



July 3, 1995

The Fourth of July looms just ahead, and we already have experienced many fine days of picnic weather. Every park in this vicinity will be busy with family get-togethers and other happy occasions, but that always brings up an unpleasant side issue. I'm thinking of chiggers. Those pesky mosquitoes and buffalo gnats that swarm in the summer air are bad enough, but at least they are visible.

Chiggers, on the other hand, lurk there in the grass awaiting fresh, unsuspecting victims. This subject always makes me think of Dr. A. M. Evans and the suggestion he made several years ago when a female member of our family discovered she had dozens of chigger bites from head to toe. After a miserable night, we took her to see Dr. Evans in search of relief. "What can I do, Doctor? They're driving me crazy," she asked. If you remember Dr. Evans, he thought for a moment's and then said softly, "Well, you could scratch them."

It wasn't exactly the advice we had hoped for, but it served to illustrate his point -- do what you have to do and wait for nature to take its course. Or, don't wear shorts on a picnic. The common cold and chigger bites remain as two of mankind's biggest nemeses.

Just wondering about this. Has anyone ever ordered a video or audio tape from Burrelle's in New Jersey after watching one of those weekend panel shows on network TV where weighty issues are discussed? Or how about dialing that 900 number for crossword puzzle assistance? If so, are you glad you did?

We're at the midway point of 1995 and I have just made a resolution that should have been made long ago. I promise myself to be more faithful in calling on friends in nursing homes or other care facilities, and also to visit the homebound more often. I know it's a lonesome feeling when you're confined because of some minor disability or illness for even a few days. Those who face that prospect each day are hungry for just a few minutes of our time. Many of you already make it a practice to call on folks like that. I'm sure your thanks come simply from the satisfaction of bringing a little cheer to those you visit. We should all try to be better visitors.

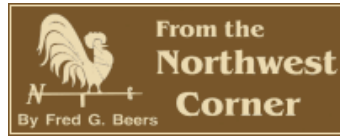
Perhaps you noticed the colorful sign advertising Vacation Bible School at the First United Methodist church recently. A reader advises me that the artist was Gregory Brent Webb, a native of Guthrie who has had no training as an artist but is naturally gifted. Brent, a welder at the Charles Machine Works, Inc., knows that his talent is God-given and he delights in sharing it this way.

July 21, 22 and 23 are the dates scheduled for Stagecoach Community Theatre's production of "Nunsense," in the Perry high school auditorium. You really must reserve one of those dates for this frothy little musical comedy. It's about an off-the-wall group of nuns who put on a show as a money raiser, and I guarantee you'll come away feeling good as well as happy. The cast as announced recently also makes it certain you'll enjoy this one. Mark those dates on your calendar now!

Apparently several others have faced the same dilemma I had concerning what to do with unprocessed rolls of old home movies, and a couple of readers were good enough to furnish the address and phone number of a Colorado firm which specializes in developing such treasures. Here's how to contact them, if you are interested: Rocky Mountain Laboratory, 145 Madison Street, Denver, CO 80206; telephone 305-399-6444.

Sam Henderson and Zella Aigner were the first to call with that information, and I thank them for it. Maybe you can use I it, too. I still haven't decided what to do with my unprocessed roll of 8 mm movie film, which may be at least 40 years old.

Something tells me it might not be worth the expense of sending it to Denver, and besides, taking the mystery out of it would spoil the uncertainty which now makes the film intriguing. I need to think about this a little longer.



July 5, 1995

Congratulations to everyone who had anything to do with Perry's old fashioned Fourth of July program. From Sgt. Major Mike Doughty's patriotic keynote address to the last event of the evening, it was a most appropriate program, highly appreciated by all who were there to take part in the courthouse park.

The text of Mike Doughty's stirring remarks should be read or heard by all of us whenever we're filled with doubts or concerns about the future of this country. His calmly delivered speech was stirring in its review of the birth of this country and the spirit of American patriots through the ages. It was just the right tone for our Independence Day celebration.

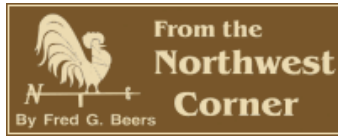
One of the unique features Tuesday afternoon was the Backseat Drivers Contest in which dozens of couples of all ages took part. Greg Bender, the energetic emcee for the day's program, provided an electric golf cart for the contest and a course was laid out on Delaware street between the post office and the Cherokee Strip Antique Mall. A series of bright orange cones had to be negotiated in a circular path by each team in a race against the clock. The driver was blindfolded and his/her partner stood on a platform at the rear of the cart, shouting instructions to turn left, turn right, go straight ahead, back up, or "STOP!" when the driver was about to jump the curb. Penalty points were added each time a cone was flattened or when the poor driver put the team on the sidewalk. It was a barrel of laughs for spectators and participants.

Other attractions provided entertainment for all ages -- face painting by the Stan Holdens, watermelon decorating contest, pie eating contest, moon walk, snow cones, cotton candy, chances on a specially commissioned commemorative rifle, music by the Country Nomads and several of our gifted young singers and dancers, plus hot dogs and cold drinks throughout the afternoon.

Several hundred adults and young people enjoyed this Fourth of July celebration in Perry, and all of us are indebted to the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations that worked so hard to help us celebrate our nation's 219th birthday. Giving the day still another dimension was the official end of mourning for the victims of the April 19 Federal building bombing in Oklahoma City. U.S. flags were returned to full staff in Oklahoma for the first time since that awful day.

Another batch of commemorative bricks will be added to the Hopes and Dreams Plaza in the courthouse park in time for the 1995 Cherokee Strip celebration in September. If you've been thinking about purchasing bricks to honor a family member, friend or some special event, you'll need to place an order very soon. Information can be obtained from the Perry Development Coalition office in the basement of the Foucart building. Karen Wilcox or Betty Warner will be glad to receive your order or answer questions there.

A brick with one line of copy costs \$28, and a brick with two lines of copy is \$36. Each line can contain a maximum of 12 spaces. Bricks ordered since the last batch was added to the plaza will be put in place very soon, so don't delay if you want yours included this year.



July 6, 1995

Contributions continue to come in for the "Church on a Perch" fund which was established earlier this year as a means of financing restoration of the historic old Episcopal church building. The response from the general public has surprised even members of the Perry Development Coalition's special sub-committee, the ones who organized the effort.

Evidently many individuals and organizations are interested in helping with this project. If not for them, Perry's oldest church building might have been lost forever. Now it stands proudly on a picturesque promontory overlooking the lake at Perry CCC Park, and one day before long it will be fully restored to its original condition. Work is continuing on the foundation, including the use of sandstone above the footings, just as the first builders did it around 100 years ago.

Typical of the contributions still coming in from time to time is one just received from Ella Merry Hayman, the daughter of a pioneer Perry family, who now lives in Ponca City. Mrs. Hayman has a special interest in the old building, and I'll let you read about it in her own words as contained in a letter I just received. She writes

"Years pass (when you are nearly 90), and hometown memories begin to fade away unless something causes a reawakening. With the arrival at Westminster Village, two doors down the hall, of Jo and Roy Garten, and their generosity in passing *The Perry Journal* to me every day, so much comes back to mind.

"My reminiscing started with memory of the Ladies' Tuesday Afternoon Club's planning a centennial celebration and the consequence of digging into my files to add to information about my mother's membership, dating from 1902 and stretching to 1961 -- a few months prior to her death.

"Then ... along came your stories about the moving of the old Saint Mark's Episcopal Church. Our home place was on the corner of Seventh and Holly and the church was set close to the rear of the Seventh and Grove corner lot, putting it only a few feet from our lot line. In my earliest memories, the church was abandoned and falling into disrepair, making it a likely spot for a group of boys to use as a place to plan mischief and games. It was the right size for a game of 'Ante-Over,' and close enough to the sidewalk for the boys to throw missiles (rotten eggs, etc.) at enemies passing by. Rumor had it that one such victim was the superintendent of schools!

"Little girls didn't take part in such sport, but there were times I peered through broken windows to bemoan the way mice and birds had used it for their sanctuary. Weeds were rampant and bees found the trumpet vines climbing the walls, but had their own way of scaring me away from much investigation. It is hard for me to realize the building is in good enough shape to be moved. Best wishes and good luck with the project."

To help orient you, the Merry family home at the corner of Seventh and Holly later was the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. B. M. Coombs. It is now unoccupied. Another house was moved in on the south side of the old Merry home several years ago, but that part of the property was just a portion of the lawn during the time Mrs. Hayman wrote about. Mrs. Hayman asked that her contribution be used to aid in interior decoration of the old church, and the committee will see to it that her wishes are carried out.

After the Episcopal church disbanded here many years ago, the wooden building was purchased by the Church of Christ. One of the faithful members of that congregation was Harry Donaldson, of Donaldson & Yahn Lumber Co., and he was one of those who were instrumental in repairing and maintaining the aged structure until the new, buff brick Church of Christ edifice was put up at Seventh and Jackson in the 1950s. Then the Episcopal congregation reorganized and built the

present Saint Mark's at Seventh and Grove. They used the original building as a fellowship hall until deciding to replace it with a new brick structure last year. That's when the old, building became surplus and the Historic Preservation Committee stepped in to find a new home and move the frail wooden building to the CCC Park.

The committee envisions use of the building for weddings, receptions, family reunions and other assemblages, and perhaps the immediate area around it can be further enhanced with structures like a gazebo. In other communities, such facilities are greatly in demand and they expect this one will be, too.

Another unexpected contribution to the restoration fund is being provided by members of Christ Lutheran Church, who received a free will offering for that purpose at a Sunday morning worship service. The people of Saint Mark's also have helped financially.

Back to Mrs. Hayman and her family. Her father, W. E. Merry, was postmaster here for eight years, from 1914 until 1922, and he was elected a vice president of the National Post Master's Organization in a ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C. He also was the second president of the Perry Chamber of Commerce, serving in 1921-22. Mrs. Hayman's sister, Jane Merry, married Lt. Kenneth C. Anderson of Enid, one of the Army officers who served here with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the construction of our CCC Park. Her brother, Lee Merry, went from the Perry Mill to General Mills, Inc. in the 1930s, and was head of their Durham wheat division at the time of his death.

Mrs. Hayman would welcome letters or visitors. She resides at Westminster Village, 1601 Academy Rd. #201, Ponca City, OK 74604. She asks that you give her a little advance notice if you plan to stop by. Our Historic Preservation Committee appreciates generosity such as hers and is happy to acknowledge this contribution to the "Church on a Perch" fund from a member of a pioneer Perry family.

To join in this effort, tax-free donations may be sent to: Cherokee Strip Centennial Corporation, Church-on-a-Perch Fund, Perry Development Coalition, P.O. Box 188, Perry, OK 73077.



July 8, 1995

You think Perry shoppers aren't being ardently wooed by some of our neighboring towns? How about that slick four-color newspaper insert that appeared here the other day, courtesy the Stillwater Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Stillwater Is Jumpin' in July," according to the billboards on I-35, and this new magazine-format brochure tells Perry residents all about the fun things to do in Stillwater, and, oh by the way, a few ads from their merchants also appear.

Just remember, the sales tax dollars we spend in our neighboring cities don't do a thing to provide better health care, municipal services, a school system or quality of life for the home folks here in Perry.

The picnic photo on the front page of the Stillwater brochure is credited to Page Davidson, former Perry school teacher who is now a resident of Stillwater. You might remember that her husband's business, Oklahoma Joe's Smokers, was lured to Stillwater from Perry last year. It was probably inevitable that Oklahoma Joe's would be invited to relocate away from here, but we do miss them.

Give credit to Stillwater and other towns engaged in the, same kind of effort. They are earnestly trying to improve their retail community and their industrial base as stepping stones to growth and prosperity. That's what we're trying to do

here, and that puts a burden of responsibility on our own Perry businesses. If they hope to be a player in this game, they have to meet the competition from towns around us with a good selection of merchandise, friendly and courteous clerks to wait on the public, a clean and pleasant shopping environment, a genuine concern for shoppers' needs, and aggressive promotional efforts.

Our downtown area is going to be spruced up very soon, thanks to the newly awarded grant for broad new sidewalks and decorative street lights in the courthouse park, and a continuing effort is being made by the Perry Development Coalition to clean up and beautify the community. All these will help bolster our shopping and residential areas, and that will give the entire community more appeal.

Perry merchants appreciate and depend on the support of their hometown neighbors. You can count on seeing some of them move out or just fold their tents if business dries up here. If you're a shopper and you can't find what you want in Perry, tell the merchant. If that doesn't work, feel free to look elsewhere, but let's help our local merchants every chance we get. Give them a break. We've already seen too many of them disappear from the landscape. 'Nuff said on that subject.

My friend Shirley Morton calls attention to another sad but significant aspect of the Noble county polio epidemic back in the 1940s, as described in this column recently. In 1946, Ramona VanBebber, 12, eldest daughter of Ray and Hazel VanBebber, became the county's first polio fatality during that siege of sickness. She was only two weeks away from her 13th birthday. Such tragedies were terribly hard on this community, as they were in others throughout the U.S., until the Salk and Sabin vaccines were developed and succeeded in virtually eliminating that disease.

Some of these columns recently have dealt with a few of the grand old hotels which came and went here through the years, and that prompted a question from Laura Kemnitz and, her husband, Charles. An early day Perry businessman, Mr. Sunfield, had a two-story building with an upstairs hotel on the southeast corner of Sixth and Cedar, where Charles now has a service station. Laura is hoping to find a photo of that building or some information about it.

The best I've been able to come up with is a reference in my book, "The First Generation," in a chapter describing the 1912 cyclone or tornado which heavily damaged this area. The chapter quotes an article from a local newspaper of that time, the Perry Republican. It describes wind damage to the front and roof of "the Sunfield building and the Pressler Hotel," on the southeast corner of the square. I dimly remember the old building from many years ago, before the service station was built, but Laura and Charles would like to see a photo. Anyone out there have one?



July 11, 1995

Some exciting discussions about Perry's future have been in progress the past few days as our town's Main Street program kicks into gear for its first year of operation. The dialogue started with a public forum one evening, in which a "vision" was developed through suggestions tossed around by a fairly large group of our citizens. The work continued the following day with separate meetings of various committees composed of the people who have agreed to accept the responsibility of seeing to it that things start happening to revitalize our downtown business district. None of those people are paid for their efforts, by the way.

A lot of abstract ideas were kicked around, but so were a lot of good, solid goals and objectives, most of them deemed reasonable for achieving within a year. If that happens, you will begin seeing a cleaner, busier, more attractive, more

vibrant, more prosperous business district around the square in just a few months.

The Main Street program, administered through, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, has worked wonders in a number of state cities both larger and smaller than Perry. Assisting locally with the public forum and the daylong committee meetings the next day were Les Hall and Melody Kellogg of the Oklahoma Main Street Program in Oklahoma City. The feeling here is that if those others can do it, surely we can succeed, too. You rarely if ever see the people of this community fumble away a golden opportunity such as this program affords.

Which is not to say that the goals can be easily reached. Doing so will take a dedicated and coordinated effort on the part of our downtown merchants -- all of them -- plus the investment of time, sweat and plain old hard work by all the rest of us. Yes, some money will have to be invested, but you don't expect things like this to be handed down on a platter, free of charge, from some beneficent oracle looking down on us from on high. The payoff from this program will accrue to everyone, not just the merchants, because our economic base will be stronger, more stable, and growing. It will benefit this entire community. Perry will be a better shopping and trade center and a more fun place for all of us.

Les Hall and Melody Kellogg are not members of the Perry Main Street program staff and they are not the ones charged with driving this vehicle. They are resource people, but the success or failure of Perry Main Street will lie solely in our own hands.

The recently announced "Hopes and Dreams Plaza" grant will give us a running start by embellishing the appearance of our courthouse park, which already is one of Perry's greatest assets. A few property owners around the square have stated their interest in restoring storefronts on their buildings to their original appearance, which in some cases dates back to the pre-statehood era. Mr. Hall and Ms. Kellogg both feel that many of the business buildings around the square need only a few minor alterations to give them an authentic look in keeping with the Cherokee Strip heritage of this area.

The Foucart building on the southeast corner of the square, home of the Perry Development Coalition, the Chamber of Commerce and the Perry High School Alumni Association, is an excellent example of what we have to start with. Its classic architecture has been well preserved through the years but some exterior work will make it even more handsome. An unfortunate automobile accident at that site several days ago resulted in considerable damage to metal railings on the south side of the building, but a source has been found to replace the steel pipes that were badly bent. Limestone trim on the building itself also was damaged, but there is reason to believe that also can be repaired.

Fresh ideas for even more downtown activities, fun things to involve and entertain all ages, will be brought forth and the Main Street folks will do all they can to complement and assist with the array of events already established on a regular basis by the Chamber of Commerce. You will be hearing much more about all this as committees announce their agendas and wheels are set in motion. Lois Malget is chairman of Perry Main Street, Clyde Speer is vice chairman, Kaye Talbot is secretary and Anna Lou Randall is treasurer. Betty Warner is director of Perry Main Street, and Karen Wilcox, interim director of the Perry Development Coalition, also is on the Main Street board of directors. Other board members are Fred Beers, Jim Davis, Norma Jerome, Deloris Layne, Vickie Malget, Marilee Macias, Randy Rupp and Tom Ruth.

You may be called upon to help with some of these programs, and of course it is hoped that everyone in Perry will join in enthusiastically, but you don't have to wait to be asked. Call Betty Warner at 336-1212 and tell her where you think you would best fit in, or just say you want to help out. Your support is the No. 1 need of this group right now.



July 13, 1995

Two of our favorite relatives spent a few days here recently and our morale has been more than just a little bit higher ever since. They are that kind of people. They make you feel good about yourself and the world in general just by being around them. I will do a column all about them one day, but today's words of wisdom relate to some of the things we did while they were here.

"They" are my niece, Sydney Jean Flynn, and her husband, Vince. The Flynns have been teachers in American schools abroad for something like 25 years. For the past five years they have been in Karachi, Pakistan, and they have signed a contract to return there later this summer for one more year. Sydney is the daughter of my sister, Jeanice, and her husband, Syd Wade, both now deceased. Sydney Jean did part of her growing up in Perry before, during and after World War II and she has many fond recollections of this place.

Laura and I look forward to Sydney and Vince's visit each summer, because they bring back nostalgia time. She remembers a brief spell in the late 1930s when she and her mother visited here while the Beers family lived upstairs over the City Drug Store, where the Cherokee Strip Antique Mall is I now located. Sydney loves seeking out people and places from her past and its fun for us to help her find them.

At her request, we made a special effort this summer to visit the second story of the Palmer & Smelser building on the north side of the square. Roy Kendrick, who operates the Cherokee Strip Mall on the ground floor there, more than welcomed us. He closed the mall, unrolled an extension cord at least 100 feet long with a lamp attached to one end, and led us personally into the dark recesses of that upper story, exploring it room by room. It was a revealing adventure for him.

Our living quarters were on the north side of the building, and that was in the days before air-conditioning was available. Lacking any south breeze, we had 12-inch oscillating electric fans sitting on small tables, on our Majestic radio console, or on the floor in every room. There were four bedrooms, a living room, dining room, kitchen and one bathroom, which our family shared with all the other "upstairs" occupants.

On the south side, eight large arched windows (now sealed) looked out on the old sand stone post office building and the lush green courthouse park. Those renting south side rooms or office suites kept their windows open all day during the summer months. Charlie Dunshee and his father had a two-room apartment in the southeast corner. Charlie worked in Gay Marcy's New & Used Furniture Store. Various bachelors, including Wilbur Weldon, Freeman Jones and Wayne McIntyre, shared another two-room apartment next to the Dunshees from time to time. All three worked as grocery clerks at different stores around the square, and all three caught the eyes of numerous young local maidens. Next to the bachelor pad was Dr. J. W. Francis' office suite, consisting of four rooms. Doctor's office staff included a paid receptionist/nurse and Jack Stone, an unpaid volunteer who answered the phone, read all the newspapers and magazines, tuned the radio to any available ball game, and greeted patients when the receptionist was busy assisting Dr. Francis.

Our family, across the hall on the north side, consisted of Mother, Cousin Fred, my sister Gloria, and me. When Jeanice and Sydney Jean came to visit from their home in Oklahoma City, where Syd was a police officer, that made six of us. Another apartment at the east end of the hall was a one-room efficiency, and it had various occupants through the years. Syd Wade and his dad, Leigh, once lived there, before Syd and Jeanice were married. Mr. Wade sold tickets at the Annex Movie Theater box office and Syd was a partner with Bailey Render in a Texaco station on south Seventh street, where the YMCA parking lot is now located. Their motto was "Wade In and We Render You Service." Syd also played trombone in some dance bands with Ashley Alexander and others on weekends from time to time. Jesse and Fredonna Eisenhower made their home in that snug little apartment at one time, also.

I keep thinking about those folks, and the fact that ALL of us shared just one bathroom. It is hard to believe now, but that's the way it was.

At the west end of the hall was another collection of offices and sleeping rooms. These were located over the old Bank of Commerce, which later became the Oklahoma Tire & Supply (OTASCO) store, until it burned down. In the 1930s those rooms were occupied by attorney H. A. Johnson on the south front, and for a few years Leo and Helen Robinson, operators of the Temple Lunch and Unk's Barbecue, lived in an apartment on the west front with their son, Tommy, one of my classmates at Perry high school. Those folks also shared a single bathroom on their side of the building. I think we all had an understanding that if one bathroom was occupied during an emergency, we were free to check out the other. We also shared a common stairway which opened onto the Delaware street sidewalk, between A. C. Lamb's Jewelry Store and J. M. Taylor's insurance agency in the old bank building.

The walls in our rooms were plaster. When we moved up there in the mid-1930s, most of the family helped with the decorating by daubing the walls with sponges dampened with a paint solution that contrasted with the color of the previously applied base coat. Amazingly, the walls are still pretty much like we left them more than 55 years ago, and they don't look too bad. Ceilings in all the rooms were at least 10 feet high, and most of the corridor doors had glass transoms (which still work). For the most part, the baroque, dark-stained woodwork is intact and as ornamental as it was before we moved in about 60 years ago. Everything needs a good cleaning, but all the windows have been sealed for years so the layer of dust is really surprisingly thin. All the furnishings have been removed and there is only a small clutter of junk here and there. It would take some renovating, but the place could be a perfect bed and breakfast location one day.

Touring that vast upstairs expanse was really a trip back in time for Sydney and me, although she was too young back then to have a very vivid memory of it today, but those accompanying us on the sentimental expedition seemed to be as interested as we were. It took me back to an interesting and innocent time, one that remains fresh and very real after all these years. Thanks to Sydney for coming back to Perry now and then to remind us of those days. We'll continue this story at a later date.



July 15, 1995

Frisco Diesel engine 601 arriving at Perry depot in 1952 with Train 605, headed for Tulsa. (Photo by Ed Klewer)

Frisco Train 604 leaving Perry in April 1951 with Santa Fe depot visible at left. (Photo by Ed Klewer)

Several weeks ago, I ran some information in this column about the "doodlebug" and other trains that used to pass through here on the Frisco line, which is now the Burlington Northern line. Those facts came from Wesley A. Leatherrock of Oklahoma City, son of *The Journal's* former publisher, W. K. Leatherrock, and they sparked a good deal of interest among local citizens.

Ed and Betty Klewer of Stillwater, friends of ours when they used to live in Perry, read the article and it set Ed to thinking about his own railroad recollections. The Klewes stay in touch with Perry through Betty's aunt, Ollie Walls, and her son,

Dale, who visit the Klewers quite often. Let me share a portion of Ed's recent letter:

"I like to read your 'Northwest Corner' and in this instance was quite interested in the comment of Mr. Leatherrock regarding the Frisco trains through Perry -- now the Burlington Northern, minus any passenger trains of course.

"When we lived in Ponca City (1950-56), we often drove to Perry on old U.S. 77 to see Aunt Ollie and family. In April 1951 we made such a trip, and since I am still a railroad fan (and ex-Santa Fe employee in 1946-47), I took a picture of Train 604 with the Santa Fe depot partially in view on the left.

"Good memories for me, of course, as I was/am an avid fan of steam locomotives. Train 604 ran from Enid to Tulsa (and Train 609 was the Tulsa-Enid run as well), and back then the train passed through Perry around 4 p.m. headed for Tulsa. Unfortunately, the steam engine #185 was on "short time" as the frisco was to pull it out of service around December 15, 1951, and replace it with a diesel, shown in another photo, as Engine 601, arriving at the Perry depot with Train 604, headed for Tulsa.

"Mr. Leatherrock was right about the 'doodlebug' frequently ran on this route and continued on to Vernon, Texas, but when the 'bug' was out of service for a tuneup, engines such as the 185 were used from Tulsa to Enid. Then, another engine was put on the train at Enid and on to Vernon.

"When the merger of Santa Fe and the Burlington Northern is approved by the Interstate Commerce Commission and Department of Transportation in Washington, there will be more freights through Perry. I hear there will be a new turnout installed on the BN to connect the Santa Fe line southbound."

Railroad stories are full of romance and adventure, because there is an underlying feeling that this mode of travel may disappear in our lifetime. That makes recollections such as this all the more interesting. We already have seen the departure of passenger train service from this state and steam locomotives are now nothing but dinosaurs, relics of a storied past.

My sincere thanks to Ed Klewer for this information and for the excellent pictures of two Frisco trains from out of Perry's recent past.



July 18, 1995

How about a few anecdotes to relieve the tedium of the day...

Former Perry Police Chief Gene Wood tells about a stake-out he made with former Sheriff John Beasley one time about 30 years ago at the old Safeway Store on Seventh street, now the home of our Dollar General Store. Wood and Beasley were behind a latticework wall, watching for someone suspected of shoplifting. They could see customers in the store, but the two men could not be seen from the customers' side of the partition.

Margaret Hayne, a lady with a sense of humor whom they both knew quite well, was looking at the produce counter, where they were stationed at the time. The two officers were a little bored with their duty by then, so they decided to have some fun.

As Mrs Hayne picked up a head of lettuce for closer examination, one of them said sternly in a deep voice: "PUT THAT DOWN!" Startled, Mrs. Hayne looked around and hastily complied with the command. She moved on down the counter, reached for another item and was stopped short when one of the officers warned: "YOU'D BETTER NOT PICK THAT UP!"

That was enough for Margaret. She made a bee line for Ed Feken, the store manager, and told him to hustle over to the produce counter. "Something real strange is going on over there," she said. Ed was in on what was going on, but he managed to keep a straight face. The incident helped relieve a bit of boredom and Wood and Beasley eventually did catch the shoplifter in the act. (It was not Mrs. Hayne!)

Frank Ley relates this one. Back in the 1930s depression era, Walt Kehres Sr. was the owner and operator of the widely known Elite Hotel & Restaurant on the north side of the square. A panhandler approached him one day in the restaurant and asked, "Can I have a dollar?" "Why sure," Walt replied, and led the way to the cash register. He punched it open and peered in, then looked up at the man and said, "Well, I had one in there but I gave it to someone before you came in. Just as soon as he brings it back, you can have it." The hobo left, somewhat confused by Walt's dry sense of humor.

My cousin Fred W. Beers, now of West Palm Beach, Fla., recalls this yarn from the 1930s, when he lived in Perry. Dr. J. W. Francis was visiting with a group of men near the stairwell that led to his second story office on the north side of the square, when O. H. Hovey, the bearded eccentric printer, strolled up to the group. He pointed a finger at Dr. Francis and solemnly declared: "You're the one!" The men stared at Mr. Hovey. They knew him as a rather quiet, mysterious man. Dr. Francis in particular was puzzled by the indictment.

Mr. Hovey, not waiting to be asked, explained: "I just heard on the radio that one in every ten people have gonorrhea. I've been counting while I walked around the square, and YOU are Number Ten! You're the one!" In a moment the little joke brought a few guffaws and grins to the group. Mr. Hovey, pleased with himself, walked on, presumably to resume counting.

Some local folks were recalling depression-era days in Perry when it was not uncommon for gypsies or other transients to come to the back door and beg for supper. Some may have been truly needy and they usually got some kind of a handout, but the general perception of them among the hard-working people of this community was not good. A TV comic was on this same subject the other night. He said when someone like that came to his parents' house, his mother would ask: "Do you like day-old soup?", and the visitor invariably said "Yes." Closing the door, the lady would snap, "Well, then come back tomorrow." It usually worked quite well.

No guarantee is made for the authenticity of any of these, but the ones who related them swear they're true. I for one believe them. Considering the time period involved, who's going to prove otherwise?



July 20, 1995

A group of Perry young people held a benefit car wash recently on the Perry Plaza parking lot to raise money for a project they hope to undertake. They had no set fees, just asked the vehicle owners to leave a contribution. Afterward they were able to make several observations.

For one thing, they found a surprising correlation between the size of the contribution and the quality of the vehicle washed. For example, a gentleman passing through town brought in his very dirty, but very sporty, red BMW, and the

young folks enjoyed working on such a classy car. They zestfully polished it, buffed it and detailed it, and the owner drove off after giving them only a \$2 donation. Just before that, a fairly clean but badly weathered pickup truck went through the wash line, and that driver left a \$10 gift.

Obviously the BMW owner was still making monthly payments, while the pickup driver had paid off his loan long ago.

Belle Busse is making an inquiry and a comment on a matter of concern to many of us. She writes:

"I'm hoping you will write about clean back yards and alleys. We all like a pretty and clean front yard. But, some of our alleys are a terrible disgrace. Do you know if the home owner or the City is responsible for the weeds and underbrush at the back of the lot? The alley I'm thinking of is in a nice part of town. There are a few clean ones, but it would take a month to clean the weeds and underbrush in the majority of those homes, and I believe most of them are owned by the occupants. What's the answer? Whose job is it? I'll bet a dollar it's the property owner's job."

Mrs. Busse would win that bet. I took the matter to City Hall and got this response to Mrs. Busse's timely question.

Property owners, not the city, have the responsibility of keeping alleys and back yards clear of underbrush, weeds and so forth. Yard debris harvested from the yards and alleyways will be picked up and hauled off by city workers without charge.

In the case of dilapidated buildings or obviously badly neglected property, the city zoning officer, David Hatfield, will make an inspection if a citizen complaint is filed. If the zoning officer feels action is warranted, he takes the matter to the city council. After that, the property owner can be billed by the city for whatever remedial work is required to clean the place up.

The thing to remember is that a citizen complaint must be filed to initiate the action. The place to start is with the zoning officer, David Hatfield, who also is fire chief. You can call him at 336-9755.

Mrs. Busse also is right on target in commenting about the condition of many of our alleys. Let's work together and clean up every eyesore around here to show the world that we stake pride in our city. That's not just limited to alleyways and back yards. As a matter of fact, quite a few front yards would benefit from a little tender, loving care.



July 22, 1995

Good news for local bowlers. The Perry Lanes, closed for the past year, will reopen soon under new management. David Verbeck has returned to Perry from Yorba Linda, Calif., and is hoping to have the bowling alley ready for use sometime in August.

David's Mother, Louanna Schwetje, and Bob Perry formerly ran the business. They bought it in 1973 from Sonny and Sue Rorabaugh. David lived here in 1974-79 and was house mechanic for the bowling alley during that time. He helped install the present AMF mechanical system in 1976-77. "It is still state of the art equipment," David says. "Except for an electronic scoring system and a different ball return delivery, this is still what top bowling alleys use today. It is the Rolls-Royce of bowling equipment."

Assisting David in getting the business ready for use is Alvin Pierce of Oklahoma City, co-owner of Oklahoma Bowling Equipment & Supply, and Willis Bell of Bethany. Mr. Pierce confirmed David's evaluation of the local alley's mechanical system. Willis and David also worked together on the equipment installation here in 1976-77.

Among other steps, all 12 lanes have been resurfaced and 10,500 square feet of R30 insulation has been installed in the ceiling. "Heating and cooling were problems in the past," David says, "but this insulation will greatly improve conditions because now there will be virtually no loss of heat or cooling through the ceiling. The temperature will be very comfortable in here."

Other work has included the installation of a French drain trench completely around the exterior of the building to carry away moisture. Previously heavy rains caused a problem inside, the building because of inadequate drainage, but that problem also will be solved with this installation.

A restaurant served bowlers at Perry Lanes in the past, but David is moving slowly with plans for reopening that phase of the business. Cold drinks, coffee and snacks undoubtedly will be available from the start, but expanded food service is probably somewhere down the line.

The Perry Lanes opened in the present location, adjacent to the Cherokee Strip Restaurant & Motel, in the 1960s. Prior to that, a two-lane alley had been available on the east side of the square, but bowling fever was at a high pitch here and the 12 lanes were busy with league and individual play right from the start. Based on local area population, 12 lanes is about twice the number needed here, David says, but he is hopeful the sport will lure many fans back into action while also appealing to those new at the game. It seems all ages can compete in this healthful recreation.

He acknowledged that some business has been lost to lanes in larger nearby cities, but he feels he has the solution to that problem. "What we'll offer here is a cool, comfortable place to have fun, and we hope bowlers in this area will support us. They won't find a finer facility anywhere."

League play sanctioned by both the American Bowling Congress and the Women's International Bowling Congress is an immediate goal. Certification by the ABC and WIBC is expected very soon. In the meantime, get your gear in shape for a new season of bowling in Perry's own Perry Lanes. Watch, for announcement of an opening date very soon.



July 25, 1995

I hope you noticed a couple of items in this newspaper one day last week. In case they escaped your attention, let me briefly bring you up to speed.

One was the closing paragraph in the report on the city council meeting. Council President Leroy Rolling asked if the new water plant and flow line from the water supply lake have been proving adequate this summer. Jack Seward, water department superintendent, replied that both have been doing their job without reaching capacity. The plant can treat 2 million gallons of water per day.

That answered a question that has been lingering in the minds of many Perry taxpayers this summer, especially since the arrival of those scorching July temperatures. Apparently the remedies that we voted to pay for really are tempering the

problems we have experienced here for several summers -- namely, not enough water to avoid rationing. I notice several other cities and towns around the state have had to impose restricted use of water, but it seems we have found the right solution here, at least for this summer.

The new treatment plant, new storage tank, and new flow line from the municipal reservoir have done what they were supposed to do. Congratulations to our mayor, council and everyone who has had a part in correcting those problems. We all know there are still water distribution problems to be faced, but at least we can get enough processed water from the reservoir to keep the storage tanks at a level sufficient to meet peak demands. Also, we still have to deal with the long-range question of an adequate water source for the future, but there are promising signs of a good answer there, to be dealt with at the proper time.

The other item I wanted to mention was in the "Ask Anne & Nan" column. One of our local people recently submitted a question to Anne & Nan, and the answer given by the columnists was as follows:

"FEEDBACK: CREPE-SOLED-SHOES: Elizabeth Sims of Perry, Okla., was looking for these and they are no longer available. Carolyn Ross of Roselle, Ill., writes, The heavenly solution I have found is 'Bounce' shoes by Hush Puppies. Divine! These are probably the most comfortable shoes I have ever worn. Hush Puppy has stores throughout the USA. Readers may call 1-800-433-HUSH (4874)."

There. Now you have been filled in on a couple of things that may have been overlooked earlier.

Our new Chevrolet-Oldsmobile-GEO dealers, Mike Ruble and John Vance, have lost no time in launching an aggressive campaign to make the Perry dealership a real winner. Starting with several physical improvements on the building itself, they are working hard to make this an attractive place for car buyers in this area. The showroom is getting a new floor covering, exterior painting (including the addition of sporty new "Chevy" stripes) is scheduled, and the whole area is just generally being cleaned up. Michael Moore, who formerly was on the local sales staff under J. I. Crossfield, has returned to the Perry dealership after working in Mr. Vance's Guthrie dealership. Although he's been working in Guthrie, he has continued to make his home in Perry.

It's good to see renewed activity in that area. Mike and John promise to be competitive in every way. We welcome them to Perry.

Watch for a formal announcement soon on the opening of a new kind of dining place in the downtown area on the west side of the square. Interior decoration is well underway, a menu has been worked out, and the owners will be deciding on a grand opening in just a few days. Also, word is out that a new motel will start construction soon on the south side of West Fir avenue, near the Braum's, Taco Mayo and McDonald's stores. This project has been rumored in the past, but apparently a firm deal has now been made.



July 27, 1995

Donald E. Green, an author, historian and college professor, was the speaker the other day at the Cherokee Strip museum here on the general topic of "Rural Oklahoma," with special emphasis on the year 1910. A small but very appreciative group

gathered to hear what he had to say, and they found his insight fascinating.

His appearance here was arranged by the Oklahoma Historical Society, which operates the Perry museum. The local Historical Society cooperated by providing hospitality. The event also served to help introduce the museum's newly completed exhibit, "Life in the Outlet: Building a New Community, 1893-1925." Too bad more could not have been on hand for the lecture, but be advised that the new exhibit is more or less permanent. Go see it if you haven't made it out there yet.

Dr. Green chose to concentrate his remarks on the year 1910 in order to have some focus. He showed the relationship between technological and industrial developments and their impact on rural families. The De Laval cream separator, invented by a French scientist, revolutionized Oklahoma farm life. Automobiles and pickup trucks likewise changed the way farm families lived. In both cases, crossroad general stores began disappearing as farmers took their cream and crops to town and did their shopping there.

Extension agents from agricultural colleges were not warmly welcomed at first by independent-minded Oklahoma farmers, who had learned how to grow crops by doing it their own way for years. When the first white settlers staked their claims in the Cherokee Strip, few acres were planted in crops so they had to figure things out by trial and error. Gradually the young agents gained acceptance as their methods proved to be beneficial, and more profitable, and a revolution began.

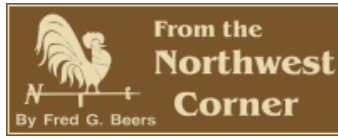
As part of the day's program when Dr. Green was here, the local and state historical societies provided a brochure containing excerpts from U.S. census statistics on agriculture for Noble county, comparing the years 1910 and 1920. To illustrate the extent of the changes sweeping through the farm industry in that decade, consider these fact

In 1910, Noble county had 2,035 farms. By 1920 that number had dropped to 1,780, and the average acres per farm grew from 212.1 in 1910 to 234.3 in 1920. Average improved acres per farm went from 128.4 in 1910 to 148.8 in 1920. But -- the value of all farm property increased from \$15,968,631 in 1910 to \$23,236,376 ten years later. That included a land value of \$11,386,120 in 1910 against \$17,146,323 in 1920. The total value of all crops leaped from \$2,003,469 to \$6,336,427 in that decade.

But perhaps the most significant shift during that period was in the kinds of crops raised by Noble county farmers. Corn was king in 1910, with 94,747 acres planted to that crop. The same year, only 30,328 acres were in wheat. By 1920 the wheat acreage was 135,429 and the corn crop came from only 7,421 acres. Cotton was rapidly diminishing as an important crop here, falling from 6,254 acres in 1910 to 1,351 in 1920.

"The factors that affected farming as a business also changed the very social and cultural fabric of rural life," the brochure notes. "At the end of the 20th century, agriculture remains one of Noble county's most important industries. The realities of Oklahoma's climate, the world's economy and ever-changing technology continue to influence agriculture."

You owe it to yourself to make a trip out to the Cherokee Strip museum on West Fir avenue and enjoy some of the engrossing displays waiting for you there. Copies of Dr. Green's book, "Rural Oklahoma," published by the Oklahoma Historical Society, also are available in the museum gift shop for \$8.50. The trip, and the book, are well worth your time. Thanks to the museum staff and the state and local historical societies for providing us with this marvelous link to our area's heritage.



July 29, 1995

Several folks from Perry have been spending time in a few of our neighboring cities recently as we begin the process of dressing up and improving our community through the Oklahoma Main Street program. It is like seeing our old friends in a whole new light because they are showing us what can be done here with the same kind of effort and dedication they have manifested.

Newkirk, county seat of Kay county, claims a population of about 2,000. "This town was dead or dying on the vine three years ago when we got into the Main Street program," civic workers there told a group of Perry Main Streeters last week. Starting their fourth year in the program, they can point with pride to a large number of major accomplishments along with the foundation for still more.

Newkirk's entire business district was placed on the National Register in 1984 as an historic district. Newkirk has one of the most intact streetscapes in Oklahoma. Many of the lovely, turn-of-the-century buildings are constructed of native limestone which was quarried a few miles east of Newkirk. The predominant architecture of these buildings is down as Plains Romanesque. Later buildings constructed in the 1920s and 1930s are of brick with the architecture being Plains Commercial. As a result of Newkirk's beautiful buildings, the community qualified in 1992 to become one of the first small towns in the Main Street program under the direction of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce

All of the information in the preceding paragraph comes directly from a handsome brochure produced by the town's weekly newspaper, the *Newkirk Herald Journal*. Now let me add some of the observations made by the Perry group during their visit. We were impressed.

U.S. 77 runs right down the Newkirk Main Street, so the Department of Transportation has recently resurfaced its entire length through town. Decorative new light poles and functional new traffic lights were included. The city itself installed broad new cement sidewalks. Storefronts have been painted, old veneers stripped away, attractive new business signs installed, canvas awnings in harmonious colors have been put up, and vacant building have been made to appear occupied with window displays and other techniques. Benches have been installed on both sides of Main Street for the use of shoppers or anyone else.

"Pocket Parks" have been created on both sides of Main Street to soften the overall look. These are tear-shaped islands near each intersection, bursting with blooming plants and lush greenery that are well-maintained and free of weeds and trash. A Teen Town Center has been created in a 25-foot front building just off Main Street. It is small but very clean and heavily used on weekend nights. The center has pool tables, Nintendo and other video games, a meeting room with shiny hardwood floor, plenty of chairs and a serving counter where soft drinks and snacks are sold. A large blue "Newkirk Tigers" banner is displayed on one wall.

Most of the downtown buildings in Newkirk were built in the 1890s and early 1900s. Kay county, of course, was part of the Cherokee Outlet and was settled in the Sept. 16, 1893, land run just like Perry. One entire block on the east side of Main Street went up in flames in 1901, and the block was totally rebuilt the following year. Architectural styles on that block are very similar, but a rich variety of influences can be seen elsewhere. Sadly, many of the beautiful old two-story buildings in Newkirk were virtually abandoned for years. During that time, roofs rotted away, allowing rain and other elements of weather to seriously damage the lower areas, plus rodents, insects, birds and other temporary inhabitants also harmed the structures. When restoration was undertaken, it was quite often necessary to remove the second story because of

structural deterioration, so those buildings have a truncated look. Several buildings were scheduled for demolition until rescued by Newkirk citizens concerned with preserving the town's historic structures.

You might think Newkirk's tourist trade suffers because of its distance from I-35. Not so, say the Main Streeters there. They have found that many travelers prefer the less-congested highways and seek out locales such as this. As a result, Newkirk now has a surprisingly large number of first-rate antique and collectible shops. We found only one cafe in town. It is combined with a bakery, and they serve the tastiest sandwiches you will find anywhere on fresh-from-the-oven white or whole wheat bread. Plus, lemon poppy seed cake and huge cinnamon rolls. We saw no sign of any fast-food restaurants.

A large number of the Newkirk Main Street group turned out on a Saturday morning to greet the Perry delegation, and they were most gracious hosts. They are justifiably proud of what they have done and they are urging us to get our program in high gear. One of the Newkirk group was a former Perryan -- Juhree Sherrod Vanderpool, who lived here with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Sherrod, until she was 12 years old. She still remembers this little city with affection. Juhree's mother, Jeannette, also lives in Newkirk, as does Juhree's sister, Sondra. Sondra is the town's librarian. A brother, Kim, lives in California. Juhree lives at 321 W 8th street (ZIP 74647), and would be glad to hear from any of the family's former friends here. Virgil Sherrod, now deceased, was advertising manager of *The Perry Daily Journal* before the family left here in the early 1940s.

I think a lot of us had our eyes opened by the results that have been achieved in Newkirk. That should inspire the Perry Main Street workers to press on and strive to reach equally lofty goals. We have been shown that it can be done. What we need is support and participation by our entire community. That's how they did it in Newkirk. Let's roll up our sleeves and join in this worthwhile effort. Call Betty Warner, 336-1212, director of the Perry Main Street program, and tell her you want to help. Doesn't matter what your skills are. She can use you.



July 31, 1995

One of you may need to come up with a new name for our "Church-on-a-Perch" out at the CCC Park. It is no longer on a perch. It is now firmly anchored onto a sturdy foundation after several weeks of hard, hot work in the Oklahoma sun.

The old wooden building, the original home of Perry's Episcopal congregation, was moved to the park earlier this year from a temporary resting place on steel I-beams at Sixth and Fir. That's where it acquired the "Church-on-a-Perch" designation. Thanks to contributions from the public, the Cherokee Strip Centennial Corp.'s Historic Preservation Committee was able to purchase the building, pay for its transfer to the CCC Park, and arrange for its new foundation -- which incidentally closely resembles the sand stone base on which it originally rested.

Now, renovation work on the exterior and interior can go forward, but that also is going to require some money, so contributions are still welcome. They are tax deductible. Send them to the Cherokee Strip Centennial Corp., designated for the Church-on-a-Perch-Fund, Perry Development Coalition, P.O. Box 188, Perry, OK 73077. Meanwhile, do we need a new name for the old church, or is what we've been calling it still OK? Think about it.

Most people who look to their TV sets for the evening news get comfortable with one channel's news team and generally stay with them. In our house it happens to be the Channel 4 (KFOR) gang. I don't know why. Once upon a time they seemed to have the best in the business in Oklahoma, but that's not necessarily so now. You can look at Channel 5 (KOCO) and Channel 9 (KWTW) and find many Channel 4 alumni in new locations.

There's been a lot of musical chairs movement particularly in the last few weeks. Two of the Ogle brothers, Kevin and Kelly, now are the evening anchors opposite each other on Channels 4 and 9. The third brother, Kent, also is with Channel 4. How many of you remember that the Ogles, including their daddy, Jack, used to do a morning news show tailored exclusively for our own local radio station, which then had the call letters KJFK?

The Channel 4 Ogle anchor was promoted to that slot because Devin Skillian is leaving. I believe he's headed for Detroit, and I'll miss him. We learned to appreciate Devin's professionalism and journalistic capability when the Murrah building was bombed last April. Theresa Green has left KFOR for Seattle. The raven-haired Robin Marsh left KFOR a short while ago and landed at KWTW (Channel 9) after winning a court decision that allowed her to do so. At KWTW she joined two more ex-KFOR personalities, the blonde Tammy Payne and Cynthia Gunn. Channel 4 reporter Anthony Foster moved there from Channel 5 about two years ago.

Jack Bowen, perhaps the senior evening anchor among the Oklahoma City TV guys, will be leaving Channel 5 later this year. The station has notified him that his contract will not be renewed. No word on his next stop. George Tomen, the smooth-talking weekend anchor on Channel 5 who sounds a bit like the late actor Ray Milland, is another alumnus of Channel 4. The non-commercial Oklahoma Education Television Authority, Channel 13, has a former KWTW newsperson - Pam Henry, who also has been with at least one additional commercial station in the big city.

Let's don't even get into the TV weatherman merry-go-round. They come and they go. Same situation on the sports desks.

Some area radio stations also are having staff changes. Sean Kelly used to be the main man at KSPI-AM, the Stillwater big band station which I listen to a lot (like, just about all the time), but he has vanished from the airwaves without a trace and Jim Randolph now covers the news for us. The Oklahoma State University FM station, KOSU, uses students in the studio quite often so they have a lot of turnover, as you'd expect. Our KASR staff seems to be intact for now.

I don't know if anyone else out there is keeping track of all these momentous changes, but don't you feel kind of an intimate friendship with these guys and gals who give us such happy faces while dispensing all that news of impending doom? They just seem line, well, such a close-knit family and personal friends of ours, perched up there at their aerodynamic little news desks, that it's hard to believe one of them could ever desert their station (and us) for another job. Makes you wonder if those smiles are genuine, doesn't it?