



November 2, 1996

The Perry Improvement Program proposition on Tuesday's general election ballot may go down in the record books as one of the most spirited local campaigns in many years. It's good to have healthy discussion based on the issues if you can see through the smoke screens and flawed information that somehow seem to become part of the debate.

The mayor, city council and other proponents of the 2.75 sales tax increase have identified our most critical needs as an alternative water supply, an aggressive street repair program to eliminate potholes, and renovation of the city-owned Perry Memorial Hospital property to keep it in tune with the times. Operating a city takes money, and their solution to that is to bring our local sales tax level back into line with such neighboring cities as Ponca City, Stillwater and Enid.

The proposed 2.75 local increase would make our total bite amount to 8.5 cents on the dollar. Several surrounding cities are planning to raise theirs to 9 cents or higher because they are struggling with their own problems, and they all require financing. Cities have no magic source for funding. It has to come from the people they serve.

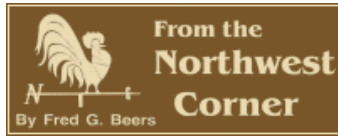
Perry Improvement Program supporters have tried very hard to place the facts before Perry voters and to make us aware of the critical needs facing this community. There is no cheap way to adequately resurface streets, provide an adequate, safe water supply and bring our hospital up to acceptable standards. It just takes money.

Some of the negative statements we've all heard have attempted to inject personalities into the discussion, but that should not enter into it at all. The people we have designated as our leaders in municipal affairs are trying to do their jobs by telling us what this city needs. Not frills, not luxuries. This is amount maintenance as much as anything. We are actually struggling just to provide ourselves with a basic water supply, decent streets and adequate medical care. Taking care of such primary needs is just common sense. If we continue to neglect them, it will amount to a major step backward. Addressing them through the Perry Improvement Program is a step forward.

The 2.75 sales tax increase would run for not longer than 15 years. Judging from past experience, all three proposals would be paid off in considerably less time than that. Our city leaders have proven they can act prudently in handling financial matters. The water treatment issue, the most recent example, was retired years ahead of time. Local officials have earned our trust in that regard.

Some who object to the proposal have threatened to drive to neighboring towns to do their shopping. As demonstrated above, all cities of any size in this area of Oklahoma have a local sales tax amounting to almost exactly the same size as proposed in Perry, or in some cases more. Add the considerable expense of driving out of town to the cost of shopping, and there is no saving to be realized by doing that. That would only provide revenue for those towns to improve at our expense. Sales tax dollars spent in Perry will help this town, not Stillwater, Ponca City, Enid or Oklahoma City.

We have been confronted with the facts in an intelligent, honest way. The choice is ours in Tuesday's general election. What direction will Perry take -- forward or backward? Will be proud or embarrassed by the choice we make? It's up to us now. Be sure to cast your vote. Yours is the one that counts.



November 5, 1996

Folks in the Perry Main Street organization will launch a series of what they're calling "block parties" next Thursday evening with an informal get-together on the main floor of the Foucart building, where Main Street is based. This event is for all business people and property owners on the south side of the square. Main Street will host each of the other three sides of the square at similar functions on a quarterly basis over a year's time.

Thursday night's get-together will start at 6:30 p.m., and there will be a simple meal (chili, soup, or something like that) for all the south siders who attend. Invitations went out last week, with an R.S.V. P. requested to make sure enough food is on hand. Jim Waters from the Oklahoma Main Street office in Oklahoma City will be there to discuss the organization's goals and explain how local merchants can take advantage of the program. Clyde Speer, president of the Perry Main Street, and Liz Meinert, chairman of the group's Organization Committee, are hopeful that the quarterly meetings will strengthen the growing relationship among Main Street's directors, business men and women, and property owners.

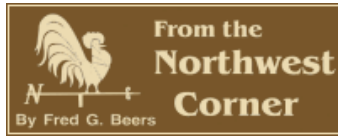
Perry Main Street people are working hard to help build our core business district. They have a program that has proved successful in communities this size throughout the country. Let's hope it keeps on clicking here. Meetings like the one Thursday night will help with communications between Main Street and merchants, and that can only be mutually beneficial.

Like all the rest of you, I get a lot of unsolicited, wacky stuff in the mail. One that arrived the other day was a good example for which I can see no plausible explanation. It invited me to a two-day sneak preview sale at a jewelry store in Middletown, Ohio, offering "dramatic price reductions" of 25% to 63%. Unfortunately, the sneak preview ended the same day my mailed invitation arrived, leaving me insufficient time to arrange a trip to Ohio. I hate to miss opportunities like that.

Perry's historic "church on a perch," now resting on a solid foundation at CCC Park on a promontory overlooking the lake, soon will receive a new cedar shingle roof as the next step in a general restoration project. The Perry Development Coalition's Historic Preservation Committee is guiding the work in an orderly fashion. Randy McGuar has been selected as the roofing contractor.

The old frame church, once the sanctuary of the St. Mark's Episcopal congregation here, is believed to be about 100 years old. St. Mark's converted it to a fellowship hall years ago and it became surplus when church members voted to replace it with a new brick building. The Historic Preservation Committee rescued it from destruction and directed the move from Seventh and Grove to the present resting place at CCC Park, with an intermediate stop at Sixth and Fir where it sat precariously on a temporary base. That gave rise to the "church on a perch" nickname which has stuck all this time.

The Historic Preservation Committee invites contributions from groups or individuals to help continue the extensive renovation work needed to make the old building usable for wedding receptions, family gatherings and other assemblies. Contact Bill Haynes or Anna Lou Randall for further information.



November 7, 1996

Next Monday will bring us the annual observance of Veterans Day throughout this country. Flags will fly from homes and businesses and a few folks will even get the day off. Perry fourth graders will sing patriotic songs that night in the high school auditorium. It used to be called Armistice Day, and it's very likely that not very many people know exactly what that means or why we're doing this.

An "armistice" is defined as an agreement for the general cessation of active hostilities between two or more belligerents. In other words, a peace treaty to end a war. The first official Armistice Day was established to mark the anniversary of the cessation of hostilities between the Allies (the U.S., Britain and France) and Germany at the end of the first World War. That historic event, bringing to an end the first truly global conflict, occurred at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918, so that date was chosen for the observance of Armistice Day. Making it easy to remember was the symmetry of numbers – the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

The first World War was supposed to be "the war to end wars," so imagine our surprise in 1939, just 21 years later, when Germany and Italy lined up as the Axis powers, later to be joined by Japan, to face off against the Allies -- the U.S., Britain and France -- for another war. In due time, that one was named "the Second World War," or "World War II" for short. I think that name must have come from Time magazine and others in the media because it could easily be made to fit into a one-column headline when shortened to "WWII." But, back to Armistice Day.

The first World War, or WWI, also led to the creation of major veterans organizations, such as the American Legion, and for years our local chapter, the Ellis-Jirous post, sponsored an observance to pay tribute to those who served in that historic conflict. Parades were common, and school children were invited to write essays on the subject. The meaning of Armistice Day was made very clear. The Legion and auxiliary, along with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its auxiliary, provided other patriotic programs throughout the year. They were worthwhile organizations and they remained active after World War II ended in the summer of 1945.

Changing times and the advent of smaller wars, like the Korean "conflict," seemed to diminish interest in the VFW, the American Legion and other organizations, and emphasis on the annual observance of Armistice Day waned. On June 1, 1954, President Eisenhower -- the hero of World War II -- signed a bill redesignating the holiday as "Veterans Day," honoring those who served in all wars. The date was changed from November 11 to the Monday nearest November 11. By coincidence that date does fall on a Monday this year. The day is still marked by appropriate ceremonies in many places.

Britain, our staunch ally in both WWI and WWII, has proclaimed the Sunday nearest November 11 as a day of tribute to the dead of both World Wars.

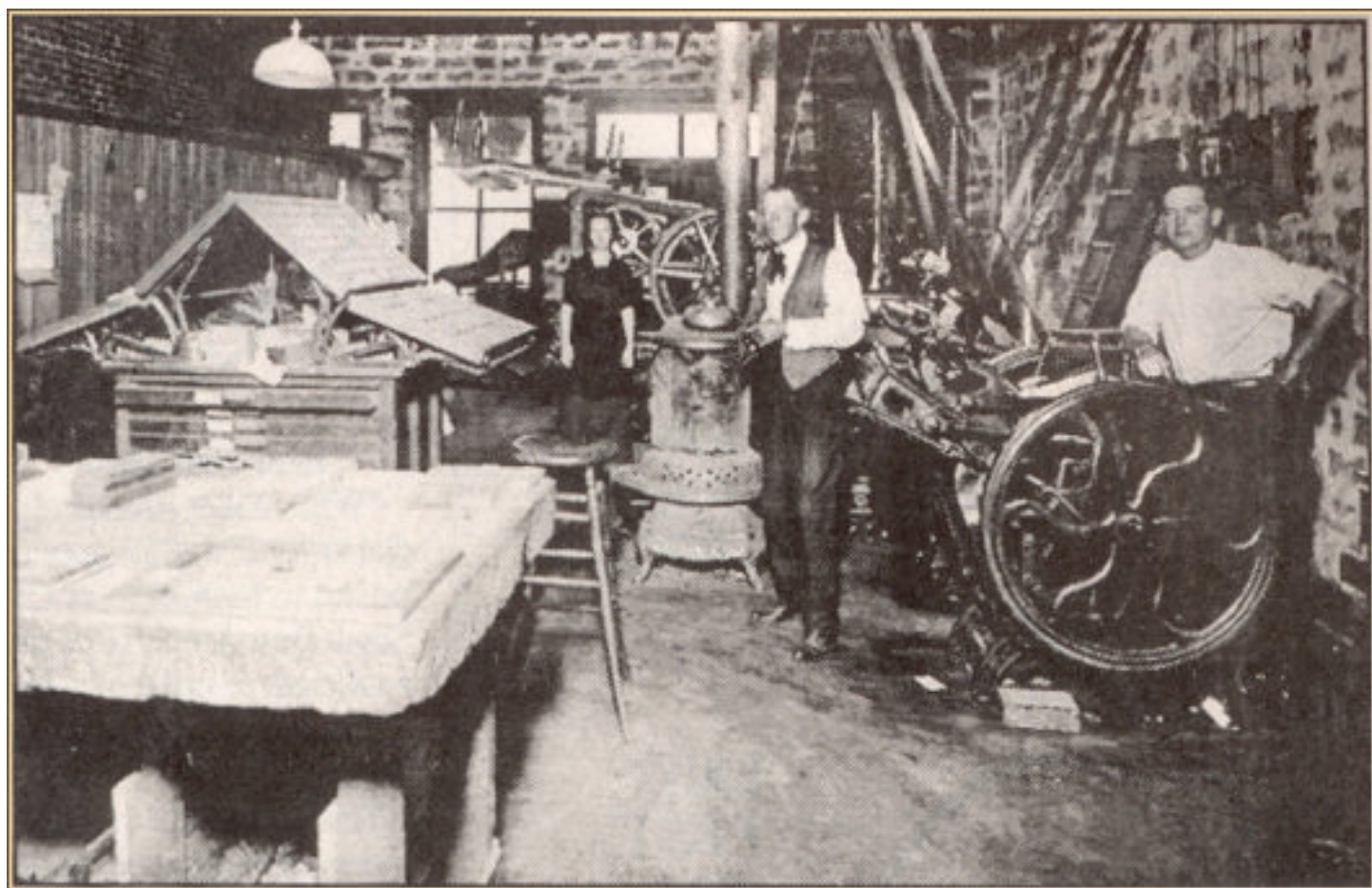
So, there is no "Armistice Day" today as we used to know it, but Veterans Day still calls us to a solemn moment of recognition to honor the men and women of this country who served the flag with honor and the ultimate tribute. It is a serious matter and the day deserves better understanding than it now has.

In days gone by, the time whistle at the Perry power plant would blow promptly at 11 a.m. each November 11, and at that time citizens were urged to reflect quietly on the debt we owe to those fallen service men and women, and to honor all them. Veterans Day still gives us that opportunity even though there won't be a parade or any other formal observance. It doesn't have to be at 11 a.m., and it doesn't have to be just on Monday or on November 11, but somehow now and then, offer

a word of thanks to those who helped preserve the liberty that we all now take for granted. Because of them, we in this nation enjoy a way of life that is envied by millions of less fortunate citizens around the world.



November 9, 1996



Judge E. W. Jones (center) is pictured standing amid printing equipment of his early day Perry newspaper, *The Perry Republican*, around 1913. In left foreground is a composition stone where pages were made up. Behind it are cases of type for handsetting articles and ads. Beyond the pot-bellied stove is a sheet-fed flatbed press for printing the weekly newspaper. At right is a smaller press for job printing. The woman at left and the man at right are not identified. Judge Jones was editor of the paper.

Mary Huffman, a young lady from the Oklahoma Historical Society office in Oklahoma City, spent some time in Perry recently gathering information about this community, Noble county and *The Perry Daily Journal* for a laudable project -- tracing the history of every newspaper that has ever existed in Oklahoma. As you might imagine, that's a daunting task. Right now she is concentrating exclusively on this county, and an incredible number of unanswered questions remain to be clarified. Perry alone has had a surprisingly large number of papers. Others were published at various times in Billings, Morrison, Red Rock and Marland, and little information is now available about some of them.

Mary had headed up this project since it began in 1992. Although much more research and study will be required to finish it, the work is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and the future underwriting of that controversial

agency is uncertain right now.

Let's hope Mary's project can be concluded before the money runs out. Newspapers are reflections of the times we live in. They give us the clearest image of what it was like at any given period. Perry has been home to papers of Republican, Democratic and independent leanings, and some of them were pretty radical -- even stooping to the level of today's supermarket tabloid rags. But ironically, while the newspapers tell us about ourselves, they do not always give us detailed records about themselves. Things like when they began, who set the policies, or when they ceased to exist are often vague or simply not provided. That's what makes Mary's work so difficult.

Most of us have heard the names of some of the old- time Perry newspapers. *The Perry Daily Times* was the first. It was printed in Guthrie and distributed here on Sept. 16, 1893, the day of the opening of the Cherokee Outlet. I have a copy of that paper, and of course it is in very delicate condition. The entire front page was printed in red ink but all the inside pages are in conventional black ink. Some of the others were *The Perry Republican*; *Perry Daily Independent*, *Perry EnterpriseTimes*, *Noble County Sentinel* and *Noble County News*. There were others, including a German-language paper to serve the large German immigrant population in this area.

Perhaps we have more information about *The Perry Republican* than the other early-day weekly and daily papers here because the editor was E. W. Jones, Esq., an attorney and historian who took the time and trouble to record important things about this community. I have great admiration for the things he did during his lifetime here. I have quoted him very often, including portions of his *Early-Day History of Perry, Oklahoma*. This brief treatise was, faithfully reprinted by the Noble County Historical Society a few years ago, and it contains many nuggets of information about the formative years of this city. I hope you have a copy in your home. If not, it's at the library.

But Judge Jones did not become associated with the Perry paper until July 5, 1913, when he came here from Billings. (I presume he was with *The Billings News*, then published by L. C. Brown.) An announcement, in *The Republican* on that date listed Judge Jones as editor and O. L. (Otis) Hamm as business manager. Mr. Hamm had been a printer on a competitive newspaper in Perry. The period prior to Judge Jones' and Mr. Hamm's stewardship is not covered as thoroughly as the years subsequent to July 5, 1913. My parents were friends of Mr. Hamm and his wife, Grace, continuing that relationship long after the Hamms moved to Oklahoma City. Judge Jones was a familiar figure around town when I was a schoolboy. In his younger years, he had been a sterling player on the powerful Red Rock baseball team, along with Barney Woolverton, Judge W. E. Rice, Charles Arkeketa, C. L. Atherton, Ted Borash, D. R. Swaney, Walt Babb and Horton Homeratha. A photo of that team is one of the features of the 1996 calendar published by the Noble County Genealogy Society.

During the Jones-Hamm era, *The Republican* exhorted its readers each week to trade at home with the people who paid local taxes, rather than with who hit town for a few days and then left. It was like our present-day problem, except now many shoppers go out of town to buy things that are available in Perry stores. This crusade was carried on until the Jones-Hamm paper ceased to exist, but we still have the problem and this newspaper still pleads with shoppers to buy at home.

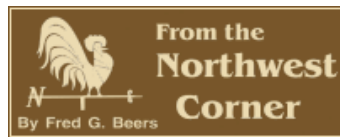
On Jan. 5, 1922, *The Republican* announced that Mr. Hamm had become editor and manager. Both Judge Jones and Mr. Hamm were listed as co-publishers. Another change of ownership was announced on March 8, 1923. The partnership of the past 10 years was dissolved. Judge Jones became the full publisher and editor and Mr. Hamm retired from the newspaper business to become connected with the Co-Operative Publishing Co. of Guthrie. Judge Jones wrote:

"Having been a county judge for the past two years has weaned me away from radical partisanship, yet the Republican political faith will continue to be advocated in a strictly legitimate and conscientious manner." The last issue of *The Perry Republican* appeared on Jan. 31, 1924, when it was merged with *The Noble County Sentinel* to create the new daily and weekly, *The Perry Journal*. The new owners were C. P. Penfield and E. M. Willett, who also had owned *The Sentinel*. Later

that year a young man named W. K. Leatherock came to Perry and purchased the new daily newspaper. He continued as editor and publisher until his death in 1949, when his associate, Milo W. Watson, became publisher. I had the privilege of working alongside both of them. Milo is now in ill health in a retirement center, and that pretty well brings us up to date on the status of newspapers in Noble county.

The official name of this historic study is "Oklahoma Newspaper Project" (ONP). A new grant of \$150,000 has just been received, guaranteeing that the task of cataloging the Oklahoma Historical Society's inventory of newspapers will continue through next April. By April 30, 1997, the OHS anticipates that newspapers in 64 of Oklahoma's 77 counties will be cataloged in the national Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). That would represent the entry of a minimum of 2,173 titles in the OCLC database. The project operation began on July 1, 1992, after the OHS received a \$574,311 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Best wishes to Mary Huffman and the OHS staff as they continue working on this commendable project. It is badly needed for future historians, not to mention our own edification today.



November 12, 1996

The weather in Perry on the morning of August 28, 1929, was typically mid-summer: hot, humid and promising more of the same. One thing made the early morning hours of that day noteworthy, however. The mighty German airship, the Graf Zeppelin, sailed serenely overhead in the pre-dawn hours while hundreds of Perry citizens, some of them only half-dressed, watched in awe from their yards and city streets below.

The sighting here at that hour was unexpected, although it was known that the ship would be flying over Oklahoma that day en route to a hangar at Lakehurst, New Jersey. The exact flight path was not publicized. Some Perryans had driven to Oklahoma City the night before, hoping they would have a better view of the flight from there. As it turned out, Oklahoma City spectators saw much less than those who remained in Perry. The ship, about 800 feet long, was at an altitude estimated at between 3,000 and 5,000 feet as it soared across Noble county.

Thanks to Art Campbell, a volunteer fireman, Perry residents were aroused from their slumber by the city's fire siren as the Graf Zeppelin approached. Campbell, always an early riser, saw the zeppelin heading this way and notified the fire station. Firemen sounded the siren for at least five minutes and thus spread the word, according to a box on the front page of *The Perry Daily Journal*. "This played an important part in helping to awake the city and making it possible for many to wake up," *The Journal* said. The paper devoted several front page columns to coverage of the flight, even including a three-column photo of the airliner which evidently was pulled from a permanent file of news pictures. The newspaper reporter described it this way:

"Sailing majestically just as though it was on exhibition for Perry alone, the mighty Graf Zeppelin passed over Perry -- between 5:30 and 5:45 a.m. while hundreds of Perry citizens dressed in night gowns, pajamas and even some in less than those gazed at the mighty airliner." The account told of the "zum, zum; zum" sound emanating from the ship's five Mercedes-Benz diesel engines while local residents turned their faces skyward.

The Graf Zeppelin, one of the marvels of the world in the era following the first World War, was en route to Lakehurst from Germany. According to the World Almanac, the ship had left Friedrichshafen, Germany, on August 14 and was flying to Lakehurst with a scheduled arrival there on September 4. That was to be the culmination of a 21,700-mile world flight.

Oklahoma would not seem to be involved in that flight plan, but one of the objectives may have been to build good will along the way. In that, the big ship was achieving great success. Crowds cheered it everywhere. The flight from Germany to Lakehurst required a little more than 20 days to complete. Even the early hour of the passage over Perry failed to dampen the enthusiasm of young people and their elders.

The Graf Zeppelin was completed in September 1928. It saw nine years of successful, continuous service. When commissioned in 1937, the Graf Zeppelin had made 590 flights, including 144 ocean crossings, and had flown 1,053,391 miles, carrying 13,110 passengers and 235,300 pounds of mail and freight, according to Encyclopedia Britannica. The ships were made lighter than air by filling the huge bags with helium. The Graf Zeppelin's helium capacity was rated at 3,708,600 cubic feet. Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, who pioneered the airship's design and gave his name to the craft, died in 1917. His successor, Hugo Eckener, commanded the ship when it flew over Perry.

The Journal story continued: "As the ship made its approach the headlights as well as the very dim lights of the cabin could be seen but as the ship passed over the city and headed on northeast the back of the ship could be seen. The gondolas, carrying the five motors of the ship, appeared as just small boxes tied below the mighty ship, while the cabin, which carries more than 60 passengers and members of the crew, appeared to be extremely small to take care of so many individuals."

Another story in the local paper had this two-column headline: "Perry Does Go In For Pajamas As Suitable Morning Costume," with this sub-head: "This Was The Popular Attire As Town Gazes At Giant Airship. The story said in part: "Perry had never been much on the pajama fad. Not once during the summer months has anyone here ventured forth in the night attire until -- well, the Graf Zeppelin is to blame." The reporter wrote that the town's best pajamas were on parade -- green ones, blue ones, red ones, white ones, and those with all the trimmings.

Some humorous sidelights were added, including this: "Little Clifford Blake ... was convinced the house was on fire (because of the siren) and carried his clothes outside with him. Ed White Mooter admitted that he grabbed his pants as he went outdoors but that they were in his hand, he learned, after standing gazing at the airliner. A prominent doctor was found with his trousers in his hands and not on his legs. A prominent attorney was the last to get out in his neighborhood; he wore the old fashioned night shirt which had slits in the side and which was not any too long."

So it went in Perry early in the morning on August 28, 1929. The Graf Zeppelin and other dirigible type aircraft were believed to be the luxury method of air travel of the future. Not until the tragic burning of the German zeppelin in Hindenburg on May 6, 1937, at the Lakehurst mooring did it become obvious that this type of air flight was never going to be safe enough to succeed. The Hindenburg disaster resulted in 36 deaths, and the zeppelin age came to a close without ever really starting. The Graf Zeppelin was one of the first of that breed to catch the world's attention, and on August 28, 1929, pajama-clad Perry residents had a closeup look at it.



November 14, 1996

A recent Associated Press story quoted a University of Oklahoma professor as saying homesteaders who made the Oklahoma land runs were "bums and losers trying to get something for nothing." Such statements pop up every now and then and they are usually left hanging with no verification or rebuttal, leading the uninformed to think that's the truth. I

missed the story when it first appeared, but one of the recognized authorities on the early history of this area has very adequately responded.

Stillwater author/historian D. Earl Newsom has come to the defense of our pioneers with a challenge to the accuracy of the AP story, which was based on the reported statement of OU Professor William W. Savage.

Mr. Newsom is the author of six books, including three which deal in detail with the Oklahoma land runs. One of his books about the Cherokee Outlet opening was published in our centennial year, 1993, and it is available at the Cherokee Strip Museum gift shop on West Fir Avenue. He has this to say about the statement attributed to Professor Savage, according to a recent story in the Stillwater newspaper:

"Actually, the (Cherokee Strip) settlers came from all walks of life. They included doctors, lawyers (100 settled in Perry the first day), farmers, newspapermen and all sorts of business people. Many of the 100,000 or so who gathered for the Cherokee Strip run came as a result of the panic of 1893. Banks closed and unemployment was high. People from across the nation came hoping to find new lives.

"Otis Lorton, who later became a principal editorial writer for the *Tulsa World*, was in the throng at Arkansas City, Kan. His description of the home seekers was among the best: 'In the throng ... were men and women from all walks of life, artists, writers, lawyers, doctors, gamblers galore, down-and-outers... rich man, poor man, beggar-man, thief -- but most of all the family man who wanted a home.'

"As soon as a run was over, a business district usually sprang up by the following morning. The Cherokee Strip was on a Saturday and nearly every new town held open air church services the next morning. In Stillwater, many of the '89ers were well-educated and took the lead in establishing the county seat and Oklahoma A&M College.

"Perkins founders were largely from agricultural backgrounds. They quickly laid out a townsite and within a short time established Perkins as the dominant agricultural center of the entire area.

"This, is not to say that life was entirely serene. Saloons opened in nearly all of the frontier towns. *The Wichita Eagle* said Perry had 73 in its 'Hell's Half Acre.' But law and order prevailed after a short time. Fred Stallard, who operated one of Stillwater's first saloons, later became mayor and led an effort to close down all saloons in town.

"Many descendants of those who made the early land runs are still in the Payne county (and Noble county) area and have for years been community leaders. Most would probably dispute Professor Savage's description of their ancestors as bums and losers,' and might question his preparedness to teach Oklahoma history."

Our friend Earl Newsom makes a good point as he sets the record straight on this occasion, and we thank him for that. His rejoinder should last until the next time some other equally ill-informed "historian" revives the same scandalous baloney about the good folks who made the Cherokee Strip land run on September 16, 1893.



November 16, 1996

Strolling through our verdant courthouse park on one of those recent fine fall days, I noticed a number of squirrels frisking through the fallen leaves and scampering up the graceful trees that so distinguish that five-acre tract. The sight took me

back several years to a time when children and adults enjoyed the antics of a family of squirrels living in a spacious cage located several yards west of the courthouse driveway.

The central feature of that cage, which I suppose was about 5'x 8' in size, was a rotating drum, open on both sides and mounted vertically on a metal shaft that served as an axle. The outer edges were enclosed by a wire mesh. The whole thing was perhaps 3' in diameter, big enough for a squirrel to climb into. It was a sort of exercise wheel for the playful little bushy tailed, red-furred rodents that were housed in that cage.

The structure had a slightly pitched green roof with a small overhang to shield the occasional rain and other elements from the open mesh wire that enclosed each side of the sturdily framed cage. The floor was bare ground. A locked door on hinges was used by the park caretaker to clean up once in a while and to provide water, grain and nuts for the tiny residents, supplementing various goodies offered by visitors. The cage was about 8' in height.

As I recall, the enclosure had a shelf about 10" wide on both of the long sides. The squirrels would squat or stand upright on the shelf, flipping their tails as they waited expectantly for their fans to proffer something to eat. Children were warned not to poke their fingers through the wire or otherwise run the risk of incurring painful injuries from the incredibly sharp squirrel teeth on the other side.

Nesting places were provided for the residents. The tiny spaces were secluded enough that the little animals could hide there in the straw so that sometimes their disappointed fans would depart without seeing a performance on the wheel. (The squirrels evidently enjoyed spinning the drum, but they knew the limits of their endurance and showed off only when they were in the mood.)

Many legends developed around the squirrel cage. Some said you could tell from the animals' behavior when a change in the weather was imminent, or by the way they disposed of nuts passed to them through the wire mesh. Far as I know, the squirrels were kept in the cage year around and their fur coats, along with the straw in their nesting places, kept them as snug as if they were in the hibernation place of their own choosing.

They delighted generations of children, but in time they became a problem. The cage needed constant repairs, or the wire mesh was damaged, or the lock on the door was inoperative -- or for other reasons the caged squirrels were requiring more time than the county commissioners felt they justified.

A few yards east of the squirrel cage was a large circular pond containing goldfish and lily pads. The water was aerated with a spray in the center of the concrete lined pool but inevitably this, too, became a problem to maintain. Scraps of paper, empty soda cans, bottles, cigarettes and other debris wound up in the pond, necessitating a lot of cleanup time. The fish also were affected by the trash and other foreign matter tossed into the water by careless and unthinking passersby. Just keeping the fish alive was not simple. The pond had to be drained in the winter, then scoured, cleaned and restocked when warm weather returned. After several possible solutions were tried unsuccessfully, it was finally agreed that the fish pond also had to go.

Concern had been expressed for the welfare of the squirrels and the fish, so when all these negative factors were examined it became clear that two of the park's most interesting features would have to be eliminated. Both were removed perhaps 30 years ago. The pond has been replaced by an outdoor seating area just west of the courthouse and the squirrel cage area is now covered by lush green grass. The squirrels were set free but I don't think any gold fish survived.

The park is still restful and beautiful with other features to admire, but they are mostly inanimate and not a real match for the entertainment provided by our squirrels and goldfish in days of yore. Perhaps someday we can think of some way to replace them.



November 19, 1996

Last week's Chamber of Commerce membership banquet was a splendid affair in every way. A capacity crowd filled the Elks Lodge ballroom and the roast beef dinner served by the Elks and Elkettes was just a tasty beginning for what proved to be a veritable avalanche of well-deserved tributes.

Art and Evelyn Brown were revealed as the chamber's joint winners of the Citizen of the Year award. This is the first time that title has been presented to a husband wife team, and no more deserving people could have been chosen. Dr. Brown's years of service to this community in the role of a general medicine practitioner have enabled him to exercise compassion along with the traditional healing arts, and Evelyn, his helpmate and a registered nurse, has been no less a part of that ministry. Though officially retired, you would not know that if you followed them around on a typical day. The folks at Operation Blessing, among others, are well aware of how Art and Evelyn have channeled their time and energies into new fields.

Carol McPeck of LJR Enterprises was announced as the Employee of the Year award winner. Portions from several letters that nominated her for this honor were read and they showed clearly that she was a good choice. Our friend Milo W. Watson, in absentia, was presented the chamber's first Lifetime Achievement Award, and the C-C directors certainly made no mistake in creating that form of recognition for this fine gentleman. It was an emotional moment when Milo's daughters, Carolyn Adkins and Mary Lee Streller, accepted the honor on their father's behalf.

Lloyd Brown, a past president of the chamber and a previous recipient of the Citizen of the Year title, was called forward to receive a Sam Walton Business Leader Award, the first of its kind to be bestowed upon a Perry resident. The award, made possible through the Wal-Mart company, which Walton founded, carries with it a \$500 donation to the chamber in Brown's name.

In addition to the awards, announcement was made of the sale of *The Perry Daily Journal* to Ken and Phillip Reid of Weatherford. They were here for the banquet, with their wives and Phillip's daughter, Hayden. You will be hearing much more about these folks and this transaction, but let me just say that I have known Ken Reid for several years and he is highly regarded in Oklahoma newspaper circles. With his son, Phillip, as a partner, he will bring a sound business, professional and ethical philosophy to our Perry newspaper. Milo also knows the Reids and I am sure he is pleased that they will be picking up the baton that he recently had to lay down because of his health.

Thanks to Cheryle Leach's fine job of coordinating the myriad of details needed to arrange an affair such as this, everything went off as scheduled. The after-dinner speaker, Dr. Lee Manzer of the Oklahoma State University college of business administration, gave just the right touch to the evening by combining wit and wisdom to his remarks, and dinner music by Elroy Goe filled the hall during the dinner. Gary Lawson again showed his dexterity as the community's all-purpose master of ceremonies in a most excellent way.

Congratulations to retiring C-C president Mike Doughty and his board of directors for their service and commitment, and best wishes to Paul Green and his board as they go about the job of keeping Perry on the road to growth and development. With the new year being launched in such a positive way, they have a running start on success. We are fortunate in this community to have such a wide-awake, hard-working crew of people banded together in an

organization like the Chamber of Commerce. If all of us pitch in to help, it cannot fail to achieve its goals, and that is good news for all of us in Noble county.



November 21, 1996

A comic strip panel in the newspaper showed a toddler asking mom and dad to play a game with him, only to hear both of them say, "Not right now. I'm busy." The second panel showed the same parents years later as a very old, gray-haired couple wishing they had found the time to play with their youngsters 'way back then. So that same day, when Jill and Amy came to grandma and grandpa's house for the afternoon and needed someone to help "make a barn" with plastic blocks, they didn't have to ask twice. Even grandpa found it easy to tear himself away from an exciting Sunday afternoon football game on TV. He discovered that the building project was infinitely more interesting, anyway.

Inice McDowell was one of the town's most dedicated walkers while she was still able to be out and about. She told me many times how she was taking a lot of medication for various ailments until one day a doctor prescribed a mild exercise regimen for her. She began with daily walks around the neighborhood and was surprised to find how quickly she was able to discontinue the daily intake of pills and tablets. That convinced her. She became a firm believer in the benefits of walking and didn't miss a day of strolling one or two miles. When the weather was bad, she walked in the Fellowship hall of a local church.

We used to live in Mrs. McDowell's neighborhood and can attest that she was a familiar figure each morning, striding along with a smile and a wave for each passerby. Many others, including the corps of walkers who visit the Perry YMCA on a regular basis, also can give testimony to the benefits of exercise and staying fit. Advanced age finally caught up with Mrs. McDowell, eliminating the possibility of her brisk morning walks and finally necessitating a move to Green Valley Nursing Home. We were sorry to read of her death at age 86 last week.

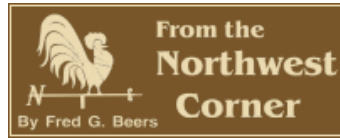
The death of Rudy Zorba, 74, also was saddening last week, closing as it did a chapter in the story of Perry's retail businesses. The Zorba family came to Perry in the summer of 1939, bringing Phil Zorba, his wife, Anne, and their two schoolage sons, Rudolph and Jack, to our town from Ponca City. At that time we had three major, family owned department stores -- Kraemer's, on the east side of the square, operated by Marguerite Kraemer Edson and her husband, Ott Edson; the Famous, on the south side, operated by Morris Gottlieb, George Gottlieb and Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Gottlieb; and Zorba's. Rudolph's wife, Twyla, is the only member of those families still living in Perry.

Before moving here, Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Zorba had operated clothing stores in Ponca City, Tonkawa, Drumright, Ardmore and also in Three Sands during the wild oil-boom days in that legendary area of Kay and Noble county. Mr. Zorba had many souvenirs of the Three Sands community, including a panoramic photo that showed the jungle of derricks where millions of barrels of black gold were pumped from the ground. Phillip Zorba arrived in the U.S. from Syria at the age of 16 in 1909, settling first in St. Louis before coming to Oklahoma.

The Zorba Department Store in Perry was on the north side of the square in the building now occupied by the Three Sands Oil Co. (how appropriate) and the law offices of Bob Kasper and Sarah Kennedy-Voise. Our family's drug store was just up the street from there, so Rudy, Jack and I spent a lot of time together as we grew up, thinking we were integral

parts of the north side community. When Phil and Anne retired, Rudy bought the store and operated it for several years. Jack, meanwhile, had moved on to Stillwater where he also had a fine men's apparel shop for a time.

Rudy, who had a degree in pharmacy, was one of the few World War II veterans from here who served in the South Pacific's Fiji Islands. He closed the Perry store when he retired a few years back and has not been in the best of health lately. His death, however, was unexpected, and this close-knit little city will miss him.



November 23, 1996

Edwin Malzahn and his Ditch Witch company are featured in two bright new publications now being distributed by Oklahoma State University. One of these is from the OSU Alumni Association, titled simply OSU Magazine, and the other is OSU Impact from the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology (CEAT). Both have slick formats with full color covers and inside photos. Ed Malzahn's familiar smiling face adorns the cover of the latter magazine, and both publications contain interesting stories about the Ditch Witch trencher that he and his father, Charles Malzahn, invented in 1948.

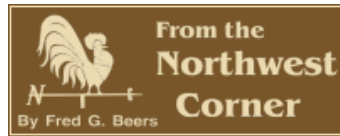
OSU Impact focuses on four successful CEAT graduates Wayne Allen, James E. Barnes, Edwin Malzahn and Frank A. McPherson. The article describes them as highly successful, hard working top executives of Oklahoma companies, all with strong ties to CEAT and OSU. "In fact," the writer states, "(they) are outstanding examples of OSU graduates whose 'dreams have been brought to life'." Wayne Allen is CEO of Phillips Petroleum, Jim Barnes is CEO of MAPCO, Inc., a diversified energy company, Frank McPherson is CEO and chairman of the board of the Kerr McGee Corporation, and Ed Malzahn of course is president and CEO of the Charles Machine Works Inc., manufacturer of Ditch Witch underground construction equipment. Full-length color photos of each of the four men accompany the articles about them

The CEAT magazine tells how CMW began in 1902 as a small repair shop and has grown to 25 acres of manufacturing space with 1,000 employees. Describing Ed as one who has truly lived the American dream, it quotes him as follows: "If retirement is doing just what you want to do, then I've been retired since graduating from college." Less than five years after his 1943 graduation from OSU with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, Ed and Charlie were inventing the first small mechanical trencher now known world-wide as the Ditch Witch.

"A strong supporter of his alma mater," the article continues, "Malzahn has served on the OSU board of regents and OSU Foundation board of governors." More recently he used a remote controlled trencher to start construction on CEAT's Advanced Technology Research Center. Continuing from the magazine: "The company is still owned by its profit-sharing employees and the Malzahn family. Known by everyone simply as Ed, he still oversees daily operations while his wife, Mary, tends their herd of cattle. 'I've never had any desire to be anywhere except Perry,' Malzahn says. 'I've watched my friends' kids and grandkids grow up and I want a lot more years of the same thing'."

The Alumni Association magazine contains virtually the same article plus another photo of Ed wearing a Ditch Witch ball cap and a Ditch Witch Underground Authority" sports shirt, open at the neck. I also noticed in the Alumni magazine that Wade Edmundson, son of Dr. and Mrs. Paul Edmundson, is listed as a member of the OSU Alumni Association executive committee. All in all, the two magazines contain a lot of interesting reading even for those who are not products of that big, friendly campus across the way in Stillwater.

Jerry Dawes believes he has discovered proof that there is life after web worms. A flowering crab apple tree in the lawn fronting the Oklahoma Department of Transportation building here, where he works, seemed to have been totally devastated last summer by those varmints. Every leaf on the tree was destroyed inside the tight, gauzy cocoon spun by the worms. Today, however, the same tree is covered with brightly blooming foliage. Its timing system may be slightly off, Jerry says, since it is supposed to flower only in the spring, but he's relieved to know the tree survived last summer's awful web worm assault.



November 26, 1996



This Was **Perry's Famous Store** as it looked in October 1931 when the business was reopened after a damaging fire. It was established on September 16, 1893, the day of the Cherokee Strip run, and survived for some 60 years. The Gottlieb brothers were owners in 1931.

Mary Ann Sherrard did a double take the first time she saw the store in the photo atop today's column. It's the Famous Department Store in Burkburnett, Texas, looking very much like the store with the same name (shown in the sketch) that used to anchor the south side of the square in Perry. It's not certain that the Burkburnett store had any connection with our Famous, but that seems unlikely.

The picture was taken a few, years ago when Mary Ann and her husband, David, were passing through Burkburnett to visit their son, Larry, who at the time lived in Snyder, Texas. Burkburnett, population about 10,000, is just south of the Red River and a few miles northwest of Wichita Falls. David now lives in De Leon, southwest of Fort Worth. Presumably the identical store names were just a coincidence. A friend of the Sherrards, Mrs. Sam Turner of southeast of Perry, used to live in Devol, not far from Burkburnett, and she remembers the Famous store there very well.

The Burkburnett store was in a single story building, while Perry's Famous was in the two-story building where Leroy Rolling's LJR Enterprises is now located. Just like Perry's Famous, the Burkburnett Famous had separate doorway entrances for the men's side and the women's side, but the interior of the store was open. Display windows fronting the Texas store's sidewalk entry area also resembled Perry's, providing generous expanses for mannequins modeling the latest fashions.

Perry's Famous store was Noble county's biggest supplier of apparel for several decades. It was established the day of the great Cherokee Strip run, September 16, 1893, by pioneer merchant James Lobsitz. It was purchased in 1908 by John Knox and Joe Stout, who sold the business to the Gottlieb brothers, Morris, Rudolph, George and Sam, in 1914. The Gottliebs sold the Famous in 1945 to Rice-Stix Co. of St. Louis, but in 1950 the store was closed. Later the Lentz Department Store operated in that location for a few years, but stiff competition and changes in customers' buying habits forced it to close in due time. We understand the Burkburnett store also is just a memory.

Many years have gone by, but Perry's Famous Department Store is still fondly remembered by those who grew up with it. Thanks to Mary Ann Sherrard for furnishing this photo and for helping us bring back thoughts of our Famous.

I used to think it was just wire coat hangers that proliferated in the darkness of closets when no one was looking. As you well know, they multiply spontaneously and become so entangled that it is not possible to remove just one at a time. They only come out in clusters, like those abominable Chinese ring puzzles.

Lately I've become aware that this phenomenon also occurs with paper clips in desk drawers. They have a tendency to snarl themselves into daisy chains. Rubber bands also become hopelessly knotted together all by themselves, with no human help needed. And there seems to be increasing difficulty in plucking one particular writing instrument from among a gaggle of ball point pens and pencils, particularly when too many of them are crammed into a single upright cup holder. You'll find that ink runs dry in the pens while they are just standing there, and the pencils are never sharp or equipped with erasers when they finally come out of the holder.

The challenge is especially severe for those whose finger dexterity is no better than mine. I categorize it as a serious problem in modern living. Perhaps one of today's bright young technology students can come up with a solution to spare our children's children from the same degrees of frustration that so annoy this generation. Do you suppose they're working on it?



November 27, 1996

Perry is fortunate to be one of the towns chosen for a visit by the 1996 Santa Express, a special holiday treat made possible by the good folks of Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad. The train will be here for a 40-minute stopover on the

evening of Friday, November 29, with an arrival time of 7:10 p.m. The train will be parked at the Seventh street crossing of the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe tracks, a short distance south of the Noble County Family YMCA building.

The Santa Express is provided by employees of the railroad to say "thank you" to the communities along their route. This is the fourth year the Express has been used, and both the route and the train itself have been expanded during that time.

Youngsters and adults alike will be delighted with the train. It will have 20,000 twinkling lights, 24 7-foot tall candy canes, a Santa on the front of the engine, a red and white snow plow, a siren, tank car, boxcar, two flatcars and a caboose. A large sign identifying it as the Santa Express will be prominently displayed.

Each of the train's cars will be colorfully decorated with lights and other traditional Christmas ornaments. A program of musical entertainment will highlight the stopover, with Santa himself to be on hand to greet the crowd. The parking lot across the street from the YMCA may be used, so families will have only a short distance to walk to take in the fun. That part of Seventh street will be blocked off to traffic while the train is here. The Chamber of Commerce is helping out by providing hot chocolate, coffee and popcorn for sale that night, with proceeds to benefit the Ministerial Alliance.

The Santa Express is just the leadoff event for Christmas activities in Perry. On the night of Friday, December 6, Santa Claus again will be here for the annual Christmas parade, which will start winding around the square at about 6 p.m., sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and the Perry Business Association. Santa will set up in the courthouse park that evening. Carolers will be posted at several locations around the square for the enjoyment of all who turn out.

After the parade, the second annual Christmas Food Court in the Courthouse will be held, sponsored by Perry Main Street. Last year's inaugural Food Court was a resounding success, and an even greater selection of food will be offered this year. It again will include the popular array of desserts on the upper levels of the courthouse.

A really big weekend will be ushered in the following morning, on Saturday, December 7. Kicking it off at 10 a.m. will be Perry's annual Pet Parade, described by some as organized chaos for youngsters and their squirming pets. Each child making it around the square will be rewarded with a shiny half-dollar. In addition to pets, youngsters may parade with dolls, small wagons and similar carriages, bicycles, or virtually anything a child considers "special." Only small animals are allowed as pets. This traditional event, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, usually draws dozens of children along with some parents helping them to complete the route. Santa Claus will lead the parade mounted aboard one of the city's big fire trucks, and he will be at his workshop that day until about noon. Various Perry school bands will provide music.

That evening, the first annual Christmas Ball sponsored by Perry Main Street will be held at the armory from 8 p.m. to midnight. Music will be provided by the Sammy Pagna Big Band. Valet parking will be available, and the ball is being promoted as a formal affair. The armory is being transformed into an elegant ballroom once again, as it was for the Centennial Ball in 1993, and guests are promised a gala, enjoyable evening. Carol McPeck and Myra Woods are selling advance tickets.

Climaxing that great weekend will be the annual Christmas Tour of Homes on Sunday, December 8. Five homes and a new bed and breakfast site will be visited, with a trip to the Cherokee Strip Museum on West Fir Avenue for a holiday tea to wind things up. The Chamber of Commerce and the Noble County Historical Society cooperate in staging this event. Tickets for this also are on sale.

Santa Claus also will be in Perry the mornings of December 14 and 21 from about 10 a.m. to noon. He will be located at his small workshop in the courthouse park, and undoubtedly he will have candy treats for boys and girls who come to see him.

All these events should be marked on your calendar, along with the other holiday attractions being planned at the schools, churches and other organizations. Yes, it's a busy season, but aren't we glad these folks are planning such wonderful entertainment for our enjoyment? That's something else for which we should be thankful. Let's take in every one of them!



November 30, 1996

The Perry stadium is a current topic of conversation once again because of the school bond issue coming up on December 10, when a \$1.5 million proposal will be submitted to voters in this school district. First of all, let's clarify some of the terms being used here. "Perry stadium," built by the WPA in 1939, originally consisted of a baseball diamond and an adjacent football field. The football portion later was renamed "Daniels Field" to honor the legendary Coach Hump Daniels, who turned out winning teams at PHS over a period of several decades. The baseball park was ruled unsafe and closed for spectators a number of years ago because the cost of fixing it was deemed excessive.

A relatively small portion of the proposed bond issue would be used at Daniels Field to repair and replace seats, make the stairways safe to use, and build a new press box. I want to second the motion on that last point. If you have attended a PHS football game there in recent years, you already know that the seats and stairways need some serious upgrading for safety's sake. You may not be aware that the press box is an embarrassment and a disgrace for our community. It has been bad for a long time. Some 30 years ago, I used to work there on Friday nights while covering the Maroons' home games for this newspaper, and that old press box should have been replaced long before that. I don't use the press box any more, but I feel for those who do. It was, and is, too small, too cold or too hot (depending on the ambient temperature) and just generally ill-suited for its intended use.

The press coop is perhaps 10 feet long. Into that space are usually crammed the public address announcer, statisticians from both the home school and the visitors, local and visiting sports writers, one or two local radio station personalities and perhaps one or two from the visiting school. Spotters also are frequently called to those same tiny confines to assist the others in identifying the players. A single ledge is available as a work space for all those folks, and believe me it gets very cozy in there at times. The working stiffs are elbow to elbow, literally. The press box originally had windows which could be propped open when the weather allowed, but vandals repeatedly smashed every pane each summer, so now cumbersome fold-down wooden panels are used.

A wooden loft for photographers, videotapers and others was built atop the press box about 30 years ago, but it's a precarious climb up a vertical ladder to reach that facility. A similar photo loft was built on the visitors' side of the field at one point, and again the ladder leading into it gives the unlucky user a real thrill, especially when such accouterments as tripods, bulky cameras and the like are dangling from straps attached to the user's shoulder or waist.

The accommodations are bad enough that most visiting sports writers and statisticians choose to run along the sidelines, even on bitter cold nights, rather than try to fit themselves into the press box. We may have the worst press box of any Class 3A school in the state.

When it was built in 1939, our stadium and the press box were considered state of the art, the best to be found at any high school of any size in north-central Oklahoma. The walls surrounding the stadium were sandstone, the familiar chalky

material which was used for so many WPA projects in this area, because it was abundant and could be quarried nearby. Our armory is another example of the WPA's utilization of sandstone. The stadium has always been owned by the city of Perry but it is now leased to the school district. The baseball park was the home of the semi-pro Perry Merchants and later the Perry Oilers, but it was also used by the PHS diamond squad. It had a beautiful infield and outfield, ample seating behind a large screen, ticket windows and a concessions booth.

Unfortunately, the stone walls became unsafe a few years ago. Mortar was loose and some of the blocks showed signs of serious cracking and general deterioration. Adventurous youngsters, and some adults, climbed along the top of the walls during games in spite of warnings that they might fall. The city, as owner, would have been liable if any personal injury claims were filed. Semi-pro baseball was no longer a consideration because by then we didn't have a town team. Structural engineers recommended closing the ball park or spending a lot of money to make it safe for use. It was hard to justify the cost needed for repairs, so the field was closed and it is now primarily used by PHS football teams for practice. Today the high schoolers and our American Legion team use the excellent Ripley Field, and pee-wee baseballers have a complex of diamonds for their games.

After the sandstone baseball park was closed, a first class running track was built around the football field and that took a chunk from the former baseball outfield.

Similar signs of decay are evident on the sandstone walls at Daniels Field, on the visitors' side as well as the home school side. The visitors' side, as a matter of fact, was never fully completed. Some visitors choose to sit on bare ground rather than on the rough wooden seats we provide for them. Boys and girls, and some adults, persist in trying to use the walls for climbing and seating, and they do so at great risk to life and limb. The wooden plank seats were covered with aluminum shells several years ago when the splintery originals were causing occasional painful injuries to fans' derrieres, but the wood continued to rot away beneath the aluminum covers.

Stairways from ground level to the top row of stadium seats are wearing away just like the outer walls, and steps inside the stadium also are potentially dangerous. They constitute an accident waiting to happen. You already know all this if you attend sporting events at Daniels Field, but some may not be as aware of the need. A short while back, new public rest rooms had to be built because the originals had been virtually useless for years.

Dressing rooms for visiting teams and for girls who participate in track and field events are sadly lacking. The original stadium dressing rooms were padlocked decades ago because they were much too small, poorly lighted and equipped, and the sewage disposal system was outdated. A wrestling room was built at the stadium after the baseball park was closed, and it now serves as a dressing room for the visitors as well as the home team. It's an unsatisfactory arrangement, coaches will tell you. If Hump Daniels were still with us, I'm guessing he would be in the forefront of those favoring updating of the field that bears his name.

It seems to boil down to two alternatives: Repair what we have or move the football field to another location and start all over. There is great sentiment and logic for keeping Daniels Field. The cost of building a new stadium would seem to be much higher than the amount needed to renovate the historic old field that we now have. When you consider that continued neglect will only make the final cost even more, it seems obvious that we must take care of the property now being used.

There are other important school matters on the ballot for the December 10 bond election, and you need to be familiar with the need for those projects, too. You'll have a chance to express yourself on all these issues at the polls on election day, but I thought you might like to hear a few details concerning the need for action at Perry stadium. Be sure to circle December 10 on your calendar and tell the school board how you feel about these very important matters.

