

**JANE CARROLL
HEARD
CLINTON
1875-1945**



**COW TOWN
INTO
CULTURAL
MECCA**

Jane Clinton was known as “the cultural soul of Cowtown Tulsa”. The Georgia aristocrat married an Indian Territory doctor and came to the newly-developing town. Today, the Jane Heard Clinton Society is a testament to her public service.

Jane Carroll Heard was born in April 1875 in Elberton, Georgia. Her descendants included a Revolutionary war governor, the niece of Martha Washington, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. She graduated from Elberton Collegiate Institute and possessed outstanding musical ability. Her family hoped that she would marry one of the local well-to-do men but, while attending a commencement at Young Harris College, she met a tall stranger from Indian Territory named Fred Severs Clinton, who was pursuing his medical studies. They married on April 15, 1897.

The blue-eyed, blond doctor was Creek, the son of a white man and part-Indian mother. His father had died in 1888, but the family still owned the Half Circle S Ranch on Duck Creek, south of the Arkansas, and lived in a large ornate house on a hilltop in Red Fork, in southwest Tulsa. When the young couple arrived in Tulsa, they couldn’t find any suitable housing, so they moved into the family home in Red Fork.

Tulsa, population 500, consisted mainly of corrals and loading pens, and a few frame buildings along Main Street near the Frisco tracks. The land belonging to the Creeks, so nobody could purchase a town lot. It was a strange setting for a cultured Georgia girl. Before the end of the year, the Clintons were able to rent a house in Tulsa – and later build a small barn for the doctor’s two horses.

Fred and his partner struck the first producing oil well in Tulsa County on June 25, 1901. It set off a boom that made Tulsa the Oil Capital of the World. Dr. Clinton, one of the town’s first doctors, organized Tulsa’s first hospital and nurse’s training school in 1906. Jane welcomed new members of the medical community and organized an annual Christmas tree at the hospital, where nurses, doctors, and patients joined in a religious service with group singing. He spent eighteen straight hours after the Tulsa Race Massacre, operating on both white and black patients, even though some of the wounded complained.

Meanwhile Tulsa didn’t remain an Indian Territory cow town for long. The population increased from 1,390 in 1900 to 141,258 in 1930. The newcomers were lured to Tulsa by chances in the oil industry. Their brides began working with Jane to make the frontier town a happier place to live. She organized the Tuesday Book Club, Parent-Teachers Association, Garden Club, Civic Music Association, Philbrook Art Center, and the Tulsa Federation of Music Clubs, to name a few. In 1914, she helped raise the funds for the \$125,000 Convention Hall (now the Brady Theater) and install a \$11,500 organ.

Her greatest interest was the Hyechka Club, a music club founded in 1904. Its mission was to promote the musical arts through performance and scholarships – and even welcomed the New York Philharmonic to Tulsa in 1911. The name – the Creek generic word for “music” – was adopted at the suggestion of a Creek member. The Hyechka Club was recognized not only in the state, but through the entire Southwest. Jane served as the first president and was named president for life in 1920.

Jane Heard Clinton died in November 1945 at age 70. Much of Tulsa’s arts scene is vibrant because of the contributions of early 20th century women. When Arts Alliance Tulsa discovered the contributions of early 20th century women philanthropists led by Clinton, they created the Jane Heard Clinton Society to honor the many women who have contributed to the city’s arts and culture, and inspire the next generation of women to continue their support in the city. The arts community of Tulsa owes her a big round of applause.