



# Rivers Historian

Fall 2003

A Journal of the Three Rivers Museum

V. 6, No. 4

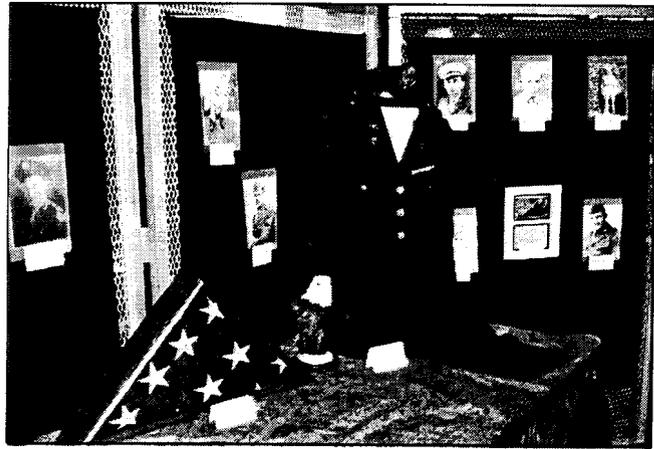
## Special Exhibit Values Freedom

The Three Rivers Museum is currently running a special exhibit titled "The Price of Freedom" in its lobby and exhibit hall. The display of patriotic quotes and memorabilia began on October 15 and will continue through Veterans Day to November 15.

Museum members are encouraged to visit this exhibit for free. Also area veterans and employees of the Veterans Administration in Muskogee are being offered free admission.

The special exhibit is open to the public during regular museum hours, Wednesday through Saturday, from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. The cost to the public is \$3 for adults and \$1.50 for students. Children under six are also admitted free.

The exhibit has been described as "very moving," by one visitor. Photos of nearly eighty area veterans are a part of the display. These veterans have served in all branches of the armed forces from the Civil War to the present. Interspersed with these photos are patriotic quotes from na-



*The exhibit features uniforms, flags, and photos of area veterans.*

tional leaders and war memorials.

"Seeing the photos of all those veterans who have put their lives on the line for our freedom makes you appreciate just what the price of freedom really is," says Jonita Mullins, marketing director for the Three Rivers Museum.

Other items on display include photos from Camp Gruber and Hatbox Field that both contributed to Muskogee's war effort during World War II. Uniforms from the WWI and WWII era are on display as well.

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## Three Rivers Museum Board & Staff

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Jonita Mullins

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Delphia Warren

## Museum News Briefs

### New Neighbor Joins the Depot District

**T**he Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame has moved into the historic Depot District in Muskogee. The Hall of Fame now occupies the Frisco Freight Depot that sits across the street from the Midland Valley Depot, which houses the Three Rivers Museum.

Hall of Fame Director, Holly Miller, and a small staff of volunteers have set up office space in the old depot building. It will later house a museum and concert hall. The Music Hall of Fame also plans to bring in a water tower like those that used to be found at depots.

The Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame is planning its 7th induction ceremony to be held on November 20. It will feature a concert by county music group Brooks and Dunn. Ronnie Dunn is one of six Oklahoma musicians being inducted into the Hall of Fame.

The other inductees are Benny Garcia, D.C. Minner, John Wooley, Flash Terry and Lee Wiley. Past inductees to the Hall of Fame include Patty Page, Merle Haggard, Wanda Jackson, and Vince Gill.

Three Rivers Museum welcomes its new neighbor and invites its members to support the Hall of Fame.

## Elgin Street Gets Facelift

**T**he City of Muskogee is currently working to resurface Elgin Street in the Depot District. This street was originally paved with bricks. City workers have removed the concrete and asphalt that covered the old bricks, returning the street to its historic beginnings. The bricks are in bad shape though, and will have to be covered again.

The City is currently taking bids for resurfacing the street. The plans are to leave some of the original bricks uncovered at the sides and resurface the middle with concrete stamped to look like brick.

### Christmas Comes to the Depot District

**B**oth the Midland Valley Depot and Frisco Freight Depot will be all decked out with Christmas lights this December. The tradition began last year when the Three Rivers Museum and the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame hung lighted wreaths to bring the holiday spirit to the Depot District.

This year, the Three Rivers Museum will also light up its diesel switch engine behind the depot. If you're out looking at Christmas lights, drive through the Depot District!

### Five Civilized Tribes Museum Donates Copier

**T**he Three Rivers Museum extends its thanks to the board of directors of the Five Civilized Tribes Museum. They recently donated a copier that was being replaced. Three Rivers staff have already put the copier to good use.

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Editor-in-Chief: Roger Bell

Managing Editor: Jonita Mullins

# The Snake Rebellion

by Roger Bell

The Old Hickory Stomp Grounds near Henryetta were an important place in the history of the Creek Nation in Indian Territory. The Stomp Grounds were a place where the Creeks gathered to remember the old ways of their tribal culture. Over the years, it was a prominent site for stick-ball games, stomp dances, and other Creek customs and social events.

In 1900, Chitto Harjo, a full-blood Creek Indian, established the capital of his Snake band of the Creek government at the Hickory Stomp Grounds. In front of about 100 of his supporters, he held a rally in which he called for the overthrow of the main government.

Harjo then proceeded to organize his own government with himself as the principal chief. Additionally, a full slate of cabinet officers were appointed and a group of lighthorsemen were outfitted and armed. The group began to enforce their laws on all the Creeks and other citizens living in the area. Soon the U.S. marshal's office in Muskogee was flooded with complaints.

The federal officials warned Harjo that his government was illegal and should be disbanded. In spite of these warnings, the Snakes continued their actions. In January 1901, a group of U.S. deputy marshals under Marshal Leo Bennett moved in on the Snakes' encampment at the Hickory Grounds. African American deputy marshal Grant Johnson arrested Harjo and 86 of his followers. The group was taken to Muskogee where they were placed in the old federal jail.

Their imprisonment was short lived and they were soon released after apologizing before Judge John R. Thomas of Muskogee. They told the judge that they

"All that I am begging of you, Honorable Senators, is that these ancient agreements and treaties wherein you promised to take care of me and my people, be fulfilled."

— Chitto Harjo

would obey the laws of the U.S. government and would not cause any further trouble.

On June 30, 1905, the Dawes Commission ceased to exist. By this time many of Harjo's full-blood supporters had deserted the Snake leader. However, they had been replaced by a large contingent of Creek freedmen, led by Abe Grayson, who had congregated in this area. The freedmen soon began building cabins and shanties in the vicinity of the Stomp Grounds.

The group had a certain lawless element which Harjo was unable to control. These men began to steal and plunder the area. Soon tensions in the area were increased to a high level. Though only a few of the group were involved in these crimes, the entire Snake group took the blame. Law officers were involved in several skirmishes with Harjo's supporters. By 1908, the Hickory Grounds had the appearance of an armed camp.

County officials soon were forced to take action. On July 8, 1908, McIntosh County Sheriff "Dock" Odom and Okmulgee County Sheriff W.E. Robertson met in Henryetta and drove a buggy to the site of the Hickory Grounds. As

*continued on page 5*

## 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 region. Contact the museum if you have something to donate at 686-6624.

## 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.*

## Thomas-Foreman Home Gets Roof Work

The Thomas-Foreman Historic Home has received a new roof thanks to donations from supporters and assistance from the Three Rivers Museum.

Gil Miller Roofing replaced the old wood shingles this past month. This hopefully will end the problem with leaks that the historic home was experiencing.

The Thomas-Foreman Home still needs donations to help with the roof costs. Please consider making a donation by using the form below.

This past month, the Muskogee

Historic Preservation Commission voted to extend the boundaries of the Kendall Place Historical District to include the Thomas-Foreman Historic Home at 1419 W. Okmulgee.

Kendall Place takes its name from Henry Kendall College which was originally located in the neighborhood. The college had several buildings including classrooms, dormitories and the home of the college president, Grant Evans.

The college later moved to Tulsa and its name was changed to Tulsa University.

## 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.

# The Snake Rebellion

they entered the camp, they were immediately surrounded by 70 of Harjo's supporters. The lawmen told the group to disband at once, but were soon forced back to Henryetta.

The following night, some of Snake's supporters slipped into Henryetta and burned a few buildings. Tensions now were at a fever pitch. The Snakes began to accumulate guns in anticipation of a battle.

On March 24, 1909, Eufaula Constable A.Y. Patty, along with deputies Bill Morey and Bob Crawford and several others, rode to the camp. Though they had no legal jurisdiction, they were looking for stolen property that they believed was in the Snakes' camp. They broke into a tent and were looking around when they were surprised by some Snakes and were captured. Some of the freedmen became very hostile but the lawmen were eventually released unharmed and told not to return.

Patty then went to Henryetta and recruited a larger posse of about 14 men and soon returned to the Hickory Grounds. They arrived before day-break and surrounded the camp.

At the light of dawn, the officers realized that they were severely outnumbered. They decided to regroup and sent for more men, but one of their men, Timothy Fowler, was spotted by the Snakes. Fowler was a preacher and was not an experienced lawman. Not realizing the danger, he raised up and was shot and killed.

Soon a full scale battle erupted. The fight was brief but bloody. Casualties were heavy on both sides. About six members of the posse suffered serious wounds, however, Fowler was the only one killed. Re-

ports are that as many as 29 freedmen were killed during the fight. Eventually, most of the Snakes surrendered. The lawmen took about 40 of the Snakes as prisoners with about 35 of them being freedmen. The Hickory Ground encampment was secured and records taken. The next day most of the buildings were burned by the authorities.

Stories soon began to circulate around Indian Territory that a full scale uprising was underway. Harjo was not present during this battle; as he was at his home near Pierce. Soon after the battle, a warrant was sworn out before Justice Rankin of Checotah charging Crazy Snake with inciting a riot.

At this time, McIntosh County had two law enforcement headquarters due to a county seat fight that had developed between Eufaula and Checotah. The Sheriff of McIntosh County, "Dock" Odom had been forced to split his forces between the two communities. The sheriff's 22-year-old son, Herman, was placed in charge of the Checotah office.

Since Checotah was closer to Crazy Snake's home, the warrant was sent to the younger Odom to serve. Odom sought some of the most experienced officers in forming his deputized posse. They consisted of Ed Baum (city marshal of Checotah), Frank Jones (a veteran U.S. deputy marshal), William Carr (a veteran posse member) and Frank Swift (a Muskogee resident and personal friend of Ed Baum).

At 2:00 in the afternoon, they began their journey to the home of  
*continued on page 6*

## 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)

Excerpts  
from Crazy  
Snake's Plea

# The Snake Rebellion

## An Appeal to the United States Indian Commissioners

"We are all one blood; we have the one God and we live in the same land."

"I could live in peace with all else, but they wanted my country and I was in trouble defending it."

"It was not justice. I have always been asking for justice."

"I never agreed to the exchanging of lands and I never agreed to the allotting of lands. My treaty said that it would never be done."

"All I am begging you honorable Senators is that the ancient agreements and treaties wherein you promised to take care of me and my people will be fulfilled."

of Crazy Snake near Pierce. On their way, they came upon Sarbie Par-nosecher, a Snake Indian, who was arrested and turned over to Frank Swift for delivery back to Checotah. Before arriving at Pierce, they came to the home of Lee Bateman, a well-known resident of the area who had formerly been on several posse duties.

Bateman was a good friend of Frank Jones and told the group he believed he could capture Harjo himself. He told the officers that he had sold several horses to the Snake leader over the years and had a good relationship with him. The officers conferred, but decided that it was too dangerous for Bateman to go alone. Bateman though, was deputized and went with them.

After a brief rest, the five officers continued on their way for approximately two miles to the site of Crazy Snake's cabin and arrived there at around 6:30 p.m. just as the sun was setting.

Most accounts of this event confirm that when the posse reached a clearing about 250 yards from Harjo's cabin, they were spotted by two of the Snake faction. Gunfire erupted and one of the officers shot one of the Snakes and he fell to the ground.

This alerted the other Snakes and soon a full fledged battle erupted. At this time, Charlie Coker, a Seminole freedman and one of Harjo's lieutenants bolted from the cabin and ran toward the posse. The posse could not easily spot him because they were looking into the setting sun. Coker jumped behind a fencepost and began to fire his rifle.

Carr and Batemen had caught sight of Coker and immediately fell to the ground. They yelled to Baum and Odom to do the same, but their warning

was too late. In an instant, Baum was shot in the head. Herman Odom hurried to his fallen comrade's side. Coker fired again and Odom fell to the ground.

The battle raged on for another ten minutes. During this time posse members Jones, Carr and Bateman attempted to recover the fallen officers' bodies. They brought them several hundred feet out of the clearing.

It was dark by this time and the posse feared a further ambush. They made their way into Pierce and telegraphed a message to Checotah and Eufaula for help.

In Eufaula, Sheriff Odom was notified that his son had been killed. In anguish, he collected a posse and by midnight was on his way to Crazy Snake's home. This posse arrived at the site at daybreak and immediately recovered the two bodies of the slain officers. They were taken to Pierce, loaded in a wagon and carried to Checotah.

The posse captured six horses and eventually captured Crazy Snake's son Legus Jones and four other Snakes. They were taken first to Checotah and then to Muskogee.

It was later learned that Chitto Harjo had been wounded during the affair and had left the area. Poses scoured the countryside looking for the Snake leader but were not successful in finding him. The fate of Crazy Snake remains a mystery today. The most common belief is that he was taken to the small community of Smithville in the Choctaw Nation. It is believed he died in 1911 and was buried in an unmarked grave.

# Thanks to These Museum Members

**M**USEUM 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

Carolyn Bresser  
 Mary Ann Burrows  
 Andrea Chancellor  
 Geraldine Farris  
 Sue Gaston  
 Lillian Jayne  
 F. Merton Jeanes  
 ♦ Robert Motter, Jr.  
 Barbara Newell  
 ♦ Robert Pyle  
 Lillian Ragsdale  
 ♦ Avalon Reece  
 Rosemary Rice  
 ♦ Lucy Rooney  
 ♦ Marie Story  
 ♦ James Voss

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 Stephen & Charlotte Crank  
 ♦ Sarah Dixon Family  
 Andy & Audrey Ewing  
 John & Linda Fike  
 ♦ Betty & Larry Franks  
 Earl & Olivelle Graves  
 John W. Griffin Family  
 Terry & Jeanie Grubbs  
 Dianne Hill Family  
 Jack & Bette Hodge  
 Elmer & Judy Hoffman  
 Dave & Dale Holloway  
 ♦ Phillip & Dixie Hopper  
 ♦ Don & Jimmie Jones  
 Kathryn Lathim Family  
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 Gift Shop  
 this  
 Christmas!**

The Whistlestop Gift Shop has something for everyone on your Christmas list. If you're shopping for a train enthusiast, the Whistlestop has the best selection of train-related items in Muskogee.

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

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



# 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.

**Editor's Note:**  
The "Three Rivers Historian" needs your historical articles. Please submit them to: Three Rivers Historian, Attn: Managing Editor, 220 Elgin, Muskogee, OK 74401.

## Museum Hours:

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

Call about  
group reservations and  
rates

**686-6624**

## Three Rivers People

### Lynn Campbell Has Three Rivers Roots

**L**ynn Campbell has served on the Board of Directors for the Three Rivers Museum for several years. She is always willing to volunteer for special events such as our Railroad Day held each year in May.

Lynn has deep family roots in the Three Rivers region. An ancestor of hers, Dr. William Campbell was born in the Cherokee Nation and a graduate of the Cherokee Male Seminary. He operated a ferry across the Arkansas River in the 1870s and 1880s as well as practicing medicine. The ferry ran between Webbers Falls and the town he helped establish called Campbell.



Lynn Campbell (center) works at a museum event with fellow board members.

The town's name was later changed to Gore.

Because of her family's history here, Lynn is committed to the museum's mission of preserving this area's history. Her support of the museum is greatly appreciated.

## Belle Starr Caravan Tour

On Saturday, October 25, nearly 30 people joined with the museum for its Belle Starr Caravan Tour. The highlight of the event was tramping through the heavily wooded Belle Starr homestead to find her grave. This tour was so well attended, it will probably be offered again by the museum in the future.



The Caravan group poses by Tom Starr's tombstone in the Starr Cemetery near Briatown.



Belle Starr's grave was hard to find, but worth the effort.

The tombstone is a replica of the original stone placed by Belle's daughter Pearl.