

October 2, 2001

Before the Perry school system had an auditorium of its own, students used the facilities of the Grand Opera House on the east side of the square for graduation ceremonies, recitals, concerts, and the like. The story of the old Grand is well known. It was one of the city's most prized possessions when it was built in 1901 by J.B. Tate and John Pressler, and it was privately owned. In its prime, the Grand was grand in every sense of the word. The two-story brick building stood proudly in the middle of various businesses on the square, and its size dwarfed all of them. A loft on the roof at the rear of the building, where stage scenery and other set pieces were raised for storage, gave it an even more distinctive look. Sadly, the tired old structure was torn down in 1960 because its sandstone walls and foundation were crumbling. Today a gaping hole on the east side of the square shows where the Grand Opera House formerly stood.

The Grand's ample stage was used by touring artists, such as Buster Keaton and Will Rogers, and for local presentations, like those provided by the city schools. In later years it was the home of Henry Tate's Annex Movie Theater. Thanks to former Perryman David Foster, I have some of the handout programs used at a few of those events and they are interesting for several reasons. David, who now lives in Albuquerque, came across them in going through some things found after the death of his mother, Kitty Marshall Foster. Mrs. Foster's family was very musical and many of them took part in entertainment on the stage of the Grand. I'm happy to present portions of some of those handouts for your reading pleasure.

The oldest souvenir program appears to be for the commencement exercises of St. Joseph's Academy on May 25, 1915. A footnote on the cover states that tickets for the event could be purchased at "Beers' Drug Store" (my Dad's City Drug) for 35 and 25 cents. Some of the highlights from that program included a piano duet by Misses J. Metz and R. Ableidinger, and another duet by Master A. Lumber and Miss R. Ringler. Following was a violin selection by Masters E. Bowles, J. O'Neil, A. Lumber, A. Mills and Miss E. Soule. Master Edgar Wiegel sang "The Best Country on Earth," followed by Miss Ethel Knox and Miss Clara Hempfling in a piano duo, "Fantasie Impromptu." Miss Strothman sang "Rockin' in De Win'," and "The Little Girls" performed a rainbow drill accompanied at the piano by Miss C. Hempfling.

Archa Mills played a piano solo and the violin ensemble played another selection with Miss Ethel Edmiston at the piano. A solo was sung by Miss Vesta Clark, accompanied by Miss Wilkerson. A piano quartet composed of Misses A. Strothman, F. Wiegel, and Misses L. Soule and M. Ringler played a number, followed by a play. (The title and cast members were not listed.) Miss Vesta Clark played a piano solo, the "S. Girls" presented a drill, accompanied by Miss Hempfling, and Misses Clark and Wilkerson sang a duet. The violin class played a selection with Miss Ethel Edmiston as accompanist.

The program for the evening was climaxed by an address by the Rev. Father Willebord, pastor of the St. Rose of Lima Catholic church, and the awarding of diplomas and medals. Names of members of the 1915 graduating class at St. Joseph's Academy were not listed for some reason. We'll have more about some of these program at the Grand Opera House in a few days.



October 5, 2001

Let me interrupt this series of columns about the Grand Opera House just long enough to talk about another subject. In a way, this piece also relates to the Grand, so it sort of belongs here. I'm talking about "The Wrong Mr. Wright," the latest offering from our own Stagecoach Community Theatre. It opened last night in the brand-new theatre of the Heritage Center, just off the southeast corner of the square.

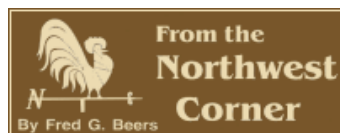
Several months ago, when I first heard that Stagecoach had decided to produce the play and offer it as a unique centennial presentation, I was a little skeptical. Partly because I presumed the story had to be badly outdated and therefore not in sync with today's audiences. Also, I doubted scripts could still be available for an unheard-of play that was in vogue one hundred years ago. I was wrong on both counts.

First of all, some of the hard working Stagecoach people found a source (Samuel French Inc.) for the play manuscript, then a reading seemed to confirm that it was indeed appropriate for the wholesome families that Stagecoach has always catered to. No violence, no profanities or obscenities, and of course no depiction of any kind of nudity. The action occurs in the Victorian era, around 1890, but the comedy is just as funny today as it was a century ago when a touring theatrical group brought this play to Perry in 1901 for presentation at the old Grand Opera House on the east side of the square. Stagecoach's production occurs almost exactly one century later.

The play is well-sprinkled with laughable dialogue, funny situations, mistaken identities and an innocent crisis that appears to be the basis of a major forgery scam. The characters are broadly drawn, and are well portrayed by the cast, including some newcomers to Stagecoach. This is the kind of comedy that used to be popular in the movies, on radio and TV, but is now rarely seen.

Dinner theatre productions have been popular with local audiences since Stagecoach introduced them locally a few years ago with a series of offerings in the Elks Lodge ballroom. Our new Heritage Center has wonderful facilities for such dinners and you will have an opportunity to enjoy one of them on next Friday or Saturday night. All other performances of this play will be strictly theatre. The meal will be catered and served in the Center's Anvil Room, but seating there is limited to fewer than fifty. The Center's auditorium seats 111. The ticket price for the play alone is \$7. Add \$8 if you wish to attend one of the dinner theatre productions. In either case, you'll get your money's worth. On-street parking around the Heritage Center should be ample.

Tickets are on sale at the usual places – Chris' Pharmacy, Foster's Corner Drug, Exchange Bank & Trust, First Bank & Trust, and the Perry Printing & Office Supply. Check with those sources and get your tickets for the night that suits your family best. Come out and enjoy an evening of fun with some of Perry's dedicated thespians and let them entertain you.



October 9, 2001

On the evening of May 23, 1918, at 8:15 p.m., Perry high school seniors marched into the Grand Opera House on the east side of the square for the 16th annual PHS commencement exercises. The students faced an uncertain future. The first World War was raging in the trenches and on the battlefields of Europe, and American troops were being tested there for

the first time. Many of the young men in that year's graduating class probably expected to join the Army or Navy after receiving their diploma.

The school had no auditorium large enough to accommodate the usual large audience of students, parents, other relatives and friends, so the Opera House, owned by J.B. Tate, was the designated place for graduation exercises. This story began with a previous column in which I explained that former Perryman David Foster, now of Albuquerque, recently gave me a small package of articles he had rescued from the belongings of his late mother, Kitty Marshall Foster. She had saved these things for years and now they are a treasure trove of information about the early days in this little city. I have chosen to focus on events at the Grand Opera House because it seems that most folks are eager to hear more about that old building, which once graced the east side of the square. Built in 1901, it was razed in 1960 because of serious structural problems. A lot of us still miss it terribly.

After an invocation, the audience joined in singing "America," followed by a vocal solo provided by Homer Hurt, who chose the "Toreador's Song" from Bizet's opera, "Carmen." Mr. Hurt was one of the graduates that night. Ellen Bowles and Ethel Knox, also graduating seniors, played a piano duet, "American Fantasie," by Victor Herbert. "Morning Song," a duet, was sung by another pair of senior girls, Virginia Bagby and Bernice Guthrie. Then the entire senior class joined in singing "Away to the Fields," signifying the new life awaiting them. The commencement address was given by Dr. L.N. McNash, who is not further identified, and diplomas were presented by Hon. Roy Harvey, who I presume was the school superintendent. A benediction closed the evening program.

The class was typical in size for that period at Perry high school, numbering 26 – 18 girls and eight boys. Some of the names sound familiar to me, although I knew them only when they were much older. How many of these 1918 PHS graduates have you known? Here's the class roll:

Virginia Bagby, Casmir Balcerkiewicz, Ellen Bowles, Eugenia Edwards, Hannah Freese, Herman Feucht, Evelyn Geiger, Bernice Guthrie, Homer Hurt, Esther Isham, Leslie Johnson, Alpha Knox, Ethel Knox, Robert McCandless, Edna McCracken, Louisa McCracken, Hazel Scott, Alta Shaeffer, Agnes Shaeffer, Martha Schiltz, Nina Thomason, Merle Waldon, Fred Waltermire, Lucile Warner, Robert Watson and Helen Wright.

Thanks once again to David Foster for rescuing this material from obscurity and passing it on to me. Eventually it will be deposited with the Perry Alumni Association.



October 12, 2001

Recently I've been writing about some of the public school and Catholic academy graduation services that were staged at the Grand Opera House in the early 1900s. That was before the Perry school system had an auditorium large enough to accommodate the large crowds that have always attended those services, but, as you know, the Grand was home for many other public attractions. The old building that stood in the middle of the block on the east side of the square from 1901 to 1960 also was home for traveling theatrical road shows, vaudeville, Will Rogers, Buster Keaton and other celebrated artists of that era.

PHS also used the Grand Opera House stage for school plays, concerts and other presentations. I have the remnants of a program that was handed out one year when the school presented a play, "The Pennant," the night of Friday, April 28.

Unfortunately, the year is not shown, but it apparently was around 1915. The single sheet flyer lists these students in the cast of characters. Perhaps you know some of them: Leslie Johnston, Raymond Woodruff, Ralph McCune, Kenneth Kirchner, Lester Bartow, Earl Bechtold, Fred Waltermire, Bernice Guthrie, Florence Kraemer, Lilyan Laird, Lenore Stout and Hope Eby.

The following played "College Girls": Ada Dishman, Agnes Shaeffer, Virginia Bagby, Edith Dishman, Eugenia Edwards, Mary Tate, Ethel Knox, Gladys Rosa, Ellen Bowles, Agnes Marshall, Nina Thomason and Virginia Merrell. Appearing as "Football Players" were Hugh Shaeffer, Lawrence Wood, Archa Mills, Allan Wilson, Ellis Webber, Robert McCandless, Leo Wetzel, John McCormick, Edwin Bechtold and J.C. Wood.

The sheet also listed "The Mating," a "play of college life, starring Bessie Barriscale," to be presented before and after "The Pennant." Apparently that was a sort of bonus for the audience, but it does not tell us if Bessie Barriscale was a local performer or the star of some touring production.

Another handout sheet gives the order of service for Perry high school's 14th annual senior baccalaureate service to be held on Sunday evening, May 14, 1916. This one, however, was in the sanctuary of the First Methodist Episcopal church, starting at 8 p.m. After the processional and the invocation, the high school chorus sang a selection, a prayer was given, scripture was read, and the Choral Club sang "Moon-Rise." After another prayer, Bernice Guthrie and Raymond Woodruff sang a duet, "Hold Thou My Hand." The sermon, entitled "The Sinews of Character and Achievement," was given by Rev. Wheeler. To close the service, the congregation sang "America" after which the benediction was pronounced.

The programs and other printed information contained in these recent columns are gifts from David Foster of Albuquerque, NM, whose parents, the late Joe and Kitty Foster, were students at Perry high school in those years. All this material will be presented to the Perry High School Alumni Association for its archives.



October 16, 2001

In the early years of the last century, public events that drew large crowds in Perry were generally held in the Grand. Opera House on the east side of the square. The old two-story sandstone building stood like a proud, stately sentinel from the time of its construction in 1901 until it was razed in 1960 when the owners feared the walls and foundation were crumbling, That posed a serious threat of liability and made it impossible to attract an audience for any kind of program on the Grand's stage. By that time it had scarcely been used for years. A movie theater, the Annex, on the ground floor had been closed and the upper level, where the Grand's original stage and auditorium were located, had been abandoned long before that.

But when it was new, the Grand was something; to brag about. Touring road shows and other kinds of entertainment were booked there, partly because of Perry's location approximately half-way between Oklahoma City and Wichita. Vaudeville shows, featuring the likes of Will Rogers, paused here en route to one of those metropolises for performances at the Grand. Local folks also used the Grand for such things as graduation ceremonies for seniors at Perry High School and the Catholic school, St. Joseph's Academy. That type of program is what we're dealing with in this series of columns. A lot of relevant information comes from PHS memorabilia that belonged to the late Mr. and Mrs. Joe H, Foster Jr. It was recently found among their papers by a son, David Foster, now-of Albuquerque, NM, and he has passed it along to me.

Some of the earliest material is a batch of invitations sent to relatives and friends of several senior classes; the earliest being 1915. The announcements folded into envelopes about 2 1/2" by 5" and the texts were in traditional style. The oldest one is for the class of 1915 at St. Joseph's. It reads: "The Faculty and Graduating Class of Nineteen-hundred Fifteen of the St. Joseph's Academy request your presence at their Commencement Exercises Tuesday evening, the twenty-fifth of May at eight o'clock, Grand Opera House." The program began with music by Archa Mills, followed by postgraduate remarks by Vesta Clark. The class motto was "Virtus Sola Nobilitat," the class colors were pink and white, and class flowers were pink carnations. Names of graduates were not listed.

The PHS graduating class the following year had commencement exercises on Thursday evening, May 18, 1916. Class members were Earl Bechtold, Clark Brock, Edith Dishman, Hope Eby, Florence Kerns, Kenneth Kirchner, Virginia Merrill, Ralph Mcune, Lenora Neal, Lenore Stout, Hugh Schaeffer, Mary Tate, Lola Wheeler and Lester Bartow. Earl Bechtold gave the class oration, entitled "Wanted - A Man." Edith Dishman gave the valedictory address on "Hard Knocks." Diplomas were presented by John Knox, president of the board of education. The collection also includes commencement invitations from members of the class of 1917; Members of that class, according to the invitations David found, included his father, Joseph H. Foster Jr.

We'll wind up this series in the next column.



October 19, 2001

One more story about the old Grand Opera House, which used to be in the middle of the block on the east side of the Perry square, and then we'll put the subject to rest, until something new comes along.

In the early years of this community, probably about 1916, "the National Troubadours" presented a program on the stage of the Grand Opera House featuring an all-local cast of players. The event was under auspices of the Baptist Young People's Union of the First Baptist church. I have a copy of the souvenir program that was handed to guests that evening, and details of the production are contained on its pages.

The compact little booklet is eight inches from top to bottom and pages are three and one-half inches wide, but they contain a wealth of names and other information Let's start with the cast of characters: Prof. Zoaring (aviator) - Mr. Homer Hart; Miss Dolly Dean - Bernice Guthrie; George Washington (Prof. Z. Valet) -- Mr. Earnest Housh; Johnny Bell (Englishman) - Mr. George Edwards; Deutschland Troubadours - Misses Edith Farris, Twila Wadsworth, Bernice Pert, Merle Watson, Ruth Ringler and Hazel Scott; Spanish Troubadours - Misses Lola Moore, Faythe Eby, Hope Eby, Mabel Ringler, Mary Watson and Dolly Wadsworth; Soloist - Miss Lilyan Laird; Italian Troubadours - Mr. Raymond Woodruff, Miss Mildred Tate, Russell Harbaugh, Misses Evelyn Geiger, Alma Tate, Etta Scott, Annabel Hendren, Mamie Tillman and Bernice Ross.

During intermission, the audience was entertained with a trumpet solo played by Mr. Earnest Brookhart. In an "English tea garden scene," these singers were heard - Margurite Monroe, F. Jones, N. Vandevener, L. Ellis, J. Tillman, George Edwards, Lilyan Laird, Faythe Eby, Mary Watson, Mabel Ringler, Lola Moore, Hope Eby, Dolly Wadsworth, Martin Robinson, Charles Shultz and Dean McKinney. The "Indian Troubadours" were composed of Homer Hart, Tillie Ringler, Olive McMeeken, Wanda Johnston, Mary Tate, Cecil Maloch and Winifred Brengle.

When "the American Troubadours" performed, they included soloists Homer Hurt and Bernice Guthrie; Uncle Sam – Ora Hall; Liberty – Francis Weber; Chorus composed of Hazel Scott, Martha Mugler, Anna Mugler, Edna McCracken, Martha Jensen, Twila Wadsworth, Martin Robinson, Charles Schultz, Dean McKinney, Mr. Straus and H. Hurt. The business and talent committee for the night's performance consisted of Rev. Hurt, R. Lattin, Tillie Ringler, Mrs. C. Harbaugh and Mrs. Weber. Piano accompanist was Miss Lone Geiger, and director of the whole shebang was Mr. F. S. Fluke, who was not otherwise identified.

Some of the merchants who purchased ads in the program were Lattin's News Stand ("most modern ice cream parlor in the city"); the Famous Department Store ("Palm Beach suits, mid-summer hats, fancy parasols and wash suits"); Charles Huffman Cash Grocery ("We Don't Deliver"); Lobsitz Hardware Store ("The Leading and Best Hardware Store in the City"); Exchange Bank ("Loans Money and Receives Deposits; Will Sell You All the Liberty Bonds You Want"); First National Bank; A. Kraemer ("Dealer in Boots, Shoes and Clothing; High Grade Merchant Tailoring"); and the City Drug Store, Fred W. Beers, Proprietor ("The Best Cold Drinks in Town"). Numerous other merchants also had ads in the program. Thanks again to former Perryman David Foster of Albuquerque, N.M., for passing along to me this program and other memorabilia from the past.



October 23, 2001

The Perry post office has been around since those days in 1893 when the public and the government began speaking openly of allowing homesteaders to stake claims in the Cherokee Outlet of what is now the state of Oklahoma. Mail service was essential in that era when communications were limited even in the best of circumstances. Operating a reliable postal service was a top priority on the Western frontier as this country extended its borders. Unfortunately, few public records are available to document the creation and growth of the postal service in this developing area. One thing is clear: Perry has had a post office from the beginning.

Interest in this subject was evident the other day when the Northwest Corner included a picture of the old sandstone Perry post office as it appeared in 1917. The photo was provided by a former Perryman, Nevalyn Freese Stotts of Stillwater. I've received several inquiries about that old building since the picture appeared, so here's some information to answer a few of those questions.

A tiny wooden shack served as Perry's first post office. It was located on the courthouse square, along with one other wooden building – the Land Office, where homesteaders registered their claims to some of the choice real estate in this virgin land. They were the only buildings in the courthouse park for more than a year. The five-acre park itself was pretty desolate. There were no trees, only a stand of alfalfa that the early-day city fathers had planted to reduce the erosive damage caused by Oklahoma winds. A buffalo wallow on the east side of the park reminded one and all that livestock had been pastured in this area for years before the run.

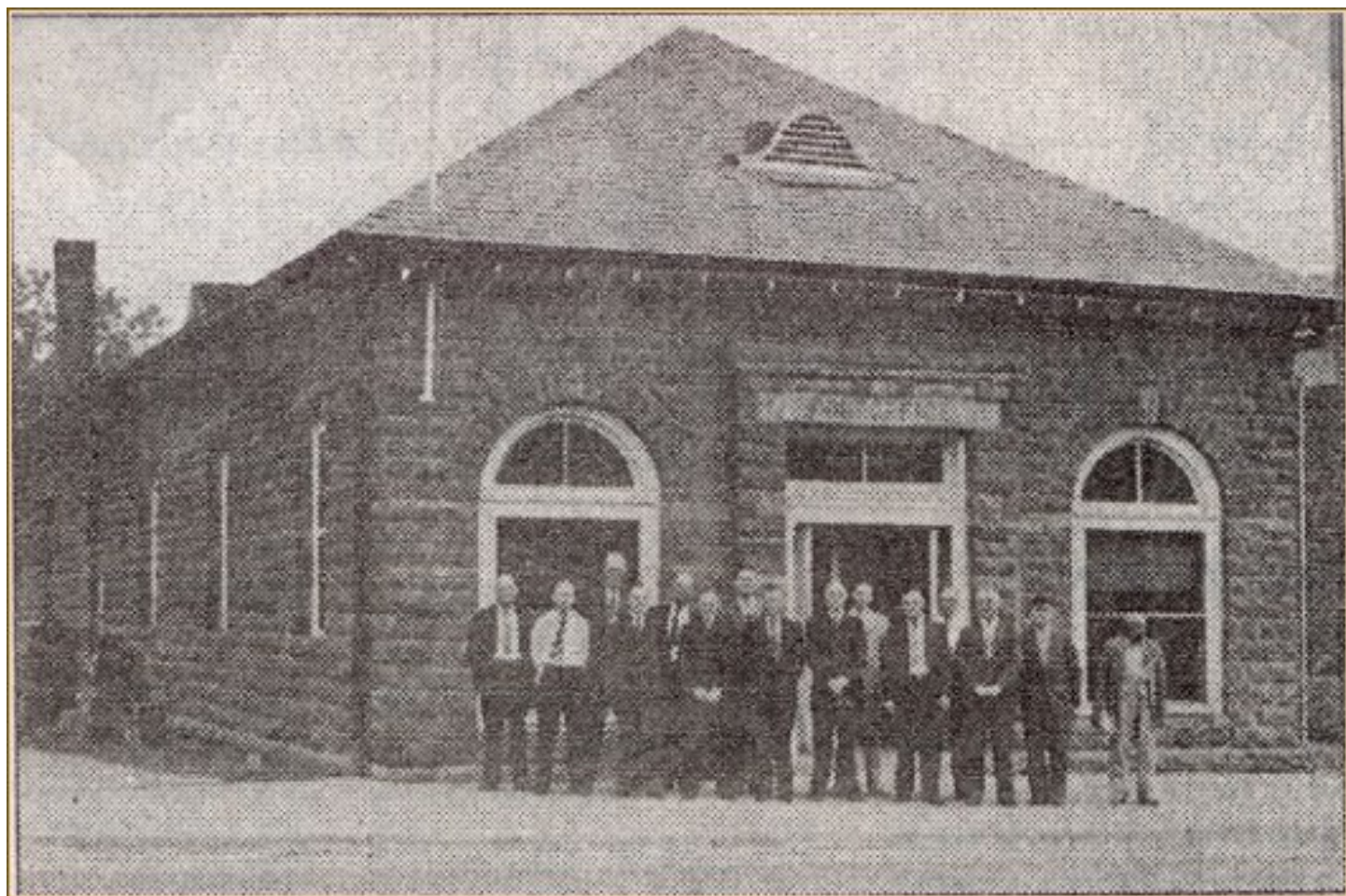
As a sidelight, after the run the courthouse park initially was occupied by squatters who thought they were claiming lots for business buildings in the heart of this brand new town. Hundreds of businessmen located on all four sides of the park reserve and they stayed there for a month after the run, according to Judge E.W. Jones' *Early Day History of Perry, Oklahoma*. Eventually they were driven off the park grounds by U.S. troops and the area surrounding it quickly became the

busy commercial heart of the tented city. The west acre of the park was reserved by the federal government. The south half was deeded to the city of Perry and is now the location of Perry's Carnegie Public Library.

Eventually, which is to say we don't know the year, the little wooden post office near the northwest corner of the park was replaced by a sandstone, single-story post office. It was not an especially handsome building, but it blended with most of the architecture around the square. It included a fair-size lobby and a space where postal clerks waited on patrons and answered numerous questions about dispatch times and other matters. Tiers of various size mail receptacles lined one wall. The main entry was on the west front of the post office and a single-width door on the north side provided another access. Most of the north side was covered by dense vines of ivy. Roughly half of the interior was set aside for clerks and city and rural carriers to prepare for their duties. Foot carriers delivered mail to city homes twice daily. The outlying area was served by four rural routes. We'll have a bit more on this subject when the Northwest Corner returns. Stay tuned.



October 26, 2001



The Perry post office building shown here served many years before it was replaced by today's much larger brick building. This photo was taken on October 15, 1939, when the newer building was ready for occupancy. Part of the new building is barely visible at right. Lined up in front of the older building are most of the U.S. Postal Service employees in Perry at that time. Shown, left to right, are Ted Sherrard, city carrier; George Butler, clerk; Herb Peden, mail messenger; Frank Jones Sr., clerk; Allen Merriman, rural carrier; Ed Trumbla, clerk; Ed Bowles, postmaster and later a rural carrier;

Ernest Moore, city carrier; Allan F. Wilson, clerk; Henry Schurkens, rural carrier; Marion Watson, assistant postmaster; Quine Brengle Sr., clerk; E.E. Lewellen, rural carrier; Fay Thompson, rural carrier; and John Warner, fireman-laborer.

When you hear Perry old-timers speak of "the old post office," it's a pretty safe bet they are referring to the single-story sandstone building that once served the public at the extreme northwest corner of the courthouse park. It's been gone since 1939, when the Works Progress Administration (WPA) built the original part of our present handsome post office, but many of us still have vivid memories of that old building. Along with that, we recall some of the men who served us there.

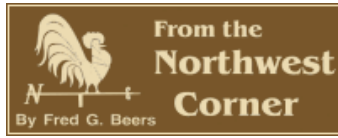
The "old" post office was not the first one built here. At the time of the Cherokee Outlet land run on September 16, 1893, a small frame shack already was located on the government preserve, a five-acre tract in the heart of this new city. Also on the preserve was a frame Land Office building, where the land run pioneers filed their claims for property they had "staked." The tract was a desolate, wind-swept piece of real estate. Some misguided businessmen had staked claims on the preserve, only to learn later that the area was set aside for government buildings only, and they were driven off by armed troops. Eventually a courthouse, post office and land office were built there, and still later the Carnegie Public Library was added to the collection. The Land Office was closed in due time after claims had been registered and processed. The frame building was discovered in Perry some 50 years later, serving as a small home, but an effort to move it to the grounds of the Cherokee Strip Museum failed when the structure collapsed.

The sandstone post office was a narrow building in a classic architectural style of the early 1900s. The north wall was covered with ivy vines, but that was about the only vegetation aside from a Bermuda grass lawn. The hip roof had distinctive dormers at the east and west ends with ventilation vents to keep Oklahoma's summer heat from building up in the attic. The main entrance was on the west end, and a smaller entry served the north side. On the south side, a driveway was built for use of motor carriers and a contract carrier (Mr. Herb Peden), who hauled incoming and outgoing mail in his flatbed Model T truck to and from the Santa Fe and Frisco Railroad Stations several times each day.

It seemed that each postal worker in the 1930s and 1940s had a unique and very distinctive personality. All of them were Civil Service employees and they served the public in many ways. Back then, many people used Postal Savings as a safe depository in preference to bank savings accounts. Money orders, registered and insured mail and other services were provided. Along with all that, one-cent stamps had to be sold for postcards, or three-cent stamps for first-class mail. The local newspaper also was brought to the post office each afternoon on large-wheel carts for eventual delivery to out-of-town subscribers.

Mr. Lincoln Grant Shoop was the postmaster when I first became aware of the post office. He was a rather small man, with gray hair. He was cordial to patrons and you would see him serving as a clerk in one of the lobby windows from time to time, but mostly he dealt with administrative matters in his office. Some of the clerks were George Butler, Frank Jones Jr. and Quine Brengle. Each had a unique personality and all of them were hard-working, knowledgeable public servants. The same goes for the city foot carriers and the motorized rural carriers.

When the WPA turned the new post office over to the Postal Service on October 15, 1939, an era ended. The new building was just a few inches south of the old sandstone structure. By that time Ed Bowles had become postmaster but most of the crew from the old post office moved to the new location. Many things have changed in the nation's Postal Service, including the price of stamps, but Perry is fortunate in having a nice looking, sturdy building and a crew of friendly, capable people to handle our mail.



October 30, 2001

Here it is again: Halloween is upon us, and that can only mean the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays will soon be here. But wait a minute. We know the origin of those other events, but why do we even have a Halloween celebration? Who started it, and why? Read on and I'll share some information gleaned from usually reliable sources, plus a few personal recollections.

I'm old enough to remember when some of my more daring youthful contemporaries scoured the rural area each year in search of those wooden outbuildings that used to be part of the landscape at every farm house. They made excellent kindling for bonfires when high school homecoming celebrations were in full swing, but the flimsy old structures also served as lawn decorations at several homes when the annual Halloween rituals were being observed. Why were such nuisances perpetrated on that particular day?

I also remember one Halloween when Mr. George Spraberry was the newly employed superintendent of Perry schools. The student body had been advised by the administration beforehand that acts of vandalism would not be tolerated, so we had better behave. The morning after Halloween, we were all called to a special assembly in the old high school auditorium. There Mr. Spraberry dolefully announced that not only had the youngsters of this community violated his instructions, but that a most destructive act had been performed. A four-tier sandstone wall around the outside perimeter of one of the city's fine old homes had been willfully pulled apart and broken in the process. The wall was historic and unique, so the destruction was especially regrettable, he said. The ones responsible had not been identified, and he wanted us to know that some form of group punishment would be imposed until names of the guilty parties were made known.

Other related events of the day are not known to me, but I do remember that by the next morning the sandstone wall had been rebuilt, looked good as new, and the student body was no longer a collective pariah. Names of the actual perpetrators were never disclosed to the rest of us and we all felt greatly relieved. On Mr. Spraberry's next Halloween the following year, nothing untoward occurred. Evidently, we had learned our lesson concerning proper deportment.

Now - why is there a Halloween celebration? My encyclopedia tells an interesting story about the origin, but it's copyrighted and too lengthy to relate here. Briefly, the name "Halloween" applies to the evening of October 31, before the Christian feast of Hallowmass, Allhallows, or All Saints' Day. Observances connected with Halloween may have started with the Druids, who believed that on that evening, Saman, the lord of the dead, called forth many evil spirits. The Druids lit fires on that evening, apparently to shoo away those spirits. In Perry, the mayor and city council decide when youngsters can call on their friends and family for trick or treat favors, and the date varies slightly from year to year. There's more about all this in any good encyclopedia, and now would be a good time to read up on the subject. In Perry, some of us know that October 31 also is the birthday of one of our favorite friends, Elizabeth Willems, and that alone is cause enough for celebration. Just be careful not to damage or destroy someone else's property in the process. Happy holidays!