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"THE WOMB IS THE HOME OF MAN": THE REPRESENTATION OF THE LIVES OF WOMEN AT OKLAHOMA HOUSE MUSEUMS

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DEDICATION

To my grandma Dorothy Pauline Fowler and mother Trudy Fowler-Goins.

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Introduction

While hosting a lecture at The Jacobson House Native Art Center, where I was employed as a work study at The University of Oklahoma in Norman, I had the privilege of meeting our speaker who was a Maori tribal elder from Australia. He gave a fascinating presentation about the involvement of his community in rebuilding his ancestral home which had been destroyed by fire. A detailed account was given about their cultural practices and how traditional building methods were utilized to authenticate the resurrection of this structure. While discussing the important role of Maori women in the project and their duties as grass weavers, painters, and protectors of culturally sacred knowledge, our speaker quoted a tribal phrase that I have never forgotten: "The womb is the home of man." This single phrase made me contemplate the possibility that perhaps the lives of women where underrepresented in American house museum institutions and that they had not yet been given an equal amount of research focus as the men for whom many of our historical sites are named. I soon learned that this theory was not only relevant for my home state of Oklahoma, but also for the American historic preservation field as a whole.

During my post bachelorette studies in the fields of art history and museum studies, I have encountered many broadening themes which challenged my own conventional ideas regarding aesthetics and historical preservation. A background in interdisciplinary studies and the liberal arts instilled the ability, and desire, to make important culturally pivotal connections within my research. But, it was not until I began my work in the museum field that I saw these themes manifested through research

literature, the performing arts, the fine arts, and sometimes controversial context. Through the study of museum development, I began to discover the importance of the object, the public's relationship with their surroundings, and, most importantly the importance of place.

Many multifaceted issues must be considered when discussing the potential missions, future mandates, and ever-changing environment of the 21st century house museum. These institutions must be prepared and willing to adapt to an increasingly socialized world where digitization and globalization have brought a plethora of information to our finger tips as well as narrowed our scope through a homogenization of culture. It is this prevalent illusion of "sameness" or "ideal" which has challenged house museums to maintain relevance within the collective mind of a contemporary population hungering for contradictory versions of truth: truth of nature, truth of self, and truth of beginnings. The need to accurately and equally represent all members of society is among the many challenges being faced by all twenty-first century museums. Subjects such as gender, class distinction, and race are beginning to take on relevant roles as players in the interpretation of history. American house museums have the potential to incorporate all of these subjects into the cultural framework of modern life and allow the public to re-imagine their own significance. This idea was beautifully summarized by Eudora Welty: "House is the physical form, the evidence that we have lived, are alive now; it will be evidence someday that we were alive once, evidence against the arguments of time and the tricks of history."[1]

[1] Good Reads: Eudora Welty Quotes. http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/7973.Eudora_Welty (Accessed 11/28/2011).

According to the National Register of Historic Places[2], "the evaluation of the integrity (of a house) is sometimes a subjective judgment, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance". Women's history is not often considered as a valid resource when conducting studies on American house museums and only recently have state-by-state case studies been performed to widen this field. Many local and national organizations, such as the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Foundation, Pennsylvania Humanities Council, and Georgia's State Historic Preservation Office, have orchestrated crucial research projects with the intention to increase the understanding of women's history at historical facilities.[3]

While much has been written about individual Oklahoma house museums, nothing collective relating to the history of the women's lives represented at these sites has ever been produced. This thesis is an attempt to fill that void. How are the lives of Oklahoma women represented at the state's house museums? Through an examination of how Oklahoma's house museums demonstrate community development, the importance of material culture, and contemporary adaptive reuse, individual women are revealed as historically pivotal in their roles as mothers, myths, leaders, and creators. In Chapter One the experiences of two Oklahoma women, Mattie Beal and Lydie Marland, are compared through a look at their surviving homes, The Mattie Beal Home in Lawton and The Marland Mansion Ponca City. Chapter Two will explore the lives of two Oklahoma

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[2] The National Register of Historic Places is (NRHP) is the United States government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects deemed worthy of preservation. (National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior: "National Register of Historic Places", http://www.nps.gov/nr/, Accessed 10/30/2011).

[3] Jennifer B. Goodman, "Best Practices for Saving Women's Heritage Sites: Nonprofit Case Studies" from *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) 248-265.

minority women, Alzira Murray and Mabel B. Little, and how the sites named in their honor, The Murray-Lindsay Mansion in Lindsay and The Mabel B. Little Heritage House in Tulsa, represent their ability to rebuild through tragedy and loss. A focus upon the collections objects housed at two of Oklahoma's Victorian style house museums, The Moore-Lindsay Historical House in Norman and The Overholser Mansion in Oklahoma City, will be explored in Chapter Three through an analysis of women's roles in society and how their personal experiences are made visible through material culture. Oklahoma women artists and the continuation of their legacy through the reuse of their private homes as community art galleries are examined in Chapter Four with an analysis of The Jacobson House Native Art Center in Norman and JRB Art at the Elms in Oklahoma City.

Chapter 1:
City Mother/ City Myth: The Mattie Beal Home and The Marland Mansion

In 2003 the National Register Information System[4] listed 9,820 "significant persons" related to American historical sites; 360, under 4%, were women.[5] This data base and many case studies related to American historical sites divulge the volume of women "worthy of study whose achievements are not yet well documented on women's history publications".[6] Oklahoma women are excellent candidates for the further study of broader themes in American history such as land ownership and settlement, business, economics, religion, marriage, and preservation. Oklahoma history is also directly tied to the love of land which is in turn linked to the built environment and urban development.

Many "ordinary citizens", such as women and minorities, have been overlooked as resources for historic preservation. Jennifer B. Goodman offers an explanation for why women's lives are not more actively recognized as assets within the museum field: "Potential allies, such as members of the general public, preservation professionals, and politicians, are often not cultivated because they do not know the significance of the person or theme, they have a misunderstanding of the person or theme, or the issue is

[4] The National Register Information System (NRIS) is a computerized index containing some forty-five data elements for each registered historic place and can be queried in a variety of ways to find listings associated with women's contributions to American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The NRIS is available on the internet and information from both the NRIS and National Register files may be obtained on request from the National Parks Service (NPS), expands and maintains the National Register. (National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior: National Register of Historic Places, http://www.nps.gov/nr/, Accessed 10/30/2011).

[5] Carol D. Shull, "Searching for Women in the National Register of Historic Places" from *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) 305.

[6] Ibid., 305.

controversial".[7] At Oklahoma house museums, women and minorities are also not usually represented as figures in positions of authority or making significant contributions to economic, cultural, or community development. However, there are some exceptions to this traditional approach of portraying women as being isolated in the parlors or kitchens and instead being acknowledged for their individual stories as land owners and forces of change in the state's history.

Perhaps one of the best examples of this ideological shift is The Mattie Beal Home in Lawton, Oklahoma. While many Oklahoma house museums are dedicated to telling the sagas of early twentieth- century male oil tycoons, real estate developers, and business owners, this site is named for an extraordinary female figure who took a huge risk for a chance to own land and establish a homestead. Her private home stands as a testament to a unique story and is one of the few Oklahoma house museums named after a woman.

Her story began on March 3, 1901, when a U.S. Congress act opened the Apache-Comache-Kiowa-Caddo and Wichita Indian Reservation for settlement.[8] The July 4, 1901 opening day of this land lottery[9] proclaimed on August 6, 1901 by President McKinley allowed 3,500,000 acres of land to become available for settlement. Telephone operator Martha Helen (Mattie) Beal (Figure1) of Wichita, Kansas registered for the land lottery on July 17, 1901 and received a "certificate of registration" for the Lawton Land

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[7] Jennifer B. Goodman, "Best Practices for Saving Women's Heritage Sites: Nonprofit Case Studies" from *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) 225.

[8] Audrey Routh, *The Mattie Beal Story With a Pictorial History* (Lawton ,OK, Lawton Heritage Association, Inc., 1979) 2.

[9] Between July 4 and July 29, 1901, 160,000 people registered for 13,000 claims of 160 acres each and proceeds from auctions were used by the Department of the Interior for construction of courthouses, water works, and school houses. (Ibid.,3).

district.[10] Although the number of women who registered for the land lottery is unknown, it was indeed unusual for Beal to have ventured to Oklahoma without male accompaniment.[11] Beal's name was the second name drawn on July 29, 1901 at the U.S. Land Office in El Reno.[12] She became famous overnight and received a plot of Lawton, Oklahoma land estimated to be worth $20,000 to $40,000. [13] According to an El Reno reporter present when Beal arrived: "Miss Beal is a young woman of striking appearance. She is one of the American girls who are handsome enough to win homes regardless of any land lottery…".[14] This comment supports the theory that she received such immediate attention through the media and this may have been one of the reasons for her success as an integral future civic leader. Beal rented a 10x12 tent which she used while acquiring lumber for her first house. Thirty-five year old Charles Warren Payne, owner of the lumber yard, began courting Beal through extravagant gestures such as purchasing a horse, buggy, and stable for her new homestead. The two eventually married on July 16, 1902.[15]

By 1902, land in Lawton, Oklahoma became too expensive for most people to afford ($400-$1,000 per lot) and city officials asked Beal to sub-divide her land lot.[16] She was hesitant and visited with several potential homesteaders to make an informed decision. As the primary owner of her land, Beal ultimately made the decision to offer

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[10] Ibid., 3.

[11] It is said that Beal's mother would only let her take the train to El Reno, OK after Beal agreed to be accompanied by her friend Florence Allen. (Ibid., 3.)

[12] Ibid,. 3.

[13] Within three days after the announcement of her win, Beal began receiving many marriage proposals (more than 500 total) from "frontiersmen, farmers, doctors, dentists, editors, lawyers, businessmen, and British nobility". She filed her land claim on August 6th and returned to Wichita on August 9th, required to return to Lawton within 30 days. (Ibid., 4).

[14] Ibid., 4.

[15] Ibid., 6.

[16] By 1902, the population of Lawton, Oklahoma had dropped from 25,000 to 8,000. Beal was asked to commute 160 acres of her land for townsite purposes in the hope that making more land available would attract more settlers to Lawton. (Ibid., 8).

her land at auction.[17] Her purpose for subdividing her land was to give more people the opportunity settle in the area and build their own homes just as she had done. She wanted the Lawton land to be affordable and supposedly told land auctioneer A.J. Hannah, "If the bid goes no higher than $20, sell the lot".[18]

The Lawton City Council incorporated the Beal Heights Addition into the city limits on August 10, 1902. As the city's first sub-division, the new lots did indeed "strengthen the permanent population" and after only a few months "300 new homes were in progress and the population increased by 1,000". [19] Beal's land lot contribution not only led to the strengthening of Lawton's population and geographical growth, but also to the cultivation of local society through fine art and culture. This contribution is most notably illustrated by the building of her grand home and the later efforts made to preserve this historical site within its original context.

According to Lawton architect Richard Smith, who presented material to the U.S. Department of the Interior for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, Beal's Neoclassic Greek Revival inspired home (Figure 2) "introduced Eastern American cultural and social ideas to the pioneers and settlers of Oklahoma Territory."[20] Beal may have identified with this commanding style of architecture as a way to present her new success to the public. Perhaps she may have intended for the home to function not only as an identification of her personal success, but also the flourishing new community of Lawton. This geographically isolated example of a classical style home complete with a

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[17] Beal was advised by her attorneys to remain on the premises for 14 months and then she could buy the land for herself for $200. If she chose to subdivide the land before that time, the land would cost her $10 an acre. She paid $1,481.40 for her farm after deciding to subdivide. (Ibid.,8).

[18] Ibid., 8.

[19] Approximately seven acres were designated for parks, three acres for a school, and another plot for the construction of Beal Heights Presbyterian Church where Beal was a member for the remainder of her life. (Ibid., 6,8).

[20] Ibid., 9.

semicircular entrance portico porch and traditional Corinthian columns exudes an air of grandeur, beauty, and financial success.[21] The only known information about the possible architects of the home is mentioned in a July 1907 edition of the *Daily Oklahoman* which stated that the Paynes consulted with Oklahoma City architects Van Meter and Schmitt and that the home would "cost $20,000, as estimated by the preliminary plans which likely means a home worth $30,000 before completion."[22]

Beal's new permanent home was completed in 1908 and underwent an extensive period of remodeling which was completed in 1923.[23] When choosing the architectural style of her new home, Beal was supposedly inspired by her childhood memories of her grandmother's plantation home in Missouri.[24] It is interesting to note that Beal's architectural choice of a Neoclassic Greek Revival temple-like structure is usually associated with wealthy and powerful male figures. Beal's over-arching influence in the design of the home is also illustrated by the architectural detail including the woodwork and glass detailing created by Kansas and New York craftsmen. The best example of this craftsmanship is the "Wichita Mountains" stained glass window (Figure 3) installed in the home's first floor parlor which could have also been inspired by Beal's childhood spent in Missouri. This window solidifies Beal's identification with Oklahoma; land which had been won by sheer chance and expanded into a flourishing community.

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[21] C.W. Payne's diary gives a detailed account of the time taken to procure the funds to build the home through the auction of her land; "Taxes were accumulating to when we did sell a lot the money had to go for taxes. We finally did accumulate enough to build the fine home that Mattie wanted. And we obtained an architect from Oklahoma City." (Ibid., 8).

[22] Ibid., 8.

[23] The estate also included a two-story carriage house, multiple out buildings, a vineyard, garden space, and a pasture all covering a full city block between 4th and 5th Street and Park Avenue and Summit Avenue in Lawton. (Ibid., 9).

[24] Ibid., 9.

The Mattie Beal Home is fully furnished in each room with some original furniture once belonging to Beal and many of her personal items are displayed such as her "lucky" horse shoe which she found right before leaving Kansas for El Reno, Oklahoma. Beal was referred to as the "Lucky Hello Girl" by the press in reference to her good fortune acquired through the lottery. A 1901 Lawton newspaper headlined with the title "The Lucky Hello Girl" is displayed in the museum's entryway. Another prominent interpretive aspect of the museum includes paintings and drawings by Beal's three daughters Louisa, Martha Helen, and Lahoma. These pieces extend the interpretive focus beyond that of Beal's success and resonates the idea that her children were also accomplished. The museum also features covered chimney flues, pipes, and support beams which were designed by Beal who insisted that there never be any dust in the home. These original features cement Beal's influence in the construction of her home and her work to present the space as a clean and streamlined dwelling to her fellow Oklahomans.

Although The Mattie Beal Home, now owned and operated by the Lawton Heritage Association, was not specifically preserved to acknowledge the contributions made by Beal as a woman, the site is extremely important because she was essentially the founder of Lawton. Very few American women are acknowledged as civic leaders within the house museum field and even those that are do not usually have their names as the namesake of the house museums. Through the building of the commanding structure of her home, Beal was able to acquire a great deal of power and influence in a short period of time just as many early male settlers had done in Oklahoma. Early Oklahoma women

settlers were creatively resourceful in shaping their own destinies and sites such as The Mattie Beal Home represent their accomplishments in action.

In sharp contrast to Mattie Beal, many other women of the families documented in Oklahoma house museums are typically interpreted as somewhat mythological characters playing a supporting role to wealthy and powerful men. The idea of black gold kings conquering the barren, untamed West is a prominent interpretive focus of many house museums whose name sakes were these powerful oil barons. Wives and other female family members of oil barons are not usually mentioned at all during guided tours and if they are, only as glamorous creatures who maintained the social graces of the family fortune. Interpretation of the lives of women in house museums can demonstrate changes in American political culture and not merely the ability of women to remain within their "sphere". Once this idea is given validity, many Oklahoma women are revealed to have fostered powerful influences upon preservation itself.

Often referred to as "The Palace on the Prairie", the 43,561 square- foot fourteenth century Italian Renaissance style Marland Mansion (Figure 4) in Ponca City, Oklahoma tells the story of the rise and fall of oil baron and Oklahoma governor Ernest Whitworth (E.W.) Marland and his second wife Lydia "Lydie" Roberts Marland. Standing as a testament to great financial gain and a life of extreme luxury, the site encompasses many unique aesthetic qualities not often seen in a rural community. While E.W. Marland is the primary interpretive focus at this house museum, the Marland family's women should be acknowledged for their own contributions to the history of this site.

As illustrated by the life of Mattie Beal, many men and women from across the globe were attracted to the fertile and potentially prosperous Oklahoma prairie during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A combination of government authorized land runs[25], land lotteries, and oil booms created a diverse and rapidly expanding state ripe for cultural growth. Pioneer sagas demonstrated a unique dichotomous American experience in which various social classes were fortuitously merged through settlement and urban growth. The wealthy community viewed Oklahoma land as another economic opportunity while the working class saw the opportunity to cultivate their own wealth through land development. The Marland Mansion is a great example of a site which began as an individual enterprise and was eventually rescued by the "mythological" being once thought to have vanished.

Mary Virginia Collins (Figure 5), daughter of nineteenth- century Philadelphia legislator Samuel C. Collins, had been working as a court stenographer in Philadelphia when she met the ambitious amateur geologist E.W. Marland[26] through her father. After Marland had developed a working relationship with Samuel C. Collins, he began to court Mary Virginia and married her in 1903. Well aware of her new husband's intentions to

[25] Beginning in 1889, the United States Land Office opened previously restricted land for homesteading on a first arrival basis. The legal basis for opening the Oklahoma District, referred to as the Unassigned Lands, cam in 1889 when, in the U.S. Congress, Illinois Representative William Springer amended the Indian Appropriations Bill to authorize President Benjamin Harrison to proclaim the two-million-acre region open for settlement. Under the provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862, a legal settler could claim 160 acres of public land , and those who lived on and improved the claim for five years could receive title. A total of seven land runs took place between April 22, 1889 and May 23, 1895. (Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, "Land Run of 1889", http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/L/LA014.html, Accessed 11/20/2011).

[26] E.W. Marland first struck oil in 1911 on a plot of land which he had leased from a member of the Ponca tribe. Two more oil wells were discovered soon after and by 1922 Marland "controlled one tenth of the world's oil and more than one third of the Ponca City population was employed by Marland Oil Company." (Northcutt,, C.D., William C. Ziegenhain, and Bob Burke, *Palace on the Prairie: The Marland Family Story* (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Oklahoma Heritage Association 2005) 8.

pursue his fortune through oil, Mary Virginia embarked upon a life of travel and wealth which led to tragedy.

Having no children of their own, the Marlands developed a close relationship with Mary Virginia's niece and nephew, Lydie Roberts and George Roberts Jr., who the couple adopted in 1916.[27] The Marlands were able to provide a comfortable life for the children, who attended private schools, traveled extensively in Europe, and participated in entertaining the most elite individuals of the era. Unlike Mattie Beal who demonstrated control of destiny through the building of her own grand home, Lydie Roberts and Virginia Marland were both uprooted from their families in Pennsylvania to embark upon a life of privilege and eventual obscurity. This transition is made evident with an examination of the Marland's estate.

During one of the family's many trips to Europe, E.W. Marland was inspired by the fourteenth- century Davanzati Palace in Florence, Italy and decided to build a palace of his own which would cement his image as a successful oil baron. Construction of Marland's "Palace on the Prairie", as it was called by locals and Marland himself, began in 1925 and was completed in 1928. John Duncan "Jack" Forsyth from Tulsa was hired in 1924 as the lead architect for this monumental project.[28] Artists and craftsmen from all over the globe were hired to create the mansion's exquisite details.[29]

Unfortunately, Mary Virginia Marland died on June 6, 1926, before the mansion was completed and she was never able to live in the magnificent structure. The circumstances and cause of her death were highly suspicious. Accounts of a "sickness" or

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[27] Ibid., 38.

[28] In addition to the mansion itself, the grounds included a swimming pool, boat house, artist studio, cottage (chauffer's quarters), and south gatehouse. (Ibid., 61).

[29] World famous Italian mural artist Vincent Margliotti and Swedish stone carver Conrad Berglund were two of the most prestigious artists hired for the project. (Ibid.,65).

"disease" from which she suffered were attributed to pneumonia, cancer, blood sickness, dementia, depression, alcoholism, to a morphine addiction. That her demise was never fully explained gave rise to the rumor that she had been intentionally poisoned by E.W. Marland himself. However, this theory was widely discounted because it was not likely that Marland would have committed a crime thus resulting in damage to his fortune and reputation. However, Mary Virginia's condition and multiple incidents with public intoxication became a "liability to the respected oil tycoon."[30] A theory that she might have committed suicide was also considered. [31] Whatever the truth, E.W. Marland became weary of attending to Mary Virginia's "illness" and it became clear that he was no longer interested in cultivating the marriage.[32]

Two interesting facts about the building of the mansion are intriguing in regards to Mary Virginia's marriage to Marland. First, plans for the layout of the mansion must have been finalized by 1925 when the building began. This was a year before her death and it would have been reasonable to assume that her personal quarters would have been included in the plans. They were not. In addition to guest quarters, only three personal bed chambers were included in the plans; E.W.'s large master bedroom, Lydie's room, and George's room. It is indeed suspicious that a bedroom was not allotted for Mary Virginia because she was still alive when the mansion was being built. Perhaps E.W. did

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[30] Kim Brumley, *Marland Tragedy: The Turbulent Story of a Forgotten Oklahoma Icon* (Mustang, Oklahoma,Tate Publishing and Enterprises, LLC., 2009) 27.

[31] In an account described by author Kim Brumley, an argument occurred in Hot Springs, Arkansas between E.W. and Mary Virginia in the presence of Marland Oil Company employees. According to Brumley, Mary Virginia was highly intoxicated and angered when E.W. attempted to help her stand and she "screamed that their marriage was over and she wanted to die." (Ibid., 27).

[32] In another account described by Brumley, Mary Virginia made yet another public scene during an event held at their first home located on Grand Avenue in Ponca City. She was apparently extremely agitated and made accusations of E.W. 's infidelity. When asked to remain calm, she shouted, "I don't give a god damn! I saw him with that tramp!" It is said that E.W. had air conditioning installed in her room after this incident, possibly in an attempt to isolate her from the outside world. (Ibid., 27).

not expect her to live or, even more sinister, he *knew* that she would not live to see the mansion completed. Second, artist Jo Davidson[33] was hired by E.W. to sculpt statues of the family to be placed on the mansion grounds. Life-size statues of E.W., Lydie, and George were completed, but Mary Virginia was not included in the commission. The events that followed support the theory that she was systematically excluded from Marland's future plans for his life.

In 1928, two years after Mary Virginia's death, in a somewhat shocking series of events, E.W. Marland had Lydie's adoption annulled and they were married later that same year. The couple was scrutinized and badgered by the press for a period of time, a tormenting experience from which the 28- year- old Lydie (Figure 6) never fully recovered.[34] Local people began to refer to Lydie as "Princess Lydie" of the "Palace on the Prairie", a title which she no doubt grew to hate due to her nature as a quiet, unassuming person in her later life. The Marlands were only able to live in the mansion for two months in 1928. That year J.P. Morgan took over E.W. Marland's company, Marland Oil Company, after Marland lost control over the Board of Directors to a group of New Jersey bankers.[35] In order to avoid a "hostile takeover," Marland resigned as president of his company and he moved with Lydie into the guest cottage on the estate grounds. He was unable to pay even basic utilities for the mansion after losing most of

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[33] Jo Davidson was also the artist who created the famous "Pioneer Woman" statue in Ponca City. Marland had initiated a national contest to select an artist to sculpt a piece which "best represented the spirit of the pioneer woman". The statue can be seen today at its original location on the corner of 14th and Monument Street.

[34] Patti Apman, *Lydie's Legand: E.W. Marland's Tragic Love* (Ponca City, Oklahoma: Marland Estate, 1995) 8.

[35] A detailed account of E.W. Marland's lose of his oil company is given in his own words in *My Experience With the Money Trust*, reprinted from a 1930 edition of *Brass Tacks Magazine*.

his fortune. He owed the federal government $3.2 million in back taxes and during the Great Depression his stock investments lost most of their value.[36]

Marland entered politics in 1932 when he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.[37] He and Lydie relocated to Washington D.C. where they remained until 1934 when Marland was elected governor of Oklahoma.[38] Although he never officially lived in his palace after the takeover of his company, he and Lydie still opened the mansion for special events and political campaign activities. Architect John Duncan Forsyth remodeled the chauffer's quarters into a more comfortable cottage for the two after they returned to Ponca City from Washington D.C. in 1939 after Marland's political career had ended. At this point, the mansion must have become a great burden to young Lydie who was still bound by political and marital duty to the great home which represented the downfall of her former role as "Princess Lydie".

In 1941 the mansion and grounds were sold to the Discalced Carmelite Fathers of Mexico for $66,000, a fraction of the $5.5 million spent to build the estate.[39] The Marlands continued to live in their cottage.[40] On October 3, 1941, six months after selling his palace, E.W. Marland died.[41]

Lydie continued to live in the cottage until 1953 when she "packed her 1948 Studebaker with her remaining pieces of art, a few tapestries, and $10,000 in cash" and

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[36] Northcutt, Zeigenhain, and Burke 67.
[37] *Marland Estate Mansion and E.W. Marland,* (Ponca City, OK: City of Ponca City 2007) 21.
[38] E.W. Marland served as the governor of Oklahoma from 1934 to 1939 and ran for U.S. Senate twice during this time, losing both endeavors. (Nothcutt, Zeigenhain, and Burke 91)
[39] The mansion was used as a college of philosophy and cloister by the Fathers until 1948. The Fathers then sold the estate for $50,000 to the Felician Sisters who renamed the mansion Assumption Villa, "although townspeople still referred to the property as the Marland Mansion. On the grounds was built a chapel, convent, and two-story hall used later as an all-girls school. (Northcutt, Ziegenhain, and Burke 106).
[40] Ibid., 103.
[41] With Lydie holding his hand, E.W.'s last words were, "I love you more than anything in this world." (Ibid., 104)

left Ponca City.[42] She virtually vanished for 22 years. Nobody is certain of where she was during these years, but eye witness accounts suggest she worked as a maid in Independence, Missouri and stood in a breadline in New York City.[43] Lydie's brother, George Jr., filed a missing persons report with the FBI in 1953, but nothing was uncovered before his death in 1957. He never saw his sister again.

In 1975, Lydie was finally tracked down in Washington D.C. by attorney C. D. Northcutt who was working for family friends of the Marlands.[44] She had been living on the street, clearly mentally impaired and physically battered. After receiving a letter from Northcutt expressing concern for the condition of the mansion, Lydie was convinced to return to Ponca City. She moved back into her cottage on the estate grounds, but sadly lived the rest of her days in an extreme state of mental illness and incessant paranoia. In letters written to Northcutt, Lydie expressed some of her most deep felt hardships:

> Twenty-two years ago I had to leave my home in Ponca City. People moved in on my life for less than noble reasons, and it has been a nightmare ever since, breaking me down physically in every way. The invasion of, and exploitation of, one's private life is being called "the new cannibalism"- and it is, that "psychological cannibalism". I was never a "missing person" I have spent years trying to evade the relentless surveillance, and never succeeding.[45]

In August 1975, after discussions with Northcutt, Lydie posted a letter to the citizens of Ponca City asking them to buy the estate. In this letter published in the *Ponca City News* on August 10, 1975, Lydie expressed the importance of the estate being preserved and how such an effort could benefit the community:

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[42] Ibid., 107.
[43] Ibid., 107.
[44] Apman 19.
[45] Ibid., 20.

> I had not wanted to be involved in this matter, or to have anything to say about it- but in the past few weeks I have learned that the alternatives are, to the city owning this property- and I do believe that for the city to own it, is the best answer for ensuring the protection for the future of a structure that is unique- and also, I feel it would add to the many unusual and attractive features that makes Ponca City the outstanding city of its size, that it is.
>
> I deeply regret that the Church is vacating the property. They have maintained it with dignity- with love and concern- and respect for the man who built it. A quiet refuge from the mad, mad world outside its walls.
>
> My own feelings about the place are naturally emotional and personal- but I would like to say this much- to me it is a place of rare beauty and artistic integrity. A structure that is an expression from mind into substance, of the quality, the strength, and the heart of a man.[46]

A two-year sales tax was approved to raise $717,500 of the purchase price and Conoco Oil Company, formerly Marland Oil Company, paid the rest of the purchase price which totaled $1.5 million.[47] Since 1975, major efforts have been made by the Marland Estate Commission and the Marland Estate Foundation to renovate and restore the mansion. The mansion was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1978 by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service of the United States Department of the Interior and also placed on the National Register of Historic Places, while the mansion and surrounding grounds continue to be owned and maintained by the City of Ponca City.

The omission of Mary Virginia and Lydie Marland from the interpretive focus at the mansion is evident throughout the site, with barely any mention of them during guided tours, although the original statue made in Lydie's likeness by Jo Davidson is prominently displayed in the grand entryway. This image of Lydie as a stoic, stationary figure further supports her mythic rather than real public image. The cottage on the estate grounds, where Lydie spent the remainder of her life after her return to Ponca City, is now called Lydie's Cottage and functions primarily as an event venue. Her mythic

[46] Northcutt, Zeigenhain, and Burke 117.
[47] Ibid., 117.

presence at the mansion is also evident through local tales of haunting activity and paranormal activity on the grounds. The mansion currently displays some original furnishings and art work belonging to the Marlands including Lydie's bedroom set and a large portrait painting in a ballroom of her dressed in a traditional Spanish gown. It is interesting to note that although Lydie is not the dominant interpretive focus at the site, she is given a powerfully mysterious presence at the mansion by being represented through sculpture and paintings. After visiting the mansion, one cannot help but want to know more about her and her own unique experiences.

A comparison between the homes and experiences of Mattie Beal and Lydie Marland demonstrates the variety of influences Oklahoma women had upon city births and the immense sacrifices made to uphold legacies. While Lydie Marland may not have been the sole factor in the decision to preserve the Marland Mansion, it was her return to Ponca City and request to the public that ultimately rescued the site. Mattie Beal, however, was the sole interpretive focus in the decision to preserve her home and tell her unique story. This wide spectrum of life experiences which shaped the destinies of affluent Oklahoma women demonstrate key areas where house museums can acknowledge previously untapped cultural resources.

Chapter 2:
Tragedy Begets Transformation: The Murray Lindsay Mansion and The Mable B. Little Home

Just as The Mattie Beal Home of Lawton and Marland Mansion of Ponca City represent city-birth and development of early Oklahoma, many other house museums can be interpreted as reflections of rural- to- urban development by rebuilding after personal struggle. Oklahoma history is uniquely ripe with stories of cultural amalgamation and interrelationships developed through a desire to build a future by the acquisition of land and the fostering of community. Two of the last remaining Oklahoma sites which are examples of these interlocking social themes are The Murray-Lindsay Mansion of Lindsay and The Mabel B. Little House of Tulsa. The representation of the lives of minority women are often excluded from the house museum field and these museums are both case studies for how these women should be approached as cultural resources.

The Murray- Lindsay Mansion in Lindsay, Oklahoma stands as a unique testament to Oklahoma's rapid rural nineteenth- century development due to European immigration and the results of Native American- white intermarriage. The Murray family, of both Choctaw and Irish decent, and extended Lindsay family both inhabited the grand home.[48] Very few Oklahoma house museums have been preserved to accurately tell how this tale of interracial relations affected the cultural landscape of the United States.

According to historian Linda Williams Reese, early Oklahoma women settlers built and maintained "social bonds for survival" and "Indian-white intermarriage became

[48] Much of the information gathered regarding the Murray and Lindsay family histories was acquired through Anita Lindsay's published account *From Pioneers to Progress* (Lindsay, OK; Cable Printing Co, 1957)

exceedingly common in Oklahoma."[49] These homesteading women formed these social relationships through "female roles" and caring for their newly established homes. The unifying experience of childbirth and childcare took on an especially important role in the bonding of these women to their new surroundings. As explained by Reese, "Indian women faced a bewildering continuum of alternatives that included education toward the Victorian ideal and vocational training for farm life" while, "Some historians have suggested that gender expectations -more than class, ethnicity, race, religion, education, or marital status- shaped the lives of westering women."[50]

Nineteenth- century European emigration had a particularly significant impact upon Oklahoma's early land development. The opening of Oklahoma land to non-Indian settlement coincided with the period of the greatest flow of European immigrants into the United States during the 1880's and more than 5.2 million immigrants entered the country during this time.[51] Due to Ireland's overpopulation, severe poverty, and religious prejudice brought on by Protestant England, the Irish constituted nearly half of all immigrants entering the U.S. by 1840.[52] A potato famine beginning in 1845 accelerated this great migration and over two million Irish flocked to the United States after their

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[49] According to the 1910 federal census only one-third of the total Indian population in Oklahoma claimed to be full blood. (Linda Williams Reese. *Women of Oklahoma 1890-1920.* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997) 53.

[50] Ibid., 143.

[51] "The next decade the total number of immigrants dropped to 3.7 million, but the first decade of the twentieth century saw the highest flow of European immigrants into the United States in the history of the nation with more than 8.8 million new arrivals. Many of these immigrants of the late 19th century and early 20th century represented the so-called "new immigrants", Asians, Jews, Italians, Poles, and Slavs. The earlier immigrants to the United States had been drawn primarily from Britain and Germany. The Origins of the European settlers in Oklahoma reflected this new wave of immigrants." (Oklahoma State University Digital Library: Off Campus Access to Library Resources. (Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia of History and Culture, "Irish", http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/W/WO022.html, Accessed 5/11/2011).

[52] Oracle Thinkquest Educational Foundation. "The Irish", http://www.thinkquest.org/pls/html/think.site?p_site_id=20619 (Accessed 12/5/2011).

most important food crop had failed. [53] Many peasants arrived without resources to start farms or businesses. Few of them ever accumulated the resources to make any meaningful choice about their way of life. Fortunately, however, the expansion of the American economy during the Industrial Revolution created heavy demands for labor.

Irish presence in Oklahoma can be traced to the federal relocation of American Indians. Many of the tribal members who were relocated to Oklahoma Territory during the early to mid nineteenth century had intermarried with the Irish.[54] The Choctaw tribe had lived and prospered in Alabama and Mississippi until approximately 1830 when, during the presidency of Andrew Jackson, tribes in the Southern United States made treaties with the U.S. government to give up their lands for a territory located beyond the Mississippi River.[55]

After being widowed during the civil war and left with five children, Choctaw descendant[56] Sophia Dibrell left Mississippi for Indian Territory with "her children, all her earthly possessions, one bale of cotton, and a piano".[57] Like her mother, her daughter Alzira Dibrell was educated at seminary in Mississippi and at 18 married native Irishman William Powell in 1868. Their only daughter Anita was born one year later. Tragically Powell died shortly after her birth, leaving the family with considerable resources of

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[53] It is estimated that over 3.5 million Irish emigrated to the United States between 1820 and 1880. (Kerby Miller and Paul Wagner. *Out of Ireland: The Story of Irish Emigration to America* (Niwot, Colorado; Roberts Rinehart Publishers 1997) 10,11)

[54] Oklahoma State University Digital Library: Off Campus Access to Library Resources. "Irish" (www.digital.library.okstate.edu/…IR001.html) Accessed 5/11/2011.

[55] These exchange wilderness lands lying west of the Arkansas became known as "Indian Territory" and were to remain so "for as long as grass shall grow and water flow." (Anita Lindsay. *From Pioneers to Progress* (Lindsay, OK: Cable Printing Co. 1957) 2).

[56] Sophia Dibrell was the daughter of Alzira Dibrell, descendant of the Iska clan who had settled in the Territory with her brother Nathaniel Folsom. Folsom had arrived with the Choctaw tribe as an adopted chief in command of an immigrant party of British settlers. (Ibid., 2).

[57] Anita Lindsay gives an account of the piano being the only one on the Territory and people would come for miles to hear Alzira McCaughey play music. (Ibid., 2).

cattle and livestock.[58] Two years later in 1871, Alzira Powell became Alzira Murray after marrying yet another Irishman, Frank Murray, of Londonderry. Murray, descended from a wealthy Irish family, sought his own fortune in the New World after being sent by his father on a business trip to England.[59] The Murrays were the only settlers in the area which was known as Elm Springs in Indian Territory and they originally settled in a log cabin. Their nearest neighbors were 25 miles away.[60]

Elm Springs belonged to the Choctaws and Chickasaws and was not open to white settlers. Frank Murray acquired rights to the property through his marriage to Alzira. The family eventually acquired 20,000 acres of land that extended along the Washita River. At one time, the Murray land was the largest farm in cultivation in Indian Territory.[61] When Indian Territory was opened for settlement, Frank Murray lost most of his good tenants as they pursued land for themselves. Twenty-six thousand head of cattle became the Murrays' primary resource, in addition to their new real estate ventures.[62] The community name of Elm Springs was changed to Erin Springs reflecting the Irish influence of the Murray family.[63]Alzira Murray had eight more children with Frank Murray; John T., Robert Emmet, Marie Rosie, Frank, Erin, Lula, Ila, and Mamie.

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[58] Ibid., 3.

[59] Frank Murray arrived in the U.S. in 1850 after purchasing cattle in England for his father and shipped them to Ireland. He kept just enough money to pay for his passage to America and landed in New Orleans virtually penniless. He held various jobs as mail carrier and forage master for the federal army until he eventually drifted to Oklahoma/ Indian Territory in 1871. (Ibid., 3)

[60] According to Anita Lindsay, freight drivers drove supply wagons for the government through the area and one of them was a young Jesse James who was a frequent visitor to the Murray household during his pre-outlaw days. (Ibid., 4)

[61] At one time, the Murray land was the largest farm in cultivation in Indian Territory. The primary crop of this first homestead, which came to be known as The Old Hedge Farm, was corn meant to be sold to the government. Frank Murray rented land to new settlers at tracts of 100 to 200 acres. According to a Daily Oklahoman article from 1888, Frank Murray was known as the "poor man's friend." (Ibid., 6).

[62] The Murrays eventually purchased the local general store and post office. (Ibid., 6).

[63] Erin Springs became a thriving community by 1886 and boasted a dozen cottages, two country stores, post office, drug store, blacksmith shop, school house, and Monastic hall which was also used as a church. (Ibid., 13).

The Murrays began the construction of their new home in 1879, taking three years to complete. It was originally constructed of native Oklahoma stone from a quarry located approximately five miles south of Erin Springs.[64] This second home was the largest and most ornate house in the western Chickasaw Nation and provided an air of luxury in a previously isolated region. Although very few photos of this structure exist, the surviving three-story mansion is complete with ionic columns, two story porch, and commanding size. These features were added later during a remodel orchestrated by Alzira. Although she may not have been the primary designer of the original second home, her contribution of land rights is highly significant to the initial financial success of her family and their ability to construct a large home which demonstrated this achievement to the public.

The Murray's operated their agricultural empire as a team for the next ten years until Frank Murray passed away in 1892. By this time, the family's fortune had begun to wane and the Murrays were on the verge of financial catastrophe at the time of Frank's death. At age forty-two, Alzira Murray (Figure 7) assumed all fiscal, business, and managerial responsibilities for the struggling farm and its prospects soon began to improve. Alzira's access to tribal land was halted by the opening of Indian Territory to allotment through the Dawes Act[65] and the family was left with a mere 80 acres of land.

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[64] Lumber for the two-story square mansion, complete with fifteen rooms, was hauled to the site by a wagon team from Gainsville, Texas. The architect hired to design the home was also from Gainsville. (Ibid., 16).

[65] The Dawes Act, adopted by Congress in 1887, authorized the President of the United States to survey Indian tribal land and divide the land into allotments for individual Indians. The act was named for its sponsor, Senator Henry L. Dawes, of Massachusetts. The Dawes Act was amended in 1891 and again in 1906 by the Burke Act. The objective of the Dawes Act was to stimulate assimilation of Indians into American society. Individual ownership of land was considered a crucial step. The act also provided that the government would purchase Indian land "excess" to that needed for allotment and open it for settlement to non-Indians. The Dawes Act had a negative effect on American Indians, as it ended their communal holding of property. It was followed by the Curtis Act, which dissolved tribal rights and governments.

While the loss of most of her farmland would have been a financially, and personally, devastating blow to Alzira, she was able to sustain her family's fortune through new business endeavors through the banking industry. Anita, Alzira's first and only child from her first marriage to William Powell, married Lewis Lindsay who had worked for Frank Murray and became heavily involved in the cattle industry.[66] In December 1902 Lindsay established a new town on part of his 400 acre farm located adjacent to Erin Springs in the Washita Valley between Pauls Valley and Chickasha. By January 12, 1902, land had been cleared and the town of Lindsay began to expand at a rapid pace.[67] Alzira Murray and her brother Emmitt McCaughey both served as original vice-presidents and stock holders of the First National Bank of Lindsay.

Deciding to take advantage of the new town's business ventures, and undoubtedly desiring to transform her older homestead into a more suitable entertainment venue, Alzira began a lengthy remodel of the family home beginning in 1902. Perhaps she felt the need to reinvent herself through the reinvention of her home. Her financial independence would have certainly been demonstrated through the remodeling of the mansion and the newly established town of Lindsay would have benefitted from such a commanding structure. Just as Mattie Beal had chosen a traditional Greek Revival style for her home to demonstrate success, Alzira Murray chose a similar aesthetic to also

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According to the Oklahoma Historical Society's *Encyclopedia of History and Culture* the act "was the culmination of American attempts to destroy tribes and their governments and to open Indian lands to settlement by non-Indians and to development by railroads". Land owned by Indians decreased from 138 million acres in 1887 to 48 million acres in 1934. (Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, "Dawes Commission", http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/D/DA018.html , Accessed 1/12/2012).

[66] Lewis Lindsay arrived in Oklahoma Territory in 1888 and married Anita the same year that he began working for Frank Murray. Anita and Lewis Lindsay had ten children: Tess, Fannie, John, Burr, Mamie, Frank, Dorothy, and Louise, some of whom were named after Anita's deceased siblings. The children were raised in the Murray-Lindsay family home. (Lindsay 19).

[67] Ibid., 22.

illustrate her family's successful re-stabilization .The front veranda was removed and a classical portico with Grecian columns was installed in its place. Also added to the front entrance of the home were two beveled glass entryways and four cypress columns. Brick walls were stuccoed and the roof of the house was raised to create a third floor intended to be used as attic sleeping space and a party room for her daughters Ila and Mamie. These remodeling features remain today (Figure 8) along with the structural renovations project undertaken by the University of Oklahoma School of Architecture in 1978.[68]

Multiple tragedies struck the Murray-Lindsay household before and after the first major remodeling of the mansion, however. Of Frank and Alzira Murray's eight children, only John T., Lula, and Anita lived to adulthood and only Anita lived past age thirty-one.[69] The other six children did not live past adulthood. By the turn of the century Alzira had buried her other children from her marriage to Frank Murray. John T., the only Murray son to live to adulthood, died in 1898 at age 25 of an illness. Ila and Mamie both contracted scarlet fever while attending a Catholic school in Denton, Texas and died in 1901 within days of each other.[70] Lula lived in the home until hear death on May 7, 1914, her birthday, from complications from pneumonia while recovering from an accident.[71]

While representing a harrowing saga of the gain and loss of land, the home also evokes the feeling of a tomb echoing the loss of many lives. In fact, the Murray children's graves marked with angel statues are located in a small cemetery near the mansion. It is interesting that while Frank Murray is considered to be the primary

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[68] The four fluted stucco columns required the most immediate attention as the fired clay Ionic capitols had cracked and allowed rainwater to break down the foundation of the mansion. All four columns were restored by 1981 and were replaced with redwood columns with central metal posts complete with exact replicas of the decorative capitols. The stucco restoration was completed by 1982. (The Murray-Lindsay Mansion).

[69] The Murray-Lindsay Mansion

[70] The Murray-Lindsay Mansion

[71] The Murray-Lindsay Mansion

contributor to the development of this region, the surviving structure which stands as a testament to his success is not the frame structure built by him, but the renovated structure orchestrated by Alzira Murray. Despite the devastating loss of most of her children and land, she was able to reestablish her family's homestead. Unlike the Mattie Beal Home and Marland Mansion, where the exhibition rooms are primarily furnished with original objects, The Murray-Lindsay Mansion is furnished with mostly donated items of furniture and plaques giving detailed descriptions of the family and the purpose of each room. Ghostly images of Alzira's deceased children are prominently displayed in their former bedrooms on the second floor. Very little interpretation of Alzira's life as a Native American is evident in the museum with the exception of a few donated tribal objects displayed in an isolated attic space. Alzira's contribution to the community is much more evident in the telling of how the renovated mansion came to be built during a period of rebirth after the loss of her most treasured possessions: her land and her children.

An examination of another Oklahoma house museum, The Mabel B. Little Heritage House in Tulsa, which also represents the life of minority women, solidifies this theory of these museums standing as evidence of rebirth. Named in honor of Tulsa race riot survivor Mabel B. Little, this site was actually the home of the Mackey family who lost the original house in the riot of 1921. The surviving brick structure, located in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District, is the second home built by the Mackey's. Although this historic house is not currently functioning as a museum space, the story behind the site and its importance in the telling of Oklahoma black history is relevant.

After the Civil War ended in the spring of 1865, race relations in the Southern United States were unstable.[72] White Southerners, "expected the deference they had become accustomed to during slavery to continue after emancipation".[73] Oklahoma Territory proved to be a geographically ambiguous location with no fixed boundaries between its white and black settlers. Therefore, by the 1880's, Oklahoma settlers were given the opportunity to "etch out their own pattern of race relations."[74] Black and white settlers alike emigrated from the North and South which brought a wide variety of opinions regarding race to the territory. The "biracial" pattern existing in the South was impossible to replicate in Oklahoma Territory partially due to the presence of thousands of Native Americans.[75] In fact, the first African Americans to emigrate to Oklahoma Territory in the late 1860's accompanied the Five Civilized Tribes on the Trail of Tears as slaves or members of tribes.[76]

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[72] Segregation was the norm of Southern race relations long before it received legal sanction in the 1890's. Oklahoma Territory was dominated by the Republicans after the Civil War and the political debate over segregation was presided over by this government. White Democrats and Republicans continued the war within the racial arena with Democrats utilizing segregation and disenfranchisement against African Americans to thwart the likelihood of a "class revolt" while Republicans supported granting blacks all rights and privileges of citizenship in order to make racial exclusion virtually impossible. (Murray R. Wickett, "The Fear of Negro Domination: The Rise of Segregation and Disenfranchisement in Oklahoma" from *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume LXXVIII, Number One, Spring, 2000 (Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Historical Society, 2000) 44).

[73] Ibid., 44.

[74] Ibid., 46.

[75] Ibid., 46.

[76] Many black freedmen married into Native American Tribes and were given tribal membership, rights, and responsibilities. Freedom for the slaves of Native Americans came after the Civil War. Treaties were drawn in 1866 to free these slaves and some were accepted as members of the tribes. Treatment of freedmen varied. The Seminole, Creeks, and Cherokee treated slaves well and granted citizenship to freedmen and former slaves. However, the Choctaw and Chickasaw did not allow blacks into their tribe. Freedmen of the Choctaw tribe could also not claim land to farm. They were legally free but denied rights of their former masters and Choctaw and Chickasaw freedmen were reduced to conditions worse than slavery. There is even an account of a former slave being 'stripped naked and driven from the territory" by these tribes. (Dorscine Spigner- Littles, Collective Visions: A Historical Overview of Black Women in Oklahoma , 1800-1921, documentary VHS video (Oklahoma City, OK: Grekel Productions, 1990)

In the two decades following the Civil War, African Americans arrived in Indian Territory from Texas, Arkansas, Kansas, and most Southern States. According to historian Dorscine Spigner-Littles, this mass exodus was stimulated by four major factors: intense racial violence in the South, the dramatization of the richness of the West propagandized by print media, the desire to earn a better living, and land available during the Land Run of 1889.[77] It is important to note that many African- American families were driven away from the South by assaults on women and children. The cultural diversity and initial racial tolerance of Oklahoma Territory generated economic opportunities to African Americans which had been denied to them in the South and they were also given access to integrated schools.[78] The territory's first schools provided education to white, Native American, and African American pupils.[79] A majority of African American settlers established livelihoods as farmers or tradesmen and even owned their own land.[80]

African American women settling in Oklahoma Territory during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century made great contributions to the growth and prosperity of early settlements through efforts to engage their individual communities in self improvement by being the example of the "new model of black womanhood."[81] By 1890, 22,000 African Americans populated the territory; half were women. Both married

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[77] Ibid

[78] During the early territorial period, schools were too few and far between to have a comprehensive segregated system. Republicans also argued that separate schools would result in greater expense and "integrated schools lead to better understanding of (among) the races." (Wickett 47)

[79] A school established in Tulahassee, OT (Oklahoma Territory) and operated by the Creek Nation was of the the first schools to provide education for freedmen.

[80] According to a 1900 census, of the 13,225 African American farmers reported, 9,944 owned their own farms (75.2 %), while only 2,467 were reported as share tenants working on the farms of their land owners. In fact, the inclusion of freedmen in the Five Civilized Tribes in the division of tribal lands enacted by the Curtis Act made the proportion of African Americans that owned their owned farms greater than the proportion of whites; only 46.1% of whites owned their own farms. By 1910, there were 137, 612 African Americans populating Oklahoma making it the 16th most black populated state in the U.S. (Wickett 46-47).

[81] Reese 145.

and unmarried women traveled West and could file land claims at age 21.[82] According to Spigner-Littles, around fourteen black women made land claims within one year of the Land Run of 1889. Agriculture proved to be the chief means of livelihood during pre statehood Oklahoma and for many African American women this lifestyle entailed back-breaking, unrelieved work to build their homes and raise their children. This hardship was compounded by many African American families not having access to the capitol needed to acquire the best available farm land and only being able to establish homesteads on remote, less fertile land.[83] As stated in her documentary, Spigner-Littles explains, "Slavery's sharpest legacy, other than racism, was a financially crippled black community."[84]

Many African American women preferred urban life over harsh rural living and were able to find additional work as house servants, cleaners, or midwives. Both black men and women strongly believed that without political power they were defenseless against racism and made great strides to educate themselves in order to rise above oppression. According to historian Linda Williams Reese, "Territorial Oklahoma's black town women constructed a female culture that reinforced the high standards they set for themselves, sustained and unified their relationships with each other, and defied criticism from whites as well as from their black male counterparts."[85] For a brief time, a few all-black towns[86] provided an "insulated freedom" for women and men to create a culture

[82] Spigner-Littles
[83] Ibid
[84] Spigner-Littles
[85] Reese 145.
[86] Some of Oklahoma territory's twenty seven all-black towns included Langston, Boley, Liberty, Taft, Clearview, Tatums, and Bailey. Taft and Boley were both founded on the land allotments of black women; Taft on the land of Creed freedwoman Phyllis Manuel and Boley on the land of Choctaw freedwoman Abigail Barnett. Edward P. McCabe promoted Langston City in the early 1890's as a settlement supply base for future land openings in the northern part of the territory. (Reese 146)

free of racial blockades and a place to nurture future generations. Education and protection were advocated above all other endeavors and girls were raised to strive for a "virtuous and industrious life."[87] Black families often kept their daughters in school longer than their sons in the hope that they would become school teachers.[88] Women faced less sexual discrimination in all-black towns and were able to organize their own study clubs, discussion groups, and participate in charity work in their communities.[89] There was nearly an even ratio of black females to black males in these all black towns; however, the traditional western pattern of female-headed households was not consistently present in these communities.[90] Despite this reality, male editors of the "Boley Progress", attempting to recruit businessmen and settlers from the South, used the female image within their print narrative to represent the fertility of Oklahoma land. Oklahoma was said to have "leaped at one bound to the adult age, a buxom young giantess."[91] According to attorney and author Hannibal B. Johnson, "The lure of Oklahoma in the 1800's was clearly a better life for African Americans."

Early territorial Oklahoma black men and women were committed to racial development through economic opportunity, cultivation of morality, political power, and social institutions. Religion was perhaps the most powerful influence upon the community and the church was their most important cornerstone in sustaining a progressive livelihood. Women were the mainstay of religious life, yet their role in the church was considered to be more supportive through their fundraising efforts and care

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[87] Spigner- Littles

[88] Before World War II, teaching and domestic work were the only opportunities for black women. They were also not allowed to work in factories or hold clerical positions. (Ibid)

[89] Organizations and literature clubs made efforts to keep black history alive in the minds of young people in order to counteract racist beliefs. (Ibid)

[90] Reese 146.

[91] Ibid., 148.

for the orphaned and elderly.[92] Shortly before Oklahoma Territory was slated for statehood in 1907, political struggle began to play a more important role in the lives of black Oklahomans with segregation becoming a very real, and possibly inevitable, social factor. White settlers seemed to favor segregation as a means to regain rural and economic control; some even considered lynching to be an "effective means of race control."[93] Members of the black community across Oklahoma were threatened by mobs and the Klu Klux Klan participated in the disposal of many of their properties and possessions. Jim Crow Laws were made a high priority when statehood legislation was being drafted and black Oklahomans made a valiant effort against this constitution for the new state.[94]

Despite widespread segregation and the establishment of Jim Crow legislation in early twentieth- century Oklahoma, middle class African Americans were still able to gain economic and social strength by developing their own districts where they could live freely, and, for a time, without fear of disenfranchisement. All- black districts such as the Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma represented the brief economic success enjoyed by black Americans throughout America during the first two decades of the twentieth

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[92] In Langston, black women sold needlework and hosted socials to buy oil lamps to light Main Street. Boley women stressed the importance of parents to order dolls from the National Negro Doll Company in Nashville. Oklahoma black women raised money to built homes for the elderly and orphans. Judith Horton of Guthrie founded the Excelsier Club in 1907 and established Oklahoma's first library in 1908. Harriet Jacobson of Oklahoma City established the Eastside Culture Club in 1907 which founded the Oklahoma Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (OKFCWC) in 1910 with Jacobson as their first president. The OKFCWC was responsible for the establishment of the Boley School for Boys and a facility for delinquent girls in Taft. (Spigner-Littles)

[93] According to Spigner-Littles' documentary, 3,436 people were lynched in Oklahoma Territory, and Oklahoma State, between 1889 and 1921. (Ibid.,).

[94] Oklahoma's segregation legislation was passed in 1907. Between 1907 and 1916, a legal battle ensued to deny black men the right to vote. Oklahoma began to steadily loose its high African American population after statehood and many left to settle in the North, Africa, and Canada. Those who chose to remain in the state made attempts to cultivate their farms but the lack of capitol and supplies caused many farms to fail due to increasingly poor conditions. These factors led to many farmers selling their land and moving to larger urban areas in pursuit of other economic opportunities. (Ibid).

century. [95] Many Oklahomans are not aware of the significant role played by the state in black history and this fact increases the importance for the acknowledgement of existing historical sites in Oklahoma's former all-black districts.

By 1921, Greenwood had become the center of African American life for over 11,000 Tulsa residents.[96] Due to segregation, black Tulsans were barred from living, socializing, and shopping in other areas of the city. A high level of home ownership in Greenwood made this district unique from other black communities in other parts of the country. During this era, Tulsa was essentially two cities; the black North end and the white South end. Greenwood's segregation from the rest of a predominantly white Tulsa actually made the growth of the Greenwood District possible because the black population's economic success was not stifled by competition from other parts of the city. According to Hannibal Johnson, supply and demand was an essential factor; "There was a demand for goods that one could not purchase within the context of the white community, so there was a need for black individuals to produce and supply their own goods."[97]

As part of a white dominated society, black Tulsans had to endure the constant threat of law enforcement who were able to come and go from Greenwood at will, sometimes making unexplainable arrests. This issue was compounded by two factors;

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[95] Tulsa, which had first been established as a Creek Indian village in the 1830's, remained an uneventful frontier town until 1882 with the arrival of the railroad along with a large number of new white settlers transforming the settlement into one of Oklahoma's many "Boom Towns". The city's rapid growth was spurred in 1905 by the Ida Glen oil range and by 1920 the population had skyrocketed to 100,000 people. This oil wealth went primarily to the whites who owned the wells, but black Oklahomans also benefitted as the money began to trickle down in society as blacks were able to hold a menial number of jobs in town. (In Search of History: The Night Tulsa Burned; Documentary, (A&E Television Network) 1999)

[96] Declared as the "Black Wallstreet " of the United States by Booker T. Washington, the Greenwood District included 108 black-owned businesses, two black schools, the Dreamland Theater, two black newspapers, a black public library, over 13 churches, 15 doctors offices, and a black hospital. (Scott Ellsworth. *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Louisiana State University Press 1892) 14)

[97] In Search of History: The Night Tulsa Burned

most black wage earners had white bosses and the district was under the jurisdiction of Tulsa's political and police authority.[98] As the district continued to thrive and develop, white Tulsans developed an intense jealousy towards wealthy blacks who were becoming more socially and economically visible.

The presence of the Klu Klux Klan in Oklahoma, particularly in Tulsa, was only one example set among the other numerous groups who were fueling race riots in America during the 1920's.[99] By 1921, the fires of racial intolerance spread to Tulsa's Greenwood District. Trouble had been brewing for quite some time when a single alleged event touched off the most deadly race riot in American history. Dick Rowland, a 19 year old black Tulsan who had dropped out of Booker T. Washington High School to earn money shining shoes, worked downtown. Being unable to use any of downtown Tulsa's public restrooms, which were reserved for whites, Rowland used the nearest black restroom available located on the upper floor of the Drexel building. On May 30, 1921 he allegedly stepped onto the elevator in the building with elevator operator Sarah Paige.[100] The only facts known about what happened between the time he entered the elevator and the time he exited are that Rowland ran from the elevator and Paige was found in a hysterical state. She supposedly accused Rowland of assault and the story spread like

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[98] Ellsworth 23-44.

[99] In what was later know as the "Red Summer" of 1919, 25 major race riots erupted in America. The worst riot of that year occurred in Chicago where 38 people were killed and 1000 black families were left homeless. According to Scott Ellsworth, "One thing to remember about race riots during this period is that they are characterized by whites invading black communities. These are not black communities that are erupting. These are white citizens sometimes aided by the police who are attacking black citizens, attacking black homes". (In Search of History: The Night Tulsa Burned)

[100] Ellsworth 46.

wildfire throughout Tulsa. The media quickly circulated the story and the account became more elaborate with each telling.[101]

After the story of the alleged assault was made public by the *Tulsa Tribune*, the city of Tulsa was engulfed by a race riot. By 4:00 PM on May 31, 1921, a crowd of almost 400 whites were gathered in front of the court house where Rowland had been taken after his arrest. Armed guards were provided for his safety.[102] False reports reached Greenwood that a white mob stormed the courthouse threatening to lynch Rowland and that a group of black Tulsans had taken a stand in his defense. A group of Greenwood men offered to help guard Rowland but were turned away after being assured of his safety. By 10:30 PM many members of the white mob had armed themselves and their number swelled to over 2,000.[103] Tensions continued to develop and the Greenwood men returned to the courthouse. A fight broke out after the armed black men were provoked by the white mob with racial taunts and insults. Shots were fired by an unknown person and the riot began with a fervor of rapid destruction, blood shed, and horror.[104]

In addition to the high number of riot casualties, the monetary amount of property loss was a devastating blow to the completely demolished Greenwood District.

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[101] A major contributor to this seemingly unstoppable media frenzy was the *Tulsa Tribune* newspaper which ran the front page headline titled "Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator" on May 31, 1921, the day after Rowland's arrest. Sarah Paige was described in the article as "an orphan who works as an elevator operator to pay her way through business college" while Rowland was only referred to as "a negro delivery boy". This same Tribune had referred to Greenwood as "Little Africa". (Ibid., 51)

[102] Ibid., 51.

[103] Ibid., 51.

[104] Many Tulsa police officers abandoned their duties, deputizing any white ale citizen with a gun and allowing them to arrest and detain Greenwood citizens at will. Almost all black men in Greenwood were arrested and held against their will in detention centers for their "protection." This left the district, and its women and children, completely defenseless while all 50 blocks of their beloved homes were looted and burned. The National Guard was contacted to protect the city of Tulsa and martial law was declared at 11 AM in June 1, 1921. Although it is estimated that 300 people were killed during the riot, the number of casualties must have been much higher. Considering that it was the Tulsa police who had, for the most part, instigated the riot, black Tulsans did not feel safe going to authorities to report missing loved ones. Many Greenwood residents simply disappeared and were never seen alive again. (In Search of History: The Night Tulsa Burned).

The Tulsa Real Estate Exchange estimated the loss at approximately $1.5 million[105], individual claims filed against the City of Tulsa for losses due to the riot were estimated at $1.8 million[106], and the total amount of property loss was over $5 million.[107] Approximately one week after the riot, a state grand jury began an investigation of the event. The result of this investigation led to Greenwood residents being ultimately blamed for fueling the destruction and none of Tulsa's white residents involved were ever tried or made to serve any jail time.[108] According to Hannibal Johnson, "With the conspiracy of silence in Tulsa regarding the riot, those in leadership did not talk about the event" and information was suppressed. A direct and blatant example of this "conspiracy of silence" was the destruction of the *Tulsa Tribune* editorial which fueled the riot. This section was systematically cut out of bound volumes of the newspapers and cannot be found in any library microfiche files.

With thousands left homeless after the riot, many tent cities became the temporary homes of Greenwood residents. The Red Cross provided over $100,000 in relief supplies and the NAACP organized a nationwide campaign to raise money for riot victims.[109] Despite the fact that a majority of Tulsa's white political leaders were supposedly embarrassed by the event and the actions which led to such a level of destruction, a fire

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[105] The Exchange also estimated "personal property loss" at about $750,000. (The Greenwood Cultural Center; Tulsa, Oklahoma)

[106] These claims were filed with Tulsa's city commissioners and "subsequently disallowed". Claimes ranged from under $25 to over $150,000. Larger property loss claims included Loula T. Williams' claim for over $100,000 for the Dreamland Theater and the Williams building. R.G. Dunn and Company lost approximately $250,000 in merchandise goods. Greenwood newspaper offices, the Tulsa *Star* and the Oklahoma *Sun*, and the newly built Mount Zion Baptist Church also claimed high monetary losses. (Ellsworth 70).

[107] Ibid., 70.

[108] In Search of History: The Night Tulsa Burned

[109] Riot victims also received relief funds and supplies from the Colored Women's Branch of the New York City YMCA and other civic organizations. It is also important to note that Governor Robertson refused the offer of fifty Black Cross nurses by the president of the Chicago chapter of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and also refused to cosign for 100 National Guard tents to use for the homeless. (In Search of History: The Night Tulsa Burned).

ordinance was enacted which placed quality requirements on new buildings planned for the Greenwood District. This new ordinance made rebuilding the district nearly impossible and was one of the many actions taken by Tulsa politicians to prevent the black population from regaining their previously celebrated economic strength.[110]

The epicenter of this district was the intersection of Greenwood and Archer (Figure 9) where this historic area is now shadowed and hidden by the overpowering structures of present day downtown Tulsa (Figure 10). Upon arriving in this area, one would never be aware of the cultural significance of the district and the thundering highway overpass built directly above is seems to have been placed as an intentional distraction. Standing directly across from the rebuilt Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church, which was destroyed in the riot and rebuilt in 1928 in its original location, is The Mabel B. Little Heritage House and adjacent Greenwood Cultural Center. Although not the original owner or resident of the home, race riot survivor Mabel B. Little is celebrated through the site as a vital member of the Greenwood community, a successful business owner, and a testament to the resilience of the black residents of Tulsa. In her autobiography, *Fire on Mount Zion: My Life and History as a Black Woman in America*[111], Little gave a riveting and detailed account of her early life in Boley, Oklahoma, her move to Tulsa to pursue an education, and her later struggles as a young wife, entrepreneur, and community leader in Greenwood. In her account of the riot, she

[110] Greenwood ultimately prevailed through the efforts of Greenwood lawyer Buck C. Franklin, who set up a "tent practice" in the middle of the destruction of Greenwood. Franklin and his associates challenged the fire ordinance which was not passed. Greenwood then began to rebuild without the use of city assistance. In addition to the physical and emotional destruction suffered by Greenwood residents, desegregation legislation also caused the once-flourishing black community to lose its financial footing. (In Search of History: The Night Tulsa Burned).

[111] The autobiography was written by Mabel B. Little, with the assistance of Nathan Hare, PhD. And Julia Hare, PhD., at age 93 when she was honored with a degree from Langston University.

stated, "Nothing in my life had prepared me for any face-to face encounter with a race riot. It took quite a while for the full force of the riot and its effect on me and my family and community to penetrate my unwary mind."[112]

Little described her grandmother's unwavering encouragement for her to grow up to become a missionary; "As the years went by, she would fast and pray for me every Friday night, asking God please not to give me a lot of children, so I would have time to be a missionary."[113] Little's early devotion to the Christian church, which she joined at age eleven, is highly evident and this aspect of her spirit colored her entire life-long devotion to self-improvement. This desire to become a missionary both helped and hindered Little's efforts as a community leader but her influence upon the preservation of the Greenwood District would solidify her place as a healing force in the aftermath of the race riot. [114]

Mable Little was only 24 years old when the riot occurred in May 1921 and "never could get much real feeling about it- I guess because it shocked and numbed me so."[115] Like the majority of Greenwood residents, the Littles lost virtually everything in the destruction. Both of their rental houses burned, their shoe shine parlor/ beauty salon, and home including, as mentioned by Little several times in her autobiography, "Five

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[112] Mabel B. Little. *Fire on Mount Zion: My Life and History as a Black Woman in America* (Langston, OK; Melvin B. Tolson Black Heritage Center and Langston University 1990) 15.
[113] Ibid., 17.
[114] After settling in with a widow woman who rented her a room, Mabel met and fell in love with Pressley Little. She described their first 1914 encounter as "love at first sight" and continued to profess their great love throughout her autobiography. The young couple began their new life by establishing a three-room shotgun house business at 612 Archer Street where her Pressley operated a shoe shine parlor and Mabel opened her own beauty shop. Unfortunately the new business partnership lost many of their regular customers and supporters in the flu epidemic of 1916. However, Mabel remained thankful for the opportunity to work stating, "Working on peoples heads you learn so much about life and other people." (Ibid 27-34)
[115] Ibid., 38-42.

rooms of brand new furniture."[116] Little described the looting of her home, "like a jealous man out of control and cutting up his wife's best clothes or slashing and scarring her face in a crazed desire to ruin her good looks".[117] When a group of white men came to her home and tried to arrest her husband, Little told them, "No! If you're going to take my husband, you take all of us. If you're going to kill him, kill us."[118] His wife's bravery and forcefulness in standing up against the mob, saved Pressley's life and the two settled into service jobs.[119]

The transition from a life of financial independence to a life of servitude must have weighed heavily on the young couple who now found it nearly impossible to find new jobs due to inadequate transportation in Greenwood and the hateful treatment by members of Tulsa's white community. Little expressed the high level of anxiety and physical strain her husband Pressley faced in the manual labor jobs and he was forced to take. He died of tuberculosis in 1927. This devastating blow to Mabel Little's already taxed emotional state was compounded by the Great Depression. She was forced to sell most of her remaining property to pay for her late husband's doctor bills and medication, utility taxes, and mortgage payments for her new home.[120] Many whites were equally as poor as the black community during this time and this must have created an interesting social dynamic, and challenge to segregation, in the common struggle to find stable work and maintain a sense of dignity. Shortly after being told that her home was being foreclosed by the Home Loan Company, she was contacted again and informed that her

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[116] Ibid., 34.
[117] Ibid., 10.
[118] Ibid., 13.
[119] A man only named as Mr. Brown, who had sold the Little's their beloved furniture, offered to ove the young couple into the servant's quarters of his home free of charge and only asked that they assist his wife with light housework. Commenting on this situation, Little stated that she and Pressley were "basically live-in servants, but very thankful for the blessing". (Ibid.,13).
[120] Ibid., 47.

back taxes had been paid by the company's all-white Board and that her mortgage payments had been significantly cut. Due to her devotion to the Greenwood community and the circumstances behind her husband's death, Little had been singled out as someone who was a valuable asset to the rebuilding of the district. This circumstance was not common. Thousands of others lost their property in the riot and according to Little, "I was about the only person I knew who didn't lose their property."[121] Little's contributions made to the revitalization of Greenwood was one of the main reasons why she was chosen as the namesake of the Mable B. Little Heritage House.

After being allowed to keep her home and regain her independence, Little resumed her dream of becoming a missionary. She became much more involved in her church life by reorganizing the Young Matrons of the State of Oklahoma for the National Baptist Convention, the Young People's Department for the state of Oklahoma and the first Woman's Day in the State of Oklahoma. She also and conducted the first Youth State Encampment at the Oklahoma Baptist College near Muskogee.[122] In speaking of her continued missionary work in *Fire on Mount Zion*, Little stated that there were many people in her community who were against women preaching but, "I may not have been called to preach, but I am a missionary and I'm going to speak. I do what the Lord tells me to do."[123]

Like many other American women during World War II, Little aided the war effort by working in the defense industry. She became one of the first mechanics at

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[121] Ibid., 49.

[122] Little's other positions in church leadership included president of the Oklahoma Baptist Women's Convention, president of the Women's Missionary Society at Mt Zion Baptist Church, Director of the Young People's Department, Religious Director of Education, and chairman of the Devotion Committee for the Oklahoma Baptist Women's Convention. (Ibid., 107).

[123] Little's early missionary work during the 1930's included service as Field Missionary Worker for the Texas Baptist State Convention and Field Missionary Worker for the National Baptist Convention (Ibid., 54).

Douglas Aircraft in Tulsa and attended a government school to learn new skills.[124] After her next mechanic job had been terminated in Wichita, Kansas, she relocated to the Lockheed Plant in California where, according to Little, she "worked the graveyard shift as a welder inspector".[125] Although Little felt an obligation to serve the greater good of the country, being away from her beloved community proved to be a taxing ordeal and she returned to Tulsa in the early 1970's to continue supporting the city's black community. She was driven to return to Tulsa in part because of the "urban renewal" that was destroying her community and its heritage; "It's sad to see the black communities being gutted today," she wrote. "The buildings and the minds and the bodies of the people under something that was supposed to help us—'integration'. Something is wrong here."[126] It was as if the City of Tulsa and Tulsa Board of Education desired to erase all traces of black historical figures from Greenwood and instead assimilate the community into their own vision of leadership.[127] According to Little, "Its like cutting a mighty river off at its source and turning the water into your own sea, taking its name away and slowly giving it your name."[128]

The Mable B. Little Heritage House (Figure 11) is the only remaining house built in the 1920's in Tulsa's historic Greenwood District and is actually an "imitator of an imitator" according to Little.[129] Originally the home of the elusive and highly scrutinized Sam and Lucy Mackey (or Mackley), the two story brick home represents to some the

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[124] Ibid., 71.
[125] Ibid., 71.
[126] Little spoke of her dissatisfaction with the desegregation of schools in Tulsa which resulted in many of Greenwood's schools, such as Booker T. Washington School, being demolished and a new school being built with the name shortened to Washington. She explained that this action by Tulsa's educational leaders took away a piece of Greenwood history which was vital to the future of their children. (Ibid., 71)
[127] Supposedly the shortening of the school's name was to reference President Washington and not Booker T. Washington. (Ibid., 71)
[128] Ibid., 77.
[129] Ibid., 98.

ability of the black community to "rise above racial discrimination, to build a substantial home that would parallel its counterparts in the elite white neighborhoods."[130] To others this site is representative of the perpetuation of black servitude. Lucy Mackey worked as a cook and maid for a banker's wife in South Tulsa and according to Little, "had the dream of building a fine home like the one she cleaned every day." She enjoyed "solitary nights playing at being mistress after 5pm" in her "tiny replica of her mistress' house."

The Mackey's first home was a frame structure destroyed in the riot. After being warned of the impending dangers, the Mackey's reluctantly left their home and returned the next day to its smoking ashes. The family was eventually able to rebuild a brick home in 1926. Lucy Mackey did not live to see her second home completed and "left the house as a retreat for her two daughters to inhabit in seclusion", according to Little. This opinion of the Mackey family is shared by many Greenwood residents today and through the mission of the historical house which some believe encourages the romanticization of servitude. Little stated that the "perpetrators of this legacy unknowingly fall into a syndrome of make believe and second class status of imitation."[131]

The house is significant in that it survived Tulsa's Urban Renewal efforts to modernize the downtown area. Ironically, the original Mackey home, supposedly one of the first to be destroyed in the riot, was the only house to avoid the wrecking ball decades later. Why was Mabel Little given the honor as the namesake of Greenwood's only historical house if she felt so strongly about the misunderstandings regarding the Mackey family? Both the black and white community of Tulsa felt the need to incorporate the

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[130] The Sam and Lucy Mackey House, The Mabel B. Little Heritage House (Tulsa, Oklahoma; Greenwood Cultural Center)
[131] Little 97.

vision of Little's hopes for the city's youth who, as she stated in the Greenwood Cultural Center groundbreaking ceremony in August 1985, should "enter not into the fields of the fatherless" and "whose history is yet to be made, perhaps never to be written."[132] When writing her autobiography Little expressed her intention for the heritage house to function as a "teaching museum" but feared that the site was beginning to replicate instead a "mausoleum". Little also stressed that "it is after all the making of history, and not merely the viewing of history, which is our most unavoidable task."[133]

According to a plaque located in the first floor of the house and titled "The Greenwood Cultural Center, Dedicated to the Generations", a group of both black and white civil rights leaders, Tulsa city officials, and Greenwood residents met at the site in the early 1980's to discuss the future of the house which was in danger of demolition by the continuing Urban Renewal Project. The consensus was that the site should be preserved because the people of Greenwood, and Tulsa as a whole, "need to have something left to their memory for the generations of children who will live under the shadows cast and the indelible scars from the riot." This emphasis upon the importance of the site being preserved for future generations was in no doubt spear-headed by Little.

Currently functioning mostly as an event venue and office space for the adjacent Greenwood Cultural Center, The Mabel B. Little Heritage House is not fulfilling the wish of Little to function as a teaching museum. Due to a lack of research staff and resources, very little information about the Mackey family or Little is given during guided tours of the site, although the Mackeys are mentioned as the original owners of the home. Most of the interpretive focus of the house deals with its proximity to the riot and being the last

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[132] Ibid., 96.
[133] Ibid., 100.

remaining house in the Historic Greenwood District. The museum does not contain any objects belonging to the Mackey family or Little and the only evidence that they were involved in the history of the site are a few crumbling pictures in the front living room. However, Little's life as a missionary is somewhat represented with the display of a *Woman's Missionary Union* handbook which may have been used by her at one time.

Through an analysis of the lives and surviving homes of Alzira Murray and Mable B. Little, their significant community-building contributions are made evident in the way these structures shaped Oklahoma's cultural landscape after periods of devastation. Just as Alzira Murray was able to reestablish her family's homestead after great financial and personal loss, Mabel B. Little mothered the Greenwood District after the race riot which deeply scarred the black community. Her direct involvement in the preservation of her community is made visible through The Mabel B. Little Heritage House, although the site may not currently be enforcing her original vision for the site. While these women are acknowledged as minorities, their importance does not lie in the sole fact that they are non-white. However, more Oklahoma minority women should be acknowledged within the house museum setting in order to tell a complete history.

Chapter 3:
Pressure and Persuasion: Women's Material Culture at The Moore-Lindsay Historical House and The Overholser Mansion

Much can also be learned through the study of individual objects and their role in the social, economic, spiritual, religious, moral, and family life of Oklahoma women. The collections housed in Oklahoma's late Victorian[134] style house museums are great examples of how objects can speak to the present while maintaining their true meaning. Two of Oklahoma's last remaining Victorian style house museums, The Moore-Lindsay Historical House in Norman and The Overholser Mansion in Oklahoma City, are examples of institutions which place a heavy influence upon the interpretation of collections objects in the telling of the lives of upper-middle class women during the Territorial Era.

An emphasis on the lives of upper and middle-class late Territorial era Oklahoma women have been chosen for this chapter due to the availability and quality of the sites' collections. However, more research should be done on the exploration of the material culture of the lives of domestic servants, minorities, working women, and other Oklahoma sites that are not representations of this era. Typically, the homes of prominent and affluent Oklahoma families are the only sites chosen to be preserved due to their architectural uniqueness or the importance of the individuals who owned the homes, while homes of the working class are not typically preserved. Therefore, the

[134] The Victorian Era in America began in approximately 1837 and lasted until around 1901, although some scholars have argued that the highly influential era lasted until the outbreak of WW1. (Ellen M Plante, *Women at Home in Victorian America: A Social History* (New York, New York: Facts on File Inc 1997) ix.).

representations of working women are often excluded from the telling of the region's history.[135]

According to Ellen Plante, during the nineteenth- century the "culture and customs of this fast-changing romantic period lingered in America" and was fueled by growing industrialism.[136] However, Oklahoma architecture and daily life was still influenced by the stylized character of the early Victorian era yet took on its own unique patterns of rustic refinement. The introduction of railroad travel in the 1840's galvanized the expansion of the American West two decades later. The lives of Oklahoma women were impacted on multiple levels relating to labor, education, child-rearing and opportunities to renew their definition of "wife and mother". During the early twentieth-century, an ideological shift in American homes occurred as the importance of women as consumers emerged while their roles as wives and mothers became less demanding of their energy. The new availability of department store goods, threats of changing demographics through immigration, and transition from rural life to urban life, created an environment where the home was "revered as a safe haven from uncertainty, center of refuge, and glorified the domestic sphere"[137] for the middle-class American woman. It is also important to note that the lives of pioneering women, who did not have access to the luxuries of the middle-class during the late nineteenth- century and early twentieth-

[135] For many years, the interpretation of material culture has been challenged by "New Social History" and professionally trained staff. This transition of view point has greatly affected the missions and interpretation of house museums whose original goals only served a small percentage of the public. Such sites were not originally equipped to address controversial subjects such as social inequality, gender discrimination, or poor labor conditions. (Diane Barthel, *Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historical Identity* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press 1996) 67).

[136] Plante ix.

[137] Ibid x.

century periods, "differed dramatically from what we have come to recognize as genteel Victorian culture."[138]

By the early 1900's, the American middle class home "had lost most of its romantic appeal with the increased availability of material goods, packaged foods, house hold appliances and tools, and professional services."[139] However, the geographically ambiguous location of Oklahoma Territory created an interesting environment in which the more "refined" taste of the North was beginning to trickle down and the traditional antebellum influence of the South had taken hold. Territorial women therefore likely struggled to carve out their own identity amidst these competing identities.

Thus, the homes of Oklahoma's late nineteenth- century and early twentieth-century middle and upper class women functioned primarily as a public extension of the family's financial and social success. This included a pressure for women to illustrate proper decorum at all times which was compounded by the added responsibility of cultivating a moral family unit through the raising of children to function as "upright" citizens. Further, a responsibility to maintain social relationships through the cultivation of "social contracts and friendships"[140] was paramount and dictated virtually every aspect of middle class women's lives. Women became the primary designers and decorators of their homes and were expected to "fashion homes that were once a retreat from the outside world and a material as well as a cultural inventory of refinement, social standing, intellect, and honor."[141] This era shrouded by symbolism and strict codes of ethics materialized in middle and upper class homes through the distinction of "public" and

[138] Ibid x.
[139] Ibid., 36.
[140] Ibid., 103
[141] Ibid., xi.

"private" space through separate areas designated for specific uses. Gilded parlor spaces, dining rooms, music rooms, and other spaces for entertaining guests were located in the front of the house while kitchens, bathrooms, out buildings, and servant quarters were typically located towards the back of the house. Women learned how to navigate proper behavior, material design of furnishings, and dress through highly popular etiquette manuals, also known as "behavior books," and ladies' magazines. These important resources gave women detailed information on all aspects of maintaining the home including fashion trends for specific events and times of the day, cooking and recipes, home décor, fine arts crafts, proper hygiene, child rearing, and short stories, that demonstrated moral living. These readily available magazines for the middle class heightened the necessity for women to begin functioning as consumers in order to demonstrate their skills in the art of homemaking. The collections objects housed within two of Oklahoma's Victorian style house museums, The Moore-Lindsay Historical House in Norman and The Overholser Mansion in Oklahoma City, are excellent examples of the extent to which the lives of middle and upper class women were dominated by material goods and the task of representing the required air of gentility to the public.

Built in 1895 by real estate developer William Moore and his wife Agnes Moore, The Moore-Lindsay Historical House (Figure 12) in Norman, Oklahoma represents a ten year period from the Land Run of 1889 to approximately the turn of the century. Although the Moore's did not participate in the Land Run of 1889, this historical site is one of the last remaining examples of the Princess Anne architectural style in Norman that was popular among the Territorial Oklahoma elite of the late nineteenth century who

did participate in this event. Characterized by asymmetrical design, decorative gingerbread facades, towering turrets, and stained glass windows, this home represents the Princess Anne Victorian architectural style which was influenced by Gothic Revival style cottages of Europe.[142]

Relocating from St. Joseph, Missouri in 1890, the Moores may have purchased the 160-acre lot from the individual who had claimed the far northwest corner of what was first known as "Norman's Camp". The Moore's spent $5,000 dollars on this kit house[143] during a time when most new-comers to the territory only spent approximately $400-$500 to build their homes. The Lindsays, who were relatives of the Moores and also from St. Joseph, Missouri, purchased the home in 1908. Harry Lindsay was involved in the coal and lumber industry and, not unlike William Moore, represented the quintessential middle class Territorial entrepreneur. Most of the written documentation and records about both families focus on the lives of men and, therefore, the museum's collection becomes an even more important resource for exploring the lives of the families' women.

Currently owned by the City of Norman and operated by the Cleveland County Historical Society, the The Moore-Lindsay Historical House contains examples of turn of the century furniture, decorative fine art, textiles, clothing, books, photos, children's toys, kitchen gadgets, documents, and many other objects which illustrate daily life of middle class Territorial Oklahomans. Approximately 95% of the collection consists of donated

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[142] This dominant architectural style infiltrated Victorian America from approximately 1875-1900 and began to be popularized by architects such as Andrew Jackson Downing in his book *The Architecture of Country Houses.* (Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications 1969)

[143] Late 20th century "kit houses", or "fabrication homes" were massively popular in early American settler towns and could be ordered from catalogues. The pieces of the home were usually shipped to the homeowner by railroad or by wagon trail. William Moore hired local craftsmen to build his home and also custom build parts of the interior such as the grand staircase. (The Moore-Lindsay Historical House).

items from the community and the other 5% includes original parlor furnishings, correspondence letters, and silver dinnerware belonging to the Lindsay family. As the Victorian style home was considered to be "an extension of its owner's spiritual condition as well as their aesthetic taste", middle class women were encouraged and advised to "take an active interest in the interior and exterior construction of their homes."[144] Although it is not known if Agnes Moore, the wife of William Moore, was involved in designing the home, it can be assumed that she was educated in nineteenth-century "domestic sciences" which included a keen aesthetic eye. In her marriage to a prominent civic figure such as William Moore, she was certainly a product of her environment and would have been expected to maintain her family's home in a respectable fashion.

In contrast with The Moore-Lindsay Historical House, The Overholser Mansion (Figure 13) in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma represents the Territorial upper class lifestyle enjoyed by many affluent families of the early twentieth century. Ohio city planner Henry Overholser constructed this lavish 20 room, three-story Queen Anne mansion, complete with characteristic turrets, stained glass windows, and arcade windows, in 1903. Overholser, who became known as "The Father of Oklahoma City", saw the 1889 Land Run as a business opportunity and arrived in the newly settled region two days later with ten railways cars of lumber in tow and some of the earliest examples of pre-fabricated buildings.[145] Within a year of arriving, Overholser was credited with establishing a well-designed downtown region including the Grand Avenue Hotel and many other establishments. It was also in this year that Overholser met and married Anna Ione

[144] Plante 45.
[145] *Anna and Henry Overholser*, Overholser Mansion Visitor Center

Murphy. Representing the ideal Territorial woman of refined gentility, Anna's mother had died when she was young and she was raised by her English step mother Louise Berry. Anna often traveled with her step mother overseas to Europe and, like most upper class American women, she was heavily influenced by this exposure to antiquity. A picture of Louise Berry's home in England, which is almost identical in design to The Overholser Mansion, housed at The Overholser Mansion's archives may prove that Anna Overholser acted as a heavy influence on the design of the mansion.

Taking an active part of early Oklahoma City civil and social activities, the Overholser's mansion became the cultural hub of the region where Anna Overholser (Figure 14) maintained the family's relationship with the growing community. As the first house built in this region of Oklahoma City, and the only example of the Victorian style in the neighborhood which would later be named Heritage Hills, the mansion stood as a representation of the Overholser's financial and civic success. Henry Overholser died in 1915 after living in his mansion for only twelve years. Anna Overholser and her daughter Henry occupied the house until the passing of Anna in 1940.[146] The fact that the house was predominantly inhabited by the women of the family makes the site even more important as a case study for the dominance of women's consumer lives and the personal relationship they would have developed with their homes.

Unlike The Moore-Lindsay Historical House, whose collection largely consists of donated objects and very few original items belonging to the original families, the entire collection displayed at The Overholser Mansion is original to the house. After the death of the Overholser's daughter Henry Ione Overholser Perry (Figure 15), her husband David Perry continued to live in the mansion until 1972. He then sold the home, and all

[146] Ibid

of its contents, to the state of Oklahoma to "remain a tangible symbol of the spirit of the 89er's."[147] The mansion's collection is significant because it is extremely rare for an American house museum to contain all original furnishings and family objects.

A close examination of the material collections displayed and archived at both The Moore-Lindsay Historical House and The Overholser Mansion illustrate the multiple social and physical demands placed upon late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Territorial women in their ceremonial pursuits as entertainers, wives, mothers, and collectors. Nineteenth century middle and upper class American women were expected to know the proper and most acceptable styles of home décor and depended largely upon catalogues and women's magazines for this knowledge. Many women also planned the interior design of their homes through the use of the hobby of scrapbooking and were constantly saving visual cues which represented their aesthetic tastes.

One of Anna Overholser's numerous interior scrapbooks (Figure 16) is an excellent example of how her interior tastes were influenced by women's magazines in her design of a second story bedroom at The Overholser Mansion (Figure 17). Another interesting and important aesthetic quality of the Victorian style formal parlor is the use of the brightly colored porthole window (Figure 18) as seen at The Moore-Lindsay Historical House. These dual-functioning round windows, inspired by the portholes in ships and may have reflected the love of travel, were usually tinted with a rosy red or pink color to bring light into the home through natural sunlight. Their other function is more specifically related to a woman's appearance as the rosy colored glass would reflect off of the wax-based makeup prominent at the time to give the face a healthy glow. In order to be viewed in the most appealing light, young women who were being courted in

[147] *Henry Ione Oversolser Perry*, Overholser Mansion Visitor Center

the home sat near these windows. The formal parlor spaces displayed in both museums are both excellent examples of the social epicenter of the Victorian style home. Serving as a space for formal entertaining and showroom for the families' most expensive and lavish decorative possessions, the formal parlor was intended to be the most beautiful room in the home.

The dinner table was the "embodiment of material culture and second only to the parlor."[148] Proper dining etiquette was another highly important aspect of middle and upper class women's lives and was greatly influenced by the rapid industrialization of cutlery. The formal eating style of *dinner a la Russe*, "in the Russian style", became popular for Americans in the 1870's and included food being placed in a sideboard or buffet where the servants would do the serving.[149] Specific dinnerware to be used only for certain foods, such as the small salt dish and spoon (Figure 19) displayed at The Moore Lindsay House, became wildly popular through catalogues and etiquette books. Just as the formal parlor functioned as an entertainment space, the dining room was also required to reflect the same refinement for guests. The original hand-painted dining room wall motif (Figure 20) at The Overholser Mansion was designed to match the Limoges China (Figure 21) which was one of Anna Overholser's favorite possessions. This is an example not only of the strong connection upper class women had with their material possessions, but also the extent to which they would orchestrate refinement through the interior design of their homes. The expectation of women to maintain a beautifully embellished home was also extended to their physical appearance and the importance to always represent themselves as poised, refined, and proper.

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[148] Ibid., 115.
[149] Plante 114.

In a constant state of maintaining one's poise and refinement, American women were concerned with their physical appearance through proper fashion and cosmetic regimens. The middle class woman's physical appearance and conduct "allowed or denied her entry into desirable social circles."[150] This attentiveness to the appearance is one example of the multiple "social rules" indoctrinated by etiquette manuals. These "social rules" were later "elevated to a set of "laws"[151] and this linguistic change was intended to reform the middle class as well as the new immigrant population.[152] It is important to note that a majority of these etiquette manuals and advice magazines were written by men. According to cultural historian John F. Kasson, "The entire ritual structuring of urban life, although performed in the name of honoring women, assumed and encouraged their subservience to men."[153]

By the 1840's, women were also beginning to be influenced by the ideals of the "domestic goddess" which in turn affected dress. American fashions mirrored primarily French fashion trends, the most notable aspect of this European influence being the corset. The intention of the corset was to represent a refined lifestyle and high social status. This reflection of restricted movement to the woman's body would supposedly inform the public that she did not do her own chores and had the financial means to hire domestic servants.[154] Nineteenth- century health reformers believed many popular dress fashions to be unhealthy and spoke out specifically against the "tight lacing" technique of corset wearing. According to historian Patricia A. Cunningham, "The appeals against

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[150] Ibid., 103.
[151] Ibid., 106
[152] Ibid., 106.
[153] John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, New York; Hill and Wang 1990) 115.
[154] Plante 126.

fashion were clear: advocates of reform believed that corsets adversely affected internal organs, that long skirts swept up filthy debris from the streets, that the weight of the skirts and petticoats impaired movement, that uneven temperatures caused by clothing brought on sickness, and, finally, that faulty suspension of garments put undue stress on the anatomy."[155] An early twentieth- century dress (Figure 22) displayed with a measuring tape fastened to the waist at The Moore-Lindsay House shows museum visitors exactly how restricted women's waists were while wearing the corset. Although the waist of this dress displayed at the museum is measured at 24 inches, grown women could restrict their size to only 13 or 14 inches while wearing the corset. Corsets were even outlawed temporarily in nineteenth century England because their original material of whale bone, which gave the piece its structure, posed a potentially fatal hazard by stabbing women in their abdomens. The middle class women living in The Moore-Lindsay Historical House during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century would have worn corsets on a regular basis and this dress display is a great example of an object which represents the regularly experienced discomfort that would have been endured by these women.

Quality clothing for middle class women became more ready available in the 1860's with the advent of paper dress patterns and the sewing machine. While some women chose to make their own clothing, and used their sewing skills as another example of their "accomplishments", many others took advantage of mail order catalogues. A Fall/ Winter 1910-1911 McCall's catalogue from Norman titled *Fashions for Women and Young Women with Style Notes by Madame Savarie* (Figure 23), housed in The Moore-Lindsay House archives, is an excellent example of a turn of the century

[155] Patricia A. Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion 1850-1920.* (Kent and London; The Kent State University Press 2003) 24.

style guide. The types of illustrations used in these catalogues were a primary influence upon women's fashion choices as seen by 1910-1911 McCall's illustrations by New York City artist Jean Parke (Figure 24) whose portrait work was in high demand with women of high society.[156] Through the 1870's until approximately the early 1900's, middle class fashion was influenced by changing lifestyles as opposed to the earlier trend of fashion styles conforming to "fashionable modes" of dress.[157] Casual wear continued to take on a more utilitarian function due to the influence of leisure activities and popular sports.

The display of the American woman's "accomplishments" and skills in the arts are another very important aspect of the collections housed at The Moore-Lindsay Historical House and The Overholser Mansion. In fact, parlor spaces often functioned as showrooms for crafts and other ornamental artworks and it is interesting to see these rooms continuing to serve this function within a museum display setting. Both middle and upper class women were encouraged to occupy their time with such popular crafts and hobbies such as sewing, needlepoint, playing musical instruments, singing, self education through reading, gardening, wood burning, and beadwork. Hobbies were an important part of developing refined taste and skills which would be admired by the public, most notably potential male suitors. According to John F. Kasson, an expert on nineteenth century manners, "Reading for general knowledge was one important sign of cultivation, but the immense economic and social changes begun in the early nineteenth century also created a vast new market for more specific instruction."[158] Poetry, drama, history, biographies, advice books and columns, educational works, and popular novels

[156] *Fashions for Women and Young Women with Style Notes by Madame Savarie*. McCall's Fall/ Winter 1910-1911 (Norman, Oklahoma).
[157] Plante 130.
[158] Kasson 41.

with religious themes were all considered to be "appropriate" reading material for middle class women. Through their reading material, women were conditioned to place much emphasis upon moral goodness and often studied other female historical figures who demonstrated this moral strength. Appropriate fiction from women's magazines were often approved or disproved by critics and often included specific moral themes which illustrated the "war of fashion versus modesty" or a "plot that exposed and resolved the dilemmas of middle class refinement."[159] Plante explains that women were avid readers for four main reasons:

> an increase in leisure time due to the industrialization of housework, affordability and availability of books along with improved printing processes, reading was the primary means of self culture and self improvement, and women were largely responsible for educating their own children.[160]

While popular women's literature is a dominant aspect of the collections at both museums, Anna Overholser's extensive collection of Shakespeare works (Figure 25) displayed at The Overholser Mansion is one example of the importance of reading for self improvement. The encouragement for women to appreciate music is also prominently illustrated through the interior design of the Overholser Mansion with the second story stained glass windows, *The Musicians* (Figure 26), which were commissioned by Anna Overholser for the landing.

A discussion of Oklahoma women's lives would be incomplete without the inclusion of their roles as mothers. The mother of the home functioned as the primary educator and moral center for her children. She was entrusted to "mold children into moral, upright citizens" and to shelter her "children from harmful influences of the

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[159] Plante 169.
[160] Ibid., 170.

outside world."[161] Between approximately the 1830's and 1850's, the American family unit evolved from an "economy based unit in which everyone labored for survival, to one in which relationships were based on love, feelings, and sentimentality."[162] Many changing views towards child development were influenced by strict religious customs and the family unit being decreasingly dependent upon child labor for income.[163] New traditions geared specifically towards educational activities for children brought about an explosive production of material goods catering to children. Middle and upper class mothers were, yet again, targeted as consumers for these new goods. Toys began to reflect gender specific roles reflecting the idea of children as "miniature adults". Young American girls played with toys which "mirrored practical aspects of domestic life" such as the metal, and wooden, kitchen sets (Figure 27) displayed in the children's room at The Moore-Lindsay Historical House.

Health and physical care for children, specifically infants, also became a specialized science. By the late 1800's, cow's milk was widely accepted as a supplement for breast milk and access to processed baby foods were considered to be safer than foods prepared in the home.[164] As this nineteenth century glass and leather breast pump (Figure 28) on display at The Moore-Lindsay Historical House indicates, some women did chose to cling to traditional methods for caring for the nutritional needs of their children.

With the growing influence of nineteenth- century social reformers and educators came the development of more "structured learning" as opposed to home education for children. However, the growing trend of educating children in schools was more common

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[161] Ibid., 69.
[162] Ibid., 94.
[163] Ibid., 79.
[164] A concoction of flour, water, tapioca, rice, bread, or arrowroot was often bottle fed to children. (Ibid.,88).

in rural areas of Oklahoma while many city children were still educated at home. According to Plante, social reformers adopted this new "structured learning" due to an "influx of immigrants needing to be 'assimilated' into American culture" and these immigrant children "needed to learn Anglo Saxon virtues."[165] The new educational ideology brought about during the early twentieth- century is made clear through the plethora of children's texts and story books housed at both The Moore-Lindsay Historical House and The Overholser Mansion. One of the most intriguing examples is Henry Ione Overholser Perry's 1913 sewing book from her childhood, *The Mary Frances Sewing Book: Adventures Among the Thimble People* (Figure 29) by Jane Earye Fryer displayed at The Overholser Mansion. This book, beautifully illustrated by Jane Allen Boyer, tells a story of Mary Frances and her stay with her grandmother at her summer home. Through a comical depiction of personified sewing tools, such as her new friends "The Thimble People" (Figure 30) and "Kitchen People", the young girl is taught lessons on virtue, manners, and and proper etiquette.

Pregnancy and childbirth during the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth century, were extremely dangerous and often fatal for the mother and child. A high infant mortality rate was caused by primitive medical practices, such as blood-letting and arsenic-laced patent medicines, the popular use of maternity corsets which restricted the woman's internal organs, and also disease.[166] According to social historian Elizabeth Donaghy Garrett, a woman's fear of dying from childbirth "far outweighed

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[165] Plante 92.

[166] In the early 1900's, more babies were being born in hospitals with an attending physician. Hospitals were considered to be safer and more sanitary. The state of pregnancy and childbirth became increasingly viewed from a more scientific perspective as opposed to a natural process and "one of the components of the cult of domesticity." (Ibid., 75).

their dread of dying in any other manner."[167] In fact, during the last quarter of the nineteenth- century, it is estimated that various diseases and illness caused the death of one in ten children before the age of one.[168]This devastating issue of the death of a young child is addressed through the collection at The Moore-Lindsay Historical House by a small advice booklet titled *Consolation for Mothers with Empty Arms* (Figure 31). Infant death was a common theme expressed in stories and poems which often offered advice to grieving mothers.[169] A poem by Ella Wheeler titled "A Face At The Widow" in an excerpt from *Consolation for Mothers with Empty Arms* states:

> "Once, as I wandered down the street,
> I saw at a window a face so sweet-
> The tiny face of a baby girl,
> With a soft, clear eye, and a silken curl-
> And I looked o'er my shoulder again to see
> The sweet, sweet face that smiled on me
> With a look in the eyes that seemed to say,
> "I've come from heaven, but not to stay".
>
> Adown the street as I walked again
> I looked for the face at the window pane;
> But the blind was drawn, and I heard it said,
> As I passed along, that the child was dead.
> O happy baby! O cherub girl,
> Borne up out of the din and whirl-
> Out of the sorrow and saddened strife
> That burden even the brightest life-
> Out of the darkness and out of the gloom,
> A bud in the garden of God to bloom-
> Safe from danger and care and cold-
> Sheltered for ever within the fold."[170]

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[167] Elizabeth Donaghy Garrett, *At Home: The American Family 1750-1870* (New York, New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc. 1990) 236.

[168] The late 1800's saw the deliberate and planned decrease in birthrate and according to Harvey Green, the average number of children in most white, Anglo Saxon families dropped from 5 in 1800 to 3 in 1910. This was brought about by more effective contraceptive methods such as protective sheaths and primitive versions of the diaphragm. The ending of unwanted pregnancies also became common through home remedies and patent medicines. (Plante., 77).

[169] Another example of infant death-themed advice books is the 1897 The Great Hereafter, or Glimpses of the Coming World which included a chapter titled "Our Children in Heaven". (Ibid., 77).

[170] *Consolation for Mothers With Empty Arms.*

Although this particular book did not belong to any members of the Moore or Lindsay families, the object is significant in its representation of the common struggle of loosing children suffered by many nineteenth and early twentieth century Oklahoma families. The Moore family was no exception. Before leaving their home in St. Joseph, Missouri, the Moore's had lost one daughter of their own and this event may have been one of the reasons for their relocation to Oklahoma Territory. One aesthetic feature of the The Moore-Lindsay Historical House stands as a reminder of this devastating family event. Located on the first floor next to the original wooden grand staircase, the stained glass window titled *The Torch of Life* (Figure 32) was commissioned by the Moore's for their home in remembrance of the loss of their young daughter.

One of the many challenges being faced by Oklahoma house museums is the transition from the traditional nineteenth- century notion of museums functioning purely for the sake of the object into the twentieth- century ideology described by Diane Barthel as the "new museology" which is "not based solely upon the object."[171] Historical objects displayed within house museums can be utilized as teaching tools to illustrate the lives of women through their historical narrative. By displaying objects within the original context of their use, the art of daily living can be more clearly understood. Historical objects are often overlooked as priorities for architectural preservation are brought to the forefront. However, the sense of urgency and "impending loss" to care for valuable objects within the house museum setting can be used as a motivator to safeguard our material culture.[172]

(New York, New York; American Tract Society 1894) 31-32.
[171] Barthel, 46-56.
[172] Ibid.,63-64.

House museums of the twenty- first century are also faced with a battle against the media and are constantly competing with the instant gratification of technology. Barthel explains that, "The physicality of the exhibited objects provides at least the potential of a direct link between contemporary viewer and historical period, above and apart from the interpretive surround. With the media, this direct physical link is missing. We have only the images of the screen or in the magazine."[173] Interacting with the objects used by Oklahoma women in their own homes gives the public the opportunity to not only observe their true functions but to also form their own opinions about our contemporary world. The study of material culture deals largely with collective memory and the desire to understand the past through objects. According to Sarah Henry, Deputy Director and Chief Curator at the Museum of the City of New York, an object "holds a little bit of someone's essence, even as the human body does not endure, that's why things from the past become precious to people as individuals."[174]

Due to a lack of resources, inadequate administrative leadership, and inaccurate interpretive focus, most Oklahoma house museums are unable to properly care for their material collections let alone devote time to accurate research. However, if more attention could be paid to the care and interpretation of these objects, much could be learned about the lives of the former residents of these homes. Both The Moore-Lindsay Historical House and The Overholser Mansion are examples of Oklahoma house museums which house important objects to be studied in the analysis of women's lives as consumers, designers, mothers, and other numerous duties.

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[173] Ibid., 119.

[174] Objects and Memory, Documentary Produced and Directed by Jonathan Fein and Brian Danitz (PBS 2008).

Chapter 4:
Partnerships, Not Parking Lots: Adaptive Reuse in the Arts at The Jacobson House Native Art Center and JRB Art at the Elms

Many of the Oklahoma house museums discussed have been preserved in a highly traditional manner of maintaining the history and architecture of the site through displaying objects illustrating the daily lives of Oklahoma women. The process of continued preservation work in Oklahoma is also evident through adaptive reuse. This process typically refers to the use of endangered historical sites as modern structures such as museums, business offices, and community centers. Still considered controversial in the museum field, the transformation of traditional homes and public buildings into structures for modern use became somewhat of a necessity in the 1980's when a dramatic decrease of institutional funding prevented many communities from building new museum spaces. Historical sites are also threatened due to the creation of a world where many objects, including buildings, are created with the intention of being replaced and are viewed as disposable.

According to Jean Carroon, "We must reshape our culture to become one of reuse, repair, and renewal that is respectful of existing resources, including buildings".[175] The adaptive reuse of private homes of notable women artists and fine art patrons has created fascinating case studies in Oklahoma for the ways in which these women's legacies and visions for their cities are being maintained through contemporary space. Early patrons of the fine arts in Oklahoma desired to create a cultural identity for their communities through creating opportunities for Oklahoma artists to receive professional

[175] Jean Carroon, *Sustainable Preservation, Greening Existing Buildings* (Hoboken, New Jersey; John Wiley and Sons 2010) 18.

exposure and in turn transform the region into a legitimate avenue for artistic growth. Community and ethnic focused museums such as The Jacobson House Native Art Center in Norman and JRB Art at the Elms in Oklahoma City are examples of how adaptive reuse can add vibrancy to a community "by providing the means to preserve memory, sustain culture, and create identity."[176] Oklahoma communities are shaped by these institutions which function to harness creative energy and promote an inclusive exposure of the fine arts. This exposure provided by local art galleries gives community members an outlet for defining their own unique ownership of their city's identity.

The Jacobson House Native Art Center (Figure 33) is one of the most historically relevant structures in Norman, Oklahoma and makes an incalculable contribution to the University of Oklahoma (OU) community, Native American arts, and community collaborations. Built in 1915, the house was once the home of Swedish artist and founding director of the OU School of Art, Oscar B. Jacobson, and his French wife Sophie Brousse, an author and playwrite whose pen name was Jeanne D'Ucel. After meeting at Washington State University where Jacobson was teaching art and Brousse teaching French, the two married in 1912.

According to Carole Whitney, artist and founding director of The Jacobson House Native Art Center, the arrival of the Jacobsons in Norman "brought a refreshing partnership of worldly sophistication to the college town."[177] The young couple arrived in the small prairie town after an extensive summer trip which took them through the

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[176] Ellen Hirzy, "Mastering Civic Engagement: A Report from the American Association of Museums" from *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums* (Washington D.C.; American Association of Museums 2002) 28

[177] Carole Whitney, "A Place of Coming Together" from *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume LXXVIII, Number Four, Winter, 2000-01 (Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Historical Society, 2000) 446.

Southwest. Building their private home near the University of Oklahoma campus was not an easy task as World War I was ending and building materials, and skilled craftsmen, were scarce. It is said that Oscar Jacobson not only designed the classical, New Mexico Territorial style home, but also did most of the construction himself. Although it is not known how involved Jeanne D'Ucel was in the design of the home, it can be assumed that her input would have been important as she would have used the house for important social events. In fact, the east back porch (Figure 34) of the home was designed with the intention to be used as a stage where Jeanne could produce plays for neighborhood children.[178]

By 1925, Oscar Jacobson "had assembled a strong art faculty from far and near who shared his enthusiasm for painting outdoors under constantly changing effects of light and for working with live models."[179] Faculty members from Louisiana, Newfoundland, New York, and New Haven joined Jacobson in transforming OU into one of the most highly respected art institutions in the country. Throughout his travels across the Southwest, Jacobson developed an integral repertoire with "Indians, traders, and other artists while continually painting and collecting."[180] This relationship and collaboration with the Native American community would serve as one of the Jacobsons' most important legacies.

In 1926 Jacobson invited five young Kiowa artists from Anadarko, Spencer Asah, Jack Hokea, Monroe Tsatoke, Stephen Mopope, and Lois Smoky, to OU in order to give them the opportunity to receive formal aesthetic training. Jacobson and field matron

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[178] The Jacobson House Native Art Center (Norman, Oklahoma).
[179] Leonard Good, "Oscar Brousse Jacobson: Art Pioneer1882-1966" from *Oscar Brousse Jacobson: Oklahoma Painter*. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press 1990) 3.
[180] Ibid.,3.

Susie Peters encouraged them to depict what they knew; "images of their culture and religion."[181] Many of the artists had attended St. Patrick's Mission School where they were not allowed to speak their Kiowa language or participate in their religious ceremonies and dancing rituals. The Indian Service, of the United States Government, "wanted the Kiowa children to learn patriotic songs and warned that teachers should carefully avoid any unnecessary reference to the fact that they are Indians."[182] Therefore, Jacobson's invitation became all the more important, giving Kiowas the chance to reconnect with their cultural practices and expose a new generation to the traditional Kiowa way of life. According to Monroe Tsatoke, he wanted to "paint the Kiowa spirit, not merely a picture in colors for the white man to view. If he failed to portray Kiowa spiritual life, he stopped painting."[183]

The Jacobsons' involvement with these Kiowa artists is significant in the history of art because Oscar Jacobson was the first fine art authority to "both recognize and present Native American art, specifically painting, as a fine art" and not merely as kitsch items created for the purpose of selling to tourists.[184] He encouraged them to not only "paint like the white man", but to preserve their own customs, styles, and beliefs through their art. This two dimensional flat style of painting, now known as Plains Style, was used by the Kiowas to arrange dynamic compositions depicting their most sacred rituals including spiritual dances and seasonal ceremonies. Their use of color, line, and form created an energetic depiction of Kiowa life in a way seldom seen by non-Americans.

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[181] Bill Neeley, *Art and Cultural Preservation: The Kiowa Five, A Retrospective Exhibition* 1.
[182] Ibid.,1.
[183] Ibid., 2.
[184] Whitney 447.

Jacobson's proteges became known as the "Kiowa Five" and achieved international fame through European exhibitions in Nice, France, and Prague, Checkoslovakia orchestrated by Jacobson. Even before their travels abroad, Jacobson wrote, "I exhibited their works in the most important museums from New York to Hawaii: San Francisco, Seattle, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Cleveland, where they were received with applause before any notice had been taken of them in Oklahoma."[185] Many museum directors found these depictions of Native American life to be "the most startling and significant pieces of work that have appeared on this continent."[186]

Lois Bou-ge-Tah ("of the dawn") Smoky, who was the only female member and youngest of the original Kiowa Five group, studied at OU with Jacobson for only one year at age 20. Although she was replaced by new Kiowa Five member James Auchia and the group is sometimes referred to as the Kiowa Six, there were never more than five members at a time.[187] Although her body of work was smaller than that of her contemporaries among the Kiowa artists, the pieces created by this young native woman are significant because she was the first Native American woman artist to paint for the purposes of aesthetic expression. Until Smoky's contributions, painting among the Kiowas was largely a ceremonial act and only performed by men. Smoky's love of traditional bead work and detailed craftsmanship is evident in her surviving work which depicts mostly Kiowa women and children. According to art historian Mary Jo Watson, "Her short time in Indian painting, the lack of a substantial body of work, and the scarcity

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[185] Neeley 3.
[186] Ibid., 4.
[187] The Jacobson House Native Art Center. "Louis Bougetah Smoky (1907-1981)". https://www.jacobsonhouse.com/kiowa-five/ (Accessed 3/27/2012)

of literature about her could lead to the conclusion that she is not an important figure in Oklahoma Indian Art history"; however, Smoky was the "first Indian woman who stepped outside of the accepted role of Kiowa women and began painting subjects previously exclusively in the purview of Plains Indian men and served as a model to later generations of Indian women artists who wished to do the same."[188]

Opened regularly by the Jacobsons for art exhibitions and musical performances, their home was an energetic hub for promoting Native American culture. According to Carole Whitney, "From concept to completion, the house was designed to serve as a welcoming place where talented people could enjoy hospitality."[189] In fact, some members of the Kiowa Five lived in the home for a short period of time while at OU, used a room for a studio, and sang their traditional Kiowa songs while drumming in the Jacobsons' living room. As a literary figure, Jeanne D'Ucel documented her interaction with the members of the Kiowa Five in her unpublished memoirs[190] of this time period.

After Oscar Jacobson's death in 1966, the Jacobsons' home was used as rental property by OU for almost 15 years. In 1984 the property was sold to the OU Foundation and in turn sold to University Real estate, an entity which manages university property. According to Whitney, "no stipulation for long-tern protection had been placed on the transfer of the Jacobson house to public hands"[191] and this resulted in a potentially devastating decision. The university began to make plans in 1985 to demolish the historical landmark and build a campus parking lot. Reacting to this plan, a grassroots

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[188] Mary Jo Watson, Ph. D. *Oklahoma Indian Women and Their Art* (Norman, Oklahoma; University of Oklahoma 1993) 292.
[189] Whitney 449.
[190] The type-written unpublished memoirs of Jeanne D'Ucel were transcribed by Jacobson House staff in 2007 and 2008 as part of a research project begun by previous Director Russ Tall Chief. Tall Chief included some quotes from these memoirs in the first production of "The Jacobson Play: 1930".
[191] Whitney., 451.

committee of Norman supporters was formed in the spring of 1986 to rescue the home and transform the space into a cultural center. This group believed that the home was an ideal structure for a cultural center because of its "accessible location on the arts quadrant of the university, public character, artistic heritage, and should become a shared public resource."[192] Carole Whitney and cultural art educator Jeraldine Redcorn joined forces with fellow community members, consisting of Native Americans and non-Native Americans, to submit a formal proposal to OU to fund restoration of the home and preserve the building as a cultural center in honor of the Jacobsons and the Kiowa Five artists. This committee included Jack Haley, associate curator of the OU Western History Collection, Phil Lujan, director of the OU Native American Studies Department, and Marie Alley, a German national who "lent an international perspective to the project."[193] The 501 c 3 nonprofit educational corporation The Jacobson Foundation was formed in December 1986 and The Jacobson House Native Art Center was included on the National Register of Historic Places in that same year. [194]

Although the interpretive focus at The Jacobson House Native Art Center centers primarily upon the contributions made by Oscar Jacobson and the Kiowa Five, the lives of Jeanne D'Ucel and Lois Smoky are honored through programming and the continued use of the site as a fine arts event venue for the community. Now under the directorship

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[192] Ibid., 451.
[193] Ibid., 452.
[194] "The Jacobson Foundation made a formal request for a long-term, nominal-cost lease of the property in exchange for an offer to gather and manage funding for its restoration and preservation as a public facility. In the late 1980's, OU was undergoing a transitional period with 'frequently changing leadership and short-term presidencies'. In October 1986, during the National Register nomination process, OU President Frank Horton sent a letter to the Oklahoma Historical Society's Historic Preservation Review Committee objecting to the nomination. President Horton revealed in the letter that the site had been purchased by the university for a parking lot space. However, despite this rejection The Jacobson House was approved for The National Register of Historic Places on December 23, 1986. Early collaborations with the university were also delayed 'due to preference for university fundraising efforts for the new museum of natural history.'" (Ibid., 453).

of Kiowa storyteller, dancer, and actress Krickett Rhoades- Connywerdy (Kiowa), who is also a relative of Kiowa Five member Stephen Mopope, the art center has also developed into an educational site hosting a variety of events which augment the site's long history as a meeting place. In an interview with *Indian Country Today*, Connywerdy explains the importance of the site and the need to maintain its legacy in Norman:

> I want it to be what it's supposed to be for the community. It is a community place. It's for the community. The Kiowa artists, their artwork really helped spark that Native American fine art movement. That is the part I want to continue.[195]

A south gallery room (Figure 35) in The Jacobson House Native Art Center prominently displays Kiowa Five photos, original paintings and prints including the work of Lois Smoky. The center offers a wide variety of cultural opportunities through a regular program of fine arts classes focusing upon traditional Native American crafts such as beadwork, basket weaving, and sewing techniques. The center maintains collaborations with the OU community through regular art exhibits and poetry readings. Recurring fine arts events include an annual showcase of a Kiowa Five member and the annual "University of Oklahoma Native American Arts Exhibition", which gives Native American alumni, students, and School of Art faculty the opportunity for professional exposure. This kind of student outreach gives young artists, curators, and graduate students the invaluable chance to interact directly with the museum world and gain personal experiences through important connections with the Norman community. In the very same space where the Kiowa Five played traditional drums and sang hymns, traditional Native American singing and language performances have also become an

[195] Brian Daffron, "Kricket Rhoades- Connywerdy and the Renaissance of a University's Native Art Center". Indian Country Today Media Network, LLC; http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/09/17/kricket-rhoads-connywerdy-and-the-renaissance-of-a-universitys-native-art-center-54436 (Accessed 1/20/2012).

important part of weekly Jacobson House programming. When speaking of the importance of community involvement through regular programming, Connywerdy stated , "People (are) coming and making the walls sing. The House is happy again, because it has people in there. It has singing. It has activities. It's a living place again."[196]

Another important collaboration orchestrated by former Jacobson House Director Russ Tallchief (Osage) is the ongoing and evolving production of "The Jacobson Play, 1930: A Theatrical Story Telling" which was written by Tall Chief and first performed at Jacobson House in 2008. This play tells the tale of how the Kiowa Five came to study at OU and includes word-for-word accounts of how each artist felt about preserving their Kiowa culture through art. The first cast playing the characters of Oscar Jacobson, Jeanne D'ucel, Jack Hokea, Monroe Tsatoke, Spencer Asah, Stephen Mopope, and Lois Smoky was a multi-talented group of OU professors, students from the OU School of Dance and School of Music, and various other professional Native American dancers and singers from the Norman area. Dr. Andrew Phelan, who portrayed Oscar Jacobson, directed the OU School of Art from 1992 through 2006 and Maya Toralba, who was a perfect personification of Lois Smoky, is a direct descendant of Smoky.

Through its use as a fine arts venue, The Jacobson House Native Art Center celebrates the lives of women artists through diverse programming. Another Oklahoma gallery space which operates within the same strain of traditional adaptive reuse and continues the work of another Oklahoma woman artist. The identity of Oklahoma City as a thriving arts community came to early fruition through the use of Nan Sheets' private home, The Elms, as a cultural hub.

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[196] Ibid.

Working at the same time as the Jacobsons and the Kiowa Five to promote fine art in the community was notable landscape artist Nannine "Nan" Quick Sheets of Oklahoma City. Her early dedication to producing quality works of art, promoting other Oklahoma artists, and building a fine arts community for the public made Sheets one of the first local Oklahoma artists to gain national recognition. Just as the Jacobsons' private home and exhibit venue was preserved by the Norman community to function as a cultural center, Sheets' Oklahoma City home and studio space, The Elms, also currently functions as an art gallery space located within the historic Paseo Arts District.

According to an interview conducted by Richard Doud of the Smithsonian Institution on June 4, 1964, Sheets noted that her most powerful influence to study art was her mother, Orvilla Quick, who had been a painter. Sheets explained the importance of her mother providing her with an early exposure to art through fine art magazines and regular trips to The Chicago Art Institute; "It does show how parents can influence a child. The magazines I looked at as a child were art magazines and when we went into Chicago to shop, always I was taken to the art museum. This interest in an art museum was in me quite strongly as a child. The whole institution impressed me so.."[197] After developing a later interest in medicine and graduating from Valparaiso University in 1905 at age 16, Sheets became the fist registered woman pharmacist in the state of Utah. While she seemed to enjoy her pharmacy work in Salt Lake City, Utah, Sheets soon began to miss painting and arranged her work schedule in order to study art at Utah

[197] Oral History Interview with Nan Sheets conducted by Richard K. Doud. June 4, 1964. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

University.[198] Her marriage soon after to Dr. Fred Sheets, who she had known from her time at Valparaiso University, would prove to be an invaluable partnership throughout her career. The young couple eventually settled in Oklahoma City.

Having befriended Oklahoma City art dealer Sam West and studied under artist John F. Carlson at Broadmoor Art Academy in Colorado Springs during the summer of 1920, Sheets began entering landscape work in numerous exhibitions including the 6th Annual Exhibition of the Association of Oklahoma Artists.[199] This pattern of studying and producing abroad during her summers and focusing on exhibiting her work during the following Fall would become a valuable, continuous routine which allowed Sheets to gain recognition. The summers of 1921 and 1922 would be a pivotal as she studied landscape painting under Everett L. Warner and Birger Sandzen, the latter having been a mentor to Oscar Jacobson.[200] During this period, Sheets adopted a palette of "clean colors" and thick pigment was applied with a palette knife instead of the traditional brush.

After returning from her 1923 summer of study in Colorado, Sheets returned home to Oklahoma City and a surprise from her husband. He had arranged for the reception room of their home, built on Walker Avenue and called "The Elms" because of the huge elm trees surrounding the house, to be converted into a studio and gallery space. This space

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[198] *Their Visions Live On: Oscar Jacobson and Nan Sheets* (Oklahoma City, OK; Oklahoma Arts Council 1997).

[199] Wanda Cole, *The Public Life and Work of Nan Sheets*. (Norman, Oklahoma; University of Oklahoma) 9

[200] In 1922, Sheets' name was also included in the Who's Who in American Art and was the first Oklahoma artist to be included in this publication. Her work was also included in a traveling exhibition organized by the American Federation of Arts. Her summer of 1923 was spent studying in artist colonies of Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico where she worked with Nellie Knopf. Sheets was also the first Oklahoma artist to be elected into the National Association of Women Artists in 1925. In the following years of 1926 and 1927, her work was included in exhibitions organized by The National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors in New York, the Northshore Arts Association in Glouchester, Massachusetts, and the Delgado Museum in New Orleans. (Ibid., 9,11,16,17).

provided Nan Sheets with a venue in which to display her summer work from Colorado Springs and also expose the Oklahoma City public to the fine arts. In fact, "The Elms" was the first art gallery opened to the public in Oklahoma City when it was unveiled in 1930. Through her various U.S. and international connections with the fine art world, Sheets was able to exhibit the work of well known American and European artists in addition to her own. The Sheets' opened their home to all art lovers including club women, school groups, art students, and visiting artists such as Douglas Chandor and Stanislav Rembski[201]. The space began to accrue much unexpected publicity when a gala opening at "The Elms" was covered in November issues of *The Art Digest* and *The American Magazine for Art*. After another expansion in 1934, "The Elms" was declared the "most beautiful art gallery in the southwest" by the Oklahoma press.[202]

Shortly after opening "The Elms" to the public, Sheets worked with Tulsa University Art Department Director Adah Robinson, who was organizing an exhibition for five Oklahoma artists chosen by Sheets. The participating group included Nan Sheets, May Todd Aaron, Doel Reed, Lindley M. Tonkin, and Oscar Jacobson. This participating group became known as "The Oklahoma Five" and could have been influenced conceptually by Jacobson's work with the "Kiowa Five" artists. With the help of these fellow artists and many other community supporters, Sheets devoted her energy to arranging exhibits for free fairs in Oklahoma and Kansas and giving art lecture tours in Oklahoma City and the surrounding communities of Ponca City, Ardmore, and Enid.[203] Oscar Jacobson stated at the time, "Mrs. Nan Sheets has done more than any other person

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[201] Ibid., 12.

[202] *Their Visions Live On: Oscar Jacobson and Nan Sheets* (Oklahoma City, OK; Oklahoma Arts Council 1997).

[203] Ibid., 107

in Oklahoma City to make that place famous as a cultural community. She has done more than any other person in awakening interest and enthusiasm for art."[204]

Sheets' devotion to the growing art community in Oklahoma would became an even more crucial asset to the state when she closed "The Elms" in 1934 and embarked upon a task to extend her vision. She was approached by Thomas C. Parker from Washington D.C. who was working for the U.S. government as the program organizer to establish public art galleries and art centers as part of the Federal Art Program during the Great Depression.[205] An extension of the Works Progress Administration (WPA)[206], the program paid a salary for the director and staff but did not provide any additional funds for a building, utility costs, or furnishings. In her 1964 interview with Doud, Sheets described the arduous task of acquiring WPA help:

> I had to find out the artists who were on relief..You had to prove that your business, whatever it was in the cultural world, was not making a livelihood for you in order to get onto the program. And they were very strict about that. The interviews were long and sometimes it took quite a little doing for a person to get on the relief rolls. But I was permitted to have all the secretaries I wanted , or all the janitors, and art teachers, stenographers—everything that I wanted of people that I could use that were on relief rolls; they were available to me for this program.[207]

Sheets was able to acquire a rent-free facility in the Commerce Exchange Buidling through the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce where she established an art school,

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[204] Ibid., 34.
[205] Oral History Interview with Nan Sheets conducted by Richard K. Doud.
[206] "During the Great Depression, the U.S. Congress in 1935 created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to administer $5 billion for public works. The WPA's goal was to employ as many people as possible on projects that would provide long-term benefit to local communities. Ideally, workers would also receive on-the-job training to prepare them for further employment. The WPA made a significant impact on Oklahoma. Ultimately, of 166,000 Oklahomans certified for WPA jobs, approximately 119,000 were employed at some point between 1935 and 1937. Including those recruited into a special drought-relief work project, more than half the state's work relief recipients were farmers. By 1937 the WPA had already spent more than $59 million in Oklahoma." (Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, "Works Progress Administration", http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/W/WO022.html , Accessed 3/29/2012)
[207] Ibid

lecture program, and also produced silkscreen posters for local Oklahoma City non-profits.[208] The facility became known as the Oklahoma Art Center. The need for expansion became evident after a brief period and the head of the WPA regional division was informed, most likely by Sheets herself, that the program needed to be moved into a larger facility. Without much financial support from the government and very few community sponsors, Sheets expressed her early fears as director in having no experience in the solicitation of funds to support the art center. Despite this concern, she was able to approach some of her affluent friends, including oil tycoon Frank Butram and Ned Holdman of Liberty Nations Bank, and collected $3,500 in addition to acquiring a larger building on 2nd Street in Oklahoma City. In January 1937 the art center was moved into the newly constructed Municipal Auditorium where Sheets was given access to the vacant top floor for gallery space and second floor for conducting art classes.[209] In a 1964 interview, Sheets spoke highly of the work done at the Municipal Auditorium by WPA employees and of the numerous needs met by the program;

> The Depression was very bad. But later, and I will say this because, when that program closed, it really operated. The plans for the work were made long ahead of the program, and everyone was a worker. That is all forgotten. All you have to do today is to o down around the Municipal Auditorium , all of the paving around the new Municipal Auditorium, the big apron in front of it, all of it is stamped with WPA. And there's not a crack, there's not a break, that's the best paving in Oklahoma City, and it was done by WPA.[210]

In 1941, the WPA program was ended on account of World War II. Sheets was given no notice of the loss of government support and the decision seemed to happen "just overnight." The art center had, however, a six- year stock of various supplies despite most of their equipment, including typewriters and cameras, being reclaimed by the

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[208] Ibid
[209] Ibid
[210] Ibid

government. Sheets' first instinct was to close the center but reconsidered after thinking about "all these years here of building this program, to just close it up overnight, it just is not the right thing to do. It was set up to continue. There was a hope that they (the art center) would continue and really start something for the city."[211] Community sponsors encouraged Sheets to sell memberships to the art center and accept clerical volunteer help from Junior League members. Sheets expressed her deep concern for the future of the center:

> I just decided to stay there and keep the place open and not act like we didn't have all the money in the world, so that's what we did. And it came back again where I had to get exhibitions from friends and local artists and do anything I could to keep the place in paintings.[212]

During this financially difficult transition period, Sheets continued to write her art column for the *Daily Oklahoman* and took an active role in the control of the center's publicity, which in Sheets' opinion, "had a great deal to do with the success of the program."[213]

Sheets eventually acquired the needed financial support for the art center through John Kirkpatrick, an affluent businessman, who donated $250,000 towards the construction of a new building. He was interested not only in procuring a permanent art center, but also a space which would be used as a science center for school children. According to Sheets:

> His (John Kirkpatrick's) interest in the center was that he had this money that he could give away and due to the tax structure I think it's necessary for some of these millionaires, in their foundations and all, to do these philanthropic things for tax-free institutions. The center profited by his philanthropic ideas, and accepted his $250,000

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[211] Ibid
[212] Ibid
[213] Ibid

without an endowment, and ordinarily a museum, a gift of a building, is not accepted without the endowment. But, Mr. Kirkpatrick had faith enough in the way we operated the center that we would be able to continue, and we have.

Sheet's vision to foster a fine arts community in Oklahoma City came to fruition with the opening of The Oklahoma City Museum of Art (OKCMOA) in 2002. As the predecessor to OKCMOA, Sheets' Oklahoma Art Center formed the core collection now housed at the new museum located in downtown Oklahoma City.[214] Her paintings are also part of the permanent collection at OKCMOA. Although she passed away in 1976 and did not live to see the new museum, Sheets' legacy as the most influential fine arts patron of Oklahoma City is evident not only through the establishment of this state of the art facility, but also through the success of The Elms continuing to function as a fine art venue in the city's historic Paseo Arts District.

Located directly north of the Oklahoma State Capitol in Oklahoma City and nestled within a cluster of residential neighborhoods, The Paseo Arts District is home to beat poets and artists who work in every media imaginable. Visitors to this two-block street, complete with beautiful "Spanish revival architecture" and stucco buildings (Figure 36), quite literally stumble upon this village-like community which acts as a refuge from the bustling bureaucratic activities of Lincoln Boulevard and tawdry bars and tattoo parlors of 23rd Street. The Paseo was established as a shopping district in 1929 by Oklahoman G.A. Nichols and has undergone many cultural transitions due to the counter-culture of the 1960's and a move towards a focus on the arts during the 1970's.[215] According to the

[214] Oklahoma City Museum of Art, "American Art". http://www.okcmoa.com/see/collections/american-art/, (Accessed 4/4/2012).
[215] The Paseo Arts District: History of "The Paseo" and the Paseo Arts Association http://www.thepaseo.com/aboutus.html (Accessed March 1, 2012).

Paseo Arts Association (PAA), a non-profit organization formed in 1982, the PAA mission is "to preserve and maintain the The Paseo in Oklahoma as an historic arts district" and "to foster an environment of cultural exchange between the public and the arts through performances, festivals, and educational programming."[216]

The Elms still functions today as a contemporary art gallery and remains an important part of the Oklahoma City fine art community. Now called JRB Art At The Elms (Figure 37), the gallery is a testament to the cultural efforts of Nan Sheets and to the contributions continuing to be made by fine arts patrons. The gallery space bears the initials of Joy Reed Belt, local entrepreneur and fine art patron. Visitors to the gallery immediately experience the cozy, light-heartedness of the space which is arranged as an open floor plan. The gallery evokes the spirit of The Elms during the 1920's. Actively participating in the First Friday Gallery Walk, the gallery hosts around twelve shows a year of "emerging, established, and internationally exhibited artists who create in a wide range of media including: paintings, drawings, sculpture, ceramics, glass, fine crafts, functional objects, fiber art, and photographs."[217] JRB exercises an important ambition of community involvement through "a gracious environment that fosters a dialogue between the arts and the larger community while providing quality art for first time buyers as well as individual, corporate and museum collections."[218] Although the site contains no evidence of having once been a private home, with the exception of a renovated kitchen

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[216] Ibid.

[217] JRB Art At The Elms: About the Gallery. http://www.jrbartgallery.com/about.php?PHPSESSID=a115aec5023ebb9b65dc5dbbf6d80cb0 (Accessed February 27, 2012).

[218] Ibid

space, the space continuing to function as a gallery with six large exhibit rooms is evidence of Sheets' mission to promote local fine artists.

Although The Jacobson House Native Art Center and JRB Art at the Elms were not preserved for the specific intention of celebrating the lives of women, an examination of their contributions to the Oklahoma fine art community reveals the importance of these sites as resources for fostering a more complete understanding of community growth. The initial visions put into action in Oklahoma by the Jacobsons and Nan Sheets to bolster the state as a culturally legitimate, and unique, fine art region are evident through the adaptive reuse of their private homes. Unfortunately, both sites are primarily known to Oklahomans only as fine art venues and not as historically relevant resources in women's history. Therefore, the recognition of women through the modern use of historical sites takes on an important role of educating the public through programming and creating an awareness of how these sites contribute to the broad scheme of historic preservation.

Conclusion

Through an examination of the women represented at Oklahoma house museums, it is clear that these figures are relevant as early civic leaders, invaluable community healers, maintainers of important social bonds, and pivotal fine arts patrons. This challenge to explore the lives of women, who are often unknown and excluded in the telling of Oklahoma history, within the context of their homes presents fascinating case studies that should be included within the framework of American historic preservation. The tangible history made available through historical sites and their collections creates connections between the past and present. Our realities and understandings can be transformed by the perpetuation of accurate women's history at house museums. According to historian Heather A. Huyck, "Preserving and interpreting the tangible resources of women's history pose some interesting challenges. We continue to uncover, sometimes literally, women's presence. We seek ways to share that presence when the tangible remnants are particularly scarce."[219]

Early Oklahoma women lived in their homes primarily as part of family groups, as daughters, wives, and mothers. Their experiences were marked by these relationships and important life cycle events such as marriage, pregnancy, and motherhood.[220] The interpretive focus on women's experiences is very limited at most Oklahoma house museums and women's presence, while sometimes assumed by the public, is not fully understood. Putting Oklahoma women at the forefront of historic preservation research allows historians to record and interpret accurate history as opposed to mere traditional tellings.

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[219] Heather A. Huyck, "Proceeding from Here" from *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) 355.
[220] Huyck 358.

At Oklahoma sites such as The Mattie Beal Home in Lawton, the myth of the absence of women as civic leaders is abandoned. Beal's former home functioning as a museum space gives great power to this individual story. In contrast, the omission of women at some sites, such as The Marland Mansion, is often referred to as "symbolic violence" and perpetuates inaccurate history. This lack of knowledge begs the question: How many Oklahoma houses and other women-related historical places have been demolished due to ignorance? Historic structures are sacred to collective memory and the range of Oklahoma structures worthy of preservation should be widened to include other building types such as businesses, schools, and other public buildings.

The lives of Oklahoma minority women, such as Alzira Murray and Mabel B. Little, not being accurately represented at The Murray-Lindsay Mansion and The Mabel B. Little Heritage House is not surprising given the lack of common knowledge about these women's contributions to the civic development of early Oklahoma. However, given the previous assumption that minority women were not represented in any Oklahoma house museums at all, the discovery of these sites was unexpected. However, the existence of sites connected to Oklahoma minority history does present an additional challenge to preservationists: Should Oklahoma minority women be included as part of the American house museum framework because of their status as minorities or because of their individual contributions? Perhaps through an examination of the house museums named in their honor these women can be acknowledged equally as civic leaders and minorities. Cultural diversity should be considered more of a priority when undertaking the preservation of ethnic neighborhoods. The identification, preservation, and

interpretation of structures associated with less prominent Oklahoma women and the contribution of women in groups are essential.

In the search to discover the representation of women's lives at Oklahoma house museums, a lack of accurate information can be balanced with a focus upon the collections housed at these sites. The examination of the strong bond women had with their homes and personal objects creates a more accurate portrayal of how women ***really*** lived as opposed to how we ***assume*** they lived. Collective memory is anchored by visual monuments and the objects housed within these sites provide cues in the understanding of women's daily lives. Victorian style Oklahoma house museums, such as The Moore-Lindsay Historical House and The Overholser Mansion, contain a plethora of knowledge regarding upper and middle class women's ceremonial roles as collectors, wives, mothers, and educators.

The adaptive reuse of important historical landmarks which represent the life and work of Oklahoma women artists is an example of the continued legitimacy of these sites being used as contemporary fine art venues. Although the use of The Jacobson House Native Art Center and JRB Art at The Elms as contemporary space creates exposure of the arts in Oklahoma, the lives of the women who lived in these former private homes gives these sites the added opportunity to also function as preservation resources for the public. Most Oklahomans are unaware that these galleries were once private homes of culturally pivotal women such as Jeanne D'Ucel and Nan Sheets. This knowledge could bolster current programming and support for these institutions. Art students and designers familiar with folklore can provide provocative demonstrations and lectures to enhance the missions of these sites.

Collaboration is an integral aspect of reclaiming Oklahoma women's history through house museum institutions. University departments of history, art history, museum studies, women and gender studies, and architecture can be used as valuable tools to create research opportunities for students. Projects to create digital databases for individual historic sites and lesser-known historical figures could provide valuable resources. These efforts could convince future house museum supporters that deteriorated and more modest properties are also worth saving. Additional sites placed on The National Register for Historic Places could also benefit from these projects by being made eligible for public sector funding programs and grant funding. With new available scholarship, historical sites can have a women's component in their documentation. There is a need to examine old subjects from new perspectives.

Advocacy projects in conjunction with other Oklahoma museums, historical societies, city government, and state government can provide opportunities to discuss ways to build preservation efforts at the local level. Community boosters such as convention and visitors bureaus and tourism organizations could also recognize the economic value of the preservation of women's sites. A statewide network could be established for participants to encourage Oklahoma women's history projects, increase the attendance at historic sites, and share results with other historical sites across the nation.

Oklahoma house museum collections objects should be studied, archived, and used as research materials by more community volunteers and students. Local scholars can be assigned as project advisors to help museum staff overcome collaboration hurdles such as prejudice from academic scholars in the representation of the lives of women

slaves and servants or the questioned authenticity of objects. This can allow house museums to move beyond "token" programming and outdated exhibits to make history that is being presented to the public fully inclusive of all women's experiences.

Oklahoma house museums reveal many truths. Women are an important part of the state's history and their homes tell us just how integral their stories will continue to be in the development of the historic preservation field. As stated in the initial quote which inspired this project, "The womb is the home of man"; the home of truth, the home of self, the home of beginnings.

List of Figures

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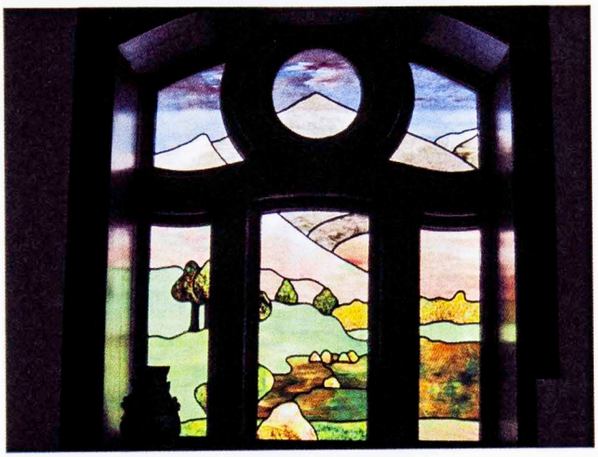

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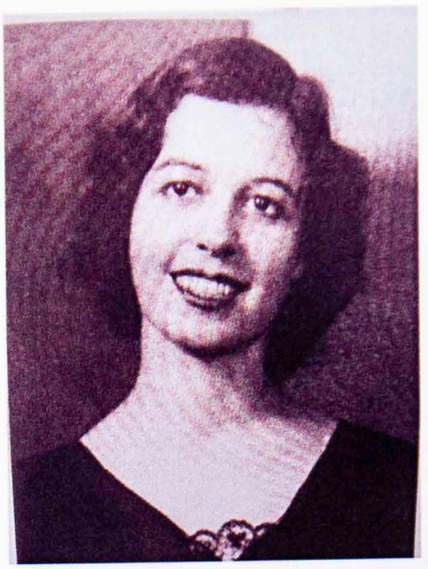

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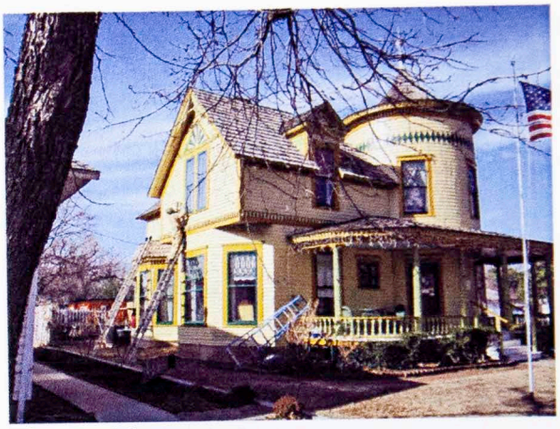

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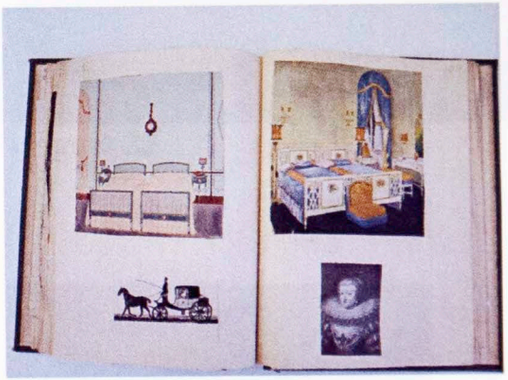

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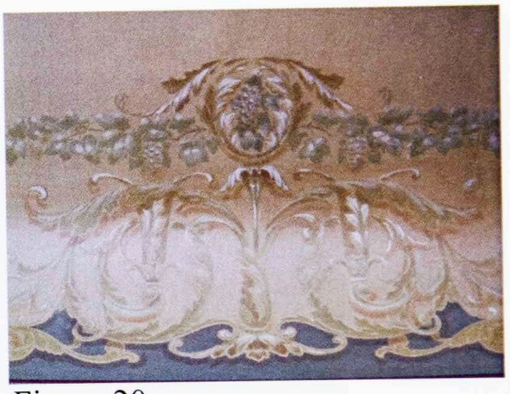

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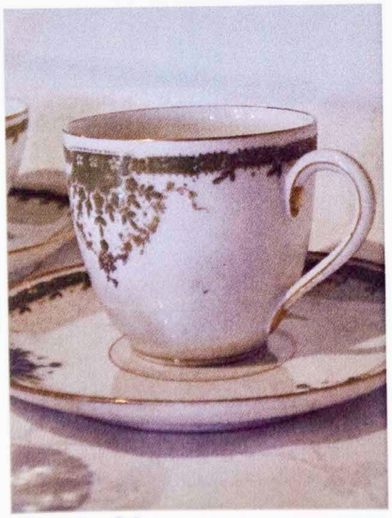

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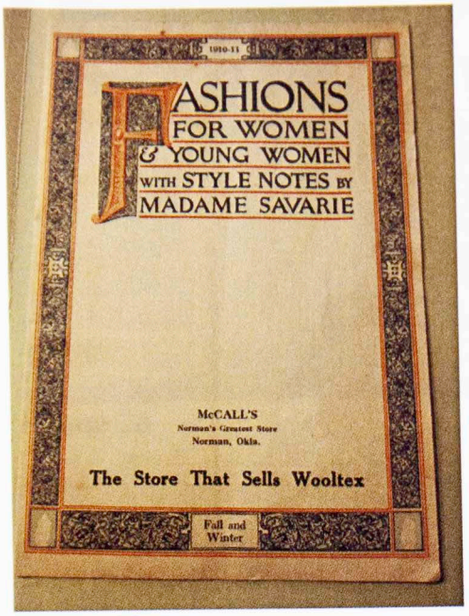

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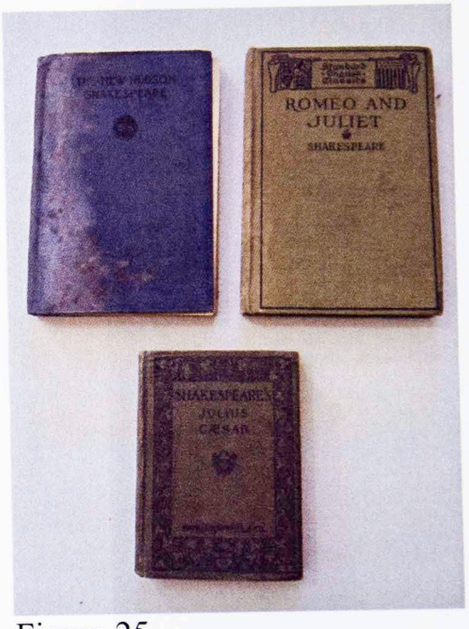

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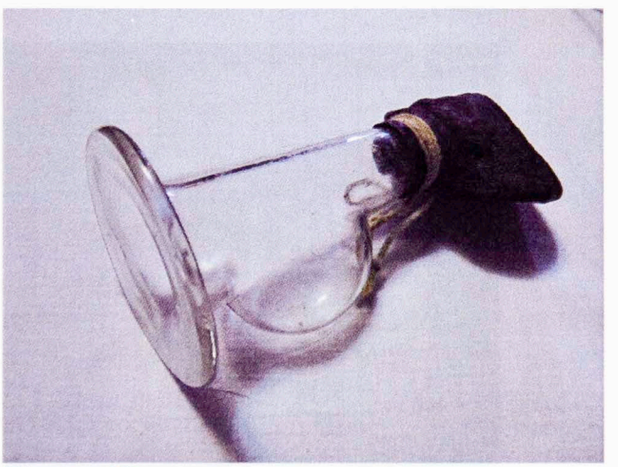

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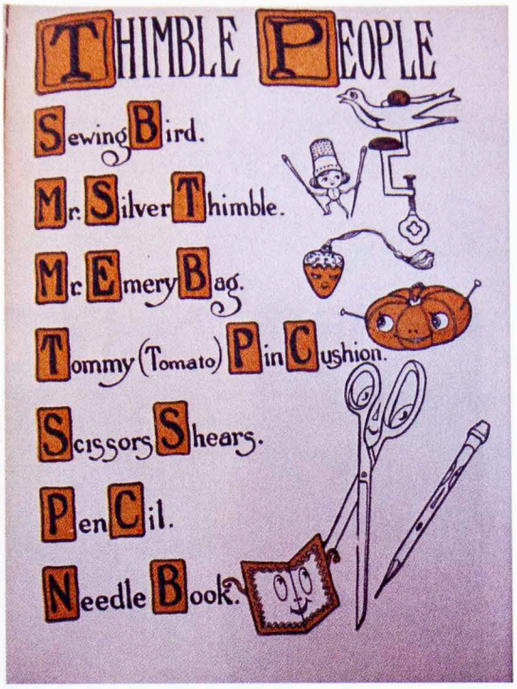

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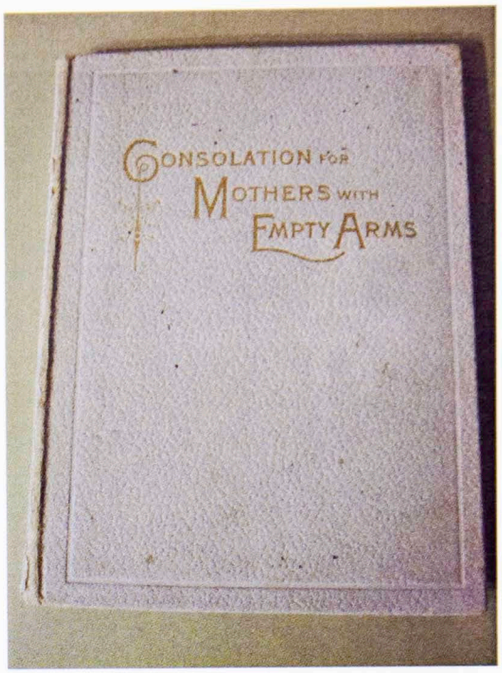

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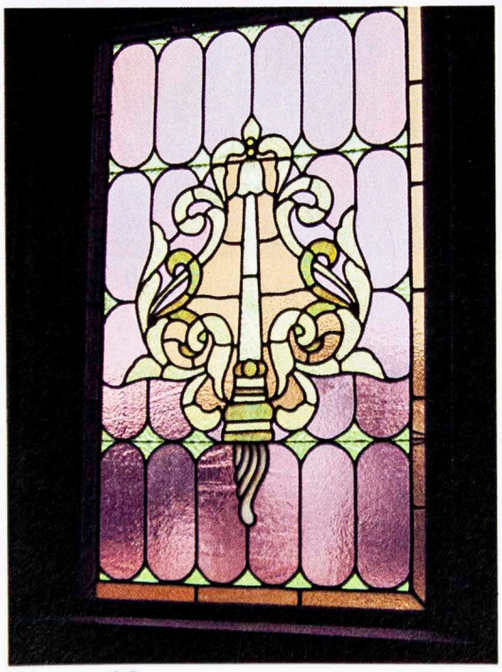
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