

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD
OF DIRECTORS OF THE OKLAHOMA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
October 23, 1944.

The called meeting of the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society convened in the Historical Society Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, at 10 A.M., October 23, 1944, with Judge Robert L. Williams, President, presiding.

The Chief Clerk called the roll which showed the following members present: Judge Robert L. Williams, Judge Thomas H. Doyle, Dr. Emma Estill Harbour, Gen. Charles F. Barrett, Hon. George L. Bowman, Judge Harry Campbell, Mr. Thomas G. Cook, Dr. E. E. Dale, Hon. Thomas J. Harrison, Judge Robert A. Hefner, Mrs. Frank Korn, Mrs. Blanche Lucas, Hon. J. B. Milam, Hon. R. M. Mountcastle, Mr. H. L. Muldrow, Judge Baxter Taylor, and Mrs. John R. Williams,

The President called to the attention of the Board the matter of a vacancy in the secretaryship of the Society and asked that nominations be placed before the Board.

Mr. H. L. Muldrow nominated Dr. Charles Evans as Secretary of the Oklahoma Historical Society in accordance with Dr. Evans' statement to him that, while he realized his advanced years, he would accept the secretaryship with the understanding that should the Board find a suitable young man he would resign. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Anna B. Korn.

Judge Thomas H. Doyle made the motion that the rules be suspended and the secretary of the meeting instructed to cast a unanimous vote by the members present for Dr. Charles Evans as Secretary of the Oklahoma Historical Society. The motion was seconded and the vote so cast and Dr. Evans was elected under the conditions as expressed by Mr. Muldrow.

The President called to the attention of the Board the vacancy in the position of Cataloguer in the Library.

Mrs. Anna B. Korn made the motion that Mrs. Edith Mitchell be transferred from the Newspaper department back to Cataloguer in the Library and that Mrs. Louise Cook be transferred to the Newspaper department, same to be effective November 1, 1944. The motion was seconded by Dr. Harbour and carried by unanimous vote.

The President read the report of the Committee appointed at a former meeting to investigate the question whether or not one Jean Pierre Chouteau established a trading post on the Grand River near the present Salina in 1796, Dr. Grant Foreman being chairman of said committee.

Judge Robert A. Hefner made the motion that the report of Dr. Foreman and the Committee, and the letters attached, be made a part of the minutes of this meeting. The motion was seconded and carried by unanimous vote.

The following is the report of Dr. Foreman and the committee: To the Board of Directors, Oklahoma Historical Society:

At a regular meeting and on resolution of the board, the undersigned committee was appointed to investigate the question whether or not one Jean Pierre Chouteau established a trading post on the Grand River near the present Salina in 1796, and whether a subsequent settlement at this place had its beginning that year and is, therefore, the oldest settlement in Oklahoma.

The fact of the location and development of the oldest white settlement in any state is always a matter of deep interest, and the proper determination of this fact is therefore a subject of considerable importance to all persons interested in the history of the state, and inasmuch as this society is dedicated to the discovery and perpetuation of the history of Oklahoma and of the valid claims to the facts of history, it seems fitting that every effort be made to ascertain the facts connected with the Chouteau settlement, that they may be made available to all who are interested in Oklahoma history.

In a recent issue of *The Daily Oklahoman*, a feature story was devoted to this subject and the writer states as a fact that said "Jean Pierre Chouteau" had established a trading post at this point in 1796, and further, that the Oklahoma Historical Society have erected a monument inscribed with a statement of this fact.

In the beginning it might be observed that such a monument has been erected at Salina with the statement that the Chouteau brothers had established a post at this point in 1796. However, there is no evidence that the Oklahoma Historical Society was interested in any way in placing this monument or endorsing the statement inscribed on it, so it may be stated that the Historical Society is entirely unprejudiced concerning the date of the establishment of a trading post at this point, and the Society can approach the subject without any bias one way or the other.

It may be noticed also that there were two Chouteau brothers, Auguste and Pierre or Peter, who were engaged in the fur trade with the Osage Indians at an early day. From an examination of a letter from the Secretary of War to Chouteau of July 17, 1807, it appears that a commission was issued at that time to Peter Chouteau appointing him agent for the Indians west of the Mississippi River. Subsequently, in 1808, by order of the secretary of war, the jurisdiction of the said Peter Chouteau was restricted to the Osage Indians alone and from that time he continued as Osage agent.

On May 18, 1794, Auguste Chouteau wrote to Baron Carondelet, Spanish governor at New Orleans, that the Osage Indians were raiding in the white settlements along the Mississippi River, and proposed that if the governor would authorize him and his brother to build a fort in the Osage country they would endeavor to curb the warlike activities of the Osage in consideration of the grant of a monopoly on the Osage trade until the end of the year 1800. Carondelet accepted the proposal and the contract was carried into effect the same year by the construction of a fortified establishment in the Osage country, on the south bank of Osage River in the present Vernon County, Missouri. Pierre Chouteau was made commandant of this fort, and the Chouteaus enjoyed a monopoly of the Osage trade until 1802 when it was taken away from them and given to Manuel Lisa and other traders. But Pierre Chouteau, having acquired considerable influence with the Osages, in 1802, circumvented his rivals by inducing a considerable number of the tribe to remove to the Three Forks, the junction of the Verdigris, Grand and Arkansas Rivers. In this neighborhood they made a settlement on the Verdigris River near the site of the present Claremore, Oklahoma. The principal man in this settlement was Clermont, whose name was corrupted by the French and English into

Claremore; hence the name of the town nearby. These facts are derived from the reading of "The Expeditions of Zebulun Montgomery Pike," (Archives of the Indies, Papers from the Island of Cuba.); "The Spanish Regime in Missouri," by Louis Houck; Chouteau Manuscripts, numbers 14, 20 and 21, in the St. Louis Mercantile Library; "History of Missouri," by Louis Houck.

On August 7, 1786, Congress enacted an ordinance for the regulations of Indian affairs, by which it was ordained that no person might trade with the Indians except under a license issued by the government. Until 1804 Oklahoma was part of Louisiana Territory and traders were subject to the regulations of Spanish or French governors, pursuant to which authority the Chouteaus were licensed by Governor Carondelet to establish their trading post in southwest Missouri and trade with the Indians. Efforts of this committee to find a trader's license issued to either of the Chouteaus after the Louisiana Purchase have revealed no such license or record of a license in existence at that time.

Because of his familiarity with the Indians, the President in 1804 appointed Pierre Chouteau, the person sometimes spoken of as "Jean Pierre Chouteau," "agent of Indian Affairs for upper Louisiana," but four years later his jurisdiction was limited to the Osage Indians when William Clark was assigned to the General Superintendency of all other Indians in the territory. The law of the United States forbade any Indian agent from trading with the Indians. Peter Chouteau continued as Osage Indian agent for many years after 1808, and therefore, he could not have conducted a trading post during those years at Salina or any other place among the Indians.

In the journal of his expeditions Zebulun Montgomery Pike, who passed that way on August 17, 1806 (on page 384), tells of his visit to the site of the Chouteaus' fort in Vernon County, Missouri, and gives an account of Peter Chouteau taking the Osage Indians down to the Verdigris River.

Lieutenant Wilkinson separated from Pike and descended the Arkansas River; after he approached the mouth of the Verdigris and Grand, on November 30, 1806, he went overland to Clermont's town, of which he wrote a description that appears in the Pike report. He relates that this band, at the request of Pierre Chouteau, came to the Verdigris River in order that Chouteau might enjoy their exclusive trade. The reference is to the movement there in 1802 previously given by Pike. If Chouteau had been at the present Salina at that time there is no doubt that Wilkinson would have told of seeing him. But from what has been said it appears that Chouteau could not have been engaged in trade at that time for the reason that as Indian agent he was forbidden by law to trade with the Indians.

Soue's edition of Pike's Journal has a reproduction of a map made by Pike, which shows the site of Chouteau's fort on the south side of the Osage River a short distance north of the several Osage villages. It also shows the Verdigris River and the Osage village south of the present Claremore. It also shows Grand River, on which there is no designation of any settlement or trading post, which is, of course, significant of the fact that there was no trading post in 1806 when Pike described the country and made his map.

In 1808 a commission was issued by the President to "Peter Chouteau" to negotiate a treaty with the Osage Indians which he did at what became known as Fort Osage on November 10, 1808. The commission and treaty are to be found in *American State Papers*, vol. 1, pages 763-66.

It appears then from all available official and other historical records that the only contact of Pierre Chouteau with the Indian Territory was

his inducing a band of Osage Indians to move down on the Verdigris River in 1802. If he had remained here after that time his detachment from the country was effectuated by the commissions in 1804 and 1808 as Indian Agent for the Indians in Missouri.

Though Pierre was unknown in the Indian Territory after that time, the name of Chouteau survived through his son, Col. A. P. Chouteau, who is identified with Indian Territory history in a much more prominent manner than his father ever was and in ways that exerted greater influence than his father ever did on the Indian Territory. The name of A. P. Chouteau is preserved in the history of Indian Territory through an endless series of official records and communications and the writings of contemporary visitors, official and otherwise, such as Washington Irving, Gov. Montfort Stokes, Indian Commissioner Henry L. Ellsworth and many others whose writings are familiar to any one having any knowledge of Oklahoma history.

Prior to 1835 A. P. Chouteau had two trading posts in the Indian Territory, one of which was located at the present Salina. It is well established that A. P. Chouteau received a license to conduct a trading business at Salina in 1815 which was issued in the name of Chouteau & Revoir. Revoir continued the business here until his death in 1821 when A. P. Chouteau removed from Fort Osage to Salina where he continued the business of the trading post. Afterward in 1823 Chouteau acquired the buildings of the trading establishment near the mouth of the Verdigris River where he continued in business for many years. Afterward, in 1835, he set up a trading post near the present Lexington, Oklahoma, which was conducted for him by his brother and others until Chouteau's death in 1838.

During these years he rendered valuable service to the government in negotiations with the Indians and thus became of great importance in Indian affairs throughout the southwest and his death was a matter of general regret among the Indians and whites. The name of Chouteau is thus from A. P. Chouteau identified with Oklahoma history.

(signed) Grant Foreman

The following letters are attached to the above report:

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Saint Louis
1 September 1941

Dear Mr. Foreman:

I have just returned from a five weeks research trip during which my correspondence has been neglected. Shortly after I left home, your letter and the copy of your report were forwarded to me.

I agree entirely with the opinion in your letter and in your report. Auguste and Pierre Chouteau enjoyed the Osage monopoly from 1794 to 1802—they controlled the trade from Fort Carondelet and had no need of a post in the Salina region. As good business men they would not have wasted money on an unnecessary establishment. Apart from the commonsense point of view, there is *no evidence* that a post was built at Salina in 1796. None of the persons upholding that date have put evidence in print or said where such evidence could be consulted. Although they may very well have traveled through that region, there is no evidence that Chouteaus established a post there in the eighteenth century.

The responsibility for this error, I believe, must be laid to Holcombe's history of Vernon County which declares that Pierre Chouteau in 1795 (or 1796—I do not have the reference by me), having lost the Osage monopoly, induced part of the tribe to move to the Arkansas watershed—a statement quite contrary to known fact.

I agree with you also in saying that Pierre Chouteau had little interest in the present Oklahoma region. It is Auguste Pierre Chouteau, not his father, who is important in Oklahoma history.

My life of A. P., Mr. Lottinville tells me, is promised for March, 1942. I hope he is right.

I was very sorry to miss you this summer. I left Saint Louis immediately after summer session was over, but when I reached Oklahoma City I found that you had gone to Mexico just before I left home. I had looked forward to seeing you very much, for I have been for years a great admirer of your work. I hope that when you are next in Saint Louis you will let me know. My home telephone is CABany 6122—I don't want to miss you again as I once did when you passed through town.

Sincerely,

(signed) John Francis McDermott
John Francis McDermott

Have you written to A. P. Nasatir, San Diego Teachers College, about this Chouteau question? He has been doing an elaborate work on the Osage and if anything turned up in Spanish documents he should know it.

Muskogee, Oklahoma,
October 6, 1944.

Dr. Emma Estill Harbour,
Edmond, Oklahoma.
Dear Doctor Harbour:

I am enclosing herewith a manuscript which I trust will be self-explanatory. It is a copy, the original of which I have sent to Doctor Dale. I cannot explain why I have allowed the matter to drag so long; but since I received from the board of directors of the Historical Society and ran across this report, I felt I ought to do something with it. I was particularly and forcibly reminded that I should from reading in the paper yesterday that the Governor had designated a day in the near future to memorialize the fact that one "Jean Pierre" Chouteau had established the first settlement in Oklahoma in 1796. This, as you know, is based on a resolution adopted by the legislature, obviously without knowing anything of the facts, and without making any effort to secure the facts from the Oklahoma Historical Society, which it should have done before acting.

In sending the original to Doctor Dale, I asked him—if he approved and signed it—if he would be good enough to send it to you for your consideration; and if you do approve it, will you kindly present it to the board at the next meeting, if that meets with your approval?

I have not been very well lately, but I trust this will find you enjoying the best of health.

Very sincerely yours,

(signed) G. F.

GRANT FOREMAN

1419 West Okmulgee Avenue
Muskogee, Oklahoma.

GF—B—Enclosure

(M.P.B.)

Department of History
The University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma
October 9, 1944

Mrs. Emma Estill Harbour
Central State Teachers' College
Department of History
Edmond, Oklahoma
Dear Mrs. Harbour:

I am enclosing herewith a statement made by Grant Foreman and accompanying it with Mr. Foreman's letter to me. If you approve Mr. Foreman's statement of the case, will you kindly so indicate and return the document to him at 1419 West Okmulgee Avenue, Muskogee, Oklahoma.

How is your health by this time? I am hoping that you are fine and that we shall see you at the next directors' meeting.

With every good wish, I am

Very sincerely yours,
(signed) Dale

E. E. Dale
Research Professor of History

EED:jn
Enc.

The motion was made that the condition of the ceiling in the Director's room of the Historical Building be called to the attention of the Board of Affairs. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

The following gifts were presented to the Historical Society: (1) Muster-In Roll Troop M, 1st Regiment, U. S. Cavalry Volunteers (1898), presented by M. G. Wicker; (2) A Record of the *Minutes and Proceedings* of the Reunion held at the old county seat town of Grand, Day County, Oklahoma Territory, May 4, 1931, presented by Mr. O. E. Null; (3) copies of the past meetings of the Western Oklahoma Indian Baptist Association, presented by Dean Marc Jack Smith, Bacone College; (4) *Book of Genesis* in Cherokee language—Sequoyah text (Park Hill: Mission Press, Edwin Archer, Printer, 1856, . . .), presented by Dr. John Paine Torrey of Bartlesville, and his brother and sister, Daniel T. Torrey and Emily R. Torrey of Providence, Rhode Island; (5) original manuscript of Cherokee Resolution passed by Cherokee National Council in 1865 and signed by Lewis Downing, presented by John Harrah of Venice, California; (6) collections of historical photographs—Oklahoma—, presented by the Ponca City Chamber of Commerce (H. L. Schull, Secretary-Manager), Loretta Diggs, of Ponca City, Mrs. Sam H. Robertson of Marietta, and Tom Harris of Haworth; (7) Creek Indian, dance shells, presented by Judge Frank L. Warren of Holdenville; (8) a framed picture of the late Charles F. Colcord, presented by his family.

Mrs. John R. Williams made the motion that these gifts be accepted by the Society and the donors thanked. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Upon motion, duly seconded, the photographic picture of the late Judge Samuel W. Hayes is to be framed and placed on the walls of the Board room. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The reports of Muriel H. Wright, Editorial and Research Assistant; Annie R. Cubage, Museum Collector; Hazel E. Beaty, Librarian; Edith Mitchell, Curator of the newspaper department, and Rella Looney, Clerk-Archivist, were received. The motion was made that these reports be received and filed. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Dr. Charles Evans, the new incoming Secretary, appeared before the Board and was introduced to the members present. He was advised that he had the privilege of naming his secretary since there would be a vacancy in that position November 1, 1944.

The following list of applicants for membership was presented:

LIFE: F. W. Bird, Poteau; Chapman J. Milling, Columbia, South Carolina; Mrs. N. Bert Smith, Oklahoma City; Mrs. Kib Warren, Shawnee.

Annual: John J. Allen, Enid; Mrs. Ted Allen, Falconer New York; Lloyd J. Anderson, Tulsa; Mrs. Joy S. Baker, Peru, Nebraska; James H. Berry, Oklahoma City; H. L. Buchanan, Pawnee; A. C. Bray, Oklahoma City; Catherine (Minx) Brown, Oklahoma City; Walter S. Campbell (Stanley Vestal), Norman; J. Dewey Clemens, Ardmore; Al Cottle, Tulsa; Miss

Ella M. Covel, Tahlequah; Mrs. Ben F. Davis, Oklahoma City; Mrs. James H. Denison, Oklahoma City; Frank A. Derr, Guthrie; H. T. Douglas, Shawnee; J. P. Dulin, Paoli; Dean Duncan, Oklahoma City; W. W. Fargo, Stuart; W. F. Finney, Oklahoma City; Sara W. Garrison, Oklahoma City; Dixie Gilmer, Tulsa; Jess Gooding, Grant; Mrs. S. A. Hammack, Clinton; Jim Hatcher, Chickasha; C. H. Hendricks, Antlers; Mrs. Ollie L. Holcomb, Oklahoma City; Mrs. Mamie V. Hunt, Los Angeles, California; Shay Hunt, Shawnee; Mrs. Virginia Johnson, Hugo; Raymond H. Kemp, Norman; Charles Lindsay, Minco; Mrs. Susie Lee McCrummen, Pauls Valley; Rev. C. F. Mitchell, Weatherford; Dr. Robert L. Mitchell, Muskogee and Blue-jacket; I. D. Moseley, Tulsa; Frank R. Pauly, Tulsa; Acton Porter, Oklahoma City; Mrs. Viola Palmer Priddy, Tahlequah; Hal F. Rambo, Tulsa; Mrs. Juliette Riggs, Tulsa; Ross Rizley, Washington, D. C.; W. F. Rogers, Jr., Atoka; Charles Thomas Rolfe, Oak Ridge, Louisiana; Mrs. Agnes V. Saulsbury, Wilburton; George B. Savage, Brownwood, Texas; Dr. Fred D. Sparks, Ponca City; J. C. Stanhop, Paoli; Dr. R. V. Steele, London, England; Ron Stephens, Chickasha; Francis Stilley, Oklahoma City; Mrs. Cliff Strider, Guthrie; Ruby M. Tomlinson, Gallup, New Mexico; Thomas B. Trent, San Diego, California; Clara L. Waggoner, Tahlequah; Dr. Charles E. White, Muskogee; Dr. Foyd A. Wright, Norman; Mr. and Mrs. Newell E. Wright, Durant.

Mrs. John R. Williams made the motion that each be elected and received as members of the Society in the class as indicated in the list. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

The motion was made that the regular quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors for October 26, 1944, which is the Thursday immediately following the fourth Wednesday, be dispensed with in lieu of this meeting of October 23, 1944. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Korn and carried by unanimous vote.

A motion was made that the Board express its gratitude for the attendance of the honorable J. B. Milam, Chief of the Cherokee Nation, who has been unable to attend the Board meetings on account of illness. The motion was seconded and all voted Aye.

Judge Baxter Taylor made the motion that the family of the late Judge Samuel W. Hayes be asked to have a fitting portrait painted of Judge Hayes for the art gallery of the Oklahoma Historical Society museum. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Korn and carried unanimously.

Dr. E. E. Dale made the motion that the matter of binding reprints, or separates, be submitted to the publication committee in order to assure that said reprints, or separates, would be bound in first class material. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Mr. H. L. Muldrow offered to give to the Historical Society for the Confederate Memorial Hall, an old Colt Revolver which was carried by Major Robert Muldrow who served with Generals Wirt Adams and Bedford Forrest, C. S. A., during the War between the States.

The motion was made that this be accepted and placed in the Confederate Memorial Hall. Motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

On motion, duly carried, the meeting stood adjourned subject to call of the President.

Robert L. Williams, President
presiding.

Mabel F. Hammerly, Chief Clerk,
acting in lieu of a Secretary.