

3 Rivers Historian

Winter 2001

A Journal of the Three Rivers Museum

V. 4, No. 1

Museum Prepares for Grand Opening

WITH LESS THAN A MONTH remaining for the scheduled Grand Opening of the Three Rivers Museum, the exhibits, gift shop, ticket booth, flag plaza and landscaping are taking shape.

“We know we will not be 100 percent completed by the Grand Opening on March 3,” says museum chairman, Roger Bell, “but we believe our first visitors will still be impressed with what we have been able to accomplish in the nine months since we moved into the building.”

The Three Rivers Museum has occupied the renovated Midland Valley Railroad Depot in downtown Muskogee since June of last year. In that time, the museum board has worked diligently to prepare the first exhibits for its Grand Opening in March.

Several hundred hours of work will go into the research, design and production of these exhibits. The Museum Development Committee, led by Linda Moore, has been primarily responsible for completing this task.

Visitors will enjoy the “Gone, But Not Forgotten” exhibit which takes a look at many old landmarks from around the Three Rivers Region that have been lost to time and progress.



Three museum-quality mannequins, like this “1940s D.J.” will bring the museum exhibits to life.

The exhibit will include one of three museum-quality mannequins specially designed for the Three Rivers Museum.

Another exhibit, “Builders of Our Heritage,” features the pioneers of the region who settled and prospered here. Visitors will want to search through this exhibit to see if an ancestor of theirs is mentioned.

The museum board is planning a Grand Opening and Flag Raising ceremony for the afternoon of March 3.

continued on page 4

Inside:

- 2** News Briefs
- 3** The Moran/Pate House
- 4** The Chairman’s Letter
- 6** Grand Opening
- 7** Welcome to New Members
- 8** Three Rivers People
- 8** From the Mailbag



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Museum News Briefs

Museum Recipe Book Developed

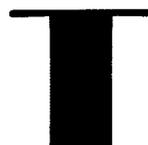


useum member Bonnie (Lavonne) Baker is chairing a committee to put together a recipe book that will be titled "Recipes and Remembrances." The committee has sought recipes from cooks throughout the Three Rivers region.

In addition to great recipes, both old and new, the recipe book will feature old photographs from the region and interesting tidbits from area history. Proceeds from the sale of the recipe book will benefit the Three Rivers Museum.

The recipe book will be completed in time for the annual Azalea Festival in Muskogee in April. ▼

Historic Society Approves Yearly Stipend



he Oklahoma State Historical Society has approved providing the Three Rivers Museum with a yearly stipend of \$20,000. Dr. Bob Blackburn, Executive Director of the Historical Society, met with museum officials at the Midland Valley Depot to discuss the state funding.

The Three Rivers Museum will use the funds in developing future exhibits and acquiring artifacts of specific significance to the Three Rivers region of Northeastern Oklahoma. The State Historical Society's support will help the

museum continue its efforts in exploring and sharing the history of this area. ▼

Phoenix to Feature Museum



he *Muskogee Daily Phoenix* will feature the Three Rivers Museum in its annual "Progress" Special Issue. The publication of this special issue will be on the Sundays of February 18 and March 4 just preceding and following the Grand Opening of the museum on March 3.

Phoenix editors met with museum board chairman Roger Bell and Three Rivers Historian editor, Jonita Mullins, to plan the special newspaper section that will be called "Trails to 2001." The special section will look at the river and rail travel both from a historical perspective and as it will be in the future.

The Three Rivers Museum will provide old photographs and historical information to assist the *Phoenix* in producing the special Progress issue. Extra copies will be available for purchase in the museum's gift shop. ▼

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Moran/Pate House Graces Ninth Street

by Ellen "Cowboy" Collins Johnson

Balmy breezes of late spring 1906 carried the stinging sound of a hammer hitting square nails as Ed Moran built a two-story house on North Ninth Street for Thomas M. Lackey, a realtor. It was one of the first houses in that area. Around 1912, the home of Capt. F.B. Severs, built in 1884, was moved from State Street to a lot across the street from the Moran/Pate house before work started on the Severs Hotel. Muskogee, Indian Territory, was a bustling prairie town expanding north for well-to-do families.

In 1900, the town-site commission began surveying town lots in preparation for ownership of non-Creek citizens. The abstract deed shows original property owners as Clarence W. Turner, a prominent businessman, and General Pleasant Porter, Chief of the Creek Nation from 1899 to 1907. Porter may have signed the deed as the Creek Nation representative. After Lackey, owners of the elegant oak frame house with a living room, dining room, kitchen and two bedrooms were Lucy and R.W. Everett, J.O. Bailey, Myrtle and E.C. Adleta, Walter C. Pope and E.E. Gravell. Moran's daughter and son-in-law proudly bought the house in 1942. It has been in the family since then.

Anna (18??-1929) and Ed (1863-1941) Moran came from Champagn, Illinois, to Arkansas and then Muskogee. They lived on South Third Street and the



The Moran/Pate House today



Ira B. and Minne Pate at the homeplace in 1945

home included a smokehouse and an icehouse. He was a carpenter and then cattle inspector for the stockyard. Their children were Clem, Minnie, Edith and Eileen, who drowned as a child. Minnie and Edith attended Nazareth Institute, a Catholic prep-school founded in 1891 at 537 South Second Street by the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Minnie (1892-1978) married Ira B. Pate (1889-1958). He was a WWI veteran of France and machinist for the KATY Railroad until he bought Muskogee Machine and Welding Co. at 563 North Fourth Street in 1941. Their children include Jim, Ira B. Jr., (deceased) Ann Phillips and Mary Pat Baltzle.

The sunlit family room of the Moran/
continued on page 5

**THE SUNLIT FAMILY
ROOM OF THE
MORAN/PATE
HOUSE ECHOED WITH
LAUGHTER AND FOND
MEMORIES.**

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 began as a dream and now is only a few weeks from reality. The Three Rivers Museum of Muskogee will be opening its doors to the public for the first time on March 3rd. What began in 1984 as an idea of founder Dorothy Ball is now ready to be a showcase for our area's rich history.

It has been a long and arduous task to reach this point. There have been numerous roadblocks and at times it has looked to many that the museum effort was in vain. However, the museum board and our members have all been determined to see the museum become a reality. I hope all of you who read this column will be in attendance at our Grand Opening activities. It will truly be a day of celebration.

The opening of the museum though is not the end of our journey. It is just another important step. The museum must now work to become the center for education and research on the history of the Three Rivers area. We must continue to work with Director Linda Moore on improving our collections, exhibitions and facilities. Plans are already under way to further develop the area surrounding the museum. Much work remains to be done and many volunteers will be needed.

At this time, though we must all step back with pride and look at what we have accomplished through the efforts of so many. Thanks to each and every one of you who have helped in any way in the creation of this museum. With your continuing support our future looks bright.

Roger Bell

Grand Opening cont.

continued from page 1

The keynote speaker will be Dr. Bob Blackburn, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Historical Society. Dr. Blackburn earned his masters and Ph.D. in history at Oklahoma State University before joining the Historical Society in 1979. He was named Executive Director of the Society in 1999. Blackburn is the author of 12 books and numerous journal, magazine and newspaper articles.

Also attending the Grand Opening will be two men who have historical ties to

the Midland Valley Depot. Perry Benson and Jared Roberts, both of Pennsylvania, are the great-great grandsons of Charles Ingersoll who established the Midland Valley Railroad almost 100 years ago. They plan to make the trip to Oklahoma in March for the opening ceremony.

The museum board hopes that each museum member will also be able to attend this historic occasion. The story of the Three Rivers region has long waited to be told, but now its time has finally come. ▼

continued from page 3

Pate House echoed with laughter and fond memories as the three remaining Pate children talked about growing up there in Muskogee.

“Mother used to work for Tams Bixby in the early 1900s,” Ann Phillips recalled. “Mr. Bixby purchased controlling interest in 1906 of the Muskogee *Phoenix* later absorbing the Muskogee *Times-Democrat*. The women wore ‘hobble skirts’ then. She complained that metal weights sewn in the hem knocked her ankles every step of the way to work!”

During the 1930s, the Pate family lived on 32nd Street (where Denny’s Restaurant is now). It was a gravel street. Behind the house was a stream created from a leak in the clay water line on Okmulgee Avenue. It flowed into Coody Creek.

“One of my earliest memories is sitting on the soft grassy bank of that stream with Grandfather Moran,” Mary Baltzle remarked with a smile. “We’d sit there for hours just throwing rocks or dangling our bare feet in the cool water.”

Jim Pate recalls catching crawdads in the stream with bacon rind as bait. “I loved the smell of mother frying those crawdad tails in butter,” Pate said. “She was a great cook. Like all kids, we complained about not getting enough sweets. So she made a peach cobbler about the size of a dishpan and let us eat all we wanted!”

Jim continued, “My brother — we called him ‘B,’ — continued operating the machine shop when father died. B was generous and kind. He lived in the Ninth Street house his whole life and added two rooms. I bought the house when he died.”

Jim was in the Army for several years and later had an industrial products business adjacent to the machine shop. Although he sold the business, Pate Industrial Supply, Inc. is still operating.

From 1950-1963, Ann and her husband Bob Peerson, owned and operated Meadowbrook Golf & Country Club at 40th Street and Border Avenue. It is now Eagle Crest Golf Course. They remodeled and opened a popular restaurant, the Topaz Room, to complement the lounge with a fireplace, large dance floor and pool.

“The dance hall seated about 400,” Phillips stated. “Can you imagine the glasses that had to be washed after a busy evening? We didn’t have an automatic dishwasher. We had lots of members,” she said, smiling with the memories, “and there were a lot of good times.”

“Phyllis (Call) Pate, Jim’s wife, originally from Porum, summed up the family feelings about their home. She said, “It is well-built, roomy and full of loving memories.”

The pride of Moran’s workmanship is evident in the 94-year-old Moran/Pate House. His descendants are fortunate to have the lasting legacy from their grandfather and they know it. ▼

**THE PRIDE OF
MORAN'S
WORKMANSHIP IS
EVIDENT IN THE 94-
YEAR-OLD MORAN/
PATE HOUSE.**

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.



Please join

**the Three Rivers Museum
Board of Directors**

in a

**Grand Opening Ceremony
and
Flag Raising**

Featuring Keynote Speaker
Dr. Bob Blackburn

Saturday, March 3, 2001
2:00 p.m.

at the Midland Valley Depot
220 Elgin Ave., Muskogee, OK

as we

*Celebrate our
Colorful heritage*

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

- ♦ Brad Barker
- Charles Bowman
- Lynn Campbell
- Peggy Dollarhide
- Susie Beard Eisenschmidt
- Sue Gaston
- Jonita Mullins
- Ann Williams Pierce
- ♦ Jerry Pippin
- ♦ Marie Wadley
- Blanche Zaroor

Family

- ♦ Alice Faye Adams
- ♦ Roy Barmore
- ♦ Chip Bevilaqua Family
- ♦ Kirby & Lillie Boen
- ♦ Frank & Kay Borovetz
- R.D. Cox
- Paul & Telitha Day
- Jerry & Paula Hoffman
- ♦ Julia Hurst/Jacob Gonzales
- ♦ Jayson Jarrard Family

- ♦ Arnold Moore
- Carl Moore
- ♦ Kai Moore Family
- Harold Patterson
- Mary & Frank Plummer
- James & Karen Ritchey
- Nancy & Phil Stolper
- ♦ Troy Thornton Family
- George & Shirle Williams

Builder

- ♦ Bill & Ann Boies
- Joel Cousins
- C.G. Fullenwider
- Larry Hoffman Insurance
- Edward & Phyllis
- Kuykendall
- ♦ Kathryn Lathim

Grand Opening Contributors

Benefactor

- Robert & Jean Anthis

- BancFirst
- The Beckman Co.
- Sabina Beckman
- Carter & Karen Bradley
- Richard & Leigh Bradley
- Elois & John Cable, Jr.
- Morris Caves
- Children's Clinic
- Custom Seating
- Dillard's
- Jim Egan Trust
- Pat Ferry
- Nick & Laurie Fuller
- Geraldine Bates Hannah
- Johnston Terminal
- Kirk's Drug
- Kirschner Foundation
- Ray & Margaret Lehman
- Rae Lindsey
- Patricia Rowsey Molloy
- Muskogee Bridge
- Muskogee Daily Phoenix
- Muskogee Federal Credit Union

- Pioneer Abstract & Title
- Pumps & Controls
- 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
- Bradley Family Memorial
- Fort James Foundation
- Miriam & Ray Freedman
- David Garrett
- Love Bottling
- Golda Martin for the Richard Martin Trust
- 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: _____

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@Muskogee.ok.us

► Three Rivers People

Shirley Rogers Is Long-time Supporter of Three Rivers Museum

Three Rivers Museum board member Shirley Rogers has been involved with the museum since its first organizational days. She was invited to get involved with the museum by the late Dorothy Ball as it was just beginning.

"My husband and I owned the old KATY freight house where Arrowhead Mall is located now," Shirley explains, "and we had it filled with railroad memorabilia. We had even planned to start a museum ourselves someday."

When the freight house was torn down to make way for the mall, Shirley had to find other places to store her railroad treasures. Many of these artifacts were donated to the Three Rivers Museum.

"My husband had worked for the KATY and the Midland Valley Railroad," says Shirley, "and he was an avid collector of railroad memorabilia."

Shirley has been instrumental in helping

the museum acquire an important piece of railroad history. She negotiated the purchase of a silver tea service that had been presented to Charles Haskell on Railroad Day in 1904 when the Midland Valley began service to Indian Territory.

Shirley has also served on the museum's Grand Opening fundraising committee and cookbook committee. She is currently working to organize the volunteers who will staff the museum when it opens. Her volunteerism has set a great example for those who will work for the museum in the future.



Shirley Rogers

► From the Mailbag

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

I have watched with interest the development of the museum and admire those that have worked so hard on this project. I think this is a wonderful endeavor with very admirable goals. I currently teach at NSU and am a lifelong resident of Muskogee. I also feel that our past should be preserved, when possible.

I have an old luggage cart with iron wheels and some iron, wall-mounted

bench supports. When I bought them about 6-8 years ago, I was told that they came out of the old KATY Depot.

My time is limited (like everyone else) but I would be glad to volunteer some time, if needed.

— Dr. Hershel Beaver
Muskogee

Editor's note: The luggage cart donated by Dr. Beaver will be a part of our "Rails Across the Three Forks" exhibit.

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