

**MADLINE CZARINA  
COLBERT  
CONLAN  
1871-1958**



**HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
MUSEUM  
CURATOR**

Levi Colbert signed the 1832 treaty for Chickasaw removal, son Martin searched for lands west of the Mississippi River, grandson James moved the tribe to southern Oklahoma Territory and his great grand-daughter Czarina became one of most important Oklahoma women.

Madeline Czarina Colbert was born in January 1871 in Colbert. She went to St. Xavier's Academy in Denison, Texas and attended Baird College in Clinton, Missouri and Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia. She married Michael Conlan in November 1894.

In 1896, she organized Pioneer Club, Atoka's first women's club. She authored a resolution at the 1908 General Federation of Women's Clubs convention to press state legislatures to allow women to serve on school boards. She was elected to the Lindsay School Board in 1909, but the state Attorney General ruled her ineligible. Conlan rallied women and served in defiance for two years. She later moved to Oklahoma City.

In April 1913, Conlan rallied nine tribal nations to donate important artifacts for a Century Chest being buried in First English Lutheran Church's basement, including tribal laws, books, hymnals printed in tribal languages, newspapers, photos of educational institutions, and family genealogies.

Other 1913 period items included a Kodak camera, telephone, coins, clothing, and Fourth of July celebration poster. Orator Angelo Scott wrote, "What manner of men and women will they be, I wonder. We cannot know, but it is safe to say, they will be happier, wiser, and better than we are. A wax audio cylinder of the speech was included with a Thomas Edison Recorder/Player.

Bank president Frank Pearson Johnson shockingly predicted electronic mail would replace the daily opening of morning mail. "Your distant correspondence will be conducted instantaneously by electric means all through business hours and only letters with document enclosures will come by slower moving mails."

In 2013, the copper chest, in eighteen inches of concrete, was still in perfect condition. "They had carefully packed items in paper like Christmas and wrote what was inside." It included priceless photos of Chief Quanah Parker, War Chief Geronimo, and a 1913 Chickasaw Nation letter addressing future members, not sure there would tribes in 2013. "We are here now and this is our land, story, culture and people."

In 1919, Conlan became curator of the Oklahoma Historical Society Museum's Native American collection. Her knowledge of tribal traditions helped her collect priceless artifacts: Creek poet Alexander Posey's baskets, pottery and bead work; Delaware Chief Charles Journeycake's peace pipe from a 1682 treaty with Pennsylvania leader William Penn; and Muscogee Chief Pleasant Porter's elaborate feathered war bonnet. Conlan worked there until 1942, when she dismissed. No explanation was given.

In 1923, Conlan was the first Indian woman to be honored with a tree planted on the Capitol grounds. She was recognized in the 1926 edition of Who's Who in America and inducted into the 1935 Oklahoma Hall of Fame. Conlan died at age 87 in May 1958 in Oklahoma City. Her portrait hung in the Oklahoma Historical Society until it was stolen in 1977.