



The Round Tower

*Cleveland County Historical Society
Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum*

Celebrate Norman 89er Day April 15, 2015
at the

Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum

Come to the Historical House on 89er day and enjoy historical presentations of Norman's history. As visitors tour the historical Moore-Lindsay House, volunteers in period dress will relate different aspects of the history and culture of Norman and Victorian American from 1889 to 1910.

Guests will be treated to deserts and beverages , served in the dining room, while listening to a flute trio in the formal parlor.

This year, visitors are encouraged to donate a historical artifact to the Cleveland County Historical Society. In return, the donor will receive a copy of the recently published book, *Norman, 1889-1949*, and a free one years membership in the historical society, which allows access to the online photo archive.

Recently donated artifacts to the historical society include a 100 year old working light bulb and a facinating story about the couple who celebrated 70 years of marriage in 1979, the light bulb constantly on during those 70 years on N. Peters ave. (see related story)



In 1964, the citizens of Norman and Cleveland County celebrated the 75 anniversary of the Oklahoma landrun of April 22, 1889. The celebration included a rodeo parade, an arrival of the Santa Fe train full of settlers, an art exhibit and a showing of the musical, "Oklahoma." Since 1964, Normanites have celebrated the landrun, which opened the unassigned lands of central Oklahoma to settlement. The parade and celebration will take place on April 15, 2015. This year's parade theme is "History in the Making" and will look at each decade of Norman's history.

The Pryor V. Adkins Family and Entrepreneurship in Early Norman

Tucked into the farmland south of the Canadian River, east of the Goldsby exit off I-35, is Adkins Hill Road, a rural stretch of two lane road named for one of Norman's prominent entrepreneurs, Pryor V. Adkins. The isolated highway stretches through the countryside east of the freeway into McClain County, where it angles southeast up an incline onto a hill that looks north over the South Canadian River and into Norman. Very few people, who travel Adkins Hill Road, in the old Chickasaw Nation, are aware of Pryor V. Adkins or his significance to the economic development of Norman, Oklahoma after settlement in 1889.

Pryor V. Adkins was born in Tennessee in 1841. He first married in 1859 to Phariba Jane Hughett in Scotts County, Tennessee. At the onset of the Civil War in 1861, Adkins joined the 2nd Regiment Tennessee Infantry; the Regiment fought for the Union cause. After the War, Phariba and Adkins divorced. In 1865, Pryor Adkins married Elizabeth Byrd in Tennessee. They settled down and started a family; eventually raising six sons, four would live to adulthood. In 1880, Adkins moved his family westward in search of economic opportunities. They settled in Sebastian County Arkansas, with five boys ranging in age 4 to 14. At the time, son, Columbus D. (C.D.) Adkins, was 12 years old.

Somewhere between Sebastian County, Arkansas, which abutted Indian Territory and the Choctaw lands to the west, young C.D. met Sarah Jane McKinney, who was $\frac{1}{4}$ Choctaw. On January 25, 1886, C.D. and Sarah were married at Sans Bois, Indian Territory. Soon afterward, Pryor Adkins once again moved his family westward. In the spring of 1886, the Adkins family camped in the vicinity of Norman. The most likely camping place was "Norman's Camp," a spring on Bishop's Creek where surveyor, Abner Norman camped in 1873, and where Montford T. Johnson's cowboys camped while guarding Johnson's livestock on the Arbuckle Trail. (The spring/camp was located near the intersection of Lindsay and Porter.)

The Adkins family ultimately located south of the South Canadian River in the Chickasaw Nation in 1886. Adkins marriage to a woman with Choctaw lineage qualified the family to lease land from the Chickasaws. According to the Adkins family history, the land was "beautiful indeed with acres of wild flowers, vast forests and pasture land for miles and miles, where wild animals roamed. This was the paradise they sought." Regardless of the somewhat overrated attributes contributed to the land south of the Canadian River, Adkins took advantage of the natural resources available to him; He and his boys cut and bailed prairie grass on land that is now Norman. Through their lease with the Chickasaw Nation, the family acquired several thousand acres of grazing land, and built a log home on the hill in the middle of their new "paradise." Below their Hill on the South Canadian, Adkins and his boys established a ferry business; the area was known for years as Adkins' crossing. Eventually, the first bridge built across the river was at this crossing. (24th Ave. SW). The family also established a corn meal mill and a lumber mill at the bottom of the hill.



courtesy of Bob Rice



*South
Canadian
Bridge
24th Ave
S.W.*

*Photo courtesy
Bob Rice*



Before the opening of the unassigned lands to settlement in 1889, individuals seeking economic advancement saw the potential of being on the “ground floor” of acquiring the best town lots. In the spring of 1889, before the land run, several enterprising gentlemen, including Pryor Adkins, met at the Santa Fe Depot in Purcell, a newly established town in the Chickasaw Nation. Adkins, along with lawyer Albert Rennie; Santa Fe Agent, Delbert L. Larsh; Chickasaw rancher, Charles T. Gorton; Santa Fe engineer, John Helvie; Purcell newspaper editor, Edward P. Ingle; and Purcell’s Santa Fe Depot agent, Thomas R. Waggoner, formed the Norman Townsite Company. Rennie created a map of the townsite so that each member of the Company could easily locate the desired town lot. But, on the morning of the landrun, when members of the Norman Townsite Company debarked from the special train to Norman from Purcell, Rennie put the map in his back pocket; the Santa Fe employees had already surveyed the town in advance of the run. The men then moved forward with staking their claims to town lots surveyed by the Santa Fe, and they staked claim to quarter sections outside the townsite. Adkins acquired a quarter section west of present day McGee and south of Lindsay. He also acquired town lots; one north side of Eufaula Street and west of the tracks, and the other where the Sooner Theater is today.

*Planters Hotel 101
East Main St.*



Along with his various enterprises south of the Canadian River, Adkins was one of the first to move ahead with establishing substantial businesses in Norman. Shortly after the run, Adkins built the Planters Hotel on his town lot just east of the Santa Fe track, north side, 101 East Main. The structure was two stories with fourteen rooms. Upstairs there was a large room with 11 beds that could accommodate 22 men. Soldiers stayed at the Planters just after the run to maintain order in the new town. Downstairs was a dining room, kitchen and lobby. The building was raised shortly before the establishment of the Sooner Theatre in the 1920s. Adkins other building was known as the Adkins-Welsh Rock Building at 208 West Main. The Rock-Building had several tenants over the years. At one time the City and County offices rented space upstairs as did the University of Oklahoma. The first university classes were held upstairs until University Hall was finished on campus in 1903. In more recent history, the Rock-Building was occupied by Landsaw's Furniture store. The site of the Rock-Building is now an empty lot owned by the downtown Baptist Church.

Adkins Rock-Building at 208 West Main. First University of Oklahoma Classes were held on the second floor in 1903.



Adkins other building was known as the Adkins-Welsh Rock Building at 208 West Main. The Rock-Building had several tenants over the years. At one time the City and County offices rented space upstairs as did the University of Oklahoma. The first university classes were held upstairs until University Hall was finished on campus in 1903. In more recent history, the Rock-Building was occupied by Landsaw's Furniture store. The site of the Rock-Building is now an empty lot owned by the downtown Baptist Church.

Pryor Adkins was instrumental in establishing the first town council. He called the first meeting in order to establish a charter and elect city officials. Those interested met in Edwards Park, now renamed James Garner Plaza. Townsite member Thomas Waggoner was elected mayor and Adkins was elected clerk and recorder. In 1894, Adkins was elected Mayor.

Pryor Adkins was typical of those who saw the economic benefits on the western frontier. The settlement of the America West began in earnest after the United States congress passed the Homestead Act in 1862. Opening Native America lands for settlement in what is now Oklahoma was one of the last opportunities for free land and a new beginning. Adkins, like many who sought economic advancement, had to realize there would be many such opportunities in the new Territory of Oklahoma. Being blessed with a family of boys, who could help establish a ranch and other economic enterprises needed in a new settlement, Adkins provided a foundation for his sons and their families, all contributed to financial success of the City of Norman that we know today.

New to the Cleveland County Historical Society Archives:
The Alexander's Incandescent Light Bulb

A trip to historic Greenfield Village in Detroit, Michigan is a wonderful adventure for any visitor, who wants to see and experience America of the last two centuries. In order to preserve our historical heritage, Henry Ford created Greenfield Village in 1933. Over time, he added historical buildings collected and moved to the village from locations throughout the country so that they would be preserved and would stand as witness to the culture and history that they reflect. One of the exhibits is the reproduction of Thomas Edison's Menlo Park New Jersey laboratory, where Edison researched many of his inventions. The most significant of those was the long lasting incandescent light bulb assembled by Edison in 1879. In the last thirty years, there are those who claim to have an incandescent light bulb that has been burning since installed, some over 80 to 100 years. Such was the case with Mr. and Mrs. O.L. Alexander of 916 N. Peters, Norman Oklahoma.



Mr. and Mrs. O.L. Alexander



In 1976, the Alexanders celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. The Norman Transcript ran an article on the couple's 70 years together and highlighted the fact that through 54 years of their marriage, an incandescent light bulb burned continually in their carport for all those years. One of the reasons why those old light bulbs could last so long is that they were never turned off and on. When a bulb is turned on, the filament heats up, when turned off, the filament cools. This process causes the filament to develop stress lines, which eventually will break the filament. A light bulb that is left on continually does not develop the stress lines and tends not to break, which explains the long life of some incandescent light bulbs.

Over the years, the Alexander's light bulb must have been a family conversation piece, perhaps a little wager between family and friends to when the light bulb would finally burn out. The continually shining bulb also marked the process of history. When the bulb was installed in 1922, Norman had around 8,000 residents and the world was enjoying economic prosperity. But, the storm of the Economic Depression of the 1930s was on the horizon, which was followed by war and then new economic expansion in the 1950s. The bulb shined through all, sort of a sentinel marking history for our little patch of the world and for the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander.



Incandescent Light Bulb hanging in the carport of the Alexander Home at 916 N. Peters.



The Alexander Light Bulb on Display at the Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum, 508 N. Peters.

In February 2015, Ginna Rose of Oklahoma City, a member of the Alexander family, donated the light bulb and the framed Norman Transcript newspaper story about the Alexander wedding anniversary to the Cleveland County Historical Society. With the filament still attached, the Alexander light bulb could continue to shine, but we will not test it for fear of breaking the filament. The bulb sits on a table next to the framed article in the small Parlor of the Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum. It is donations like this that help the historical society to add to our narrative of the history and culture of Norman, Oklahoma.

MARCH

3/3: Opening of Clothing Exhibition
3/4 Board Meeting, Carriage House 6pm.
3/13: First Friday Open House

APRIL

4/18: 89er's Day Parade + Living History Day

MAY:

5/17-5/23: OK Museum Week
5/23: Carriage House Speaker Series; Poetry Reading (Karen Daley)

Membership

Help maintain the Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum with your membership in the Cleveland and County Historical Society. The Historical Society, established in 1967, oversees the operation of the City owned Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum established in 1973 at 508 N. Peters. Your financial support through membership in the Society goes toward operation of the museum and helps to fund historical displays and educational exhibits.

There are three Levels of Membership, all members receive the quarterly newsletter, The Round Tower and access to our photo and paper archives and Sanborn Maps.

1. Standard: \$15.00
Includes online quarterly newsletter
2. Heritage: \$30.00
Includes quarterly online newsletter & copy of *Norman 1889-1949* (Arcadia Press 2012)
3. Premium : \$50.00
Includes online quarterly newsletter, limited edition museum replica Christmas ornament and copy of *Norman 1889-1949* (Arcadia Press 2012)

Mail your membership to Cleveland County Historical Society, 508 N. Peters, Norman Oklahoma 73069 **OR: Visit <http://www.normanmuseum.org/membership.html> and use credit card or paypal.**

We appreciate your financial support.



Starting March 3, the Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum and Cleveland County Historical Society will be presenting a new exhibition entitled, "Historic Clothing: Victorian - Post Edwardian Woman's Fashion." A collection of dresses ranging in style from the early 1900s-1920s will be on display throughout the Historical House. Additionally, the exhibit will present various accessories, hats, shoes, and gloves from the Victorian Era to the Post Edwardian time period.

Guests are invited to visit the Museum for a look back in history of women's clothing and learn about the differences in style, fabrics, and process of getting dressed. The Historical Society and Museum are excited about the opportunity to present these items to the public free of charge.

"This is a really interesting and eye-opening exhibition," Museum Manager, Stephanie Hixon, said. "When you see how many layers some of these women wore during a hot, summery day- it's no wonder they developed fainting couches!"

This exhibition is made possible through the funding of Norman Arts Council and the Cleveland County Historical Society. Tour of the Historical House and Exhibition are available Tuesday-Saturday at 11 AM, 1 PM, and 3 PM. To schedule an additional time please call, 405-321-0156 or email at mlhhmuseum@gmail.com

