

July 2, 1996



This sketch of Henry T. Armstrong, murderer of Isaac Fell, appeared in a Perry newspaper during the trial at the Noble county courthouse in 1909. The courthouse building at that time was a two-story wooden structure. The present three-story stone courthouse was built in 1916, three years after Mr. Armstrong's execution on the courthouse lawn.

The previous Northwest Corner related some of the facts about the public hanging of Henry T. Armstrong in 1909 on the lawn of the Noble county courthouse park. That gave rise to the legend of his ghost haunting the area even to the present day. There is still more to be told concerning this interesting story.

The nickel-plated .44 caliber six-shooter used by Mr. Armstrong to dispatch Isaac Fell on a rural Noble county road in 1908 is now part of the permanent collection on display at the Cherokee Strip Museum in Perry. The museum also has the clevis, a U-shaped metal shackle, through which the noose was looped for Mr. Armstrong's hanging. This particular piece is not yet on display.

Relatives of the murder victim recently made contact with residents of this area in a quest for information about the murder and subsequent events relating to the crime. Mrs. L. W. Johnson of Winfield, Kan., granddaughter of Isaac Fell, visited here in April and became acquainted with Gary and Jeanie McCray of Morrison, who live on the farm where Mr. Fell's body was stashed after the slaying. The Johnsons visited the site and spent some time at the Cherokee Strip Museum here to learn more about the story.

Mrs. McCray now corresponds with Mrs. Johnson and finds her to be an interesting lady, still touched by the fate that befell her grandfather in 1908. Mrs. McCray says the well has not been used for drinking water since that fateful day. A spring tooth implement now stands guard over the well site, and it still contains water.

The hanging was distasteful to many in Noble county for several reasons. Capital punishment itself was controversial, then as now, and the fact that it had to be held in the courthouse park did not set well with local civic boosters. But, as an article in the Perry Republican reported on September 9, 1909, the law required that a defendant be sentenced in the county in which he was tried, and execution of the sentence had to occur at the county seat. Perry folks accepted it because that's the way it had to be, under the law.

The same article added: "The hanging will take place on the east side of the jail, where a high fence will be erected, and within it, in view of the condemned, the gallows. The public will not be permitted to see the death throes of the prisoner, only a jury of twelve summoned by the sheriff, he and his deputies, and representatives of the press will be admitted inside the enclosure." Although the newspaper's account seems to indicate it was not officially a "public" execution, an estimated 80 persons saw it take place. There was not the air of a Roman holiday in the courthouse day. It was a sad and difficult day.

Sheriff Austin C. Nicewander and his deputies, including Tom Phillips, were under great stress during the months of the trial and the interval leading to the execution. They were required to provide adequate security for the prisoners, Mr. Armstrong and Albert Mitchell (who wound up in an insane asylum), during their incarceration, maintain public order while feelings were running strong against both men, then oversee construction of the gallows and take steps to insure that no demonstrations break out during the execution.

A "death watch" was placed on Mr. Armstrong after the sentence was announced by District Judge W. S. Bowles. Joe Kern, Stick Dale and Tom Jamison each stood eight-hour watches on the condemned man's cell to prevent a suicide attempt before the execution could be carried out. Judge Bowles was commended by the newspaper for the dignified, orderly manner in which the trial was conducted.

The Republican, which billed itself as the "official paper of Noble county and city of Perry," did a competent job of covering the story from start to finish, beginning with the arrest of Henry Armstrong and Albert Mitchell in December 1908, a few days after the slaying. Mr. Fell, the victim, lived with his wife and three children on the Ed Mossman farm about ten miles northeast of Perry. The Fell children were ages 6, 4 and one year old at the time of their father's death. One of the children became Mrs. Johnson's grandfather. The murder apparently was provoked by a business deal that went sour between Mr. Fell and the two accused assailants. The newspaper called the crime one of the most sensational in this part of the U.S.

Henry Armstrong was described by the newspaper as "a dark, greasy looking individual with long black hair tinged with gray, and (he) wears large round ear rings." His home was in Pawnee. Albert Mitchell, 20, was single and lived with his parents four miles south of Morrison. Whether he died in the asylum or was released after care and treatment is not known.

Although the Republican, published by J. W. Casey, covered every aspect of the story in a thorough, professional manner, its competitor, the Perry Enterprise Times, with a much smaller circulation, gave only superficial coverage. Thanks to the Perry Carnegie Library's excellent microfilm reader/printer and its file of Noble county newspapers, I recently had the pleasure of spending several hours reading some of the vivid details of this story in Mr. Casey's paper. The reader/printer also made possible a quality reproduction of a sketch of Mr. Armstrong drawn for the newspaper at the time of the trial, nearly 90 years ago. Our Cherokee Strip Museum provided photos of the gallows along with information about the murder weapon and the clevis used in hanging Mr. Armstrong. I am indebted to the Oklahoma Historical Society for permitting me to use the photos.

As usual, researching this story was a fascinating trip back in time to visit some of the interesting people and events from the early days of Noble county's existence. The hours required to prepare this report were well worth it, to say the least. And thanks to Rick Kukuk of Moore, whose question in a Northwest Corner column a few weeks ago led to all this renewed interest in the story of the ghost of Mr. Armstrong.



July 3, 1996

Perry knew Dave Matthews as a jovial young attorney who could spin a yarn with the best of them. He came here fresh out of Navy service after World War II and quickly became an integral part of this community. He helped reorganize the Oklahoma National Guard, served as commander of the local unit, went with the 45th Division to Korea, then came back to Perry to resume the practice of law and quickly began ascending into the upper ranks of the guard. He became a brigadier general in 1965 and commanded the 45th Division from 1968 to 1970. In 1971 Gov. David Hall appointed him Oklahoma adjutant general and he served in that post until 1975. Federal recognition as a major general came in 1972.

Apart from his military duties, Dave served Perry and Noble county in many civic functions. He was a staunch Baptist and filled many roles for the local church. He was president of the Perry Rotary club in 1970-71 and moved it to new heights in membership and service. Dave knew how to delegate authority. He and banker Kenny Coldiron owned cattle and kept them on their "ranch" northwest of town. Initially, he told Kenny, they would take turns in feeding the cattle Kenny would take a year, then Dave would do it. After some 20 years of performing the daily chore by himself, Kenny asked Dave when it would be HIS turn. Dave just chuckled.

Dave and his family, now residents of Edmond and Norman, have been gone from this community for several years, but his death last Sunday afternoon at Presbyterian Hospital in Oklahoma City leaves a void here. He made a lasting and favorable impression on many folks. Final services were held this morning at the First Christian church of Edmond. Our condolences to the Matthews family.

Retired lumber czar Glenn Yahn continues to recuperate at his home with a broken shoulder and four broken ribs, the result of a recent fall. There's a lot of pain, as you might imagine, which makes it tough for him to enjoy all the humorous get-well cards friends are sending. "It hurts worse when I laugh, Glenn says, but he still appreciates the kind thoughts.

Esther Clark was one of the first to call after the Henry Armstrong columns appeared the other day. She will be 96 this month, and she vividly remembers the day in 1909 when Mr. Armstrong was executed by hanging in the Noble county courthouse park. He was convicted earlier that year of murdering Isaac Fell, a young farmer, a few days before Christmas in 1908.

"We were neighbors of the Fell family," Esther relates, "and we were horrified at what happened to him." Such a crime so close to home left a decidedly indelible impression on her young mind. "We talked about it and it made us fearful that something of the sort could happen to someone else, or one of us," Mrs. Clark says. Her parents were Henry and Etta Isham and her father later became Noble county sheriff. The Fells and Ishams were neighbors in the rural Bliss/Marland area on the Otoe reservation:

The story of the slaying and subsequent execution is not pleasant to relive, Mrs. Clark said, but she was glad to read about it for one reason: It affirmed some details that she remembered but that were not perfectly clear in her mind. She's happy to have her memory validated by the facts from old newspapers and other reliable, sources.

Bill Feken is another long-time Noble county resident with his own memories of that era. His father, Folkert Feken, was selected to serve on the district court jury that heard evidence in the Armstrong murder trial and returned the guilty verdict. "We lived 12 miles northwest of Perry," Mr. Feken remembers, "out in the Polo district. My father had to get up pretty early every morning for about a week or ten days to be in the jury box by 9 a.m. With a team of horses and a spring wagon for transportation, it was not easy to do." Bill, who was eight years old at the time of the trial, also remembers the old wooden county jail was at ground level on the south side of the courthouse park, just a little south of the present bandstand. He said passersby could easily see Mr. Armstrong in his cell.

Congratulations to the enterprising merchants, property owners or who ever cleansed the downtown area of weeds and grass in the sidewalks last week. Just drive around the square and check it out. They are all gone, and doesn't it look better? Now let's all work at keeping downtown and the residential area looking lived-in and cared-for.

I had an opportunity to visit briefly the other day with George Rice, the former Perryan who now lives in Long Beach, Calif., and he spoke proudly of his plans for an antique car showroom in the two-story brick building at the south end of the west side of the square. George is dividing his time between his home in Perry and Long Beach right now, but he plans to make this his permanent home.

Crews are working on sprucing up the building and he hopes to have it ready for viewers within a few weeks. George graduated from high school here but has been away from Perry for a number of years. Like many before him, he's seen enough of the rest of the world and has decided that he wants to be part of a community like this. Welcome back!

No need to drive out of town for your Fourth of July celebration. Another patriotic afternoon and evening are scheduled right here on Thursday, courtesy the Chamber of Commerce. It begins at 4 p.m. in the courthouse park and it's all free. You'll see Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Boys and Girls and others paying tribute to our flag, a patriotic address, singers, dancers, games and contests, including watermelon decorating and pie eating. Later, events are planned at Lake Perry, southwest of town. For an old-fashioned salute to the anniversary of our nation's Independence, come to the court house park and Lake Perry on Thursday and join in the fun.



July 6, 1996

Martin Piel is another who remembers the hanging of Henry Armstrong in 1909 on a gallows in the Noble county courthouse park. He saw the execution, as a school-age youngster, but as he recalls the story Mr. Armstrong was buried in an unmarked grave near the southeast corner of Grace Hill cemetery. Newspaper accounts of the day said the burial was in the local Catholic cemetery.

Mr. Piel has other vivid memories of early day Perry. He wonders how many people remember when Perry had not even one square foot of paved streets. "I remember when it rained so long for a spell that the corner of Sixth and Delaware was one big mud hole, a lob-lolly. In his own words, here are a few more of Mr. Piel's interesting recollections

"Who remembers Perry's first fire station? It was located where the Dollar General Store is now located (on Seventh street just off the northwest corner of the square). Perry had the most beautiful team of horses that pulled the fire wagon. When not needed for that, they had the back lot to romp in and exercise. When the siren sounded, they would dash into the fire station. The harness was suspended from the ceiling. They would take their places and the harness would drop onto them. In a matter of a few seconds they were on their way to the fire. Ernie Cooper was fire chief. He also was a heavyweight boxer. One of his opponents was Texas Tate. They took turns beating each other. A big fire took out several buildings south of where Chris' Pharmacy now stands on the west side of the square.

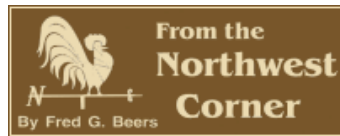
"My father, Fred Piel, operated a blacksmith shop where the magneto shop now stands. One day he made some repairs on what was probably the first auto that came to Perry. When finished, the owner of the car asked for the repair bill. Dad said, 'Oh, nothing.' He finally settled for a ride around the block. I got to sit in the back seat, and oh, what a thrill!

"The tornado of 1912 came while we were eating supper, about 6:15 in the evening. It started out as a spring shower but imbedded in that shower was a tornado. It came so sudden that we had no time to go to the storm shelter. So much debris was flying through the air that it would have meant sudden death to be hit. We rode out the storm until it was over. My father had four cows tied to a 2 x 6 which rested on top of the manger. After the storm eased up we looked out and we could see no barn and no cattle. Later we found them near Cow Creek, still tied to the 2 x 6, but grazing as though nothing had happened.

"Who remembers 'Hot Tamale Tom,' who peddled his wares on the corner by Foster's Drug Store? He had a two wheeled cart to sell tamales. I sold him many sacks of corn husks that he used for wrapping the tamales. I got 25 cents a sack for my time.

"I don't think anyone in Perry knew 'Cattle Annie.' She rode with the Doolin and Dalton outlaw gang. They were the ones that robbed the train in Red Rock. Cattle Annie had two sons who were raised by their grandmother, who lived next door east to us. As a youngster we played together many times. I did not know that they were sons of Cattle Annie until they had grown and moved away. My mother knew who they were but never revealed it to me until they were grown. I can't tell you their real names -- they may not want it known. I also remember U.S. Marshal Bill Tilghman. He served as chief of police in Perry for a time, walking around the square with a .45 strapped to his hip.

Mr. Piel concludes: "How do I remember all this? I go back to 1903, when I was born in Indian Territory." Mr. Piel now lives on Route One, Perry. My thanks to him for these interesting glimpses into the past.



July 9, 1996

Regular readers of the Northwest Corner will recognize the name of E. W. Jones. He was an early-day Perry newspaper editor who later became county judge. His informal history of this city remains one of the most rewarding treasures available to those who find the romance and drama of Perry's birth pangs an altogether fascinating story. He became county judge after selling his newspaper and he remained an avid historian of Perry and the Cherokee Strip country until his death in the late 1930s. I have quoted him often in this column.

While researching an unrelated subject the other day, I came across another contribution left to us by Judge Jones that I had not seen before. In 1938, he wrote down the origin of the names of all townships in Noble county, with the exceptions of Autry and Auburn. He could not remember the source for the names of those two, both in the eastern part of the county, but perhaps some of our modern-day scholars can lend a hand there. Here are the others as listed some 58 years ago by Judge Jones:

Bunch Creek – Named after a creek in that section.

Buffalo – Named after the buffalo that once roamed in that section.

Glenrose -- Also named after a stream.

Bressie -- Named after Col. R. M. Bressie, well-known early resident.

White Rock – Another one named after a stream.

Red Rock – Named after Red Rock creek, which derives its name from the landscape.

Carson – Named after the Carson family, early ranchers and trading company operators.

Otoe – Named after the Otoe Indians who settled on the reservation in that township.

Oakdale -- Named after two early-day prominent residents of the community, John Oakley and Allen Dale.

Black Bear – Named after the Black Bear creek which was named by the Indians.

Santa Fe – Derives its name from the Santa Fe Rail road whose taxes supported school districts in that township for many years and which formerly supported the town government.

Missouri – Named after the Missouri Indians who once lived there.

Warren Valley – Also named after the landscape.

Lowe – Named after T. J. Lowe, secretary of the Oklahoma Territory.

Rock – Named after its rocky landscape.

Walnut – Named for the trees in that area.

Noble – Named after the U.S. secretary of interior John Noble.

There you have another addition to the abundance of historic information provided for us by Judge Ernie Jones. If you don't know the location of all those townships, visit your local abstractor or the county courthouse and check a county map for yourself. It's probably a safe bet that many of our readers are not aware that Noble county is composed of all those townships.

Thanks again, Judge Jones, for contributing to our knowledge of this area that we call home.



July 11, 1996

There is something deep inside most people that makes them want to share whatever good fortune has come along with others who have not fared as well. It becomes a passion with some folks and it drives them to find unusual ways to achieve that aim. Such a program is Habitat for Humanity, which is now becoming established right here in our own community.

The groundwork is still being laid, but a number of caring individuals have agreed to undertake this way of helping their ill housed neighbors in the Perry area. The program has met with great success in many parts of the U.S. and there is no reason to doubt that it will fare just as well here. The local group is in the process of making application to become an official Habitat for Humanity affiliate.

Habitat for Humanity is a Christian ministry that seeks to transform the lives of families and churches. It uses donated money and material to build simple, sturdy houses in partnership with families in need. Volunteers work side by side with Habitat homeowners as they put in their own labor -- "sweat equity" -- into building their houses. Partner families are able to purchase these homes with affordable, no interest loans. Their mortgage payments go into a revolving fund that is used to build more homes for families in need.

Each Habitat for Humanity affiliate assumes responsibility for family selection, site selection, construction work, fund-raising and family nurturing. The affiliate is managed by a board of directors that is made up of diverse citizens of various backgrounds and income levels. The board oversees several committees who are in charge of the many functions that exist at the local level of each community.

Local citizens who choose to become members of the Habitat affiliate are not charged membership fees, but are expected to voluntarily assist in providing services that are necessary to complete the construction of the house for the

new homeowner. Volunteers may donate their time and talents in one of several areas. For example, building a home requires publicity, food for the work crews, "gofers" for materials, morning devotions, child care for the homeowner family, and site cleaners.

By ministering to the community, local Habitat for Humanity members can demonstrate sermons of love. And local churches can offer that support at several levels, also.

If you would like to participate in this new volunteer partnership or obtain more information, contact Rich Lambert, Mike Lumbers, Mary Jo Houghton or Mike Gard. Until the affiliate is official for this area, a steering committee is meeting the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, starting this week. The meetings will be at noon at the First Christian church, and they are open to the public.

Or, if you are interested in signaling your willingness to assist, fill out the information form found on page 5 of today's *Journal* and send it to Rich Lambert, Route 3 - Box 96-F, Perry, OK 73077. Be prepared to share the unique joy of doing something worthwhile and practical for a neighbor you may not even know. You'll find the rewards far outweigh the time and effort that are put into this program. It comes highly recommended.



July 13, 1996

The Kumback Cafe, a favorite place for many Perry diners and coffee drinkers since Eddie Parker first opened the front door there on the north side of the square 70 years ago, is undergoing an extensive remodeling project. All the windows are papered over so curious passersby can't peek in to watch the work in progress. Tony and Marilee Macias, the present owners, want to keep you guessing as to how the old standby will look when this project is finished. Will the exterior be changed, too? Will there be a new counter, booths and tables? A new ambience? Different menus? We'll just have to wait and see, even if the suspense becomes unbearable.

Another PHS graduate has joined the ranks of the working press, and his first job puts him almost in our backyard. Steve Doughty, son of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Doughty, has just been named sports editor of the Guthrie Daily Leader, down the road a piece on I-35. Steve received a degree from the University of Oklahoma in broadcast journalism this year, but decided to switch to the print medium for his first job. He was a dandy athlete and a good student during his years as a Perry Maroon, and we wish him well in this new endeavor.

The blight destroying elm trees in this country apparently has afflicted another of the stately old elms in the courthouse park. One near the driveway entrance on the north side of the square is slowly dying and probably will have to be removed. It looks old enough to have been one of those planted in the early days by Will T. Little, the gentleman who in 1896 put out 8,600 seedlings in our courthouse park. Many of those later were moved to parks and school yards, and only a few of the original seedlings now remain in the courthouse park.

Speaking of trees, our problem with webworms is common throughout the state, according to a piece in the Daily Oklahoman the other day. The tiny little creatures are spinning their deadly webs in many varieties of trees and some of our leafy friends may not survive. Webs need to be cut out and burned or destroyed by spraying. Pecan trees are favored by webworms, but they're really not all that particular. Fruit trees, hackberries, mimosas, and almost every variety is being

infested. The problem is worse this year because of the intense heat and lack of rain that have plagued us this summer. Don't let them spoil your shade trees, pecans and other ornamentals. Fight back!

Community theatres in Oklahoma, like Stagecoach in Perry, are involved in providing live, wholesome, good entertainment for the audiences they serve. Some of them turn out excellent stage productions, and it's always nice to hear that such efforts are being rewarded. Muskogee Little Theatre recently returned in triumph from the 28th annual Drama Festival in Dundalk, Ireland, where they performed at the invitation of the mayor of Dundalk and the Festival committee.

Competing with theatres from Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Germany, Israel and Russia, the Muskogee group presented "Strange Snow," with which they previously had won performance and acting awards in regional and national competitions. Two of the three cast members received best actor and best actress awards in Ireland. The next Oklahoma state festival competition will be March 13-16, 1997, in Stillwater. You really should consider attending some of the plays to be presented there by Oklahoma's top-flight community theatres. Ticket information is available from OCTA's Oklahoma City office, telephone 405-236-0788.

Incidentally, former Perryan Bob Herod, now of Tulsa, was president of the Oklahoma Community Theatre Association when Muskogee won the state festival title. Bob and Dena Herod's younger son, Jim, his wife and two children, recently moved to Perry from the Dallas-Ft. Worth area and Jim is now a design engineer with the Charles Machine Works, Inc., where his father previously was head of industrial engineering.



July 16, 1996

Digging through boxes of old articles retrieved from the attic, the storeroom or some other forgotten niche frequently leads to the discovery of a treasure trove of wonderful memorabilia. Most of us have experienced that, and a couple of friends recently told me about their serendipitous sojourns into the past, thanks to the location of aging relics of another age.

Zella Aigner opened a box that had belonged to Phillip Aigner, the brother of her late husband, John. Inside, among other things, was a book inscribed with the name of another Aigner brother, Joe, and the year "1913" inked alongside. Although the pages are fragile and the contents are largely illegible, Zella made out enough to know that it was an English literature textbook. Poets and writers from the 18th and 19th century are included. The book was purchased at the E. E. Howendobler Drug Store which was located on the south side of the square years ago.

This was especially interesting to me because, as I have mentioned previously, Mr. Howendobler ran a school of pharmacy in Wichita until coming to Perry at the time of the Cherokee Strip land run on Sept. 16, 1893. My dad, Fred W. Beers, graduated from the Howendobler School of Pharmacy and in 1895 came here to work for his former mentor. Sebastian Aigner, a native of Germany, was the father of the Aigner brothers. Mr. Aigner staked a claim in Noble county in the 1893 run, and that property is now owned by Zella's grandson, Darren Huddleston, who lives in Stillwater.

Shirley Williams has loaned me a copy of a little book which she recently came across. It is entitled "A History of Noble County, Oklahoma," written in 1958 by Mrs. Fannie L. Eisele of Covington. The book is probably long out of print and it is one that I had not seen before. In it Mrs. Eisele focused primarily on Perry and the surrounding community. An alphabetically arranged list of "old timers and others" leads off, and the legal description of the property held by each also

is given. The list fills the first 58 pages of the little book, and the names range from "Joseph Abbett, SE 35-23-2W," to W. Zoung, SE 25-20-2W."

Mrs. Eisele fills the rest of the book (159 pages) with facts and anecdotes from the early days right on through the 1950s. One of the most interesting to me was a list of all our county agents, from W. L. English, who started in October 1908, to James Nelson Robinson, who came here in July 1955 and was still on the job when she wrote her book. The list of home demonstration agents ranges from the first one, Mrs. L. B. Whitney (February 1, 1913, to December 15, 1915) to Gladys C. Umwake, who came August 1, 1955, and was still on the job when the book was written. Our first assistant county agent was W. D. Daily (December 1, 1917, to May 31, 1918); the first assistant home demonstration agent was Garnett McNally (July 1, 1949, to December 31, 1950).

On page 88 she mentions Jesse James, whose name has appeared in this column several times lately, dealing with speculation as to whether or not he ever set foot in Noble county. Mrs. Eisele's item about Jesse was garbled in composition and it is impossible to figure out what she was attempting to convey. It starts out this way: "Jesse James of Bandit fame had an extensive hogxxx" and the rest of the sentence is lost. At the bottom of that page it seems to begin again with a line that pops up in the middle of an unrelated paragraph. It reads: "xxxxrun from Orlando. He later had a store on the eastxxx". Once again a line seems to be missing, but then it begins: "xxxxwas fenced with wire. Some of this wire was still up on the evening of the opening. It was now know that James came to the hog range occasionally, supposedly after pulling some outlaw stunt and to hide awhile." Unfortunately, that's all that appears on the subject, and Mrs. Eisele did not identify her source of information. Like most of the other local Jesse James lore, it is incomplete and a little bit incomprehensible.

Nevertheless, the little book is interesting in its collection of tales about the early days of this great country. Thanks to Shirley, Williams for letting me borrow it.



July 18, 1996

You may remember a while back I mentioned the essays written by Charles Kemnitz and gathered into a collection with the title *Hand Me Down the Land*. I have learned from Charles that one of the essays appeared in the summer 1994 issue of *Cimarron Review*, a literary quarterly published at Oklahoma State University, and they will publish a second essay from the collection in their 1996 summer issue, which should be out this month. That makes eight of the original 13 essays that have been accepted for publication. They're worth reading, so find a copy of the *Review* and check them out. Caravan book store in Stillwater handles the quarterly.

Charles, son of Mrs. George Kemnitz and her late husband, has completed another year at Pennsylvania College of Technology in Williamsport. He is head of the technical communications program, a bachelor's degree program which he designed and administers with four other professors. His wife, Susan, is the English tutor supervisor at Penn College, and this summer is teaching a five-week freshman English class. She also is actively involved in story telling, an art she practiced while the family lived in Perry. The Kemnitz children, Alicia and Aaron, are doing well at swimming and golf, respectively. Alicia went with her relay team to the national championships in Florida and Aaron is hoping to make the school golf team. Aaron also has become an avid mountain climber. Both are near the top of their class in school. Charles is a former technical writer at the Charles Machine Works, Inc.

One of the radio stations I listen to is carrying a commercial for something called "wireless cable TV." They say it's not a satellite dish, but a truly "wireless cable TV." Pardon me, but isn't that a bare-faced oxymoron?

Ted and Glenda Riddle opened the county's first major bed and breakfast enterprise earlier this year 12 miles north of Perry. Now there are rumors of one or two more businesses of this type in various stages of discussion. That fits just fine with our efforts to lure more tourists to visit this special part of Oklahoma, and we hope they all succeed in a major way. The Riddles named their place "the Homestead," and it is earning many favorable comments from those who have tried it.

Dr. John Chaffin, the distinguished Oklahoma City heart surgeon, has been honored as "Man of the Year" by the Greater Oklahoma City American Heart Association. Formal presentation of the award was made at the chapter's recent annual meeting at the Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club. Dr. Chaffin, son of Everett Chaffin and his late wife, Betty, grew up in this community and graduated from Perry high school. We're proud of him and the lifesaving work he performs. Congratulations on this award.

The Daily Oklahoman had an interesting piece the other day about the stellar record of Oklahoma wrestlers through the years in the Olympics. And of course no such story would be complete without the names of Jack VanBebber and Danny Hodge, two Perry boys who won Olympic medals in the sport. Hodge, who never lost a college match while wrestling for the University of Oklahoma, earned a silver medal at the 1956 Melbourne games but failed to place in 1952 at Helsinki, although he led his Russian opponent 10-0 before a bizarre ending to the match. Dan thought he had pinned his man but instead had pinned himself. According to writer Mac Bentley, Hodge still believes he should have won two gold medals.

VanBebber, who wrestled at Oklahoma A.&M., and Bobby Pearce of Cushing won Olympic gold medals for the U.S. in 1932 at Los Angeles. Both are now deceased, but they became symbols of Oklahoma's excellent wrestling program during their lifetime.

One more thing to note: In looking through the composite list of Oklahoma medal winners at the Olympics, I could find no other city our size that has contributed two such outstanding individuals as Danny Hodge and Jack VanBebber.



July 20, 1996

The return of Mickey Ripley to the Perry high school football program brings back many memories of another great era in the 1960s when he was one of the finest prep quarterbacks ever produced by this proud state. The Maroons of 1964, coached by Rex Edgar and led by Mickey in his junior year, also had Abe Sears, Kenny Russell, J. D. Newton, Clark Coldiron, Spencer Unruh, Frank Feken, Gary Jackson, John Chaffin and countless other authentic stars. After a sterling 10-0 record during the regular season, they played host on November 27, 1964, to the Lindsay Leopards in a class A quarter-final playoff game at Daniels Field. It was a classic contest, one of the most memorable games ever played by a Maroon team.

The Leopards were favored but the never-say-die Maroons played them tough from kickoff to the final whistle. The stands were packed with frenzied fans from both towns. In the end Perry lost, 13-12, but that close score doesn't begin to tell the real story of that game.

Down by 13-0 with less than two minutes to play, the Maroons scored two touchdowns within 57 seconds but failed to add the extra point in both cases. That brought to an end Perry's finest season since 1936.

Halfback Clark Coldiron muscled his way across the goal line from one yard out for Perry's first score with only 69 seconds remaining in the game. For the conversion, Coldiron knelt to hold for placekicker Kenny Russell, then stood up and heaved a pass in a try for two extra points. Gary Goodwin, Lindsay's strapping quarterback and a defensive demon, intercepted in the end zone to spoil the effort. Lindsay led, 13-6.

Perry wasn't ready to toss in the towel. J. D. Newton executed a perfect onside kick on the ensuing kickoff and Paul Haxton fielded the ball for Perry with the aid of Steve Parker, giving the Maroons possession on Lindsay's 41-yard line. Ripley hit Gary Jackson on the Leopard 15. That play gave Perry a 3-2 edge in penetrations, the tie-breaking statistic. On the next play, Ripley hooked up with Jackson in the end zone to bring the score to 13-12 and an extra point attempt coming up. Ten seconds remained to be played.

Kenny Russell, the state's leading scorer in class A that season and normally a sure shot when it came to kicking conversion points, booted the ball as 2,000 screaming spectators strained to watch. Had the kick been good, the score would have been tied, 13-13, but Perry would have won the game on penetrations. The ball sailed wide to the left of the south end zone goalposts.

Nobody felt worse at that moment than Kenny Russell. I can still see him sinking to his knees when the kick missed its mark and he realized the onus would be on him. No true Maroon fan blamed him for the loss even for a moment: They were well aware of his exemplary play throughout the regular season which had helped bring the team to the playoffs.

Kenny, a fine young man, was a skillful and exciting running back as well as a placement kicker. Sadly, he was killed a few months later shortly after arriving in Vietnam with the U. S. Marines. That was just one of the thousands of tragedies spawned by that dreadful period.

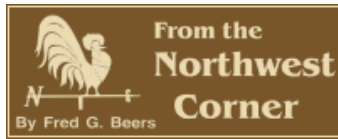
The 1964 Maroons were champions of the I-35 Conference and winners of the District 4-A crown. Five members of the team were named to the all-conference team: Halfback Kenny Russell, fullback John Chaffin, tackle Frank Feken, end Gary Jackson and guard Spencer Unruh. Honorable mention went to Darrell Brower, Clark Coldiron, J. D. Newton, Paul Haxton, David Taber, Jerry Johnson and Jim Voigt. Only seniors were eligible for the all-conference team.

Lindsay advanced to the next round of the 1964 playoffs. The Leopards were a traditional football power at that time. Their quarterback, Gary Goodwin, later became a defensive standout for Oklahoma State University. Ironically, after earning his degree he moved to Perry as a district sales representative for the Charles Machine Works, Inc., and became a Maroon fan. Still later he was a Ditch Witch dealer in Colorado.

Mickey, a marvelous passer, was an All-Stater as a senior and was recruited as a passing quarterback by the new OU head coach, Jim MacKenzie, who died after only one year on the job. His successor as head coach, Chuck Fairbanks, had a different idea about OU's offense and it did not include a passing game. So, Mick became a vastly under-utilized quarterback for most of his years as a Sooner. Many other schools with exciting pro-style offenses would have quickly signed him to a full scholarship but Mickey chose to stay with OU.

He did get one unexpected shot at stardom on a New Year's Eve in a Bluebonnet Bowl game with Bear Bryant's Alabama Tide in the Astrodome at Houston. The Sooners fell behind badly in the first half and Mickey was inserted into the lineup to start the second half. He ignited the crowd and the team with his go-for-broke passing but OU lost the game despite his heroics.

In the 1970s Mickey returned to his high school alma mater here and was head coach of the Maroons for several seasons before moving on to Bartlesville. It's good to have him back in town, and I know Joe and Betty Ripley are tickled he's home again. Maybe Mickey can help the PHS Maroons reclaim the winning touch.



July 23, 1996

Atlanta may have the Olympics but Perry is equally proud of its role as host to the state AAA American Legion baseball tournament this weekend. For one thing it gives us a chance to show off Joe Ripley field, the sparkling new baseball park just off the bend of U.S. 77 in northeast Perry. For another it will attract hundreds of visitors here Friday through Sunday and we want to afford them every courtesy. If you see some strangers in town, be sure to make them feel welcome. We hope they will return to their homes with a favorable impression of Perry stamped in their memory.

Visitors surely cannot help but be impressed with our new facility, which was formally dedicated in the spring of 1994 but is still being improved. The grandstand and the outfield fence were completed only this year. The name honors longtime Perry baseball figure Joe Ripley, former pitcher and manager of some noteworthy semi-pro teams from this community. The field, made possible through a gift from the Exchange Bank & Trust Co., probably is one of the main reasons the tournament was awarded to Perry.

Joe himself will be in the park for most of the games. He will be doing color commentary of all the Perry games with play-by-play announcer John Dawson for the local radio station, KVCS, which will carry the action live. Mike Doughty will be the familiar voice on the ballpark public address system and will help all of us understand the action on the field.

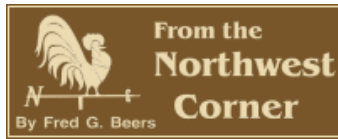
The sale of tickets is totally under the control of the sponsoring Oklahoma American Legion Baseball Association. All tickets will be general admission and they will be sold only at the gate on game days; none will be sold in advance. Additional bleachers are being brought in to accommodate the anticipated crowd. Two games will be played Friday night, three more on Saturday afternoon and evening, and the finals will be played Sunday. The tournament format is double-elimination.

Three of the four teams that qualified for the tournament were chosen through zone tourneys the past week. Perry won its district tournament but qualified for the state meet because it is the host city and thus did not have to play at the zone level. The local team is very competitive and likely would have made it to state even without the automatic certification.

To Perry Coach Raydon Leaton, this is all a "field of dreams" experience. Coach Leaton returned to Perry this summer after a stint as pitching coach at Indianapolis University. Six years ago he was just starting here as coach of the PHS Maroons. He called a meeting of local baseball enthusiasts, organized the Diamond Club to coordinate the efforts of supporters, and established two ambitious goals: 1. Secure a fine new baseball park for our high school and Legion teams; and, 2. Bring a state Legion tournament to Perry.

Coach Leaton left Perry for the Indianapolis job before those goals were met, but he had set the wheels in motion and now we have seen the realization of Goal No. 1 -- Joe Ripley Field. The second goal was met shortly after that when the state Legion association chose Perry for this year's triple-A tournament.

Now Coach Leaton is back with us to resume his old job as skipper of the Maroons and the local AAA Legion team. It's a very timely return, and we thank him for his energy, enthusiasm and vision of Perry's baseball future. Good luck to him and to our entry in the state tournament here this weekend. Let's play ball!



July 25, 1996

An item in this column the other day about Mrs. Fannie L. Eisele's booklet, *A History of Noble County*, reminded Clarence and Jean Koch that they also have a copy of another book, *Covington and Community*, by the same author. It deals with a large portion of the southeast corner of Garfield county where it borders Noble county. The *Covington* area history was published in 1952, six years before the other. Mrs. Eisele (her name rhymes with nicely), a resident of Covington, was familiar with the early-day history of both areas. Her family was among the settlers in the Cherokee Strip.

The Kochs, like many of us, are students of this area's history and their roots go deep. Clarence's great aunt, Mrs. Bertha Cawood Koch, is quoted in the *Covington* book as a source for information about the Potter Christian church. A portion of that reads as follows:

"Potter Christian church was organized at the Potter school house by Rev. Judd in 1900, and services were held there until 1904, when a church was built on the adjacent S.W. corner of the North West quarter of Sec. 26, Marshall Twp., at which time there was an average attendance of about 120. Among many others, a few of the old-time contributors to the church were Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Cawood, Mr. and Mrs. Geo. F. Majors, Mr. and Mrs. O. A. Edwards, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Cox, Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Hebbe, Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Ward, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Shields, Wm. Cawood, Miss Anna Boren, Miss Martha Lloyd, Miss Lida Potter, Mr. and Mrs. A. Koch, Mr. and Mrs. T. Capper, and Mr. and Mrs. A. Pinnix. The present pastor (in 1952) is Rev. Guy George."

In a footnote to the above, Mrs. Eisele wrote: "From (an) account written by Mrs. Bertha (Cawood) Koch, who was a girl of the Potter Community, and who further says there was not room inside for all who attended the first Christmas program at the church."

The *Covington* book index shows a reference to a Garfield county community known as Billville and I quickly flipped the book open to that page because I remember stopping there one day in the late 1930s while traveling on a Perry school bus with the high school band to the annual Tri-State music festival in Enid. That event always is held in the spring, when the woes of winter weather are usually long gone.

On that particular day, however, the weather turned bad after our bus left the PHS band building for Enid. Snow began falling, heavily, and by the time we reached a certain point on the old two-lane highway U.S. 64 east of Enid our driver could no longer see the road. He stopped at a filling station and called the band director, Bill Sharp, for instructions. Mr. Sharp told him to wait it out and to return home if conditions did not improve. We wound up returning to Perry because of that late winter snowstorm. The filling station where we stopped was Billville, but I believe all traces of it have long since vanished.

I, for one, was extremely happy to return home that day instead of continuing on to Tri-State. Our band was scheduled to march in the annual parade, and my instrument was a Sousaphone, one of those large and heavy circular tubas with a flared adjustable bell, the opening of which was often the recipient of small missiles hurled by parade watchers as we marched by. I could see the possibility of freshly formed snowballs being aimed at that bell, which is shaped rather like a target, with the likelihood of at least a few missing their intended mark and landing in my face just as I was oompahing an important note in one of the standard Sousa compositions in our repertoire. That thought, along with the unexpectedly

cold weather, caused me to shudder until the bus driver said we were turning around to go home. I'll always remember Billville.

Mrs. Eisele wrote this about Billville: "Over the hill (Gas, Groceries and Gumption?) began, commenced, started, Etc. by Bill Oldham, in or about 1931: On Hg'y 64, 4 miles (32 Furlongs, 1280 Rods, 7,040 Yards, 21,120 Feet, 253,440 Inches or 760,320 Barleycorns) West of the Garber-Covington Y: and if anything was ever actually and really on the corner of anything, the emporium is strictly on the S.W. corner of S.W. 1-4, Sec. 8, Lincoln Twp." She added this explanatory foot-note: "3 Barleycorns (average length of 3 grains) - 1 Inch; 12 Inches -1 Foot; 3 Feet -1 Yard; 5 1/2 Yards -1 Rod (sometimes Rood, Perch or Pole); 40 Rods -1 Furlong (From Furrowlong - length of a Furrow); 8 Furlongs (320 Rods - 5,280 Feet) -1 Mile." The definition of terms was supplied by Ellis Land & Titles company.

Clarence obtained his copies of Mrs. Eisele's two history booklets from her nephew, Earl Gopfert Jr., a retired employee of the Charles Machine Works, Inc., where Clarence also is employed. The books contain a wealth of information about the Covington and Perry areas and you would enjoy reading them. However, Mr. Gopfert told Clarence these were the last copies available so it may be difficult to track them down. The Perry Carnegie Library has a copy of the Covington history, but it is in delicate condition and available only for reference. The Perry history book is not available at the library at this time. Ernie Hotson, a grandson of Mrs. Eisele, also is a CMW employee.

My thanks to Clarence and Jean Koch for letting me look at these little treasure troves of history.



July 27, 1996

While cleaning up some old property recently, Don Streller came across a couple of advertising pieces apparently dating back to an era in Perry about 70 years ago or more. These were rescued from the garbage heap by Don's wife, Sue, who showed them to me. I thought you would be interested in hearing about them, too.

One was an advertising showcard measuring approximately 11 x 17 inches in a vertical format. It contains information about several Perry merchants but the main focus is on the schedule of services at local churches. It apparently was designed for display in public buildings, where visitors to the community would see them. Some of these cards probably were distributed to local filling stations, cafes, hotels and other places catering to out of town customers.

Sue has mounted this one in a wooden frame and it is ready to be displayed. My estimate is that the card was printed around 1928.

The mid-section of the card has the outline of a large cross with this heading in the upper middle column: "Church Director of Perry, Oklahoma." Beneath the heading on either side and down the length of the column were these church listings:

Adventist church - Saturday, Sabbath school, 9:45 a.m.; Services, 11 a.m. Baptist church - Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.; Preaching, 11 a.m.; Baptist Young People's Union, 7 p.m.; Mid-Week (Wednesday) Prayer Meeting, 8 p.m. Catholic church - Week Day mass, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, 6:30 a.m.; Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 8 p.m.; Sunday mass, 7:30 to 10 a.m. Christian church - Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.; preaching, 11 a.m.; Young People's Society, Christian Endeavor, 8 p.m.; prayer meeting Wednesday, 8 p.m.

Christian Science church – Sunday, 11 a.m. to 12 noon; Wednesday evening, 8 to 9 p.m. Lutheran church – Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.; preaching, 11 a.m.; Young People's meeting, 8 p.m.; preaching 8 p.m. (Winter services one-half hour earlier in evening.) Methodist church – Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.; morning service, 11 a.m.; Epworth league, 7 p.m.; evening service, 8 p.m.; mid-week prayer service, 8 p.m. Presbyterian church – Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.; preaching, 11 a.m.; Young People's Society, Christian Endeavor, 7 p.m.; preaching, 8 p.m.; mid-week prayer service, 8 p.m.

Oddly, locations were not given for any of the churches, so a stranger would need to ask directions to find them. Isn't it interesting that in those days virtually all Perry churches had preaching services on both Sunday and Wednesday evenings. Those times were traditionally reserved for church activities. We've come a long way from that schedule, sadly.

Advertisers in boxes arranged around the church information were: Pennant Service Station, Ross Seton, manager. J. H. Norman Co., successors to Harbaugh and Woodruff, fine clothing and furnishings for men and boys. O.K. Filling Station, Shell gasoline, "The Gas With Real Pep." Noble County Motor Co., Ford products, corner 6th and Elm. Click-Moreland Co., "We Sell for Cash and Save You Money," dry goods, clothing, shoes, ready-to-wear and millinery, corner 7th and D streets. Chic Shoppe and Chic Millinery, in Temple building. J.C. Penney Co., Donaldson & Yahn lumber dealers. Piggly Wiggly, "Helps Those Who Help Themselves." Farmers & Merchants Bank, "Your Business Appreciated." Houston-McCune Lumber Co., building materials specialists.

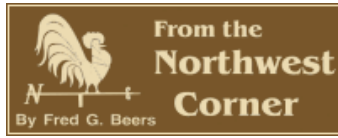
Wolleson Motor Co., "Before -- to -- or After Church, Oakland and Pontiac agency. Christoph and Newton, home furnishings, undertaking, ambulance service, southwest corner square. The Exchange Bank, established 1896. Annex Theatre, "The Coolest Place in Town," presenting the latest in photo plays, open daily – 1 p.m. to 11 p.m., prices 10 cents and 20 cents.

Art Cleaners, phone 61 for one-day service and odorless cleaning. Hill's, "Human" Department Store, dependable merchandise at lowest prices. Charles Huffman Grocery Store, "Groceries and Service That Please." C. J. Lindeman Grocery, "35 years of reliability." The Famous Department Store, "Noble county's greatest store." Kerr-Guthrie Hardware, "Hardware That Stands Hard Wear."

The other advertising piece is about the size of a business card and it bears the imprint of "M. Kopelman – Perry, Oklahoma Territory," which means it was printed before we were granted statehood in 1907. It is called a "premium ticket." The card explains: "In advertising this way, our customers get the benefit of the money we spend, in proportion to the amount they patronize us. No lottery. No humbug. Good, honest goods, Rogers' make. Something every family needs. Save this ticket as it is worth something to you."

Customers received one of these tickets with each dollar's worth of goods purchased, something like today's S&H Green Stamps. Four tickets earned the buyer a Rogers silver plated sugar shell. Other premiums ranged from a Rogers silver plated butter knife (six tickets) to a lady's or gentleman's watch, plated case with 7-jewelled nickel movement, all for 100 tickets. I cannot tell you what kind of merchandise Mr. Kopelman handled. That is not mentioned on the card.

The names of most of these merchants were familiar to me, but I had not previously heard of M. Kopelman's, J. H. Norman Co., or the Click-Moreland Co. Perhaps some of you remember them. These things are always nice to see. They help us bridge the gap in time back to those interesting days in this community. Thanks to Don and Sue for sharing these particular pieces with me.



July 30, 1996

Oklahoma City seems to be having a lot of trouble getting the heralded MAPS project up and running, so they probably don't need to hear this. Kansas City is going through a period of anguish over a riverwalk project very much like the one planned in Oklahoma City.

Part of Oklahoma City's MAPS will be a riverwalk along the South Canadian as it flows through the downtown area, offering a place for relaxed strolling amidst boutique shops and informal types of entertainment. It would be patterned along the lines of San Antonio's eminently successful riverwalk.

Kansas City had the same idea and laid out major bucks for an improvement project to make it happen. Unfortunately, all is not going well in that great city. The situation was colorfully described in a Kansas City Star article by staff writer Tracey Kaplan, who investigated readers' complaints about foul odors and raw sewage in the water. Kaplan found these charges valid. According to the Columbia Journalism Review, Kaplan flushed out the truth and raised a heckuva stink about a sensitive local issue.

The magazine wrote: "After getting wind of residents' complaints of less than fragrant odors emanating from the city's recently opened 'riverwalk' an \$86 million flood-control and beautification project designed to transform a concrete, flood-prone ditch near the downtown shopping area into a Seine-like urban paradise of lakes, pools, waterfalls, fountains and pathways along the water's edge - Kaplan plunged into the problem and, beginning with a page-one story, spread it all out."

Briefly, the reporter's personal observation revealed toilet paper, feces and urine spilling routinely into what the mayor was calling "the jewel of the Midwest." Contradicting lab findings announced by the city, an independent analysis revealed levels of bacteria above federal and state standards, frequent sewage spills and the city's failure to report them. There was more. Does this project remind you of any part of Oklahoma City's plans for use of the MAPS sales tax revenue?

Haven't our friends in the capital city had enough grief already? Let's hope their proposed canal doesn't turn out like Kansas City's riverwalk. We should also hope KC's riverwalk itself can be salvaged and become something like the famed downtown attraction in San Antonio. Kansas City is a beautiful city, one of our favorite places, and it deserves a winner. So does Okie City, for that matter. After their county jail fiasco, the trimming-down of their proposed new ball park and other municipal headaches, the city needs to raise its batting average.

But let's give thanks for the vigilance of private citizens, a fearless reporter and an investigative daily newspaper for their roles in bringing such matters out into the open. Kaplan and the Star won a "laurel" from the Columbia Journalism Review for exposing the situation there. They are protecting the public's right to know everything about what's going on with their tax dollars.