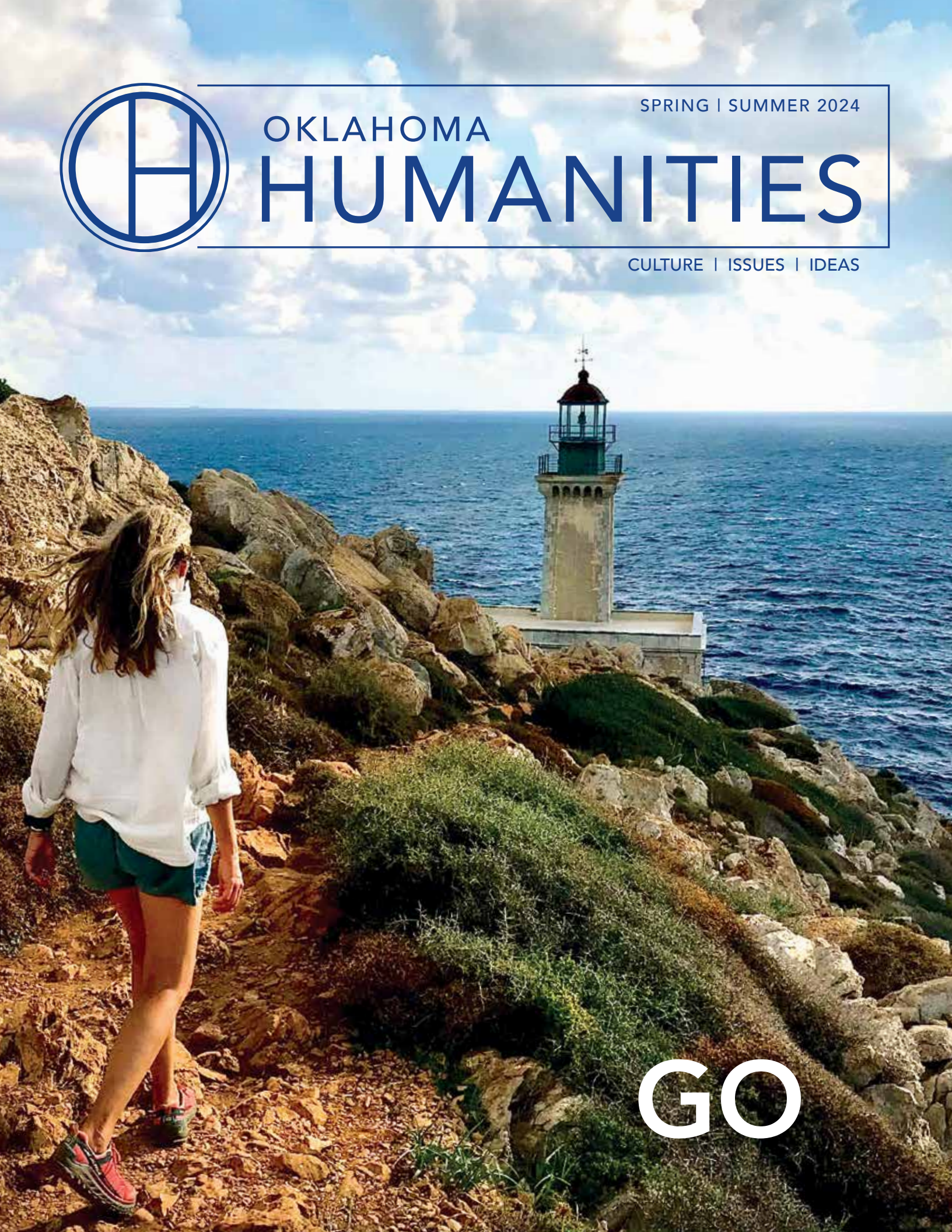




SPRING | SUMMER 2024

OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES

CULTURE | ISSUES | IDEAS



GO



CAROLINE LOWERY

Executive Director
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PERSPECTIVE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are what we read—books, newspapers, magazines. They all shape us, but who shapes *them*? For sixteen distinguished years, founding Editor Carla Walker has shaped *Oklahoma Humanities* magazine, and as she transitions to Editor Emeritus to focus singularly on her role as Associate Director, we reflect on her remarkable editorship.

With an eagle eye, empathy, and intellect, Carla forged an award-winning publication that navigates the complex intersections of art, literature, philosophy, history, and more. From the outset, she curated content that resonated with readers like you, weaving together narratives that celebrated diverse perspectives and inclusivity. Her ability to identify emerging trends and topics ensured the magazine’s relevance amidst shifting cultural landscapes, and under her stewardship it became a bastion of critical inquiry and cultural dialogue, challenging conventions and elevating marginalized voices.

She leaves not only a team inspired by her intellectual rigor and unwavering dedication to excellence, but also a legacy of insight, enrichment, and visionary leadership. Built page by page and proof by proof, it includes scholars, authors, and an audience of readers across our state and beyond.

In her new capacity, Carla will continue to shape the direction of Oklahoma Humanities, guiding its strategic vision and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. Though her formal tenure as Editor draws to a close, we’re reminded of her inaugural remarks in the Summer 2008 issue that encapsulated the spirit and mission of the magazine then—as well as now.

That’s what this publication is all about: shaking things up, surprising you, and, ultimately, offering new perspectives that expand your world. . . . Gather a group of friends and use the articles to start your own spirited conversations. The true value of the humanities is in sharing them with other people, debating differing viewpoints, having those “aha” moments that take you outside yourself or give you a piece of the puzzle you didn’t know you were missing.

Go back, find a new perspective, and pass it on!

From all of us at Oklahoma Humanities, thank you Carla!



OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES

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ON THE COVER: Author Alexis Adams walking the tip of the southern Peloponnese, south of the remote village in Greece where she now lives part of each year. Read her story on page 18. Photo by David Lehnerr

Reader Feedback



My husband and I receive your magazine and enjoy it very much. Is it possible to purchase a subscription for our son and his wife, who live in Wyoming?

—Patti & Craig Johnson, Tulsa

Editor’s note: We replied to Patti and Craig with a big thank-you-for-the-compliment, noting that our magazine is always free for the asking. Subscribe on our website (okhumanities.org, scroll down to find the SUBSCRIBE button) or, even better, make a donation in someone’s honor to help us keep this ad-free, donor-supported, award-winning publication free—for all. We’ll send the recipient a note about your gift and start their free magazine subscription. Find our secure, big blue DONATE button at the top of our webpage. And thanks!

You already know how much I enjoy getting *Oklahoma Humanities*, but this Fall/Winter FOOD edition is incredible. Stories are so thought provoking. Congratulations to everyone.

—Dr. Pat Capra

I got the new magazine today and read it cover to cover. I am always amazed of your ability to bring so many thoughts together. I enjoyed the article on the Day of the Dead. The longer that I’m around the more I want to honor my forefathers and foremothers. Thank you for your dedication. Like an art curator, you put just the right pieces together to make a bigger impact than they would have individually. Can’t wait for the next magazine.

—Ken Ferguson, Altus

I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate not only the high level of articles that are presented, but the wonderful diversity of presentations in the magazine. Thank you for your work.

—Rev. Dr. George E. Young, Sr., OK State Senator, District 48 (OKC); Pastor, Greater Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, Oklahoma City



THE 2024 EDITOR’S CIRCLE

Donors who designate gifts of \$500 or more for *Oklahoma Humanities* magazine are printed in the Editor’s Circle. Thanks to these generous donors, we distribute this award-winning publication, free of charge, to Oklahomans in all 77 counties. Thank you—we’re grateful for your generosity!

THANK YOU!

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\$40,000 for *Let’s Talk About It*



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Oklahoma Humanities magazine is an award-winning collection of culture, issues, and ideas—a rich mix of humanities scholarship, insightful narratives, informed opinions, and beautiful images, for a read that is smart, balanced, educational, and entertaining. Subscribe online: okhumanities.org or call (405) 235-0280.

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Oklahoma Humanities awards include 55 Oklahoma Society of Professional Journalists awards, including multiple first place honors for Best Writing, Best Cover, Best Feature Photo, and Best PR Publication; 25 Great Plains Journalism awards, including firsts for best Magazine Feature Writing and best Magazine Page Design, and as a finalist for the Great Plains Magazine of the Year; three Central Oklahoma IABC Bronze Quill Awards; the State Historic Preservation Officer's Citation of Merit; and an Oklahoma Heritage Distinguished Editorial Award.

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THE EDITOR'S DESK

CARLA WALKER

carla@okhumanities.org



WHAT'S NEXT ?

This is it—my final issue as editor of *Oklahoma Humanities* magazine. The Editor's Desk traditionally resides on page six, but I hope you will indulge me a bit of added space—pages five and six—to mark the end of an era.

As the one place a curator of content can speak directly to readers, the editor's note is tricky at any time. Constructing a meaningful message (in fact, a meaningful magazine) is a bit like traversing a rope bridge, wobbling mightily on the path from a singular perspective to something universal or at least useful to a mass audience. I find this note particularly precarious: How to sum up sixteen years, how rewarding it has been to know that readers anticipate and care about what we publish? There isn't enough time or space.

Perhaps the best approach is a love letter—which this is, to *all* who have read these pages. Your readership has given me purpose, given meaning to my work. Knowing (by your feedback) that this publication brings something positive to your world, I am forever changed.

Though I didn't expressly choose our issue theme, "GO," with this final note in mind, it is surely fitting. Not that I'm leaving Oklahoma Humanities as an organization. I'm simply handing the editorial reins to someone that is more than up to the challenge (more on that later), so that I can step into a full-time role as Associate Director. I still have energy to give the OH community—but I confess: magazine deadlines I will *not* miss.

What I *will* miss is the conversation that has developed during my time at the Editor's Desk—talking with authors, debating with readers, and learning more than we could ever print while endeavoring to bring you, as our masthead states: culture, issues, and ideas.

Sixteen years ago, we plunged into the unknown to launch this publication. There was no template for "How to Create a Humanities Magazine." Among state humanities councils, only a half-dozen or so published something approximating an "extended" publication. Some were newsy writeups and snapshots of local programs and grants; others filled pages with long-form articles on state-centric themes by state-based writers. At the time, electronic messaging and e-zine publications were the future. "Print is Dead" was the wisdom of the day.

CONTINUED

Still, in Oklahoma, there was a need for humanities programming that only a print publication could fill. In majority-rural areas of our state, internet connection in 2008 was sparse at best and travel to “the big city” to attend exhibits, lectures, festivals, and other cultural programs was a luxury. The pitch to our program committee proposed that a widely-distributed publication presenting multiple views on specific topics would approximate the “dialogue” of in-person cultural programs—that dynamic interaction where participants hear others’ perspectives, a process which can, and often does, evoke a different, expanded perception of the world. With our publication, the goal was to frame Oklahoma as a state in the context of the nation and the world. Miraculously, the Board said yes to this untested proposition and we have not stopped printing or probing “what’s next.”

Over sixteen years, Oklahoma Humanities as an organization has easily spent more than half a million dollars distributing this publication. Big as that number seems, it pales in comparison to the fact that we spent it one dollar and fifty cents at a time—\$1.50 per copy allowed us to “paper” Oklahoma with educational humanities content, serving readers wherever they asked for it: delivered to homes, in schools and universities, on library shelves, in veterans’ centers, among cultural organizations, and behind the walls of incarceration. From the chambers of the State Capitol to Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.; from all 77 Oklahoma counties to every state humanities council in the nation; from small-town coffee shops to backpacks on planes traveling halfway

around the world and back—this is how we serve you and serve up the humanities, packaged in prose and pictures that call you to read, think, talk, and link.

Oh, how I will miss working with the hundreds of people who have contributed to these pages. I celebrate their talent and that our little publication widened their work, educated readers, and garnered more than 80 journalism awards in the process. From the beginning, we have collected narratives and images that, together, interpret and give insight to human experience, an effort that will contribute to a wider body of knowledge for generations to come. Print is very much alive and well—but it’s all there on the internet, too, free and accessible in perpetuity for anyone to explore in the magazine archives on our website: okhumanities.org.

It is beyond my ability and the confines of this space to convey the joy this work has given me. Editorships are coveted and scarce, and I have been one of the lucky few. It is humbling and rewarding to



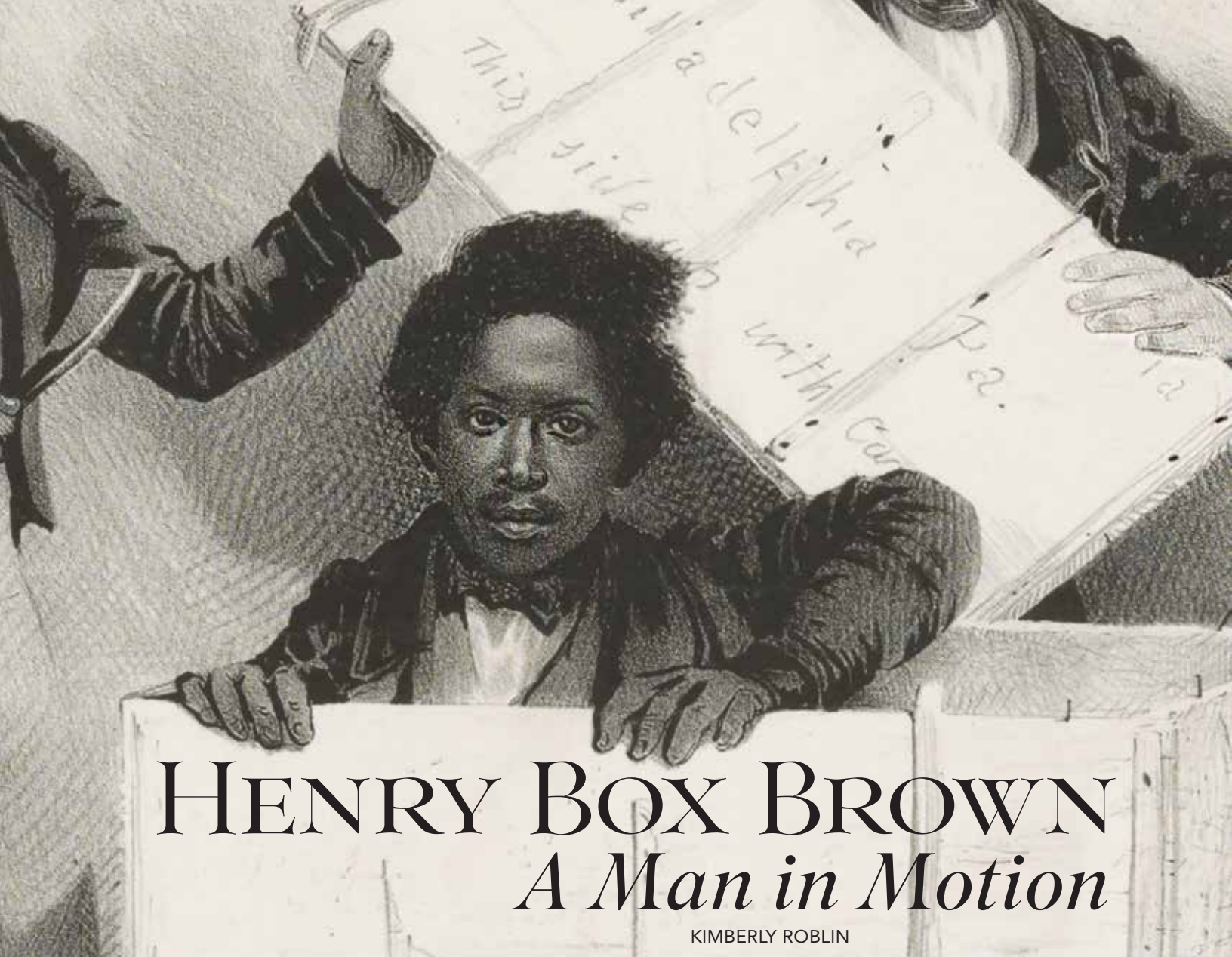
know that one small idea and a little ambition could aspire to these grand results.

I dare not name all that have made this possible and worthwhile—you know who you are: executive directors, board members, production personnel, scholars, poets, artists, photographers, archives, tribal nations, donors, foundations, corporations, family, friends—and *you*—readers. I cannot name you all, but I must mention two extraordinary people who have expanded this work and will carry the magazine into the future:

Anne Richardson has been my design partner since 2016. She raises the bar to graphic *artist*. The only way I can bear to let go of such a rewarding partnership is knowing that somewhere along the way we became and will continue to be *friends*.

Incoming editor Kimberly Roblin is a talented, award-winning writer, who has been my freelance-come-full-time colleague for the past five years. She’s more than ready to take you on the next adventure and we’ll introduce you to her more formally in the next issue of *Oklahoma Humanities*.

If there is one thing I have learned and that I will carry with me because of this work, it is this: The more we listen, the more we participate, the more we experience the world beyond our own neighborhood and newsfeeds, the more just (as in justice) we become. I hope *Oklahoma Humanities* magazine has led, will continue to lead you further along that path. Whether you’ve been a long-time reader or it’s your first issue, I hope you’ve found something worth your time and thought.



HENRY BOX BROWN

A Man in Motion

KIMBERLY ROBLIN

“I entered the world a slave.”

—*Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself* (1851)

A man in motion remains in motion. Slavery sought to stagnate Henry Brown, but he saw, defined, and understood the world through movement. He was a man on the move, a man who perfected entrances and, most famously, an exit.

He entered the world around 1815 in Louisa County, Virginia, and spent his early years, as he called it, “waiting upon” John Barret and his wife. A few times each year he and his brother were allowed to transport grain to the local mill,

twenty-mile trips that were the only chance to learn about conditions and experiences of other enslaved peoples. “Otherwise,” Brown later noted in his *Narrative*, “we would have known nothing whatever of what was going on anywhere in the world, excepting our master’s plantation.” The boyhood lesson informed his entire life: movement led to opportunity and knowledge. Virginia law might have considered his life a noun, an object to be bought, sold, or inherited, but not Brown. His life was a verb.



Purported to be drawn from life, this is one of the few depictions of Brown. *The Resurrection of Henry Box Brown at Philadelphia*. Published by A. Donnelly, ca. 1850. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

John Barret's eventual death in 1830 splintered Brown's family among Barret's four sons, sending Henry to Richmond to work fourteen-hour days in William Barret's tobacco factory. He'd been there less than two years when Nat Turner's Rebellion erupted in southern Virginia and set the entire state and South on edge. Turner and his enslaved allies killed fifty-five men, women, and children, starting with the family that owned Turner. Though quickly suppressed, the revolt reverberated. Mobs were swift and indiscriminate in their retaliation, killing a number of free and enslaved Black people and Turner was captured, tried, and hanged. In his *Narrative*, Brown reflected on the anxiety of Richmond's white townspeople, despite their relative safety, and concluded that their fear betrayed their guilt. He delivered his verdict with a moving Bible verse: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth."

Brown remained in and around Richmond for almost twenty years, but was not stationary. Around 1836, he met and married Nancy, who was owned by a local businessman, and they soon started a family. Although Nancy was sold multiple times, they managed to stay together until August 1848, when Brown was informed while at work that his wife and children had been sold. He rushed home to find their small cabin empty and could do nothing but watch from the roadside the following day as his wife, children, and more than 300 others passed by on foot and in wagons. "She with whom I had travelled the journey of life in chains, for the space of twelve years, and the dear little pledges God had given us I could see plainly must now be separated from me for ever." He spotted one of his children and then Nancy. "I went with her for about four miles hand in hand, but both our hearts were so

overpowered with feeling that we could say nothing."

Soon after this terrible loss, Brown set his mind to escaping and enlisted the help of two men: James Smith, a free man, fellow church choir member, and friend; and Samuel Smith, a white shopkeeper and long-time acquaintance. Brown noted in his *Narrative* that he had "formed a favourable opinion" of Samuel's integrity. "I imagined he believed that every man had a right to liberty. He said I was quite right." Still, Brown paid for Samuel's assistance.

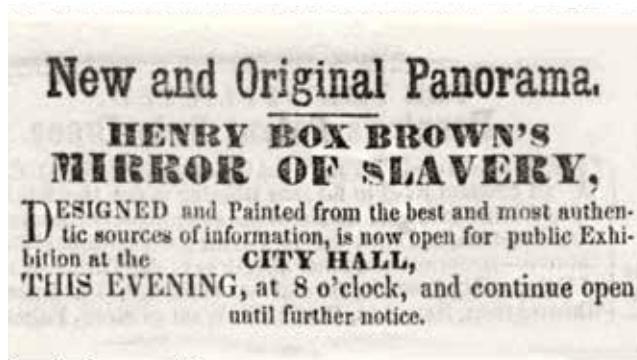
They discussed several options, but none resonated with Brown. Undeterred by the risks and punishment should he fail, he prayed for divine inspiration until an unorthodox idea flashed across his mind. Slave patrols searched roads and rivers for people—they did not suspect parcels. He would ship himself to freedom.

The bold design required careful planning. Samuel wrote to an associate and abolitionist in Philadelphia, James Miller McKim, to arrange for the delivery of the crate that he likely commissioned. Months later a carpenter testified that Samuel “called on and employed him to make a pine box” and that “he was in a great hurry.” Brown focused his efforts on the tobacco factory where his absence would arouse suspicion unless pre-approved. Only injury or illness merited missing work and although Brown had wounded his finger, the overseer did not think it serious. Brown tasked James with acquiring “oil of vitriol” (sulfuric acid) to worsen it. In his haste, he used too much and when the overseer saw it again, now down to the bone, he sent Brown home. Instead, he went directly to Samuel and James and they set a time for his departure. At four the next morning, March 23, 1849, he climbed into the wooden crate bored with three holes and measuring approximately 3'1" long x 2'6" high x 2' wide. From a box smaller than a coffin he would attempt a “resurrection from the grave of slavery.”

For the next twenty-seven hours and three hundred miles, Brown jostled and bounced between wagons, trains, and steamboat. Despite the “This side up with care” instruction, Brown’s box was loaded and unloaded, tumbled about, and upended. He nearly died but could do nothing but wait. Finally, he arrived at the Philadelphia depot and was delivered to a group of expectant abolitionists,

including McKim, at the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society office.

Brown heard a slight knock as McKim asked, “Is all right within?” “All right,” Brown replied. The lid was pried open and, as he recounted, “I rose a freeman.” With the support of his new acquaintances, he began building a life as Henry “Box” Brown, an anti-slavery advocate who shared his experience at abolitionist meetings, including the New England



Announcement for Henry Box Brown’s “Mirror of Slavery” from *The Daily Spy*, Worcester, Massachusetts, May 16, 1850

Anti-Slavery Convention where Frederick Douglass also spoke. Brown sang songs and recounted in dramatic detail how he escaped. It was part public lecture, part performance as he toured Massachusetts, New York, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania.

During this time, he and Charles Stearns co-published *Narrative of Henry Box Brown* (1849). Using the profits, Brown commissioned three artists to paint a large moving mural to enhance his presentations. Speaking of enslavement was effective; illustrating enslavement was more so. Accompanied by music and narration, this *Mirror of Slavery* depicted approximately fifty scenes, including: “The African Slave Trade,” “Interior of a Slave Ship,”

“Grand Slave Auction,” “Women Working,” and “Henry Box Brown Escaping.” Importantly, it also portrayed African landscapes and African daily life, providing critical context that Africans were more than enslaved peoples.

Although the mural culminated in “Universal Emancipation,” it was far from reality. On September 18, 1850, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act, which made it legal to pursue and apprehend escaped enslaved people, even in free states. Brown and all other escapees were no longer safe. He had no choice but to flee and quickly found passage aboard the *Constantine*, but he was not alone. His friend James Smith had recently made an escape of his own when he and Samuel had been arrested and charged the previous

year for trying to help two more enslaved men escape. Samuel was convicted and sentenced to several years in prison, but James had been released and joined Brown as his business associate. On Friday, November 1, he and Brown arrived in Liverpool, England. By November 12, Brown was already on stage at Concert Hall.

Newspapers, census records, and county documents help map the professional and personal life Brown forged in England for the next twenty years. They reveal a man nearly always on the move and ever evolving. He published his own *Narrative* in 1851, with striking differences to the version Stearns co-published. Passive voice became active: “I was born a slave” became “I entered the world a slave.”

Inevitability became agency as he exercised legal rights that were so long denied him in the United States. In the summer of 1852, he successfully sued the proprietor of the *Wolverhampton and Staffordshire Herald* for libel after it printed racist and inflammatory remarks that drove down his audience attendance. He received 100 pounds in damages.

Brown understood the power of perception and performance, and found a largely enthusiastic and encouraging audience in England. Starting in the north, he toured Lancashire, Yorkshire, Manchester, Staffordshire, West Midlands, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire counties, before expanding south into Oxfordshire, Leicestershire, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Surrey, and London. Brown visited industrial cities and quiet villages, playing concert halls, lecture halls, Odd Fellows' halls, temperance halls, exchange rooms, schoolrooms, civic halls, and more.

In late 1855, Brown married school-teacher Jane Floyd and they welcomed at least three children over the next twelve years: Agnes, Edward, and Annie. By the mid-1860s, however, it became difficult to support his family as ticket sales ebbed. More than a decade of touring had rendered his act familiar to most and slavery's abolishment in the United States had neutralized its urgency. Instead of packing it in, Brown pivoted. Following trends, he modified his show to incorporate sleight of hand, hypnotism, and other popular acts of intrigue. As "Professor" Box Brown, he performed magic tricks that garnered modest but consistent reviews. Jane and Annie joined and assisted him on stage at times. Years later this career as a magician drew the attention of another illusionist famous for escapes—Harry Houdini—who collected magic-related ephemera, including Brown's tickets and playbills.

After nearly 25 years, Brown decided that for his show to go on he must leave England. On July 14, 1875, he, Jane, Edward, and Annie arrived in New York City.

Agnes had died the previous year. True to form, he was on the circuit in little time, playing Massachusetts, Maine, and Vermont. A playbill dated 1878, from Woonsocket, Massachusetts, reveals the tricks that tempted audiences:

"Destroying and restoring a Handkerchief, astounding feat with the Sword and Cards . . . Burning Cards and Restoring them again, the most Wonderful and Mysterious Doll, the Inexhaustible Hats," and more. He added Michigan and Ontario to his bookings and tried to secure some in Montreal.

Audiences continued to grow smaller and Brown grew older until, in 1897 in Toronto, the man in motion finally came to rest. His life had traversed the Mason Dixon Line, one ocean, three countries, eight decades, and perhaps his own expectations. He moved himself to

freedom; moved hearts and minds to reject slavery; moved money and opportunity as a businessman and entrepreneur; and moved himself and his family forward.

He exited the world a free man.

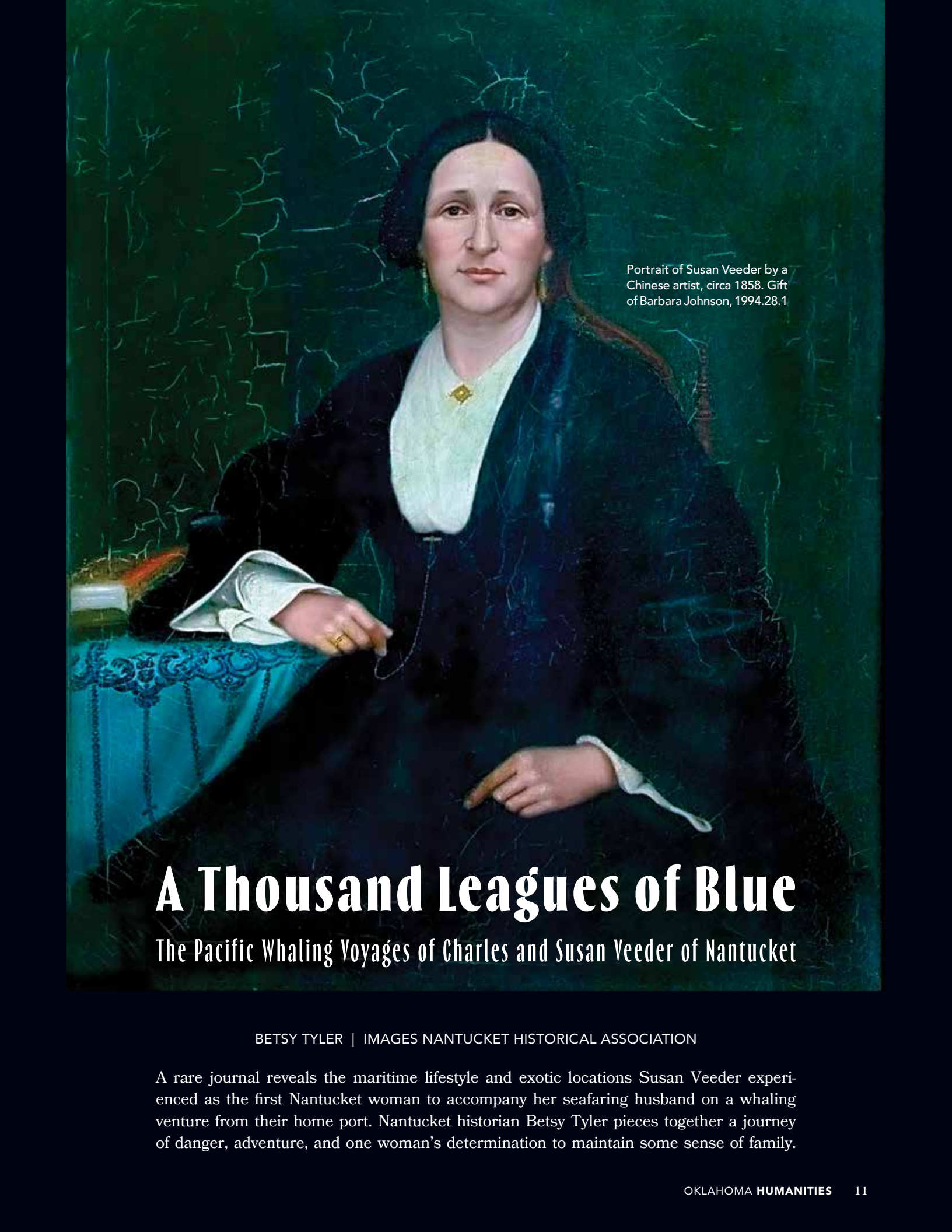
KIMBERLY ROBLIN is incoming editor of *Oklahoma Humanities* magazine (May 2024) and the communications officer for Oklahoma Humanities. Before joining the organization, she worked as a museum curator. She received a BA in history and MA in museum studies from the University of Oklahoma. Her writing has appeared in *The Journal of Gilcrease Museum*, *True West*, *STATE*, *Oklahoma Humanities*, *History Scotland*, and several books.

EXTRA! READ | THINK | TALK | LINK

- "Henry Box Brown," Encyclopedia Virginia. Explore Brown's story in greater detail. encyclopediavirginia.org
- *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself*. Manchester, 1851. Read Brown's account of his early life and escape. bit.ly/3HXht7A
- "Rare Ephemera Shows Legacy of Henry 'Box' Brown," Eric Colleary, May 6, 2021, *Ransom Center Magazine*, The University of Texas at Austin. See ephemera in the Harry Houdini Papers collection, which includes playbills and tickets from Henry Box Brown performances. bit.ly/4323kjl



Henry Box Brown from the *Narrative of Henry Box Brown*, published by Brown and Stearns, Boston, 1849. New York Public Library



Portrait of Susan Veeder by a Chinese artist, circa 1858. Gift of Barbara Johnson, 1994.28.1

A Thousand Leagues of Blue

The Pacific Whaling Voyages of Charles and Susan Veeder of Nantucket

BETSY TYLER | IMAGES NANTUCKET HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

A rare journal reveals the maritime lifestyle and exotic locations Susan Veeder experienced as the first Nantucket woman to accompany her seafaring husband on a whaling venture from their home port. Nantucket historian Betsy Tyler pieces together a journey of danger, adventure, and one woman's determination to maintain some sense of family.

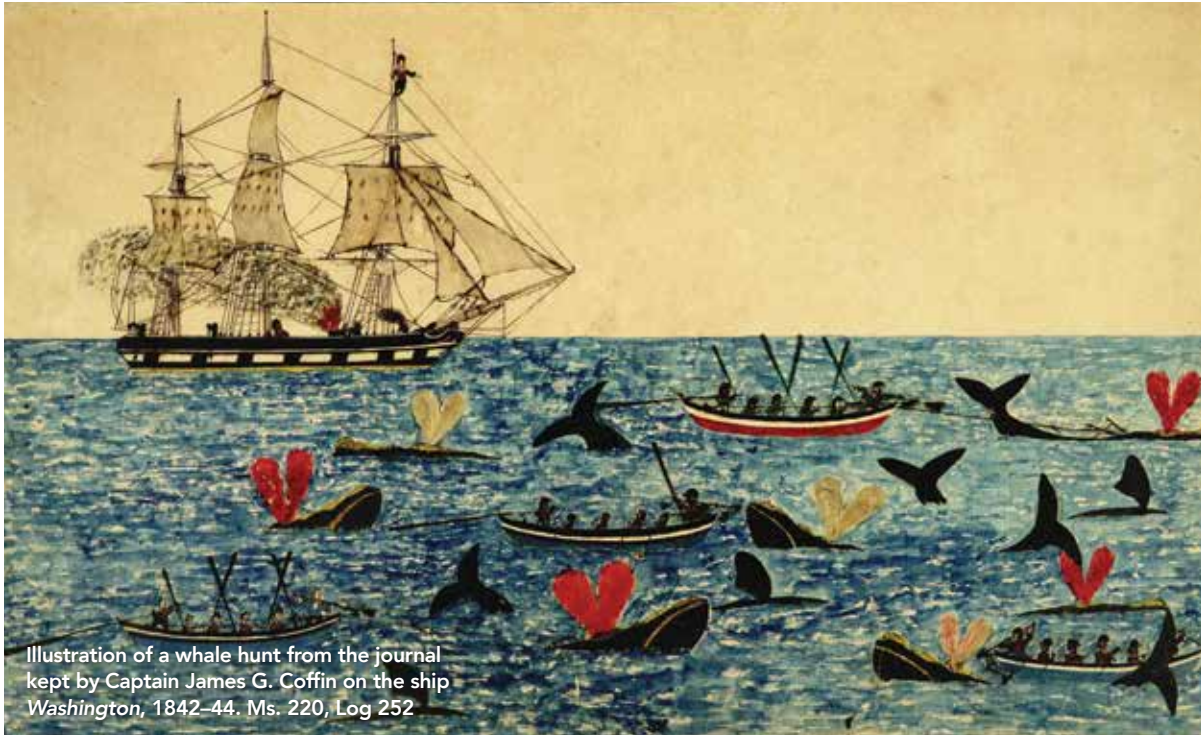


Illustration of a whale hunt from the journal kept by Captain James G. Coffin on the ship *Washington*, 1842–44. Ms. 220, Log 252

... now the long supplication of my youth was answered; that serene ocean rolled eastwards from me a thousand leagues of blue.
— Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*



Charles A. Veeder was one of a pantheon of respected and successful Nantucket whaling captains in an era when Nantucket Island was at the height of its prosperity in that global industry. Oil from sperm whales lubricated the Industrial Revolution and lit the streets of Boston and New York, London and Paris. While other seaports might send whalers after right whales, or humpbacks, or into the Arctic after bowheads, Nantucketers were primarily sperm-whale fishermen, chasers of the largest toothed whales in the ocean, and Charles Veeder was one of the more successful whalers: in four voyages as captain of Nantucket vessels—*Christopher Mitchell*, *Empire*, *Nauticon*, *Ocean Rover*—he brought home more than 7,500 barrels of sperm oil, turning 125 or more of the leviathans into illumination, lubrication, and cash.

The complicated endeavor, with its heavy toll on mariners and whales, was about light, the simple idea of extending the day and moving beyond the rhythm of the natural world into that of the

man-made as the industrial age kicked into gear. And, of course, it was about money: ship owners and whale-oil merchants could become very wealthy, and although Nantucket Quaker whalers might not approve of singing and dancing and wearing colorful clothing, they had no problem counting their profits. Nantucket boys had family connections in the oil industry, they grew up listening to tales of the sea, studied mathematics and navigation, learned to swim and row when they were young, and aspired to become whaling captains. Inexperienced boys and men without that background, or crew signed on in the Azores or Pacific Islands, generally had no idea what they were in for and how little they would get out of it if they survived.

There was no such thing as an uneventful whaling voyage. Men fell from aloft and were drowned or broken, they deserted, they were injured during the hunt, and they suffered from malnutrition, exposure, and despair. Ships wrecked on uncharted reefs, were damaged in storms, lost their way. Mutinies, clashes with foreign cultures, pirates—travel on

the ocean could be treacherous. For those reasons, and other, more personal ones, few women chose to accompany their whaling husbands at sea. Even fewer kept journals of their voyages, and only a handful attempted to illustrate their travelogues, but Susan Veeder went armed with watercolors and pens and paintbrushes, eager to record a world she had heard so much about but could not imagine.



September 15, 1848: Discharged our pilot and steered our course for the Cape de Verd Islands, nothing of any note occurred until the 15th, then we had a strong gale for three days and myself and boys very sick.

Thirty-two-year-old Susan Austin Veeder (1816–1897), five months pregnant with her fourth child, sailed on the Nantucket whaleship *Nauticon* in 1848 with her husband, Captain Charles A. Veeder (1809–1878?), and two of their sons on a journey hunting sperm whales that would last four and a half years. Her account of the voyage from the home port is the earliest one by a Nantucket woman that is currently known. A contemporary of Herman Melville, Susan was not a literary woman, but her journal gives us a glimpse of her passage through the world that was the setting for much of Melville’s work.

Her reasons for uprooting her family—leaving ten-year-old Charles Edward, her middle son, at home with her parents—were complex. Like so many other Nantucket women, she felt like a widow when her husband was at sea, and feared that she would become one. Sparse information about the progress of his voyages—an occasional letter, a brief notice in a newspaper, or personal news delivered by another Nantucket captain who had met him at sea—provided ample opportunity for anxiety as the statistics of disaster and tragedy in her maritime community were well known; local genealogies of Nantucket families are heavily peppered with the comment “lost at sea.” During the fourteen and a half years of their marriage, while she ran her household and cared for their boys, Charles was at sea more often than he was ashore. Since she pledged her seventeen-year-old heart to him on November 28, 1833, he had been at sea nine and a half years.



Portrait of Susan Veeder by a Chinese artist, circa 1858. Gift of Barbara Johnson, 1994.28.1

Susan Austin Veeder (1816–1897) became the first Nantucket woman to accompany her husband on a whaling voyage from the home port. She packed her trunks and, with two of her three boys, boarded the *Nauticon* in September 1848 for a voyage that lasted four and a half years. She kept a journal, a terse record that on rare occasion overflowed with emotion, and she illustrated it with watercolor paintings of islands and harbors in the Pacific world.

Charles A. Veeder (1809–1878?) appears to have been a talented constructor of things. He could work with his hands, navigate, trade with Pacific Islanders, explore new whaling grounds, maintain discipline, protect his family, and fill the hold with oil: so much responsibility on his shoulders, the monarch of a floating kingdom. He was a man to be admired, and Susan was by his side, making it possible for him to be a real member of his family for the longest period of time in their marriage.

Charles Veeder, by James Hathaway, circa 1842. Gift of the Friends of the Nantucket Historical Association, 1999.30.2



He returned home in November 1847 to a family he hardly knew, and, when it was time to go to sea again ten months later, he and Susan broke the traditional maritime-family mold.

Strong, capable, curious, and determined not to be without her husband when her next child was born, Susan agreed to sail off to the other side of the globe on a voyage that held no guarantees for her safety, health, or sanity. Susan began to pack her trunks and arrange for middle son, Charles Edward, to stay on Nantucket with her parents. At ten years old he was a schoolboy who would miss four crucial years of education if he joined his family at sea; older brother George had already completed his formal education, and David was young enough to catch up when he returned.

In the corner of one of her trunks, Susan tucked in a blank journal, pens, ink, watercolors, brushes, and blotters, ready to record the noteworthy events of her life at sea. Her journal is not the typical sturdy account book favored by many log keepers, the ones sold by stationers in New Bedford and Boston. It's surprising hers survived at all, as it is more delicate, a simple, slim eight-by-ten-inch notebook with a skinny leather spine, the cover a thin board made lively with marbled paper. One hundred and seventy-two lightly lined pages, all she anticipated filling in more than four years at sea.

The first mate of a whaleship kept a logbook for the vessel's owners, often a rather dull record of weather; longitude and latitude; where whales were seen and killed and the number of barrels of oil rendered from each; ships spoken (other ships seen at sea and communicated with by signal or conversation); and sites where wood, water, pigs, fruit, and other provisions were collected in the Pacific. Some logbooks were later used by granddaughters of mariners as scrapbooks, with illustrations from *Godey's Lady's Book* pasted over accounts of mutiny and other disasters. Others were tossed when attics were cleared, and some are still treasured by descendants.

Journals kept by whaling wives, the rarest of all, present an entirely different perspective of life at sea, one that often involved childbirth, laundry, and loneliness. Among women's journals, Susan's is one of the most valuable. Although some women's whaling journals include sketches of ships and animals and islands, no other woman's journal yet discovered includes full-page color paintings.

Susan overcame whatever anxiety she may have had, and, holding David firmly by the hand, boarded the 106-foot-long wooden ship to sail off chasing whales in the Pacific, even though there was no doctor on board, no female companionship in the foreseeable future, and no set course across the watery portions of the globe—wherever sperm whales gathered, there they would go. Susan planned to keep a journal and illustrate it, and she set to work immediately, even though she felt wretched.

She was a proficient painter, carefully delineating isolated islands—some uninhabited, others featuring harbors crowded with ships—seen during the course of the voyage. In fact, the striking title page of her journal, depicting their ship tossing on waves near a point of land where a lighthouse and keeper's house stand, is framed by the painted words "Islands Seen by Ship *Nauticon*." One of her incentives for joining her husband was a desire to see exotic places and to paint landscapes entirely foreign to her, and *everything* was foreign to her. Married at seventeen and a mother at eighteen, she had been bound closely to Nantucket while Charles was roaming the Pacific; there is no reason to assume she had been farther afield than New Bedford, or, maybe at the farthest reach, Boston.



September 24, 1848: . . . we had another strong gale we took in our boats and sent down some of our masts. I think that if I could of got on shore I should of given up the voyage for I was very sick.

The *Nauticon* followed the usual route of whaleships traveling from Nantucket to Cape Horn, sailing the Gulf Stream toward Newfoundland and then taking the southern curve of that warm-water conduit down toward the coast of Africa, briefly stopping at the Cape Verde Islands for provisions—pigs, chickens, oranges, and plantains—but no excursions on shore for Susan. The *Nauticon* sighted Staten Island, east of the tip of South America, on December 11, three months into the voyage that took them away from an approaching North Atlantic winter across the equator to summer and then farther south to some of the roughest seas on the planet.

Susan writes very little about the voyage to Cape Horn, noting a few ship sightings, and remarking that her sickness had begun to wear off on November 8,

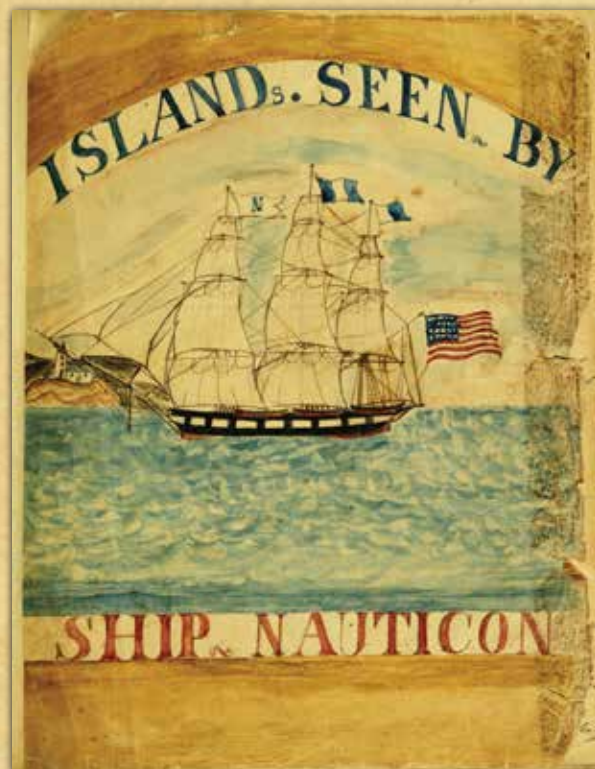
after eight weeks at sea. By December 13, she was feeling spritely, noting, “the Capt’n is all attention and says he is very happy to think I am hear and encourages me by saying that he thinks I get along first rate.”

The *Nauticon* rounded Cape Horn on schedule and sailed up the coast of South America, arriving at Talcahuano, Chile, on January 4, 1849. The family all went ashore, and, as Susan recorded, they “soon arrived at the Consuls whare i shall stop for a while.” American consul William Crosby had a household of nine. In addition to its function as a consulate, Crosby’s home appears to have been an American whaling refuge and convalescent clinic, as evidenced by Susan’s maternity stay there.

January 29, 1849: Nothing of any note occurred until the 29th and then I was confined with a fine daughter weighing 9 lbs which was very pleasing to us both and so things went along about as they should . . .

One of the most startling entries in Susan’s journal is the record of the birth of her daughter. She never mentions her pregnancy, nor does she hint at the reason for her stay in Talcahuano until January 29, when the simple birth announcement is recorded. What becomes immediately apparent is that the journal keeper was pregnant when she left Nantucket, well aware that her child might be born aboard the *Nauticon* if their voyage around Cape Horn was delayed. Her prolonged seasickness is understandable, as is her courage. Not only was she the first woman to depart on a whaling voyage from Nantucket, she was pregnant when she made her decision. Rather than hindering her plans, it may have increased her desire to be with her husband.

The happy news of the first oil of the season prompted Captain Veeder to return to his ship with his sons, leaving Susan and their new daughter at the consul’s house in Talcahuano for almost two months of recuperation and female companionship, which were not what Susan wanted; she wanted to be back on board the *Nauticon* with her family. Finally, the *Nauticon* returned to Talcahuano on March 23 and Susan began packing her trunk, eager to be back on board. In the bosom of her family with her healthy daughter, Susan wrote no comments in her journal for ten days. It was now all about whaling, which they had begun in earnest, chasing humpback whales in



Title page of Susan Veeder’s *Nauticon* journal. Gift of the Friends of the Nantucket Historical Assoc., Ms. 220, Log 347

Susan filled one page of her journal with a watercolor scene titled *Some of the Paumotu Group*, giving us two different perspectives in this panel. Paumotu, or Tuamotu, Group, from Susan Veeder’s journal of the *Nauticon*. Gift of the Friends of the Nantucket Historical Association, Ms. 220, Log 347





Otaheite as seen from the Harbor

*We are steering to the South where I
am in hopes we shall get some sperm oil.
We are all well. It is a year today since
I have heard from home.*

Otaheite, or Tahiti, from Susan Veeder's journal of the *Nauticon*. Gift of the Friends of the Nantucket Historical Association, Ms. 220, Log 347

Mejillones Bay north of Talcahuano, warming up for the deep-sea sperm whale hunting to come.

On April 7 they had success, so they stayed in the area for a few days and Susan got to go on shore to collect shells and go fishing, but the novelty wore off and she commented that there were no inhabitants, and “*not a green bush to be seen.*” Her husband’s tales of the verdure of the South Pacific must have seemed suspect. As the humpbacks became more elusive, the *Nauticon* headed up the coast of South America; off Peru, Susan sighted her first sperm whale, the primary object of their pursuit, the creature her husband spent his life battling, and it was not a pretty sight:

April 24, 1849: Today we saw a dead sperm whale but it was not good. This is the first I have seen. I am in hopes they don’t all smell quite so bad as that did.

Heading north from the Galápagos, the *Nauticon* sailed to the Bay of Panama, where there were a number of whaleships actively pursuing sperm whales. On the first day of June, the *Nauticon* got its first one since Susan rejoined the vessel. She does not describe the hunt or the butchering and boiling that must have been a hellish sight, the stench and smoke of the boiling-down process; she only comments that the whale made twenty-five barrels of oil.

Although care of her baby and David were her primary concerns during the voyage, Susan rarely mentions them, saving her comments for what she found “noteworthy”; being a mother was not anything to write about. It was her role in life and she found it unnecessary to note her daily child-tending chores. On June 11, after days of cruising unsuccessfully for more whales, she recorded one of her few remarks about her infant: “*the babe grows nicely and is very cunning.*”

For the next month or so the *Nauticon* stayed in the vicinity of the Galápagos Islands where they spied lots of other New England whaleships: *Roscoe*, *Catawba*, *Daniel Webster*, *Alfred Tiles*, *Mary*, *President*, *Martha*, and *Mary Frances*, the latter suggesting a name for their daughter. Susan found no sister sailors aboard any of them.



The *Nauticon* was in the vicinity of the Washington Islands, or Marquesas, on November 11; from there they turned toward the Tuamotu Archipelago and Tahiti:

We are steering to the South where I am in hopes we shall git some sperm oil. We are all well. It is a year today since I have heard from home.

She was experiencing a different kind of time, its progress unmarked by the regular report of the church bell, the tides in the harbor, the first frost; she kept track of the date in her journal, it was her landmark.

Susan filled one page of her journal with a watercolor scene titled *Some of the Paumotu Group*, giving us two different perspectives in this panel: the atolls as seen from sea level—a long, low strip of land fringed with coconut palms—and another view looking down on two of the atolls from a height, so that the entire circle of isles can be seen as well as the calm lagoon within. She must have climbed up to the lookout’s cross-trees on the mast, the captain showing her where to put her feet and helping her hang on. There, from the gently swaying vantage point, she could see for miles: endless aquamarine water, bleached sand and coral islets, coconut palms.

Here was the vista she had been waiting for, as different from barren, windswept, gray Nantucket as possible. Color! She could feel it. She went gingerly down the ropes to the deck for her journal and paintbrushes to record the idyllic scene. The Veeders must have been as happy as they would ever be—the family healthy, whales in sight, warm weather, incredible beauty.

BETSY TYLER is an independent researcher and writer. She was the inaugural Obed Macy Research Chair and Director of the Research Library of the Nantucket Historical Association, 2012–2016, and editor of *Historic Nantucket*. She has numerous books on Nantucket history. This work is excerpted from *A Thousand Leagues of Blue: The Pacific Whaling Voyages of Charles and Susan Veeder of Nantucket* by Betsy Tyler, copyright © 2019 and 2023, Betsy Tyler, published by the Nantucket Historical Association (order info at nha.org) and used by permission of the author. Images are from the collection of the Nantucket Historical Association.

EXTRA! READ | THINK | TALK | LINK

- *At Home with Authors*, Nantucket Book Festival. Festival Chair Mary Bergman interviews Betsy Tyler on discovering Susan Veeder’s journal and researching the whaling industry and maritime lifestyle that shaped the Veeder family. youtube.com (search: a thousand leagues of blue)

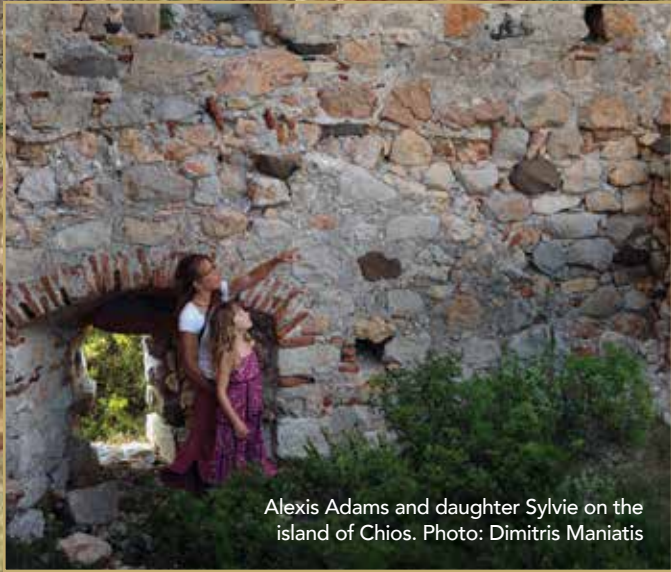
SEARCHING FOR THE CYCLOPS' CHEESE

Finding home in the flavors of a foreign land

ALEXIS MARIE ADAMS

My mother and I have arrived on a small Greek island in the Myrtoan Sea, a place where the scent of warm pine needles and herbs growing wild on terraced hillsides mingles with fumes from the fishermen's caïques and the stink of fishing nets drying in the sun. There are no cars here, so we walk the pathways that wind through the village, past whitewashed stone houses with walled gardens brimming with bougainvillea, beneath lemon trees and aromatic jasmine, past cafés where old men sit with worry beads and tiny cups of Greek coffee. It is 1977 and I am ten years old. We'll stay on this island for the next year, or maybe forever. This is how our lives are—spontaneous, exhilarating, ever shifting.

On this bright blue morning in late summer, we've just come from the butcher's shop where the skinned carcasses of goats, lambs, and fowl hang from hooks that dangle from the ceiling. Now we're in a village market and I'm searching the shelves for something I know well, perhaps a reassuring box of cereal emblazoned with a smiling tiger's face, or a slender carton of Kraft macaroni with its bright orange powdered cheese that, I am sure, when combined with the cooked pasta, milk, and melting butter, will become something familiar.



Alexis Adams and daughter Sylvie on the island of Chios. Photo: Dimitris Maniatis



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Cristina Anne Costello: unsplash.com



Yves Cedric Schulze: unsplash.com



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Instead, the jars and cans stacked neatly on the shelves are packed with pickled octopus, tiny fish, grape leaves, squid. In baskets that line the wall, I see mounds of lentils, yellow split peas, red onions, potatoes caked with dirt. Olives of various shapes, colors, and sizes float in barrels of dark, watery brine. A glass case holds massive rounds of cheese. The air smells musky, like a shadowy barn.

I look around and see something hanging from the ceiling behind the counter, a thing that I will eventually forget until, decades later, I remember it, in that startling, How-did-I-forget-this? sort of way. And from that point on, the thing will become an obsession. It's the skin of an animal, one that's been turned inside out, scrubbed clean and white, and packed so full with some substance that it looks bizarrely rotund, like a caricature of the carcasses hanging in the butcher's shop. It's both curious and grotesque and I can't stop looking at it.

Some days later, we return to the market for fresh eggs and a few provisions to round out our new pantry. An elderly woman bustles in, leans against the counter, toothpick bobbing in her mouth, and places her order. The shopkeeper, Panayiotis, is tall, maybe my mother's age, with warm chestnut eyes. He talks and laughs with the woman as he works, cutting into a round of cheese and removing a wedge that he weighs and then wraps in bright white paper. Since we arrived at the market, I've avoided looking at the strange inside-out creature in the corner. But when I see the shopkeeper stride to where it hangs, my eyes follow. He removes it from its hook, foists it onto the counter, and scoops out some of the stuff inside.

The contents are white, solid, creamy . . . and pungent. Even standing across the room I am hit full force by its odor, earthy and sharp. It is, I realize with disbelief, more than a little bit like the tangy scent of my beloved Kraft Macaroni and Cheese. But it can't be. It just can't. Because there is the repulsiveness of its white, fleshy, container once very much alive.

I sense that breakfast could easily rise in my throat, but here is my always inquisitive mother, standing at the counter beside Panayiotis and his customer, watching curiously. He offers her a slice of the stuff, which she tastes without hesitation. "Oh!" she exclaims, delightedly. And then, "It's cheese!"

Panayiotis and his customer beam—thrilled that the beautiful foreigner likes the stuff that hangs in

the bloated carcass. Then they all look at me, smiling with anticipation as Panayiotis cuts another slice and stretches out a hand, offering it to me. But I can't taste it. I won't. If I do, I am sure I will vomit. "But you will *loff* it," I hear him call after me as I run out the door. Breakfast splatters on the cobblestone lane.

I was an anxious child, prone to counting my fingers and other behaviors to try to keep my small world orderly and predictable—to control something, anything, because what I could not control was boundless. I could not control my parents' decision to divorce, for instance, and my father's disappearance from the constellation of our family. I couldn't control my mother's boyfriend, who was by turns loving and raging. Later, after we left him, I could not control my mother's delightful if at times unnerving impulsivity, which, among other things, moved us all the way to Greece.

But I could control what I chose to eat.

In those days, I often kept a copy of *The Children's Homer* tucked into my backpack. I liked to imagine that Odysseus had sailed right by our island. I spent a lot of time alone, reading and daydreaming, and soon I began to believe the implausible: in this case, that Homer's one-eyed, cheesemaking giant, Polyphemus, whose cave was filled with goats, sheep, and "vessels, bowls, and milk pails . . . swimming with whey" probably lived on *our* island. *He* was probably the maker of that repulsive, delicious-smelling cheese. Because, like, who else?

Years later, I would read that in Homer's time, shepherds—not Cyclopes—were the principal cheese-makers. Food historians say that they'd store and transport the milk from their flocks in cleaned and heavily salted skins of sheep or goats. There, the milk turned itself into cheese and the cheese ripened inside the skin. The contemporary name for the cheese, touloumotiri, comes from *touloumi*, modern vernacular Greek for something like "skin of the animal," and *tiri*, which means "cheese." In other words, it is "the cheese of the skin."

It takes nearly a year of encouragement and learning how to "eat like a Greek" before I dare to taste touloumotiri. By then, I am eating olives by the dozen and have learned to sop up the island's rich, green olive oil with a hunk of wood-fired whole-grain bread.

I eat wild greens, called *horta*, boiled and topped with olive oil, lemon, and sea salt. I've learned to eat fish caught from the waters that surround us, panfried and drenched in lemon juice squeezed from fruit plucked through a kitchen window. I even eat fish eyes and fish heads and octopus and squid, pickled, fried, and grilled. I've developed a craving for the pungent oregano and thyme that grow wild on the island's sun-drenched hillsides, and the honey-sweetened treats our widowed neighbor makes. Although sometimes I still daydream that a slender box of Kraft Macaroni and Cheese will land mysteriously on our front stoop, it never does. But that's mostly okay because gradually, the foods grown, gathered, and cooked on this island at the edge of the Myrtoan Sea are beginning to taste delicious. They're beginning to taste familiar. Moreover, after a lifetime of moving from town to town each year, this island's flavors are beginning to taste like a place I could call home.

Until we move again. Then, Greece becomes memory and longing and, from that point on, no matter where I live, I crave it, including in wild and beautiful Montana, where my mother and I move next. Greece is in the sun on my face. In the garlic Mom chops and mixes with the pale, dried oregano we buy from our small-town grocery store. It's in the rind of a lemon and in the tapes of Greek folk music she plays on cold winter nights, the baglama drowning out the sound of sleet beating against the windowpanes. It's even in the curious packets of shrink-wrapped cheese that appear on my lunch tray at the local high school.

It is springtime, 2009, and I am in Greece—separated from my husband and recovering from early-stage breast cancer, my two children by my side. I'm here to heal. As soon as we're off the boat, I smell it—wild herbs warmed by the sun, diesel from the fishermen's *caïques*, a whiff of smoke rising from a street vendor's grill, skewers of spiced lamb sizzling over hot coals. I feel loved by it all, in love with it all, all over again. But the island has changed dramatically since my childhood. So, rather than stay here among the yachts and the boutiques that have replaced so many of the traditional shops, including our friend Panayiotis's market, we will spend the next six weeks twenty nautical miles and a world away, on the remote southern Peloponnese peninsula, a place where traditions remain rich and strong. A place so fertile, so abundant, it is dizzying. Olive groves stretch



Cheesemaking tools in a mountain village in Arkadia, where home cheesemaking is ubiquitous. Photo: Alexis Adams



Sheep's milk warms in Thomae's cheesemaking room on her farm in the Peloponnese. Photo: Alexis Adams

from the sea until the land becomes too steep for cultivation. Gardens grow beneath trees budding with lemons, figs, oranges, pears, and nuts. Honeybees and clumsy, doting bumblebees browse wild garlic, oregano, and thyme.

We return to Montana after this respite, but I'm working as a freelance journalist, writing more and more about Greece's culinary customs and history, so the children and I spend summers in what becomes "our" village, that lush place on the southern Peloponnese. Sometimes I travel there on my own, too, for short, intense periods of research while the kids are in school. But I am not only driven to Greece to write; I'm driven by that old longing, which is more intense than ever. Because Greece is where I feel at my best, physically and emotionally, post-cancer and post-divorce. There, the anxiety that has long beset me dissipates.

One afternoon my children and I stop for a bite at a roadside taverna, sitting in the cool shade of a blooming arbor. I go inside to order lunch and see a dozen or so black-and-white photographs on a wall. In one shot, locals harvest grapes in a vineyard; in another, a black-robed priest draws water from a well. And then, there it is. An image of a man standing proudly, holding what appears to be a long, very full, fleshy bag. I know exactly what the bag is, know what's inside it.

I ask the proprietor about the photograph. That was his father, he says, crossing himself. He was a shepherd, and a cheesemaker. Our host is delighted that an *Amerikanida* recognizes the touloumi and knows touloumotiri. "How could I forget the flavor?" I ask, shrugging. When I ask if he knows anyone

who still makes it, he shakes his head, laughing. "No, no, *kamari mou*—my pride—no one uses the touloumi anymore."

Later that summer, I travel to a farm in the mountains above our village to interview a cheesemaker for a story I'm writing for an American food magazine. When I arrive, she's waiting for me. In her seventies, Thomae is dressed in a blue plaid dress, wool knee-highs, and a bright blue calico apron. Her arms look strong and she is quick to smile, however shyly. We walk the fifteen-acre farm, the place she has lived and worked most of her life with her husband, Theodoros, their ten children, and countless sheep and goats. Thomae shows me her garden and a small field of wheat, which she and Theodoros still harvest by hand with a scythe; she talks about the cheeses she makes from the milk of their flocks. Eventually, she takes me to her cheesemaking room, in a tiny outbuilding off the courtyard. When we walk in, I'm met by a familiar smell—the pungent whiff of goat's and sheep's milk, of Panayiotis's market, of touloumotiri. She points to the wooden paddle she uses to stir the milk, which she heats in a knee-high copper colander over a propane burner on the floor. The paddle was her mother's and her grandmother's before her. The colander, now blackened by years of use, came with her dowry nearly fifty years ago. When she tells me that the name of the cheese she makes this time of year is touloumotiri, I'm thrilled. But then she leads me to her cellar and opens the door to rows of bright blue plastic barrels. I ask her about the touloumi—the skin—and, just like the taverna owner we met in the mountains, she laughs. "The touloumi left when electricity came to the farm,



Thomae gathers greens from her garden. Photo: Dimitris Maniatis

poulaki mou,” she answers, calling me her “little bird,” a common term of endearment, even if it implies a certain naivete. The electricity “came to the farm” about fifteen years ago.

To say that Thomae and I strike up a friendship would be an exaggeration. It would be more accurate to say that I develop a fascination with her and her traditional lifestyle and that she indulges me, welcoming the children and me to visit anytime. Whenever we do, her kitchen is filled with seasonal culinary projects: berries from her garden for preserves; chamomile blossoms for tea; homemade sheep’s milk butter on the counter. In a storage room beneath the house, balls of *mizithra* hang from the ceiling beside long strings of wild greens and herbs drying over barrels of walnuts, apples, and pears and bottles of wine she makes from grapes she and Theodoros grow.

Thomae talks about the seasons and how they determine how she and Theodoros live, when they plant, harvest, and forage, how they shepherd, when they make cheese, and how they influence the cheeses’ flavors. Thomae’s culinary and agricultural insights lead to stories about weather, wild grasses, flowers,

and herbs. About her family and their traditions. These stories lead to others: about the difficult years during and after World War II, the heartbreak of the Greek Civil War, the births and deaths of people she loved. As she talks, I gain perspective—I am moved by the tranquility she possesses, the jokes she slyly cracks, despite the suffering she’s endured. Thomae’s stories are themselves sustenance.

When I was a child, it was easy to find touloumotiri in the touloumi. Today, cheesemakers like Thomae produce a cheese they *call* touloumotiri, but because they age it in barrels made of plastic or wood, not in animal skins, they’re not producing true touloumotiri.

Finding the real thing becomes my obsession. I talk to shopkeepers, cheesemakers, shepherds, neighbors and their friends and relatives, nearby and distant. I even travel to the island of Zakynthos off the opposite coast of the Peloponnese to interview a food historian about the cheese. Each time I return to Greece, I continue my search. In the process of searching, I hear people recount their memories of touloumotiri—of wedding feasts and saints’ days, of famine and funerals, of folding some into a bit of cloth



ABOVE: Hiking with friends Eleni and James to find Dimitris and the elusive touloumotiri cheese. Photo: Alexis Adams.
RIGHT: Dimitris holds the inflated touloumi skin to make touloumotiri cheese. He and his family migrate, on foot, each summer to graze their goats and sheep on the green grasses and make cheese. Photo: Alexis Adams

for a long walk over the mountains to woo a beloved in a far-flung village.

I also learn that touloumotiri has “skin terroirs.” Not only does it taste of the plants growing in the meadow where the sheep grazed, but it also tastes of the meadow where the goat whose skin serves as the vessel grazed. Because the rennet to coagulate the milk comes from the stomach of a kid or lamb, you get the culture of that creature and its place too. The cheese’s complex flavors reflect unique moments in specific places that, in all their ecological complexity—convergences of plants, animals, soil, fog, rain, slope, and sunlight—will never be repeated. I begin to understand that my search isn’t just about touloumotiri, it’s about history and tradition, strength and courage, kindness, generosity, and love, and it’s about the more-than-human earth. It’s about the resilience that comes from diversity, in all its forms, including the culinary, cultural, and biological.

And, nearly every time we sit down to eat in this ancient and beautiful place, symbols of this diversity and resilience are right there, on our plates—in the dozens of traditional foods we have learned to love, and in the one we know is missing.

Dimitris is the only shepherd in this region who still follows the ancient practice of transhumance, migrating by foot with his flocks each spring from lower-altitude grazing lands to these mountain pastures, following centuries-old trails called *monopatía*. Sometimes alone, sometimes with his wife, Yianoula, and their children, he stays here in the high country until mid- to late October, allowing their goats and sheep to graze on still green grasses, living in a traditional stone hut, called a *kalivi*, foraging, gardening, and crafting cheese and other dairy products.

My friends and I have walked all morning to reach Dimitris and his family and, with them, we enjoy a good afternoon visiting over coffee, watching the cheesemaking process, feasting, and celebrating—for after three years of searching for touloumotiri from the touloumi, I have finally found it, thanks to these friends who have led me here.

Dimitris offers me a slice and it tastes just the way I remember it: piquant, like an aged cheddar, with mouthwatering hints of blue and a pungent earthiness. There are these flavors, yes, but there is a sense of homecoming, too. Suddenly it's 1978 again. It is the high season for tourists and Panayiotis's shop is bustling. I stand in line with my mother, waiting our turn to order at the counter. I watch Panayiotis retrieve the touloumi from its shadowy corner and hear a group of sunburned tourists titter when they see him scooping cheese from the carcass. "Disgusting," one of them says. "How could anyone eat that?" Panayiotis's face flushes. I feel my skin prickle with anger and, to my great surprise, I feel myself striding over to the counter. "Disgusting?" I say, "Oh, not at all! It's delicious." And I ask for a slice. He hands it to me, a question in his eyes: Are you sure? But I pop it in my mouth, even though I'm not at all sure. It's my first taste of touloumotiri, at last, and I remain skeptical as I close my eyes and chew. Skeptical, that is, until I realize that it is mouthwatering and delicious—that, despite its container once very much alive, it is so much better than Kraft. I open my eyes to see a grin on Panayiotis's face. *Effaristo, poulaki mou*, he says. "Thank you, my little bird. Congratulations! You finally did it."

We leave the shop just as the tourists step up to the counter, asking to taste the touloumotiri. As we walk through the village, I feel a part of this place. And I feel anticipation: about slicing into the hunk of cheese that's in the bag I am carrying home—a bag that contains meadows and forests, fog and rain, soil, slope, and sunlight, culture, resilience, and story. Yes, Panayiotis, I think to myself, yes. I do *loff* touloumotiri.

ALEXIS MARIE ADAMS lives and writes in rural Greece and at the edge of the Greater Yellowstone region in Montana. Her stories—about cultural and sustainable travel, culinary and agricultural traditions, and environmental issues—have appeared in *National Geographic*, *The Guardian*, *Scientific American*, *The Boston Globe*, and others. Find more of her work at alexisadamswrites.com. This article was first published online in May 2023 and is shared with us by our kind friends at *Orion* magazine, orionmagazine.org



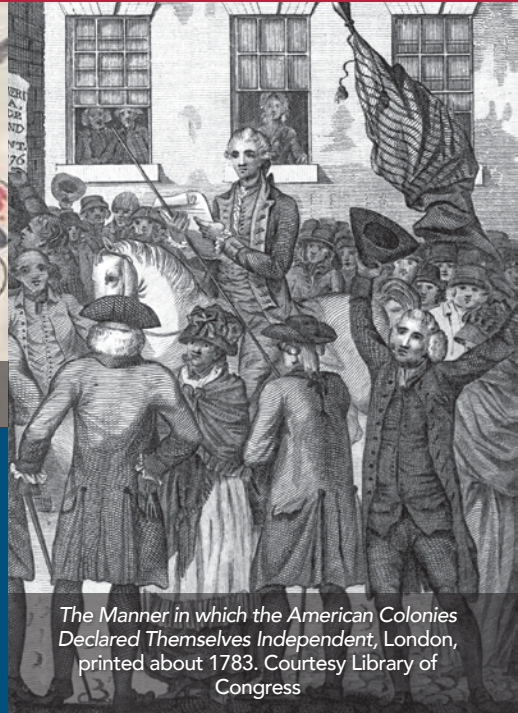
SEE THE SMITHSONIAN IN A



Bloody Massacre in King Street, engraving by Paul Revere, 1770. Courtesy of National Museum of American History



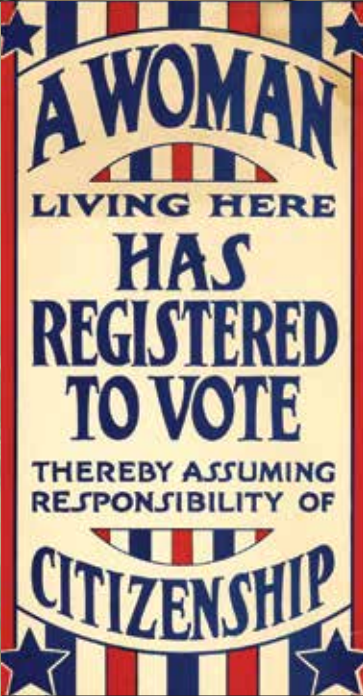
Remember the 4th holiday banner, 1860s. Courtesy National Museum of American History



The Manner in which the American Colonies Declared Themselves Independent, London, printed about 1783. Courtesy Library of Congress

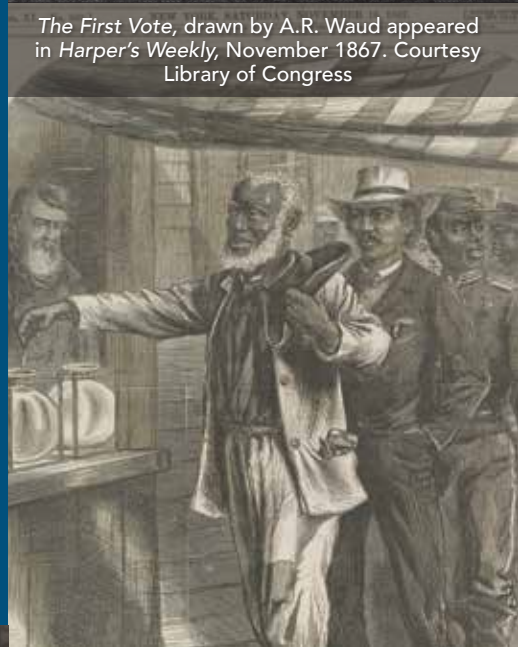


Statue of Liberty, sketch, June 30, 1884. Courtesy Library of Congress



LEFT: A Woman Living Here Has Registered to Vote, window sign for a home, 1919. Courtesy National Museum of American History

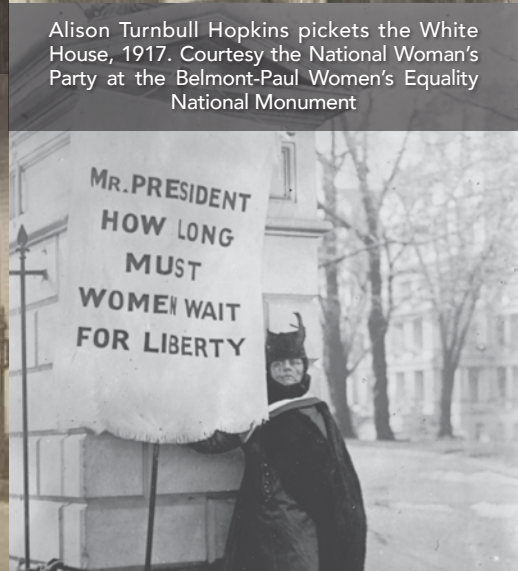
The Constitution's call to action is clear. Democracy is a verb! It demands action, reaction, vision, and revision as we continue to question how to form "a more perfect union." From small towns to big cities, the state of our union is a work in progress and every community and individual plays a part. Exhibit features: historical and contemporary photos, archival video, multimedia interactives, vintage campaign souvenirs, voter memorabilia, and more.



Alison Turnbull Hopkins pickets the White House, 1917. Courtesy the National Woman's Party at the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument



National Woman's Party march for woman's suffrage, Washington, D.C., February 14, 1917. Photograph gift of Alice Paul Centennial Foundation, National Museum of American History



MR. PRESIDENT HOW LONG MUST WOMEN WAIT FOR LIBERTY

TOWN NEAR YOU!



March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963 by Rowland Scherman.
Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration



From the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street program, the traveling exhibit *Voices and Votes: Democracy in America* explores the complex history of our nation: The Revolution. Civil rights. Suffrage. Elections. Protests. The rights and responsibilities of citizens. Catch this national tour, brought to you by Oklahoma Humanities.

Naturalization Ceremony at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, July 4, 2013.
©Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello



specphotoops/unsplash.com

HOST SITES & DATES

Nowata Historical Society & Museum

April 13, 2024 – May 25, 2024

Bristow Train Depot & Museum

June 1, 2024 – July 13, 2024

Anadarko Community Library

July 20, 2024 – August 31, 2024

Cheyenne-Roger Mills County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism

September 7, 2024 – October 19, 2024

Al Harris Library at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford

October 26, 2024 – December 7, 2024

Bethany Library

December 14, 2024 – January 25, 2025


Smithsonian
Institution


OKLAHOMA
HUMANITIES

Sponsors: *Voices and Votes: Democracy in America* is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and State Humanities Councils nationwide. Based on an exhibition by the National Museum of American History, *Voices and Votes* is made possible in Oklahoma by Oklahoma Humanities. Oklahoma programming is supported by The Carolyn Watson Rural Oklahoma Community Foundation, The Stuart Family Foundation, The Gerald H. Westby Jr. Foundation, The Southwestern Urban Foundation: John E. Green Community Fund, and 2Fellas Moving Company. Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress.

OH RECEIVES \$30,000 NEH CHAIR'S GRANT

Oklahoma Humanities (OH) was recently awarded a special Chair's Grant of \$30,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to support and promote programs that increase public knowledge of the history of federal Native American boarding schools in Oklahoma.

OH will use the grant to support Oklahoma's National History Day, a program that encourages middle and high school students to think critically about historical topics and present projects, exhibitions, performances, and essays based on their research. As noted in NEH Chair Shelly Lowe's introduction, adjacent, the grant has also funded free copies of this magazine issue, which features the following articles on two Oklahoma Indian boarding schools and the diversity of experiences for students who attended them: "Chilocco: Native American Resilience within the Indian Boarding School System" by K. Tsianina Lomawaima and "Federal Indian Boarding Schools Still Exist, but What's Inside May Be Surprising" by Sequoia Carrillo and Allison Herrera.

We are grateful to Chair Lowe for her thoughtful leadership in guiding the NEH and State Councils toward greater tribal collaboration and representation, and for the opportunity to heighten awareness of the enduring effects of this history in our state.

OH Executive Director
Caroline Lowery



PARTNERSHIP TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING

*Addressing the intergenerational
impact of federal Indian boarding
schools*

NEH Chair Shelly C. Lowe (Navajo)

Of the 408 federal Indian boarding schools identified by the Department of the Interior (DOI) operating in the U.S. and its territories between 1819 to 1969, the largest concentration was in Oklahoma, which maintained 76 federally-funded boarding schools for Native children. For

the country's Indigenous peoples, the era of federal Indian boarding schools remains an extremely painful chapter in our history, with communities and families still dealing with the long-term effects of a system that separated children from their families and homes, severed their connections to their Native languages, cultures, and traditions, and stripped them of their Native identities. In addition to this forced removal and assimilation, many students within the federal boarding school system also experienced abuse, harsh conditions, malnutrition, neglect, and disease.

The humanities have an important role to play in helping us understand this history and its impact on Native Americans today, and in providing a platform for discussion, healing, and reconciliation. The first step toward addressing the intergenerational consequences of these schools is to squarely acknowledge and examine the history of a federal system intended to separate families, erase Native languages and cultures, and dispossess Native peoples of their land. Through a partnership with the Department of the Interior on the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is helping document the experiences of survivors and descendants of federal boarding school policies and practices so that we can better understand this challenging and under-studied past.

I commend Oklahoma Humanities for highlighting this history in its magazine, and for additional programmatic efforts to support and expand the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative and increase knowledge of the history and impact of the federal Indian boarding school system.



Photo by Cheriss May

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES



CHILOCCO

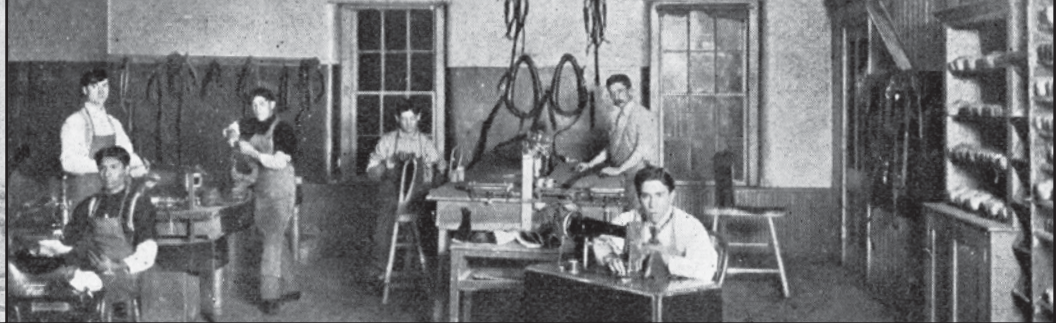


Native American Resilience within the Indian Boarding School System

K. TSIANINA LOMAWAIMA

I open and close this essay with the personal stories of my dad, Curt, and his brother, Bob, both students at Chilocco Indian Agricultural School. These stories reside in my heart, nestled among the vivid, loving memories of my dad and the very, very little I know about his brother. The stories I heard from my dad about his childhood at Chilocco inspired me in the 1980s to undertake an oral history of the school as it existed in the 1920s and 1930s.

On September 20, 1927, a car pulled up to the Wichita Children's Home in Wichita, Kansas. Probation officer A. E. Jones picked up brothers Curtis Thorpe Carr (age 9) and Robert Carlyle Carr (age 10) to drive them seventy-five miles south to Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma. The boys were likely dressed in pressed bib overalls or white shirts and ties. My grandmother, Cora Wynema Carr, Muscogee (Creek), was a single



LEFT: Class of 1894, Chilocco Indian Industrial School. 1. Louis McDonald (Ponca). 2. John Kimble (Ponca). 3. Allen Johnson (Seneca). 4. Samuel Lincoln (Otoe). 5. Charles Deroin (Otoe). 6. Thompson Alfred (Shawnee). 7. Mary Charley (Shawnee). 8. Laura Purdy (Winnebago). 9. Emma Johnson (Potawatomi). 10. Josephine Geck (Wyandotte). 11. Annie Crowe (Seneca). 12. Ellen Edwards (Caddo). 13. Annie Barome (Shawnee). 14. Etta Purdy (Winnebago). OHS Photograph Collection.
RIGHT: Shoe and harness shop, June 1901. OHS Photograph Collection



A sunny day, June 1901. OHS Photograph Collection



Football team, June 1901. OHS Photograph Collection



Commissioned officers, 1915. NARA



Engineers, 1915. NARA



Football team on office steps, 1915. NARA



Track team, 1910. NARA



Uniforms hanging in the tailor shop. Photo by William S. Prettyman & Cornish, Arkansas City, KS. OHS Photograph Collection



Miss Robertson's school room, 1913. NARA



School band and orchestra, *Chiloccoan Journal*, 1931. archive.org



Girls basketball team, *Chiloccoan Journal*, 1933. archive.org



Student nurses and sponsors, *Chiloccoan Journal*, 1932. archive.org



Chilocco Indian School, Newkirk, Okla. Territory. Photo by Thomas Croft, Okla. Territory. OHS Photograph Collection

mother who worked sporadically in the Children's Home laundry and dressed her children neatly, even in tough times. I don't know why the boys were reporting to a parole officer; my dad never said. In any case they were Indian boys, so local authorities felt they were a federal responsibility and Jones filed their applications to the nearest off-reservation Indian boarding school.

Located between Arkansas City, Kansas, to the north and Ponca City, Oklahoma, to the south, Chilocco (pronounced shī-law'kō) enrolled thousands of Native American children and young adults from 1884 until 1980. If we judge the school by federal attempts to dissolve Native identity and erase beliefs and practices, Chilocco both succeeded and failed. Boarding schools unquestionably did serious damage. Students fell prey to disease, accidents, abuse, malnutrition. Among survivors, experiences and recollections vary tremendously; positive and negative and often both, they remind us of the resilience of Native youth. We must honor them all, those who were lost, those who were scarred, all who survived. One reality unites boarding school alums: they grew up in an institution, not at home. That marked everyone.

JUSTIFYING "CIVILIZATION"

The United States was built entirely on Native lands and U.S. relationships with Native Peoples have always been rooted in land. Violent methods of dispossession required justification. The U.S. subscribed to European ideas that were inaccurate but self-serving: Christian nations had a divine right

to claim lands inhabited by "heathen savages"; Indigenous people did not farm or use lands "efficiently"; Indigenous peoples were morally, physically, and intellectually inferior and required instruction to "civilize" them as Christian, English-speaking laborers. In an 1818 report, a House Select Committee recommended how to transform Indian people:

Put into the hands of their children the [reading] primer and the hoe, and they will naturally, in time, take hold of the plough; and, as their minds become enlightened and expand, the Bible will be their book, and they will grow up in habits of morality and industry . . . and become useful members of society.

As a result, Congress passed the Civilization Fund Act of 1819 and appropriated \$10,000 to support church missions working to "uplift" American Indians as wards of the federal government. In the next century of explosive westward expansion, scattered mission schools could not keep pace with the need to "civilize" Indians, who were rapidly and unconstitutionally being stripped of land and denied their inherent sovereign powers.

By the mid-1800s, the federal government began to establish its own system of day schools and on- and off-reservation boarding schools, including Chilocco. All these schools were designed to "erase and replace" Native life with American values and instill obedience to federal authority. The erasure of Native languages, cultures, and lifeways was seen as a benevolent act and civilization as a grant. As Chilocco yearbooks and newspapers explained:



Katie Carpitcher, age 18, left, and Fannie Jane Ripley, age 17, gain counter experience, 1955. OPCPC-OHS



Auto mechanic trainees overhaul a car by replacing the head, ca. 1955. FCC-OHS



Agriculture, one of the primary vocations taught at Chilocco. Here, a group of students get instruction in dairy cattle judging, under supervision of Mr. Francis Heinz, ca. 1954-1955. FCC-OHS



Trainee Elizabeth West completed training and was employed as a cook at Diebel's Café, Arkansas City, KS, ca. 1954. FCC-OHS



Typing, taught as a related skill for pre-professionals. FCC-OHS



A group of seniors exiting Haywarth Hall—the center of student activities, library, auditorium—on their way to dormitories, ca. 1954. FCC-OHS



Special Navajo Program Class with their teacher, Mrs. Leola Taylor, a Chilocco graduate; ca. 1950-1959. FCC-OHS



Matron vocational training was offered to older girls with an interest in working in the dormitory, ca. 1955. FCC-OHS



Arc welding taught in blacksmith welding training program, ca. 1955. FCC-OHS



Troop 89, Boy Scouts Of America, affiliated with the Northern Oklahoma Council, ca. 1955. FCC-OHS



Leather tooling taught in connection with shoe repair, ca. 1955. FCC-OHS



The Daily Oklahoman: "Times have changed drastically at Chilocco Indian School between Albert Makescry's graduation with the class of 1908 and this year's commencement exercises for his grandson, Brian Kemble." Photo by David Longtreath, May 18, 1980. OPCPC-OHS



A pupil in clothing class, ca. 1955. FCC-OHS



Freshman Class of 1954-55 at a Student Dinner, part of the training program for all Chilocco students. FCC-OHS

Image credits: FCC-OHS: Florence Correll Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society
OPCPC-OHS: Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society
NARA: National Archives and Records Administration, Office of the Special Disbursing Agent, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs. Part of a series of glass plate negatives used by the Chilocco Indian School print shop in publishing the *Indian School Journal*, 1909-1915

It is expected that all who borrow our opportunities shall return to the United States both principal and interest in intelligent and patriotic service as the result of an improved quality of citizenship. In such service alone can the debt be paid.

When Chilocco opened in 1884 it was called Haworth Institute, after Superintendent of Indian Schools Major James M. Haworth, who selected the school site for an imposing three-story building designed to house 150 students, employees, classrooms, dining hall, and kitchen. It was no accident Haworth held military rank; like other off-reservation federal boarding schools opened in the 1880s (Chemawa in Oregon, Albuquerque in New Mexico, Haskell in Kansas, Genoa in Nebraska), Chilocco inherited a legacy of federal Indian policy originally housed in the War Department. Men with military experience were prime candidates for jobs supervising Indians, even when bureaucratic authority was shifted to the Interior Department.

The first 150 children enrolled in Chilocco came from the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Wichita, Comanche, and Pawnee tribes. By 1895, enrollment had increased to 352, and by 1906 students hailed from a wide variety of tribes across Oklahoma and the West. Military or police forces were frequently brought to bear to force parents to surrender their children to the schools; other punitive methods, such as withholding food rations, were also effective.

Coerced enrollment never entirely disappeared but, over time, a diversity of economics, family situations, and curiosity drove enrollment (see the alumni testimony on page 34). Native communities felt school

attendance was an avenue to gain skills that were useful, such as fluency and literacy in English and knowledge of U.S. legal structures, yet many public schools were nonexistent, inaccessible, or closed to Native enrollment through the early twentieth century.

After 1910, Chilocco enrollment from the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee (Creek), and Seminole Nations grew significantly. By 1925, Cherokee students constituted the largest single tribal affiliation (25% of approximately 875 students). At the height of enrollment during the Great Depression, young people from up to 45 Native nations attended. By the early 1920s, Chilocco had more applications than it had room. As public schools became more accessible to Indian children after World War II, Chilocco served students from more remote, inaccessible areas such as the Navajo reservation in Arizona/New Mexico/Utah and Native villages in Alaska.

BONDS OF RESILIENCE

Strictly regimented boarding schools applied rigorous military discipline and stressed training in trades, manual, and domestic labor, known as “actual work.” Summers were often spent in the Outing Program which placed many students in the homes of local white citizens to work as nannies, housekeepers, ranch hands, or farm workers. Alumni remember 22 bugle calls a day, G.I. (government issue) uniforms, scanty meals, inadequate health care, and a paucity of individual attention. They also remember rivalries that crosscut school society, as well as the loyalty, love, and mischief-making (called trixing) that bonded students.

In 1983 and 1984, I interviewed my dad and about 60 alumni who attended Chilocco

between 1917 and the early 1940s. Their words illuminate boarding school life in the 1920s and 1930s (names used here are pseudonyms):

Hubert (Choctaw, enrolled 1940, age 15): We were a poor family out in the country, and Dad decided they had to send us to a boarding school, it'd be cheaper on them.

Rachel (Cherokee, enrolled 1929, 4th grade): I couldn't go to school at home. I was the oldest girl and so I had to take care of the younger ones. I *wanted* an education.

Charlie (Cherokee, enrolled 1934, age 14): My grandparents died when the youngest of 8 or 10 brothers and sisters were young; they went to Chilocco and as we came along, the next generation, it was sort of a family tradition.

Noreen (Potawatomi, enrolled 1924, age 12): What a sad parting that was! To leave your mother and father, at that age. And drop off in a strange place. It looked so forbidding with all those brick buildings. Sad day.

Winona (Cherokee, enrolled 1930, 10th grade): I was resentful of the regimentation, but it didn't hurt us. . . . We wanted very much to go back home but it only took us about three weeks to become acquainted with the different ones and we adjusted quite easily.

Curtis (Muscogee [Creek], enrolled 1927, age 9): When I first went to school there, I was horrified at the way they ate. They sat you down at a table, put the food on, and rang a bell. If you weren't *fast*—about the first three days I almost starved to death because they'd just reach out and grab it and split it up among themselves and trade off. If you didn't grab something, you were out of luck, you didn't eat.

Ira (Cherokee, enrolled 1936): The one thing, if you didn't learn anything else, was to learn to work. I don't remember learning anything in school. Except not to write on walls! [laughter]

Florence (Choctaw, enrolled 1937, 7th grade): One thing that I think figures into this lack of warmth I'm talking about, is the loss of individuality that comes from that damn G.I.-issue striped denim drawers, gray sweaters. It was just, I guess, some kind of a feeling to encourage submission. I don't know what else you'd call it. The thing that I

remember most about it, and I think it's probably the most valuable thing I learned, or the longest lasting, is the value of friendship. We were *very* close friends, and you never forget.

Albert (Cherokee, enrolled 1926, age 13): The reason we went up there, my mother was invalid that summer, and there was no one to care for us. I later joined the Marine Corps and did 28 years with the Marine Corps, and you hear people talk about how tough boot camp was; that was a *breeze* after Chilocco. [laughter]

Juanita (Cherokee, enrolled 1929, age 12): [You worked off demerits] on your hands and knees, with our old wool sweaters. They made excellent polishing cloths [laughter], you could see yourself in the floors. And as you walked you thought, "Oh, I wish I could fly!" and you dusted your tracks out as you went. Those demerits when you look back, they weren't given for anything except mischief. Like turning your head—you had to look straight ahead. Or talking in line was absolutely forbidden.

Mason (Cherokee, enrolled 1928, age 11): The formative years, nine through ten, one learned he was either white (light complected), half breed (brown, light hair), or full-blood (dark). So gangs were formed, for individuals' protection, learning trust, to fight for each other, right or wrong. After the tenth, eleventh grade, why you were pretty much old enough then to take care of yourself and you didn't have this business of the individuals ganging up, and they were kind of more sociable.

Robert (Cherokee, enrolled 1933, 10th grade): I was getting a good education at a boarding school that some millionaire would send his son back East to a place like that, wouldn't be as good as Chilocco. I felt like I was really in an elite place.

Edgar (Muscogee [Creek], enrolled 1929, age 10): There were things that you had to do and the discipline was such, that it just didn't make any difference, there was no exceptions. And maybe that makes a better person out of you, at least you learn there's a lesson in all this, a *hard* lesson.

In 1928, the Institute for Government Research in Washington, D.C. published a report on the federal Indian Service that scathingly critiqued conditions in the boarding schools. A few reforms were introduced through



the 1930s. For example, boys and girls could sit together in the dining room, a reform my dad recalled filled the young boys with horror—sit down and eat, even talk, with *girls*? The strict gender segregation enforced up to this time had not prepared them for this. The men who supervised the boys were no longer called “disciplinarians”; they became “counselors,” though personnel remained the same. Vocational trades for boys were slowly updated; harness-making was replaced by auto mechanics, electrical, and plumbing trades. The drudgery work devoted to school upkeep was cut back, but many aspects of student life endured: separation from home and family for years at a time, strict discipline, training for subservience, and vocational rather than academic curricula.

Across the 1960s and 1970s, changing social conditions, growing Native enrollments in public schools, and federal reluctance to fund and operate schools for American Indians, despite treaty and trust obligations, led to the closure of many schools. At Chilocco, student-on-student violence escalated and enrollments dropped dramatically in the 1970s. The federal government closed the school in 1980. The agricultural land, over 8,000 acres, was turned over to the neighboring Kaw, Ponca, Otoe-Missouria, Pawnee, and Cherokee Nations. The buildings of the central campus were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2006, but are decaying and dangerous today.

A RESPECTFUL RECKONING

On June 22, 2021, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna) announced the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative to investigate “the loss of human life and the lasting consequences” of Indian boarding schools. The Initiative can be a critical step

forward. As we count, name, and honor students, justice demands that the United States accept responsibility for the institutional violence of boarding schools.

The legacies of boarding schools reverberate beyond those who created and benefited from their harsh realities (the Interior Department, Congress, and the Supreme Court; school staff and church leaders; ranchers, farmers, and homemakers who exploited Outing labor). Again, every square inch that the U.S. claims today was Native land, and boarding schools were key weapons in the federal agenda to dispossess and deculturate Native nations. That means that all of us who live in the U.S. have inherited the legacies of those federal agendas, including the legacies of boarding schools.

Accountability—not pity—must guide U.S. reckoning with those legacies. Thinking of boarding schools as unfortunate relics of a past era whitewashes inequities in the present day. Reducing Native people to unfortunate victims devalues the Native children who were lost, denies the resilience of the survivors, and disrespects the sovereign Native nations fighting to determine their futures.

One reality unites all boarding school alums: they grew up in an institution, not at home. During the many years they spent away—learning how to survive homesickness, how to make and keep friends, how to take care of themselves, how to adjust, adapt, resist, submit, rebel, get along, excel—they were *not* learning at home from parents, family, and community, *not* reaping the cultural rewards of language, land, and place. We can never measure that loss. Some were lost, some were scarred, some came out stronger. Some determined to return home and re-embrace language, culture, and nation. Some never returned home and never looked back.

There’s no one path to healing. We are diverse people and Nations and one answer does not fit all. There is, however, a path that U.S. society might follow in reckoning with boarding school legacies. We can be guided by an ethic of accountability. We can recognize and respect the inherent sovereignty of Native nations and work collaboratively to support their rights to self-government, self-determination, and education of their generations. And we can focus on a present and a future that are informed by an accurate understanding of the past.

I visited Chilocco on August 17, 2023—at least I looked through the locked gate under the Chilocco Indian School arch, down the avenue lined with Chinese elms that are now fairly shattered by almost a century of Oklahoma weather.

FIRST STOP: OKLAHOMA

U.S. Secretary Deb Haaland on “The Road to Healing” Tour



U.S. Secretary Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna), U.S. Department of the Interior (right), and (left) Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland (Bay Mills Indian Community - Ojibwe) held the first event of “The Road to Healing Tour” at Riverside Indian School, Anadarko, OK, July 9, 2022.



LEFT: Ray Doyah (Kiowa) spoke about his time at Riverside Indian School. RIGHT: James Nells (Navajo), a U.S. combat veteran, carried an eagle staff as part of the color guard presentation. PHOTOS: Tami A. Heilemann, Department of the Interior

From July 2022 to November 2023, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna) undertook “The Road to Healing” tour as part of the Federal Indian Boarding School initiative. Her first stop was at Riverside Indian School, Anadarko, Oklahoma. In a year-long tour of similar gatherings across the nation, Native survivors of federal boarding schools shared their experiences as residents and the lasting impressions left for them and their descendants. Haaland included the following among her remarks to those assembled in the Riverside gymnasium:

Federal Indian boarding school policies have touched every Indigenous person I know. Some are survivors. Some are descendants, but we all carry the trauma in our hearts. My ancestors endured the horrors of the Indian boarding school assimilation policies carried out by the State Department that I now lead.

This is the first time in history that a Cabinet Secretary comes to the table with this shared trauma. . . . I launched the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative last year to undertake the comprehensive effort to recognize the legacy of boarding school policies with the goal of addressing their intergenerational impacts and to shed light on the traumas of the past. To do that, we need to tell our stories. Today is part of that journey. . . .

I want you all to know that I am with you on this journey and I am here to listen. I will listen with you. I will grieve with you, I will weep, and I will feel your pain. As we mourn what we have lost, please know that we still have so much to gain. The healing that can help our communities will not be done overnight, but it will be done. This is one step among many that we will take to strengthen and rebuild the bones of the Native communities that the Federal Indian boarding schools set out to break.

The initiative is a national effort to help connect tribal communities with trauma-informed support and facilitate collection of a permanent oral history. The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition received a grant through the Bureau of Indian Affairs to facilitate the collection of these stories and experiences to educate current and future generations. Funding for the initiative was made in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Mellon Foundation.

Federal Indian Boarding Schools Still Exist, But What's Inside May Be Surprising

SEQUOIA CARRILLO AND ALLISON HERRERA



On a hot afternoon last summer, Riverside Indian School drew a crowd from all over Oklahoma. Elders and family members drove hours to pile into the residential school's gymnasium. They filled the space with rows of chairs and stuffed the bleachers up to the rafters, but when the meeting was called to order, everyone was silent.

Facing the busloads of tribal citizens were U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland. They traveled from Washington to listen for as long as people wanted to speak. The subject at hand? The very place they were sitting.

The gym now shines with new equipment and has a wall dedicated to the "Tribes of Riverside." A symbol of the new Riverside, one with a majority Native staff and an emphasis on cultural practices. But for many of the people here, Riverside Indian School was once a waking nightmare.

One of the first to speak was an 85-year-old man with short salt-and-pepper hair who used a walker to steady himself. Donald Neconie attended this school more than 60 years ago.

"It was 12 years of hell," he told the officials. He recounted for Haaland and Newland how, when he first arrived at the school, the staff treated him like a prisoner.

"The moment I landed there, they took me downstairs, took all my clothes off, and threw a bunch of green stuff all over me," Neconie said.

He described his time here as an experience marked by abuse—both emotional and physical—and said that certain teachers would routinely beat students for acting up or just for speaking their own language.

The experiences were so awful that when one of the buildings at Riverside, known as Kiowa lodge, burned down, he stood by and cheered: "I laughed when they tore it down."

HISTORY OF RIVERSIDE

Riverside sits perched along a hill overlooking the Washita River in Anadarko, the very heart of Indian Country in southwest Oklahoma. This is Caddo, Delaware, and Wichita land. The school opened its doors in 1871 and is one of four off-reservation boarding schools still operating in the U.S. today.

Oklahoma at one time had the highest number of federal Indian boarding schools, more than 80, according to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. That's one of the reasons why it was chosen as the first stop on Interior Secretary Haaland's "Road to Healing" tour: a months-long

Amber Wilson taught at Riverside for years and is now the principal. She believes it is more important to move forward, rather than dwell on the school's past. "Our kids deserve what we can give them going forward." Photo: Brittany Bendabout for NPR



Winona, left, and Cynthia Castro (Kickapoo), members of the 4-H club at Riverside Indian school, Anadarko, get assistance from home economics instructor Mildred Cleghorn, 1959. The Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society



On the job training at Safeway Grocery Store, Anadarko, OK, c. 1954. (L to R): Vernon Martin, Store Manager, and Kee Chavez, Riverside Indian School. Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection



A lively discussion, leisure time in the living room at Keechi Cottage, Riverside Indian School. View includes: Jack Degroat, Freddie Yazzie, Larry Yazzie, Caroline Keedah, and Mary Edith Bitsillie, c. 1954. Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection

effort to hear from boarding school survivors about their experiences.

In recent months, there's been a renewed spotlight on these boarding schools, after the Department of Interior, for the first time ever, admitted its role in creating the system in 1819 and enabling the physical and emotional abuse Native children were forced to endure while attending them.

A report issued by the department last year described how these schools were part of a long-running federal effort to erase Native languages and cultures and to force Native people to give up their land and adopt white culture.

Haaland's own grandparents were taken away and forced to attend boarding schools: "I want you all to know that I am with you on this journey, and I am here to listen," she told the crowd.

While many in the gym are survivors of the boarding school era, others came to learn and to listen. The history of these schools touched more than just the students who attended; their impact spans generations.

"I will listen with you, I will grieve with you, I will weep and I will feel your pain as we mourn what we have lost. Please know that we still have so much to gain. The healing that can help our communities will not be done overnight, but it will be done," Haaland said, while holding back tears.

In the mid-20th century, many of these schools shut down due to reports of neglect and abuse, while those that remained made enormous changes. Four are still open today.

Since Neconie and others attended, thousands of Native students have walked through the school's halls and dorms. And now, unlike during Neconie's time, students actually choose to attend Riverside. But why?

RIVERSIDE TODAY

In many ways, Riverside looks a lot like any other school at 8 o'clock in the morning. The daily morning announcements blare over the PA system, and one or two stragglers hurry to class a few minutes late.

The sprawling campus is a mix of new and renovated buildings alongside older, run-down ones—some dating back to the school's inception. There are a few portable classrooms, an old red barn, and a brand new basketball court, all overseen by Amber Wilson, the school's principal.

"Our staff works hard to make the students feel like they're at home," she says.

And for the students, Riverside *is* home. It's still a residential school, so there are dorms and recreational facilities that

can make it feel more like a junior college than a high school or middle school.

“I always try to filter like, ‘If it’s good enough for my kid, it’s good for anybody’s kid,’” Wilson says. “That’s how I’ve always run the school.” While Wilson and officials here wouldn’t allow us to attend classes or interview students, she tours us around, commanding attention wherever she goes and saying hello to just about everyone.

Her cheery and unflappable demeanor translates into the decor of the school. The dorm common rooms are dressed up with patterned blankets and artwork on the walls. In the bathroom, even the shower curtains have bright pops of color.

She says they spent a lot of time decorating during the pandemic—Riverside was closed to students for 2020 and 2021. Her big project was turning one of the school’s trailers into a beauty parlor for the students to pick out shoes, dresses, and jewelry for prom.

That space is an explosion of pink and black velvet with lots of sequins. “We got our jewelry over there. We’ve got a little bit of candy for them,” Wilson says. “This is a full prom experience.”

Much of the school’s decor is bright and exuberant, but also full of pride. From murals on the walls to newspaper clippings on the bulletin boards, everything shows American Indian students proud to be Indian.

Things that Donald Neconie never would have seen in his time here.

This new approach filters into the curriculum, too. Wilson says the cultural activities include drum-making, flute-making, dress and ribbon skirt-making, moccasin-making—even little things like dream catchers. The culture is integrated into as many classes as possible, especially Benjamin Blackstar’s art class.

Blackstar attended Riverside as a student, then returned a few years ago to be the school’s art teacher. He says a lot has changed since he attended, mainly newer buildings and more of a focus on cultural preservation.

Another big difference? Some of the students have taken to wearing traditional clothing—like ribbon skirts and moccasins—to feel connected to their culture.

“It’s such an amazing sight to see,” Blackstar says.

He felt a strong pull to come back to Riverside: His siblings also attended, and his parents met at a boarding

school. Many students come to Riverside because their parents or their older siblings also attended the school.

Despite some of its older history, in recent generations students see it as a way to get a better education away from their hometowns. It comes with its own challenges, but Blackstar feels uniquely positioned to help the students.

“We all have that goal, we all have that target, to educate these kids,” he says. “That way they can go back to their reservations, to their communities and spread that.”



Dining room at the Old Kitchen at Riverside Indian School.
Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection

Blackstar’s grandmother went to Riverside, too—75 years ago. He says she died before they could talk about her experience at Riverside, but he still sees her often—her school portrait hangs in the hallway outside his classroom.

She’s surrounded by portraits of the class of 1948; almost all of the students are smiling wide. Blackstar hopes his grandmother had a good experience here, when so many did not.

Dealing with the painful memories that the school holds is something that most of the teachers and administrators have trouble articulating.

Justifiably so, as these conversations are not a simple history lesson. For many teachers and administrators, the school’s past is tied up in intergenerational trauma.

Wilson says the history of the school is not officially taught in the classroom. She says she believes the best way to heal from it is to move past it.



Navajo citizen Lorenda Long, who attended a federal boarding school as a young girl, is a supporter of students at Riverside Indian School today. Photo: Brittany Bendabout for NPR

“All I can do is just go forward from where we are now and not dwell on the past. I’m not a person that looks in the rearview mirror all the time,” she says. “I don’t let things like that distract from the work that we’re doing now and what we want to do.”

And what they are doing now would have been mind-boggling to the students of decades ago.

But does the future at Riverside mean *never* looking back?

For some of the survivors of the boarding school system, the answer is no.

IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

Lorenda Long, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, wants to make sure that Indian boarding schools still operating today are the best places for young Native students who want to attend.

She was in the gym at the summer event at Riverside and told Haaland and Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland about her experience at a federal Indian boarding school in Arizona: Lower Greasewood, near where she grew up on the Navajo Nation reservation.

She says she left after another student assaulted her when she was 9.

“I had never, ever been hit before,” Long said about an older student. “I was in shock and I started crying, you

know, and he just said some curse words to me.”

Her mother pulled her out, but quickly sent her to another boarding school because she couldn’t afford to care for Lorenda and her siblings.

At the Road to Healing event at Riverside, she spoke directly to some tribal leaders who were in the audience, telling them they needed to help their young tribal citizens get a better education.

“It’s us that has to do something for our young people,” she said. “We can’t just expect Ms. Haaland to do it all by herself.”

Long is already pitching in.

Since she moved to Anadarko more than a decade ago, Long has taken it upon herself to care for younger Navajo students who move to Oklahoma to attend Riverside—those who might feel a little homesick. She did so at the urging of a friend who was a counselor there.

She says she’s like the students’ grandmother. “I want to encourage you to have an education,” she tells the students. “I want you to know, I’m here—if y’all ever need me, you know, just call on me.”

A couple of times a year, she invites all the Navajo students at Riverside to a special gathering where she cooks traditional foods like mutton stew and fry bread.

She wants the students to know that, despite the difficult legacy, these schools can be good places. While what happened to students like her and Neconie was a long time ago, the memories of those awful times remain.

“Some kids would run away and some kids would die from running away, get harmed from running away,” she said. “And there were some kids that were sexually abused.” Now, she adds, “I feel it’s a whole lot better.”

Alumni from recent decades talk about the connections they made with teachers, or school trips they took while they were students here. The school has a Facebook group of more than 3,000 alumni who proudly tout the school’s motto: “Once a brave, always a brave.”

Benjamin Blackstar teaches art at Riverside Indian School. He also attended school here as a student, along with his siblings.
Photo: Brittany Bendabout for NPR

RIVERSIDE'S FUTURE

One alumni active in the Facebook group is Leandra Johnson—she's Diné. She graduated from Riverside in 2007 and now lives in Bloomfield, NM.

She left the public high school she attended in Huerfano, NM, to finish at Riverside, where she says she got a better education, and has a relative who works there—her uncle Junior.

"I spent the summer with him and his family out there and I just fell in love with the school," said Johnson.

"And I think, ever since like sixth grade, I was begging my parents, Can I go? Can I go? Can I go?"

When she attended Riverside, Johnson said a little bit of the school's troubled history was included in the curriculum. She also learned Native American history that she was *never* taught at her public school in New Mexico, like the forced removal of thousands of Navajo on the infamous Long Walk of 1863-1866.

She read the government's boarding school report released earlier this year and was sad to see Riverside listed on it. She thinks it's important that the school's history is taught to the students.

Johnson remembers feeling more comfortable at Riverside because she was around other Native students and teachers—including the current principal, Amber Wilson, who Johnson said helped raise her. It felt like a family there.

Now, she has three children of her own, and her oldest, Aydrian, a shy seventh-grader who likes science and video games, wants to go to Riverside.

Aydrian knows about the history of these boarding schools from his own studies: watching videos about it online and some documentaries on TV. He knows children were forced to go and that they lost their language and culture. He thinks it's important for students to learn that history in addition to gaining some of the independence and life lessons at the school.

"My mom told me it was fun and that she made a lot of friends from all over the country," Aydrian said. "I want to go to Riverside. To see how it is for me and compare my experience to my mom's and great grandma's."



SEQUOIA CARRILLO is an assistant editor and reporter for NPR's Education Team. She regularly reports on Native communities and identity. Her work has appeared on numerous NPR podcasts including *Code Switch*, *Throughline*, and *Life Kit*.

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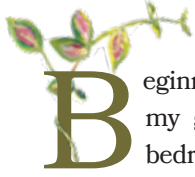
- Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI). Overview of the initiative, with links to the report on federal Indian boarding schools and an op-ed by Secretary Deb Haaland on her grandparents' experience. doi.gov/priorities/strengthening-indian-country
- *Please, go on with James Hohmann*, podcast from *The Washington Post*. Deb Haaland discusses the importance of a full accounting of the past. washingtonpost.com
- *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Stories*, Heard Museum. Online exhibit explores off-reservation boarding schools through photographs, artwork, interviews, and timelines. boardingschool.heard.org/introduction



LIFE AFTER LOSS

The dilemma of letting go

TONNIA L. ANDERSON



Beginning with the night my grandfather died, my grandmother abandoned the first-floor bedroom they had shared for 32 years and climbed the flight of stairs to where her children had slept years earlier. She was in her late 80s when I noticed on an overnight visit that she no longer trusted herself to walk upstairs. Instead, she made the nightly journey on her hands and knees. I offered to clean up the abandoned room that she had systematically filled over time with old clothes and junk, to change its appearance and function. She simply looked at me and said “no” in a tone I instinctively knew translated to “drop the subject.” At the time, her habits made no sense to me. It wasn’t until my wife died 20 years later that I understood why she always kept that room unrecognizable and the door closed.

Jami died unexpectedly 28 days before our 30th anniversary. She went to bed that night and never woke up. Upon discovering that she had died, I remember shouting between uncontrollable sobs, “I don’t know what to do! I don’t know what to do!” For months after, that same phrase would pop out of my mouth. I truly did not know what I meant until I realized that I did not know how to live in a world without her.

When Jami died, *we* died. Even legally, the *couple* we had been died with her. It felt like half of me had suddenly turned into a million tiny shreds of aged paper carried away by a strong Oklahoma wind, and no matter how hard I tried to retrieve the pieces they were always out of reach until they disappeared altogether. In an instant the world I had known—the love, the emotional security, the laughs, the conversations, the moments of irritation, the “honey-dos”—was gone, stolen in the middle of the night without warning. I wasn’t even able to say goodbye, to say the words “I love you” one more time. I realized after she passed that no matter how often those words were said over the span of nearly thirty years, it would never be enough to express a depth of emotions that defy words. Just as that marvelous human being had suddenly waltzed into my life, she exited it with the same spontaneity.

After her memorial service, society expected me

to move on as if nothing had happened and everything was perfectly normal. Moving on, though, is easier said than done when one loses a spouse. Despite the vast array of literature on death, there is no “Death 101 for Dummies” to prepare the mind for grief’s impact or make it magically go away by understanding its dynamics. Prior to Jami’s death, no one in my immediate family had died. Grief was an alien and abstract emotion that I had equated with sadness. When my grandmother died a few months shy of her 100th birthday, I was deeply saddened by it but, given her physical state, death was also a mercy. Grief, however, is not sadness. Sadness is generally characterized as feeling *unhappy, gloomy, downcast, glum*. While these emotions can be components of grief, synonyms allude to a deeper, darker state: *affliction, torment, suffering, anguish, heartache, sorrow, heartbreak, pain, and woe*. These synonyms correspond to a life-threatening *physical* wound without the aid of unconsciousness or a sedative. When Jami died, I understood the difference between the two words.

For me, grief translated into raw pain, isolation, even insanity. For months I had constant flashbacks of the pink fuzzy blanket that covered Jami’s body on the gurney as EMT personnel took her out of our home, of the funeral director giving me the diamond necklace she always wore, of my whispers, “Please don’t drop her, please be careful with her,” as she was placed into the hearse . . . of watching the hearse drive out of view and me standing in the yard in shock long after it was no longer visible. In a strange way, time seemed to stop at that moment.

For nearly a year I stayed outside on the patio regardless of heat or cold. I went inside only for necessary tasks and to sleep on the couch because being in the house without her was too painful. Everything had her imprint on it, the most mundane object could serve as an emotional trigger. It took me a year to emotionally process that Jami would never come home again. The loneliness, anger, and confusion felt absolute and insurmountable. I quickly learned how to control my emotions in public, but once home, I would cry uncontrollably.

Although I successfully fulfilled my professional obligations and dealt with the business of death, I truly thought that I was losing my mind. Thirty years of being together ended in a flash and I could only wonder where the time went. Losing Jami had created an existential crisis. For the first time in my life, I no longer knew who I was or understood my place in the world. Despite my education and knowledge of basic psychological theories on the stages of grief and loss, nothing prepared me for widowhood. There was no compass, no map, no recognizable signposts to help guide me.

In earlier centuries of our history, public rituals and attitudes about death and grieving provided a sense of hope and continuity. These have been replaced by the demands of contemporary society to simply “shake it off” and move on. I was expected to keep going, as if Jami’s death was nothing but a hiccup in my life, an inconvenience that threatened my productivity at work. Two weeks after her death, a colleague questioned why I was “still bothered” by her passing. The callousness left me speechless and angry. Though most acquaintances were polite, few knew what to say other than a hurried “hello” without breaking stride towards their destination. Such attitudes underscore the erasure of death and grief as natural phenomena, as inevitable components of life, leaving precious little space or grace to move on.

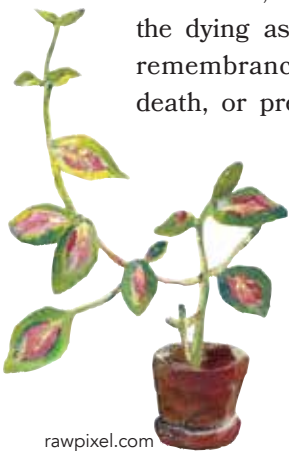
A century ago, approximately eighty-five percent of all Americans died at home, surrounded by family and friends. Now, the sick and dying spend the final stage of life in institutional settings where they expire and are discretely whisked away for funerary preparation. Relatively few people have held vigil over a deathbed, witnessed the moment of death, or helped the dying assert agency over post-death rituals of remembrance. Media representations romanticize death, or present it as grotesque and startling, or

render it invisible through a shroud of inferences without actually naming it. Despite its ubiquity, death is perceived as alien, taboo, and inconvenient. Those who grieve are perceived in a similar light, perpetuating their isolation, emotional distress, and negative health consequences due to bereavement.

But this was not always the case. During the nineteenth century, mortality rates increased, especially among children. Westward expansion, increased immigration, crowded urban centers, and unsanitary conditions created an environment for the spread of disease, often resulting in epidemics of yellow fever, tuberculosis, scarlet fever, typhoid, cholera, and other infectious diseases. Death was a common feature of domestic life; people openly discussed the topic and planned for it long before their demise. Familial expectations were clear and served to preserve the agency of the dying person as the individual transitioned into death.

Part of preserving the agency of the deceased rested with preserving the image of the person. Post-mortem photographs were a common component of death rituals. Sometimes family photographs were taken with the deceased, who were posed in ways to resemble the living. In many respects such images provided the only visual documentation of the person’s existence. Other rituals included braids or locks of hair of the departed that were incorporated into mourning jewelry or simply kept as memory tokens.

In Victorian-era America, elaborate social conventions developed around death and mourning for widows. The mourning period lasted up to two years and was divided into three stages: deep mourning, second mourning, and half-mourning. Degrees of social isolation and modes of dress were dictated by these stages. During deep mourning, women were expected to wear heavy black clothing often made of crepe or non-reflective silk. Black bonnets, black veils, and black gloves were also worn as aspects of deep mourning and no ornate jewelry was permitted. During second mourning or “ordinary mourning,” women were allowed to discontinue wearing veils and crepe. White trim could be added to dresses and jewelry could be worn. Upon entering half mourning or “light mourning,” subdued colors like lilac, purple, and gray could be worn. These visible signifiers not only indicated to the community at large that the person was in mourning but also readily identified the stage of mourning. In this way, grief was acknowledged and honored within the public sphere, shaping the patterns of social interaction that allowed people the space and time to grieve and then to transition back into wider life. Violating these norms was seen as an egregious form of disrespect, if not evidence of immoral character, for



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both the mourner and those who did not afford them proper respect.

Today, it is impossible to determine whether someone is grieving the loss of a loved one. Most businesses allow only three to five days of bereavement leave. After this short period, basic decorum prohibits public displays of grief or acknowledgment of the mourner. Things are expected to quickly go back normal, which only heightens feelings of social isolation for the bereaved.

Although Victorian observances of death as a natural and necessary component of life may seem excessive, if not morbid, by contemporary standards, this integration intuitively reflects what science now reveals about the grieving process. The brain literally changes and goes into survival mode to cope with traumatic loss. Cognition, memory, vision, and other functions can be impaired because of physical transformations that take place within the brain. This is why it is so easy following a death to feel as if one is going insane. For me, it was a type of insanity in which alienation, anxiety, absurdity, and guilt collided, like a nightmare in a Kafkaesque universe or the terror of a Stephen King novel.

Only time can heal grief, but time is a commodity. I had only one day away from work, but even the standard practice of three to five days is barely adequate to make final arrangements, much less heal. The Victorians understood this. The erasure of real death from the public sphere makes it difficult for the healing process to begin. This is particularly true for the trauma of losing a spouse; it is not uncommon for negative health consequences to develop as a result of widowhood. For some, the loss of a spouse leads to what is known as the Widowhood Effect in which both halves of a couple die shortly after one another. Because research in this area is new, the reasons behind this phenomenon are speculative, but point to the consequences of isolation, shock, and limited social support following the loss of a spouse.

The expression of grief, the social recognition of grief, and structured ways for coping with grief are essential to the process of healing the brain after tragic loss. All of these things were addressed by the formality and practice of Victorian social conventions prescribed around death and mourning.

In the days, weeks, and months after Jami's death, I was desperate to talk to anyone who had known

her. I hoped that the interaction would stimulate memories of us, dispel the fog that pervaded my mind, and bring back the sound of her voice in my head. The loss of so many memories and the sound of her voice felt as if she had been stolen from me twice. But my desires to talk about Jami with family and those we knew were blunted by the fact that no one wanted to talk about the dead. Repeatedly I was told that I needed to "move on," as if the 30 years of Jami and me building a life together had never existed. Only the future mattered. I was outraged.

Thankfully, I intuitively practiced nineteenth-century rituals of mourning without even realizing it. I engaged in journaling, writing to Jami every day. I have a lock of her hair as a *memento mori*. Unlike post-mortem photographs that served to codify the existence of a loved one, my photograph of her at the funeral home dissuades me from the seductive fiction that Jami will be home soon, that she's just running late—very, very late . . .

My grandmother permanently closed the door to the room she and my grandfather once shared to help her move on, but I have no such luxury. There are no literal stairs to climb or doors that can be sealed. Many days, I feel as if I am simply crawling forward on faith without knowing the destination. For me, moving on is a process, a struggle in which I take two or three steps forward and one or two backwards. It is a clumsy and frustrating dance. I do not know what moving on means or how it translates to everyday life. I don't know what it looks like or feels like.

Deep down I am a farm girl, and every farmer will attest that, regardless of what is going on or not going on in a person's life, the cows still have to be fed. Out of necessity, I have learned how to conscientiously practice gratitude for the life that I have and the blessing of sharing life with Jami for 29 years and 338 days. I have found a way to keep moving forward, even if the movement can be measured only in millimeters.

I will go on.

TONNIA L. ANDERSON is an Associate Professor of History and American Studies and serves as the director of the Dr. Ada Lois Fisher Center for Social Justice and Racial Healing at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha. Her experience includes work at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change (Atlanta). She holds three degrees from Yale University: an MA in African American Studies, and an MA and PhD in American Studies.

I know they are Chinese elms and how long they have been there because my dad helped plant them. I stood at the gate and it felt surreal. How small the arch and entryway seem now—dwarfed by the massive casino, hotel, and waterpark just a few hundred yards away—this place that loomed so large in my family’s history, where my dad was shut in and I am shut out. Who could have imagined *that* on the warm afternoon of September 20, 1927, when parole officer Jones delivered two young mixed-blood Muscogee (Creek) boys to an institutionalized life?

Bob was expelled from Chilocco in 1928 for “incurable behavior”—petty thievery, mostly of food. Chilocco boys and girls were always hungry. Bob bounced in and out of the Boys’ Detention Farm in Wichita, the Boys’ Industrial School in Topeka, and the state reformatory in Hutchinson for recurring petty theft. In 1937 he was sentenced to 10 to 20 years in the Kansas state penitentiary at Lansing. He had stolen \$30 of groceries from another familiar institution, the Wichita Children’s Home where Cora worked. Bob passed away while incarcerated in 1938 at age 22.

After several failed attempts, Curt ran away from Chilocco in 1935 because he hated the authoritarian institutional life there and he wanted to see his mother. Although their relationship was irreparably damaged, he survived Chilocco, the Depression-era hobo road, and WWII service to marry my mom, Marilyn, and raise two daughters.

I respect my dad deeply for his ability to gift my sister and me with a happy and secure childhood—something he did not experience himself. I cherish all the Chilocco alums who shared their stories, memories, laughter, and tears about boarding school life. These heartfelt personal histories are the antidote to the institutional life boarding schools imposed on Native children. Resilient individuals remain at the heart of boarding school stories. Listening carefully to their voices can help us chart a respectful and productive future for all children.

K. TSIANINA LOMAWAIMA, PhD, helped found the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) in 2007. In 2010 she was awarded the Western History Association Lifetime Achievement Award for American Indian History. In 2023 she received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Society for Ethnohistory. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.

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- Chilocco Indian Agricultural School Collection, Oklahoma State University Library. A two-year collaboration with the Chilocco National Alumni Association includes alumni oral histories; historical images of the campus, students, and events; a full-length documentary; and a graphic novel. chilocco.library.okstate.edu

NOTEWORTHY



Sarah Milligan, Chair

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

It is my distinct pleasure to work with the staff and Board Members of Oklahoma Humanities towards our mission of strengthening communities by helping Oklahomans learn about the human experience, understand new perspectives, and participate knowledgeably in civic life.

I want to thank outgoing Board Chair Suzette V. Chang for her leadership and encouragement as I step into this new role. I hope to build on her articulated goals of broadening our support and relevancy for the state’s diverse and historically underestimated communities, while continuing our existing vibrant network of partnerships.

As a folklorist, I explore how people share and nurture community, and as an oral historian, I help create living records of human memory and cultural practice. Approaching my decade milestone as head of the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program at the Oklahoma State University Library, I feel fortunate to work alongside colleagues through Oklahoma Humanities who also focus their expertise and passion in helping Oklahomans in all 77 counties learn about each other and our collective experiences.

I also feel grateful for you—our supporters. Thank you for your interest in learning something new, engaging with the familiar, and connecting with the humanities. Visit our calendar of supported events and programs at okhumanities.org to find current and upcoming exhibitions, lectures, book discussions, and more. Browse our grant opportunities and share them with organizations and individuals in your local area who might be interested in applying, and introduce your friends and neighbors to *Oklahoma Humanities* magazine. With your help, we can bring more people together in conversation and contemplation.



2023 MAGAZINE AWARDS

Oklahoma Humanities (OH) is excited to announce the magazine's recent success at the 2023 Society of Professional Journalists Awards, Oklahoma Pro Chapter, which recognize excellence in print publications, digital media, broadcasting, and public relations. OH staff members and contributors were honored across two categories in writing and overall publication quality for a total of three awards. Leeda Copley, First Place, for General Writing: "Vampires, Aliens, and Zombies—Oh My!"; Danny Heitman, Third Place, for General Writing: "The Days of Eleanor Roosevelt;" and OH Staff, Second Place, Outstanding Publication: Spring/Summer 2022. See these award-winning entries from the CODE (Spring/Summer 2022) and ETC. (Fall/Winter 2022) issues online at: okhumanities.org/archives

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT RECEIVES MAJOR GRANT

Oklahoma Humanities (OH) is proud to be a recipient of a \$40,000 grant from the Kirkpatrick Family Fund that will support our reading and discussion program, *Let's Talk About It (LTAI)*, in numerous communities. *LTAI* is a free program that provides libraries, veterans centers, community nonprofits, and centers of incarceration with the resources needed to implement a literature-based book club.

The Kirkpatrick Family Fund, founded by John and Eleanor Kirkpatrick in 1989, supports charitable, civic and cultural causes that impact citizens in central Oklahoma and beyond. The Kirkpatrick Family Fund has funded organizations and programs across many areas of need, contributing more than \$164 million to nearly 900 qualified nonprofit organizations that work tirelessly to address the greatest needs in their communities.

TEACHERS' WORKSHOP

This July, Oklahoma Humanities will host a special teachers' workshop in conjunction with the Smithsonian's traveling exhibition *Voices and Votes: Democracy in America*. Led by Dr. Sunu Kodumthara (Southwestern Oklahoma State University), Dr. Sarah Eppler Janda (Cameron University), and Dr. Patricia Loughlin (University of Central Oklahoma), the day-long session will be open to middle school and high school teachers of American and Oklahoma history. It

will introduce *Making Oklahoma: A History*, a forthcoming textbook published by the University of Oklahoma Press and authored by Drs. Janda and Loughlin; explore methods of incorporating primary sources into the classroom; and discuss ideas for helping students understand how Oklahoma fits within and contributes to American democracy. Lunch will be provided and attendees will receive a certification of participation. See pages 26-27 for more information about the exhibition.

ABOUT OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES

Oklahoma Humanities (OH) strengthens communities by helping Oklahomans learn about the human experience, understand new perspectives, and participate knowledgeably in civic life. As the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, OH provides and supports programming for the general public that uses humanities disciplines (such as history, literature, ethics, and philosophy) to deeply explore what it means to be human. OH accepts grant applications from nonprofits across the state for programs that may take the form of museum exhibits, film

festivals, teacher institutes, oral history projects, or other formats that best serve local communities.

OH also administers programs that provide free access to cultural humanities content, including: *Oklahoma Humanities* magazine; *Let's Talk About It*, a reading and discussion series; and *Museum on Main Street*, a collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution to provide traveling exhibits to small rural communities. Visit our website to find an event near you, read magazine archives, or explore OH programs and grant opportunities. We look forward to hearing from you. (405) 235-0280 | okhumanities.org | ohc@okhumanities.org



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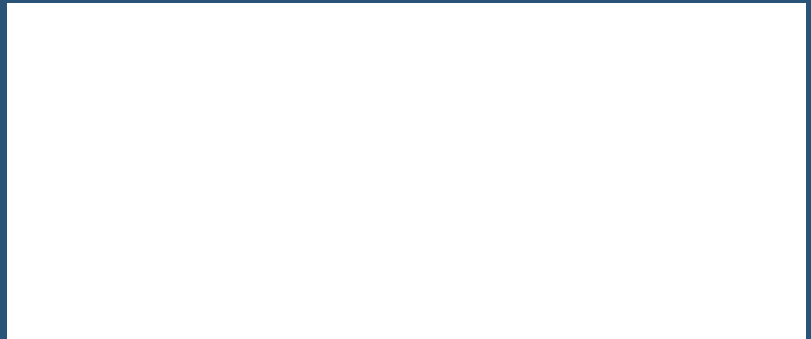


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NEXT UP: FABRIC | FALL/WINTER 2024

We wear it, use it, and create it. In our next issue of *Oklahoma Humanities* magazine, we'll reveal the fabrics woven into everyday life. How wool shaped war; how Hmong Story Cloth records culture and resilience; how African wax prints reflect international trade; how union workers displayed solidarity and self-expression through uniforms; how Oklahoma poet Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel used clothing to convey time and place; and more. Some threads are meant to be pulled!