



NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

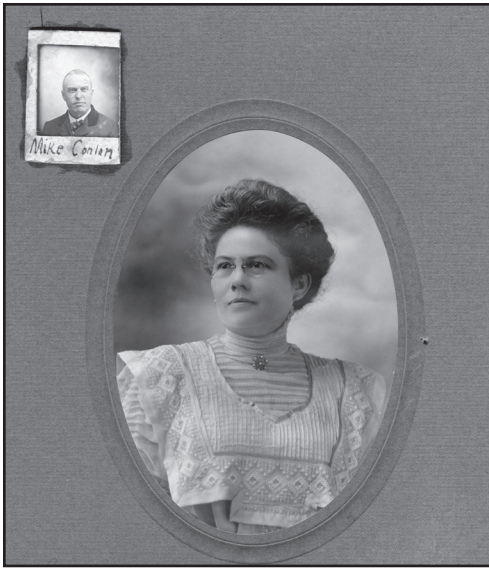
In the Shadows of the Century Chest: Message to Future Generations

*By Tara Damron**

On April 22, 1913, a Century Chest was buried in the basement of the First English Lutheran Church (now the First Lutheran Church of Oklahoma City) at 1300 North Robinson. The ceremony was witnessed by a capacity crowd, including Governor Lee Cruce and other notable Oklahoma residents. Through a century of dutiful vigilance the congregation of the First Lutheran Church guarded the Century Chest so that on April 22, 2013, exactly one hundred years later, the chest would be unearthed and its contents revealed. The concept for the Century Chest was the idea of Mrs. George G. Sohlberg, later spearheaded by the Ladies Aid Society of the First Lutheran Church, and was originally planned as a fundraiser to purchase a new organ for the church. The concept grew from a city wide affair to a statewide event. Efforts were made to include items and documents from the American Indian tribal nations, who were the original inhabitants of what later became the state of Oklahoma. According to an older publication by the Oklahoma Historical Society titled *Historia* volume four, number two, from April 1, 1913, by William Parker Campbell, an interesting note on the role and partnership set in motion between the First Lutheran Church of Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma Historical Society is brought to light.

Through the courtesy of the Ladies' Aid, the Oklahoma Historical Society will have a niche in the sacred vault, its deposit to include a copy of this issue of *Historia*, constitution and by-laws and other items allied to the Society. The ceremonial at the church and the vault will be in the basement. April 22, 2013 the vault will be opened and the contents presented to the Historical Society.

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Photograph of Czarina Conlan with a photograph of her husband Mike Conlan in the upper left corner (P2013.133.142, Century Chest Collection, OHS Research Division).

Through the unique partnership between the First Lutheran Church and the Oklahoma Historical Society, the contents of the Century Chest were opened and revealed to a capacity crowd at 10 a.m. on April 22, 2013, and followed the program set forth by the organizers of the original event a century earlier. The contents of the Century Chest will be preserved by the Oklahoma Historical Society at the Oklahoma History Center for generations to come.

The lady designated to secure documents and items from the various American Indian tribes that resided in Oklahoma prior to statehood and were the original inhabitants of this land was Mrs. Michael Conlan, or Madeline Czarina Colbert Conlan. Czarina Conlan was born near Colbert Station in Indian Territory in 1871. She was one of eight children born to James Allen Colbert (Chickasaw) and Athenius Folsom Colbert (Choctaw).

According to an article from the *Daily Oklahoman* dated April 6, 1913, titled “Indians Feature in Century Chest Plan,” Czarina Conlan was asked by Mrs. George C. Sohlberg, president of the Ladies Aid Society of the church to

... gather such documents, pictures and Indian relics as she may deem suitable for deposit in the chest. Mrs. Conlan’s resources for securing articles of great value are remarkable, since she is descended on one side from the Folsom family in the Choctaw Nation and the Colbert family in the Chickasaw nation.

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As part of her mission Conlan wrote to Senator Robert L. Owen (Cherokee) and asked him for a word of greeting for the Century Chest. Additionally she also made written requests to Congressman Charles D. Carter (Cherokee and Chickasaw), Douglas H. Johnston, governor of the Chickasaw Nation, and Victor Locke, chief of the Choctaw Nation. All of these requests were received with favor, and these prominent individuals deposited a word of greeting in the form of letters on official letterhead to the future citizens of the state of Oklahoma.

There were many valuable American Indian items ranging from letters, manuscripts, tribal constitutions and laws, school books, dictionaries, and hymns printed and illustrated in tribal languages; photographs of educational institutions operated by tribes, family photographs and genealogies, and photographs of famous and influential American Indians; prayers printed in tribal languages and translated to English and vice versa; tribal newspapers including the *Cherokee Advocate* printed in English and the Cherokee syllabary developed by Sequoyah, a notable Cherokee, as well as early newspapers from Indian Territory. In addition, there were three-dimensional objects such as a American Indian bow, horn spoon, and a pair of southeastern finger woven garters to name a few. The American Indian items donated to the Century Chest represented the sovereign tribal nations that still call Oklahoma home today.

The topics of governance, education, cultural knowledge and authority, jurisdiction, as well as federal relations between the tribal nations are some of the very same issues that sovereign tribal nations and governments face today. The exhibit highlighting materials donated to the Century Chest by many of Oklahoma's American Indian tribes will be on display from October 4, 2013, to December 31, 2013, at the Oklahoma History Center. This selection of materials represents a small portion of the American Indian items preserved in the Century Chest. The last mini exhibit prior to the major exhibit of Century Chest items will begin in January 2014 and center on the state of Oklahoma as a whole. This exhibit, which is free to the public, is located in the main atrium of the Oklahoma History Center until April 22, 2014, when all of the items from the Oklahoma Century Chest will be placed on exhibit in the History Center's Noble Gallery. For more information please visit the Century Chest website at <http://www.okhistory.org/centurychest>, the First Lutheran Church of Oklahoma City website at <http://www.firstlutheranokc.org/site/ks/Index/asp>, or email centurychest@okhistory.org.

The American Indian tribes currently represented in the Century Chest exhibit include the Chickasaw Nation, Choctaw Nation, Cherokee Nation, Delaware Tribe, Muscogee Creek, Cheyenne and

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Arapaho, Apache, and the Comanche Nation. It should be noted that all the photographs currently on exhibit at the History Center are reproduction scans of the original photographs. All the books, letters, manuscripts, newspapers, as well as all of the three-dimensional objects are the original items as preserved in the Century Chest.

The American Indian items currently selected for exhibit include the following:

Plate

2013.065.024

This particular plate was painted by Julia Chisholm (Chickasaw) and shows her interpretation of the seal of the Chickasaw Nation in 1913. Julia Chisholm was a niece of Governor D. H. Johnston of the Chickasaw Nation.

Bow

2013.065.014

This particular bow, dated circa 1880, was made by a Choctaw Indian and contributed to the Century Chest by Don J. Folsom. This bow was made of bois d'arc, a particular type of wood known for its flexibility and endurance qualities.

Horn Spoon

2013.065.008

This horn spoon, dated circa 1875, was carved from a bison horn and shaped in the form of a spoon. There are trade beads attached by a leather tie to the handle. This horn spoon was also contributed to the Century Chest by Don J. Folsom, Choctaw.

Garters

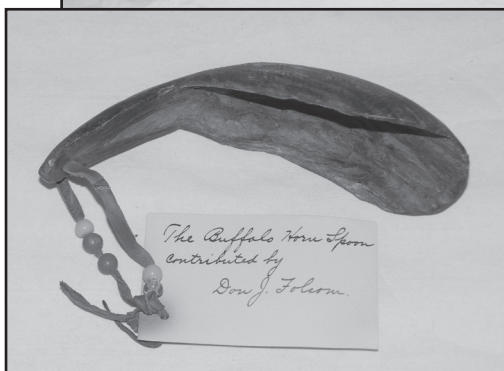
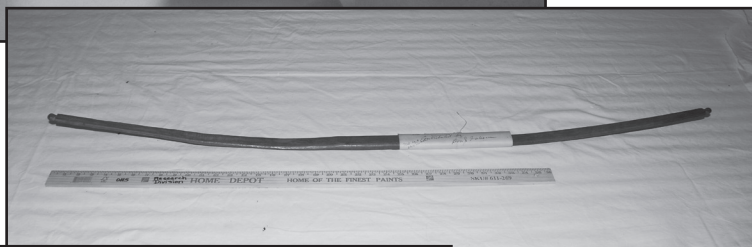
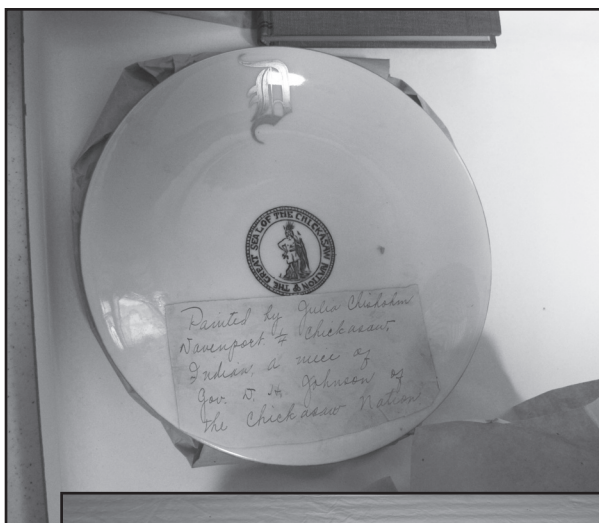
2013.065.026-027

These are finger woven garters, dated circa 1870, and are made of red and blue yarn woven in a design attributed to southeastern tribes. White beads are also woven into the yarn design. These were undoubtedly worn and used by an individual at one time.

Argument on Behalf of the Chickasaw Nation Against the Reopening of the Choctaw and Chickasaw Citizenship Rolls, dated 1913.

M2013.133.182

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Top to bottom: Plate painted by Julia Chisholm, bow, horn spoon, garters (Century Chest Collection, OHS).

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Choctaw New Testament Bible

B2013.133.249

This Bible was presented to the Century Chest committee by Julius Folsom. It features the New Testament translated and printed entirely in the Choctaw language.

***Oklahoma Red Book*, Volume 1**

B2013.133.253

This particular book was compiled and copyrighted by the state of Oklahoma in 1912. Volume 1 deals solely with the American Indian tribes that originally claimed Oklahoma as part of their ancestral homeland, those tribes forcibly removed to Indian Territory, and those tribes that purchased their land in what would eventually become the state of Oklahoma in 1907.

Constitution and Laws of the Chickasaw Nation

M2013.133.007

This particular book was printed and dated 1890. It contained the Chickasaw Constitution as well as their tribal laws, printed in English, current to the date of publication.

Choctaw Auditors Warrant

M2013.133.171

This is a pay warrant issued and signed by Choctaw Auditor Basil Leflore, dated June 25, 1885.

Quanah Parker and the Comanches

P2013.133.261

This particular panoramic photograph was rolled up in a cylinder and clearly marked when the contents of the Century Chest were

Panoramic photograph of Quanah Parker and Comanches (Century Chest Collection, OHS)



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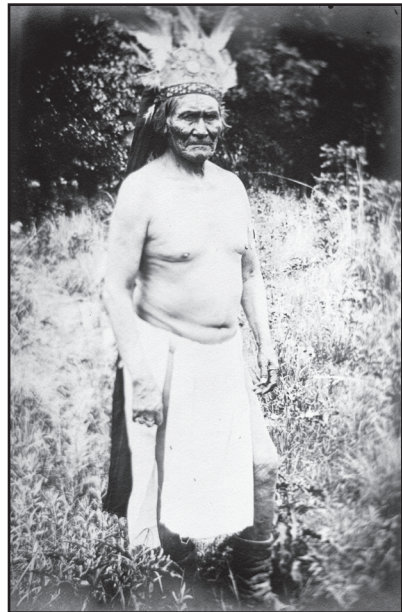
unpacked. This panoramic photograph, along with several others from the Century Chest that were treated and deposited in the same manner, was taken to a conservator for proper unrolling. The result is a never-before-seen photograph of Comanche Indians taken in Oklahoma City. Quanah Parker, his son, and three of his wives were identified on the original photograph. According to the written description on the back of the original photograph, Quanah Parker and this group of Comanches were hired by the Natural Gas Association of the United States and Canada and brought to Oklahoma City, where they boarded at the Lee Huckins Hotel. This photograph was taken in Oklahoma City.

Geronimo

P2013.133.188

Geronimo is one of the most iconic figures in American history and one of the more famous Apache leaders that led the resistance against the onslaught of western expansion led by the Americans. He, along with many other Apaches, was imprisoned by the US government for twenty-seven years as prisoners of war. This particular photograph of Geronimo was taken in his later years at Fort Sill.

Apache leader Geronimo (Century Chest Collection, OHS).



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Pottery

2013.065.026

This particular pottery was made by Czarina Conlan and represented her interpretation of Choctaw-style pottery. It was made of red clay from the Oklahoma soil, shaped by her hands, and painted in the likeness of the early Choctaw-style pottery.

Post Newspaper

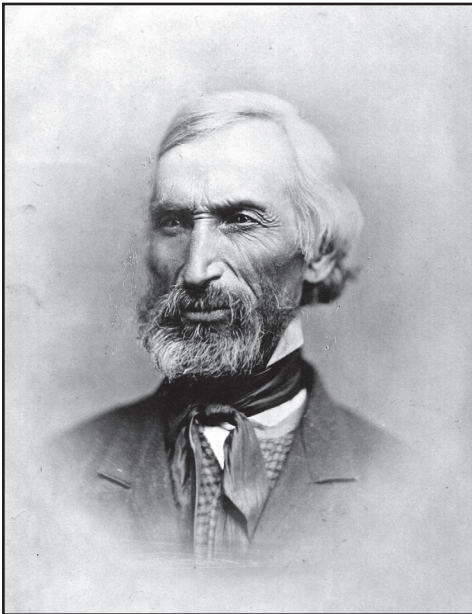
M2013.133.225

This is an original newspaper from Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, dated October 15, 1904.

Cherokee Advocate Newspaper

M2013.133.231

Sequoyah (Cherokee) developed the written syllabary for the Cherokee language between 1810 and the early 1820s. After this, newspapers such as the *Cherokee Advocate* carried the news of the Cherokee people, written and printed in Cherokee. This syllabary is in use today in contemporary Cherokee society.



*Chief Journey Cate of the Delaware
(Century Chest Collection, OHS).*



Cheyenne and Arapaho tribesmen counsel for the Cherokee Outlet in June 1889 (Century Chest Collection, OHS).

Manuscript and Photograph of Chief Journey Cake (Delaware)

M2013.133.184, P2013.133.196

Charles Journey Cake (Ne-she-pa-na-cumin) was born December 16, 1817, near Ohio's Upper Sandusky River of Delaware, French, and Wyandotte descent. His parents were Sally Williams and Delaware Chief Solomon Journey Cake. This is a handwritten manuscript about the life of Chief Journey Cake.

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribesmen Counsel for the Cherokee Outlet in June 1889.

P2013.133.189

This particular photograph shows the leaders of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes as they met with government officials regarding the land known as the Cherokee Outlet.

Douglas H. Johnston, Governor of the Chickasaw Nation Dated February 21, 1913.

P2013.133.140

Victor Locke, Governor of the Choctaw Nation, 1913

This particular photograph is a reproduction scan from the OHS Research Division Photograph Archives.

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Goodland School (Century Chest Collection, OHS).

Choctaw Definer

B2013.133.247

This is an example of an early dictionary with words in English and their Choctaw translations, as well as meanings.

Goodland School

P2013.133.134

Goodland School was started in 1848 and has the distinction of being one of the oldest educational institutions still in operation today in the state of Oklahoma. It was run by the Presbyterian Mission and is located in the Choctaw Nation near Hugo, Oklahoma.

Creek Second Reader

M2013.133.134

This reader is printed and illustrated in the Muscogee Creek language. It would have been used by students as one of their school books. It was presented to the Century Chest committee by Alice E. Robertson in 1913.

Harley Institute

P2013.133.143

Harley Institute was founded in 1850 as part of the Indian Mission Conference Organization led by the Methodist Episcopal Church. It was originally known as the Chickasaw Academy, but later changed its name in honor of one of its beloved professors, Joshua Harley. Harley Institute was located one mile north of Tishomingo on the banks of Pennington Creek and was closed shortly before Oklahoma statehood in 1907.

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Letter

M2013.133.026

This was a letter written by former Choctaw Chief Victor Locke in 1913 and addressed to the future citizens of the state of Oklahoma in 2013.

Choctaw Baptist Hymn Book

B2013.133.249

This hymn book, dated 1880, was written and printed in the Choctaw language.

Letter

M2013.133.006

This was a letter written by former Chickasaw Governor William Malcolm Guy to Czarina Conlan. It speaks to the future citizens and tribal members in 2013.

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