

**CAROLYN
THOMAS
FOREMAN**
1872-1967



**RESEARCHING
OKLAHOMA
HISTORY**

On West Okmulgee Street in Muskogee is a home built in 1898, the year the town was incorporated. The home showcases the life of an amazing scholar, historian, and author, whose writings specialized in the history of Oklahoma and Native American culture. Carolyn Thomas moved there with her father at age 25 and stayed the rest of her life.

She was born in October, 1872 in Metropolis, Illinois and educated in Washington D. C., where her father John Robert Thomas served in the U. S. Congress. She received French and German lessons while her family lived in Belgium for a year. She continued her education at Monticello College in Godfrey, Illinois.

In 1897, President William McKinley appointed her father as U. S. District Judge for Indian Territory so the family moved to Muskogee. The family moved into the Adams House Hotel at Main and Broadway until they could build a home. They bought land from the Creek Nation and settled at 14th Street in 1898. Judge Thomas served from 1898 to 1901, then went into private practice.

Grant Foreman, a Chicago lawyer who came to town in 1899 to work for the Dawes Commission, joined Thomas' law firm in 1903. Though she had no formal legal training, Carolyn began helping Grant do research for his law cases. The couple formed a good partnership and married in 1905.

After Carolyn's father was killed during a prison uprising at McAlester in 1914, the law firm closed. The Foremans had no children, but both loved to travel and became fascinated with the Indian culture that surrounded them. Initially, Carolyn conducted research for Grant in archives, taking notes during site visits and translating primary documents written in French and Spanish.

Carolyn wanted to continue living in the house that her father built so she began her career as a historical writer. Her first historical article was published in "The Chronicles of Oklahoma" in 1927. That was just the icebreaker. During the remainder of her life, she contributed 83 articles to that journal.

In 1936, she published her first major book "Oklahoma Imprints 1835-1907: A History of Printing in Oklahoma Before Statehood", which continues to serve as the reference work on Oklahoma newspapers. Her command of foreign languages culminated in her second work, "Indians Abroad: 1493-1938" in 1943. Carolyn authored six additional books.

She was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1938 and made an honorary life member of the Oklahoma Historical Society in 1959. Grant Foreman died in 1953. Despite her own declining health, Carolyn continued her work until her own death in February 1967. Her home was renamed the Thomas-Foreman Historic Home and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Carolyn Thomas Foreman accomplished many things in her lifetime but she was most proud of her work during World War I as director of women's work for the American Red Cross. Her home still displays the collections and mementos of her incredible travels and memories of her life's work.