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Charter a Mystery; Papers Fun

By Rik Espinosa
7/8/1997

With nearly six months to go in the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of Tulsa, the papers chartering the city remain missing. But newspapers from nearly a century ago are quite revealing.

The original petition to incorporate, as well as a plat map of 1,440 acres filed by Edward Calkins for the village, was kept by the Federal District Court in Muskogee, court records dated Dec. 16, 1897, show.

By law, two copies were to be made of the incorporation papers, and they had to be published. One copy went to the town of Tulsa, and the other was to go to the "secretary of state." Since Tulsa incorporated under the laws of Arkansas, it is not clear if this meant Arkansas, the Creek Nation or the Department of the Interior, which was the overseer of Indian Territory.

So far, no trace of any of the copies or the original has surfaced.

A review by the Tulsa World of newspaper archives in Tulsa and at the state Historical Society in Oklahoma City has also come up empty in an effort to find the publication of the incorporation documents.

Unfortunately, no copies of newspapers from Tulsa for December

1897 or January 1898 are known to exist. That would be the time period when the petition to incorporate would have been published. The earliest newspapers in the World's library are dated in January 1900.

Tulsa's First Newspaper



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TULSA WORLD
www.tulsaworld.com

At the Oklahoma Historical Society's newspaper microfilm archives, the June 15, 1894, copy of The Tulsa Review is the earliest known date for a Tulsa newspaper.

The newspaper did not list a publisher or editor. It mixed advertising and editorializing

with local news, and it was

sometimes hard to differentiate among the three.

In the "Local and Personal" column on the front page of the June 15 edition was the news tidbit that "Clarence Winterring was quite sick in the fore part of the week, but is now convalescent."

Next came the editorial comment that Tulsa is now ready to have its streets put in shape and sidewalks properly fixed.

And those who have had their senses jolted by a loud commercial for an automobile dealership will appreciate the sedate: "I have the most complete line of buggies, carriages and carts ever brought to Tulsa, at reasonable prices -- W.B. Hogan."

Inside the eight-page paper were stories from Washington, D.C., more advertisements and other items -- including the serial "Tommy de Kid."

Substantial Growth

The big news during the summer of 1894 was that "the barbershop, milliner and the ice cream parlor have to give way for more substantial buildings." Tulsa's first stone building was to be erected where the businesses were located, the paper said.

"A bran (sic) new baby boy arrived at D. Orcutt's Wednesday night. All doing well except the father, and he is improving," the short story said.

Brady's Shoe Co. offered 20 pounds of granulated sugar for \$1 or 22 pounds of light brown sugar for \$1. Men's "good overalls" were 40 cents; ladies' solid calf shoes were 95 cents; and 20 yards of "warranted fast color calico" was \$1.

Other items in "The Tulsa Review" during the summer of 1894 included the offering of a \$300 reward by Wells Fargo after a westbound passenger train was held up at Red Fork on July 18. The robbers "secured about \$15 and a jug of whiskey," the article said.

Later, the robbers were identified as members of the "Cook Gang:" "Skeeter" Baldwin, Bill Cook, Cherokee Bill, Al Lukis, Henry Munson and a man known as Curtis.

And there was an item about a man who was to leave the medical profession years later after striking oil in Red Fork with the Sue Bland No. 1: "Fred Clinton, son of Mrs. Lon Clinton -- living across the river, left last week for Kansas City to attend medical college."

The last "Tulsa Review" is dated March 1895.

The first edition of the predecessor to the Tulsa World, "The Indian Republican," -- still known to exist -- is dated June 17, 1898, just five months after the town had incorporated.

The microfilmed paper had a dark circular stain that possibly was caused by the bottom of an ink holder. In pencil at the top of the paper is the signature of E. Calkins, who was mayor at the time.

Curtis Bill Passes

The big news was the passage of the Curtis Bill in the U.S. Senate. The Curtis Bill established new forms of government for the Indian nations.

A letter to the editor by "An Old Soldier," published on the front page, defended U.S. District Court Judge John R. Thompson from "slandorous" charges raised in a previous letter to the editor. The soldier, in an apparent misspelling, called the first letter writer a "nickingpoop."

Also on the front page were "Broken Arrow Notes," short items of

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Dave Sittler

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John Klein

Sooners Deserve Jump to No. 1

The Picker

Not Number One!

Jimmie Tramel

Dodge Ball

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2. [Fair ride closed after malfunction](#)
3. [Updated: Fire causes \\$1 million in damage to Tulsa business](#)
4. [Car, home loans still available](#)
5. [Stabbing at apartment leaves three hospitalized](#)
6. [City erects new signs](#)
7. [Ex-teacher pleads guilty to peeping Tom charge](#)
8. [US Senate to vote on rescue plan Wednesday](#)
9. [Body of missing Del City woman found](#)
10. [UPDATED: Muskogee bookkeeper charged with embezzlement](#)

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- [N'k](#) created a profile. 11:24 am
- [CHOCTAWROB](#) created a profile. 10:49 am
- [ace1](#) created a profile. 9:16 am

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interest such as "Arthur Toon was stung by a centipede on the breast and back Sunday while at church." The story said the centipede was inside Toon's best Sunday outfit when he put it on. Examination of newspapers from Vinita and Muskogee from the last month of 1897 and the first month of 1898 also resulted in dead ends for the charter chase.

The federal courthouse was in Muskogee, and the court sometimes went to Vinita.

The December 23, 1897, edition of the Muskogee Phoenix, published a week after the incorporation papers were signed, has two articles concerning Tulsa.

One, from the "Tulsa Republican," tells of Tulsa rebuilding from a huge fire that consumed part of the village in early December 1897.

"Businessmen are not of a class to be downed by a fire and at the present rate it will be but a short time until those burned out will have surpassed their former degree of prosperity," the article said.

The other news item concerned the bankruptcy of Tate Brady, with stores in Tulsa, Muskogee and Nevada, Mo., going under.

The Phoenix for Jan. 20, 1898, -- the first edition after Tulsa's incorporation -- doesn't even mention the event.

It does say that Judge William Springer, the man who gave the OK for Tulsa to become a municipality, left on the afternoon of Jan. 18, the day he signed the order allowing the incorporation.

Famous Lawyer Here

One newsworthy item that may have drawn some of the people from Tulsa to Muskogee a day earlier was that William Jennings Bryan arrived by train in Muskogee on Jan. 17 and spoke. Bryan, who had run for president in 1896 and some years later would fight against the teaching of evolution in public schools, was a friend of Judge Springer, the story said.

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