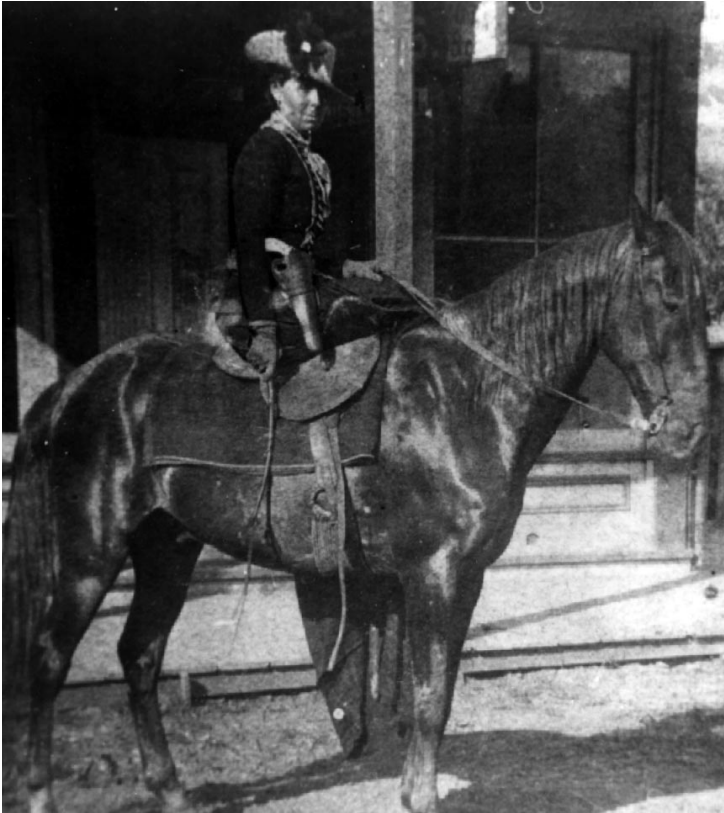


the finest one of 'em all went yesterday, Alice Robertson of Oklahoma. She was a fine old soul; too fine for politics."

BELLE STARR -- (1846-1889) -- OUTLAW

Few women have gained the notoriety of Belle Starr, who was called the "Queen of the Outlaws," "a female Jesse James," "the Bandit Queen," and other colorful labels. She inspired many books, magazine articles, and newspaper stories, many of which are mostly fictional. Belle was unusual, riding around the plains of Missouri, Texas, and



Oklahoma, dressed in elegant velvet dresses and plumed hats with two revolvers strapped around her waist. She associated with some of the most notorious outlaws, including Jesse James, Cole Younger, and Sam Starr, and was married several times to known badmen of the times. Belle Starr became a legend in her own lifetime mostly through the efforts of dime-store novelists. She was born Myra Mabelle Shirley in

Carthage, Missouri in 1846. The Shirleys owned an elegant hotel in Carthage, and Myra was a good student, studying reading, spelling, grammar, arithmetic, department, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and music. She excelled in piano and often played at the hotel, and for weddings, church meetings, and barn dances. She was also known to have a volcanic temper and would fight anyone, boy or girl. She was obsessed with horses and the outdoors. She spent much of her childhood roaming the hills on horseback with her older brother, Bud, who taught Myra how to handle a pistol and rifle.

As the Civil War drew closer, the Shirleys' tavern became the center for Southern sympathizers. Myra, who had become known as Belle by this time, resented the Union's movement to destroy their way of life. The Confederate guerilla, William Clark Quantrill, used the tavern to mobilize his forces. Bud was one of the first to join Quantrill. Belle wanted to join the forces with Quantrill and her brother, but women weren't allowed. She often rode to the camp to deliver information. Bud sneaked home for a visit in 1863. Belle heard the federal forces knew where Bud was hiding

and planned to capture him. She rode all night and beat the federal troops to help Bud escape. The next year, however, he was killed. Belle went with her father to claim the body. When Belle saw it, she grabbed Bud's revolver and began shooting wildly, yelling, "You damned blue bellies will pay for this!" To her dying day, Belle hated Yankees, and many believe this was the beginning of the legend of Belle Starr.

Shortly after Bud's death, the Shirleys moved to Scyene, Texas, a few miles south of Dallas. Belle married Jim Reed in 1866, when she was 18 years old, and they had a daughter, Rose Pearl. Belle became notorious around Dallas, wearing stylish velvet dresses and the pearl-handled revolvers. She kept a livery stable and fine horses, which she allegedly supplied to an ever-broadening circle of outlaw friends. When Jim Reed became a wanted man for killing the slayer of his brother, he took Belle and Pearl to California, and there, in 1871, their son, James Edwin, was born. When Reed became wanted by federal agents, he escaped to Indian Territory and Belle went back to Dallas. In 1874, Reed was killed by a friend for the reward money, but Belle told the authorities the body wasn't Reed's, so the friend-turned-killer was unable to collect. Belle was accused of horse theft and arson, but was found not guilty.

Belle's father died in 1876 and Belle left Texas, after years of pressure and harassment. She went to Kansas where she married Bruce Younger, a cousin of Cole Younger. The marriage lasted three weeks, and immediately she married Sam Starr and moved to Indian Territory. They built a secluded home and Belle named it Youngers Bend. No wagon roads led to the home, only horse trails. The house itself was fort-like and filled with fine furniture. Belle intended to live in solitude with her family, staying within the law. Sam Starr wanted a quiet family life, too. They made good friends in the area. But, in 1883, Belle and Sam were tried in Hanging Judge Parker's Federal Court for stealing horses and were found guilty. They were sentenced to one year at the Detroit House of Correction. Sam was killed in a drunken shootout in December 1886. Afterward, Belle married a young Creek named Jim July. In 1889, July was charged with larceny, but Belle felt the government didn't have enough proof to convict him. Assuming he'd be home in a few days, Belle rode only half way to Ft. Smith with him, and they spent the night at San Bois. The next morning Jim set out for Ft. Smith, and Belle headed home.

On the road back to Youngers Bend, Belle was shot in the back and neck and fell from her horse. The assassin then walked up and fired again, hitting the dying Belle in the left side of her face. The riderless horse returned to Youngers Bend, where Pearl, sensing trouble, mounted her own horse, and found her mother's body. The murderer's identity is not known; some suspected Belle's son, who resented his mother's various husbands. Others thought her young husband may have been tired of taking orders from Belle, or that a neighbor with whom she had had a disagreement murdered her. As with her life, many tales surrounded the death of Belle Starr, Oklahoma's most famous woman outlaw.

TE ATA -- (1895-1995) -- ACTRESS AND STORY TELLER

Her name was Mary Thompson, or later, Mrs. Clyde Fisher, but she was known around the world as Te Ata, which means "Bearer of the Morning." A Chickasaw, Te Ata was born in December, 1895, in Emet, Indian Territory, and grew up near Tishomingo, the capitol of the Chickasaw Nation. Her father was the last tribal treasurer elected before statehood, and her uncle was the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation. She went to school in Emet until she was eight years old, then was sent to Bloomfield Seminary, an Indian boarding school. She later finished high school in Tishomingo, and went to the Oklahoma College for Women at Chickasha.

Te Ata began telling stories to the girls in her dormitory, stories like "why the owl

and the rabbit do not get along,” and others told to her by her father and other family members. Te Ata was persuaded to change her major from education to drama, and as part of the degree requirement, she presented a program about Indian lore. This was the beginning of Te Ata’s life-long career. In the summer of 1919, Te Ata was offered her first professional tour on the Chautauqua circuit. She performed for a variety of audiences across the U.S., and earned enough money on tour to continue her studies in the theater school at Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. She then moved to New York City where she appeared in several Broadway shows.

Her pine tree-straight posture and graceful hands created many characters. With the lift of a shoulder,

a change in stance, or a variation in voice, Te Ata became a warrior, an old woman, a young maiden, a medicine man, or a new mother. Her stories explained Indian ways of looking at birth, death, love, and the meaning and origins of life. Te Ata came to the attention of Eleanor Roosevelt when Franklin was governor of New York. Te Ata gave presentations at the Governor’s mansion and the governor named a lake in New York Late Te Ata.

In the spring of 1933, Te Ata appeared at the White House for President Roosevelt’s first state dinner. Also in 1933, Te Ata married Dr. Clyde Fisher, curator of the Hayden Planetarium at the New York Museum of Natural History. Although he was older than Te Ata, the two shared many mutual interests including a love of nature and a fascination with Indian folklore. Their marriage, until his death fifteen years later, was filled with world travel, fascinating and famous friends, and involvement with the cultural activities of the day. In 1939, Te Ata was chosen by President and Mrs. Roosevelt to present an American Indian folklore program at the Roosevelt family home in honor of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. The King and Queen invited her to appear in England which was the first of many tours throughout Europe.

Te Ata appeared professionally in every state in the nation and many other countries. In 1957, she was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. In February 1976, she was named “Woman of the Month” by *Ladies Home Journal*. Te Ata appeared on the Today Show in 1976, and was named a member of the National Congress of American Indians. Also in 1976, Gov. David Boren and the Arts and Humanities Council named Te Ata Oklahoma’s first state treasure and honored her as a “bearer of intangible cultural assets, an elder with Oklahoma origins who has outstanding artistic and historical



worth.” Te Ata continued traveling and telling her stories until the late 1970s. She died in 1995, a few days before her 100th birthday.

THERESA HUNT TYLER -- (1878-1972) -- DENTIST

In 1886, Theresa Hunt's father took her to the local dentist. She was, evidently, very impressed. She went home and announced she would become a dentist, to be greeted with laughter from her family and neighbors. In the late 1800s, dentistry was not a profession for women, and the Hunt family farmed, an occupation that did not produce income sufficient to send a child, a daughter especially, to dental school. Much more



commonly, girls went to school through eighth grade and became teachers, as Theresa did. She taught for a few years, and saved part of her salary of twenty dollars a month for dental school tuition. She worked part-time for a dentist, as well.

Theresa entered Western Dental College in Kansas City, Missouri, and found there were two other women in her class of 60 students. Theresa worked for a dentist in Kansas City while she attended school. She graduated in 1901, and was invited to work with a dentist in El Reno, Oklahoma Territory. She accepted, and soon learned a great need for a dentist existed in Watonga. So she took her new Oklahoma Dental License No. 134, and the train, to Watonga. Concerned about whether she would be accepted, she must have been relieved to find people waiting to see her before she even checked into the hotel. She leased an office suite in the Rose Building, but until the building

was completed, she set up her practice in the back room of Hooper's Drug Store. The Hoopers offered Theresa a place to live; they were living in Governor Ferguson's home while he and his family were living in Guthrie, the territorial capital. Theresa rented the top floor for her living quarters, and the room can still be seen at the home, which is now a state museum.

In 1903, Theresa married Homer Tyler, a merchant. She and Homer had three children, and Theresa maintained her practice in the front room of their farm house just outside Watonga while the children were young. She also traveled regularly to Eagle City to treat patients. Her fees for dental service stayed the same during the years; in 1941, for amalgam fillings she charged one dollar for adults and fifty cents for children. Extractions were one dollar and gold crowns were five dollars. She practiced in Watonga for 40 years, until 1941, and lived there until her death in 1972, at age 94.