



September 3, 1996

If you've been wondering just how effective our new curfew law has proven, listen to this: Burglaries in Perry have declined by 46 percent and vandalism is down by 82 percent, according to Police Chief Fred LeValley. That's definitely good news.

The curfew law was enacted by the mayor and city council late last year at the urging of LeValley and his officers, and they are well pleased with the results. Burglaries and vandalism are never going to disappear completely, but those reductions are welcomed by the whole community.

Speaking to a Rotary club meeting the other day, Officer Wesley Layton was asked about the local drug problem. Specifically, someone wanted to know which drugs are most heavily used by our young people. Mr. Layton replied that alcohol is No. 1 on the list, followed by marijuana, methamphetamines and crack cocaine. Some may have been surprised to hear that alcohol is regarded as a drug. As a matter of fact, alcohol was not included in news releases about the recent federal report on drug uses among American teenagers.

According to that report, marijuana use among kids ages 12-17 increased 150 percent from 1992 to 1995, and cocaine use jumped 166 percent. Eleven million U.S. teenagers are using drugs. This upsurge occurred after years of decline among American teenagers. Alcohol is addictive and physically harmful. It should be included in the federal report on drugs, but apparently it is not.

Plans are going forward for major improvements to our courthouse square as announced last year. You can't see any of the work being done right now because it's all in the realm of handling preliminary details -- like scale drawings to indicate placement of the new period street lights and the precise width of the new sidewalks.

At a presentation to the Perry Carnegie Library board last week, Street Commissioner Jim Davis estimated construction probably will be starting in March next year. Some of the work may have to be done in the wee small hours of the morning to avoid interference with heavier daytime traffic around the square.

The new street lights will look like those now in use on the YMCA parking lot on south Seventh street. Jim said the lights had been stored for some time in the city's old power generating building in southeast Perry, but vandals broke in and caused a great deal of damage. All the light bulbs were broken along with some of the globes, and other components of the system were totally ruined. The poles have now been moved to a secure storage area to prevent further loss. If you want to see what the new lights look like, one is on display at the Perry Chamber of Commerce office in the Foucart Building. Drop by and check it out.

Dr. Eugene Swearingen, one of our local sons, recently published a new edition of a book he wrote nine years ago, and it's drawing favorable reviews. Titled *Success and Beyond: 50 Keys*, the book is designed to serve as a guide whether you manage yourself, a corporation or a household, according to a recent piece in *The Tulsa World*. The article, written by Dean Sims, an author and public relations counselor, calls Dr. Swearingen a "truly great educator." He earned that kind of respect while serving as president of the University of Tulsa, vice president of Oklahoma State University and now professor and chairman of free enterprise at Oral Roberts University. Along the way, he also has been a Boy Scout executive and chairman of the Bank of Oklahoma.

"Like all educators from kindergarten to graduate school, Swearingen makes it clear that he was put on earth to help people improve themselves, and society, through education and its application," the article states. "Swearingen puts

plenty of self-motivation messages in this updated edition," the piece continues. Look for the revised version of *Success and Beyond* next time you're in a book store. The price is \$15.



September 5, 1996

I've seen some likely candidates around town for the "Ugliest Pickup Contest" which the Perry Main Street organization is sponsoring as part of the Cherokee Strip celebration this year. The problem is, I'm not sure if some of the owners would appreciate the honor of being nominated. On the other hand, the owners of some of our more scraggly pickups are pretty proud of their vehicles and would be flattered to be considered.

Some of the potential entries look like they have been driven hard all day and put away wet. They do their jobs in the oil patch or traversing the south 40 to look for a stray calf. You get pretty roughed up doing that. Some owners hang an assortment of stuff from the tailgate to the hood ornament and everywhere in between, including the rear view mirrors, and the uglier the better. Some haven't been hosed down since they were driven off the lot. But that's part of the fun of being a pickup man.

Someone asked if this contest is for the ugliest pickup or the ugliest owner of a pickup. They may be on to something there, but the name of the event does not include the word "owner," just pickup, so I guess the sponsors knew what they were doing.

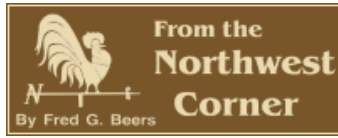
Nominations can be turned in to the Perry Main Street office in the Foucart building, southeast corner of the square, until 5 p.m. on September 9. You'll need to include a photo of the vehicle, its year and model, confirmation that it bears a current state inspection sticker -- and signed consent of the owner.

Votes will cost a penny each, and the proceeds will be used by the Main Street organization to improve building fronts on the square. How's that for a nice twist of irony -- ugly pickups contributing to beautification of the city. Votes may be cast in the commercial exhibits area at the fairgrounds.

The entries have to be drivable, which may eliminate some worthy candidates. Some of our uglier pickups are on blocks and can't be driven any more, but they won't be eligible. To qualify as the grand prize winner, the ugly pickups must be good enough to be driven in the parade on Saturday morning, September 14. They have to circle the parade route on their own, not towed or pushed.

All pickups entered in the contest will be displayed from 2 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, September 12, at the county fair. Besides the honor of being chosen as Noble county's ugliest pickup, the winning entry will receive a trophy and will carry this message on a signboard for the parade: "Ugliest Pickup at the Noble County Free Fair, Sponsored by Perry Main Street."

If you have a suitable vehicle, don't delay! Turn in your entry form before 5 p.m. on September 9 and see how your ugly pickup measures up. This should be at least as much fun as the annual whiskers contest but maybe not as gratifying as the pie eating contest.



September 7, 1996

"Clean up Perry!" That was the comment most often heard from shoppers who took part in the recent survey of this community conducted by the Perry Main Street organization. The overall appearance of this city is a turnoff to many of those who shop here, and that should concern each one of us. The candid criticisms, commendations and other ideas served up in this survey affect every individual in Perry. They are provided for our information by people who have an interest in this town.

The survey results provide something to think about for all who live in this community and not just those in the retail business. If those merchants go down, we all suffer. But, the respondents did not limit their remarks to just the business district. The appearance of our residential areas came in for a large share of criticism, too.

The survey has been analyzed by a unit of the Oklahoma State University Cooperation Extension Service, and results have been passed along to Betty Warner, executive director of Perry Main Street. A detailed copy of the survey is in Mrs. Warner's office at the Foucart Building, and every resident of Perry should study it carefully.

Although the number of respondents was not large -- 172 survey forms were turned in -- the demographics reveal that a reasonable cross-section of the local populace took part. They offered a pretty clear idea of how people perceive Perry businesses, a few suggestions for improvement, and, finally, some commendations or criticisms. Many details of the survey already have been reported in this newspaper, but I wanted to add a little bit more. That's today's topic.

Respondents were asked to make comments relative to the survey, and many of them spoke frankly. That is exactly what the Main Street group wanted them to do. Cleaning up Perry's business and residential areas is a MAJOR cry rising up from the survey. I counted 22 angry-sounding comments on that topic, and residential areas were mentioned as well as the business district. Here are some examples:

"Old houses need to be torn down. There needs to be some kind of cleanup in Perry." "Please clean up the dilapidated houses." "There are some very nice residential areas, but some are very unsightly. Dilapidated houses and junky areas are on our main approaches into town." "Junk in front of houses, old houses that are abandoned should be torn down." "Do something about the abandoned and junk houses around Perry. There are quite a few." "Get rid of junk cars and trash around homes and yards." "Merchants need to keep their store windows clean, sweep the sidewalks." "Make homeowners clean up their property; trash, old cars and furniture in yards is disgusting, especially if you live in the block." "Everyone should bag their trash and quit throwing it along Sixth street." "Clean up old places with sofas and appliances and junk in yards." "Cut procedure time on complaints filed on trash or dilapidated property." "Business owners are encouraged to improve their property." "Merchants need to keep their store windows clean and sweep the sidewalks." "Demolish some of the old rundown structures. Example: Building by the railroad tracks on Cedar street." There were many more, but you get the idea.

It should be noted that the Perry Development Coalition Cleanup Committee has been trying for two years to encourage local property owners to beautify and clean up around their homes and businesses. It can't be accomplished with just a single "cleanup day" once a year. It's up to each of us to take care of our own. Next to cleaning up the residential and business districts, the thing most often mentioned in the survey was the traffic lights around the square. At the time of the survey, the signals were malfunctioning. They have since been fixed, but the survey revealed how people felt about the problem. Examples: "Fix the stop lights; the flashing is so 'small town'." "Street lights around the square have got to be

repaired. Without them working, we look small town. It's a safety risk as well as an appearance issue." "Traffic lights need to be fixed. They need to work all the time, not just part of the time." "I do hope the traffic lights are kept in working order." And so on, in the same vein.

The need for more youth recreational facilities tied with the need for more senior citizen facilities. Interesting. More affordable housing was requested by several, and a large number asked for a movie theater in Perry. Two said Perry has a problem with cliques. And a sizable number complained about the attitude of local clerks. Here are some comments along that line:

"Employees, act like you care when a customer comes in." "Clerks need training in dealing with the public, in person and on the phone. Many are indifferent and/or downright rude. Many lack fundamental knowledge about the products they are selling. Things such as this make shoppers look elsewhere for a friendly attitude." "Sales clerks in Perry have been notorious for being unfriendly." "We need friendlier clerks."

No, all the remarks were not negative. There were many favorable comments about Perry, and some of those should be noted, too. A few of them: "We have so many positive qualities to count as blessings!" "Our square is something to be proud of." "I'm very proud of Perry and I'm sure we have more going for us than any other town in the nation its size." "Overall, Perry is in pretty good shape." "I like Perry very much. We do need some shops but for the most part one can find most things." "Thanks to the Perry Main Street program, Perry is really progressing. "I love living in Perry."

There is so much to this survey that it is just not possible to present a short, comprehensive recap. Shoppers offered many, many helpful criticisms but balanced that with a number of specific reasons about why they do their shopping here. An appropriate response would be immediate action to make improvements where needed to demonstrate that we are serious about keeping them coming back. And it's important to note that they DO shop here in spite of some critical remarks. It seems apparent that the respondents are trying to be constructive and make this a better place in every way. I believe we owe them a debt of gratitude for sharing their feelings about this little city.

For anyone interested, drop by the Perry Main Street office and spend a few minutes looking over the complete results of this survey.



September 10, 1996

Clowning For the Camera were these men at the entrance to the women's dressing room at the original Perry Country Club on the shore of Wills Lake. The bath house, with separate dressing rooms for men and women, was one of the first structures built by club members after they leased the property in 1905 from Austin Wills. None of the four men is identified.

Still more light has been shed on the origin of the Perry Golf & Country Club, thanks to several individuals. It came to me by way of Barbara St. Clair, who still holds the distinction of having been the first (and so far, the only) woman president of that club. The information she passed along was written in 1980 by the late Irene Treeman, a lady who witnessed, participated in, remembered and relayed much of the early history of this city. Her notes on the history of the Country

Club were compiled originally for a meeting of the Perry Study Club and were read to that group by her daughter, Elizabeth Willems.

So, thanks to all three of those ladies -- Barbara, Irene and Elizabeth for making it possible to reconstruct some of the events that led up to the establishment of our present Country Club. In the following narrative, anything you see in quotation marks is lifted directly from Irene's handwritten account.

Mrs. Treeman traced the beginning of the Perry Country Club back to 1905, just 12 years after the opening of the Cherokee Strip. She asked rhetorically: "Does it seem as remarkable to you as it does to me that after 12 years of that grueling work of turning a pastureland of weeds and grass and jackrabbits and snakes into a town with trees and flowers and houses and schools and churches and a square with many wooden and some stone buildings on it and a post office, and a courthouse and a jail in the middle of the square -- a nice, commodious and comfortable stone jail -- and a fire department and a police department -- all of these things and many more, which took a tremendous effort in the short period of 12 years -- and yet some people had the desire and the get-up-and-go to start a Country Club?"

"It was like, this. The winter of 1904-05 was very severe, similar to the one we had in 1978. Lots of deep snow and then a sleet which melted a bit and froze over, and the boys in our neighborhood were skating all over on ice skates. Sledding and coasting were fine, too. One of the favorite courting places was out east of Perry ... Perhaps when you have been driving east out to (Grace Hill) cemetery ... you have glanced to the north and have noticed a pond, usually a red-looking pond... Near the pond and west of it was the highest spot close around Perry. It was called 'Lover's Peak.' Why? I think I was too young to know.

"From the top of Lover's Peak venturesome boys could coast straight down. They went lickety-split downhill and then could slide clear over to where the Dolezal house is (west side of Leo Park) ... It wasn't long until the coasting and skating were enjoyed not only in the daytime by youngsters, but also at night by grownups ... When spring came, some of the adults thought, 'If we had such a good time out there in the winter, why can't we have as good a time in the summer?' And that is how the idea of a Country Club was born."

Irene related that in 1905 a group of adults obtained a 15-year lease on the lake and adjacent property from Austin Wills, who had purchased it after the turn of the century from a Mr. Walker. It was called Wills Lake, and the old reddish pond is still there. Memberships in the new Country Club were sold, but apparently no record exists to show the price of membership. Irene believed they sold for about \$100 a year. One membership included the entire family.

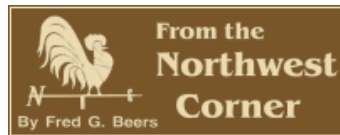
One of the first projects in development of the area was leveling of the hill just south of the lake. A pavilion was built, consisting primarily of a good floor and a roof with a wide overhang. It was about 75' x 100' in size. Benches were built around the west, south and east sides, and a stationary table was built in front of the west side benches. Movable tables were built to be used on the other sides as needed. A piano stood on the southeast corner. The entire north side was left open for each access. Steps were built down the hill to the edge of the lake. A boat house was built next, extending out over the water. Several members had row boats tied up there.

A bath house with separate dressing facilities for men and women was built adjoining the boat house. The showers were considered essential because of the lake's red water. A wide walk was built around the bath house. On the north side at the west end, steps led down into the water, and at the other end were diving boards. On the east sidewalk were a high and a low slide. The south walk extended to the east for about 150 feet at the water's edge. On the hillside, benches were built, and next to the lake, a banister. At the far end of this walk steps descended for a boat landing. Skimming over the lake surface in a row boat was a very popular diversion, Irene related.

"One of the happiest arrangements at the club was a 'pitch-in supper night,' on Thursday I am sure," she wrote. "This was for all members and their families. I well remember my mother cooking (frying) not one but three chickens on hot summer

afternoons, and on the tables were mountains of potato salad, slaw, sliced tomatoes, deviled eggs, pies and cakes, and often several freezers of homemade ice cream. After supper, nearly everyone danced. Those who didn't care to dance sat down by the lake and cooled off. We danced the Virginia Reel, children and everybody. Someone would play a jig tune on the piano, or we would start up the old Victrola with a funnel and records. Mr. W. H. Kirchner called the Virginia Reel. If some wanted to square dance, they did. Then everyone, those learning to dance, old dancers, young dancers, waltzed and two-stepped until time to go home.

More of Irene Treeman's Country Club recollections in the next Northwest Corner.



September 12, 1996

Here's the rest of Mrs. Irene Treeman's story about the origin of the Perry Country Club, from a paper she wrote for a local women's club in 1980:

The dam for Wills Lake, the site of the original Country Club on the east side of Perry, was on the west side of the lake, and between the dam and the entrance gate was a large space where two long hitching racks were located; Mrs. Treeman wrote. In 1905 there were almost no automobiles in Perry, but everybody had some kind of horse and buggy. By 1920, almost everybody had some kind of car.

One of the buildings at Wills Lake/Country Club was the keeper's cottage, a one-room building west of the pavilion. Mrs. Treeman remembered the keeper as an elderly man who lived there and was always around. "I can't remember any vandalism or bad behavior at the old Country Club," she wrote.

"In 1920 Mr. Wills would not renew the lease on his property so the club's board of directors made some arrangement with him about leaving the buildings. He opened a public recreation place there for a while," Mrs. Treeman noted. "The directors began looking for a new location for the Country Club and soon began buying property on the hill north of town where the present day Country Club functions. There had been no golf course at the old Country Club, but plans for a new club included golf. Securing as much land as they needed took quite a bit of time, but in 1925 the board of directors drew up articles of incorporation and rules and regulations for the conduct of the club. The directors were Harry DeLashmutt, Sherman Krisher, Bert Byerley, O. R. Hall, H. C. Jackson, Ralph Treeman, J. A. Boller, Marsh Woodruff and P. W. Cress."

"The clubhouse was built, the lake began to fill up with water, and the golf course was on its way. I know more about the lake than anything else because by husband, Ralph, and Marsh Woodruff were the lake committee. Many evenings we spent out there where an army of men with horses and scoops were digging out what was to be the bottom of the lake. Later, the dam was built. My son, Bill, told me recently that during the first heavy rain, after the dam was built, weak spots showed up and he stayed with his father until 2 o'clock in the morning hauling sacks of cement which they threw into the weak places. For years, he said, you could see those hardened cement sacks in the dam."

"Sand for a beach was hauled in and spread near the north end of the lake for the children's benefit. Mr. VanNoy, the school physical education director, taught swimming out there for, one or two summers. The 'pitch-in' dinners from the old Country Club were never resumed at the new location, and it was not until 1954 or 1955 that the women's auxiliary was organized. Recent notices in the local paper concerning families having dinner-club nights with games afterward remind me of the early-day club."

"I feel that the early-day club and today's club have been a very real community asset, and now that Barbara St. Clair has been elected president (the first female president that this club, old or new, has ever had) proves that the Perry Golf & Country Club of 1980 is really keeping up with the times. Congratulations and many thanks to all of those who have produced an added dimension to Perry -- the town I love."

Thus ended the report Mrs. Treeman prepared for presentation to the Perry Study Club in 1980. Her personal comments about the value of the Country Club in this city are just as apropos today as they were 16 years ago, and with the impending construction of a new clubhouse it's obvious the club is still keeping up with the times.

We're fortunate to have this facility in our community. And, we were fortunate to have had such remarkable historians as Irene Treeman to record some of the interesting facts about the growth and development of Perry. This particular account has enabled us to step back in time and to sample some of the delights of a pleasant, leisurely paced lifestyle which characterized the early days here.



September 14, 1996

Under Construction in the early 1900s is this building near the southeast corner of the square. Located next to the Foucart building, it is one of the east side's most familiar structures with a massive concrete and steel awning projecting from the front. (Barney Enright collection.)

Another look at the early growth and development of Perry after the 1893 Cherokee Strip run is provided by a newly found photograph, shown above, from the collection of the late Barney Enright, whose camera recorded many scenes of this city's formative years.

This view was made on a day in the early 1900s when the familiar two-story concrete structure adjacent to the Foucart building was in preliminary stages of construction. The Foucart building was erected in 1902 as a home for the Noble County Bank, which evolved into today's First Bank & Trust Co.

Scaffolding can be seen like honeycombs on the building as workmen prepare to pour concrete, bucket by bucket, into waiting reinforced wall forms. The sturdy old structure has withstood the onslaught of time very well because of the rugged framework. "It should last maybe another hundred years," according to Nancy Stirman, whose business is located there.

The building under construction in this photograph is now owned by Eileen Stirman and is occupied by Rod and Nancy Stirman's That's My Gallery and the Noble county Republican party. The Stirmans purchased the building in 1982 from the estate of Bertha Malzahn.

Nancy Stirman says her building was conceived originally to adjoin the bank, although separated by a fire wall, and to provide second story office space for attorneys, doctors and other professionals. They were principally used for that purpose until ground floor level offices became commonplace in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Original occupants of the ground floor level were the Pacific Cafe and the Pacific Billiard Parlor, operated by two brothers. A wall separated those two enterprises. Several years later the wall was removed and the entire space was occupied by the Sears store operated by Chuck and Mary Arnold. When the Arnolds moved to Oklahoma City, the Sears store was purchased by Byron Mayes, and the Stirmans later bought the business (but not the building) from him. The dividing wall was then restored to create two 25-foot wide spaces for businesses. When that was done, the lower level was completely rewired to bring it up to the current building code. Before that, lights on the first floor could only be turned on and off by use of a breaker box; there were not switches, Mrs. Stirman says.

Remodeling work during that same period disclosed that the massive concrete awning across the front of the building could not be removed because steel beams embedded in the concrete are structurally needed as counterweights for the facade.

In more recent years, Sears has totally redesigned its retailing strategy and stores in small cities like Perry have been closed throughout the U.S.

No date is given for the construction shown above, but Nancy says the job was completed around 1910. At lower left is what looks like the rear of a Model T Ford coupe which would have been appropriate for that year. In the near foreground are hitching posts on the courthouse park, indicating that horse-drawn conveyances were still in use.

Before the Stirman building was put up, the space had been occupied by a number of businesses operating from wooden structures. One of the frequent fires which plagued the city in those days destroyed the original frame building and cleared the way for this construction job.

For many years, Barney Enright had a portrait studio on a balcony at the rear of Everett Nelson's South Side Pharmacy in the building now occupied by City Hall. In addition to studio shots, Mr. Enright was the official photographer for much of what went on during the first half of this century, recording scenes of this emerging prairie city. Thanks to him, and to his niece, Mary Ann Witter, who provided the photo, generations of latter day Perry residents can experience a bit of what it was like, 'way back when. Today, as our city celebrates the 103rd anniversary of the Cherokee Strip land opening, is a good time to reflect on those early days of the growth and development of our little home on the prairie.



September 17, 1996

It does no good to keep telling myself that I will not become unduly upset at the gross proliferation of webworms. They still seriously bug me. They're like some of our unprincipled politicians this year -- you can't ignore them. For one thing, I don't like their name. "Webworm" has a kind of cool, cozy, sound, like "cricket on the hearth." That's terribly misleading. I prefer to call them what they are -- tree killers.

Working in the yard the other day, I noticed something strange on the trunk of our pin oak tree. It appeared to be a strip of grayish matter about an inch wide and maybe three feet long, moving slowly, vertically up the trunk of the tree starting about 18 inches from the ground. A closer look disclosed that it was a procession of webworms seemingly moving in lockstep toward the upper branches where lush, green leaves awaited them. The grayish strip consisted of three parallel rows of webworms marching like soldiers in orderly ranks, eager to devour one of my favorite trees. I counterattacked with

massive doses of insect spray and proclaimed victory, but then I observed two or three small colonies already had been established on some of the lower branches. I'll have to get rid of them, too.

You can cut them out of your tree and destroy the branches or spray them with some of the recommended insecticides, but don't try burning the webs while they're still in the tree. You're liable to set the whole thing on fire and perhaps some nearby property as well. If you cut out the infected branches, don't leave them on the ground. Burn them in a protected environment or wrap them in plastic and dispose of them in a landfill. If not burned or securely wrapped, they'll migrate from branches left on the ground to any nearby tree. If you spray, the web itself must be penetrated to be effective. It does no good to spray the outside of those cocoons. The insecticide won't penetrate unless a hole of some kind has been poked into the web. That's how tightly they're spun.

Or, you can leave them unmolested and watch your beautiful trees being devoured by some unpleasant, munching little creatures.

It is just so sad to ponder all the damage these tiny pests are causing around here. Someone suggested that if it weren't for the reality of what they are, those gossamer webs would be considered attractive, almost lace-like. They've been compared to the Spanish moss that decorates many trees in the Deep South. I don't know about that. When you see an entire tree enveloped in a suffocating web, you have to feel a sort of loathing.

This is perhaps the worst invasion of webworms in history, experts tell us, and that's easy to believe. This is the second generation this summer, and the vast numbers of the present crop insure an even larger horde next spring. It seems they've become worse since we had those April showers last August.

Fight 'em any way you can. Don't give up your trees by default. Cut, spray, burn --just find a way to get rid of them and then brace for another invasion in the next cycle. It's the same way with those unprincipled politicians. They're also pretty tough and sometimes seem impervious to our best efforts to make them go away.



September 19, 1996

Old newspapers from anywhere hold a special fascination for me, but those I enjoy the most are the ones with a Noble county connection. The other day Tolbert and Barbara St.Clair showed me their copy of the March 12, 1917, edition of *The Billings News*, and it has provided a great deal of interesting reading. L. C. Brown was editor-publisher of the six-page newspaper, which appeared every Friday. Tolbert has kept this copy of the old paper all these years because it contains a detailed obituary of his great-grandfather, Samuel St.Clair, an authentic oil industry pioneer who became a resident of Billings in 1902. John St.Clair also is a great-grandson.

In 1917, most small town newspapers accepted display advertising for their front pages, and on that particular day *The News*, which had a six-column wide format, carried three-column ads from Howard Collins' ready to wear shop, Sanford-Hammer Drug Co. and Donley's Jewelry Store, which was located in the drug store. Those ads were stacked vertically and occupied the entire right hand side of the front page. Stories in the upper left quarter of the page dealt with the intense oil activity underway in the Billings area at that time, including a notice that H.C.K. Co. of Perry had "timbers on the ground for a rig on the J. C. Deal farm, NW 24-23-2." The H.C.K. Co. was organized by John A. Hansen, then president of the Perry

Bank of Commerce; prominent Perry attorney P. W. Cress; and John Knox of Knox & Stout Clothing Co., which eventually became the Famous Department Store.

But the lower left quarter of the front page contained detailed obituary notices. One of these concerned Tolbert's ancestor, Samuel St.Clair, who died at the age of 87 in Enid. During his lifetime he was a participant in some of the most interesting episodes in the early history of this country. The story related that Mr. St.Clair was born November 20, 1829, in Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania, and was reared there. He served throughout the Civil War in Company D, 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry. After the war he farmed and entered the mercantile business in Iowa, then moved to Billings in 1902.

The newspaper article, with punctuation and sentence structure repeated intact, went on: "Mr. St.Clair was a pioneer in the oil business, taking the contract and drilled the first well at Titusville, Pa., which was drilled for the purpose of securing oil. Oil had been discovered in a well drilled for the purpose of obtaining salt, just previous, being the original Drake well. When Drake let the contract to (Mr. St.Clair) for an oil well, which was drilled until oil was found in considerable quantities. He followed the business of drilling until he enlisted in the Army, and again followed it for several months after the close of the war."

Thus he played a key role in the birth of the oil business in this country, long before development of the automobile and the industrial revolution. Discovery of the underground energy resources was important at the time, but that was before the tremendous international demand that followed the industrial revolution and the development of the automobile. In the mid-1860s, few observers foresaw what was to happen after the Titusville discovery in the well drilled by Samuel St.Clair.

Mr. St.Clair and his wife, Rachel, had seven children, although two died in infancy. Surviving him were two sons, H. E. St.Clair of Perry, grandfather of Tolbert and John; and J. F. St.Clair of Los Angeles; three daughters, Mrs. Robert Moncrieff of Enid, Mrs. J. F. Faris of Billings, and Mrs. M. F. Beerman of Ft. Collins, Colorado. At the time of his death in 1917, the old gentleman also had 21 grandchildren and five greatgrandchildren. While in the Billings community, Mr. and Mrs. St.Clair made their home east of Billings. They later moved to Enid, but because of his declining health they lived with their daughter, Mrs. Faris, at Billings for a few months before his death.

Thanks to Tolbert and Barbara for passing along this interesting information about one of our early day Noble county residents. His life story could be developed into a fascinating movie scenario or historical novel.

And to wrap up today's column, Bill Haynes offers this solution to the local webworm problem: Mix one cup of dishwasher detergent with two gallons of water and spray directly onto the webs. Ordinary insecticides are oil based and will not penetrate the webs, but this mixture will work because it is water based, Bill says. Any brand of dishwasher detergent will do the job. Bill says Ken Schuermann passed the recipe on to him, and he has had good results with it.



September 21, 1996

Football season is here, so let's begin today with a true yarn that dates back to 1923, when Coach Frank Briscoe had an outstanding squad at Perry high school. Fans and players alike were slightly ga-ga that year as victory piled upon victory. This story was told to me some time ago by Kenneth Coldiron, and I've been saving it for just such an occasion. Kenny swears this is really the way it happened. Here's what he told me:

PHS was having a great season under Coach Briscoe in the fall of 1923. A post-season game was arranged with Sapulpa, and it was considered to be for the mythical state championship. There were no playoff games then. Perry players, coaches, students, parents and fans made the trip to Sapulpa on a Frisco train. Unfortunately, the Maroons lost by 2 points.

Traveling home by train the next day and feeling depressed, the Perry group were met in Pawnee, home of the arch-rival Black Bears, by a group anxious to further humble the Maroons, if possible. Perry had beaten Pawnee during the regular season. The Pawnee delegation included a band playing a funeral dirge and a papier-mâché casket with a sign reading: 'Perry Dies to Sapulpa.'

Pawnee students and a few Pawnee fans had fun jeering the beaten Maroons, who apparently were sealed up in the chair cars while the train waited at the depot. Perry players listened to the band, read the banners, and ground their teeth. Soon their collective blood pressure soared.

Fiery quarterback Jay Gaskill was first to leave the train, jumping spang in the middle of the fake casket. The Pawnee crowd quickly counterattacked, and immediately the train emptied as Perry players saw one of their star players in jeopardy. Pandemonium reigned on the station platform.

Pushing and shoving by youths and adults was going on everywhere amid shouts and pleas from coaches, parents and Frisco employees to break it up. The locomotive engineer blew his whistle and conductors tried to halt the melee, and finally the cooler heads prevailed. Perry kids and grownups filed back onto the train and the Pawnee group grew quiet.

Just as it appeared peace had been fully restored, someone in the crowd on the platform made what seemed to be an uncomplimentary remark about Perry, and it was overheard by Mrs. Charles Harbaugh, one of the parents. She scooped up a nearby brass spittoon and heaved it through an open window toward the one who had uttered the disparaging words, and in no time at all the train was emptied again.

The second episode was shorter than the first, and when order was finally restored the train made as hasty a departure as possible. Apparently, no serious wounds or injuries were incurred by participants on either side, and passions subsided as time went by.

The Perry-Pawnee rivalry continued in intensity through the years in both football and basketball, although the two schools do not play each other as often as they used to. No further incidents have occurred like the big one in 1923.

I guess we're all just more cool-headed these days, right? Kenny's story remains one of my all-time favorites.



September 24, 1996

We have our occasional problems downtown because of those malfunctioning traffic lights, but Perry folks in the early 1920s were having their own kinds of trouble moving from the horse and buggy era into the modern world of gas jalopies.

One of the biggest gripes, apparently, was the parking situation, particularly on the east side of the square where two of our newfangled movie theaters were located. All this is gleaned from the December 7, 1922, edition of *The Perry Republican*, a weekly newspaper that preceded *The Perry Daily Journal* on the streets of this city. The editor of that day

commented on the situation in a page one news story, headlined "New Parking Method Made -- Cars Must Be Parked Within White Lines; Will Increase Parking Space." Here's what the editor had to say:

"The street department is completing a much needed service in the business part of town by painting parking lines on the pavement. Eight-foot parking space is provided between each of the lines, which run from the curb at an angle.

"Much trouble has been experienced in the past to provide adequate parking room, especially on the east side of the square near the shows. Car drivers have been in the habit of parking their machines at all angles, from parallel to the curb to 45 degrees. It has also been the habit of motorists to head in with a space between their machine and the next one to them, which is too narrow for another car to park, but altogether too much room to be wasted.

"When you drive in to park now, keep inside two of these white lines." (Funny thing. In the 74 years since that was written, some of us still haven't got the hang of it when it comes to parking between the lines.) "The police department declares that motorists who cannot remember this rule will be given 'five and --' a few times to improve their memory."

I'm not sure what constituted that penalty of "five and-," but I hope the editor's warning was sufficient to keep those motorists from parking parallel to the curb. Angle parking is much easier, anyway.

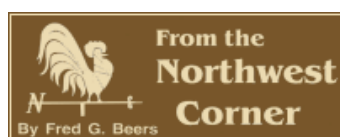
Another item on the front page of that particular day's edition was headed "School Notes," and it contained some interesting statistics in light of the newly announced enrollment figures for the 1996-97 term of Perry schools. Superintendent Larry Fry has disclosed that the average daily membership in the entire Perry school system now stands at 1,386. In December 1922 the total enrollment at Perry high school (not the total system, remember) was 272 with an average daily attendance of 256.

The 1922 "School Notes" column added another comment on "deportment," a word you hardly ever hear any more. Here are some of the school's thoughts on that subject almost 75 years ago:

"There is nothing in school which reflects the influence and training of the home more than deportment. The deportment is the average of the deportment turned in by the several teachers. It is most gratifying to know that only five out of 260 made a 'P' in deportment. More than 60% made an 'E.' Parents, do you know that the grades made by your children are placed on the permanent record of the high school for the inspection of the public and that this record will follow them if they ever attempt to attend a college or university?

"Scarcely a week passes by but that some inquiry comes to the office about prospective boys or girls or someone comes in person to inspect the records. The reports for the past six weeks have been mailed. Please take time to see if your son or daughter is one of the five."

Hopefully, a word to the wise was all it took to straighten up those five "P" recipients. If we still graded high schoolers on deportment, I wonder how many would earn an "E" today?



September 26, 1996

Getting ready for a garage sale always requires a lot of digging through boxes that have been stashed in the attic, basement or closet for perhaps several years. That's one of the purposes of garage sales -- to thin out our stuff. Helen

Bristol experienced this recently and she has come up with some old photos and newspapers that might be of interest to someone around here.

The photos are postcard size family portraits from the early years of this century, and someone probably would dearly love to have them. Signatures on some of the cards indicate they are issued by Lester S. French. He was identified as "principal of school" at Waynoka on business cards that also are included. Several copies of The Waynoka Tribune, dated August 19, 1910, are in the collection, along with more recent vintage copies of newspapers from Perry, Guthrie, Wichita and Oklahoma City, and nine 1972 issues of Life magazine.

Helen says all these were found by her late husband, David, when he was demolishing an old farm building in this county. She knows of no one in the French family, but if by chance a reader knows of some connection, Helen would appreciate a call. Otherwise, they'll be sold at auction on October 3.

I hope many of you have had the opportunity to enjoy Ken Burns' latest video documentary, "The West," which has just concluded on PBS. Tuesday night's two-hour installment included a segment on the 1889 Oklahoma land run but neglected to mention any of the others, including the biggest of them all, the Cherokee Outlet opening on September 16, 1893. Generally I thought "The West" did a marvelous job of describing the development of that part of the U.S. west of The Mississippi. I understand that the scope of the series was so broad that every detail could not be included, but I'm disappointed the Cherokee Strip was not so much as mentioned. If you missed the series, it undoubtedly will appear later in reruns. It's worth the taping for posterity.

On the subject of TV, I'm getting a little tired of video news-meisters who promote their next telecasts with 30-second headlines that invariably conclude with the phrase, "You won't believe what (so-and-so) said..." or some such verbiage. By now, thanks to TV, most of us would believe anything they choose to show or tell us. Believe it, you smiling anchor people. Lose that cliché.

Still on TV, watching today's weathermen with their computer and radar wizardry, their blue screen maps that appear to be wall size on our home tubes, and all the gadgetry now available to them, brings back memories of the early days of forecasting by these electronic meteorologists. Remember how Wally Kinnan and Harry Volkman, who pioneered this art form in Oklahoma, used to plot weather currents on their revolving drums with crudely painted maps of the state and the entire United States? They used something like a white tipped Magic Marker to dress up those maps, and frequently the lines would leak into the wrong thermal zones. I believe Mr. Volkman once said that his marker actually contained white shoe polish.

It's a far cry from those primitive weather shows to today's high-tech spectacles, but I haven't noticed a great improvement in their accuracy. The other night Gary England brought up a computer map of northern Oklahoma and it showed I-35 going up to the Kansas line from Oklahoma City as it should, but with Stillwater, not Perry, at about the midway point. I hope Gary's geographically challenged concept is not indicative of his weather forecasting skills.



September 28, 1996

This looks like a good day to acknowledge a few questions and comments from readers. First up is Betty Andrews with some memories of the little white frame house that once stood on the northwest corner of Ninth street and Wakefield

Road, where Gene and Joan Breshears' lovely home is now located. Betty's memory was jogged by a recent note in this column that Arthur Clark, caretaker at the Country Club for many years, once lived in the old house. Betty writes:

"Max and Marie Baetz, my grandparents, bought the place in 1929 from the Perry Golf & Country Club for \$1,500. If the Clarks lived there, they rented from my grandmother after my grandfather died in 1944. It was sold at auction in 1956 to Harold Scovill and others. All the land from Ernie and Myrna Stoops' (at 1005 Wakefield) to Breshears' corner was theirs. Country Club members always stopped by my grandparents' before going home and bought eggs from them. Their house was right by the tee stand and as a little girl I would go there and look for golf balls and tees. Their yard always had a lot of flowers. The property was sold at auction in 1956 when my grandmother passed away."

Ray Malget of Larry's Bestyet recently found a unique token and is looking for some information about the piece. It apparently is a souvenir coin with a value of one cent. Inscribed on one side is this: "Perry Chapter No. 15 R.A.M. Chartered August 15, 1895, Perry, Oklahoma, One Penny." The reverse side shows a set of Masonic emblems, but no other inscription. "R.A.M." stands for Royal Arch Masons, but the Perry chapter surrendered its charter several years ago and is no longer active here. Anyone remember when these souvenirs were issued?

Dr. A. M. Brown seems to be about as busy with various projects as he was before retiring from his medical practice a few years back. With his wife, Evelyn, he is a mainstay of Operation Blessing, but his interests don't stop there. One of his chief concerns is a program that assists the hard of hearing. Art sends along a copy of an Ann Landers column which ran recently. It contained a letter from M. Bernice Dinner, Ph.D., president and founder of an organization known as HEAR NOW, based in Denver.

Dr. Dinner described how HEAR NOW recycles used hearing aids provided by charitable donors. The program was mentioned in an Ann Landers column a couple of years ago, and since then 57,964 hearing aids have been donated. They were reconstructed and recycled to provide near hearing aids to low-income children and adults. Dr. Brown has supported this program for several years, even purchasing ads in *The Journal* asking local people to mail their hearing aids to Denver. After one of those ads appeared here, 15 aids were received from this area. More are still needed. If you can help, send the hearing aids to HEAR NOW, 9745 E. Hampden Ave., Suite 300, Denver, CO 80231-4923. There is a great demand for these devices, and thanks to Art Brown for calling that fact to our attention.

Gary McNabb has been finding some interesting things while renovating his house at 431 Elm street. Its origins date back to the pre-statehood days in Perry. Gary has come across a number of historically fascinating odds and ends left there by some of the carpenters and others involved in the original construction. One of these, found attached to a stud in an interior wall, appears to be a shipping tag from the Guthrie Planing Mill. It was addressed by hand to "T.M.R.L. Co., Perry, I.T.," with "DON'T DELAY" imprinted across one end.

Gary assumes the tag was attached to a load of lumber delivered to the construction site when the home he now occupies was being built. He also guesses that "T.M.R.L. Co." stood for the name of a local lumber yard. Statehood came in 1907, but the tag gives "Guthrie, OK." as the home of the planing mill, while the handwritten portion giving the destination shows it to be "Perry, I.T." That stands for Indian Territory, but this area was part of Oklahoma Territory (O.T.), not "I.T.," before statehood. All we can do is speculate from this perspective of time.

Thanks to all the above for providing some interesting thoughts to ponder on this particular day.