

**June 1, 1996**

This excellent photo of 1915 Perry is owned by Don Stoddard.

My friend Don Stoddard has a fascinating collection of photos and newspaper clippings relating to Perry's history and his high school football days in the early 1950s. Recently he received from his daughter, Gayla, who lives in Edmond, a marvelous matted and hand-colored photo of the northeast corner of the square as it appeared in 1915. The photo's perspective is looking north on Sixth street and it shows clearly where the brick pavement ended at the corner of Sixth and Elm.

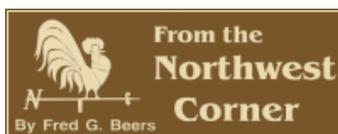
An abundance of trees, most of them apparently elms, can be seen throughout the city, all of a uniform height and fully leafed out for summer. A one-horse carriage is rounding the corner at Sixth street, heading west up Delaware. One of the new-fangled horseless carriages is parallel-parked at the corner and a two-horse dray is approaching the intersection.

Prominent in the foreground are Roy Morris' two-story brick building, the former home of Bush & Joe's Smoke House and now the home of his CPA business, and the two-story sandstone building next door which we now know as The Trib, where attorney Nikki Leach and cattlemen Bill Gengler and Laddie Trojan have their offices. The east wall of the old wooden Elite Hotel & Restaurant is visible. Across the alley from Roy's building is the two-story frame structure where Orlando Walking once had a market and hotel. Looking up Sixth 9 street to the corner of Sixth and Elm, where David Luthye now has a garage, you can make out a two-story house surrounded by lush trees.

The photo also shows the old I.X.L. Livery Stable on the north side of Elm street. That building is still standing in the same location, 611 Elm street. Don would like to have more, information about the livery stable and would appreciate hearing from anyone who can help out. His home is at #19 Villa Apartments, Hwy. 77 & Noble street. My thanks to him for letting me see the photo and other parts of his fascinating collection. His daughter found the historic 1915 photo in an Oklahoma City gallery.

Betty Andrews read with interest the recent column about Kraemer's Shoe Store on the east side of the square, in the building now occupied by Mel's Clothing. "I worked at Kraemer's in the summers of 1942 and 1943 while in high school," Betty recalls. "They sold women's and children's clothes as well as men's. Children's Jumping Jacks were the No. 1 seller, guaranteed to protect a child's backside. One of the best selling items for all ages was the white jumpsuit. Sweaters were different. The 'sloppy Joe' style was the in sweater. The bigger the better. They had to come within an inch of the bottom of your skirt, to be just right. The short button-down sweater had darling unusual puffed sleeves. I always had clothes but never a paycheck! When I graduated from high school, Mr. and Mrs. Ott Edson, the store owners, showed me a huge box of assorted flowers to wear in your hair, and I got to pick out two of them. World War II was going on then and most of us at home wore our hair parted in a V in back, then put a flower on each side. The Edsons were good people to work for.

Thanks, Betty, for those remembrances of Kraemers, the Edsons, and a special time of life from the 1940s.



## **June 4, 1996**

It was time for the Sunday morning children's sermon at one of the local churches, and the youth minister was starting to explain the mystery of the triune God. "We call him God the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, and that's kind of confusing to have three names for the same being, isn't it?" he asked. Naw, said one of the pre-schoolers, with the wisdom of Solomon. "Everybody has three names." Chuckling, the youth minister had to agree that that was a better explanation than the one he had in mind, but he went ahead with his own plan anyway.

Speaking of church services, my Presbyterians are having a "no excuse Sunday" this weekend, and that means those who fail to show up are going to have to do a lot of explaining. The usual summertime alibis (like sleeping in, catching up on yard work, unexpected guests, and so forth) won't get an absentee member off the hook. We're also expected to bring at least one guest, so if some of you don't already have plans for the hour between 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. next Sunday, please come to Eighth and Elm and we'll be glad to claim you. We'll bring in extra chairs if necessary.

You may have noticed that Judy, the Oklahoma City Zoo's beloved elephant, is celebrating her 50th birthday this summer. Judy has a real Perry connection. Back in the 1940s she was brought here shortly after her arrival at the Oklahoma City zoo and she remained in Perry several weeks: for a period of training. Judy was housed in the old exhibit building at the fairgrounds, and that is where she learned her ABC's, or whatever they teach young elephants before the public sees them on exhibit at the zoo. June Ream remembers the time very well. Her late husband, Dale, used to take their two, daughters, Karen Dale and Jean Ann, to the fairgrounds each evening to watch the young pachyderm being fed, watered and just generally pampered. Many Perry children enjoyed getting acquainted with Judy during that time.

The Perry Main Street organization will celebrate its first anniversary with an entertaining program the night of June 13. Let me urge you to write that date on your calendar and be there to share in the fun. Special secret awards will be handed out to call attention to various major improvements in the downtown business district. All of these will come as a surprise to the recipients and slide films will explain the accomplishments that led to each award. The fun starts at 7 p.m. in the Foucart building on the southeast corner of the square. It won't be a long, drawn-out affair. Come on down and join the celebration.

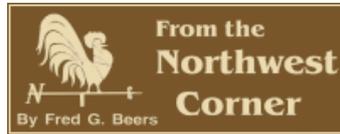
The Wichita Eagle sports page recently carried an interesting feature about Toby Smith, a hot young professional baseball prospect from Guthrie who has close Perry ties. Toby, a 6-foot-6, 215-pound home run hitter and relief pitcher, is playing this season with the AA Wichita Wranglers, a farm team of the Kansas City Royals. His parents are Jim and Sue Smith of Guthrie and his grandmothers are Betty (Mrs. Foy) Smith and Esther (Mrs. Glen) Hodge of Perry.

Toby passed up his senior season at Wichita State to sign with the Royals in 1993. He was a 32nd round draft pick. Before turning pro, he was WSU's first baseman, but he did some bullpen pitching late in the season and caught the eye of pitching coach Brent Kemnitz, who of course is the son of Charles and Laura Kemnitz of this city. Smith's fastball was clocked at 90 mph. After high school, Toby spent two seasons at Connors State Junior College before transferring to Wichita State. There he hit 18 home runs and batted .351.

The Royals drafted him as a pitcher and he spent last season at class A Wilmington in the Carolina League where he was 5-7 with a 3.08 ERA in 30 games, seven as a starter. "I like pitching, I enjoy it a lot," Smith says, but he still has a yen to pick up a bat again. "Everybody thinks I'm done as a hitter, but I don't think so," he says. Wish him luck as he continues his dream of making it in the big league.

When Ted and Marilyn Jerome were married, they moved into a small rental house across the alley from us and we enjoyed getting to know the young couple. Todd was born while they lived there. Eventually we both moved from that neighborhood but later Ted and I were co-workers at the Ditch Witch factory. There his great smile and boyish enthusiasm

served him well as a district sales representative, calling on customers and dealers in various parts of the US. Still later he took over Harry Elwell's auto supply store and continued operating it successfully. For the last few months he has been battling a terrible disease, always optimistic, but then it just became too much for him. I have to believe that famous grin never completely deserted him. This community is touched by the loss of a young man like Ted, and our hearts go out to his family.



## **June 6, 1996**

The readers write or call, asking questions that deserve answers. A few follow:

Blanche Pricer echoes the common complaint being heard these days about our free 405 area code long distance calls, the gift of Southwestern Bell. But Mrs. Pricer also is distressed about the condition of the newly resurfaced portion of Memorial Drive, the road leading to Grace Hill Cemetery. It's rough, like a washboard. Hopefully, that's just the base coat.

Alma Dunagan also has problems with the free phone calls but says the system works better if you're using a rotary phone, not the touch tone type.

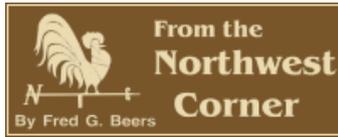
Don Stoddard is among the many who like to fish at the city lake, southwest of town. That's also our city reservoir, and Don fears the lake is getting too shallow. "I go out there quite often and I can tell that the water line is receding fast," he says. "If we don't get some substantial rains before too long, Perry is going to be in a world of hurt for water. I haven't heard any more talk about an alternate water supply, but I'm wondering why we can't run a line to the Kaw Lake line that goes to Stillwater and hook on to it." Don also made reference to the possible purchase of Lake McMurtry by the city of Perry, a topic of general discussion during the past several months.

Surface reserves of water are dwindling everywhere in this part of Oklahoma as a result of the prolonged drought, but the watershed for our reservoir is not what it was when that lake was built. Farm ponds now capture much of the rain water that used to run into the Perry lake and extensive silting has reduced its capacity greatly. Regarding the Kaw Lake line hookup, my understanding is that because we did not sign on when the line was built, Perry could not now be guaranteed unlimited access to that source of water.

I've heard nothing new about the Lake McMurtry possibility, but it sounds to me like that is the best future source for this city. A lot of angles need to be explored in this regard, and red tape is hard to unsnarl.

Don also mentioned that on one of his recent fishing trips to the Perry lake, he was able to stand on an old bridge at the south end of the lake where water used to cover a county road that was submerged by the lake construction years ago. He believes the lake level is perilously low.

Exterior renovation of the Brown Funeral Home building continues. In addition to the completely new metallic roof, a type of clapboard siding is being installed on the second story level and this is giving the building a totally different architectural look. The faux timbers formerly used on the upper floor exterior walls have been removed, and the structure now more closely resembles the original construction. The new exterior stairway built on the north side has no railing so far, but I assume one will be added so that those ascending and descending will have no fear of falling off.



**June 8, 1996**

We have an addendum to one of last weeks columns which dealt with Rick Kukuk's inquiry about the possibility, of the outlaw Jesse James having visited in this area, and about public hangings in the courthouse park back in the early days.

Wheeler Cobb is among those who are skeptical that the real Jesse James ever visited Perry; in spite of old-timers' tales to the contrary. Jesse, the outlaw celebrated as a 19th century Robin Hood of the Ozarks, was shot and killed by two members of his own band, Robert and Charles Ford, in a sensational murder case on April 3, 1882, in the James home at St. Joseph, Mo. The official version of the story says that Robert and Charles wanted to claim the \$10,000 reward money offered by Gov. Crittenden of Missouri for the capture of Jesse, dead or alive. They collected the money.

In the years since then, reports have surfaced periodically that Jesse survived the shooting and subsequently made several appearances in the Perry area and elsewhere. Rick Kukuk, who now lives in, Moore after growing up here, remembers hearing his great-grandfather, Scott Wakeman, say that Jesse made occasional trips to Perry. Rick wonders if his great-grandpa was just pulling his leg.

If the outlaw actually came to Perry, it would have been after the Cherokee Outlet land run in 1893, eleven years after his reported death, since that's when Perry was born. The other day I came across an article in a 1936 *Perry Daily Journal* stating that a man claiming to be Jesse was paying this area a visit at that time, but even then, 60 years ago, there was no authentication of the man's identity. The real Jesse would have been 89 years old in 1936, if he had survived the attempt on his life in 1882.

Wheeler, who operates the Perry Sales & Service John Deere business here, lives in Blackwell but commutes to this city daily. He has had a lifelong interest in the lore and history of this area. He says his research convinces him that Jesse James' death truly did occur in 1882 and that stories contradicting that fact are pure fiction. I remember Mr. Wakeman very well, and I can believe that his sense of humor may have led him to tell his great-grandson such a story.

Jesse James was born Sept. 5, 1847, in Clay county, Mo. In the early months of the Civil War the family was partisan to the Southern cause, and as a result suffered greatly at the hands of the Union forces. By way of retaliation, Jesse turned informer and later, when only 15 years of age, joined the guerilla forces of W C. Quantrill. After the war, he surrendered but was shot and severely wounded. The following year he was declared an outlaw and in 1867 he became the leader of "the James band" of bank and train robbers. The gang attained a wide repute for crimes of the most daring and cold-blooded type, but he was a folk hero to many. These facts are found in the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Charles (Pretty Boy) Floyd, a more contemporary bad-man, did visit Perry on at least one occasion. Sam Schwieger, managing editor of *The Perry Daily Journal* in the 1930s, was driving home from Oklahoma City one day when he saw a woman's car pulled over with a flat tire. Sam gallantly stopped to change tires for her. A few days later, a man showed up at *The Journal* office to thank Sam for his help. The man was the storied Pretty Boy Floyd, in person, and the distressed woman was his wife, Ruby. Glenn Yahn remembers this incident and verified it over the weekend with a phone call to his friend, Sam, who now lives in Arkansas. Mr. Schwieger, by the way, recently turned 90.

I'm also indebted to Glenn Yahn for clarification of the legend, about the name of a hanging victim from years ago in the courthouse park. I related last week that at times in the past, local young men were taken to the park at night by their

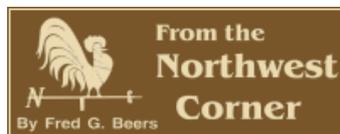
elders and told to summon the victim of a public execution. They were told to ask him what crime he had committed. Glenn says the name of the hanging victim was "Mr. Armstrong," not "Mr. Alexander," as I had it. Glenn remembers that because he was one of those youngsters who tried unsuccessfully to get an answer from the poor man. Like all others before and since his attempt, he heard nothing, absolutely nothing, in reply.

Wheeler Cobb also has been fascinated by the stories concerning John Wilkes Booth, Abraham Lincoln's assassin, whose mummified body supposedly turned up in Enid many years ago. In the 1930s, that spellbinding tale caught the fancy of Lincoln historians in many parts of the country. Mr. Cobb says there is evidence to verify the authenticity of the body in Enid, and he believes the story is true.

An article by Henry Bass in the 1968 Summer edition of Oklahoma Today tells more about the Enid-Booth connection. In part the piece says: "Boston Corbett, the eccentric Irishman who allegedly shot John Wilkes Booth, passed his last known days in Enid before vanishing into total obscurity. David George, who committed suicide in Enid, confessed on his deathbed that he actually was John Wilkes Booth, starting a controversy which continues unabated to this day.

Separate photos accompanying the article show Mr. George and Mr. Booth around the time of Lincoln's assassination, and there does appear to be a marked resemblance. Wheeler's own study satisfies him sufficiently to conclude that "Mr. George" really was the man who murdered President Lincoln.

How fascinating it is to be living in an era and in a part, of the country where the history of our early days is still at least partially available to us through people who experienced it. We're uniquely fortunate in that way. Such stories prove that history is not just an assemblage of dry dates about people and things from antiquity. It can come alive if we are interested enough to search for it. We are so close to it that our minds can almost conjure up the smell, the feel and even the taste of it. Thanks to all who contribute to our understanding and our knowledge of the past.



## **June 11, 1996**

Flag Day will be upon us in just a few days, next Friday to be precise, and many homes and businesses will want to fly Old Glory then. Do you know the other days when the U. S. flag should be displayed? That's a trick question, of course. The nation's magnificent emblem should be displayed on all days, but there are certain occasions when it is perhaps more appropriate. Here's the list of authorized, official days.:

New Year's Day, January 1; Inauguration Day, January 20; Lincoln's Birthday, February 12; Washington's Birthday, third Monday in February; Easter Sunday, variable; Mother's Day, second Sunday in May; Armed Forces Day, third Saturday in May; Peace Officers Memorial Day, May 15 (unless it conflicts with Armed Forces Day, then May 16); Memorial Day, last Monday in May; Flag Day, June 14; Independence Day, July 4; Labor Day, first Monday in September; Constitution Day, September 17; Columbus Day, second Monday in October; Navy Day, October 27; Veterans Day, November 11; Thanksgiving Day, fourth Thursday in November; National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, December 7; Christmas Day, December 25. On Peace Officers Memorial Day, Memorial Day itself, and on National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day the flag is to be flown at half-staff. On Memorial Day, it may be raised to full staff at noon.

In addition to those occasions, fly the flag on such other days as may be proclaimed by the President of the United States; the birthdays of States (date of admission); and on State holidays. Or just play it safe and display the flag every

day of the year. It's OK.

The ten rules for properly flying the flag need to be reviewed periodically. This is a good time to do that, so here they are:

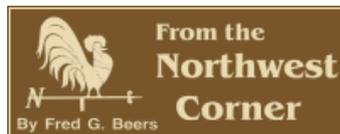
1. The flag is always hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.
2. The flag is never allowed to touch the ground or the floor.
3. When hung over a sidewalk on a rope extending from a building to a pole, the union stars are always away from the building.
4. When vertically hung over the center of the street, the flag always has the union stars to the north in an east/west street, and to the east in a north/south street.
5. The flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags of States or localities or pennants of societies are grouped and displayed from staffs.
6. The flag should never be festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds but always allowed to fall free.
7. The flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon on Memorial Day, then raised to the top of the staff.
8. Never fly the flag upside down except as a signal of distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.
9. The flag is never flown in inclement weather except when using an all-weather flag.
10. The flag can be flown every day from sunrise to sunset and at night if illuminated properly.

While we're on this subject, here's the correct version of the Pledge of Allegiance, just in case it has slipped from your memory. Note especially the punctuation:

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag, of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands, one Nation under God indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Carefully note the phrasing as indicated by commas in the pledge. Too often we also wrongfully insert a comma after "one Nation..." That's not the way it is supposed to be recited. To give it the correct meaning it is "...one Nation under God Indivisible..." with no pause (or comma) to be inserted between "Nation" and "under."

So, there you have the right way to pay homage to our flag. All information in the above comes directly from the current Federal flag code. It comes to me from the Veterans of Foreign Wars by way of my brother-in-law, a retired U. S. Marine Corps officer who saw duty both on Guadalcanal in World War II and in Korea during that engagement. I know of no one more reliable to supply this kind of information. Save this for future reference, and let's all give Old Glory the respect it has earned, wherever it is displayed.



**June 13, 1996**

**Neat Quonset Building**, a style utilized by the military in World War II, housed Perry's Tamac Pottery plant when the business expanded in 1949. The 40' x 120' building is now the home of Corky Oden's painting and sandblasting business. (Photo copyright Oklahoma Publishing Co. Used with permission.)

Tamac Pottery was a promising young Perry industry for several years after World War II. It originated here, then disappeared and now it is a collector's item. How it began, what happened to it and the fate of some of the unique pieces

that survive provide all the elements of an interesting story. Here's the first installment:

When the war ended in 1945, thousands of discharged veterans returned home and were added to the nation's unemployment rolls. They had trouble finding jobs. At the same time, small towns like Perry, which had been historically agriculturally centered, were looking for new industries to broaden their economic base. Veterans needed jobs and towns needed industries to put them to work. Into that scenario, two young veterans and their wives arrived here with a dream.

Leonard Tate, son of Henry and Zoma Tate, grew up in Perry and graduated from the Oklahoma A.&M. College school of business in 1942. His parents operated the Annex movie theater on the east side of the square and his grandfather had been owner-operator of the fabled Grand Opera House in that same location. Leonard had planned to have his own business but the war put that on hold. He joined the Navy and received a commission, served valiantly in the China-Burma-India theater and wound up recuperating in a New York hospital in 1945. There he met Marjorie Hemke and in September 1946 she became his wife.

Marjorie was born in Annapolis, MD, and grew up in the East. An art major, she graduated from Brown University in Rhode Island. During the war she was a drafter for General Electric and a designer of floor coverings for Congoleum-Nairn. There she became friends with Betty Macaulay. Betty's husband, Allen, was released from the Army in 1945. The Macaulays were natives of New Jersey. While they were still in New York, Leonard, Marjorie and the Macaulays became not only good friends but also partners in pottery-making. The decision to start a pottery plant was made because the men could not find jobs.

They chose Perry, Oklahoma, as a site because the city had a standing offer of free factory sites; some of the cheapest natural gas rates were available here; valuable technical assistance was just 24 miles away at Oklahoma A.&M. and they believed the Southwest offered the greatest opportunity for industrial expansion. This community welcomed them with open arms. The GI Bill of Rights also helped out. Its provisions for small businesses enabled Tamac to weather some early financial troubles.

The plant began as a modest addition built onto the side of Henry Tate's backyard garage at 920 Cedar street, where he stored fishing boats and related gear. Leonard and Allen constructed the addition and furnished it with equipment, including firing ovens, in the summer of 1946. Marjorie and Betty were integral parts of the operation from the beginning. Henry and Zoma pitched in as needed during the start-up phase and beyond. It was a family business.

The idea of a pottery plant was discussed by the two couples long before the Macaulays visited Perry. Marjorie had studied sculpture, modeling and design; Betty had taken a course in ceramics; Allen was a good mechanic; and Leonard had a good business education. It seemed that their combined talents could make a go of it.

After the addition to Mr. Tate's garage was finished, Leonard and his parents met Marjorie and her family in New Orleans. There they were married by her grandfather, a minister. The young couple came to Perry after their honeymoon and Betty joined the group that fall. Tamac formally became incorporated, company stock was sold, and they were on their way.

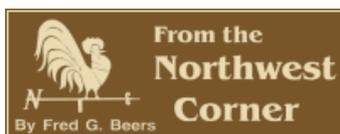
Work schedules at the new pottery plant typically involved 12 to 14 hours per day for the two young couples. Zoma Tate helped regularly in the retail store and Henry worked part time where needed. Soon they began producing a set of dishes, known as "One-Handers," for use in backyard barbecues, a fad which they correctly predicted would become popular throughout the U.S. Each set consisted of a 9-inch free-form dinner plate and saucer cast in one piece, with a corner built up in three grooves to hold silverware; a large cup and a tumbler. The sets got their name because all of the pieces could be easily balanced with only one hand. The cup had a tunnel to fit the index finger and thus insure a tight grip.

Macaulay is credited with the basic idea of the One Hander, and it was the company's best known product. However, he was not the creative partner; mechanics were his forte. He was inventive in improvising equipment and tools for the

production line. But Marjorie's background in art and industrial design played a big part in creating the Tamac look.

Starting with butterscotch, a yellow color trimmed in brown, the owners soon added a yellow-green trimmed in darker green (avocado), a pine green with a frosted white trim (frosty pine), a brown with lighter trim (frosty fudge), and eventually a pink with lacy trim (raspberry). An ivory-beige combination was added by different owners in later years.

The outlook appeared bright. Long hours and hard work seemed to be paying off and the company saw the need to expand. Tamac's rise, and then the demise, will be described in the next Northwest Corner.



## ***June 15, 1996***

**Careful Handwork** added to the quality of products coming from Tamac Pottery plant some 40 years ago in Perry. Shown here are Doris Poe (left) and Mary Hladik, two employees of the firm at that time, lightly sanding surfaces of cups and goblets before the final glaze was applied. Mrs. Hladik and her husband, Joe, later purchased the Tamac business before it was finally closed some 25 years ago.

Examples of Tamac Pottery are shown in this photo, made from an advertising piece used by the Perry business at the height of the line's popularity. Collectors still avidly hunt these Perry-made items.

Tamac Pottery started in Perry in 1946 as a post-World War II dream of two young couples, Leonard and Marjorie Tate and Allen and Betty Macaulay. Marjorie and Betty met during wartime while working in the East. Leonard and Allen became acquainted after their separation from the Navy and the Army, respectively. They all wound up in Perry, Leonard's hometown, manufacturing the novel, free-form backyard barbecue dinnerware which bore a combination of their last names, Tamac. The line was well received from the day it was first offered.

Business was doing so well by 1948 that the owners were faced with an urgent need to expand. Perry's standing offer of free factory sites was accepted and the owners received an excellent 300-foot location at the southwest edge of Perry fronting on U. S. 64-77. The \$30,000 building program was started in April. Stock was re-issued, money was borrowed from friends and relatives, and construction of a 40' x 120' quonset building was ordered. New equipment was installed to increase production. In September 1948 the plant was moved from the original backyard location at the home of Leonard's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Tate, to the new site.

Marketing on a grand scale was a problem. Production was not. Local people could be trained to fire the kiln and process the raw clay into finished, attractive pieces of pottery. The work crew included about ten men and women most of the time. Teamwork made it possible to turn out around 300 hand-made pieces per day. Major national magazines took note of the unique "One-Hander" dinnerware, drop-in traffic increased at the local retail store, and sales quickly mounted. Some major department stores in Oklahoma, Texas and elsewhere in the Southwest stocked Tamac Pottery. One of the major accounts was Garfinkle's Department Store in the nation's capital.

Leonard and Allen both felt the chain of events which led to establishment of the venture was more than a coincidence. "When two plain citizens with little pull, and few contacts, can secure materials where there are none, get help or advice

when none was anticipated, and, finally, hit on a successful idea the first try, it is inevitable that we should conclude that the hand of God is pulling strings somewhere," they were quoted as saying in a 1948 interview.

But the young industry was under great pressure to expand its output, its product line and the number of outlets. Qualified sales representatives were hard to find. In the larger stores, Tamac suffered an identity crisis and often became lost in the shuffle among other brands.

By 1950 Allen and Betty had lost their zeal for pottery making. They decided to leave, so Leonard and Marjorie bought their interest in the company and the Macaulays returned to their roots in New Jersey.

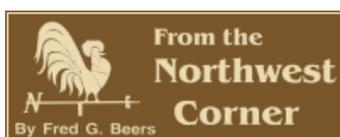
Public acceptance of Tamac was never a problem. Customers liked the colors, the variety, the quality and the availability of the Perry-made product, but distribution and marketing were something else. Financial problems mounted, and by 1952 the company was forced into bankruptcy. Leonard's uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Bechtold, bought the business and their son, Raymond, operated it successfully for a few years. He added several pieces to the line, but in a few years he also ran into financial difficulties and Tamac again was sold to Joe and Mary Hladik. Their daughter, Lenita Moore, and Mrs. Hladik operated it for a few more years, but in the 1970s Tamac was closed forever.

Leonard and Marjorie moved back East after leaving the business. Leonard was a sales representative for Arrow Shirt Co. for a time, then obtained a government position in he Washington, D. C. The Tates lived there and abroad until moving to Winchester, VA, in 1969. Leonard died in 1987. Marjorie still makes hex home in Winchester and pursues her interests in painting and arts club work. A daughter, Vicki, and husband, John Knauss, live nearby. Vicki was Perry's New Year's Baby when she was born here on Jan. 1, 1952. The Tates' other daughter, Alice, lives in Florida.

The Tamac quonset building now houses Corky Oden's painting and sandblasting business on the curve of U. S. 64-77 at the south edge of town. Tamac was the subject of numerous articles in journals of general circulation during its heyday, and it continues to interest collectors today. Many samples of the One-Hander and other articles turned out by the Perry pottery plant are now on display in shops specializing in collectibles, such as Carol Steichen's Antiques on the Square and Roy Kendrick's Cherokee Strip Antique Mall, both on the north side of the square. Frankoma and Other Oklahoma Potteries, by Phyllis and Tom Bess, gives a brief but interesting account of the Tamac story.

Tamac's forward-looking design, conceived nearly 50 dears ago, is still considered significant by today's artisans. The Dallas Museum of Art recently featured an exhibit on Hot Cars, High Fashion, Cool Stuff. Designs of the 20th Century. The objective was to tell the history of design in the 20th century through decorative and fine arts using pieces on loan as well as from the museum's own collection. Among the latter were several examples of Tamac pottery. Other pieces shown included a Ferrari, a vintage Rolls Royce, Dior and Coco Chanel fashions, art deco work by Erte, and pieces by Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright. Pretty heady company for the Perry--made pottery. Interesting to note, there were no pieces from Frankoma.

But the color, the drama, the heartbreak and the achievement of the onetime Perry business cannot be fully told in mere words and cold pieces of pottery. It was a stirring adventure, a heady climb to the top of the highest part of the amusement park's roller-coaster thrill ride, then the fast descent into oblivion, all combined with unadorned human pathos, romance and frustration. Those pieces of Tamac Pottery are made of more than just clay. They contain the elements of a classic American success story that somehow fell short.



## **June 18, 1996**

One more footnote remains to be added to the Tulsa Photography Collective's excellent "Day in the Life of Perry," the photo essay of this city undertaken by the group last year. Photos made by the Tulsans during that assignment were displayed in April at the Cherokee Strip Museum here, then were moved to the pictures gallery at the University Center at Tulsa where they remained through June 2. They now are part of the Collective's permanent collection. In addition to the photos displayed here in April, a few more prints have been added.

The Collective's most recent newsletter, *Untitled Images*, is devoted to the assignment here and it contains a poignant note of special local interest by Janice McCormick. She is a member of both the Tulsa Photography Collective and the Tulsa Artists' Coalition, and she also writes a column for *Urban Tulsa*. In the newsletter she describes the group's interest in history, and concludes with this:

"The second event (about the Perry assignment) that made this point about creating an historical record through photography occurred to me personally. On one of my wanderings through the residential part of Perry, I encountered an elderly gentleman, Gus Malget. His careworn face, reserved demeanor, denim overalls and dapper hat caught my eye. After receiving his permission, I took two photos. One was a full length view of him, and another from the torso up. The latter one became one of three works I put in the *On Assignment: Perry* exhibit.

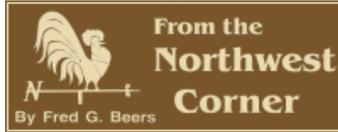
"Upon visiting the show's reception in Perry's Cherokee Strip Museum in April, I overheard a couple making a reference to Mr. Malget in my photo. They told me that he had died three weeks ago. Recalling how few photos I have of my late mother inspired me to print the second photo. I shared both photos with his family. Although I don't know what role Mr. Malget played in the life of Perry, at least I had made a photographic note of his existence."

Perry folks enjoyed getting acquainted with the photographers when they came here for the assignment on Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 last year, and apparently the feeling was mutual. We enjoyed playing host to them and they said they want to return here in the future. The Collective is a non-profit arts organization made up of professional, student and amateur photographers. The organization was founded in 1984 to promote photography as an art form. Today it receives partial funding from the State Arts Council of Oklahoma and the National Endowment for the Arts. Their mailing address, if you have questions or comments about their trip to Perry, is: Tulsa Photography Collective, 3525 South Urbana, Tulsa, OK 74135-2041, telephone 918-747-2041.

The Perry project was the Collective's tenth annual assignment of this sort. Previously they visited Pawnee, Drumright, Pawhuska, Nowata, Muskogee, Okmulgee, Tahlequah, Guthrie and Bristow. According to the group's newsletter, they hope to make this type of project an annual event so that a permanent photographic record of small community life in Oklahoma in the 1980s and 1990s will be preserved.

"In today's world," the newsletter says, "the more we change the more we become alike. There was a time when each town, state and region was distinctively different. Now, with chain restaurants, hotels and retail establishments like McDonald's, K-Mart and Holiday Inn popping up everywhere, it can be hard to tell whether you're in Tokyo, New York or Tulsa. Places are beginning to look the same no matter where you are. The Tulsa Photography Collective's 'On Assignment' project is an attempt to preserve some of the things that make individual Oklahoma towns different from each other."

I dare say Perry has more distinctive qualities in terms of people, buildings and culture than most of America's small towns, so I'm glad the Tulsa group chose our community for their most recent assignment. Let's hope they really mean it when they say they want to come back and see us sometime. We'll welcome them warmly.



**June 20, 1996**

In 1938, the local Chamber of Commerce concocted a novel idea to rid Perry lawns of those pesky dandelions. A summertime contest was announced to encourage boys and girls to pick as many of the weeds as they could, tie them in neat bundles of 25 each and bring them to a checking station at the rear of the Masonic building on the west side of the square. Awards of \$5, \$3, \$2 and \$1 were offered for the largest numbers turned in, but each youngster who presented at least 75 plants was guaranteed a free ticket to one of the Perry movie theaters.

It was a great idea. Too successful, though. Perry had its usual bumper crop of dandelions that spring and the C-C did not count on the tremendous response they received from local boys and girls. The number brought in overwhelmed the Chamber's slim financial resources, so the contest was hastily and prematurely terminated. Marsh Woodruff, the C-C manager, quickly realized it didn't take long to gather up 75 dandelions when the supply was as plentiful as it was that year.

The Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority, which serves this city, has just issued its annual financial report and I have been flipping through its pages in search of interesting nuggets to share with you. As usual, the report is well written, brightly illustrated and brimful of charts and graphs to help explain the text. It's a good production and you probably can find a copy to peruse at our City Hall.

In a summation on "Change and Competition" as part of the letter from the chairman of the board/general manager, this comment is included: "The electric industry in the United States is in the middle of an unprecedented industry restructuring. Whether the market moves toward total deregulation or some hybrid form of competition is not yet clear. What is clear, however, is that change is not coming, it is already here."

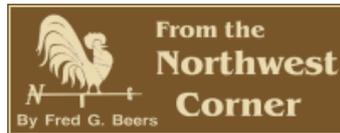
Which brings to mind an interesting remark made to me by a utility company official recently. We were discussing the humorous aspects of Mayor Fred Kretsch's 1938 lawsuit against the Apache Gas Co., when the city of Perry was granted a token reduction in gas prices averaging about 21 cents per month for local consumers. The executive, who views from a perspective of upper management at the state level in a major utility, said he foresees a day in the near future when gas service to local communities will be vastly different. He believes it will evolve into something like the long-distance telephone competition of today, in which one household can select a long-distance company while neighbors choose an altogether different service provider.

He believes there will be districts, or neighborhoods, within each municipality given the choice of several gas companies, and a transmission service will bring the fuel to them as they do now. He didn't say it would be better than the present method of long-term franchises; he said it would be different. Perhaps the same could be said about our current telephone service.

But, back to the OMPA report. Last year, the authority celebrated its 10th anniversary as a wholesale power supplier to Oklahoma municipalities. The city of Winfield, Kansas, signed as a new member of OMPA last December, marking the first sale to an out-of-state municipality. In Fairview, funds generated from extension of a one percent sales tax in January 1994, plus utility revenues, made possible the construction of a fine new City Hall complex. Most municipalities transfer

some funds from the electric utility to the general fund, which are used to operate the local municipality. A photo of the Fairview City Hall shows it to be an attractive brick building housing many units of their local government. Total cost of the complex was \$1,390,000.

Things have indeed changed in the electric industry, not just in Oklahoma but throughout the United States. What will the next decade bring to Perry?



## ***June 22, 1996***

There's nothing like a high school class reunion to bring a body crashing back to reality. It's amazing how many forgotten truths emerge at these periodic gatherings when mature adults sit around reminiscing about the days of their lost childhood. That's what makes a reunion so interesting. Take away the receding hairlines and expanding waistlines and just listen to the voices of those classmates. You'll find the present images begin to fade away and you can picture your teenage self years ago seated at one of those desks in the halls of dear old Perry High, struggling to pay attention while wisdom is being disseminated by the teacher. For a moment or two, we're young once again.

My gang, the class of 1941 at PHS, got together the other day to celebrate the 55th anniversary of our commencement. You probably have not heard that the class of '41 is considered to be one of the most outstanding collections of graduates yet produced by the local school system. That was our own appraisal, and we still lay claim to it, despite protests from every class before and since that year.

There were 88 of us and we had some of the prettiest girls, greatest scholars, best athletes and most ornery boys ever assembled in a single class anywhere. Most important, though, we truly liked each other and that fact has endured for more than a half-century. Hugs, handshakes and the exchange of anecdotes occupy most of our reunions, along with a few damp eyes as we remember good friends who are no longer with us.

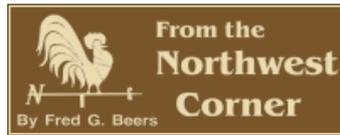
Amazing tales emerge from these reunions. For example: Our English and public speaking teacher, Elizabeth Green Rogers, disclosed for the first time that she was always aware of a little service I provided, ghost writing book reports and themes for classmates who had neither the time nor inclination to do them. She said the tip off was when I appeared at her desk each morning after those assignments were turned in. I was checking on the grades she gave us because my prices were based on a sliding scale. An "A" was worth 35 cents, a "B" was 25 cents, and a "C," which took only a few minutes to prepare, was 15 cents. This was a profitable sideline for a few semesters and I had no idea Miss Green (now Mrs. Rogers) knew what was going on.

Yes, I know now it was very wrong to do that, and I do not recommend that anyone else take up the practice. At the time I just considered it to be a service I could provide for my classmates. They never asked me to help with subjects like algebra and geometry, though.

Mary Bell Adkins, who died this week at the age of 80, was a spunky little lady who took a personal interest in the Perry families and businesses she served for several decades. She reared a daughter and four sons, supporting the family largely by doing household work or custodial chores at several locations. For 40 years she was the chief floor care person in the sprawling office complex of the Charles Machine Works, Inc. If a Ditch Witch employee spilled a cup of coffee or

anything else on one of her floors, he or she could expect a stern reprimand from Mary Bell, no matter what their executive level might be. Knowing that, most of them went to some lengths to mop up their own mess before she arrived on the scene. She was a dear little lady who will be missed in our community.

Bill Sheets has about completed the demolition of a two-story building next to his Perry Plumbing Co. on Cedar street. The old place had housed several businesses, mostly auto repair services, plus upstairs apartments, for many years, but time had taken a heavy toll on the building. Clearing it away has improved the looks of the immediate area.



## ***June 25, 1996***

Two professionals representing the Oklahoma Historical Preservation organization were in Perry the other day to explain the National Historic Register process for the benefit of property owners in our core business district. They requested a brief guided tour of the city, including the residential areas, and I am happy to report that they were intrigued with what they saw.

This was not a planned tour so nothing had been done ahead of time to prepare the way for them, and time was a problem so their hosts did not have time to show more than just a few highlights. They were delighted with the types of architecture found in our city, both residences and business and institutional type buildings, and, in some cases, they commented on the obvious care that has been taken to preserve the flavor of the early Oklahoma Victorian and prairie features that characterize this area.

The visitors were kind enough to say several nice things about our town, but the important tour also gave the rest of us a chance to step back and take a more or less objective view of things that we see every day without bothering to really think about them. Yes, we have succeeded in preserving much of our heritage through the restoration or care of our real estate, and a lot more is being planned right now through the Perry Main Street program.

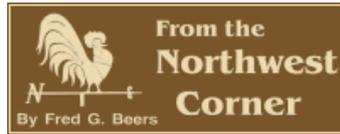
But that same little tour called to our attention some glaring eyesores that must surely be noticed by first-time visitors, even though they don't mention them. I'm talking about the abundance of grass and weeds flourishing in the cracks of sidewalks and curbs all around the square and in every block adjacent to it. It's true that nearly every ground level building around the square is now occupied, but it also is true that many of them have windows so dirty you can barely see through them. Piles of dirt are building up in front of businesses because the front sidewalks are not being swept, and gutters are clogged with leaves, old papers and any number of other kinds of trash.

Similar problems are evident in the residential areas. Most lawns are being well tended, but nearly every block has one or two spots where pride of ownership seems sadly lacking. You'll see a house where the trim is neatly painted and other signs of tender loving care are visible, but right next door may be the start of a badly blighted yard and home.

I hear a growing number of complaints about the weeds, trash and dirty windows around the square from folks who live here and shop here every day. They wonder how serious some of our merchants are about encouraging a shop at home attitude. Those visitors from Oklahoma City were polite enough not to mention such negative things, but you have to wonder what they thought about them.

A lot of good things are happening in this community and that makes us all proud. What each of us needs to do, in the business district as well as around our homes, is to try to look at our own property through the eyes of a stranger, one who would not hesitate to call out the problems he sees, and then take whatever steps are necessary to eliminate them.

Spray weed killer on those ugly sidewalk growths downtown, sweep the front sidewalks around the square every morning, wash the windows regularly, and pick up the trash from the gutter. Home owners can mow their grass and tend to all the other little details we know we should be doing, and then we'll be ready for an honest appraisal of our efforts by every visitor who drops in to tour our fine little city.



## **June 27, 1996**

As Mayor Hollingsworth pointed out the other day, Oklahoma towns and cities already have plenty of problems to deal with because of unfunded state mandates and inadequate revenues. They don't need little unexpected emergencies as Stillwater is now experiencing.

Our friends over there in the Payne county capital began noticing an unpleasant taste in their drinking water this week after a mechanical failure occurred in their processing plant. The ozone disinfecter, which I understand is used primarily to neutralize the flavor and aroma of their water, went totally kablooeey and the expected result was something not too pleasant. Now patience is being asked of customers while a fix is awaited. A new part has to be manufactured, and it will be an estimated four weeks before the replacement arrives.

It's easy for us to sympathize with our neighbors over there. Folks hereabouts are used to the distinctive flavor which develops in our local system almost every summer. They say the lake bed out at Lake Perry "turns over" when the surface is heated by the sun's rays, and this has some disturbing effect on the algae. The net result is some rather smelly water spouting from home spigots. We have almost become accustomed to it by now. Wonder if we have an ozone disinfecter?

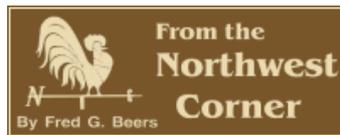
Web worms are showing up now in pecan trees and other varieties around Perry and in the rural areas. They need to be stopped early or they will destroy many decorative and valuable specimens in this area. Your nurseryman can recommend a spray or other course of action. Best remedy I've heard is to cut out the infected branches and burn them. If the worms are not destroyed, they will move on to other areas.

Speaking of trees, motorists who travel along I-35 a few miles south of Perry have been noticing a foliage phenomenon of sorts lately. A few weeks ago locust trees lining the highways, mostly on the west side, turned from their normal dark green hue to a most unusual, but beautiful, golden color. They looked very much like rain trees, not common old locusts. Then the color began fading and now the leaves are all a brownish, dead color. Other trees in the vicinity appear to be unaffected.

Several opinions have been ventured as to the cause, with our current drought the most obvious possibility, though not all trees are going through the metamorphosis. The most logical explanation I've heard is that an aerial crop duster's spray drifted onto the tree limbs and transformed them. The hope is that only this year's foliage is suffering and the trees will branch out fully once again next spring.

Pump prices for gasoline in Perry service stations are on the decline this week, just before the Fourth of July holiday. Best I've seen is \$1.09 per gallon for regular unleaded, down about a nickel. No telling where the trend will head next.

The other day a news report stated that a long-distance cable had been cut north of Guthrie, affecting service in several cities in this area. As usual, the story blamed a machine for the problem. But let's remember that the machine doesn't operate itself. Whatever cut the cable wasn't the machine's fault, any more than misspelled words in this column are the fault of my computer. I'm the perpetrator, not the machine. I operate the keyboard and control what goes into it. A machine operator, not the machine, is at fault when a cable is cut.



**June 29, 1996**

**Photo shows Henry T. Armstrong**, convicted of murder in Noble county in 1909. Does his tormented ghost still roam through the courthouse park?

**Gallows Under Construction** are shown prior to the hanging of Henry T. Armstrong in 1909. Planks needed to complete the project are visible in foreground. Carpenters on the platform evidently had to work around curious officials and other spectators, including young boys standing on the steps.

**Completed Gallows** underwent inspection by local officers shortly before the hanging of Henry T. Armstrong on November 19, 1909, in the Noble county courthouse park. A high fence prevented passersby from seeing the gallows.

The legend of the ghost of Mr. Armstrong at the Noble county courthouse has been almost forgotten here in recent years, but to earlier generations the story was a powerful means of ushering pre-pubescent Perry males to the threshold of manhood. As described in an earlier column, wide-eyed youngsters were led to the courthouse park at night and told to call out loudly: "Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Armstrong, what did you do that made them hang you?" They were told they would hear "nothing, absolutely nothing," in reply. How did that get started? Let me tell you about it.

Henry Armstrong, 59, was executed by hanging on the morning of November 19, 1909, on the lawn of the Noble county courthouse. His body was then interred in a local cemetery despite his warning that if he was buried here his spirit would haunt this place. That's the stuff legends are made of, and for nearly 90 years stories have been told about the condemned man's ghost roaming the courthouse park after dark.

Mr. Armstrong was convicted of first degree murder in the death of Isaac Fell, a Noble county farmer about 36 years old, on Saturday, December 19, 1908. The killing took place on a rural Noble county road on the Otoe reservation near the Bliss/Marland area. Mr. Fell's body was found six days later, on Christmas day, in 16 feet of water in an abandoned well about three and a half miles south of Morrison, inside the Payne county line. The victim was hauled there, his body covered by a pile of hay, on a wagon driven by Mr. Armstrong and a younger companion, Albert Mitchell, 20. The murder site was about 18 miles north of the well in Noble county.

Mr. Fell had been shot twice in the head with a .44 caliber six-shooter. His wife reported him missing to Sheriff Austin C. Nicewander when he failed to contact her after leaving home the morning of December 19 for his job shucking corn on the Arkansas River. Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Mitchell immediately became suspects when the sheriff learned they were among the last to see Mr. Fell the day he left his family. Mr. Armstrong never wavered in protesting his innocence, but Mr. Mitchell

broke down soon after his arrest and told details of the killing. He blamed his older accomplice with firing both bullets into the victim's head. Mr. Mitchell also was accused of first degree murder in the crime but was judged insane and committed to an asylum.

In his last few minutes on earth, Mr. Armstrong appeared stoic. He was led to the gallows by Father Willebord of St. Rose of Lima Catholic church; Hugh Cullivan, a Catholic layman; Sheriff Nicewander and Deputy Phillips. The condemned man had no last words to offer from the gallows. He did not flinch when the noose dangling from an overhead clevis, a U-shaped metal shackle, was placed around his neck.

The Perry Republican reported that some 80 people witnessed the hanging, noting that "the two coolest present" were Mr. Armstrong and the officer "whose solemn duty it was to arrange the details and operate the machinery that was the instrument of death." It was a time of rich descriptive superfluity of words in reportage of the news.

The straps were adjusted and a cap was placed on Mr. Armstrong's head. When the trap was sprung at 10:33 a.m., the bound body plunged through the opening on the floor of the elevated platform. The prisoner was pronounced dead of a broken neck 22 1/2 minutes later by Doctors Brengle and Watson. Mr. Armstrong had requested that his wife bury him in Pawnee, stating that if he was buried here his spirit would haunt this place and those instrumental in effecting his conviction and execution. "He displayed great hatred for Perry and its people," the Republican reported. But, no one appeared to claim the body, and the remains were interred at county expense in the local Catholic cemetery. The ghost story no doubt ensued as word of the victim's warning spread after the execution.

The widow of Isaac Fell was the only woman witnessing the hanging. She came here from Winfield, Kan., where the family had moved, to see her husband's killer punished. Although officially considered to be a public execution, photos of the wooden gallows show that at least two sides were fully screened by high fences. The site was on the grounds around the old wooden courthouse which stood near the northeast corner of the park, a short distance east and north of the present three-story stone courthouse.

The next Northwest Corner will wrap up final details of this story, along with some interesting present-day sidelights.