

The Round Tower

Cleveland County Historical Society
Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum

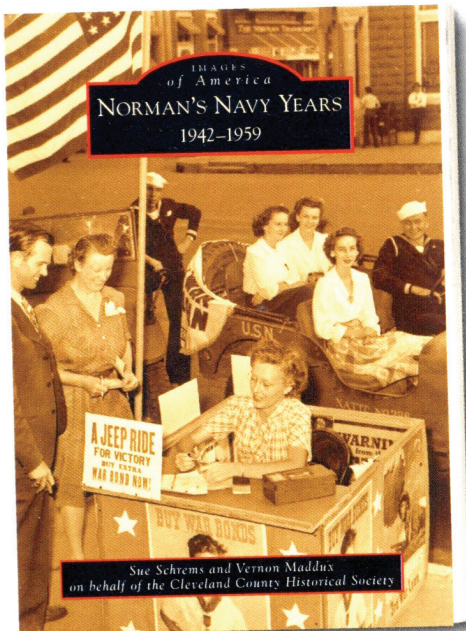


Exhibit Norman During World War Two Moore-Lindsay Historical House March 5 to May 21st

In This Issue of the Newsletter

| | |
|--|---------|
| Norman's Navy Years----- | pg. 2-3 |
| Herb Hickman and the <i>USS Indianapolis</i> ----- | pg. 4-5 |
| New to the Archive's...Norman's Womens Clubs..... | pg. 6-8 |
| Schedule of Events----- | pg. 9 |
| Membership----- | pg. 10 |

Norman's Navy Years, 1942-1959 Book Release date: March 5th, 2016



NEW LOCAL
BOOK

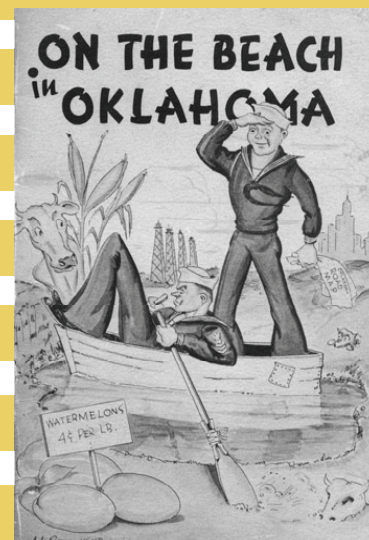
INTRODUCING NORMAN'S NAVY YEARS 1942-1959

by Sue Schrems and Vernon Maddux
on behalf of the
Cleveland County Historical Society

ISBN-13: 978-1-4671-1564-3
Retail Price: \$21.99
Publishing March 2016

 **ARCADIA**
PUBLISHING

The newest book in Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series.



WWII IN NORMAN:

the navy on the prairie

AN EXHIBITION: MARCH 5 — MAY 21

OPEN HOUSE:

SATURDAY, MARCH 5 // 10AM-12PM

free refreshments, drawing for a free book, & more!



**@ THE MOORE-LINDSAY
HISTORICAL HOUSE MUSEUM
508 N. PETERS AVENUE
hours: tuesday-saturday
11-12 & 1-4**

www.normanmuseum.org



Norman's Navy Years



Naval Air Station (North Base) 1943

The Department of Navy's decision to establish a Naval Air Station (NAS) in Norman centered on the 288 acre Max Westheimer airfield owned by the university. The Navy leased the airfield from the university and eventually purchased additional acreage to equal 1500 acres. Shortly after construction of the NAS was underway, the Department of Navy announced that they were also building a Naval Air Technical Training Center (NATTC) in Norman. The first site considered was 12 miles south of the city and university. The university and Chamber of Commerce convinced the Navy to locate the NATTC just SE of the university. Eventually the Technical Training Center accommodated 20,000 people.

Norman, a town of 11,000 residents in 1940, doubled overnight. The town council had to consider how the city's infrastructure was going to handle the extra people; there would be a need for more fire fighting facilities and law enforcement. The Navy helped build the Norman's infrastructure with the help of the 1930s New Deal Works Projects Administration, who built more water wells than Norman or the university had operating. The Navy also paved roads that bordered both bases and provided "shore patrol," to oversee Navy personnel's behavior off base. The Navy even lobbied for improved transportation, which was lacking even with the Interurban line running adjacent to the Air Station.

Continued Pg. 3

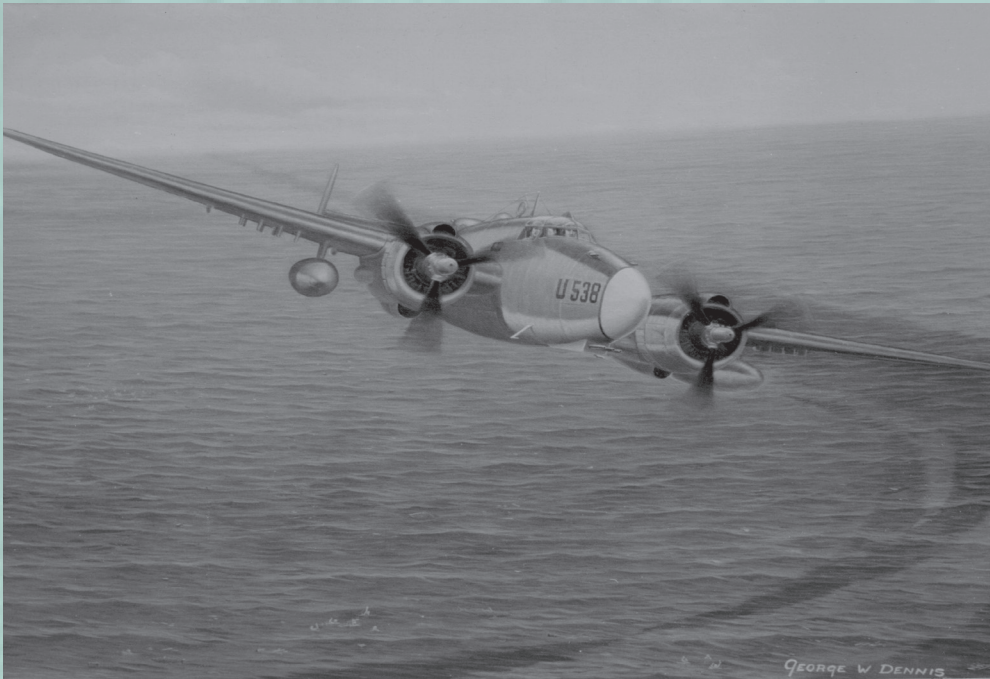


Naval Air Technical Training Center (South Base) 1943

From May 1942 until June 1945, Norman was a Navy town. But, just as quickly as the Navy came to town, by 1944 it looked like the Navy would leave town, and that would be an economic blow to the city. The city and the Chamber of Commerce lobbied the Navy to consider keeping their training facilities in Norman. The Navy was undecided and was leaning toward keeping the training centers open. But George Lynn Cross, President of the University of Oklahoma in 1945, wanted the university to take over the land and buildings occupied by the Navy. The Department of Navy signed a revocable lease with the university for the land and buildings at NATTC. When the Korean War started June 25, 1950, the Navy re-activated many of their training centers across the nation, and by 1952 NATTC in Norman was reactivated. From 1952 to 1959, the Navy continued to train aircraft technicians at the base in Norman. In 1959, they decommissioned the base with little fanfare.



WAVES in exercise
Class at the Naval Air
Technical Training
Center.



Painting of Herb Hickman's twin-engine bomber reconnaissance plane in the Pacific. (notice oil slick, and lower left, men in the water)

Herbert H. Hickman was born in Pocasset, Grady County Oklahoma in 1923, but soon after he moved to Norman, Oklahoma with his adoptive family. In January 1943, he enlisted in the Navy, where he trained as an Aviation Ordnanceman. During Hickman's service he was a member of a flight crew stationed on Peleliu Island in the Pacific Ocean. Hickman, along with pilot Lt. Chuck Gwinn, co-pilot Lt. Warren Colwell, Chief radioman William Hartman, and Ordnanceman Joseph K. Johnson routinely flew a small twin-engine bomber in the Pacific doing reconnaissance of Japanese ships and submarines in addition to their regular flying missions. On August 2, 1945, Hickman's reconnaissance plane was making a routine sweep of a certain section of the Pacific when they discovered an oil slick.

Unknown to the plane's crew, the oil slick was from the sinking of the *USS Indianapolis*. The *Indianapolis*, with a crew of 1,196 men aboard had just completed an important mission that led to the end of WWII; the ship delivered atomic bomb parts to Tinian Island in late July, 1945. Shortly after the delivery of the special cargo, the *Indianapolis* departed Tinian Island for the Philippines. A Japanese submarine attacked the *Indianapolis* and sank the 10,000-ton vessel in 12 minutes. Nine hundred of the 1,196 crewmembers aboard the ship were able to escape into the Pacific. Rescue would be difficult for these men because the *Indianapolis* was out of touch with normal reporting channels due to its mission. Also, the captain of the ship, Charles McVay III, did not have time to radio for help.

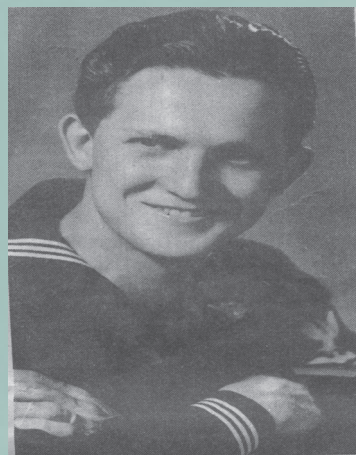
Those men, who managed to go overboard, were on their own in shark infested waters. They floated in small groups that stretched out over thirty miles. The planes that did fly high over the area were not looking for the crew of the *Indianapolis* and therefore did not notice or could not see the men in the water.



Herb Hickman at home in Norman looking over memorabilia of WWII

It was only by happenstance that Herb Hickman's reconnaissance plane saw the oil slick and small groups of men bobbing in the water. Hickman's plane was at 10,000 feet when the antenna on the plane began having trouble. Lt. Gwinn ordered Hickman and mechanic Joe Johnson to repair the antenna, which had lost its stabilizer weight. To fix the stabilizer, the men had to open the hatch on the plane's belly, which gave the men a clear view of the ocean below. Lt. Gwinn leaned over the men to look below and spotted the tail of the oil slick flickering in the morning sun. The 8-12 foot swells made following the oil slick difficult. Lt. Gwinn thought the oil slick was actually the gasoline trail from a Japanese submarine. After guiding his plane along the oil slick for several miles, Lt. Gwinn realized it did not belong to enemy submarine. About this time, the crew began to see floating debris. Then, they saw specks, and more specks, and then groups of specks. The crew realized the specks were men. At this point, the floating men from the *USS Indianapolis* had been in the water for three days. Many had died of dehydration and from shark attacks. While Lt. Gwinn called for help to pick up the sailors, he circled low over the men and threw out what provisions were available on the plane. Even though the plane was low on fuel, Lt. Gwinn refused to leave the men in the water alone; he stated that he would ditch the plane before he would leave. Altogether, 316 men were rescued from the ocean.

After the war, Herb Hickman returned to Norman, where he was a jeweler and Navy Veteran. Every year he attended the reunion of the men who survived the sinking of the *USS Indianapolis*. Herbert Hickman died in Norman in 1994.



New to the Archives

We are so fortunate that the residents of Norman and Cleveland County continue to contribute artifacts and records to the Cleveland County Historical Society. In the last couple of months we have received records of the Sorosis Club, Norman's Business and Professional Women's Club and the Federation of Oklahoma Women's Clubs.

Women played an important role in helping to change the raw frontier environment of 1889 into a modernizing community. One way in which they did this was by establishing women's organizations that offered them not only a social outlet, but also a forum to discuss the needs of their community. Numerous women's clubs, with such intriguing names as Philomatheia Study Club, Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Club, Coterie, Sorosis, Ladies of the Leaf, the Probiren, the Merrie Wives and the Current Events clubs flourished throughout the Twin Territories. In their clubs, women joined together to promote self-improvement, education through the study of America history, poetry, art and music. The original intent, with an emphasis on self-education, changed in some clubs to incorporate reform and to help those in need.

Norman women followed the national trend and started a variety of clubs shortly after the landrun in 1889. One of the oldest women's clubs was the Coterie.

The Women's Coterie of Norman was organized in January, 1894 in the home of Mrs. Carrie Holbrook, 329 West Main, (NE corner of main and University) where the old Lockett Hotel stands today. Because of the frontier environment, the women took it upon themselves to inspire and maintain certain educational and cultural standards in Norman. The women believed that by spending "their hours studying the great authors, the best in music, the ideals of good citizenship" their community was better served.



Coterie Club at the home of Carrie Holbrook, 1894.

Members of the Coterie were the wives of prominent businessmen and University of Oklahoma professors. Among the first Coterie members were Mrs. David Ross Boyd and Mrs. Edwin Debarr. Early programs required a lot of research and reading, mainly of the classics in literature and music. A program was set for each meeting, which generally lasted 2 ½ hours. At the March 14th 1900 meeting, the program consisted of four topics, delivered by four different members; Union of Scotland and England—its Import; Sketch of “the Wisest Fool in Europe”; The England of James I; and Colonization under James I.

As with many women’s clubs in the early twentieth century, the women in the Coterie believed they could also benefit the community. They were the first to plan and implement a circulating library. To maintain better hygiene and sanitation, the women demanded that bakers wrap their breads that were for sale to the public, and they purchased the first trash-cans in Norman. When Norman’s first hospital was finished by the American Legion in 1923, the women of the Coterie raised money to furnish a room, the furnishings included the first electric fan; they raised funds by writing and editing a magazine.

The Norman Sorosis Club was also a pioneer club, founded in Norman in 1927. As stated in the clubs constitution, the object of the club was “Mutual sympathy and consel(sic), and united effort toward the higher civilization.” The Sorosis club was first organized in New York City in 1868. It was the first professional women’s club. The women who organized the club were artist and authors who found little room in men’s professional organizations. Sorosis meant a “coming together” to further the educational and social activities of women.

Some of Norman’s women’s clubs had more of an activist purpose than an emphasis on education or development of the arts. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was one such organization that sought to change aspects of Oklahoma’s social culture that they deemed a significant danger to the American family; primarily the consumption of alcohol. Norman women and men, who joined the WCTU in 1902 pledged to “solemnly promise, God helping me, to abstain from all distilled, fermented and malt liquors, including wine, beer, cider, and to employ all proper means to discouraging the use of and traffic in the same.”

The Women’s Christian Temperance Union started nationally in 1874. The WCTU was organized in Indian Territory in 1888; there were 21 Unions by 1900. In 1890, a chapter opened in Norman with Margerette Olive Rhodes as president. Meetings were held in member’s homes or in churches in Norman. A typical meeting included reading papers on social purity and sobriety. The members were also active in supporting or opposing legislation in Oklahoma. In 1910, the campaigned against proposed prohibition legislation noting its defect, the WCTU members wanted to keep the state dry and they won.



The Women's Christian Temperance Union Parade
in downtown Norman, n.d.

Those who belonged to the WCTU in Norman read like the who's who of the City, from the president of the University of Oklahoma, Dr. David Boyd to the first resident of the City, Andrew Kingkade.

*Upcoming Events at the Moore-Lindsay
Historical House Museum*

March 5-May 21: WWII in Norman: Navy on the Prairie
Exhibition

April 8: Art Walk Open House 6-9

June-August: Oil lamps and stained glass exhibition

July: Children's Summer Camp

September-November: OK Women in Government

Membership Renewal

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.