



March 2, 1995

Mrs. Jo Vawter was good enough recently to give me Xerox copy of a very old and interesting directory published by the Perry Methodist Episcopal church on the happy occasion of their 28th anniversary, Oct. 15, 1921. The cover lists the pastor as Rev. William H. Beers, and though we share the same unusual last name, I am not aware of any close family relationship. However, we always say we must be relates whenever someone with that name shows up, so since this was a man held in high esteem I will guess that the two of us must have had a common ancestry.

Several things about this 74-year-old directory are interesting. Pastor Beers, whose handsome profile is pictured in a foreword along with his greetings, had this comment: "Your desire, my desire, is a living, working church. This can come only through a close cooperation in all the work. Let us pull together and success will be ours for the Kingdom." His admonition must have been well received. The Methodists are certainly continuing to build a living, working church here.

Some of the local businesses whose advertisements helped make the directory possible were the Exchange Bank, F. G. Moore, president, and H. A. McCandless, cashier; Treeman & Munger, coal, feed, seed and paint, telephone No. 6; Garvey Bros., successors to Morrison Dry Goods; Houston-McCune Lbr. Co., phone 142 or "Ask Ralph;" Crowder & Johnson sanitary grocery on the east side of the square; City Drug Store, Victrolas & Records, the Rexall store; The Model shoe & clothing company; Fred Kretsch variety goods and groceries on the west side; A. C. Lamb optician and jewelry; the Lobsitz Hwde. Co.; C. J. Lindeman grocery, 28 years of reliability; and Doyle & Sons poultry, eggs and cream.

In a history of the church contained in the directory, it is noted that the first regular Methodist church service was held at 4 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 8, 1893, in the Banks and Wade building on the north side of the square, "the same now (in 1921) occupied by the Hemsworth Furniture store." Rev. Thos. Wolcott preached the sermon. Mr. Wolcott was transferred from the Missouri conference to take charge of the mission work in Perry and "P" county, O. T. Mr. Wolcott was on the ground here at noon on Sept. 16, 1893, the day the Cherokee Strip was opened to settlement.

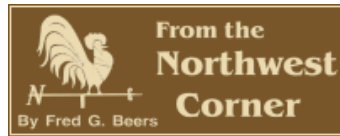
On the following Sunday, Oct. 15, Rev. Wolcott preached again in the same place and organized a class of ten members. That was the beginning of the Perry church, the brochure states.

In 1921, when the 28th anniversary brochure was compiled, some of the church officers were Mrs. H. L. Boyes, Sunday school superintendent; Fay Thompson, Epworth League president; Mrs. George W. Sims, president of the Ladies' Aid; trustees were John W. Yoce, president; M. L. Crowder, secretary-treasurer; along with members, P. W. Cress, Guy C. Dayton, H. L. Boyes, Jessie Marsh, E. T. Whitney, Clark Seton and Charles Keil. Stewards were George W. Sims, president; M. B. Shulz, secretary; and members, Henry Henriksen, W. T. Faris, A. A. Ballard, Everett Nelson, Ben Wiehe, Rebecca Wilkins, Mrs. Frank Wyatt, Fay Thompson and Paul Harding, centenary.

The schedule of services each Sunday was Sunday school at 9:45 a.m.; morning worship, 11; Junior League, 5:30 p.m.; Epworth League, 6:30; and evening sermon, 7:30. Prayer and Bible study were held each Wednesday night at 7:30.

Although all the membership is not listed in the portion of he directory I have, I can tell you that several saints of the church in that day left an indelible impression not only on their church, but on the community as a whole. Many of the family names are still familiar because they left us a legacy of children and other heirs. Reading such material can

only strengthen one's pride and love for this community where we live. Thanks, Mrs. Vawter, for providing this directory.



March 4, 1995

Sen. Nickles has my personal backing in all his efforts to restore passenger train service to Oklahoma, especially since he hopes to have Perry included on the north-south route now being discussed. This dialogue has been going on for such a long time, however, that it has become one of those I'll-believe-it-when-I-see-it things.

The last passenger train rolled through Perry in 1979 when the entire state lost this service. Before then, you could board a Santa Fe or a Frisco train here and make connections to go anywhere in the U.S.A. Since that dark day, some kind of plan has been thrust forward regularly to get the service restored. But, in the meantime, the railroad business has suffered more economic losses, casting further doubt on the chances of local folks to regain passenger train routes through here.

The remnants of our old Frisco depot on south eleventh street were cleared away several years ago, but we still have the Santa Fe station at the east end of Delaware. If we succeed in getting north-south passenger train service again on the old Santa Fe line, the city will have to re-open the only good road (Delaware) leading to the station. That part of the street was closed several months ago and barricades now prevent vehicles from using it to reach the station.

You can try getting there from Cedar street, but don't use a vehicle that you care much about. Ordinary suspension systems will fail, leaf spring will snap, wheels and tires will be damaged, mufflers and tail pipes will be stone-punctured, and blowouts are likely to occur if you attempt to traverse the miserable little street between Cedar and the old train station. It is chock-full of deep potholes, ruts, loose rock and an assortment of other hazards.

In the olden days, when traveling by rail was still fairly commonplace, Perry parents would take their youngsters to the train station when a passenger train was scheduled to stop here, and the kids would find delight in waving to the friendly engineers, Pullman porters, conductors and passengers passing through. The train whistle had a warm, friendly sound, and it seemed the engineer would always give it an extra "toot" when some child was looking expectantly at him. It was a thrilling experience.

Riding the train back then was wonderful, too. No highway traffic for Father to deal with, no flat tires to worry about. Mother didn't have to worry about fixing meals. The food service was fine on the dining cars, with their snowy white linen cloths and usually a vase of fresh flowers. The clickety-clack sound of those iron wheels on those iron tracks was soothing and sleep-inducing at night, even if your ticket only allowed you to sit up. Pullman berths were pretty expensive and generally used only for trips requiring several days.

Remembering all that pleasant side of railroad travel, our family took a vacation back East one summer. We drove first to Washington, D.C., left our car with friends there and took an Amtrak train to New York City. We thought we'd show our two daughters the joys of passenger trains. We bought tickets to travel from the Capital City's beautiful Union Station to mid-town Manhattan. We had a choice between a very fast, non-stop express train or a sort of local which made several, stops en route. The local had a diner, so we chose it. The journey was something less than successful.

It was late in the summer and the train had no appreciable air-conditioning. If a window could be propped open, dirt and debris blew in. The dining car was hardly the way we remembered from our youth. The waiters were hostile and rude. Only sandwiches were available, and the table cloths were soiled. The travel time seemed interminable.

Adding to our summer vacation was a trip to a Broadway play, one which had been enjoying a successful run before we arrived there. It was "Fiddler on the Roof," a musical rich in Jewish tradition and Eastern European/Russian philosophy. All the lyrics and dialogue were in English, however. We dug out our best Sunday clothes from the suitcases and arrived at the theatre expecting to see ladies dripping in ermine and pearls escorted by handsome men wearing white ties and tails. We had not reckoned with the growing trend toward casual attire then flowering. Blue jeans and T-shirts were the apparel of choice for both men and women.

Waiting in our seats for the opening curtain, we became aware that the row directly behind us was occupied by a group of non-English speaking people accompanied by friends who did speak the language. As the house lights dimmed, the orchestra began the overture and the curtains parted on an exciting opening number. But when the dialogue began, our neighbors in the rear had to have a continuous interpretation, loudly delivered, to enable their understanding. How loud was it? Well, none of us could understand the lines being spoken on stage because all we could hear was the version being delivered behind us, and that of course was concerned with words that had already been spoken on stage.

Aside from the music, we derived very little pleasure from the play and, in fact, did not even know the plot until several years later when our own Stagecoach Community Theatre mounted a fine production of "Fiddler" in the Perry high school auditorium. That was a superior version, anyway, thanks to the work of director Steve Smallwood, Russell Thompson's performance as Tevye, Julia Payne as his wife, and all the other talented local folks who were on stage and behind the scenes. For us, the Broadway production was an unhappy experience, thanks to that portion of the audience occupying the seats behind us. In case you're wondering, they were oblivious to our withering looks throughout the evening.

Well, this started off to a piece about restoring passenger train service to Perry, and you see where it's led. I'll say again, lots of luck, Sen. Nickles, but don't forget that we've still got to fix up our street leading to the station in Perry before the conductor can holler "All aboard."



March 8, 1995

Bart Brorsen, one of Noble county's outstanding farmers, became familiar with bureaucratic ways during his years as state director of the ASCS (Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service), an arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He left that position with the advent of the Bill Clinton administration. Since his departure, the ASCS has been renamed "Consolidated Farm Service Agency," or CFSA, and other Agriculture Departments have been similarly renamed. In recognition of the current trend toward a more modern phraseology, Bart has started giving new names to his farm tools. For example, his post hole digger is now a "vertical excavator." It's good to see that the Will Rogers-esque Brorsen sense of humor remains intact. Bart was a mighty good director of the state ASCS, too.

Whatever the outcome may be in the U.S. attempt to bail out Mexico's struggling economy, the situation will be watched with great interest in this area. NAFTA has inspired a new awareness of I-35's vital relationship to the entire country, and we here in Perry are practically sitting astride that important highway.

What does that mean? Well, Larry Tipps, a 1964 Billings high school graduate, now serves as executive director of NODA, the Northern Oklahoma Development Association, with headquarters in Enid. He recently told members of the Perry Chamber of Commerce that our close proximity to I-35 is again proving extremely favorable. A 35 percent increase in truck traffic has been tallied on that major north-south artery since Congress approved NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement. Freight haulers are shuttling goods and raw materials into and out of Mexico at a steadily increasing rate. As a result, an effort is being made to have I-35 designated a "corridor" route, which would qualify it for special consideration in upgrading, maintenance and in other ways.

Larry told the chamber that trucks are frequently reported lined up five miles deep at U.S. borders, awaiting inspection clearance for entry into Mexico or the U.S. Mayor Bud Hollingsworth personally confirmed the veracity of that report after a recent first-hand look at one of the border crossing points. He added that the trucks were three abreast in the line that he saw. Freight volume like that through this area surely makes Perry strategically well situated, especially when you add our close proximity to the east-west Cimarron Turnpike. Something good should come from all that.

Incidentally, the quarterly Chamber of Commerce luncheon where Tipps spoke was sparsely attended. Surely we have more people than that interested in supporting the positive things in our community. Exciting developments are now taking place and others are in the mill for this community. Write yourself a memo now and be sure to attend the next of these functions when the time, place and speaker are announced. Look for it during the first two weeks of May.

How about a pat on the back for one of those organizations working to improve the looks of some of the vacant buildings around the square. A good example is being set by Delta Theta chapter of Beta Sigma Phi with their bright and artful displays in a building on the west side of the square.

Others interested in joining this program can contact the Perry Development Coalition at [336-1212](tel:336-1212) for details. It's all part of the general renewal effort being encouraged by the Coalition's hard-working City Beautification Committee. Other organizations are welcome to emulate the Delta Theta chapter's example. You and your club also can adopt a window and help dress up the square. A little imagination and creativity can turn some of those empty spaces into eye-catching and interesting displays.



March 9, 1995

It slipped by unnoticed, but last month marked the 57th anniversary of the demolition of an authentic Perry landmark -- the tall brick smokestack at the site of the old Perry Mill. It was a sad ending to a significant chapter in the story of this city's development.

The Perry Mill was our most important industry for more than four decades. At its peak, probably no more than 30 employees were on the payroll, but that still made it the largest industry in Noble county. There was no Ditch Witch manufacturing company, no Department of Transportation district headquarters here then. It was the giant of its day. Wheat from farms from all over this area was refined into flour, bagged and distributed from the Perry Mill.

The cloth flour bags were labeled "Pride of Perry" and that, is just what they were. The brand was familiar to users throughout the U.S. and other parts of the world. Perry indeed was proud of it. The mill was located on the south side

of Birch street, just east of where the Charles Machine Works, Inc. Subsite plant now stands. Steam turbines provided the energy for a central power unit which drove all the machinery at the mill. Towering over the entire complex of buildings was a 100-foot tall brick smokestack. The smoke from coal-fired boilers rose from the stacks during each day's operation.

The Perry Mill was started in 1894, the year after the Cherokee Strip land run. It operated as an independent until General Mills acquired it in the 1930s. At that time it was assumed the new owners would expand operations, and indeed a \$100,000 improvement program had just been completed shortly before General Mills made the decision to shut it down in 1937.

The mill also operated an ice manufacturing plant, and virtually everyone in Perry got their supply of ice blocks from horse-drawn delivery wagons which moved slowly through the residential areas each day. Others came to the ice dock to get theirs. Electric refrigerators were uncommon until the 1930s, so most folks had a golden oak icebox in their kitchen or on the back porch.

Orie Nida began his employment at the mill working in the ice plant during summertime and helping out in the office during cold weather. He was the last employee remaining at the mill when it was closed. "Last of the Mohicans," he says: Orie, who now lives at 1404 Ninth street, later spent some time on the road as a salesman. When the local operation ceased in 1938, he moved to Chickasha and continued with General Mills for several years. In 1976 he and his wife retired and returned here to their hometown.

Perry Mill stories abound. One from an old Sunday Oklahoman columnist, Kent Ruth, concerns Dave McKinstry, who was known as the power behind the local operation. He was a bachelor when he arrived in Perry. Thus he had time to visit the early homes and encourage the young to do their homework so that they could make their town great in the future.

Newspapers of the day told of school kids afraid to play jump the rope because their homemade underwear had "Pride of Perry" plainly stamped on them. Another story tells of the mother who brought her own sack to a store for some peaches. She held it while the clerk poured in the peaches at the top, then watch red-faced as they ran out two holes in the bottom. She had, it seems, absent mindedly grabbed up what in her day were X-rated unmentionables.

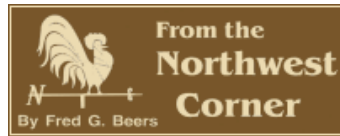
When the smokestack was sent toppling to the ground on Feb. 3, 1938, Alf Wilkerson assisted in destroying a structure he helped build some 26 years earlier. A quantity of dynamite was placed at the base of the tower. When the fuse touched off the explosion, the old stack slowly began to lean, then noisily crashed to the ground as a plume of dust rose. The bricks remained intact until the structure was half way to the ground, then they began to break up.

Machinery from the mill already had been removed and all the buildings, except grain bins, also had been torn down. Only the smokestack remained to mark the place where the business once stood. Jess Mills, one of those who had been employed at the mill, estimated 38,000 bricks were used in building the stack.

Many Noble county families made a comfortable living by working at the mill. Lee Merry, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Merry, became a district manager for General Mills in the upper Midwest. H. C. Jackson retired as manager of the business in 1930 and was succeeded by Harold Hughes. John Mugler was assistant manager at one time and was moved to Oklahoma City by General Mills in that capacity, according to newspaper files.

The Journal photographer snapped a remarkable picture of the smokestack's final moments, showing it just as the bricks began breaking up on the way down. It was a sad, if historic, moment. I well remember the day the smokestack came crashing down, and probably many of you also have some personal recollections of the old Perry Mill and of

those who toiled there. A lot more could be said about this interesting pioneer industry. Perhaps there will be additions to this in the near future.



March 11, 1995

The recent news story revealing that Borden's is shutting down its Oklahoma City operation was not joyfully received there. But it does stir memories of an opposite reaction which occurred here in 1938 when plans were disclosed for opening a related industry in Perry. The Borden company later became part of that story.

On Nov.16,1938, the late Bud Warren announced that he was preparing to open a new plant in Perry to extract casein from whole milk. That sent a wave of excitement throughout the area. It was the time of the Great Depression, remember, and news such as this held promise of great economic impact that would benefit many here.

The new installation, creating Perry's first market for whole milk, resulted in a premium price for the milk. Area farmers who had milk cows naturally were excited. Until then, they had a market only for cream which was separated from whole milk on the farm and hauled into Chester Swart's Perry cream station, or to others in this area. The skim milk then was fed to their hogs.

Bud opened the new plant shortly after Jan. 1, 1939, and it was in full operation by the latter part of March. He left a position as purchasing agent for the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety (the newly organized Highway Patrol) to operate the new business. His wife, Reba, joined him in the firm after resigning as a deputy in the courthouse office of Sadie Lee Freeman, county clerk. She was succeeded there by Ruth Ball, whose husband, barber Carl Ball, had recently died. Bud passed away in 1988, but Reba still resides on the Warren Ranch southeast of the city in the comfortable home the couple built.

The Perry Whole Milk Plant was the first of its kind in Oklahoma, although many others were in operation throughout the U.S. By 1942 the Perry plant was the world's largest independent casein plant. Casein was extracted from milk without removing any other properties. In the process, milk was allowed to stand in vats until all the whey was drained off. Whey was sold to local farmers for farm use. Remaining parts of the skim milk were then run through a drier which converted the solid part of the curded milk into dry, pea-size pellets -- casein. Casein sold for seven to eight cents per pound. It took 100 pounds of skim milk to make three and a half pounds of dry casein.

Casein was used in many ways, and in 1939 that included this country's growing contribution to Great Britain's war effort. The milk product was a component of explosives used in ammunition. Casein from the Perry plant was shipped to the Hercules Powder Co. in Chicago and from there to England. Casein also was used in the newly developing plastics industry for buttons, automobile steering wheels, rayon thread and transparent cloth. It also was used in making paint, glossy magazine covers, neckties, fountain pen barrels, glue and wall paper. A broad market was in existence, ready and waiting for the local plant's output. A long-time contract for its total production capacity of both casein and sweet cream already had been signed before Warren opened the plant.

The industry was housed in what was known as the Marchbanks building one block off the south side of the square on Flynn street, where the Wheatheart Nutrition Center is now located. At one time it had 35 employees on the payroll, Reba recalls, but it had an impact on a broad area. Milk was hauled to Perry from many points, principally from Mangum, Blackwell and Enid.

After a few years, equipment requirements for processing casein became so stringent that the Perry Whole Milk plant was converted to a conventional dairy plant and adopted the brand name of Dairy Gold. It then began producing bottled milk, butter, cheese and related dairy products. By 1946 Dairy Gold's success had caught Borden's eye, and the local firm was sold to the giant company. Warren stayed on briefly as manager and all local employees were retained. But in 1949 Borden closed the plant here, and that was the end of what once had been an interesting major Perry business.

Soon thereafter Bud and Reba Warren became two of the best-known figures in the U.S. Quarter horse industry. Early on they purchased Leo, a legendary and premier race animal who sired many high-priced offspring. His statue looks out from a prominent corner of an east side city park which is named in his honor.

Little is now visible of the Perry Whole Milk Plant on Flynn street, except a few old Borden trucks parked at the rear of the Wheatheart Nutrition Center building, but those who remember its heyday can still visualize the daily arrival of milk there and the dispatch of trucks to far away places. It was an exciting story and it helped to buoy the hopes of Perry area residents as they struggled to survive in a troubled time.



March 14, 1995

Our city election on April 4 is just three weeks away and some of the campaign rhetoric seems to be turning a little strident, not surprisingly. Two candidates are running for mayor and three are in the ward one city council race, but six (count 'em) are vying for the city marshal's job. Consequently, a lot of the debate, limited though it may be, is focused on that contest. That's to be expected with so many hopefuls all seeking to corral a big chunk of the voters. Remember, it's winner take all. No runoff this time.

Most of what's being said in the marshal's race is pretty amicable stuff. Although a few statements do sound like a bare knuckles fight, Marquis of Queensbury rules are prevailing. All very gentlemanly. Even though Police Chief Tim Davidson and Assistant Chief Fred LeValley are both in the race, they say there's no problem between them and they are making no charges against each other

Having named those two, I will give equal treatment to all and mention the other four candidates too. So, alphabetically, they are Steve Bunch, Mike Devlin, Tracy Hicks and Bob Schweer.

A few yard signs have sprouted up and some candidates are running campaign statements in this newspaper. Some are using direct mail and one public forum has been held for the police chief hopefuls. Nothing along the line yet for the two candidates for mayor, Bud Hollingsworth and Norman Boone. You've seen the ads. The ward one council race features incumbent Barbara Cook running against challengers Gene Coffey and Clifton Franklin. It is very low key thus far. For the most part these candidates seem to be relying on face-to-face, door-knocking, hand-shaking encounters with the electorate.

If nothing else, I hope the fact that there is such a large number of candidates running for city marshal helps all of us to remember that "marshal," as used here, is spelled with only one "l." If you're talking about one of the Marshall families, it does have two l's. But not our City Marshal.

Read the messages, hear what they have to say. This is an important election and it's a critical time for our city. Don't stay home on April 4. Only three races have to be decided by the voters, but our chief of police, city council and

mayor have very big roles to play in the advancement and security of this community. Get out and vote and take a neighbor with you.

Perry woodcrafter Jim Garvey is launching a new venture next Saturday by sponsoring an antique toy show at the Holiday Inn in Stillwater. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and there is no admission charge. This being his first one, Jim was preparing for maybe 40 tables. Instead, 43 exhibitors will be there, each with a full table of antique toys, some from the 1930s and 1940s, others from more recent eras. Such shows are becoming more popular all the time. Many people are fond of recalling their childhood by looking at the things they used to play with, and shows like this provide the best place to see them. Some of the articles will be on sale, and maybe you will find one that has special meaning.

Saturday will be a busy day for local folks. That's also the date of the formal grand opening of the new C.R. & Co. Clothing store at Perry Plaza. This will be the first new store of its kind in Perry in many years, and a lot of people are rightfully excited about that. The C. R. Anthony company is excited too because this is a pilot store leading in a new direction for the firm. Check out the opening day, and take in Garvey's antique toy show, too. Great way to spend a Saturday.

The general consensus seems to be that Gary England's appearance here last week was a big success and quite entertaining. His casual remarks at a noon luncheon with Rotarians, Lions, Chamber of Commerce members and other folks were humorous and light, pretty much like his TV persona on Channel 9's weather shows. The "Terrible Twisters" presentation that night in Divine Hall lived up to its advance billing also. Good public relations job for the Oklahoma City station. They played to an appreciative full house. Kids and adults enjoyed the show very much, and Perry got a little TV and radio exposure for two days running. So, it was good for us, too.



March 16, 1995

Next Saturday morning they'll be auctioning off the home and personal property of my late neighbor, Paul W Cress. He was a man of many unique qualities and a career that took him to great heights, but his personal life was marked with some tragedies and bitter disappointments. In short, he was pretty much Everyman, only more so.

He himself was not an early day settler here, but his parents came to Perry within a year after the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1893 and Paul was born here in 1904. His father, P. W. Cress, became one of Oklahoma's best known attorneys. As a young man, P. W.'s fondest hope was that his two sons, Paul and Erie, would someday join him here in the practice of law.

Erie, older than Paul by ten years, chose instead to become a professional soldier, but Paul received his law degree at OU and in 1929 became his father's partner in the firm of Cress Tebbe & Cress, along with Gerald W. Tebbe. Other partners came and went through the years, but the firm always bore the Cress family imprimatur.

Paul loved this community and its people dearly. He was steeped in the saga of the Cherokee Strip. From his father and his beloved mother, Minnie, he heard first-hand accounts of how things were in the wilderness that became Oklahoma and it was a romance that he never tired of recalling. It was one of many subjects he could discuss at length with knowledge, passion, charm, affection and wit.

He was as diverse in his interests as anyone I've ever known. His pipes brought him a special pleasure, and even if a lifetime of smoking may have contributed to his malignancy he never gave up the habit. Through the years he accumulated a marvelous collection of pipes, but some hooligan stole most of them one day and only a small portion was later recovered. That was just one of the things that really hurt him.

Paul grew up adoring his mother. When she died during the flu epidemic of 1917, he was only 14. Paul was devastated. His father remarried in 1920 and Paul found it hard to adjust. In due time he also learned to love his step-mother, Della, and the two were fully reconciled. Paul freely gave her credit for making his father's remaining years happy. Similarly, he became close to his half-sister, Marjory Jean, who now lives in Oklahoma City.

Paul's wife, Marie, also came from pioneer Cherokee Strip stock. She was born in Grant county and met Paul when both were students at OU. Marie taught school here one year, then married Paul in 1930. They had one child, a daughter, Sherry Marie, who died of cancer in 1977 at the age of 45. Sherry was never married so Paul and Marie had no grandchildren, and the loss of their only child was something they were never able to fully overcome.

Marie's death in 1991 was another bitter pill for Paul. She had suffered through a long illness and both of them were fully prepared, fully aware of each other's mortality, but Paul found himself alone in the twilight of his life and it was a trying experience. He never allowed that sadness, nor his own illness, to force him into a reclusive state. Daily he donned his trademark jaunty hat and bow tie, and stayed in touch with his friends. Visitors were always welcome at his comfortable home, providing they came before his usual bedtime in the late afternoon. He habitually arose about 3 a.m. and drove downtown for the first of many cups of coffee each day.

Paul was our county attorney, county judge and district judge. After his wartime service as an Air Force officer, he was appointed U.S. attorney for the Western district of Oklahoma by President Eisenhower. He successfully prosecuted some high-profile cases for the U.S. government in that capacity.

Paul was an excellent story-teller, reeling off personal anecdotes and never-ending tales of Perry's early days and its many fascinating citizens as long as he was able to converse. His final days were not pleasant, for Paul realized that his time for leaving us was at hand. As part of his preparation for that, he directed in his will that generous bequests were to be awarded to the local Cherokee Strip Museum, Perry Memorial Hospital and the First United Methodist church.

Paul died a few weeks back, after a long and courageous battle with cancer, and I only hope he knew how highly he was regarded in this community. We certainly will miss him.



March 18, 1995

It's distressing to know that John Divine is going through some trying times with his health right now. He has been in and out of the hospital during the past few weeks but is currently back in his room at the Perry Nursing Home. John celebrated his 91st birthday the other day, even though it was not one of his better times. Friends, the old wrestling coach is hanging tough in there. Even so he can certainly use all our prayers and good thoughts. This is a man who has contributed tremendously to this community. Let's hope he wins the decision in this match.

Local Presbyterians are searching for the old rugged cross. Well, actually it's not THAT one -- it's the one they've used for several years during Easter time and for other church events. From time to time school groups and others have

borrowed it but right now it's listed as lost or missing, and the church has need of it again. The cross is about five feet tall and is constructed of rough timber. If you or your organization remembers seeing it, call Dianna Brorsen at [336-3038](tel:336-3038), or the church office at [336-9177](tel:336-9177).

Nice to see the cleanup going on at one of the tire centers on the west-side entrance to Perry. Old tires and some other unsightly material have been moved away from the area nearest the highway, and all in all it looks much more attractive. Are there some other areas around town needing attention?

The stretch of I-35 between Edmond's Second street ramp and the north edge of Oklahoma City is clearly marked as a 55 mph speed zone, but have you ever noticed any motorists paying attention to that? I confess, I am as guilty as the next one in not slowing down from 65 mph upon hitting that zone, although I do drop it back a little bit. The other day I decided to experiment by observing the 55 mph limit fully, and I was nearly swept off the road by cars, trucks, RV's and everything else whizzing by on both sides. (I was in the middle lane to avoid an "Exit Only" lane on the right side.) Patrol cars are rarities in that area, at least in my experience. The state could be making a ton of money from penalties if the law were really enforced.

Speaking of lucrative opportunities, is there any way tickets could be sold for the gallery of signs facing the highway east of town? That's a tourist attraction all by itself, but warnings are posted to prevent parking along the highway while passersby attempt to read them all.

Maybe the signs could be re-designed and mounted in small couplets, like the old Burma-Shave signs, so they could be read by motorists as they pass by without the need of slowing down.

Our county's new extension home economist, Kaye Tipton, attended a recent meeting of the Historic Preservation committee and the Tourism committee of the Perry Development Coalition the other night. She is a dynamic lady with a lot of worthwhile ideas to contribute for our community's growth. We're always glad to have new folks like that in our little city. Nice to have you here, Kaye. She comes to Noble county from Guymon.



March 21, 1995

Ray and Eunice Khoury have moved to Perry and they are busily engaged in renovating the house on Delaware street where Ray grew up. For years it was the home of his grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. J. W Francis, and later his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Khoury.

Ray is doing most of the work himself, ripping out old plaster walls and removing old floor covering to make the single story dwelling conform to today's codes and to transform it into the vision he and Eunice have for the home place. Ray has retired from the business world so he can devote full time to this project. Eunice travels throughout the state in her work but lends a hand on weekends. Yes, it's a daunting job but one that both enjoy.

Ray's dad, Joe Khoury, passed away last year after a lengthy battle with cancer. Katherine Khoury, Ray's mom, died several years ago. Dr. Francis and his wife, Rachel, also are gone now, but the entire family left a mark on the memory of many people hereabouts.

Dr. Francis was a courtly gentleman from the old school of medical practitioners. You know, when house calls were routinely made at least once a day. Rachel was a gifted seamstress and she passed this art along to her daughter,

Katherine. When Joe appeared on the scene in Perry as a petroleum engineer in the 1930s, he courted and won Katherine and they settled down to make a home here. Ray came along in the 1940s.

This story began back in the days when my folks ran the City Drug Store on the north side of the square. The Francis and Khoury families spent a lot of time hanging out there because Dr. Francis' office was upstairs on the second story of our drug store building. This was handy for us because he was our family physician and we lived in an apartment just across the hall from him. He also wrote a lot of prescriptions for his patients and suggested that they take them to our store to be filled.

Dr. Francis was an easy-going native Arkansan with the traditional Ozark sense of humor - dry, witty and ever-present. Even in the depths of the Great Depression, nothing seemed to faze him. He was a devoted pipe smoker, a soft-spoken, gentle healer on the order of Marcus Welby. Even in his later years, when we had moved back to our home on Elm street, just two blocks from the Francis home, he never questioned the need to come over in the middle of the night when my mother was in the throes of insulin shock. He performed the same kind of service for someone night after night, but I don't think he ever missed a day at the office because of those nighttime calls. His dedication was greatly appreciated by the sick and their families but perhaps we too often took him for granted.

Rachel and Katherine loved to sew. At one time Rachel opened a sewing shop on the balcony at the rear of our drug store. The two of them did alterations or made complete ensembles for many Perry ladies, and it always seemed to me they were more like sisters than mother and daughter. They were extremely fond of each other. When Ray came along, Rachel was like a second mom. And you may notice a similarity in first names -- Rachel and Ray. He was named for his grandmother. My mother and Rachel also were best friends so she became Ray's "Aunt Ivy." Mother and Rachel both developed health problems about the same time, in the late 1940s, and Dr. Francis referred both of them to the Hertzler Clinic in Halstead, Kan., which he always described as a Mayo Clinic on the plains. Many times I was the chauffeur driving mother, Rachel, Katherine and young Ray to Halstead for treatment.

Dr. Francis always had at least one office receptionist, and they were always attractive and polite. Some that I remember are Pat Terronez Padilla and later her sister, Virginia Tovar; Belle Ruff, the daughter of jailer Dutch Ruff; Vayne Roberts, who married Otto Cowell and became the mother of optometrist Dr. Scott Cowell; and Mildred Green, who married the Francis' son, Bud. Jack Stone, the justice of the peace, also was a fixture in the office. He and Dr. Francis were devoted baseball fans and the reception room radio was always tuned to a Cardinal game when one was on the air. Jack also reviewed all the magazines in the office to make certain they were suitable for reading by the general public.

Ray's folks later operated a furniture store on the east side of the square and served as tag agents for a while. After Katherine passed away, Joe was semi-retired, but he stayed active. He worked at various jobs, including housepainting, until failing health dictated a slowdown. Joe loved his family and never tired of bragging about each and every one of them, including some like us who were at best shirt-tail relatives.

Now we have Ray and Eunice back in Perry after an absence of a few years, and they are fitting right in to our community. We're glad to know they chose our little city, and the old Francis home, as their place of permanent abode. It certainly brings back a lot of pleasant memories. Welcome home, folks!



March 23, 1995

Kenneth and Donna Brengle have bought a home here at Seventh and Jackson and are moving back to Perry after an absence of 40 years. He retired more than 10 years ago from the faculty of Colorado State college and for the past four years the two have been living in Pagosa Springs, Colo. Donna's sister, Dorothy Hafner, lives in the Lucien community and their mother, Lillian Harrison, is in Green Valley Nursing Home. Kenneth's brother, Don Brengle, retired from the military a few years ago and has been making his home here for some time.

The two brothers are only 15 months apart in age. They have spent a lot of time trying to dispel an assumption held by many people that they are fraternal twins. "I was supposed to have been the last one," Don says, "but then Kenneth came along." The two are sons of the late Mr. and Mrs. Quine Brengle. The other Brengle son, Quine Jr., died a few months ago. The brothers also have an aunt living here, Mrs. Pat Brengle.

When Don came back to Perry, he bought the house on Seventh street where his grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. Dan Brengle, formerly lived. Don partly grew up there so he was pretty familiar with the floor plan. Dr. Brengle was one of those people that most old-timers remember quite well. He was distinguished looking, with a white goatee, always fashionably dressed, even in later years when he had more or less given up the practice of medicine. I remember seeing him wearing spats and a derby once in a while, so to me he was the epitome of a Dapper Dan. The thing that most of us remember about Dr. Brengle is his penchant for walking, and that was back in an era before walking just for exercise was popular. He used to stroll all over this town in good weather and foul, tipping his hat to the ladies and greeting one and all. He was also a loyal fan of the St. Louis Cardinals.

Quine Brengle Sr., father of Don and Kenneth, also was known to most people in this area, partly because of his smiling presence at a window in the Perry post office. Quine also was an officer in the National Guard Field Artillery unit here and was a veteran of World War I. Together with Frank Jones Sr. and George Butler Sr., he was part of a memorable team of local postal workers. There were others, of course, and someday we'll have to reflect back on all of them. But Quine, Frank and George sort of stick out in the memory of a lot of people.

Quine's parents were early settlers here. My grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Bucklin, opened a very popular chili parlor on the north side of the square here in about 1902, and I grew up thinking that their world-class chili recipe had been lost before I was old enough to sample it. Then one day Quine told me that he used to hang out at the Bucklin eatery and that he knew all the ingredients used in their specialty. He passed the information along to my mother, who had never had the recipe. Years later, Marvin (Bud) Jirous asked mother to share it with him when he was getting the Sonic Drive-In chain up and running. As it turned out, the recipe was so complicated and required so many rare and exotic spices and seasonings that Bud decided it would not work in a fast food restaurant, so Sonic never used it. Our own homemade brand suited us OK by then anyway, and now, sadly, I can no longer eat chili, so Grandpa and Grandma's masterpiece has gone to that big chili cookoff in the sky.

So, here we are again, welcoming another family of returnees back to this community. It's nice to have the Brengles in Perry once again. We're glad to have you back.



March 25, 1995

I've been reading about Ferol Mornhinweg's grandson: and their new contracts in two far-flung professional football venues. One of them, Shanon Mornhinweg, will be playing with a team in Cannes, on the French Riviera. The other Marty Mornhinweg, will be a coach with the Green Bay Packers of the National Football League. Marty's team plays

its home games in a very cold climate, just off Lake Michigan while Shanon's team is on one of the world's most agreeable climates on the storied southern coast of France.

Marty, now 34, was a high school quarterback at San Jose, Calif., Oak Grove high school, where his coach was Mike Holmgren, who now is the Packers' head coach. Most of us well remember the Packers' glory days under coach Vince Lombardi and quarterback Bart Starr. The Pack seems to be back now, tough as in days of yore and threatening to become a dominant force again in the NFL. We hope Coach Mornhinweg plays a big role in that. Marty and Shanon are sons of former PHS Maroon quarterback Larry Mornhinweg and his wife, Darla, now of San Jose, Calif. Yes, Larry was a pretty fair quarterback himself at PHS and elsewhere a few years ago. Aside to Ferol: If you get any passes you can't use for games on the Riviera, please let me know.

Major changes are in the works at our Cherokee Strip Museum out on West Fir. A recent grant from the Oklahoma Foundation for the Humanities, plus supplemental local funds from the Noble County Historical Society, will enable the addition of a new exhibit in the east gallery. It will pertain to life in the outlet from 1893 to 1925, and it will showcase some very interesting articles. Curator Kaye Bond, site attendant Clyde Speer and Historical Society President Peggy Haxton are working on details now.

If you haven't paid a visit to the museum lately, you'd better go out there right away so you can better appreciate the new addition when it is ready for the public. We have a fine museum but lots of local folks have never been in it. Now's the time, friend.

Mrs. Harry Gengler, one of our pioneer residents, came to this county with her parents in 1898 when she was three months old. She has spent most of her life near the Burlington Northern Railroad line. "When I grew up," she recalls, "they had one passenger train making a short run from Tulsa to Enid daily. They called it the 'Doodle Bug.' Now freight trains come by nearly every hour, day and night."

Mrs. Gengler says that many people are wondering why so many freight trains are now going back and forth through here. She has heard that one reason may have to do with the damage caused by flooding rivers last year. An interesting question. Have you noticed the increase in rail traffic?

George Hall's new white rail fence at his home place on north Seventh street is certainly eye-catching. The spread extends from Marchbanks street to Wakefield Road, and it looks like the new fence will encircle it all. A nice new improvement. You can see the same type of fence around Sooners Corner out on 1-35.

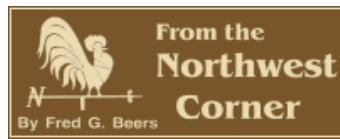
Another business improvement I've noticed is the expanded greeting card and seasonal gift selection area at Chris' Pharmacy. Lots of merchants are doing things to spruce up their stores.

Rumors have been in the air for several weeks about major changes looming at our Homeland (formerly Safeway) store, so it's good to see the news in print about the new owner and new name. Welcome to Perry, Les Horner and the Apple Market store.

We also hear that Burlington Northern Railway, which recently merged with Santa Fe, is expected to locate some kind of new station (not a depot) in Perry in the near future. Perry apparently is the only place in Oklahoma where Burlington Northern and Santa Fe tracks intersect, and that is why we were chosen.

Things I miss in Perry: The other two Boy Scout troops that used to flourish here; also the Order of DeMolay for Boys and Order of Rainbow for Girls, two very worthwhile Masonic-sponsored youth organizations; Teen Town; movie theatres; active chapters of the American Legion and Auxiliary, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary, American War Mothers and other groups that focused our attention on patriotism; Floyd Pratt's Perry high school classes dealing

with Problems of American Democracy, a very neat learning experience for young people; yes, even the Poor Boys club and their tomfoolery; Dr. W. C. Marshall's Community band playing summer concerts in the courthouse park; Moe Marcus' American Legion Dutch band, Bible reading and prayer in public schools; and anything else that helps to strengthen and inspire a feeling of high moral standards, community pride, unity and a positive attitude. Can you think of others?



March 28, 1995

Ethel Spradlin is getting ready to sell her farm south of Perry. It's being offered at auction next Saturday because, at the age of 94, Mrs. Spradlin has finally decided to retire. Actually, according to son Beryl, who retired several years ago, "she just refused to build fences any more so we made her quit." That's a joke, of course, but Mrs. Spradlin has been a hard worker for lo these many years and she is entitled to quit building fences if she wants to. She will continue to make her home here in Perry where she's always lived. Happy retirement, Mrs. Spradlin!

Here's a question one of you may be able to answer: Was there a C.R. Anthony store in Perry years ago? Since the new C.R. & Co. store, a branch of C.R. Anthony, opened here recently, I've talked to some who say "yes," but also to others who say "no." At least one has a dim recollection of an Anthony store on the north side of the square, but the time period is very uncertain. Personally, I remember an LT. Hill Co. department store at 633 Delaware, where the Three Sands Oil Co. office is now located and where Zorba's store once was located. Years before that, B. J. Woodruffs general mercantile store also was in that building, but I don't remember an Anthony store here. Can someone provide a definitive answer?

A recent column about Perry's drug stores during the 1930s has prompted a nice note from Mrs. Roy Garten of Ponca City, the former Jo Wollard of Perry. She says that her fond memory of my dad's drug store, the City Drug on the north side of the square, is his candy display. "He had many apothecary jars holding delicious chocolates," she recalls. "I spent quite a bit of my childhood in that area of town. My father, Gus Wollard, had his office (a desk placed in the front window of Walt Powers' abstract office), just a few buildings east of the drug store. Next door east was the Exchange Bank. Then came the alley. East of that was the Woodruff Mercantile Store."

Continuing, Jo writes: "After Daddy closed his office every Saturday night, he would go to your drug store and select a pound of chocolates to bring home. These would be divided between my mother, two sisters and me. Mother and my sister, Mary Lee, had a 'sweet' tooth,' so big sister Mary Lee talked me out of most of mine."

Mrs. Garten also has some interesting recollections of the Exchange Bank which were brought to mind after a recent visit to the bank's expanded and remodeled building at the northeast corner of the square. "Fred Moore was the first president of that bank. He and his wife reared their niece, Carol Lee, and she was a close childhood friend of mine. Uncle Fred, as she and I called him, was a tall, stately man. I felt safe and happy around him. He had a great big black leather chair in his home that was fun to climb up into. He had a big unusual car that we had fun climbing all over while the adults were busy in the Presbyterian church. I have never been able to learn what kind of a car it was. It had push buttons on the front of the seat by the driver's right hand. The back of the back seat could fold down to show a big storage area.

"I do not know if he lost the bank during the depression. I do know he was not well and his lovely wife was a skilled musician. In order to survive she sold Watkins products, spices, vanilla, and so forth. She walked all over town to do

this...

"It was a delight to enter the Exchange Bank as it is now. It is beautiful and gracious and friendly. I especially enjoyed the bronze plaque in the entry. There, as the first president, was Fred Moore...My first memories of dealing with the Exchange Bank occurred some 75 years ago. They were not happy, though. I was a little preschool child with a candy box full of a collection of Indian head pennies. Our family was soon to leave on a trip to Missouri to see grandparents. I was assured that if I left my pennies in the bank I would get them back when we came home.

"To my horror and grief, when we returned, I got some pennies back, but they were not my box of beloved Indian head pennies. Some kind of generation gap in understanding there, wouldn't you say?"

I appreciate Jo's interesting comments and reflections. Regarding the banker, Mr. Moore, he was a regular daily visitor in our drug store. My cousin Fred once remarked that Mr. Moore must have inspired the old Dr. Pepper slogan, "10, 2 and 4," because those were the hours when Mr. Moore would come to the fountain for refreshment.

Mrs. Garten and her husband now live in Westminster Village in Ponca City, and another Perryan, Ella Merry Hayman, also makes her home there. Her parents were Mr. and Mrs. W E. Merry, two of our local pioneers. Thanks, Jo, for your loving memories of another age in this blessed little town.



March 30, 1995

Candidates in next Tuesday's city election are putting their campaigns in overdrive as the fateful hour draws ever nearer. Soon it will be our collective duty as constituents to visit the polls and carry out our obligation by voting for the man or woman of our choice. I don't take that responsibility lightly -- none of us should. We live in a democracy (or republic, if you like) that has gone to war to defend such privileges, and we should not forget that.

Some of our fellow citizens have been brave enough to offer themselves for public service. That is commendable, assuming they are doing it for the right reasons and not for personal gain. That's one of the questions we have to answer as voters. You've read or heard most of the statements, charges and responses. You know there is no runoff, so the candidate with the largest number of votes in each race next Tuesday will be the winner of the office he/she seeks. Weigh the pros and cons carefully. We will be electing a mayor for the next four years as well as a city marshal (police chief) and a ward one council member.

Think it over carefully, and don't be afraid to say a little prayer when you're ready to mark that ballot. Perry's future may be riding on the outcome, so the decisions each of us makes will be important. But be sure to vote. Don't throw up your hands and just leave the process to someone else. This is the way we are empowered to participate in government. You have no right to complain if you don't do your part. Be sure to vote.

Some good old toe-tappin' music will fill the air Friday night when the Oklahoma Opry comes to our city's high school auditorium. If you like country and western style, you're bound to like this. The Opry showcases a fine bunch of promising young future stars who provide wholesome family entertainment, and the proceeds will go to Masonic charities. Tickets are \$6 in advance from Downtown Chevy Olds, Century 21 Real Estate and the Chamber of Commerce, or \$8 at the door Friday night. The show kicks off at 7 p.m.

Something else to keep in mind is the Health Fair and Expo '95 starting at 8 a.m. Saturday at the fairgrounds in Perry. At least 21 agencies related to healthcare will offer services, including a chem 25 and lipid battery, plus vascular ultrasound and information of real value to each one of us. Most of it will be given free or at a very low charge. Expo '95 will put the spotlight on a number of Perry businesses. Admission is free and you can count on seeing some interesting sights. Put it on your list of things to do this Saturday.