



Three Rivers Historian

Summer 2006

A Journal of the Three Rivers Museum

V. 9, No. 3

Railroad Day! a Success!

For the past five years, since the first year we were open, Three Rivers Museum has held a special event called Railroad Day. The beautiful silver tea service in our lobby was presented to Charles N. Haskell on the "first" Railroad Day and is inscribed May 18, 1904.

We plan our day on the Saturday in May nearest that date to celebrate the anniversary of the coming of the Midland Valley Railroad to Muskogee.

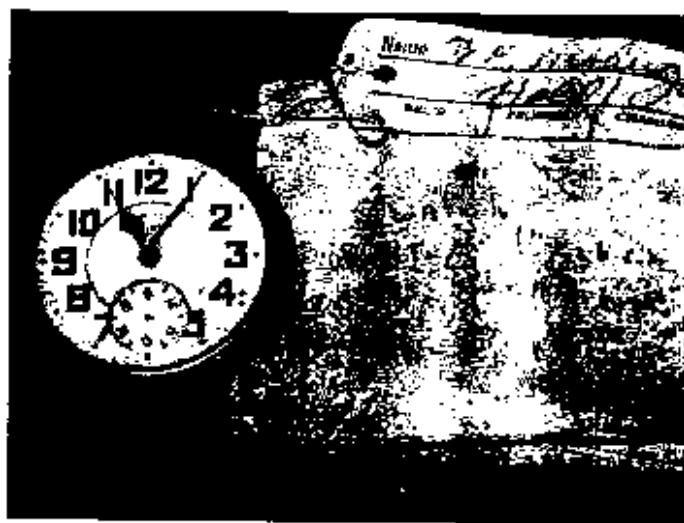
One of the special things about this year's event included a presentation about the tragic head-on collision of two diesel engines in 1958. The deaths of four men occurred as a result.

But, one man, James Brown, saved the life of another, Walter Grober, who was on fire. Brown put out the fire, carried the man to the car of an onlooker, who took the burned man to the nearest hospital. Mr. Brown's widow was present with the Carnegie Medal awarded for her husband's bravery.

Mr. Grober was also present and shared his memories of the help from his friend. The families of both of these men were on hand to learn of the story and to reminisce about how it affected each of them.

Two of the grown children of Mr. Ferrell, who was one of those killed, were also here to remember the time.

These stories were recorded to be-



*Railroad Pocket Watch,
with jeweler's tag and envelope*

come part of the living history for future generations and family members.

During the mass confusion after the wreck, Mr. Grober's pocket watch fell from his pocket. The person who found it took it to the jeweler who serviced the watches for the railroad employees each year. He was able to identify the owner by the serial number and Mr. Grober kept it as it was, stopped at the time of the accident.

Last year, on Railroad Day, Mr. Grober donated that watch to Three Rivers Museum. It is on display along with the account of the collision. ▀



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Museum News

Come and Sit a Spell on Our New Benches

Three Rivers Museum has two new benches on the terraced area in front of the building.

They each have a round medallion inset in the back to commemorate the Centennial Year of Oklahoma's Statehood. They carry a starburst design "Oklahoma Centennial 07"

There are small plaques on each to identify our donors:

Leadership Muskogee, Class XI-2005 and Class of 1946, Muskogee Central High School.

The benches are a dark green, brushed enamel on metal and will greet our visitors for many years to come.

Bass Reeves Day Planned in August

On Saturday, August 12, Three Rivers Museum will host a special event featuring the new book by Art T. Burton. It is titled *Black Gun, Silver Star: The Life and Legend of Frontier Marshal Bass Reeves*.

Mr. Burton has been to Three Rivers in the past when he spoke on the topic of other outlaws and lawmen of this area. This hard-bound volume of over 300 pages is another example of the



thorough job done by Art Burton in researching one of his favorite subjects.

Other books by this author include: *Black, Buckskin, and Blue: African-American Scouts and Soldiers on the Western Frontier* and *Black, Red, and Deadly: Black and Indian Gunfighters of the Indian Territory, 1870-1907*

The plans for Bass Reeves Day include a review by Mr. Burton at 10:30, followed by an opportunity to visit with the author and have him sign copies of his books.

There are also other activities planned for the day. Members of the local U.S. Marshal Service as well as the local Muskogee Police Department will be on hand to explain their roles in modern-day peacekeeping.

Lunch will be served on the grounds. As plans are finalized, an event flyer will be mailed. Also watch for details on our website and in the Muskogee Phoenix.

Sharing Our History in Photos

Stop by the new offices of the City Parks and Recreation staff in the old fire station building at the entrance to Spaulding Park and look at the display of historic photographs. The wonderful display case, formerly from McEntee's Jewelry, adds to the flavor.

Three Rivers Museum Board & Staff

Officers/Staff:

Chairman:
Roger Bell

Executive Director:
Linda Moore

Board of Directors:

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Orville Eaton
Dianne Hill
Jerry Hoffman
Dan Myers
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Bud Stewart
Karen Wagner
Edward Warren

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Sharing our History

By Linda Moore, Director

When I began as a volunteer nine years ago, little did I know how much of our rich history I would actually learn.

Later, when I became the Director of Three Rivers Museum, I was bound by the Mission Statement, found on page 6, to "collect, preserve, research, exhibit and interpret a collection of historic artifacts." The collecting of the stories that go with the documents, photographs, and memorabilia has been one of the most enjoyable phases of the experience.

Over the years, it has been my pleasure to do "oral history interviews" with many of our area people.

The following article comes from a visit, held July 17, 1998, with a remarkable lady.

Gertrude Nash (1903-2001)

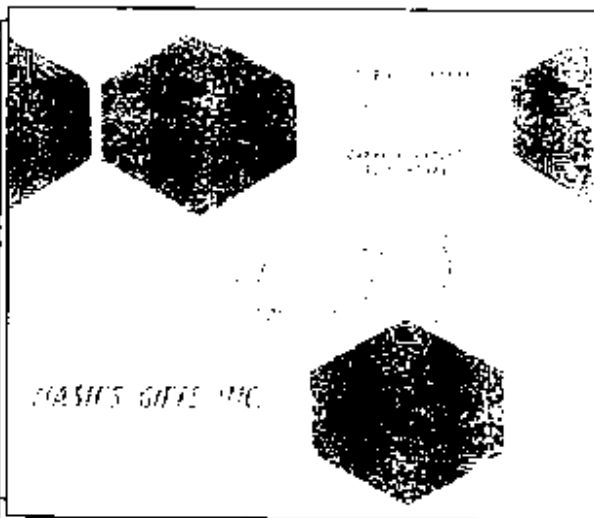
Born Gertrude Wolff, October 26, 1903, life began on the family farm near Orlando, Indian Territory. Orlando is near Perry, north of Guthrie. She had two older sisters and a younger brother.

The consolidated school in Orlando had only one teacher for all grades and her sisters completed school in that way. She was able to attend Perry High School for her Junior and Senior years, and graduated there in 1921.

At that time, she got a certificate to teach in rural schools and taught in Ponca City, Sumner, and Orlando, OK, for one year each.

She then attended college in Edmond, at what was Central State Teacher's College, finishing in two winters and three summers, graduating in 1926.

Her mother died in July, 1926, at which



Advertisement on a bag for your greeting card purchase at Nash's store.

time, she had been offered a teaching job in Tulsa. Her father wanted her to take it, and she did. However, her brother was only 10 years old at the time, so she rode the train home every other weekend to help with the family.

She taught seven years in Tulsa, met Lee Nash there, and they were married June 14, 1934. Lee was 5' 7" tall, but Gertrude was only 4' 10". He worked as a bookkeeper for a printing company in Tulsa. When their son, Lee, Jr., was born Nov. 5, 1939, it was decided that she should stay home. At the time, however, she was making \$120.00 per month and he was making \$63.00 per month, \$10.00 of which he was sending home to his parents. Obviously, \$53.00 didn't go very far, so when the baby was 3 years old, she began substitute teaching.

Soon Lee, Sr. felt he wanted a business of his own and they began to look. They finally chose Henry Potts Print Shop & Office Supply, at 5th and West Broadway, on the north side of the street, in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Just across the

continued on page 4

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,

Mayes, McIntosh,

Okmulgee,

Sequoyah and

Wagoner

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.

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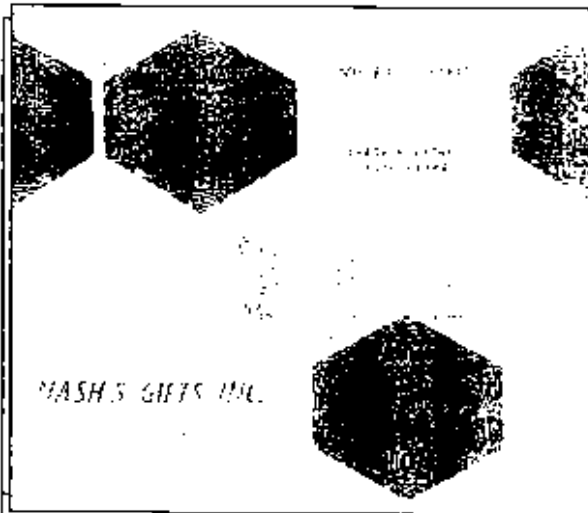
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Friends of the Thomas- Foreman Home

Roy & Lin Bantore
Bethany Bowline
Charles & Winnie
Bowman
Richard & Leigh
Bradley
Kathryn Burke
Mr. & Mrs. H.C.
Chancellor
Joel Cousins
James Crotty
Max & Peggy
Eversole
Mr. & Mrs. C.F.
Kuykendall
Kirshner Foundation
Lottis Furniture
Moffitt Parker & Co.
Muskogee Breakfast
Optimists Club
Muskogee Conven-
tion & Tourism
Muskogee County
Historical Society
Muskogee Phoenix
Mr. & Mrs. Harold
Patterson
Marjorie Paxson
Pumps & Controls
Jim & Karen
Ritchey
Forney Sandlin
Bill & Kathleen
Settle
Mr. & Mrs. Ron
Spradlin
Marie Wadley

Sharing our History

street to the west was First Presby-
terian Church, of which they became
life-long, active members. Both
served as Deacons at various times.
The Print Shop also printed sermons
and programs for the Church.

The main customer of the Print
Shop was Egan Manufacturing Co.
In about 1954, Jim Egan came to Lee
Nash and said he was going to buy
printing equipment to do his printing
in house. Lee said, "Don't look
around for equipment, buy mine."
Mr. Egan did buy it and that money
was used to start Nash's Gifts, Inc. in
May 1955. A photograph on display
in the Museum shows the grand
opening day, May 15, and all the
flowers that were sent in congratula-
tions.

The space they rented was only 15'

wide but 100' long. They bought 8
used greeting card racks from Gibson
Card Co. and some used display cases
from Sears. With unique gifts and sta-
tionary, the store boasted a hobby cen-
ter with model kits and supplies.

Mr. and Mrs. Nash ran the store to-
gether until Feb. 13, 1967, when Lee,
Sr. died. She renewed the lease and
continued to run it until January, 1973.

Always active, she was a charter
member of the board of the Kelly B.
Todd Cerebral Palsy Center. She was
also a member of the Pilot Club, and
was named Person of the Year 1989,
by the Chamber of Commerce.

At her funeral, Rev. Ben Noble,
summed up the life of this feisty little
lady by saying, "We can all rest as-
sured that heaven is much better organ-
ized now that Gertrude is there."

Join the Friends of the Home

Your donation to Friends of the
Thomas-Foreman Home will help
us maintain this Muskogee treas-
ure. All money sent to the Tho-
mas-Foreman Home is kept sepa-
rate 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 support the Thomas-Foreman
Home!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Please mark your donation level below. Donors
will receive 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.

Sharing our History

Another historian of our area, the late Mr. C.W. "Dub" West, conducted "oral history interviews" from the 1970's on cassette tape and into the 1990's on VHS format. There are over 120 of these video interviews available at Three Rivers Museum for the public to view in our Conference Room. Stop by and browse the catalog.

Dub West also wrote a weekly article for the Muskogee Phoenix called "Turning Back the Clock." The following is one of those from December 26, 1982

"One of the best ways to "Turn Back the Clock" is to talk with people who have lived a rich, full life. It has been my privilege to chat with many people who could reach back in their memories to tell of happenings. I call them "links to the past."

"They have all been important in piecing together the history and heritage of eastern Oklahoma, but one stands out in my mind—Dr. T.L. Ballenger.

"The fact that Ballenger celebrates his 100th birthday puts him in a selective group, but more important than that from a historical standpoint, he has an intense interest in the happenings in his lifetime.

"In addition, he has reached back earlier than even he could recall by interviewing others. He also has been a researcher deluxe, delving into the history of Tahlequah, eastern Oklahoma, and the Cherokees with an ability that has been highly developed.

"Ballenger was born December 22, 1892, in Yell County, Ark. He attended school at Rover, Ark. He received his bachelor's degree from Ouchita College, his master's degree from the University of Arkansas, and his doctorate from the University of Oklahoma.

"Ballenger came to Northeastern State University in 1914, remaining until the interruption of World War I. Upon being mustered out of the service, he became a bank cashier at Part Hill.

"He became Professor Ballenger in 1923 when he returned to Northeastern as head of the history department, continuing until his retirement in 1955.

"He married Mildred Parks in 1918, and they celebrated their wedding anniversary December 19, along with the 100th anniversary of his birth.

"The good professor has been interested in the history of Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma from his earliest memory, but his marriage accentuated his interest in Cherokee history. Parks' ancestors had a rich Cherokee heritage, and the two working together uncovered many unchronicled events concerning those proud people.

"Though not a Cherokee, he has been able to express the thoughts and the philosophy of the Cherokees as illustrated in his classic, "Around Tahlequah Council Fires."

"Ballenger has inspired thousands of students during his tenure at Northeastern. He has always been approachable, ready to share his knowledge with others. He has laid a foundation on which persons coming after him can build."

As a postscript to this article, people that have done research into historic books and documents at the Northeastern State University campus, in Tahlequah, did so in the Ballenger Room. It was so named in honor of this respected gentleman.

Where Is the Three Rivers Museum?

The museum is located in historic downtown Muskogee at 220 Elgin. To visit us, take Highway 69 to Okmulgee Ave. Turn east on Okmulgee Ave. to 3rd St. Then go south on 3rd St. two blocks 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

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.

Do You Remember?

With the recent passing of Bob Yaffe, several people have spoken of his passion and love for Spaulding Park. Mike Kays recalled his interest in tennis and others spoke of how much he donated for the preservation of this Muskogee landmark. The following article from the Muskogee Phoenix in 1990 also came to mind regarding one of the Park's great features.

Our Statue of Liberty

"A replica of the Statue of Liberty will remain torchless for a few more weeks while park officials decide the best way to re-attach her arm.

"Her torch arm had been missing for more than a year, and was recovered this week from chest deep water that surrounds the statue.

"I got to thinking this winter that it might be in the pond, so we started talking about how we could get in the pond to see if the arm might be in the water," Parks and Recreation Director Mark Wilkerson said.

"A hard freeze that winter had kept the pond frozen several weeks, and Wilkerson assumed somebody walked out on the ice, broke the arm off, and 'made off with it.'"

"The Muskogee Crime Stoppers offered a reward for the return of the statue's arm, but of course we didn't get any leads," Wilkerson said.

"Our first idea was to drain the pond. The Oklahoma Wildlife Department, which stocks the pond with perch and crappie, was against that idea."

"That's when we contacted the Three Forks Treasure Hunters Club to see if they could help us. It turned out they

have metal detectors that can be used under water," Wilkerson said.

"Four members of the club put on wet suits and recovered the arm in 10 minutes. The copper arm was muddy and tarnished, but it was still in one piece.

"They started looking right around the base of the statue and sure enough, the arm was there with fishing line wrapped around it," Wilkerson said.

"So the arm was not taken, it was right there all this time. Our guess is that while somebody was fishing they got ahold of the arm with their line and pulled it off. When that happened, they probably cut their line and got out of there."

"This was the second time the arm holding the torch was broken off (*the other time was in 1983*)," Wilkerson said.

"As soon as the arm is replaced, he plans to send a picture of the complete Miss Liberty to Francis Beaumatin in Veneus Les Sablons, France. Beaumatin is a member of the 'Club of the Friends of Miss Liberty', in France, and sent a letter to Muskogee inquiring about the replica. Beaumatin is writing a book about the replicas of Miss Liberty throughout the world.

"The copper statue was installed on a concrete pedestal in the Spaulding Park pond in 1956, as part of the Boy Scouts of America's national crusade "Strength in the Arm of Liberty."

"I didn't want to write to Mr. Beaumatin saying the statue was missing an arm," Wilkerson said."

(In 1983, the pond was drained, cleaned, the statue repaired, sidewalks for wheelchairs were added, and the pond was refilled and restocked with fish.)

We currently have 244 active members of Three Rivers Museum, so of course, we cannot list everyone in each issue. The following have joined our effort or renewed their commitment since the last publication of this newsletter in April.

Renewals

New Members

Acme Engineering
 Lavonne Baker
 James & Emma Lee
 Bankhead
 Bill & Sabina Beckman
 Perry Benson, Jr.
 Rolleen Bishop
 Ruth Box
 Nancy Cagle Boydston
 Jim Brown & Ann
 Franklin
 Agnes Brown
 Gene & Patsy Buse
 Christine Cannarsa
 James & Ruth Carnagey
 Central High School
 Class of 1947
 E.P. & Mary Ann Couch
 Mildred Cousins
 Michael J. Cristantiello
 Jess & Phyllis Epple

Max & Peggy Eversole
 Harriet Jayne Garrett
 Elizabeth Gibson
 Walter & Georgelene
 Grober
 Kathy Hewitt
 Gene Hyden
 J. Wm. Keithan
 Kirschner Foundation
 Ed & Phyllis Kuykendall
 Larry G. Lee
 Jim Lemley
 John & Barbara Lomax
 Mary Malone
 Muskogee Breakfast Op-
 timist Club
 Muskogee Phoenix
 Betty Sue Nemic
 Joan O'Dell
 Marjorie Paxson
 Pumps & Controls, Inc.

Rolland & Melba Ranks
 Jim & Karen Ritchey
 Jennifer Sparks
 Ross & Barbara Staggs
 E.L. 'Bud' Stewart
 Gordon & Dorothy
 Swanson
 Marjorie Szabo
 Trust Company of OK
 Margaret Vardeman
 Karen Wagner
 W.S. & Nancy Warner
 Betty Weaver
 Charlie & Brenda Wil-
 bourn
 Bernard & Anita Wil-
 liams
 Jay & Margaret Wil-
 liams
 Revere & Mary Young

Deborah L. Buse
 Lyle & Shirley Bibb
 Wayne & Doris Cooper
 Thomas & Marion
 Duggan
 Hugh W. Foley
 Raymond & Nancy
 Ivens
 Elada Kirk
 Jimmy & Karren
 Rogers

Help us increase our membership, invite someone you know to join us.

Keep History Alive! Become A Museum Member.

An annual membership provides you with the quarterly journal, free admission to the museum and a 10% discount on purchases in the museum gift shop. Three Rivers Museum is a 501c3 entity so your donation is tax deductible.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

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

Clip or copy and mail to: Three Rivers Museum
 220 E. Igin. Muskogee, OK 74401

My check for \$____ is enclosed.

Contact Us

The Three Rivers Museum is always looking for historical artifacts pertinent to the Three Rivers area of Oklahoma.

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

•••

Suggestions?

Three Rivers Museum is your museum. Tell us what you think about the museum and the quarterly journal. Tell us what you would like to see in the future. You can help us make Three Rivers Museum better.

Meet the New Members of our Board



Dan Myers

Retired from a 35-year career with the Dept. of Veterans' Affairs, he was involved in starting the Encore Program, using people who had left previous

professions, but who still wanted to work part-time.

He was in the Marine Corps and served in Viet Nam.

He is a History graduate from Kansas University and his wife Mary is an OSU graduate. Their son, Matthew, is an OSU graduate and Patrick is attending Kansas University, so they are "a house divided."

He is currently a realtor with ERA, Charles S. Raper & Son and enjoys motorcycles.



Karen Wagner

At eight years of age, Karen volunteered at her local library and the Tuberculosis Christmas Seal program. She worked with the American Red Cross as a volunteer, and

lastly as Chapter Executive at Muskogee. Retired now, there is time for unhurried travel, genealogy, yard work, and volunteering.

"Isn't it interesting how the circle turns—the Red Cross was the original sponsor of Christmas Seals, and I'm again volunteering at the library," she says.

A native Oklahoman, with ancestors who settled both Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory, she has a keen interest in state history. Three Rivers Museum was a natural attraction for her.

Recent Acquisitions

The Three Rivers Museum continually receives artifacts relating to the history of our area.

Jerrie Ann Wingo—1920 Vintage Phonograph and records

DeRutha Richardson—Dress worn in Congress by Alice Robertson

Ray Williams—Eye glasses from McEntee's Jewelry

Glenn Smith—Photos of 1938 Muskogee gas station

Susie Lawrence—Pair of child's shoes

Cary Pruitt—Photo of Procter & Marsh promotion of movie 'Stagecoach' 1939

We cannot list every item, but this list mentions some of the recent ones. Perhaps it will remind you of something you have that could be donated.

New in the Whistle Stop Gift Shop

We have expanded our selection of children's books about "Thomas the Tank Engine". These are very popular with the young railroad fans.

One of our specialties is trying to carry as many histories of area towns as possible. We particularly like to have those written by area authors. Currently we have: Ft. Gibson, Wagoner, Oktaha, Okay, Haskell, Three Forks Country, Boynton, Manard Bayou, Tahlequah, Honey Springs, and Muskogee.

•••

The gift shop also has a variety of cookbooks including our own Recipes & Remembrances.