



September 3, 1999

September is officially here, and that can mean only one thing: Celebration time is upon us! Are you ready for the annual weeklong anniversary of the great land run that brought hundreds of settlers to this blessed part of the country?

All of us enjoy the celebration and the Noble county free fair that coincides with it each year. Plus, there are carnival rides, the big Saturday parade, non-stop entertainment in the courthouse park, a concert at the Perry high school auditorium, class reunions, family get-togethers, the rodeo, Maroon football game, and many, many more forms of entertainment to delight every age. Perry rightfully takes pride in its record of being the only city in the Cherokee Strip that has never failed to mark the anniversary each year since the opening. It's a community-wide wingding.

Sometimes visitors are amazed at the scope and ingenuity of our celebration. It is so big that it requires the time, energy, and patience of the entire populace to pull it together. Weeks and months of dedicated effort go into the preparation, and all of us enjoy the big week when it finally arrives. Waiting for it is something like the feeling of anxiety that youngsters experience as Christmas nears. To me, what makes it really special is the fact that none of this is done to make money. Most of it is free and it's that way because the people of this community want it to be a celebration and not a fundraiser. Most Perry businesses, aside from the very essential food merchants, close for the entire day rather than try to make a sale or two.

Take it all in and enjoy it. Don't overlook the musical treat provided for us on Thursday night, September 16, at the PHS auditorium. The featured performer is singer Brenda Shook, the young lady from Covington who is honing her craft in Nashville. Brenda has entertained groups in this area through the years and now she has a show of her own to help with this big event. It promises to be a toe-tapping, upbeat concert with just the right tempo to kick off the celebration in style.

The Perry Maroons of Coach Mark Baetz entertain arch-foe Blackwell on Friday night, September 17, at Daniels Field. This game always generates its own kind of excitement as the state's only two Maroon teams collide on the gridiron. Go on out to the ball game and become part of the excitement that is sure to be generated there.

The Cherokee Strip run took place on September 16, 1893, but in recent years our annual celebration has been moved to the Saturday that falls nearest to the 16" so that more people might participate. The arrangement has worked out well, and if the weatherman will just cooperate our population should more than double on Saturday, September 18.

Many things have been done to prepare for the guests coming that day. All of us can contribute by cleaning up yards, cutting weeds around the square and elsewhere, touching up paint on homes and businesses, picking up trash along the rights of way or wherever it's found, and, finally, playing the part of congenial hosts when the crowd arrives. Most of all, let's remember the hardy pioneers who made that run 106 years ago, and made it possible for the rest of us to enjoy living in one of Oklahoma's greatest little cities.



September 7, 1999

A lot of people are telling us that 1999 marks the end of a millennium and 2000 is the start of a whole new one. Others argue that the next millennium actually won't start until the year 2001. Choose your own way to look at it. Whatever else, the year 2000 will alter the way we refer to previous decades. In today's usage, if we say "the roaring '20s" or "the silly '60s, we expect the hearer to understand that we mean the 1920s or the 1960s. How are we going to abbreviate the decade just ahead? Will we call it "the technically advanced '00s?" I don't think so. For one thing, how do you convert "00" to conversational English? Is it "double aught?" Or, perhaps it should be stated as "oh-oh." That could convey a whole different meaning. How will next spring's graduates at PHS identify their class verbally at future reunions? ("Hi, I'm John Jones from the class of '00." That's awkward to say, and I worry about such things.) Let's just forget it for now and concentrate on the angst we've already created by the potentially disastrous advent of Y2K.

Part of the hullabaloo relating to this subject is brought to us courtesy the many experts in various fields of endeavor. We've been presented with the 20th century's greatest Oklahoma University and Oklahoma State University football teams. Many other team sports have been subjected to the same analysis. Before the torrent of such lists is ended, we can expect an onslaught of them from every imaginable segment of the populace. That thought made me wonder: Why shouldn't Perry have its own list of top ten citizens? It quickly dawned on me, after a moment's deliberation, that the number ten would be insufficient because we have produced so many outstanding folks.

So I decided to forge ahead with my own list, but I would make it broad enough to span every field of endeavor. Athletics, humanities, government, politics, education, industry, business, science -- achievement in any of those, and any others I might think of, would qualify a person for the list. Above all, they would not be listed in any numerical order. Who among us would want the responsibility of categorizing Perry citizens that way?

Being fully aware of the potential grief this would invite, I plunged ahead and decided to bring out my own list of notables. The deliberation that followed brought up a rather enormous quantity of names and I am proud to present them for your consideration. If Perry had a Hall of Fame, most of these men and women would be in it. The criteria used in selecting them were simple: Anyone who has made it big in some way can be included.

There are too many of them to fit in just one column, so in due time I will start to reveal my version of those whose accomplishments convince me that they should be included. They may never have their names etched or engraved in stone or bronze for the magnificence of what they have done, but I am moved to place them in my own summation of Perry folks who deserve a little extra credit. I don't expect unanimous agreement, but maybe this will be the starting point for a little discussion.



September 10, 1999

A few months ago I devoted one of these columns to "what I know about Nevilyn Throckmorton." There was so much more to her than I knew then, probably more than I will know in this lifetime. If ever a mortal being was destined to be an angel here on earth, it was Nevilyn. I think she was the type of person all of us wish we were. The thing is, she achieved that level in a much too brief life span.

As a teacher in the Perry grade school, she was in her element. She worked with young minds, coaxing them to question everything and prove as much of it as possible. She had the whole community working on a project to collect one million pull tabs from soft drink cans just to show her youngsters "what a million of something looks like." She taught good citizenship and delved into the American economic system. At least one former student paid his way through college with the profits from an investment program outlined by Nevilyn. She challenged the young people in her classroom to dare to do things they might never have dreamed about, and she told them if they persevered they would prevail.

Her life was like that. When her cancer was diagnosed, Nevilyn smiled her sweet smile and announced that she could win that battle. She gave it a good shot, and with this whole community pulling for her, praying for her, hoping with her, it looked like she was going to win. When the grim prognosis was learned a few days ago, Nevilyn chose to maintain a normal life as much as possible after bidding farewell to the youngsters in her classroom at the middle school. She was in church last Sunday, though obviously in discomfort.

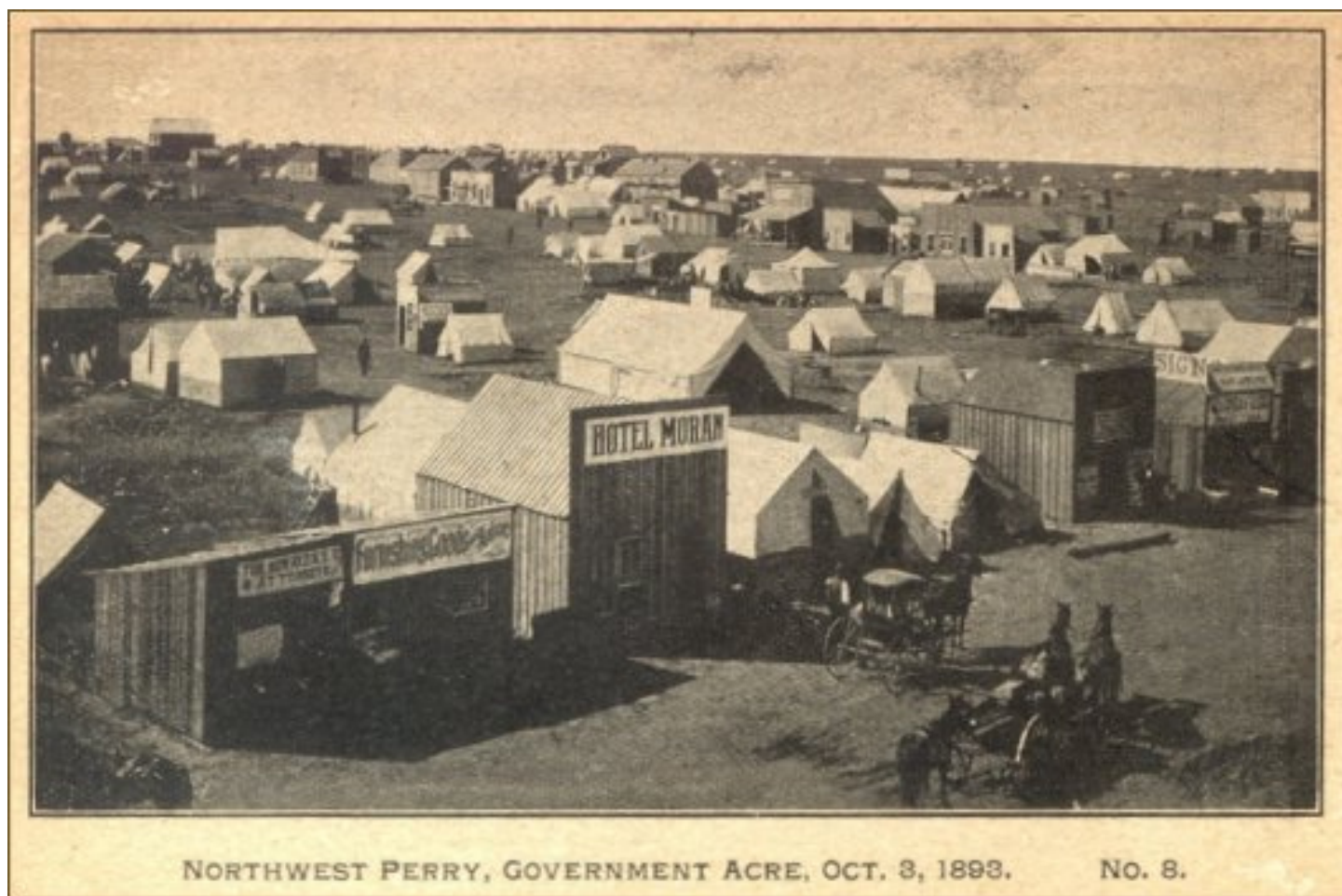
The church played a most significant part in her life. She was faithful in attendance, in expressing her spirituality, in creating and directing the curriculum for a vacation Bible school at her beloved Presbyterian church, and in serving as an excellent role model for adults as well as young people. She believed in physical fitness as well and worked out as long as her body allowed.

Many urgent and special prayers have been offered on her behalf, and for husband Craig and their two young sons, Solomon and Alonzo. Those who knew her, which is to say just about everyone in this close little community, are shedding tears this week as we grieve at her passing. It is hard to understand how this can be for the best, but it is not meant that we should understand at this point.

It is perhaps enough to remember that for Nevilyn, death meant an abrupt halt to pain and suffering, mental anguish and stress for her and for her family. She is a beautiful young lady we will remember for a very long time in this community. Her loss creates a void in so many ways, but her character and spirit will live on as a memorial to the life of this one whose time among us was dreadfully brief. Goodbye, Nevilyn.



September 14, 1999



Hotel Moran, an early-day Perry hostelry, is shown clearly in this photograph which was made on October 3, 1893, only a few days after the Cherokee Strip land run. A pioneer of that period, John Knox, described an era in a colorful 1948 letter to friends.

John Knox was an authentic pioneer of the Cherokee Strip land rush on September 16th, 1893. He was not yet 20 years old at the time and therefore not legally eligible to homestead, but his father, Bethuel Knox, did stake a claim. Unfortunately, it was on Santa Fe Railroad right of way, so he was unable to hang on to it very long. The Knox family played an important part in the early development of Perry, so today is an appropriate time to hear about them as we prepare to celebrate the 106th anniversary of that great event.

In 1948, John Knox was living in Santa Ana, California. He moved there from Perry in 1918 but his thoughts returned to Perry each September. That annual wave of nostalgia motivated him in 1948 to address a letter "to the 241 pioneers and descendants (of the run)" who had registered at the previous year's celebration here. His letter is rich in colorful details with his recollections of Perry as it was shortly after the run, and I thought you would enjoy reading them. Jo Wollard Garten of Ponca City furnished the letter to me. She is the daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. G.C. Wollard, two of Perry's distinguished early day citizens.

From this point, today's column is in the words of John Knox as they appeared in his letter to other pioneers of the 1893 land run. Here's a portion of what Mr. Knox had to say:

To the best of my recollection, and to begin with, I made the run from Kansas on the Santa Fe train, accompanied by my father, B. (Bethuel) Knox. Upon our arrival (in Perry) we located near where the Santa Fe station now stands on what turned out to be land owned by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company. Upon this site we built a shack which was

called home. Prior to building that, we were forced to spend the first few nights on the bank of Cow Creek, along with hundreds of others who were without shelter and very little water for necessary purposes of life.

At that time I was under 20 years of age, and therefore, not eligible to take up a homestead. With approximately \$5.00 between my father and myself, the thought of a capital investment in a business was somewhat remote. However, my father, in his younger days, was an auctioneer. Through our connection with folks who had ventured the same as we and who, rather than stay, desired to return to their women folks, allowed my father to pick up a little business by buying and selling various items. (These were things) which these folks had in their possession but were required to relinquish, so that some cash would be realized, allowing them to return to their homes.

With the thought of making my way in life, I called at a place where the Moran family was setting up some tents for the purpose of starting a hotel. This site was on the public square near where the present courthouse now stands. Without asking questions from anyone I immediately pitched in and helped set up the tents. Upon completion Mrs. Moran said to me: "Young man, you seem to want a job." To which I replied: "I surely do." With that expression she said: "All right, young man, I can afford to pay you fifty cents a day and board, providing you find your own place to sleep. I immediately went to work doing everything necessary in hotel work. This included being janitor, dish washer, second cook and night clerk. The greatest difficulty encountered was the handling of various characters of houseguests, which included drunks and outlaws. To mention one group, we housed and fed some of the Jennings gang. Fortunately, most of our guests were the better class of people of many walks of life.

Watch for the next Northwest Corner with more fascinating information from Mr. Knox's letter to Perry pioneers.



September 17, 1999

Part II of the recollections of the late John Knox, a Perry pioneer who came here at the age of 19 with his father, Bethuel Knox, on September 16, 1893. Following is part of a letter he wrote from California to other Cherokee Strip pioneers in 1948.

POLITICS, 1893 STYLE

Working in the Hotel Moran was not entirely to my liking and fortunately I had met P.F. Flower, who had brought the tail end of a clothing store to Perry from Nebraska. He gave me a job at seventy-five cents per day (I furnished board myself). As time went on we soon added second hand merchandise, as it became available. This addition developed into a thriving business.

During this time the first city election was brought about and John M. Brogan, among others, was a candidate for mayor. While passing the voting place, Mr. Brogan approached me in an effort to solicit my vote. He said, "John, have you voted?" I replied, "No, I am not old enough to vote." To which he replied, "You sure are big enough," and with that gave me a push into the voting booth. As I was being pushed, Mr. Brogan explained that this election might be very close and he was sure that my vote would assist him greatly. (Editor's Note: Mr. Brogan won the election and became Perry's first mayor.)

Later, I found a better position with Spears and Barnes Grocery store on the south side of the square, for which I was to receive \$1 per day. My duties were driving an old gray mare hitched to an old spring wagon for delivery purposes, together

with clerking the rest of our usual 16-hour day, including Sunday forenoon, which was without extra pay.

During this time my father and I opened a small notions store on the corner of Sixth and C streets, utilizing a pushcart as storeroom. This meant taking the cart back and forth to our shack each night. The merchants were generally belligerent as to the location we selected to do business. They promptly got out a petition to have us removed from the street. However, we held our position on the corner under the protection of Police Chief Shockey, who maintained that as long as my father auctioned off for no pay the loads of blackjack wood brought in by the settlers from southeast of Perry we could hold this space. Under this police protection we managed to hold our location for a few months.

Immediately thereafter our store (pushcart) was not sufficient to properly maintain the increased business which we had. Therefore, we rented a small room, with living quarters in the rear, near where the original Famous Store was operated. During this time we had been forced to dispose of the shack residence on the land owned by the railroad company, for which we received the sum of \$10. That amount was added to our store capital.

In the next installment we'll learn more about the origin of the Famous Department Store, which for years was one of Noble county's leading businesses.



September 21, 1999

(Editor's Note: Today we return to the letter written in 1948 by John Knox to friends gathered in Perry for the annual Cherokee Strip celebration. Mr. Knox made the run in 1893 at the age of 19 when he came here from Kansas with his father, Bethuel Knox. He moved to Southern California in 1918 and wrote this letter from there. In the portion below, he describes more of Perry's earliest days.)

In 1896 I quit Spears and Barnes Grocery Store to become active in the little store with my father, which was later moved to a larger building where the Youcie Grocery had been located. In 1897 we outgrew this location and moved into the room adjoining the former location of the Famous Store. We immediately added groceries to our line, with favorable results. However, misfortune was incurred when my father's health failed, and he was taken back to Kansas for medical treatment and care. My brother, Charles Knox, came to assist me in the management of the business and later became my partner.

In approximately 1899, James Lobsitz built the present Famous building and moved into that location. Later our business expanded to proportions that our present location was not adequate to handle. When James Lobsitz moved out of the old Famous building we took a lease at this location. During this occupancy we had employed the following as sales clerks: Sadie Fradlander, J.M. Basye, W.H. Hudson and W.P. Lott.

Our line of merchandise included dry goods, clothing and a grocery department. However, in 1904 we closed out the groceries. As our business further expanded arrangements were made by J.L. Pancoast to build a two-story building on an adjunct lot. Unfortunately, we over-expanded and incurred some financial difficulties. At this time J.H. Stout had closed up shop in the manufacture of Rosa Perfecto cigars so he sold the property on the north side of the square, where Walter Kehres' restaurant now stands.

Elmer Clark's shoe store was for sale in approximately 1906 and was purchased by Joe Stout, who also purchased my brother Charles' interest in our store. Joe Stout and I joined forces at the above location and continued in the clothing and

shoe business until James Lobsitz offered to sell the Famous Store to us in approximately 1911. We purchased the Famous and operated it until 1913. During this time I also bought the Famous building.

Joe Stout decided to move to California and arranged to sell his interest in the Famous Store to Morris Gottlieb. During this transaction I sold the Famous building property to Joe Stout. Morris and I operated the Famous as partners until 1917 at which time my wife, Mollie, and I decided to also move to California. I sold my interest in the Famous to Morris Gottlieb, and Joe Stout also sold the Famous building to Gottlieb. No doubt you all know the history of the Gottliebs from that time on.

(Editor's Note: More of Mr. Knox's interesting recollections in the next Northwest Corner.)



September 24, 1999

(Editor's Note: Here's the final portion of a letter written by Perry pioneer John Knox to friends gathering here in 1948 for the annual Cherokee Strip run anniversary. Mr. Knox at that time lived in Santa Ana, California. When he was not quite 20 years old, he made the run with his father, Bethuel Knox, and soon entered business in this prairie village. John Knox moved to California in 1918 but returned here frequently for the September 16 celebration. Here's the end of the letter.)

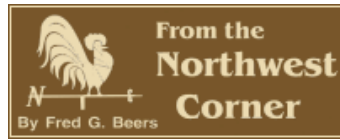
My wife, Mollie, was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Reed of Perry. From our marriage there appeared in due time six little Knoxes -- Alpha, Edith, Doris, Murril, John and Joseph. In 1918 we moved to Santa Ana, California, where we have remained during the past 30 years. I first engaged in partnership with J.H. Stout in the selling of Ford automobiles, followed by a few years in the real estate business as partners. In 1933 I engaged in the hardware business in partnership with Mr. Stout and in 1939 I purchased Mr. Stout's interest. At that time I took in my sons, John and Joseph, as partners. We have enjoyed our relationship in the hardware business and I am in hopes that the boys will be able to continue for many, many years in the future.

During our time in California each of the children have married. All have one or more children of their own and I have eleven grandchildren -- six boys and five girls. Mrs. Knox and I enjoyed our 50th wedding anniversary last spring with many, many newly made friends in this part of the country. However, it seems strange that few come into our lives as did so many of those old friends that we made during our residence in Oklahoma. Included in this list of old friends are members of the Otoe tribe.

I could continue this almost indefinitely, connecting the many experiences that have taken place between me and those to whom this communication is addressed. However, there is one other matter to which I wish to make reference, and that is the last public act I helped to perform before moving to California. This was the help I gave in carrying the bonds for the present Noble county courthouse as it now stands on the square. This was done under the direction of the former postmaster, Charles Watson, as chairman of the fine committee of the public-spirited men of Perry. The cost of the courthouse was approximately \$100,000. I have seen buildings of similar structure since, no doubt costing as much as \$500,000. However, they are no more substantial than the one in Perry.

Blanche Hanson and her husband, John, gave a going away party for me in their home. An excellent party it was, and I was the recipient of a fine watch. The watch is still in good condition but I do not use it because of its value to me. It is in my vault to be handed down to my children when I no longer need the use of same.

(Editor's Note: Mr. Knox concluded with salutations to his friends in Perry. We thought this letter gave many interesting views on the early days after the 1893 land run. A copy also has been furnished to the Cherokee Strip Museum here to be added to their collection. We're indebted to Jo Wollard Garten, now of Ponca City but originally from Perry, for bringing this document to our attention.)



September 28, 1999

Joan Miller sends me an item copied from an old newspaper showing market price quotations for Cherokee produce and grain as they originally appeared on April 8, 1947. Wheat was \$2.45 per bushel, which is interesting because that is more than wheat brings today, 52 years later. "Pity the farmers," Joan says, and I add a hearty amen. Little wonder so many of our family farms are disappearing.

The Daily Oklahoman now carries a feature about events that happened in this state 50 years ago, 75 years ago and 100 years ago, as reflected by the newspaper's files, similar to *The Journal's* old Mirrors of Yesterday column. A recent edition contained this note from the "100 Years Ago" paragraph: "An outlaw-turned-preacher 'fell from grace' and was killed in a barroom brawl in Perry." That's all there was, with no names or other details. I've tried to track this down by searching local newspaper files, but so far I have been unable to find more details. Anyone out there know about this?

Here's another query: In conversation with Bob Elliott of Oklahoma City, a former Perryman who returned for the recent Cherokee Strip celebration, we started remembering some of the people that both of us knew so well. Eventually the H.C. Donahue family came up, but neither of us knew the present whereabouts of Carlin and Sally Donahue, son and daughter of the late Bob and Eileen Donahue. Bob was the son of H.C. and Mabel Donahue, both now deceased. Bob and Eileen moved to Denver some 40 years ago and their children at that time were quite young. Can you provide any more information?

Bob and Betty Edgar gave me a page from the newspaper published by the Catholic church attended by their daughter, Jacquetta, and her husband, David Johnson, in Midwest City. It's tabloid-size and very professional looking. This particular page contains photographs and an interesting article about the bronze doors gracing the front of our own St. Rose of Lima Catholic church. The text and photos, by Cara Koenig, relate that "the five doors of the church...each depict a scene or symbol. Cast in bronze, they are as much about art as they are about function. And they are unique to this small parish in central Oklahoma."

The writer goes on to explain that the main flank of double doors, facing the east, are covered by two fish with the Greek letters, IXOYC, the abbreviation for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. Under the fish are anchors, the symbol of, the church, and under the fishes and anchors, fittingly, are the names and symbols of the 12 apostles. Each of these great doors weighs 500 pounds, and all were made in Italy. A gift from an anonymous donor, the doors' designer was Father Ward Pankratz, former parish priest here.

The two bronze beauties, the central doors, are the work of the late George Queen, who was a member of St. Rose of Lima. George's wife, Ruth, who has been ill lately, still lives in Perry. George left dedications at the bottom of both doors, one to his mother and one to Ruth's mother. Each door stands more than 8 feet tall and they are split in three pieces. The doors

weigh approximately 1,000 pounds each. The piece is an interesting article about one of Perry's most beautiful churches. It would be worth your time to have a close-up look at those doors if you haven't already done so.