and signs
- ♦ Street car items and photos

"*Gone But Not Forgotten*" — Remembering the Historic Landmarks of the Three Rivers area

- ♦ Photos or movies of buildings and landmarks that no longer remain
- ♦ Items and equipment from buildings or landmarks that no longer remain
- ♦ Photos or items relating to Athletic Park, Hyde Park and the Free State Fair in Muskogee

- ♦ Theater seats from a movie theater in the area
- ♦ Movie footage of the implosion of the Barnes Building in Muskogee
- ♦ Photos of Standing Rock (now covered by Lake Eufaula)

"*History in the Cards*" — An exhibit of Three Rivers Post Cards

- ♦ Postcards of the Three Rivers Area
- ♦ Stereoscope cards of the area
- ♦ Old postcard racks
- ♦ Stereoscope viewer
- ♦ Antique mailbox

General Items Needed

- ♦ Hand cart or dolly
- ♦ computer desk