

Rivers Historian

Winter 2004

A Journal of the Three Rivers Museum

V. 7, No. 1

"Holiday Express" Delights Old & Young Visitors

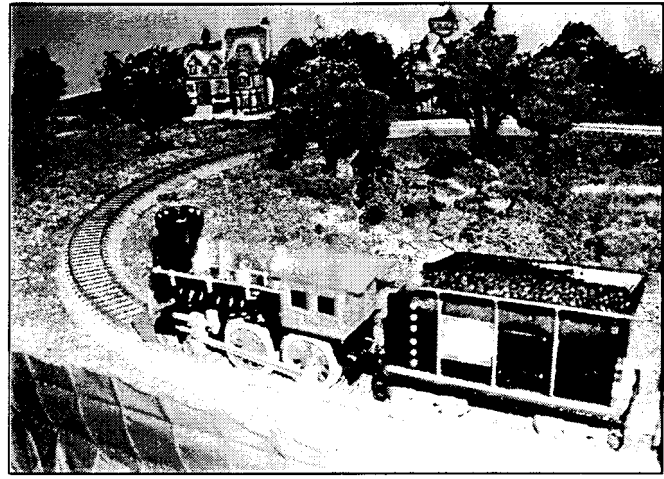
The Three Rivers Museum started a new holiday tradition this Christmas season with a "Holiday Express" model train layout that re-created an earlier time when steam engines puffed across the prairie of Indian Territory.

The "Holiday Express" was on display from December 3 to December 31 at the Midland Valley Depot during regular museum hours. Children of all ages were delighted with the model train and its little village of houses and shops, not unlike what Muscogee might have looked like in its very early days in 1872.

Museum staff have found that visitors are fascinated with trains of all sizes. Museum board member Jerry Hoffman recalls enjoying a local pizza parlor of years past that had a model train running along overhead beams. "It was great fun to eat there with the trains running around the room. I think everyone enjoys a model train."

When the Missouri-Kansas & Texas Railroad built through the Three Forks region in 1871 and 1872, it was the first rail line to be laid in Indian Territory. New towns sprang up along the line and Muscogee was one of them.

The M-K-T, or KATY as it was nicknamed, crossed the Arkansas River



This "Holiday Express" model train layout re-creates Christmas in Muscogee, 1872

bridge at the Three Forks on Christmas Day in 1871. By New Year's Day, 1872, the line had reached a spot on the Texas Road where the railroad planned to build a depot.

That depot became the Muscogee Station, named after the Indian nation where the depot was located. Before the depot was completed, a little town had sprung up — mostly tents and wooden shacks at first.

But soon new businesses were established. Two early mercantiles were established by J.S. Atkinson and James Patterson. Other businesses and settlers flocked to the railroad depot and Muscogee became a true Indian Territory town.



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Museum
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Museum News Briefs

Museum Hosts
Business After Hours

The Three Rivers Museum was the host of the Muskogee Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours on Thursday, January 15.

Chamber members, museum supporters and business leaders met at the museum after work hours to network, enjoy some good food and take a free tour of the museum.

The featured exhibit for the event was a pair of Model T Fords on display in the museum's exhibit hall. On loan from collector Larry Ross, the vintage automobiles dating from 1914 and 1924 will remain on display through the winter.



Business After Hours visitors gather in the museum's conference room for a door prize drawing.

Popular Author
Holds Book Signing



Author R.D. Morgan signs copies of his latest book, The Bandit Kings of the Cookson Hills.

Author R.D. Morgan discussed and autographed his latest book *The Bandit Kings of the Cookson Hills* on sale at the Three Rivers Museum on Saturday, January 17. The book chronicles a crime spree in Oklahoma and Arkansas in the 1920s that brought both fear and fascination to the entire region.

This book will be a great addition to the library of anyone interested in the true story of crime and punishment among the bandits and outlaws who populated the Cookson Hills area in our not-too-distant past. Morgan is careful to give credit to the brave lawmen and plucky private citizens who stood up to the gang of bank robbers who terrorized the Ozarks for several years.

Holloway Blueprint
Donates Laminator

The Three Rivers Museum extends its thanks Bill Goodwin of Holloway Blueprint & Copy Shop. He recently donated a laminating machine to the museum. The museum will use the laminator in exhibit preparation.

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918/686-6624 • www.3riversmuseum.com

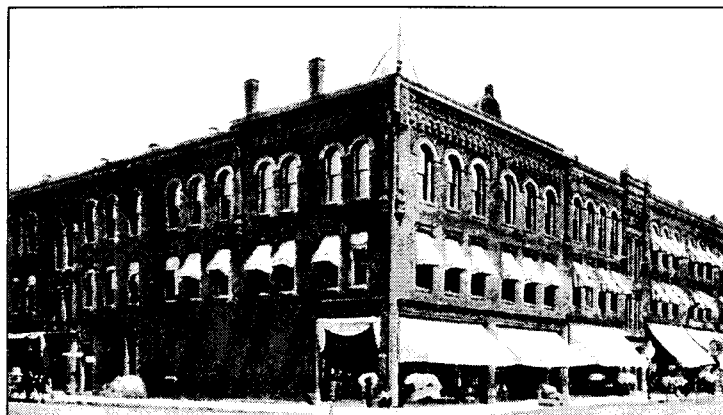
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Editor-in-Chief: Roger Bell

Managing Editor: Jonita Mullins

The Dawes Commission


The Three
Rivers Area



The Fite-Rowsey Building in Muskogee housed the Dawes Commission.

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from Muskogee: City and County by Odie Faulk.

By the early 1880s there was still "Unassigned" land in the middle of this territory, and the acres set aside so the Cherokees could reach the plains to hunt, the so-called Cherokee Outlet, were being used only by ranchers who leased grazing rights from the tribe. Thousands of dispossessed whites in Kansas and Texas cast covetous eyes on these open areas and wanted to homestead there.

The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs came to the Indian Territory in the spring of 1885 to take testimony regarding what should be done, arriving in Muskogee in May of that year. Under chairman Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts, this committee heard Indian leaders bitterly denounce the opening of the region to white settlement.

Ranchers, fearing the loss of their lease lands, likewise opposed the opening of the area, but favoring it were railroad officials and landless whites.

Two years later Congress passed what became known as the Dawes Severalty Act. This was enacted in the belief that eventually the Indian Nations should be dissolved and their members integrated into the mainstream of American life.

It provided for the gradual dissolution of tribal government by forcing individual heads of Indian families to take an allotment of 40 to 160 acres. The thousands of acres left over after this process was completed would then be available for homesteaders.

Cherokee and Creek leaders realized that enforcement of the Dawes Act would lead to an end of their dominance in the Indian Territory, and they resisted the intent of the Dawes Act to the best of their ability — to little avail. In 1893 the Cherokee Outlet was stripped from the tribe and thrown open to settlement by a run.


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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.



Friends of the Thomas- Foreman Home

- Jim & Billie Alexander
- Bank of Oklahoma
- Roy & Lin Barmore
- Frank & Kay Borovetz
- Bethany Bowline
- Charles & Winnie Bowman
- Bradley Funeral Home
- Richard & Leigh Bradley
- Kathryn Burke/Marion Weber
- Mary Ann Burrows
- C&L RV Center
- Morris & Mary Caves
- CHS Class of '46
- James Crotty
- Joel Cousins
- Margo Dollar
- Max & Peggy Eversole
- First United Methodist Friendship Class
- Harmony House
- Howard & Lillian Jayne
- F. Merton Jeanes
- Loftis Furniture
- Moffitt Parker & Company
- Muskogee Convention & Tourism
- Muskogee Co. Historical Society
- Muskogee Daily Phoenix
- Muskogee Garden Club
- Muskogee Rotary Club
- Paul Oman
- Optimists International
- Marjorie Paxson
- Pumps & Controls
- Tim & Lela Robison
- Forney Sandlin
- Bill & Kathleen Settle
- Jennifer Sparks
- Jon & Martha Stoodley
- Wally Waits
- Drew Wilcoxon
- Tom Yadon

The Dawes Commission

The payment to the Cherokees for the Outlet was distributed at the abandoned Fort Gibson on July 23, 1895, at which time 10,000 people gathered there.

In 1893 Congress authorized negotiations to begin with the tribes so that land allotments could be made. Chairing the commission which first operated out of Fort Gibson was Henry L. Dawes.

The Indians resisted as long as they could, whereupon Congress in 1895 passed legislation authorizing a survey of tribal lands to begin.

Then the following year came an act

directing that a roll of each tribe be made — which would be preliminary to allotment. Anyone whose claim for enrollment was rejected was given the right of appeal in federal court, including the one in Muskogee.

Thousands of people, some part Indian, some with no Indian blood at all, crowded into Indian Territory hoping to get enrolled and thereby reap the benefits due Native Americans. Indians themselves were bitter at forced allotments, at the activities of the Dawes Commission, and at the fraudulent claims being advanced.

But the work of the Commission
continued on page 5

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 Dawes Commission



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.



Tams Bixby chaired the Dawes Commission while headquartered in Muskogee.

Congress assured this with the passage of the Curtis Act on June 28, 1898.

Among the first in the Creek Nation to accept allotments were the former slaves of the tribe. The Treaties of 1866 had provided that the Five Civilized Tribes had to accept the freedmen on their tribal rolls as members, and thus these freedmen were eligible for land allotments.

Wherever possible the blacks tended to cluster their allotments together, and thus within the Indian Territory there were many all-black towns. This had happened previous to enrollment and allotments.

One such all-black community, named Marshall Town, had been formed between the Arkansas and the Verdigris in the 1870s, and had been the site of some violence when the Cherokees claimed the residents of Marshall Town were rustling cattle from Cherokee ranchers.

At the time of allotment, an all-black settlement named Twine was formed in Muskogee County some eight miles west of the City of Muskogee. Named for W.H. Twine, it received a post office on March 28, 1902, then two and one-half years later changed its name to Taft (in honor of William Howard Taft, then Secretary of War and later president of the United States.)

proceeded, even after Chairman Dawes became so ill that he was forced to resign. Tams Bixby, first temporary then permanent Chairman, moved the Commission to Muskogee, and the work continued.

To Bixby fell much of the task of leadership during the next decade of tremendous change in the Indian Territory.

At last the various tribes began to realize that the end of the old way of life was inevitable, and on September 27, 1897, a delegation of Creeks reached agreement with the United States commissioners on the subject of allotments.

The Creek Council rejected this agreement, but everyone — Indian and white alike — realized it was only a matter of time before allotments began.

We're on the Web!

Stay up to date with Museum News and Special Events by visiting our website at www.3riversmuseum.com



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.



Tales from Three Rivers

“I Leave You my Flag”


It was June 24, 1898, a hot tropical day in Cuba, when a group of Muskogee boys took part in one of the first battles of the Spanish American War. The U.S. had entered into the war in aid of Cubans who were fighting for their independence from Spain. After the *USS Maine*, had been destroyed by a mine, President William McKinley had sought to create an all-volunteer cavalry unit to send to Cuba. The plan was for this unit to be filled with men from the western territories – Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Indian Territory.

In Muskogee, Judge John R. Thomas, Sr., a federal judge for Indian Territory, was in charge of recruiting two troops. He took an active interest in this role and under his guidance saw Troop L and Troop M embark from Muskogee to a training camp in San Antonio, Texas. His own son, Lieutenant John R. Thomas, Jr., was among these troops.

Once in San Antonio, the First U.S. Volunteer Cavalry – its official name – quickly became known as Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders. The young recruits were green and rough when they arrived in Texas but were quickly whipped into shape by their commander Colonel Leonard Wood. After weeks of intense training, they shipped out to Cuba from Tampa, Florida.

At the Battle of Las Guasimas, 500 Americans faced a force of 2,000 Spaniards. Skeptics had questioned how these “glory boys” of the famed Rough Riders would perform under battle conditions. Also of concern to some was the 10th Cavalry, an all-black unit known as the Buffalo Soldiers who had at various times served at Fort Gibson. The regular cavalry also had a unit present at Las Guasimas.

These three regiments advanced blindly through the thick, steaming Cuban jungle toward the Spanish-held position. The Rough Riders were the first to engage the enemy. Surprised to find themselves closer to the Spanish position than they realized they took




a volley of enemy fire “that would have routed anyone but an American.” The first regulars hurried into the battle and were quickly joined by the 10th Cavalry, advancing on a run.

When his captain was shot, Lieutenant Thomas stepped into his place and fought for an hour before he was wounded himself. He fell to the ground and then rolled until he reached the gun of a fallen comrade. He continued firing as long as his ammunition held out. Then becoming delirious from heat, thirst and loss of blood, Thomas was carried three miles by stretcher to the field hospital.

The fighting was intense for a time. To the credit of their uniform and flag, the American forces did not give an inch. The Spanish troops were routed and the Rough Riders and Buffalo Soldiers had proven themselves a capable fighting force. They had gained the admiration and respect of the soldiers in the First U.S. Regular Cavalry.

It was the end of the fight for John Thomas, however. His wound proved severe enough to get him shipped home on the *Olivette* for recuperation. When Roosevelt had first met the young lieutenant he said, “I shouldn't like to be in that fellow's shoes. He has eleven ancestors who were such brilliant fighters that I shouldn't like to live up to their records. But I think he'll do it.”

John's family had been represented in every war the United States had ever fought and this youngest Thomas had ably continued the tradition. He was so steeped in the tradition of service to country that he continued in the military after he recovered from his wound. John's mother had died when he was a boy, but he never forgot her words to him shortly before her death. “I leave you my flag,” she said to her only son. “If ever it needs defense, be willing to give your life for it.”





Thanks 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

Allen County Public Library
Katherine Biggs
Ruth Box
Norma Kilgore
Muskogee Public Library
Stan Smith
w Elizabeth Sullivan
Marie Wadley
Erma Whittet
♦ Tom Yadon

Family

♦ Kamlesh & Vijay Aggarwal
Jim & Billie Alexander
♦ Kirk & Shannon Purnell
Roy & Lin Barmore

Chip Bevilaqua Family
Bill & Ann Boies
Bethany Bowline
♦ James & Jeanne Bridges
Rodney & Tish Callahan
w Larry & Connie Campbell
Phyllis Durland
Hubert & Louise Ellison
Clay & Joy Harrell
Holloway Blueprint & Copy Shop
Julia Hurst/Jacob Gonzales
Jayson Jarrard Family
Arnold & Nita Moore
Carl & Janet Moore
Kai Moore Family
♦ Leon & Sammie Rodden
Robert & Ann Roe
Rex & Martha Slack
Troy Thornton Family
♦ Ed & Tessie Warren

Builder

A More Beautiful Muskogee
Robert & Jean Anthis
Karen & Carter Bradley
Children's Clinic
ONG
Quality Staffing

Sponsor

OG & E
Ann Barker Ong

Sustainer

Benefactor

Kirshner Foundation

New in the Whistlestop Gift Shop

The Bandit Kings of the Cookson Hills

This latest book by R.D. Morgan chronicles a crime spree in Oklahoma and Arkansas in the 1920s that brought both fear and fascination to the entire region.

♦♦♦

If you're shopping for a train enthusiast, the Whistlestop has the best selection of train-related items in Muskogee.

♦♦♦

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

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.

Museum Hours:

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

Call about group
reservations
and rates

686-6624



Three Rivers Events

Upcoming Events at Three Rivers Museum

Special Exhibit: In Black & White

February 4-28, 2004

Wed - Sat from 10am - 5pm

Celebrating African American history in the Three Forks region. The museum will present a "photo album" of local black leaders in honor of Black History Month.

Cost: \$3 for adults; \$1.50 for children

Teachers Day

February 16 & 21, 2004

Muskogee Public Schools teachers will earn professional development credits with tours at the Five Civilized Tribes and Three Rivers Museums. Special presentations will be made by Musko-

gee's three other museums — Ataloa Lodge, the Thomas-Forman Historic Home and *USS Batfish* War Memorial.

Downtown Muskogee Walking Tour

Saturday, April 17, 2004

10:00 a.m.

Join us in a Walking Tour through historic downtown Muskogee. We'll tell the tale of Muskogee's growth and development from a railhead and cattle town in the 1870s to Indian Territory's most progressive and important city at statehood to its patriotic fervor during America's war years. Includes a lunch stop.

Cost of the walking tour: \$3

Recent Acquisitions

The Three Rivers Museum continually receives artifacts relating to the history of the Three Forks region. Some of our most recent acquisitions speak to the wide variety of historical subjects that the museum can cover.

We cannot list every item, but wish to give you a small sampling of what we have received. The museum staff is grateful to every donor who has shared an artifact with us.

In memory of their mother, Marie Hutchens, Pat Isbell and Fran Barker donated items relating to Braggs history include old photographs, a history of the Braggs Methodist church with its pulpit and items on Camp Gruber including a thoroughly researched roster

of the POWs who were held at the camp.

Charles Kelly of the former Kelly Office Supply brought a very old "magic lantern" (an early slide projector) and the very first Apple computer purchased in Muskogee.

Margaret McIntosh Taylor shared items on the McIntosh Nursing Home which was founded by her parents in Muskogee. Some of that information will be used in our "In Black & White" exhibit for Black History Month.

The Muskogee Public Schools donated over 100 trophies that school teams and individual students have won over the years. The trophies date back to the earliest school years. Graduates of Muskogee schools will be interested in these artifacts.

Thanks to all who have donated artifacts!