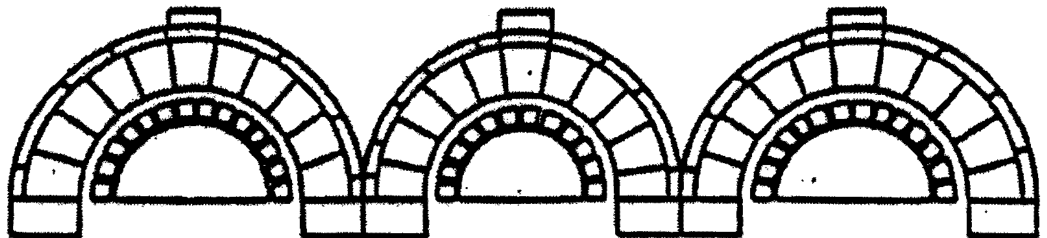
Payne County Historical Review



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Notes

In this issue of the *Review*, we reprint an article about Frank "Pistol Pete" Eaton that was published in the *OSU Magazine*. Frank Eaton, of Perkins, is a memorable part of Payne County's history, and Janet Varnum's article describes the remarkable way in which Frank Eaton's memory lives on. We also continue to publish essays from the 1942-43 Oklahoma A&M history class of Dr. Berlin B. Chapman. The collection, entitled "Memories of Oklahoma," consists of interviews with '89ers and their families. The essays in this issue were edited by Dr. Mary Jane Warde. The Payne County Historical Society expresses appreciation to Dr. Warde, as well as to the members of Dr. Chapman's class, for their efforts in preserving the history of Payne County and Oklahoma.

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The *Payne County Historical Review* welcomes readers' comments and articles about Payne County history. Family histories, photographs, or maps are also welcome. No payment is made for articles published in the *Review*.

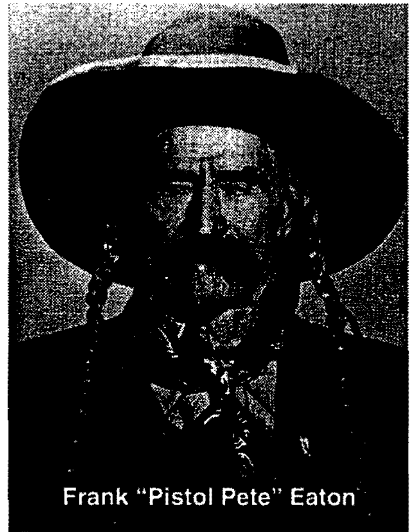
A Fitting Image: Frank "Pistol Pete" Eaton[1]

By Janet Varnum

Seventy-five years ago Frank "Pistol Pete" Eaton rode right out of the Old West and lent his image to Oklahoma State University . . .

Frank "Pistol Pete" Eaton was a legendary lawman and cowboy from the Oklahoma frontier, who boasted that he traced down and killed five of the six men who murdered his father and attended the funeral of the other just to be certain he was dead.

When a group of Oklahoma A&M students saw the living legend riding in an Armistice Day parade in Stillwater in 1923, their quest for a new mascot ended. Oklahoma A&M [now Oklahoma State University] had originally adopted the tiger from Princeton University as its mascot but wanted one more true to the land-grant institution's frontier heritage.



Frank "Pistol Pete" Eaton

(photograph courtesy of Elisabeth Wise)

"Pistol Pete" freely shared his likeness with OSU and gave the young campus a new, rougher, tougher image. With his long braids, western attire, and always-ready gun, Eaton looked and lived the part of the pioneer until his death on April 8, 1958, at age 98.

Eaton earned his nickname, Pistol Pete, as a young man. Encouraged by a neighbor, young Frank decided to avenge his father's murder in frontier fashion. According to legend, he became a quick shot and at 17 was appointed deputy marshal.

"After deciding it was almost time to set out on his mission, Frank wanted to make sure his shooting skills were good enough. He decided to visit Fort Gibson, a cavalry fort, to learn more about handling a gun," according to the late B. B. Chapman, historian and professor of history [at OSU].

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[1] Reprinted with permission from *OSU Magazine*, Volume 69, Number 4.

"There he competed with the cavalry's best marksmen, beating them each time. After many competitions, the fort's commanding officer, Col. Copinger, gave Frank a marksmanship badge and new name. From that day forward, Frank would be known as Pistol Pete."

A Shot Heard 'Round Campus

Myron Roderick [who graduated from OSU in 1956] remembers the day Frank "Pistol Pete" Eaton accidentally fired his gun inside the Student Union. Roderick was a student in Chapman's history class, and Eaton was reminiscing about Oklahoma's pioneer days.

"I was from Kansas, so I had to take Chapman's Oklahoma history class," says Roderick, former OSU wrestling coach and athletic director who is now director of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. "Pistol Pete was telling us the history of his life and his experiences and was demonstrating his gun when it accidentally fired."

A story by O'Collegian reporter Donald Duane Doty in 1955 said the bullet entered "the baseboard at the southwest corner of the Student Union Varsity Room."

"It scared everybody," Roderick remembers. "B. B. asked him why he would keep his pistol loaded, and Pistol Pete replied, 'What good is a gun if it isn't loaded?'"

Today, the plaster has been restored, but a plaque in the hall just outside the room marks the spot where the bullet hit the wall.

"He was quick with that gun," Roderick remembers. "My impression of him was that he was a rough, tough, mean cowboy. He looked the part that everyone talked about — a man who hunted down his father's killers and shot them to death."

The Man Behind the Myth

Francis Boardman Eaton was born on October 26, 1860, in Hartford, Connecticut, and lived most of his life in Oklahoma working as a blacksmith, cowboy, deputy marshal, and newspaper columnist.

Eaton and his first wife, Orpha Pearl Miller, lived on a homestead west of Perkins. They had two daughters, Ethel Florence and Faye Etta. Orpha died when the girls were small, and Eaton continued to work the homestead to "prove up" his claim. Later, he married Anna Rosetta Sillix and moved into Perkins, where he had a blacksmith shop. They had four sons and four daughters.

Eaton was a Boy Scout leader who loved to tell stories and whittle bows for children. Curt Fisher [a 1964 graduate of OSU] says Eaton whittled a bow for him when he was a boy growing up in Perkins. "He would make Indian bows for the children, and I remember he

was fussy about the kind of wood he needed.

"I was kind of scared of him," Fisher admits. "He looked fierce with his hair long and braided, or hanging down wild — that was kind of unusual when everyone else at that time had flattops."

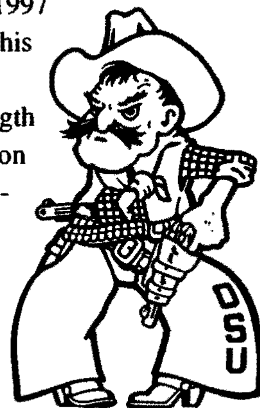
Controversy exists over whether Eaton was truly a U.S. marshal because records of his era are not complete. While they don't prove his stories about law enforcement and his activities as a lawman, they don't eliminate the possibility, either.

Dale Chlouber [curator of the Washington Irving Trail Museum, southeast of Stillwater] has researched Eaton's life and is among those who believe Eaton was a deputized fee marshal and posse member.

"The lives of most legendary characters of the Old West are a combination of fact and myth, and so it was with Frank Eaton," Chlouber says. "He's an honest-to-goodness early-day cowboy, a sometimes lawman, and a legend in his own right. He was a great hit as the OSU mascot from the very beginning and a great spirit builder."

A Fitting Image

Eaton truly embodied the spirit of the Old West. Even the University of Wyoming and New Mexico State University have adopted him as mascot. And in 1997 the National Cowboy Hall of Fame honored Eaton posthumously for his contribution to the spirit of the American West.



Like Eaton, OSU emerged from the untamed frontier with strength and determination. Now, the university is a world leader in education and an expert in laser technology, telecommunications, business, genetics, and wellness.

"I think Pistol Pete is one of the most interesting and unique mascots in America," Roderick says. " And Eaton was a real person with an interesting history. That's more important than anything. He's not something that someone dreamed up."

Editor's Note: A book of stories by Frank Eaton titled *Campfire Stories: Remembrances of a Cowboy Legend* was recently published by New Forums Press, P.O. Box 876, Stillwater, OK 74076. Eaton's daughter, Elizabeth Wise, lives in Perkins, Oklahoma.

Story of an Eighty-Niner

By Mary Bickel

In 1889 when the Unassigned Lands were opened for white settlement, a group of men in Winfield, Kansas, formed together for the establishment of Stillwater. This Townsite Board consisted of one hundred members; each member was interested in establishing a business and making Stillwater a growing, prosperous town. Each member was allowed one business and two residential lots. They drew for position of these lots. Mr. Harry P. Bullen was a member of this Townsite Board. He came to Stillwater in June 1889. Mr. Bullen was interested in the lumber business and in a few days had established his lumber yard.

On April 5, 1890, Mrs. Bullen arrived in Oklahoma Territory with her three-month old baby. She came from Winfield, Kansas, to Perry, Oklahoma, by train. Mrs. Bullen arrived in Perry at nine o'clock at night and was met by Mr. Bullen.

The trip from Perry to Stillwater is still very clear in Mrs. Bullen's mind. It was a beautiful, moonlit night and the trip was made in the family hack. To Mrs. Bullen, who had always seen the black soil of Kansas, it seemed the end of everything when she stepped from the hack onto the red soil of Stillwater. She can still see how white the soil looked [in the moonlight] on that night.

At that time the town consisted of Main and Ninth streets. The south part of town was filled up more than the north. One mail a day came in a hack from Perry. It was distributed about six o'clock from the town barber shop.

Since the country was new, everything had to be built from the ground up. Lumber had to be hauled by horse and wagon from the railroad station at Wharton [later Perry] or Orlando. The farmers who hauled the lumber came into town the night before a trip was to be made and spent the night at the lumber yard. These farmers would arise very early the next morning and start on their trip. They usually could make this haul in one day. It was through these hauls that many of the farmers were able to pay for the lumber they needed to build houses on their farms.

There were no church houses during this first part of the period, but church services were held upstairs above where Cooksey's Grocery is now located.[1] Ice cream socials formed

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[1] [Cooksey's Grocery was at 824 South Main Street, currently the location of the Karman Korner Resale shop. The upper floor of the building on the northwest corner of 9th and Main Street has been removed, but the original south wall is visible.]

the social life for Stillwater citizens. All ice for these socials had to be brought from Guthrie. In case of sickness, small quantities of ice could be obtained from the town saloons.

The most vivid memory that Mrs. Bullen has is in connection with the opening of the Cherokee Outlet. In 1893 this strip of land was opened to white settlement by runs. The day before the big opening, Stillwater was filled with strangers. Camps were pitched in any and all parts of the town. It was one of those rare, beautiful Indian summer days, and the whole atmosphere was filled with a sense of anticipation. The air was thick with smoke from the camps and dust from the passing horses and wagons. Yet in spite of this turmoil, a stillness prevailed that was felt by everyone. As Mrs. Bullen thinks back over that scene now it seems that every wagon was followed by two or three dogs.

Mrs. Bullen has been a resident of Stillwater since 1890 and lives at 504 West Third. Her first home in Stillwater consisted of two large rooms. This was the only house in town at that time built on a foundation and having built-in clothes closets.

Mr. Bullen died in 1929. He was one of the original holders of the first group of bonds, comprising $10,000, raised by citizens of Stillwater to aid in establishing Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College [now Oklahoma State University]. Mrs. Bullen owns number eight of these original bonds, and it is a prized possession. There are only three in existence. Mrs. Bullen has two sons. Both are graduates of Oklahoma A & M. One is now an engineer in Oklahoma, and the other is a physician in New York.

Since I have talked to Mrs. Bullen, I appreciate much more the glamour and romance inherent in old things. I see, too, the strength and courage that this country is founded on. It has made me love my section of this country more and feel proud that I am a part of such a country. I feel akin to all that has gone before in its history, and I shall feel a part of all that will be its future.

An Indian's Impression of the Coming of the White Man into Oklahoma

By Anne Orr

Editorial note: *The Chickasaw Nation was one of the five Indian republics that held title to the Indian Territory (excluding the Panhandle) after the 1820s. In a series of Removal treaties, they had been forced to exchange their homelands in the East for new lands in the West. The Chickasaws, who experienced their own "Trail of Tears," were first assigned to the Choctaw Nation but separated from them in 1856. A large nation that had once claimed hundreds of thousands of acres in northern Mississippi, western Tennessee, and western Kentucky, they now numbered fewer than five thousand, occupying most of nine future counties in south-central Oklahoma between the Red and Canadian rivers. The Colberts, one of the most prominent Chickasaw families, supplied many of the nation's political leaders from before Removal to beyond the federally-mandated end of their self-government in 1906.*

There was a great deal of hard feeling toward the white man in the family of Joseph Colbert, Secretary of the last Chickasaw Legislature, for his grandmother had come to Oklahoma, then Indian Territory, over the "Trail of Tears." For many years this bitter experience could not be forgotten, nor the white man forgiven for the deed.

Mr. Colbert's first experiences in meeting the white man was when he visited Tishomingo.[1] The Apache Indians, war-like neighbors of the Chickasaws, often came and robbed the Chickasaws of their livestock.[2] During one of these raids, young Joseph's mother strapped him and his little brother on the back of a horse and fled to Tishomingo, at that time the seat of the government of the Chickasaw Nation. Young as he was, his feeling upon reaching the fort[3] and seeing the white man was one of gratitude and safety. This experience somewhat healed the old wound of hatred of the white man, and the white man became his friend.

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[1] [Originally called "Good Spring," Tishomingo became the capital of the Chickasaw Nation in 1856. It is currently the seat of Johnston County.]

[2] [It is unlikely the raiders were Apaches, although other Plains tribes frequently raided Chickasaw farms and ranches. Chickasaw oral history recalls a devastating Comanche raid across the nation in 1865 along with swift Chickasaw retaliation. This may be the incident Colbert described. By 1874 the Comanches were confined to the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Reservation adjacent on the west of the Chickasaw Nation.]

[3] [Probably Fort Washita southeast of Tishomingo in Bryan County.]

However, this friendly feeling didn't last long, for when he was only a few years older, he had another experience which reverted him to his old feeling of intense dislike for the white man. He was riding in a wagon with his mother and little brother when two white men suddenly jumped out from underneath a bridge and tried to take the horse away from his mother. There was much confusion and excitement for awhile, but finally his mother beat the men off with the horse whip while young Joseph struggled and held the horse. This incident left its impression on Joseph for quite some time.

Similar incidents, good and bad, in encounters with the white man varied his opinion of him from liking to hatred or indifference according to the encounter. Gradually as he grew older he developed a philosophy of letting the white man go his way while he went his with as little friction as possible.

His recollection of the "Run of '89" was that he was sitting on a fence close to the border facing the crowd of settlers that were lined up to make the run. Many of the people had camped along the border for several days before the run was scheduled to begin. As far as he could see in both directions were men, women, "old timers," and children, waiting tensely for the gun to be fired at 12 o'clock to signal the opening of the [Unassigned Lands] and the starting of the run. Here and there stood a Federal soldier on guard. The guards were stationed there to see that the settlers didn't jump the gun and that they stayed within the specified boundaries.[1]

At the sound of the gun, the people began to surge toward him in a helter-skelter, mad rush for land. They had to cross a river in order to reach the land.[2] While crossing this river, one of the men's horses became frightened and threw him. It took six men to save the man and horse, and by the time this was finished, there was no more land close at hand to be had. One can imagine the amusement on the part of Mr. Colbert and the chagrin (and profane language) on the part of these men. No doubt they were positive that "there ain't no justice." Everywhere he looked he could see people staking out their claims. Men were fighting each other for the right to claim a certain section of land. Confusion reigned and it seemed amazing that anyone could make heads or tails out of who owned which piece of land.

Many settlers crossed the line and came into the [Unassigned Lands] on a train which was filled to capacity. It was so loaded that it just crept along. Heads were sticking out of every window, and there was one man riding on the cow catcher.[3]

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[1] [Colbert was probably at the northern Chickasaw boundary with the future Cleveland County, Oklahoma.]

[2] [Probably the Canadian River.]

[3] [The Santa Fe Railroad crossed from the Chickasaw Nation into the Unassigned Lands just north of present Purcell, Oklahoma.]

After white settlement, feeling between the Indian and the white man was fair, but the children fought among themselves continually. There was no truce declared between "young'uns." The main trouble between the Indian and the white man [according to Colbert] was that the white man brought liquor close by so that the Indian could get it easily. This caused no end of fights and disputes.[1]

Mr. Colbert's attitude toward the white man now is a philosophical one. He feels that the coming of the white man is just "something that has to be accepted." His main view of the coming of the white man to Oklahoma is that the Indian should be given more money in reparation for all that the white man has taken from him, especially now that the white man has taken over all his land.

He doesn't see that the Indian has benefited from the white man. As his great uncle, who was once Governor of the Chickasaw Nation, said, "The only things the Indian has gotten from the white man are tuberculosis, liquor, and guns."

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[1] [By treaty, alcohol was prohibited in the Indian nations, but it was legal and accessible just across the border in Oklahoma Territory.]

Recollections of an '89'er

By Stephen Ray

I wish to thank Mrs. Sallie B. Wallace for the splendid help she has given me in the preparation of this paper. Her cooperation and detailed factual information have been indispensable. She is not only a pioneer of Oklahoma but also a pioneer of friendship.

—Stephen Ray

Oklahoma, although a young state, holds a position unique in American history. The amazing spectacle of the run for Oklahoma lands in 1889 has become a saga of the American frontier. "Many who have attempted to describe the scene agree that it defied description."[1] The purpose of this paper is to collect random bits of information about this period into a mass and to organize such information for future reference.

An official announcement of the opening of the tract of land ceded by the Creeks and Seminoles came on March 23, 1889. President Harrison proclaimed that on April 22, at noon, the tract known as the "Oklahoma Lands" would be opened to settlement. "These lands appeared as an island of 1,887,640 acres of unassigned 'public lands' surrounded by reservations occupied by Indians, located there by the government. The area included the major part of the present six counties: Cleveland, Oklahoma, Canadian, Kingfisher, Logan, and Payne."[2]

News of the anticipated "opening" of "Oklahoma Lands" brought people from every walk of life—artisans, mechanics, farmers, home-seekers, adventurers—to homestead land, to embark upon new lives, and to take part in the inauguration of a new commonwealth. Approximately seventy-five thousand men and women from all over the country came to obtain free land in the Indian Territory which was all too small for the mass of fortune-hunters.[3]

Settlers in "Oklahoma" lived an anomalous life the year before the territorial government was set up and began functioning. Previous to the opening of the land no legislative plans whatever had been enacted for the government of the newly opened area or the mainte-

[1] Grant Foreman, The History of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), 239.

[2] Ibid., 240.

[3] Actually, there was land enough for only 11,797 homesteaders, but division of some areas into town lots enabled a few more to settle successfully; the people who obtained land were definitely in the minority. [Estimates of the number who made the Run of 1889 vary widely. See John W. Morris, Charles R. Goins, and Edwin C. McReynolds, Historical Atlas of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986, third edition), 48.]

nance of order among the hordes of settlers. Strictly speaking, Oklahoma was, in a sense, a lawless country.[1]

Those hardy pioneers who took part in the opening are without a doubt the best source of information for a paper of this kind. Mrs. Sallie B. Wallace, who resides at 1116 Lowry Street, Stillwater, Oklahoma, is one of these pioneers. Mrs. Wallace possesses a most remarkable memory and has in that memory many rich experiences of the early days in Payne County. She moved with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John VanArsdell, to the Lake Carl Blackwell district in 1889 and recalls many episodes of the times when Oklahoma was a lawless country.

Mrs. Wallace was born near Sharpsburg, Bath County, Kentucky, in the bluegrass region of the state. In 1875 her parents and family moved from Kentucky to Newton, Kansas, where they lived until the next year. Augusta, Kansas became their home at this time, but this part of Kansas had been settled only four years. The cattlemen in the region resented the coming of the early settlers.

"The first few years in Kansas were wild and woolly times" says Mrs. Wallace. "We had shooting and cutting scrapes galore. At one time my mother inquired of a neighbor, Mr. Elder, what seemed to be the matter when she noticed a disturbance down the road. He replied, 'Oh, just a little shootin', nothing new."

After living fourteen years near Augusta, Mrs. Wallace's father, John VanArsdell, and her brother Henry made the race into Oklahoma on April 22, 1889. They secured farms west and northwest of Stillwater, and Mrs. Wallace remembers her father's story of the run. After John had staked his claim, a man rose up out of the earth (seemingly) and drew a gun on the newly arrived Mr. VanArsdell, who forthwith moved to the next claim north. The elder VanArsdell took a claim twelve miles northwest of Stillwater, with Henry settling one mile south of his father's claim.[2] Homestead claims were filed at Guthrie.

Log houses were built, but they were small and poorly constructed. Little land was in cultivation, so the men of the house went to Kansas to work in the harvest fields. The year of the run into Oklahoma had been a bountiful one in Kansas with the finest grains being produced, but there was not a favorable market. The finest corn sold for fifteen cents, wheat for forty cents, and oats for ten cents. In Oklahoma the small plots of land broken that spring

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[1] Foreman, 240.

[2] Henry VanArsdell first homesteaded a farm on a tributary of Stillwater Creek. Later he purchased the farms of Frank Kirwin and Charles Oyster on the main Stillwater Creek where Lake Carl Blackwell is now located.

were planted to "sod" corn,[1] and the yield from this crop, together with prairie hay, constituted the first harvest of the early settlers. To supplement their own harvest, the pioneers who were financially able bought and shipped grain from the luxuriant fields in Kansas.

In November of 1889 Mrs. Wallace, two brothers, and her sister Emma made the trip from Augusta, Kansas, to Oklahoma. The family caravan of two covered wagons, chickens and pigs in crates on the rear, with cattle being driven on foot, moved slowly. The first day the party made eleven miles and camped near Douglas, Kansas. At night when camp was made, the cows were milked and the chores done as usual.

To add to the difficulties of the trip to the newly acquired lands were the heavy fall rains. The roads were muddy and traveling was necessarily slow. The first camp was three miles north of Douglas, Kansas; the second half-way between Winfield and Arkansas City, Kansas; the third near the Oklahoma line; the fourth and fifth in the Cherokee Strip [Outlet]; amd the sixth on the bank of Black Bear Creek. On the seventh day they arrived at Henry's farm and slept on the floor in the log cabin.

Mrs. Wallace's parents, younger sister, and brother Henry came through on the train with the household goods and furniture, arriving in Orlando, Oklahoma Territory, November 12, 1889. They hired teamsters to ship their grain and other baggage to the claims and arrived at their new home November 13, 1889.

Bedding space in the log cabin for eleven people was a problem. Mrs. Wallace remained awake the second night and kept the fire going. On Tuesday, November 14, 1889, the elder Mr. VanArsdell moved to his farm north of Henry's, where he set up a tent until adequate housing could be built. Mrs. Wallace says, "The winters of 1889-90 were mild, a fortunate thing for the settlers since the houses were small and of poor quality."

Mrs. Wallace and her sister, Emma, often did the chores at their brother's home in his absence. The girls sometimes rode horses to their brother's farm and sometimes walked. Walking across country in those days was fraught with dangers, for rattlesnakes, tarantulas, and centipedes were present in abundance. Mrs. Wallace recalls that she always carried along a stout green elm club with which to defend herself.

In 1890 people began to meet in the different homes for old-fashioned songfests and religious worship. Finally, the men of the community erected a large log building on the farm of Yates Smith for all types of amusement. Some of the men assisting and donating logs and labor were George Rule, Joe Scroggs, and Will Scroggs. The greatest expense of the building was to be the flooring, and at a special meeting it was decided to give a supper and dance to

[1]"Sod" corn was the name given by early settlers to standard field corn planted on the newly turned land.

raise funds for this purpose. Mrs. Wallace was appointed to solicit food for this supper and remembers riding a horse belonging to Joe Scroggs to make the rounds. Supper was served in the home of Mrs. Cinda Phelps. The flooring was already laid—charge accounts were being done in those days, too. The dance was held in the community house, and the bill was paid. The lumber had been bought in Guthrie. It was not uncommon to go many miles to attend a social function, and Mrs. Wallace recalls that a number of young folks from Orlando were present for the dance.

The Reverend Mr. King, Presbyterian minister from Guthrie, preached the first three sermons in the new community house and organized the church. John VanArsdell was an elder in the church. The Reverend Simon Peter Myers, the Reverend Cameron Townsend (both of Stillwater) and the Reverend John Hill Aughey (of Alfred which is now Mulhall) held services in the new community house. All were Presbyterian ministers. Sabbath school was held every Sunday afternoon, and one of the first superintendents was W. O. Anderson. A fine class of settlers came to the community, and among them were many good singers.

The settlers took pride in their ability to sing. Sabbath Sunday School Conventions were held in the Jim Edmonson grove with as many as six communities represented.[1] The conventions were on the order of an elaborate picnic; basket dinners, games, and singing made the occasions very enjoyable. It was at one of these conventions that Mrs. Wallace's community won the singing contest. The competition was keen, and there was every reason to be proud of the honor of being selected the best singers.

Dancing was the most important form of recreation in the early days of Oklahoma. One could attend a dance almost any week providing, of course, he didn't mind travelling as much as forty miles to the social function. Music was furnished gratuitously, and usually consisted of one or more fiddles, guitars, and a piano or organ. Mrs. Wallace's favorite dance was the polka-whirl although she "enjoyed them all." Waltzes, quadrilles, waltz quadrilles, and the schottish were the accepted dances of the time.

Evening dress in the early days was different from that of today. The ladies wore dresses cut high in the neck and the material varied from expensive silk to inexpensive calico, the latter predominating. The gentlemen generally wore high-heel boots, and some left their coats in the cloak room with their big hats and revolvers. A few of the more dudish had their boots blacked. As a rule, the lower ends of their trousers were in their boot tops. "Ladies danced in proportion to their popularity; but, in justice to the early settlers' gallantry, it must

[1] Also, Adams's Grove was used for these conventions. Adams's Grove is located immediately south and west of Stillwater, Oklahoma.

be stated that there were no 'wall flowers.'"[1] There was that about the movements of the dancers, especially the gentlemen in shirt sleeves and with trousers tucked into the tops of their high-heel boots, which the word "sprightliness" but feebly describes.

The popularity of dances in Oklahoma in the early days may be appreciated when it is known that young and old drove or rode on horseback forty to sixty miles to attend them. Mrs. Wallace, in telling of methods of travel, said that "a good buggy was classy in '89; they compare to the sport roadster of today." Once with her sister when they were returning home from a visit to a distant neighbor's, Mrs. Wallace had some difficulty. The mule hitched to their buggy balked halfway across a narrow bridge spanning a tributary of Stillwater Creek. To get across necessitated unhitching the mule and leading him to the other side. Then the buggy was pulled across by the two girls. Travel in the early days was anything but easy.

There was a stage line from Stillwater to Orlando in 1889 operated by Lew Meyers of Stillwater. Mrs. Wallace says "the first driver of the stage that I knew was Billy Snyder of Stillwater; other drivers were Will and Jim Myers, a Mr. Stokes, and a Hr. Burnsides." The stage was drawn by two small mules that were able to cling to the very rough and poor roads, especially the creek bank that was so steep and slippery. The changing point for the stage teams was at the Tom Highfill blacksmith shop in the Cherokee district.[2]

In the spring of 1890, Mrs. Wallace and her sister Emma attended a dance at Mr. Taylor's hotel in Orlando.[3] Mr. Taylor asked Billy Snyder to bring the girls out on the stage, and they came on Friday morning since the dance was Friday night. "The dance was a little wild and woolly," Mrs. Wallace said. "The first drunk woman I ever saw was there, and the floor manager invited her and her companions to leave." The stage was crowded on the return trip, and Mrs. Wallace and her sister would get out to lighten the load for the little mules when they came to steep banks.

The stage line was changed from time to time to make a more direct line into Orlando, the railroad town. The first location of Yates post office was at the home of Yates Smith on the meridian line.[4] Later it was at the George Flemmons store two and one-half miles east of the Smith location in the Cherokee district. The post office was established May 21, 1890,

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[1] George Rainey, No Man's Land, 167-168.

[2] [Mrs. Wallace meant the Cherokee Township, adjacent to the west on Stillwater Township and bisected west to east by Stillwater Creek and modern Lake Carl Blackwell.]

[3] On the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad.

[4] [The Indian Meridian was surveyed by E. N. Darling in 1870. Lying nine miles west of Stillwater, Oklahoma, it serves as the point from which ranges and townships east or west are surveyed in Oklahoma.]

and discontinued December 15, 1908.[1]

Members of the VanArsdell family attended Sunday school and preaching services in the log house in the Cherokee district. They used the David Cook literature because it was a union school, several denominations being represented. Some of the early-day ministers conducting services at the log building included the Reverend Mr. Fillmore, the Reverend Mr. Huntsberry (Baptist), the Reverend John L. Damson (Methodist), and the Reverend Mr. Brengle (United Brethren).

A literary society was organized at an early date. Among the members were John DeMoss who had taught thirty-two terms of school in Indiana, John and George Rule, W. O. Anderson, Etta Jaynes, Mattie Smith, and Sallie VanArsdell [Wallace, the informant], who served as officers in the organization. There were recitations, music, and a recess followed by a debate. Among the debaters were John DeMoss, John Bivert, Charles W. Sevier, G. W. Cooper, Jasper Bailey, Timothy Jaynes, George and John Rule, and C. D. Simpson.

The Sunday school was always well attended, and Mrs. Wallace taught a class of boys. Mrs. Wallace said, "One very amusing thing happened in my class. I asked Ben Bright to repeat the Golden text, 'Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.' Ben recited "Thy faith has made a hole; go and fish.""

Another social activity common to early-day Oklahoma was an all-day picnic for the purpose of celebrating the Fourth of July. The settlers would meet in an appointed place on the holiday and participate in games, spelling bees, and gossip. The grapevine telegraph[2] was the most prevalent method of disseminating news, so it was with more than a little interest that the homesteaders looked forward to spending the day among their friends, visiting, and discussing the news of the day.

Mrs. Wallace says that Harry Donart taught the first school in Stillwater. Mrs. Wallace attended the first summer school in Stillwater, conducted by R. B. Foster, Washington, D. C., and assisted by his son and daughter-in-law, Richard and Allie B. Foster. Some classes were held in the old Congregational church where the United Brethren church now stands.

Settling and developing the new country took a great deal of energy and fortitude. "There was a drouth in the early days when only turnips and prairie hay were raised, but the pioneers kept their chins up and came out winners." However, Mrs. Wallace says that she has never been partial to turnips since.

The difficulties experienced by the men and women who made the run in 1889 were

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[1] The Official Register of the United States. 1891. Vol. II. p. 728.

[3] News conveyed by the spoken word.

many, and the manner in which these hardy pioneers met these difficulties should stand as a goal to the men and women of today. In spite of the many hardships and inconveniences of the early days in Oklahoma, the people as a whole found happiness. Mrs. Wallace says, "We had good times." There was a twinkle in her eye as she said it.

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Mrs. Andrews, an '89er

By Dan Brannin

"We were very interested in the growth and development of the country." Those are the simple but explicit words of an '89er, Mrs. Harry Eben Andrews of 1002 Duncan Street, Stillwater, Oklahoma. These words portray to me the essence of the "run of '89." It is from those pioneers who dared in that year to make the first mass migration of the white man into Oklahoma that we owe the foundation of our separate and distinct breed, the Oklahoman. I think we should be intensely proud of and grateful for the heritage which we have received from those stout individualists who are the progenitors of our state. Certainly our state was not founded without blood, sweat, and tears. It was just those elements from which it secured its nourishment and made its growth. One has only to hear the story of an '89er to realize the debt which we owe those hardy forerunners of our state.

Mrs. Andrews did not herself participate in the run. John Ash, her father, did run and established a claim just two and one-half miles southwest of the present community of Stillwater, Oklahoma. On June 4, 1889, Mrs. Andrews, in the hay-filled back of a covered wagon, made the journey from Orlando, Oklahoma Territory, to her father's claim. Upon arriving, Mrs. Andrews was informed by her father that she was to file upon an adjacent claim which had been recently deserted. There was no other choice than to go immediately to Guthrie and there register the claims. The thirty-mile trail across untamed land was blocked by the treacherous quicksand of the Cimarron River. Mrs. Andrews still remembers very vividly the "horrible sensation" she felt as the horses floundered in the clutches of the quicksand in mid-stream. After a full day's journey, they arrived safely, registered the claim, and the next day returned home.

On July 4, 1889, at a picnic on Stillwater Creek, Mrs. Andrews became acquainted with her future husband. After a courtship of only a few months, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews were married; the couple settled upon Mrs. Andrews' claim. A tent with a floor of hard, cold dirt was their home. Mr. Andrews traded his saddle for a "breaking plow" and a cook stove.

With a floorless tent, a kitchen stove, and their mutual love, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews began a life together which continued until death separated them. Their early married life was not an easy one in this unconquered country. In the first year of the marriage, their soil yielded nothing but a bountiful crop of cane. This cane, Mrs. Andrews informed me, was hand-planted in separate hills by the process of making a hole in the ground with a sharpened stick, dropping a seed or two within the hole, and then covering the hole with a stamp of the heel. He who has ever planted any amount of tomato slips will appreciate the difficulty encountered by those performing this task.

The "Turnip Year," as 1890 was called, was perhaps the most trying year of the couple's life. It was in that year that a great drought smothered out of existence all crops planted by the dwellers in

this region. In the fall, however, the rains game. The settlers in desperation planted a large crop of turnips. The yield was one of a magnitude never before witnessed by those pioneers. There was also another flicker of light to further brighten the picture—Stillwater was being born.

Mr. Andrews earned enough money to purchase the first cow to be owned by the Andrews family. Prior to this, the family had direfully suffered from the need for milk.

Mr. Andrews found employment as the manager of a sawmill. In procuring this job he also discovered one for Mrs. Andrews; hers was the task of supplying with food the six men who worked at the sawmill. At that time there was not available the pure water we have now. Instead their water was supplied from some shallow hole dug near the house. Mrs. Andrews acquired a serious attack of the "chills." In spite of being forced at times to rely upon the table for support during the more severe of these attacks, she managed to keep the men supplied with food. She was further burdened with the care of her first child. For their work the couple received twenty dollars a month plus "their keep."

After some thirty-six years of struggle on the claim, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, somewhat enfeebled by the stiffening hand of age, decided to move to Stillwater. Selling the land to various members of their immediate family, they moved to this community.

Money was not their only objective; indeed, as one converses with Mrs. Andrews, he feels that pecuniary compensation was only a minor objective in this country. This couple wanted to aid it in its growth. Mr. Andrews helped to construct the first schoolhouse in this portion of Oklahoma. This school for more than ten years served the dual purpose to the surrounding country of providing its residents with both their spiritual and academic education. The school site was in use until only last year; a Stillwater school bus now gathers the children from that area.

Life in 1894 and the following years, however, was not all work and no play. I was curious as to what kind of amusement one could find in such a country so barren of improvements. I was immediately informed that there were "literaries" or lyceums and square dances to attend. The people of that time also went visiting. Mrs. Andrews taught a "subscription school" which the people of the surrounding country attended in order that they might learn those fundamental subjects—reading, writing, and arithmetic. The fact that these pioneer mothers and fathers hungered for knowledge in spite of the hardships they endured indicates an exceptionally admirable characteristic.

Mrs. Andrews, after almost four score years of living, has given much to Oklahoma. She has brought into this state eight children—six girls and two boys. She has living now thirty-four direct offspring. There are six grandchildren serving in our armed forces now, defending that which Mrs. Andrews has helped to bring into being. Instead of becoming embittered by her life of labor and sacrifice, Mrs. Andrews has only mellowed. Her personality is a wise and kindly one. Her religion is a simple but sufficient one: she believes wholly and implicitly in God. She represents to me the consummation of that which an "89er" should be. I think no better purpose could have been expressed for the "run of '89" than "We were very interested in the growth and development of the country."

Payne County Historical Society

The Payne County Historical Society is organized in order to bring together people interested in history, especially the history of Payne County, Oklahoma. The Society's major function is to discover and collect any materials that may help to establish or illustrate the history of the area.

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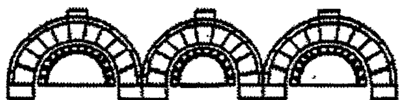

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