

3 Rivers Historian

Summer 2000

A Journal of the Three Rivers Museum

V. 3, No. 3

Moving Day!

June 8, 2000 was a red letter day for the Three Rivers Museum. It was moving day for the museum

from points all over the city of Muskogee to the newly renovated Midland Valley Depot at 3rd and Elgin Streets.

The museum's Executive Director, Linda Moore, was assigned the task of getting donated display cases, office furniture, computer and phone equipment and over 8,000 artifacts moved from storage space to the museum. The move started on June 8, but actually took several days to complete.

Exhibit display cases were donated by Bank of Oklahoma from the historic Severs Building in downtown Muskogee that was built in 1913. The City of Muskogee has also given display cases to the museum.

Bank of Oklahoma and Bank of America both donated office furniture such as desks, chairs, file cabinets and tables to completely furnish the museum's office area. Conference room chairs for the Dorothy Ball Memorial Conference Room have also been donated to the museum.

The conference room will also con-



Movers from Muskogee Transfer and Storage load display cases from the Severs Building to be transported to the museum

tain a television and VCR to be used to show visitors an orientation video about the museum and the history of the Three Rivers area.

The museum's large number of artifacts were the last to be moved from their storage area in the Connors State College building downtown. Muskogee Transfer and Storage took great care in moving these historic pieces. They will now be stored in the museum's archive area.

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Museum News Briefs

Artifact Donations Are An Eclectic Mix

In the past few months, the Three Rivers Museum has received donations of a wide variety of very interesting artifacts.

The Hyde Park Baptist Church voted to donate a piano said to have belonged to Congresswoman Alice Robertson. The piano is a beautifully carved instrument in remarkably good condition.

Moving Day cont.



Four-year-old Rachel Bell works at the visitor desk at the museum

Linda has overseen the installation of a security system by Security Alarms Co. and new phone system by Cross Telephone throughout the museum complex.

The museum board would like to express its appreciation to all the Muskogee area businesses that have contributed through donations and services to equipping the new museum.

Now that the Three Rivers Museum occupies the restored depot, the board is looking to the next important milestone — Grand Opening on March 3, 2001. ▽

Other donations include a large brass mail box that once occupied the lobby of the Flynn-Ames building that was recently demolished. An old hand-pumped vacuum cleaner is another recent acquisition.

The museum has also received a group of old photographs pertaining to black businesses, civic groups and churches in Muskogee. Most date from the early 1920s.

Museum to be Featured on Radio Program

Muskogee's talk radio station KBIX has invited the



Three Rivers Museum to be a part of a three-hour

program on Muskogee's history. The

program will air on Thursday,

September 14 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

The museum will be featured during the 7:00 hour.

The show's host, Jerry Pippin, also broadcasts on his own internet website so museum members outside Muskogee can tune in at www.jerrypippin.com on the same night and time.

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Downtown Muskogee Had a Theater on Almost Every Corner

by Lillian Jayne

The theatrical history of Muskogee began before statehood. Many Muskogee old-timers remember going to the theater as a major event in their lives. Movie houses used to dot the streets of Muskogee and were not only places to be entertained, but they served as community gathering places that sparked unity in the town.

Muskogee's first theater, was the Turner Opera House which opened in 1894 and seated 700. It was located north of the corner of Main and Broadway. This was the beginning of a rich and colorful entertainment heritage for the city.

After the demise of the Turner Opera House, civic leaders believed that Muskogee needed a fancy theater to promote the town. They encouraged the building of the Hinton Theater at the corner of Third and Court. Colonel William Hinton, an entertainment entrepreneur, successfully promoted it as a first-class vaudeville house featuring top entertainers on their way to either Kansas City or Dallas-Fort Worth. One of his most successful presentations was Miss Maude Adams as "Peter Pan" which played to huge crowds. But his major coup was getting the "divine" Sarah Bernhardt to appear on the Hinton stage in 1905. This same year saw the Hinton host the Sequoyah Convention which was an effort to create a separate Indian state in northeastern Oklahoma.

The 1920s saw dramatic changes in the theater industry. The invention of motion pictures doomed vaudeville and brought the public a new and exciting form of entertainment. The ownership of the Hinton Theater also changed when Fred Turner bought it in 1920 and renamed it the Orpheum.

Like many cities, Muskogee saw motion picture houses spring up on almost every

corner. You could take a stroll in downtown Muskogee and have your choice of some of the new "flicks" at seven different locations on Broadway and Okmulgee.

Names such as the Wigwam, Grand, Gem, Palace, Lyric, Gaiety, and the Merchant's dotted the streets of Muskogee.

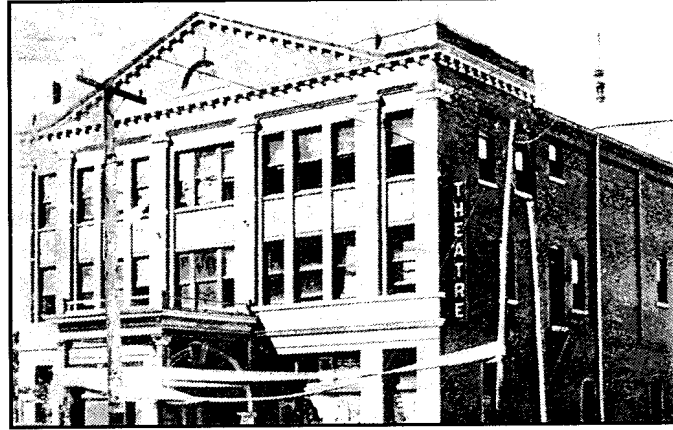
From the group of early businessmen who tried to make a success from motion pictures emerged two men who would dominate the theater industry in Muskogee. George Procter and Hugh Marsh became the major entertainment entrepreneurs in this area.

Procter and Marsh were working in Tulsa when Fred Turner hired them to wire his new Broadway Theater in 1912. They stayed on to work for Turner. Procter as the stage manager and Marsh as movie machine operator worked for handsome salaries of \$18 per week. The Broadway, located at 211 W. Broadway, became a well-known vaudeville house and was listed in "Herbert Lloyd's Vaudeville Guide," published in 1919.

In 1923, Procter and Marsh pooled their resources to lease the Broadway from Turner. Two years later they acquired a second theater and formed a partnership with the up-and-coming Robb and Rowley Theatre Circuit of Texas. Fred Turner sold the Orpheum to Procter and Marsh in 1926.

The new owners continued to book road

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The Hinton Theater, located at the corner of Third and Court, was built around 1905

"Muskogee saw motion picture houses spring up on almost every corner."

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,

As Chairman of the museum board it is my primary duty to oversee the development of the Three Rivers Museum. I am pleased to report that this summer has seen steady progress in these efforts. During the last few months (among other things) we have accomplished the following:

- Moved artifacts and office equipment to museum facility
- Equipped and setup conference room and kitchenette
- Completed setup of museum accounting system
- Set up museum office and archive area
- Started development of the museum gift shop
- Began initial work on museum exhibit area
- Obtained several important artifact donations for the museum
- Reached our goal for the "Grand Opening" fundraising campaign
- Began work on publicity and marketing efforts for the museum

Many people have been responsible for this progress. Each one of them deserves our sincere thanks. Museum director Linda Moore has been working tirelessly in her efforts. Jerry Hoffman, Rob Mix and Wally Waits all helped set up our shelving in the archive area. Kim Hoffman of Hoffman Accounting has been a big help in setting up our accounting procedures and operations. The publicity and membership committee has worked hard in their efforts to get the word out about the museum. Many others have helped in other activities. I wish I had room to name them all.

We continue to remain on schedule on our planning calendar. It is exciting to see the progress made and we are looking forward to serving the Three Rivers area as a center for regional history.

Roger Bell

Museum to Receive Artifacts at Mall

The Three Rivers Museum will have a booth set up at the Arrowhead Mall in Muskogee on Saturday, September 16 from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The purpose of the booth is three-fold — (1) to make people aware of the museum, (2) to recruit new members for the museum and (3) to receive artifact donations.

"When people hear we have over 8,000 artifacts, that sounds like a lot," says board chairman Roger Bell. "But we have only scratched the surface of Three Rivers history with what we have received so far."

The museum is asking people to look through their old photographs and their

collections of memorabilia and family heirlooms in attics and basements and garages. If those items are not being stored properly, they are deteriorating and will soon be gone. Consider donating them to the museum where they can be kept in environmentally-controlled storage and preserved for future generations to enjoy and study.

The museum has never offered a more convenient time or place for people to bring in artifacts. We hope everyone in the Three Rivers area will come by and see our booth and bring us a piece of their history to share with others. This is how museums are created — one piece at a time.

Muskogee's Theaters *cont.*



shows and vaudeville acts to supplement their motion pictures. Charles Procter remembers many of the acts he saw here as a small boy. His personal favorite was Oklahoma's favorite son, Will Rogers.

Charles says, "Will's act basically consisted of him sitting on his horse on stage and talking to his audience as he twirled a rope. The crowd loved it so much they wouldn't let him leave the stage. Finally Will climbed on top of the piano in the orchestra pit and talked for a while and continued to talk as he walked down the aisle and out the front door."

In 1928 Procter and Marsh renovated the Orpheum and equipped it for the new and somewhat controversial "talking" pictures. They also changed the theater's name.

"This was a financial decision," Charles remembers, "because neon signs were just being used and they were expensive. It was a money saver to go with a short name and thus the 'Ritz' was born."

The "talkies" and the motion picture industry boomed over the next decades and so did the fortunes of Procter and Marsh. The "Joy Boys," as they were known, acquired several other theaters in Muskogee. At the height of the movie industry, they operated 10 theaters.

The flagship house was the classy Ritz, seating 1,500 people at 300 Court Street. The Broadway Theater was at 211 N. Broadway and the Yale was across the street from it. The Grand served the black community and was located on Second Street. The new Roxy still stands where it was built in 1947 when it replaced the old Roxy lost to a fire. Their two drive-in theaters were the 64 and the P&M.

Their peak years occurred during World War II. Business was so good, with Camp Gruber in the area, that Procter and Marsh opened a theater in Braggs to bring entertainment to the troops.

The theater industry took the lead in promoting war bonds and the local "Joy Boys" more than did their part. They

gave free shows and arranged concerts for the cause. They were able to get several big-name entertainers to Muskogee to sell war bonds including the pin-up queen Bette Davis.

The biggest event of the 1950s occurred when the Ritz hosted the world premier of "Jim Thorpe: All American" in 1951. Part of the movie had been filmed in Muskogee and the Procters went all out to make the premier a success. There were parades, food, receptions for the stars, and, of course, the first showing of the movie itself.

In 1957, when the movie industry had fallen on hard times, the Procters were still able to arrange for the premier showing of "The Oklahoman." Its star, Joel McCrea, came to Muskogee and attended numerous receptions all the while signing autographs for the fans.

By the 1950s, it was evident there was going to be another revolution in the entertainment industry. Television brought the motion pictures right into people's living rooms and the theater houses were in trouble. One by one, Muskogee's theaters closed until, by the 1960s, only the Ritz was opened on a regular basis.

The final blow to downtown theaters like the Ritz was the change in American lifestyle. Downtowns were dying all across the nation as the population moved to outlying areas. New shopping centers and malls sprang up in the suburbs.

Major corporations built small multiscreen theaters in these new malls and the older downtown theaters could not compete. The time of small independents like the Procters was now a thing of the past. The Ritz closed its doors for the final time in 1977. After providing Muskogee with its major entertainment for more than half a century, the downtown theaters became part of the city's history. ▽

Turner Opera House 1894

The Grand 1904

The Hinton 1905

Broadway 1912

The Orpheum 1920

The Ritz 1928

Wigwam
Lyric
Gaiety
Gem
Palace
Merchant's 1920s

Yale
Okla
64 Drive-in
P&M Drive-in
1940's

The Roxy 1947



The Grand, built in 1904, served Muskogee's black community

▶ The Three Rivers Area

C.E. Foley: Eufaula Pioneer

by Roger L. Bell

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.

Cornelius (Connie) E. Foley, son of Pat and Mary Harigan Foley, was born in Davenport, Iowa in 1854. His parents were Scotch-Irish immigrants who came to America as children.

Connie came to Muskogee, Indian Territory in 1871 from St. Louis. He was eighteen years old and was employed with J.S. Atkins, who had the contract for feeding the railroad workers on the M K & T Railroad, the first railroad to enter Indian Territory.

A letter in the possession of the Foley family details Foley's trips to Honey Springs to attend dances. He states that he made his way to the dances by catching passing freight trains. On one occasion his hat blew off on the return trip and he jumped off the train to retrieve it. He then had to walk the rest of the way back to Muskogee.

In 1876 Foley went to work for the J.A. Patterson Mercantile in Muskogee. Foley proved to be such a diligent worker with great business acumen that Patterson eventually sent him to Eufaula to open a store as a partner. The firm of Patterson and Foley soon became the leading mercantile establishment in Eufaula and sometime in the early 1890's Foley purchased Patterson's share of the business.

D.C. Gideon's book on leaders of Indian Territory said, "Of this business, he became the sole owner and made it the most flourishing business in Indian Territory. He has made much money in the cattle business, in real estate and a considerable variety of business enterprises."

So dominant was Mr. Foley in the life

of Eufaula that the Muskogee newspaper of the time often referred to the community as "Eufoley." In 1898, Mr. Foley established the Foley Banking Co. in Eufaula which later became the First National Bank of Eufaula.

In 1898 all the stores on Front Street in Eufaula were burned to the ground including the Foley Mercantile and Foley Banking Co. Most of them relocated along Foley Avenue or Main Street. The Foley Building at Main and Foley was built in 1899, housing the Foley Banking Co. This building stands today in Eufaula.

Hotel Foley was built in 1899 and was very modern for its time with electric lights and indoor plumbing. It was the pride of the community and numerous special events were held at the hotel. Foley also organized the Eufaula & McAlester Telephone Company which was the first independent phone company in the area.

Mr. Foley was elected the first mayor of

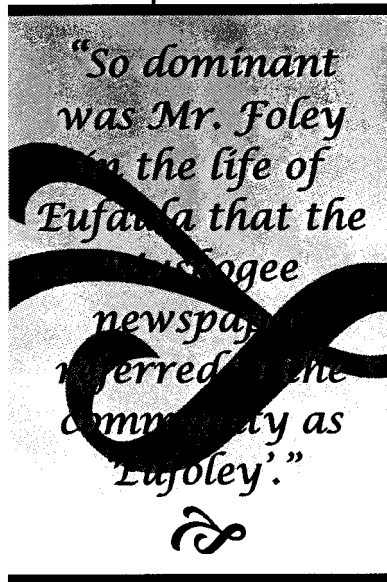
Eufaula after incorporation in 1899. He was reelected for several more terms and in one election he received all the votes except one. Many townspeople believed that his was that one vote, as he would never vote for himself. The first water system and public school were completed during his administration.

Mr. Foley, who for a long period was one of Indians Territory's most eligible bachelors, was married to Rosa Marshall on July 28, 1901. Rosa came to

Eufaula in 1888.

The couple was married in St. Louis and spent a month in the east on their honeymoon. Four sons were born to the Foleys; one died in infancy. In 1911, Mrs. Foley took her boys to England, remaining there a

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Welcome to These Museum Members

Grand Opening Contributors

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

- ♦ Mrs. C.N. Curl
- Gladys Horner
- ♦ Barbara LaFerry
- ♦ Tommie Sue Leahy
- Muskogee Public Library
- ♦ Athlyn Pool
- ♦ Lillian Ragsdale
- Dorothy Upton

Family

- ♦ Mitchell & Fleeta Baker
- Dan & Jackie Borovetz
- ♦ Christine Cannarsa Family
- ♦ H.C. & Suzanne
- Chancellor
- ♦ Bob & Gwen Coburn
- ♦ Charles Ingersoll
- ♦ Larry, David & Cindy Miller
- ♦ Ernie & Dorothy Sykora
- Gordon & Dorothy Swanson
- ♦ Tid & Virginia Sweet
- Revere & Mary Young

Builder

- ♦ Wilma Allen

- ♦ James & Cynthia Baker
- Troy & Modine Baker
- ♦ Weldon Marshall

Sponsor

- ♦ Dorothy Fite
- ♦ Moffitt, Parker & Co.
- Michael & Maureen
- Ruettgers

Sustainer

- ♦ Ernest & Marty Anthis
- Curt's Oil Company
- ♦ Howard & Mary Frances Hodges
- ♦ Carlene Leonard
- ♦ National Steel Erectors

Grand Opening Contributors

Benefactor

- Robert & Jean Anthis
- BancFirst
- The Beckman Co.

- Sabina Beckman
- Richard 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
- Ray & Margaret Lehman
- Rae Lindsey
- Patricia Rowsey Molloy
- 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
- Love Bottling
- Golda Martin
- V. David Miller
- 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 Historian

Three Rivers People

Jerry Hoffman Prepares Archive Area

Jerry Hoffman has served on the Three Rivers Museum Board of Directors since 1993. His interest in history began early in life. His father used to take him on outings to places such as Camp Gruber where he searched for artifacts among the ruins of the abandoned training base.

Jerry got interested in collecting after that and started out with a bottle and jar collection. That led to collecting paper memorabilia such as old postcards. Jerry has over 1,400 postcards and other old papers and he says, "I'm always looking for more." Most of his artifacts pertain to Muskogee history.

Jerry serves on the museum development committee which is currently working to set up the museum's archive area. The Three Rivers Museum has cataloged over 8,000 artifacts that have been donated to the museum and will be stored in



Jerry Hoffman, with Wally Waits, hammers shelving for the museum's archive storage

the environmentally-controlled archive room.

The museum development committee is also working to develop and build the first exhibits that will be displayed in the museum when it opens to the public next Spring.

From the Mailbag

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

Your article about Joseph Sondheimer was especially interesting to me as I've done a good bit of research on him and his connections to Wagoner. My great-grandfather ran a Wagoner hotel in the early days of the town and I have a few of his records. Seldom did he use names, but rather descriptions of the people staying there. Not until I did research on the Sondheimers did I understand his reference to his Jewish guests. They were up from Muskogee in connection with the hide business.

Keep up the good work, it is appreciated.

—Shirle Williams
Wagoner

C.E. Foley cont.

year. In 1912 they were scheduled to return on the *Titanic* but one son took the mumps and the return was fortunately delayed.

In his later years, Mr. Foley's business activities consisted primarily in taking care of his properties. He owned considerable property in Eufaula, Texas, Missouri, Iowa, and California.

Cornelius E. Foley died on February 2, 1944 and was buried in Greenlawn Cemetery in Eufaula. The Eufaula Indian Journal wrote of this early pioneer, "C.E. Foley was first in the hearts of his fellowmen; his honesty was never questioned; his word was all that was needed." Mrs. Foley died in 1960 and is also buried in Greenlawn Cemetery. ▽