



OK history in the spotlight

Native American Frontier Days event slated to begin Friday

By Caleb Slinkard

Transcript Editor

The inaugural Norman Native American Frontier Days will kick off this Friday with a slew of events across the city that organizers said are intended to celebrate Oklahoma history while spotlighting Lindsey Street and the Norman Round Up Club.

Event chairman and Ward 2 city council member Joe Carter said the idea came together over sandwiches at Midway Deli with Kelly Haney, a former state legislator who also served as principal chief of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma.

"How much stuff happens at Midway?

[Haney] and I ran into each other and we just started brainstorming," Carter said. "During my city council campaign, I kept running across people with ideas to stimulate the economy and Lindsey Street, just

See**FRONTIER** Page A3

Frontier:

From**Page A1**

ideas for events and celebrations. The idea was to stitch these together with a Native American theme that included a certain era of Oklahoma history: Civil War to statehood."

The event begins with a rodeo at the Norman Round Up Club Arena at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights, located on 60th Ave. NE between Alameda and Robinson streets. The arena opens at 6 p.m.

A parade is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. Saturday along Lindsey Street.

Carter said Lindsey would be closed from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. between 24th Ave. SW and Berry Road.

A pow wow is scheduled in the Homeland parking lot along Lindsey Street at noon, and a native flute concert will be held at 2p.m. at Legends Times Two (1313 W. Lindsey St.) conducted by Haney.

The second annual Legacy Rotary Car Show will take place in the Homeland parking lot as well from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

A trail ride is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday along the Lake ThunderbirdState Park equestriantrails. It's an ambitious plan, and one Carter said was primarily centered around Lindsey Street to encourage people to visit the area.

"We are doing this with the blessing of over 90 Lindsey Street merchants," he said. "As the Ward 2 councilman, I'm seeing the blight along Lindsey Street, and we want to do something to stimulate traffic and raise awareness of the area. The parade is purposefully small this first year, and we hope people are able to get down before the roadcloses."

The event will celebrate Montford T. Johnson, known as the "Chickasaw Rancher." An influential rancher and businessman prior to Oklahoma statehood, Johnson was raised by his Chickasaw in-laws and oversaw a cattle business that stretched across much of central Oklahoma. His legacy can be found across the state, and

Norman's Montford Inn is named after him. While Johnson died in 1896, his businesses thrived until the 1980s, when they were split into individual holdings, according to the Oklahoma Historical Society.

"His footprint is all over, and there are 60 of his relatives in the area, I'm told," Carter said. "I'm a real fan of his, and especially his progressive management styles and inclusive hiring practices."

Native American Frontier Days has been criticized on social media as a successor of sorts to the now defunct Norman 89er Day Parade. Carter acknowledged that the time period the event celebrates contains both positive and negative incidents in Oklahoma history.

"This is not an 89er Day redo; it's a new event , an event to celebrate Norman's Native American and horse history, and a look at that era in Oklahoma that's very complex," he said. "There are parts that are unsavory, there are parts that are romantic, and we need to look at them all.

"There was a lot of injustice during that time, but there were a lot of great things that happened. I think the conversations the event will stimulate will be positive."

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