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Fathers Found

By [Rik Espinosa](#) World Staff Writer
5/18/1997

10 Men Key in Carving Tulsa Out of Wilderness


The names of just 10 of the 20 "citizens and qualified voters of the town of Tulsa" who signed the petition to incorporate the budding village are known.

These men, who were the founders of Tulsa, faced a three-year struggle with their fellow citizens of the Indian Territory over where the townsite was to be located. Sometimes the meetings to discuss incorporation ended with six- shooters drawn and fights breaking out. The problems were: Where exactly was the town to be laid out, and who was to profit by those plans? Many people fought the incorporation because they sensed that a land grab was afoot. After everything was settled, as many as 10 pioneers journeyed by buggy over dirt paths to the district court in Muskogee on Dec. 16, 1897 to ask the court to incorporate the town. Three members of the group returned to Muskogee 32 days later to hear Judge William Springer decree that, ". . . said petition be granted, and it is ordered that the incorporated town of Tulsa as named and described in said petition be organized."

Nearly 100 years after the fact, the original petition -- which chartered Tulsa -- and the 1,440-acre plat map filed with the court have disappeared. As compiled from city records, the Tulsa World's files and histories and biographies of pioneer families, the 10 known founders of the incorporation of Tulsa are:
Harry Campbell -- As a partner of the Campbell & Poe law firm, he wrote the incorporation papers of Tulsa in longhand and was the chairman of the incorporation committee. Campbell opened his law office in Tulsa on April 28, 1895, driving a wagon



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"Judge" Campbell, although he never served as an elected member of the judiciary. The last surviving member of the founding fathers of Tulsa, he died Sept. 8, 1950, at age 83.

Lewis M. Poe -- As Campbell's law partner, he probably helped write Tulsa's incorporation papers. Poe served as a delegate to the 1904 Democratic National Convention in St. Louis. He was elected Tulsa County's first district judge at statehood in 1907 and was a state legislator. He died March 8, 1941. Campbell wrote of his partner, "A good man and fine citizen, a devoted husband and father, who proved his faith by his works."

Col. Edward E. Calkins -- Calkins was the area's first attorney and Tulsa's first mayor, serving from 1898 to 1899. He was also the petitioner of record in filing the incorporation papers. He was an officer in the Seventh Indiana Calvary and was discharged in 1865. He served as a member of the Indiana Legislature for a two-year term in 1871-1872. He served as the third city attorney from 1902 to 1903. Calkins died May 3, 1911.

James M. Hall -- Called "The Father of Tulsa," he was a pioneer merchant and businessman. With his brother H.C. Hall, he claimed to have persuaded the San Francisco and St. Louis Railroad to locate the terminus of a railhead in Creek Territory in 1882, establishing where downtown Tulsa is to this day. Hall's "The Beginning of Tulsa, First Men, First Events," published in 1928, is considered by many people to be the bible of Tulsa histories. Hall was the village's first resident postmaster. He helped form the first Sunday school in 1883 and the Commercial Club -- the predecessor of today's Chamber of Commerce -- in 1902. When the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions in New York declined to fund the town's school in 1897, Hall, Joe Price, Robert Bynum and Jay Forsythe borrowed \$1,050 from the Tulsa Banking Co. to pay for the school because the fledgling town had not yet collected any taxes. Hall became the first superintendent of schools.

Upon his death May 26, 1935, at age 86, Mayor T.A. Penney wrote in a proclamation that closed City Hall on the afternoon of May 28, that "death has laid its icy hand upon our beloved townsman, J.M. Hall."

Prier Lee Price -- After Price came to Tulsa in 1885, he returned to Missouri and shortly thereafter named a daughter "Tulsa." Price, his wife, Della, and their family then moved back to Tulsa and operated a general store in the 100 block of South Main Street. Price died July 3, 1928, in Webb City, Mo. His son, Prier L. Price Jr., known as Lee, was the first- elected police and fire commissioner and served as Tulsa mayor from 1946 to 1948. Grandson Prier Lee Price III founded the Better Price Stores in northeast Oklahoma.

W. Tate Brady -- Brady came to Tulsa as a traveling salesman and settled here in 1891. He wrote of the days in early Tulsa: "Indian and white man, Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, we worked side by side, shoulder to shoulder, and under these conditions the `Tulsa Spirit' was born and lived, and, God grant, it never dies." He hoped Tulsa was going to grow north and bought extensive properties on that side of the railroad tracks. He owned a general merchandise store at north Main Street and Archer Street and expanded it into the two-story Brady Hotel on then North Second (now Brady) and Main streets. The Brady Theater and Brady Street are named for him. Brady was president of the school board and a town alderman. He committed suicide in Muskogee on Aug. 29, 1925.

The Rev. George W. Mowbray Sr. -- Born in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, England, in 1847, Mowbray came to Tulsa as pastor of the First Methodist Episcopal Church in 1887. After serving as a minister in Choctaw and Stillwater, he returned to Tulsa in 1894 after a tragedy struck his family here. In 1889, his daughter Annie married Tulsa pioneer Jeff Archer, and they ran Archer's General Store at First and Main streets. When an intoxicated man shot into a powder keg in the store, the resulting explosion killed Archer in November 1894. Archer Street is named after Jeff Archer. Mowbray was the fifth mayor of Tulsa, serving a one- year term from 1903 to 1904. He was also the first president of the Tulsa Commercial Club, now known as the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce. Mowbray died Jan 12, 1912.

Robert E. Lynch -- Served as the first treasurer for town of Tulsa. He came to Tulsa in 1897, working as the bookkeeper at the J.M. Hall store. Along with brother C.B. Lynch, he built Tulsa's first stone building in 1893 at the corner of First and Main streets. He became the area's first real estate agent and during the early oil boom days was involved in selling oil leases. He died Sept. 12, 1932, at age 67.

John D. Seaman -- Seaman served as captain in the U.S. Army, arriving in Tulsa in 1890. He lasted nine years as the politically appointed postmaster of Tulsa beginning Nov. 22, 1898. As a contractor he built many of Tulsa's earliest structures. Seaman died in 1907. His son, Dr. Frank Seaman, was the area's first dentist, and his daughter-in-law, Mary Seaman, was the first elected woman in city government, serving as city auditor from 1920 to 1922.

Dr. Samuel G. Kennedy -- Kennedy came to Oklahoma for the land run of 1889 and moved to Tulsa on Sept. 20, 1891, with his brother, Dr. James Kennedy, to practice medicine. In his

pulled by mules. He was a delegate to the Democratic National convention in Chicago in 1896. He was known as

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memoirs, he recalled being a doctor in Indian Territory. "I have visited patients 30 or 40 miles, changing horses three or four times, riding at top speed, and usually found the patient dead." Kennedy, who had married Osage Indian Agnes Lombard, got "oil fever" and gave up the practice of medicine in 1908. In 1912, Kennedy and his partner, W.A. Springer, leased land near Hominy and hit oil and gas. They sold their interest in the lease for more than \$6 million. Kennedy was one of the longest lived of Tulsa's founders. Known as Dr. Sam, his death at age 76 on Sept. 27, 1941, rated a front-page story in the Tulsa World.

[By Rik Espinosa World Staff Writer](#)

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