

3 Rivers Historian

Fall 2000

A Journal of the Three Rivers Museum

V. 3, No. 4

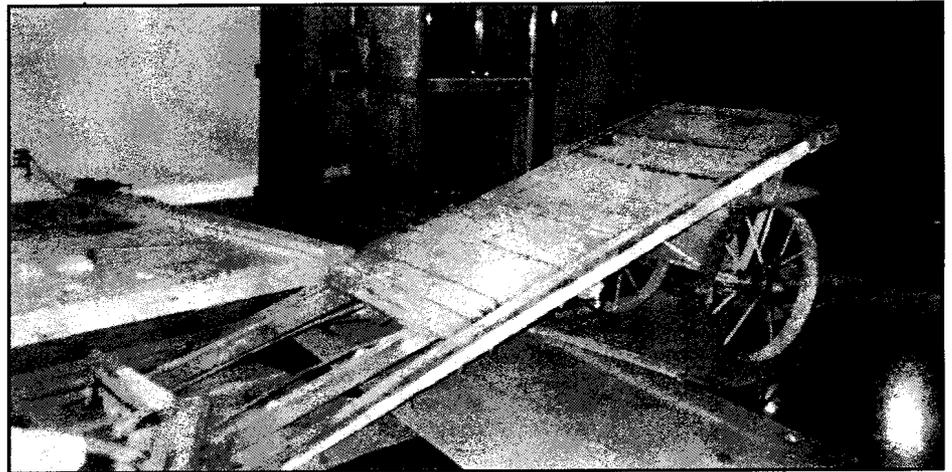
First Exhibits Under Construction

THE THREE RIVERS MUSEUM is working hard to complete the first exhibits for their Grand Opening scheduled for March 3, 2001.

The museum's Executive Director, Linda Moore, is overseeing the development of the four exhibits that will greet the first visitors to the Midland Valley Depot next Spring.

Several hundred hours of work will go into the research, design and production of these exhibits. The Museum Development Committee is primarily responsible for completing this task.

In recognition of the fact that the museum is housed in a railroad passenger depot, the first exhibit to be developed is called "Rails Across the Three Forks." The setting is a passenger waiting room and baggage area. The Museum Development Committee researched all the various railroads and their depots that crisscrossed the eight counties making up the Three Rivers region to develop this exhibit. Many railroad artifacts have been donated to the museum, so doing a rails exhibit seemed the natural place to start.



This old baggage cart is being restored and will be featured in the exhibit "Rails Across the Three Forks."

However, the Three Rivers Museum wants to stress to visitors that it is not merely a railroad museum. A second exhibit now being built is called "Miss Alice's Parlor."

This smaller display area will feature many artifacts relating to Congress-woman Alice Robertson's fascinating life in the Three Rivers area. She came to the region as a young daughter of missionaries to the Creek Indians and throughout her life had a profound in-

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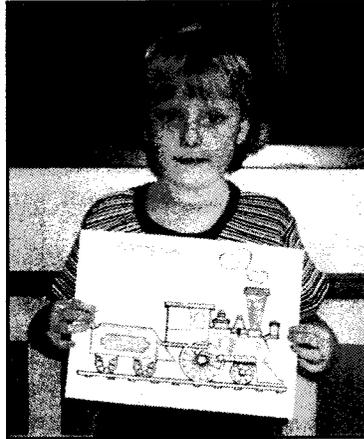
ON September 16, the Three Rivers Museum set up a booth at Arrowhead Mall in Muskogee to raise public awareness of the museum, recruit new members and receive donated artifacts.

Several interesting pieces were obtained included a large KATY railroad sign, silver teaspoons from the Severs Hotel in Muskogee and a china setting that had belonged to Alice Robertson.

In addition to receiving memberships and artifacts, the museum held a coloring contest for children. The winner of the contest was five-year-old Kyla Lammers from Fort Gibson.

Kyla is pictured above, proudly displaying her winning picture. Museum chairman Roger Bell presented her with a mall gift certificate and railroad cap from the museum gift shop.

The museum is committed to getting the children and teens of the Three Rivers region involved in learning about their history and heritage. Educational programs will be an important part of the museum's efforts in the years to come. ▽



Museum Receives State Allocation

THE STATE of Oklahoma, in its 2000 legislative session, allocated \$50,000 in funds to the Three Rivers Museum. Former state representative, Bill Settle of Muskogee, requested the funds in the state's appropriation bill which was signed by Governor Frank Keating in May.

The funds will be administered through the Eastern Oklahoma Development District (EODD) in Muskogee during the 2000 fiscal year which begins July 1, 2000 and ends June 30, 2001.

The museum will use the funds to build exhibits, refurbish antique display cases, purchase the 14 flags for the flag plaza and purchase artifacts that are important to the region's history.

The funds may also be used to purchase some of the empty lots located behind the Midland Valley Depot. Future plans include landscaping this area and developing large permanent displays such as an old trolley car or one-room schoolhouse. ▽

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Indian Bowl Opened in 1939

IT WAS three weeks after the start of World War II. A new record of 4000 visitors attended the Muskogee Free State Fair, the New York Yankees were winning their fourth straight World Series, and the Muskogee Central football team was finally getting a place of its own.

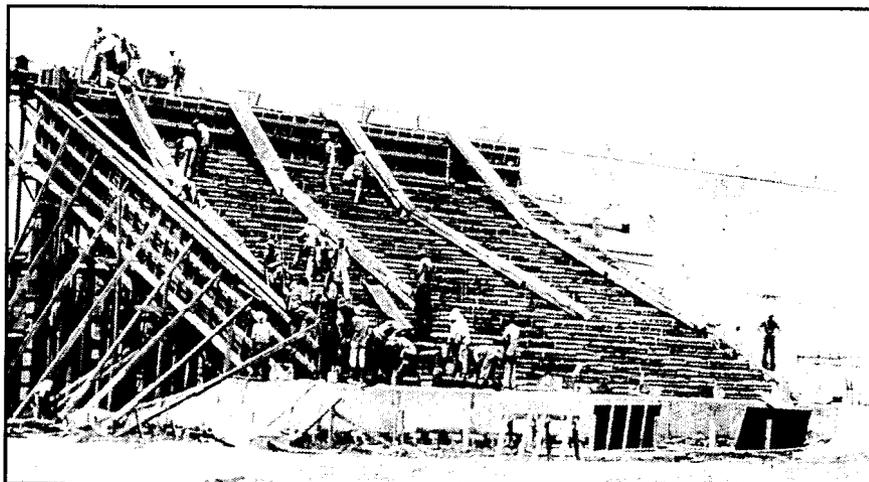
After years of playing in Athletic Park (where the Muskogee Civic Center now stands), the Roughers opened the 1939 season in one of the finest, state-of-the-art facilities in the area. Indian Bowl was about to become a part of Muskogee football history.

“When we got there, it was like Yankee Stadium to us,” says the 1939 team captain Sonny Roberts. “We were used to playing at Athletic Park, which was almost like a cow pasture. So we thought we were really uptown.”

The construction of the 6500-seat stadium began earlier that year at a cost of \$100,000. Tickets sold for 50 cents per game or you could buy a season ticket for all six games for \$2.50.

Tulsa Webster was the first opponent the Roughers faced at Indian Bowl. On September 21, 1939, nearly 2800 spectators watched Rougher Eddie Davis score the first touchdown as Muskogee went one to defeat Webster 12-0.

“They kind of rushed things a little,”



Construction workers labor to complete the Indian Bowl in time for the 1939 football season

Roberts adds. “The field wasn’t quite ready and it didn’t drain very well. But anything was better than where we were.”

Although Indian Bowl’s new electronic scoreboard, cinder track and even the official dedication did not come until later in the year, the team was ready to leave behind the days of playing at Athletic Park.

“We had a minor league baseball team here at that time,” says Bob Neely who started at center and linebacker for Muskogee. “Athletic Park was basically a baseball field. It was very poor for spectators, but that didn’t keep the fans away.”

**“It was like
Yankee
Stadium to us.
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were really
uptown.”**

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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.

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends of the Museum,

It is truly hard to believe we are now only three months from our Grand Opening in March 2001. Each time I walk through the building I marvel at the accomplishments that we have made in creating this museum. I hope that the museum will be a source of great pride in our community and the entire Three Rivers area.

One thing that will certainly be needed in the next several months, and into the future, will be a strong volunteer base of support. We will need volunteers at the Information Desk, as docents, and in several other areas of the museum. Volunteers will be a necessary part of our museum operations.

The museum is scheduled to be open Wednesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. I hope that several of you will consider volunteering during these times. The museum may also be open at other times for school groups and special events. We have already received several commitments to help, but will need many more. We also will need backups to call from time to time on an as-needed basis.

If you would be interested in helping us as a volunteer, please call our museum office at 686-6624. If you have already volunteered, I sincerely thank you for your commitment. We know that the commitment of volunteer time is not to be taken lightly. We are hopeful that the spirit that has helped create this museum will help us in finding volunteers. We will be contacting you in January to set up a meeting for volunteers at that time.

Roger Bell

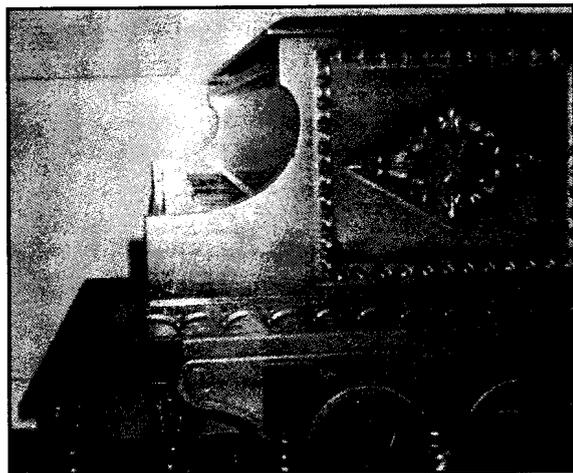
First Exhibits cont.

continued from page 1

fluence on the history of the region.

The featured article in this display will be a beautiful antique piano said to have belonged to the Congresswoman. The piano was donated to the museum by the Hyde Park Baptist Church of Muskogee.

Other exhibits planned for the museum's inaugural year include "Builders of Our Heritage," about Three Rivers pioneers and "Gone, But Not Forgotten" which takes a nostalgic look back at Three Rivers landmarks and lifestyles. ▽



This beautiful antique piano will grace the "Miss Alice's Parlor" exhibit

Indian Bowl, 1939 *cont.*

continued from page 3

The first overflow crowd at the new stadium came just two weeks later when coach Paul Marston's Roughers hosted Fayetteville, Arkansas. Over 8000 fans crammed into the stadium to watch Muskogee defeat its Arkansas rival by a score of 12-0.

On November 11, Muskogee hosted Oklahoma City Capital Hill. The stadium was officially dedicated on that date and named Indian Bowl.

"It was a big thrill to be the first to play there," Neely said. "We didn't have a particularly great team that season, but we ended it by beating Tulsa Central. That was our big game. After years of going and playing them at Skelly Stadium, we felt we had a place

that we could be just as proud of."

Indian Bowl has had a few changes over the years. There have been several renovations and bleachers have been replaced. In 1985, the press box was expanded from one level to three. But the basic structure has remained the same over the past 61 years.

"It was then exactly like it is today," Neely said. "It's still a great place to watch a game. It may not be as fancy as some stadiums are today, but when I played, the players weren't too impressed with luxuries anyway."

Indian Bowl was once the jewel of eastern Oklahoma football stadiums. Like most precious gems, just a little polishing will reveal that the beauty is still there. ▽

Muskogee's Central High School Football Schedule of 1939

Tulsa Webster
12-0

Sapulpa
6-7

Fayetteville, AR
12-0

Bartlesville
25-0

McAlester
0-0

Okmulgee
6-36

Fort Smith, AR
0-21

OKC Capital Hill
20-20

OKC Classen
0-40

Tulsa Central
7-0

From the Mailbag

We appreciate hearing from our readers about the Three Rivers Historian and about Three Rivers history.

Last week I received my 3 Rivers journal and thoroughly enjoyed it. The article on the theaters, or as we called them, "picture shows," was wonderful to read and brought back such pleasant memories.

I was a child of the thirties and forties and had many enjoyable hours at the movies especially the Ritz and the Broadway. The Broadway had all the serials that made you wait a full week to find out if the hero had escaped the villain.

Besides all the first run movies, the

Ritz had a Saturday program for children. We pledged allegiance to the flag and sang a song and watched cartoons. It cost a nickel to get in and if you didn't have a nickel (this was in the middle of the Depression) and promised to bring it next week you were allowed in. I think you would have been let in without the promise.

Thank you and Lillian Jayne for the article.

Mrs. Sue Neirman
Dallas, TX

Let us hear about your history in the Three Rivers area. Write to us at P.O. Box 1813, Muskogee, OK 74402.

The Three Rivers Area

WPA Left Legacy in Three Rivers

by Marjorie Wilderman

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.

DURING THE TIME of the Franklin Roosevelt era, many agencies were formed that gave work to some of the millions of people who were unemployed during the difficult years of the Depression in the 1930s.

Well-known, but often misunderstood, was the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Although much forestry and campground development work was done by the Civilian Conservation Corp. (CCC), the WPA often worked on the same projects.

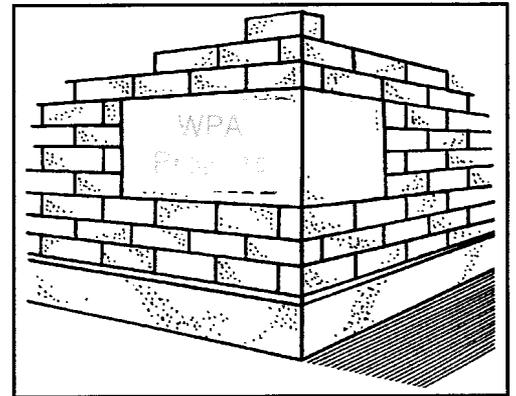
In the Three Rivers region, the WPA worked on several projects that have left a lasting impression. WPA workers built the dam, most of the cabins and the lodge at what became Greenleaf State Park. A few of the original picnic tables still stand at the park.

Near Sallisaw, the WPA restored the homestead of Sequoyah, the Cherokee responsible for the first written Indian language. Closer to Muskogee is the old Fort Gibson Stockade, restored to its present state by workers of the WPA.

It is interesting to note that Grant Foreman played an important role in gaining WPA contracts for the Sequoyah Park project and the restoration of Fort Gibson.

Several other projects were completed under the direction of Dr. Foreman with work done primarily by those employed by the WPA. These included collecting Indian narratives, indexing all the newspapers in the state at the time, and other jobs requiring clerical workers and writers.

Numerous schools in the Three Rivers region were built by the WPA and many are still used today. This includes the ad-



ministration building at Connors State College in Warner. The Wainwright School and Gym, Muskogee's Central High School Athletic Field and Stadium (Indian Bowl) and schools in Wagoner are also some of the projects constructed by the WPA and still in use today.

Another significant, yet often overlooked project, is the most popular tourist attraction in eastern Oklahoma — Honor Heights Park. While the park has become known around the world for the beautiful azaleas and the Christmas lights, the atmosphere of the park is certainly enhanced by the waterfall and rock walkways among the hills. That work was completed by the WPA.

Wagoner has many conspicuous WPA buildings — the Armory, the County Courthouse, the City Hall, and the community building. Nearly every small town in the Three Rivers area has at least one building, park, lake or other project that was completed by the WPA. Many are still being used and enjoyed today.

The work of the WPA was quality work that has stood the test of time and has left a lasting legacy for the residents of the Three Rivers region. ▽

“Nearly every small town in the Three Rivers area has at least one building, park, lake or other project that was completed by the WPA.”



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

- Bethany Bowline
- Carolyn Bresser
- Mary Ann Burrows
- Al Cheeseman
- Dorothy Gardner
- Sue Gaston
- ♦ Lillian Jayne
- Merton Jeanes
- ♦ Norma Kilgore
- Sue Neirman
- ♦ Amy Gene Pepperkorn
- Rosemary Rice
- Kay Baim Shapiro
- ♦ Nancy Steveson
- Nadeane Taylor
- ♦ Marie Wadley
- ♦ Erma Whittet

Family

- Hershel & Patsy Beaver
- Richard & Tasha Carr
- Valerie Rogers Carter
- Stephen & Charlotte Crank
- Swen & Jo Lynn Digranes
- Phyllis Durland
- Andy & Audrey Ewing
- Geraldine Farris

- John & Linda Fike
- Ernest & Dorothy Fischer
- John Griffin Family
- Terry & Jeanie Grubbs
- Clay & Joy Harrell
- Jack & Bette Hodge
- Dave & Dale Holloway
- ♦ Gary & Barbara Kegley
- James & Grace Lemon
- John & Barbara Lomax
- Robert & Carol Mix
- Lin & Linda Moore
- Greg & Barbara Newell
- Duane & Virginia Pickle
- ♦ Jim & Fran Risch
- Cliff & Suzanne Rogers
- Dudley & Paula Rogers
- Joe & Cindy Rogers
- John & Lynn Rowsey
- Michael & Wren Stratton

Builder

- ♦ Bill & Ann Boies
- Joel Cousins
- C.G. Fullenwider
- Larry Hoffman Insurance
- ♦ Kathryn Lathim
- Harold Patterson

- Joe & Josephine Teaff
- Warren Weakland
- Jack & Eva White

Sponsor

- OG&E
- Olive Oldham Rogers

Grand Opening Contributors

Benefactor

- Robert & Jean Anthis
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- The Beckman Co.
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- Johnston Terminal
- Kirk's Drug
- Kirschner Foundation

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- Muskogee Bridge
- Muskogee Daily Phoenix
- Muskogee Federal Credit Union
- Pioneer Abstract & Title
- Pumps & Controls, Inc.
- Betty Brown Rawlins
- Jim & Rosie Russell
- Louise Cook Simpson
- Phil Stolper Trust
- Wal-Mart
- W.S. Warner, Jr.
- Waterloo Industries
- Wilolamb International
- Fannie Lu Yaffe
- Yaffe Companies, Inc.

Patron

- Acme Engineering
- Bank of Oklahoma
- Fort James Foundation
- Miriam & Ray Freedman
- David Garrett
- Love Bottling
- Golda Martin
- V. David Miller
- Lin & Linda Moore
- Margaret Mountcastle
- Shirley Rogers
- Walter Stoddard, Jr.

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:

To purchase a Gift Membership to the Three Rivers Museum, see page 8 of this newsletter.

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



► Contact Us

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 3riversmuseum@3riversmuseum.ok.us

► Three Rivers People

Mildred Cousins Works Tirelessly for Three Rivers Museum

Mildred Cousins is one of the Three Rivers Museum's most ardent supporters and tireless workers. She got involved with the Three Rivers Museum 15 years ago at the urging of her good friend and fellow church member, the late Dorothy Ball. "Dorothy was so enthusiastic about starting this museum," Mildred recalls. "I told her I would help her in any way I could."

Mildred has served on the board of directors for the museum for the full fifteen years that it has been in existence. She actively recruits new members and is always looking for ways to help the museum.

A forty-year resident of Muskogee, Mildred has always had an interest in history. She is also a member of the Muskogee County Historical Society and the Thomas Foreman Home. She also serves as a member or on the board of the Garden Club, Friends of the Library, A More Beautiful

Muskogee, Soroptomists, the Girl Scouts and First Presbyterian Church.

Museum member Molly Reeves says of the octogenarian, "Mildred is the most vital, energetic, enthusiastic person I know. If I can be like her when I'm 87, I couldn't ask for more than that."

Mildred Cousins is an asset, not only to the Three Rivers Museum, but also to the entire community. Her work as a volunteer for so many organizations is a great example for all.



Mildred Cousins works at the Three Rivers Museum's booth during the Muskogee Chili Cookoff



Give the Gift of a Museum Membership

Do you have a friend of the arts or a history buff on your Christmas list? Why not give them the gift of a membership to the Three Rivers Museum.

This membership will give them free admission to the museum for a full year, plus receipt of the museum's quarterly journal and a discount in the museum's gift shop.

We'll send your gift membership in a special holiday card. But hurry — there are only a few more shopping days till Christmas!

Yes, I want to give a gift membership.
My Name _____
Address _____

Send gift memberships to:

Name _____
Address _____

Name _____
Address _____

Name _____
Address _____

Name _____
Address _____