

PAYNE COUNTY

# HISTORICAL REVIEW

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# Payne County Historical Review

VOLUME I

NUMBER 3

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# “Ol’ Betsy”

by *Everett E. Hudiburg*

The ever-deepening shadows of evening stretched out like fingers across the brick pavement as the dimming sun sank slowly behind the "Old Opera House" (now Shepherd's Carriage House) in Stillwater, Oklahoma. It was March 12, 1918, and Fire Chief John O. Slack had just returned a few months earlier to his fire department duties after having served on the Mexican border with Company I of the National Guard. Chief Slack walked slowly from the open front door of the old fire station at Ninth and Lewis streets and turned at the curb to face the place he had learned to love. John Slack had never married, so the living quarters on the second floor with fire horses and hose wagon below had actually become his home.

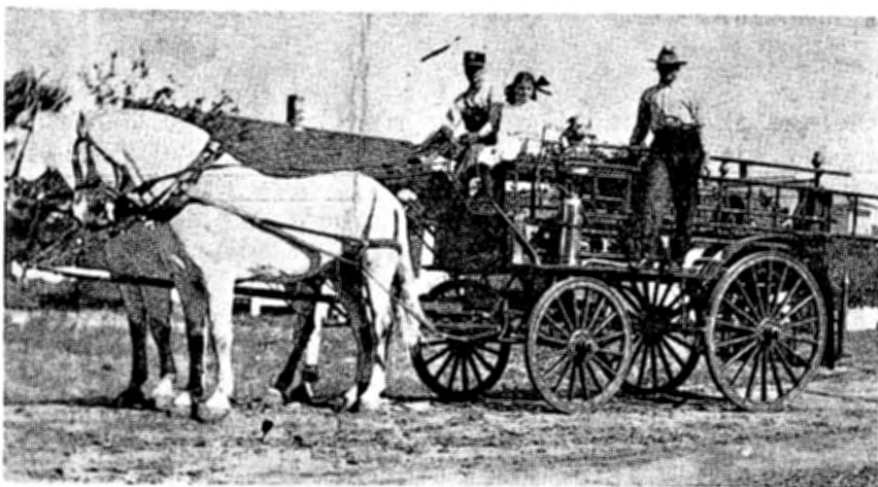
As he stood there in a pensive mood, his thoughts went back over several years. The well-lighted fire station enabled him to watch Stillwater's two white fire horses, Rock and Dan, standing in their stalls. An occasional stomping on the wooden block floor and swishing of a tail were about the only audible or visible activities. Good ole Dan, he thought, so dependable and loyal to the cause. Then, there is mischievous ole Rock, just as dependable but slightly stubborn. Neither has ever failed to answer the call of duty nor delayed a response to a fire alarm. Rock acts more like a child sometimes, he mused, but small wonder, the way they have been pampered. Little do they know this is their last twenty-four hours to stand in readiness to answer the call of duty. Tomor-

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Everett E. Hudiburg is author of the book, Beside The Still-water: A Fire Protection Chronicle, 1885-1977, and retired fire chief of the City of Stillwater, Oklahoma, and retired executive director of the International Fire Service Training Association.

row they will be taken out of captivity and placed in a pasture where the soft earth will be gentle to their feet. They will learn the freedom to graze the green slopes and taste the sweetness of fresh green grass as never before. They can drink at leisure from the running stream or wander aimlessly through the wooded areas. I almost envy them, he thought, yet regret that they must go. Maybe I resent this transition from horse-drawn to motorized fire apparatus, he pondered. How I love those animals. They are almost a part of me.

Chief Slack was a rugged individualist, yet his casual reminiscing caused him to wipe a tear from his eye with the back of his hand. He drew a red bandanna from his hip pocket, covered his nose and mouth, snorted, and then blotted each eye. I must not let anyone know this Irishman can be sentimental or melancholy, he grinned. Smilingly, he placed his hand to the back of his neck, stretched, and looked once more toward the west where a slight hue of red evening light beckoned



Fire Service in Stillwater prior to 1918 consisted in horse drawn fire wagons such as this one picturing Arlie D. Cantwell (in the seat) and John O. Slack (standing).



In 1918, Stillwater received its first motorized fire engine. "01" Betsy" is pictured here with (from left to right) Elmer Rowland, G. Porter, Bill Allison and John O. Slack with Dave Fillmore and Ward Hall on the tailboard.

the end of another day. The night's darkness had almost wholly engulfed the entire town with its inky shadows except for a few flickering lights here and there. Local history was being made, for not far away at City Hall commissioners were approving a claim of \$7,500 to pay for a motorized fire engine to replace the horses. Few people would probably ever realize the importance of the occasion unless, by some act of fate, someone should eventually tell the story and bring this momentous event to light.

Even before Chief Slack was called to active military duty early in 1917, he had established the need for motorized fire apparatus in Stillwater and laid the groundwork to make it possible. Walter E. Going, a local businessman, chaired a committee to investigate

and establish the water distribution and fire protection needs in Stillwater. A report of the committee's findings had been made to the City Commissioners. Based upon the recommendation of this committee, the Stillwater Board of Commissioners passed a resolution on February 14, 1917, to call an election for \$7,500 in bonds to purchase fire equipment. The bond election passed on April 3, 1917; and the bonds were sold to The Stillwater National Bank on May 9, 1917.

A contract agreement was drawn on June 6, 1917, between the American La France Fire Engine Company of Elmira, New York, and the City of Stillwater, Oklahoma, for a 600-gallon per minute (gpm) American La France Type 10 pumper. Delivery was required within two hundred working days after the contract date. This requirement established a delivery date not later than April, 1918. Stillwater's new red fire engine arrived March 9, 1918; but an acceptance test was required and the truck could not be used by the City until final payment had been made. The full payment was made the night of March 12, 1918. S. W. Burr was mayor of Stillwater during this period, but Paul Bennett was Commissioner of Revenue and Accounting when the fire truck was ordered and J. E. Goodan held that office when the truck was delivered. Arlie D. Cantwell was acting fire chief during Chief Slack's absence and carried out Slack's wishes by recommending the La France pumper.

Stillwater's new pumer with its gold leaf trim on fenders, hood, and hose body was the pride and joy of all who witnessed it. The engine had four cylinders cast in pairs with a large exhaust manifold shaped like a ram's horn and made of polished brass. When this manifold was shined the engine was a sight to behold. Actually, we thought it was quite beautiful. The cylinders had a 5 3/4-inch bore with a 6 1/2-inch stroke and, could they have been seen, had the appearance of gallon buckets going up and down. Engines of that era were of the slow-speed, low-compression type but were very powerful. A large heavy flywheel approximately two feet in diameter rotated in the open direct-

ly behind the engine. Although the top speed of the machine was only fifty miles per hour, the weight and rotation of the flywheel gave it considerable torque which added to its performance as a pumper.

The engine was equipped with dual ignition consisting of a 6-volt battery and a magneto, but there was no electric starter. The engine usually had to be cranked by hand. It was not uncommon, however, to be able to start the engine from its own compression. This might have seemed somewhat of a phenomenon to anyone not well versed in internal combustion engine performance. Probably the one person best qualified to explain compression-starting is Elmo Ricker, a local auto mechanic of long standing, who operates an auto repair shop on South Main Street in Stillwater. Elmo explained it to me in this manner. Engines of that era were often equipped with a vibrator-type coil, similar to the old "Model T" Ford coil. A vibrator-type coil will cause a very hot spark when charged with an electrical source. The pistons would usually stop "two-up" and "two-down", and the closer the "two-up" pistons were to the top the more compression in the cylinder head. Gasoline vapor compressed in this space needed only a spark to ignite the vapor. A button switch was usually supplied to cause the coil to function and the engine would fire and start from its own compression. The cylinders could lose their compression after eight to ten hours, however, and cranking was then necessary.

The rear wheels were driven by large linkage drive chains extending from two drive sprockets behind the transmission to the rear wheels. If one of these drive chains should break, the truck then would become immobile until the chain was repaired. This one factor alone required rigid inspection and care of the chains at regular intervals. These drive chains could never be oiled because of accumulation of dirt in the oil. They were driven dry and had to be kept clean.

Besides the 600-gpm pump, the apparatus came equip-

ped with a 30-gallon soda-acid fire extinguisher with hose attached. Just why the manufacturer put a soda-acid extinguisher on a truck with a pump we'll never know, but that is the way it was done in those days. The soda-acid tank had to be charged by filling it almost full of water, then mixing in the right amount of bicarbonate of soda to make a solution of soda water. A vial of sulphuric acid was suspended in the tank. The extinguisher was made active by turning the tank to empty the vial into the soda water. This action formed carbon dioxide gas within the tank with adequate pressure to force the soda water out the nozzle. The soda-acid tank was removed in 1932 and replaced with a larger tank which held 100 gallons of water. This water was piped from the tank through the pump and pressure was derived by the pump.

Not only was the tank changed, but the hard rubber tires on the wheels were replaced as well. The truck came equipped with solid rubber tires which made it very rough riding and subject to skidding. A company that manufactured wheel rims made it possible to replace the solid rubber with pneumatic tires. This replacement was accomplished and the La France was then better than when the City purchased it.

In addition to all these oddities, the pumper was a right-hand drive vehicle with shifting levers mounted to the right side of the body. Perhaps all these features contributed to nicknaming the truck "01' Betsy." No one seems to know how, why, or when the La France pumper acquired the nickname "01' Betsy." J. E. (Jack) Tinker, veteran firefighter of both horse-drawn and motorized periods, remembers well referring to the La France as "01' Betsy," as does Marvin T. Gates, who joined the department in 1928. Both men agree that the name became commonplace through the years.

It is reasonable to assume that someone must have affectionately dubbed the apparatus "01' Betsy" when the second pumper, a 750-gpm Seagrave, was purchased in 1927. Naturally, this new pumper was put in service



to replace the ten-year-old La France which automatically put "01' Betsy" in reserve. In those days the crew on duty would answer a fire alarm with the new Seagrave pumper, and the off-duty shift would come to the station and stand by with the La France. This was standard operating procedure for many years.

"01' Betsy" did not take the back seat all the time. It was surprising how many alarms she answered after 1927 and how dependable she was even after three decades of service. "01' Betsy" was retired from active response duty the fall of 1950. She served the people of Stillwater thirty-two years without a major overhaul. Based upon the initial cost of the La France, "01' Betsy" cost the people of Stillwater less than 65 cents a day. This figure is exclusive of maintenance and fuel costs. "01' Betsy" saved the people of Stillwater far more in dollars and cents than her original cost. Where else could you find so much for so little?

Yes, I was fire chief when "01' Betsy" was taken out of service. I have always regretted that we did not preserve the old girl for posterity. Instead, we sold her for junk.

However, all has not been lost, for an exact replica of "01' Betsy" is on display in the Firefighters' museum at 2716 N. E. 50th Street in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The museum, which also houses the offices of the Oklahoma State Firefighters Association, composed of 6000 firefighters, paid and volunteer, representing some 300 cities and towns in Oklahoma, can be seen from Interstate 35 and can be approached from the N. E. 50th Street exit. A nominal admission fee is charged to maintain the museum. Many visitors have compared it to museums of like interests, calling it the most interesting display of old fire apparatus and equipment they have observed.

# Some Eighty-Niners Remember . . .

From the Minutes of  
The Payne County Historical Society  
April 26, 1942

[In April, 1942, the Payne County Historical Society invited several Payne County pioneers to attend one of the regular meetings and share some of their memories of early days in the Territory. The statements of these old-timers were recorded by a stenographer and included in the minutes of the historical society. The following quotes are a sample.]

[Speaker unknown]: Why Stillwater Creek is named Stillwater is because there is always water there; no matter how dry it is there is still water in the creek. The cattlemen had roundups each year. The country opened here in May. A mile north was what was called the Z-V ranch. I went out one time when they cleaned up the last cattle. That was along in May. The cattlemen didn't want to see these boomers coming, but they knew it was going to happen. They never made any opposition whatever. No trouble about that.

[Question]: You feel quite sure that the boomers spent the winter down there on the creek?

[Same speaker]: [We] used burned logs out of the town there. There was a boomer town of 500 or 600. There were old dugouts down there. The soldiers had wrecked the log cabins. They had a town on Uncle Charley Donart's place. That was where the town sites was. The first buildings I did were built out of the burned logs. They was the first building on the town site.

[Mr. W. C. McCoy]: I was acquainted with this boomer outfit four or five years before the opening of Oklahoma. I lived at Douglas [Kansas] where Couch lived

and was pretty well acquainted with it and I was making preparations to come four or five years before the opening. When the opening day came, I was five or six miles east of Orlando, on a horse ready to go when the gun was fired. I came from Arkansas City through the strip and I failed to get anything on that day so I tried again....

[C. M. Edmondson]: I hail from Polsen County, Indiana. I struck this country the eighth day of October. I spent 47 years living in the Blackwell Lake area. I can vouch for what Mrs. [Sallie B.] Wallace told you and what Mr. [Freeman E.] Miller read you. I know it for I was here. The thing that interested us folks back East was to get a better home. We came here and so far as the people that I lived around, we didn't know what this country would produce. We speculated on it and thought and talked about it a good bit. One thing that we all did when we ate a good peach was to drop the stone and tramp our heel on it good. We had more peaches then than we knew what to do with. We thought that maybe this would be a good fruit country. Most of the people planted orchards and there was lots of fruit. Don't have that now because we don't have the trees and you can't have fruit without trees.

[Mr. W. A. Swiler]: I came down here shortly after the opening. There had been a consignment of goods shipped down here. We didn't know anything about the country and only knew that the man in charge was to meet us there. We thought we could cut straight through west to Alfred and I guess you folks know what we got into. We were a day and a half getting through it. We would have to cut and pull the wagon out of the creeks. We met him and I said to him, "Shouldn't we get bread before we start out of here?" We then forgot all about it until we got out about six miles and it was pretty near dark. We rummaged through the goods and the only thing that was good to eat was a sack of navy beans and prunes. We made our supper out of that. We pulled out the next morning and were up pretty near to where Perry is before we got a good road and for three days we were

out, we had beans and prunes for three meals a day. It was sometime before I got so I could look at a prune or a navy bean. Had to drink water we got out of the tracks along the road.

[Mrs. George A. Davis]: I feel it is quite a privilege to be an 89'er and I am kinda proud that I got to teach one of the first schools of Oklahoma. I have certificate number 11 and took one of the first teacher's examinations. That was January, 1891. There were no government schools in '89. There were subscription schools. There was a \$50,000 appropriation made. That is when the schools commenced, in January, 1891. I had a second grade certificate and I got \$30 a month. Most of them got \$25. I kept on teaching until my two-year certificate was over. Men at that time were very anxious to get housekeepers and Mr. Davis persuaded me to quit teaching. I had 41 pupils from all parts of the county with all sorts of books, and then there was an enterprising book concern who offered to exchange books. I loaded the buckboard full and came into town. I took a list and got the new books for each child. They could then all have readers alike. The books were McGuffey's Readers, Ray's Arithmetic, Barnes' History, Barnes' Geography.

[Miss Metta Lytton]: One of my friends made the run with a fine Hamilton horse, but this proved to be of no use. He then had a farm out east of town and he later sold that and went into business here in town. My father and mother and I came down to help their family several times. [We] went on down to Oklahoma City and then to the first normal school there. There were colored people attending. We wanted to have our pictures taken and didn't want the colored people in them. We sneaked away and had them taken. The next day they had a gathering and one fellow said that he could match arms with any of us in intellect.

[Mr. Freeman E. Miller]: The session of legislature which convened August 26, 1890, and adjourned on a corresponding day--Christmas, 1890--gave us our first laws enacted by our own people. We had an election in Febru-

ary. We had trials here in Stillwater. Court was held in the Presbyterian Church set over here where the water tower is [800 block of Lewis Street]. When a man was convicted he was sent to Kansas, where we had rented a jail. When released, he was given enough money to come back on. A man, Mr. [Ira N.] Terrill...was involved in a shooting, and sentenced to life imprisonment. He went up to the jail in Kansas, but was released on a habeas corpus writ, which made the Kansas Supreme Court call for another court trial. They said that the Stillwater court had already finished their session, and therefore the trial was not legal. He was brought back and tried again, this time being sentenced to ten years. He served his time.

...A person named McCormick would plant his potatoes about February. Another man who lived on the hill came down, plowed them up, and then planted his own potato patch on the same ground. They had a fight on it. It fell my lot to get my first attorney's fee in Oklahoma on this--\$10.

I remember after the fight when I was assistant county attorney, there came word to the office that they had found a dead man about seven miles west of Stillwater on the Sixth Street highway down in a draw. The sheriff and I went out to see the scene. At that time there were many strangers in the country and we didn't know who many of the people killed were. Some man was coming to Stillwater and he heard the horse nicker off in the brush. That aroused his curiosity. He looked around and found a buckboard and a fine gray horse tied to a tree. The horse had eaten everything he possibly could, even the bark from the trees. He also found a fine set of harness. Looking further, he saw rolled under some bushes something that looked to be a roll of blankets. He found a body in there badly decomposed and he found the head in another place. He came and notified the sheriff's office. We went out and had a hearing. I took down the testimony in longhand. Nobody could identify the dead man, so his harness, wagon, and horse were sold and he was given a burial as good as possible with the money from the sale.

[Clippings from the Stillwater News-Press concerning this or possibly a similar incident were included with the April 26, 1942, minutes. The entire text of the two clippings is included here; unfortunately, neither was dated.]

#### GRAVE OF EARLY RESIDENT SOUGHT

Some Stillwater or Payne County old timer may be able to help C. G. Bathe, 738 East Moses Street, Cushing, who is seeking the location of the grave which holds the remains of his uncle, Mack Hogue.

Bathe said he believed Hogue was one of the first persons buried in or around Stillwater.

He was killed by an outlaw during the run of 1889, according to stories Bathe has heard. The outlaw cut Hogue's head off, rolled it in a blanket, and left the body near the buckboard where the Cushing man's uncle had been camping.

The body was not found until about 10 days after the murder.

#### GRAVE OF EARLY MURDER VICTIM NORTH OF CITY

Mrs. Sallie B. Wallace, 1116 Lowry Street, came to the fore Sunday with exactly the information needed, following a request in Sunday's News-Press by C. G. Bathe of Cushing.

Bathe sought to learn the location of the grave of his uncle, Mack Hogue, an early-day Payne County resident who was killed by an outlaw in 1892. Hogue's body was not found until almost two weeks after the murder. It had been decapitated and left near the buckboard where Hogue had been camping. The head had been rolled in a blanket.

Mrs. Wallace, a pioneer resident who is familiar with much little-known Payne County history, reported Monday that Hogue had been murdered near what was then the Sherrard farm, near her home northwest of

Stillwater and near the farm owned by Hub Adams, who now lives here at the Burdette hotel.

The murder was discovered when Adams's dog dragged home an arm, she said. Mrs. Wallace and Hub Adams compared notes Monday morning and found that their memories of the occasion were the same. Mrs. Wallace's home was 12 miles northwest of Stillwater, near the scene of the murder.

Hogue's body is in the Shelton graveyard, 12 miles northwest of Stillwater, Mrs. Wallace said. She commented that perhaps few small graveyards hold the bodies of so many persons who had violent deaths. One family which burned to death, another which was poisoned, and individuals who were shot to death are represented in this cemetery.

\* \* \* \* \*

From The Stillwater Gazette, January 23, 1906, p. 2:

One of Carrie Nation's Wichita smashing lieutenants, a mother who took more interest in the welfare of other people's families than in her own, has been appraised of the fact that one of her daughters is a member of a chorus girls' outfit holding forth in California.--Wichita Eagle.

## Freeman E. Miller's "Oklahoma"

My Oklahoma, land  
Of the fair God, so grand,  
    Thy name I bless!  
I love Thy streams of might,  
Thy Plains with blossoms white,  
Thy hills and vales so bright  
    With happiness.

Men knew thee as a child  
In strife and struggle wild,  
    And loved Thy name;  
Thou hadst no childhood long  
In toil and hope and song  
With giant steps and strong,  
    Thy greatness came.

Vast cities in an Hour  
Sprang forth in mighty power;  
    Divinely fair;  
Homes filled the desert way;  
Advancement came to stay;  
A nation in a day  
Was builded there.

Here may the blessings grow  
That Free men always know  
    And fondly prize;  
Here may the ancient hate  
Of man and men abate;  
O, may a noble state  
    From Thee arise.



My Oklahoma, thee  
So fondly fair to me,  
    No evil mars!  
Long may thy people thrive;  
Long may they keep alive  
That faith which bids them strive  
    Up to the stars!

The song above was sent to the Payne County Historical Review by Dr. Berlin B. Chapman, now of Orlando, Florida. According to Dr. Chapman, Professor Miller was a member of the English faculty at Oklahoma A & M College in the early 1890s. The "Dean of Oklahoma Poets," he was also a member of the Council of Oklahoma Territory at Guthrie, circuit judge of Payne and Logan Counties, and in the early 1940s president of the Payne County Historical Society. His "Oklahoma," sung to the tune of "America," opened programs of the society. The final lines recall the Oklahoma state motto, Ad astra per aspera (To the stars through hardship), which was also the state motto of the Kansans who settled the Stillwater area.

# The "Civilized Tourist"

## Washington Irving on the Prairie

*by Mary Jane Warde*

In October of 1832 an expedition left Fort Gibson for a short trip up the Arkansas and Cimarron rivers through Central Oklahoma. "Expedition" is almost too grand a term; for the company of mounted infantry was merely scouting the territory. What made that trip so profitable for historians was the presence of four civilians, each of whom later wrote accounts of the trip with descriptions of the country through which they passed. Together the four accounts, like the Four Gospels, corroborate and complement each other to give a picture of what this part of Oklahoma was like in the days before the advent of settlers, either white or red.

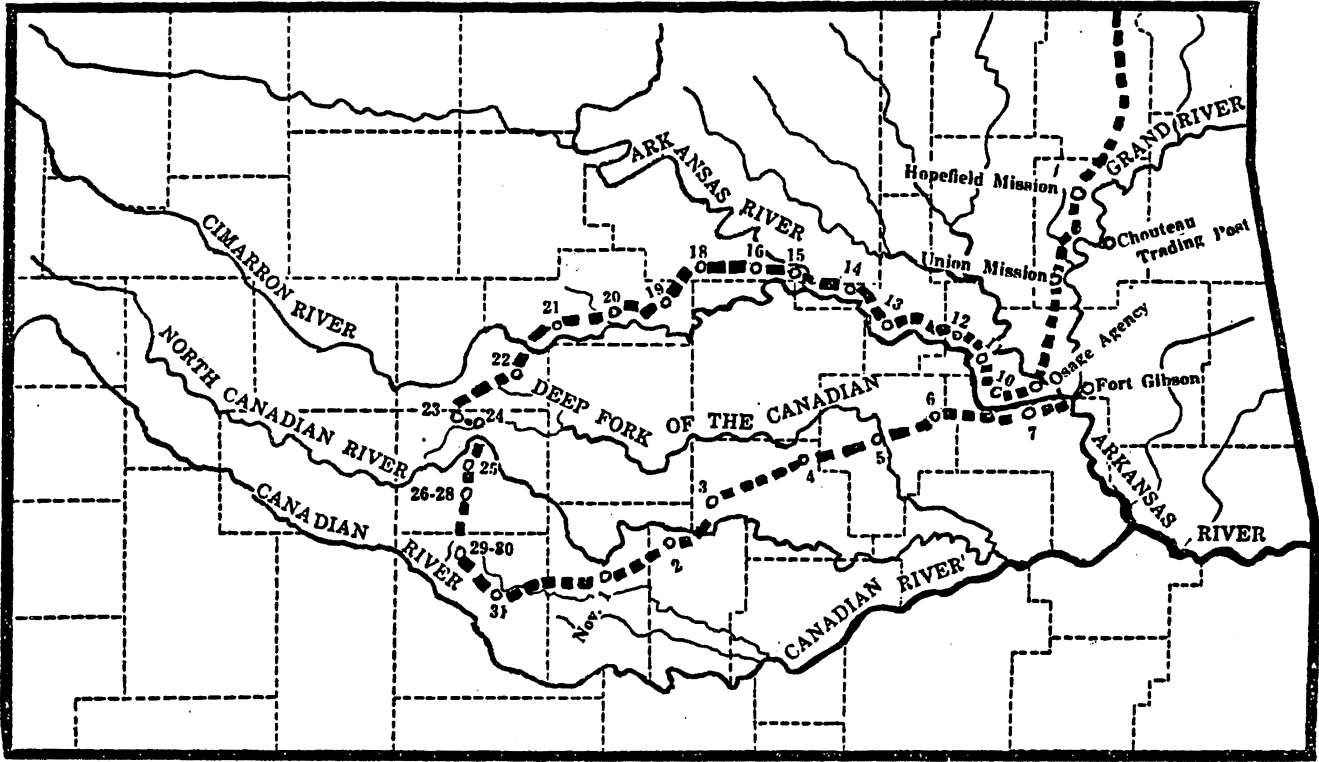
The four civilians were Henry L. Ellsworth, son of a Chief Justice of the United States, a special emissary to the tribes west of Arkansas; Count Albert-Alexandre de Pourtalés, a nineteen-year-old Swiss sent to America to broaden his education and sow his wild oats; Charles J. Latrobe, an intellectual Englishman acting as Pourtalés' companion; and Washington Irving, one of the first internationally-recognized American writers. Ellsworth later described the trip in Washington Irving on the Prairie; and Latrobe included his observations in his two volumes entitled The Rambler in North America, while the letters and journals of Pourtalés lay forgotten among his family papers until rediscovered in 1965. But Irving was already known as the writer of short stories and sketches set against a colonial New York background or that of his European assignments, and public reception of A Tour on the Prairies in 1835 made his little book a best seller.<sup>1</sup>

Few modern travelers set off in quite so haphazard a fashion to explore unfamiliar territory as did Irving

and his friends. He had become acquainted with Latrobe and Pourtalés on shipboard while returning from seventeen years' service abroad in a series of governmental posts. Later they met again by accident aboard a Niagara Falls steamer during Pourtalés' American grand tour. On the same boat was Ellsworth, recently appointed by President Andrew Jackson to investigate conditions among the Plains Indians who would soon be compelled to share Oklahoma with the Eastern tribes then being forcibly removed from east of the Mississippi. At Ellsworth's invitation the other three agreed to go with him on his tour of investigation. Consequently, all four left the Niagara steamer to go overland to Cincinnati; from there they travelled down the Ohio and up the Mississippi by riverboat as far as St. Louis. There they bought equipment; hired hunters and guides; and visited two of the local famous personages, General William Clark, who had made the initial crossing of the continent with Merriwether Lewis over twenty-five years before, and Chief Black Hawk, the Sac Indian leader imprisoned at Jefferson Barracks for his recent rebellion against the removal of his tribe from Illinois. Within two days of their arrival, the four were organized--after a fashion--and ready to be off.<sup>2</sup>

Ellsworth, of course, travelled as a government agent; but the other three went out of curiosity and high spirits. Latrobe was a keen botanist and longed to study the prairie flora. Pourtalés, a romantic nineteen, was eager to know the Osages and to hunt with them on their own grounds. Irving wanted to see the frontier at first hand. He wrote to his brother Peter:

I should have an opportunity of seeing the remnants of those great Indian tribes, which are about to disappear as independent nations. . . I should see those countries of the far west while still in a state of pristine wilderness, and behold herds of buffaloes...before they are driven beyond the reach of the civilized tourist.<sup>3</sup>



Map showing Washington Irving's travels in 1832 through Central Oklahoma. Reprinted from A Tour on the Prairies.

From St. Louis the four tourists travelled south to Independence, Missouri, and on to Fort Gibson on the Arkansas River with the trader Auguste Pierre Chouteau Jr. as their guide. They were disappointed on their arrival to find that a detachment of Rangers, mounted infantry in those pre-cavalry days, had left the fort three days earlier. Ellsworth had planned to travel under their protection; but as their commander, General Mathew Arbuckle, had received no information about Ellsworth's mission, he had sent them off on a scouting trip. Nevertheless, he provided a second detachment of thirteen Rangers to escort the Ellsworth group; and on October 10 they set off after the first party. Within three days they caught up and the two companies went on together.<sup>4</sup>

Their route took them up the north bank of the Arkansas beyond its confluence with the Cimarron. On the 15th they crossed over the river and went on westward for two days before swinging back to the southwest toward the Cimarron. Along the way they crossed the tracks of Osage hunting parties and kept an eye out for hostile Pawnees. Their meetings with the Osages were happy occasions, but tales of Pawnee horse thieves made everyone, including the less-than-intrepid Rangers, nervous. All of them enjoyed hunting the abundant deer and other game they encountered, and each looked forward to spotting the first buffalo or wild horse. On the 19th, as they entered what would later be Payne County, Oklahoma, the sultry weather broke; and the scouting party was soaking wet and gloomy by the end of the day. That evening they pitched camp early on Salt Creek just west of Yale. Irving described the day and the country in A Tour on the Prairies:

Our march for a part of the day, lay a little to the south of west, through straggling forests of the kind of low scrubbed trees already mentioned, called "post-oakes," and "black-jacks." The soil of these "oak barrens" is loose and unsound; being little better at times than a mere quicksand, in which, in rainy weather,

the horse's hoof slips from side to side, and now and then sinks in a rotten, spongy, turf, to the fetlock. Such was the case at present in consequence of successive thunder showers, through which we dragged along in dogged silence. Several deer were roused by our approach, and scudded across the forest glades; but no one, as formerly, broke the line of march to pursue them. At one time, we passed the bones and horns of a buffalo, and at another time a buffalo track, not above three days old. These signs of the vicinity of this grand game of the prairies, had a reviving effect on the spirits of our huntsmen; but it was of transient duration.

In crossing a prairie of moderate extent, rendered little better than a slippery bog by the recent showers, we were overtaken by a violent thunder-gust. The rain came rattling upon us in torrents, and spattered up like steam along the ground; the whole landscape was suddenly wrapped in gloom that gave a vivid effect to the intense sheets of lightning, while the thunder seemed to burst over our very heads, and was reverberated by the groves and forests that chequered and skirted the prairie. Man and beast were so pelted, drenched, and confounded, that the line was thrown in complete confusion; some of the horses were so frightened as to be almost unmanageable, and our scattered cavalcade looked like a tempest-tossed fleet, driving hither and thither, at the mercy of wind and wave.

At length, at half past two o'clock, we came to a halt, and, gathering together our forces, encamped in an open and lofty grove, with a prairie on each side and a stream on the other. The forest immediately rung with the sound of the axe, and the crash of fal-

ling trees. Huge fires were soon blazing; blankets were stretched before them, by way of tents; booths were hastily reared of bark and skins; every fire had its group drawn close round it, drying and warming themselves, or preparing a comforting meal. Some of the rangers were discharging and cleaning their rifles, which had been exposed to the rain; while the horses, relieved from their saddles and burthens, rolled in the wet grass.

The showers continued from time to time, until late in the evening. Before dark, our horses were gathered in and tethered about the skirts of the camp, withing the outposts, through fear of Indian prowlers, who are apt to take advantage of stormy nights for their depredations and assaults. As the night thickened, the hugh fires became more and more luminous; lighting up masses of the overhanging foliage, and leaving other parts of the grove in deep gloom. Every fire had its goblin group around it, while the tethered horses were dimly seen, like spectres, among the thickets; excepting that here and there a grey one stood out in bright relief.

The grove thus fitfully lighted up by the ruddy glare of the fires, resembled a vast leafy dome, walled in by opaque darkness; but every now and then two or three quivering flashes of lightning in quick succession, would suddenly reveal a vast champaign country, where fields and forests, and running streams, would start, as it were, into existence for a rew brief seconds, and, before the eye could ascertain them, vanish again into gloom....

After a gloomy and unruly night, the morning dawned bright and clear, and a glorious sunrise transformed the whole landscape, as if by magic. The late dreary wilderness

brightened into a fine open country, with stately groves, and clumps of oak of a gigantic size, some of which stood singly, as if planted for ornament and shade, in the midst of rich meadows; while our horses, scattered about, and grazing under them, gave to the whole the air of a noble park. It was difficult to realize the fact that we were so far in the wilds beyond the residence of man. Our encampment, alone, had a savage appearance; with its rude tents of skins and blankets, and its columns of blue smoke rising among the trees.<sup>5</sup>

That next bright morning, October 20, brought the party to one of the outstanding topological features in what would be Payne County. Irving describes it like this:

After a toilsome march of some distance through a country cut up by ravines and brooks, and entangled by thickets, we emerged upon a grand prairie. Here one of the characteristic scenes of the Far West broke upon us. An immense extent of grassy, undulating, or as it is termed, rolling country, with here and there a clump of trees, dimly seen in the distance like a ship at sea; the landscape deriving sublimity from its vastness and simplicity. To the southwest, on the summit of a hill, was a singular crest of broken rocks, resembling a ruined fortress. It reminded me of the ruin of some Moorish castle, crowning a height in the midst of a lonely Spanish landscape. To this hill we gave the name Cliff Castle.<sup>6</sup>

Pourtalés with his Swiss background was also impressed by the crest of rock: "This one in particular so greatly resembled the ruins of those ancient towers along the Rhine...."<sup>7</sup>

During the day's travel they spotted buffalo trails and horse tracks that caused much speculation. They



looked on as a pack of wolves attacked a buck and saw so many deer that even the most avid hunters were bored. The woods, according to Pourtalés, were crawling with turkeys. And always there was the rolling prairie.<sup>8</sup>

They camped that night just west of Mehan "in a beautiful grove watered by a fine spring and rivulet."<sup>9</sup> Fresh signs of buffalo and wild horses once more excited the hunters among them so that everyone looked forward to the next morning's promised sport. But the day began with some difficulty as they crossed Stillwater Creek.

We had not proceeded far on our morning's march, when we were checked by a deep stream, running along the bottom of a thickly wooded ravine. After coasting it for a couple of miles, we came to a fording place; but to get down to it was the difficulty, for the banks were steep and crumbling, and overgrown with forest trees, mingled with thickets, brambles, and grape-vines. At length the leading horseman broke his way through the thicket, and his horse putting his feet together, slid down the black crumbling bank, to the narrow margin of the stream; then floundering across, with mud and water up to the saddle-girths, he scrambled to the opposite bank, and arrived safe on level ground. The whole line followed pell mell after the leader, and pushing forward in close order, Indian file, they crowded each other down the bank and into the stream. Some of the horsemen missed the ford, and were soused over head and ears; one was unhorsed, and plumped head foremost into the middle of the stream: for my own part, while pressed forward, and hurried over the bank by those behind me, I was interrupted by a grape-vine, as thick as a cable, which hung in a festoon as low as the saddle-bow, and, dragging me from the saddle, threw me among the feet of the trampling horses. Fortunately, I escaped without injury, regained my steed, crossed the stream without further difficulty, and was enabled to join in the

merriment occasioned by the ludicrous disasters of the fording.<sup>10</sup>

Leaving the woods they came out upon a vast and glorious prairie, spreading out beneath the golden beams of an autumnal sun. The deep and frequent traces of buffalo, showed it to be one of their favorite grazing grounds; yet none were to be seen. In the course of the morning, we were overtaken by the lieutenant and seventeen men, who had remained behind, and who came laden with the spoils of buffaloes; having killed three on the preceding day. One of the rangers, however, had little luck to boast of; his horse having taken fright at sight of the buffaloes, thrown his rider, and escaped into the woods."

The buffalo eluded them that day but all were impressed by the capture of a wild horse by one of the hired hunters on the evening of October 21. Irving described the scene that remained vivid in his memory:

The whole scene was singularly wild; the tall grove, partially illumined by the flashing fires of the camp, the horses tethered here and there among the trees, the carcasses of deer hanging around, and in the midst of all, the wild huntsman and his wild horse, with an admiring throng of rangers, almost as wild.<sup>12</sup>

He ended the day's observations with a bit of philosophy:

I could not but look with compassion upon this fine young animal, whose whole course of existence had been so suddenly reversed. From being a denizen of these vast pastures, ranging at will from plain to plain and mead to mead, cropping of every herb and flower, and drinking of every stream, he was suddenly reduced to perpetual and painful servitude, to pass his life under the harness and the curb, amid, perhaps, the din and dust and drudgery of cities. The transition in his lot was such as sometimes of towering individuals:--one day, a prince of

the prairies--the next day, a pack horse!<sup>13</sup>

That particular episode can still be recalled from a Payne County map; the stream on which they camped that night is now known as Wild Horse Creek.<sup>14</sup>

On the 22nd the scouting party left Payne County as they forded the Cimarron and picked their way through the Cross Timbers to the south. For the next week they continued to explore Central Oklahoma with buffalo hunts and fears of Indian attacks enlivening their days, but several factors soon put an end to comfortable sight-seeing. Winter was closing in, so the weather conditions worsened. Rough going had worn both men and horses, and provisions soon ran short. The horses did not fare well on the dried prairie grass, and game became scarce due to the presence of Indian hunting parties in the area. Measles had attacked the Rangers, who, according to Irving and Pourtalés, were not exactly the seasoned campaigners one would expect of the U.S. Army. Clearly it was time to go home.<sup>15</sup>

On October 24, very near the intersection of Interstate and Route 66 today, they decided to turn back toward the east. Two weeks' hard travel--with some pauses for hunting buffalo and locating young Pourtalés, who had become confused the excitement of the chase--brought them back to Fort Gibson on November 8. The whole excursion had taken twenty-eight days.<sup>16</sup>

Irving was right. For better or worse, change was coming to the prairie as it had to the young wild horse. Already the tide of white immigration had crossed the Mississippi; the Plains tribes, like the eastern Indians, were about to be shuffled and shoved and corraled to accommodate the newcomers. General William Clark and Chief Black Hawk understood that very well. Farmers would take the place of hunters. Cattle would replace the buffalo. Grain would replace the prairie grasses. The future Payne County might not be occupied for another fifty or sixty years, but Oklahoma as a whole, as well as the rest of the prairie, was about to give up its primitive state. In 1832 the four tourists took one last look at what was

about to end forever. Therein lies the value of the accounts of Ellsworth and Latrobe, Pourtalés and Irving.

But the "civilized tourist" in the 1980s can still enjoy some of what Irving and his friends experienced. The route that took them twenty-eight days to cover can be driven over now in a day or two with plenty of time out for sightseeing. In 1956 the Oklahoma Historical Society laid out the Irving tour along the modern road system. George H. Shirk updated that work in 1967 and published it in The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Number 3, Volume XLV. Armed with that guide and a copy of A Tour on the Prairies, still good reading after 150 years, today's "civilized tourist" can retrace the Washington Irving Trail in speed and comfort.

On Sunday, November 30, 1980, the Payne County Historical Society conducted its fall tour with visits to Ingalls, scene of the Dalton-Doolin shootout, and Irving's Cliff Castle. One half-mile west of Ingalls and two miles south on the section-line road, the "civilized tourist" may still see the rocky crest that so impressed Irving and Pourtalés. It is not easy for the modern eye to see in it a ruined castle. One must remember that Irving and Pourtalés lived in a romantic age during which castles, the more ruined the better, were all the rage. Natural weathering, grazing cattle, and removal of stones by builders have diminished the Castle considerably; and a planting of cedars has also changed its appearance. But from its summit one may still appreciate the stretch of rolling prairie and the hazy-blue rise on the far side of the Cimarron River Valley. It is still possible to visualize some of Payne County as Washington Irving saw it.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>George H. Shirk, A Tour On the Prairies Along the Washington Irving Trail in Oklahoma, reprinted from The Chronicles of Oklahoma, 45:3, pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup>George F. Spaulding, ed. and comp., and Seymour Feiler, trans., On the Western Tour with Washington

Irving: The Journal and Letters of Count de Pourtalés (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), pp. 3, 5, 10.

<sup>3</sup>Cited in Spaulding and Feiler, Count de Pourtalés, p. 8, from the Arkansas Gazette, June 26, 1833.

<sup>4</sup>Spaulding and Feiler, Count de Pourtalés, pp. 12-16.

<sup>5</sup>Shirk, Washington Irving Trail, p. 9; Washington Irving, A Tour on the Prairies (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Corporation, 1955), pp. 74-75; p. 77.

<sup>6</sup>Irving, A Tour on the Prairies, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup>Spaulding and Feiler, Count de Pourtalés, p. 62.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 63; Irving, A Tour on the Prairies, p. 81.

<sup>9</sup>Irving, A Tour on the Prairies, p. 82. The camp that night may have been four or five miles northeast of Ripley.

<sup>10</sup>Irving, A Tour on the Prairies, pp. 84-85.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 93

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 109; Shirk, Washington Irving Trail, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup>Shirk, Washington Irving Trail, p. 15.

## How Our Grandmothers Did It From *The Log Cabin Cook Book*

For those of us who have grown up with the convenience of soap from a box; our meat cut, tenderized and packaged in plastic wrap and styrofoam; and our bread baked and stored for us on the supermarket shelf, it is often hard to imagine how our grandmothers were able to provide these simple things for their families. But they managed, using whatever materials were at hand. Edna Eaton Wilson of Yale, Oklahoma, has preserved some of their methods in The Log Cabin Cookbook, which she compiled in 1960, using information gathered from the pioneers themselves. Her work was printed by the staff of the Yale Record in 1963. Below are some excerpts from The Log Cabin Cookbook which deal with an important part of everyday life in early Payne County--making bread.

\* \* \* \*

Bread was what the pioneers craved in their foodstuffs. There was always meat of a sort to be had. Game was plentiful. Fish, turtles, and frogs abounded in the streams and lakes. Bacon, ham and salt side were not uncommon. Lacking grease from these or lard, or butter, game could still be cooked by broiling over an open fire, but BREAD, that was another thing! For the making of even the simplest of breadstuffs required a certain knowledge, and a good deal of skill....

Within walking distance of nearly every pioneer homestead was a grist mill, where wheat was ground into whole wheat flour. Sometimes barley or rye was ground for bread grain, and always corn, either white or yellow, sometimes both, were ground into good corn meal.

Whole wheat flour was not relished so well as "good white flour" that was to be had from a "regular flour mill" or bought from the general store whence it had been freighted in by team or by railroad. But whole wheat was used, too, as a stretcher for the fine white flour that was kept by "for company cakes," and used sparingly because in the pioneer days, money was scarce and the things that had to be purchased were carefully handled so that every bit of use possible could be realized from them....

The simplest of all bread, requiring the least possible of material and tools is Uncle Ed Cook's hoe cake. Take three or more cups of cornmeal, one teaspoon of salt, cold water to dampen the cornmeal slightly, all of it, and one cup of boiling water. Mix the hot water thoroughly with the cornmeal-salt mixture. Have a heavy pan hot ("or you can bake it on a hot limestone rock as we did when we were coming along from Missouri"). Sprinkle a dusting of dry cornmeal over the bottom of whatever you are going to bake it on or in. Put the mixture into the pan or onto the rock. Keep it just moderately hot. After about half an hour, turn the cake. It should be brown on one side. In another half hour it should be done....

The next most commonly made sort of bread among the boys who came down to build a shanty or a dugout for the wife and baby was sour dough biscuits. For the starter boil a batch of potatoes in their jackets for the night meal. Next morning eat the rest cold if you don't want to peel and fry them, but save one to peel and chop up for the starter. Add a cup of sugar to a cup of water in a gallon jar, then the chopped-up potato. Add two cups of warm water and stir up the mess, cover with something to keep out the dirt and insects, and take a look at it two days later. In warm spring or summer, it would be ready to use within two days; in winter or late fall, it would take three.

For the biscuits, take out a little over a cup of flour into a bowl. Make a hole in it (the flour, that is, not the bowl). Now dip out a cupful of the

starter and pour it into the hole in the flour. Add a teaspoon of salertus (soda to the modernist and about one-fourth cupful of meat frying or lard, and stir all together to make a dough. Pinch out the biscuits with your hand, and place in a camp skillet. This was a skillet with legs, so that it could be set over a bed of coals. Put the lid on the skillet and pile coals over and on top of the lid. After about twenty minutes brush all the coals and ashes away with a buckbrush whisk, and using a thick cotton glove remove the lid. The biscuits will be brown and sweet-smelling. Biscuits like that and a can of black coffee, a panfried catfish, or a breast of quail--you had a meal fit for the kings who ate it! Before you broke camp for the day's travel, you would add one cup of water, one-half cup of flour and a tablespoon of sugar to the sour dough to keep the ferment growing. You did this each time you took out starter for bread.

Making yeast breads was somewhat more complicated. Wild yeast plants, invisible to the eye but none the less present, abound and grow rapidly in the warm, atmosphere of late spring and early summer in Oklahoma. Certain plants like hops and peach leaves seem to be special hosts to the yeast plant. Pioneers knew. From colonial days women had soaked wild hops, gathered for them by husband or son, stirred flour into the strained liquid, added a little sugar; and when the bubbles grew in the mixture, and the same began to rise in crock or jar, they knew with delighted certainty that they had captured the yeast plants, that they had "ever-lasting" yeast. Sometimes grandma stirred corn meal into this mixture, dired the same and stored the dried yeast in a dry place, using a small portion for each baking....

Yeast bread varied with the bread-maker as to ways it was made. Some homemakers put one-half cake of yeast foram to soak in a half-cup of water at 1 PM. Then they put one gallon of clabber milk to warm, and brought it to 100 degrees temperature. After two hours, they stirred the milk, breaking the curd, and drained off the whey through a cheese cloth or cloth corn-meal



bag. They added the whey to the softened yeast foam, and stirred in flour to make a medium batter which they let rise until after supper. Then they took three quarts of warm, not hot, water; three tablespoons of sugar; the yeast batter that should by now be full of bubbles, and enough flour to make a thick batter. This rose in a warm place overnight.

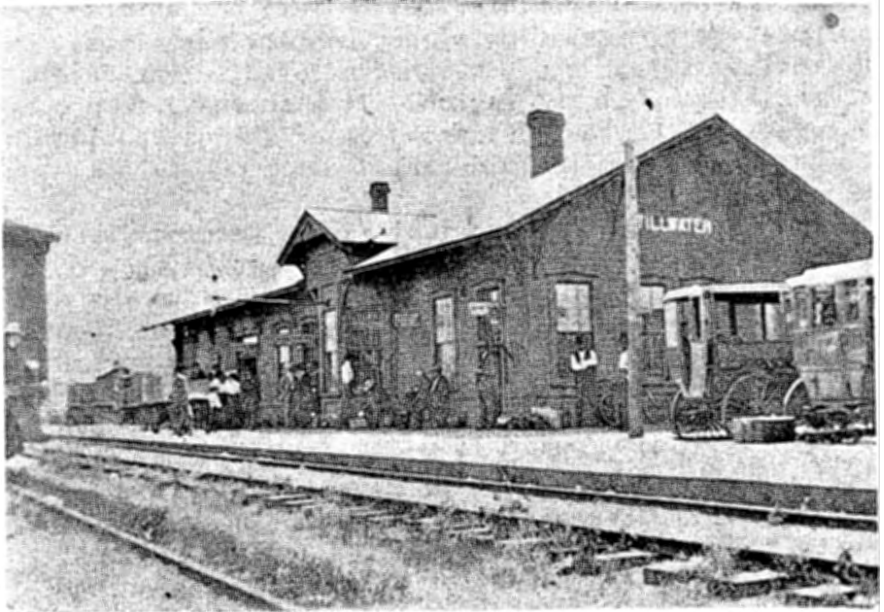
The next day the bread-maker added one-fourth cup of sugar, two teaspoons of salt, one cupful of mild that had been scalded and cooled, four tablespoons of melted shortening, and worked in enough flour to make a stiff dough. It was kneaded with the hands. When the dough would just let go, not quite sticking to the mixing bowl or greased board, it was placed in a greased bowl (we used to use a dishpan), the top was greased with butter or drippings, and it was left to rise in a warm place until very light. Then it was made into loaves, left to rise until doubled or more in bulk, and baked in a moderate oven one hour. The loaves would be brown and have a sweet, nutty smell.

Other homemakers used just warm water as the liquid in the bread and no milk at all. Some homemakers used water drained from plain boiled potatoes for stirring up the yeast at night. Some would take out a cupful of the yeast at morning, before mixing the bread, and would put it into a jar with warmwater, a little sugar, and more flour to be kept and used as a bread starter. But whatever variations they used in bread-making, the above was basically the procedure.

Editor's Note: The Log Cabin Cookbook contains many other old-time recipes as well as interesting information on pioneer food preparation and early Payne County families.

# A Glimpse of the Past

*by Ann Carlson*



Stillwater Railroad Depot. This picture taken in the Spring of 1907 shows wooden depot built shortly after rail service came to Stillwater in 1900. The depot was replaced in the 1910s by the present brick structure although the old depot continued to serve as storage for freight.

## News and Notes

The Payne County Historical Society has as its purpose the preservation of documentary materials, historical sites, and published materials that relate to the history of the region. It also seeks to promote interest in the past by, among other things, publishing a quarterly historical journal.

The Payne County Historical Review welcomes readers comments, news, or requests for information from other readers. Family histories or memories, histories of groups or institutions, articles, pictures, or suggested topics for articles are also welcome and may be sent to the Review in care of the Payne County Historical Society, P. O. Box 194, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074.

The historical society meets each March, June, September, and December on the second Thursday of the month. The executive board of the society meets at noon on the second Monday of those months when a general meeting is not scheduled. All members of the society are invited to attend.

The March meeting of the Society will feature Mr. Everett Hudiburg, author of "01' Betsy" in this issue of the Review. Mr. Hudiburg will speak on the history of the Stillwater Fire Department. The meeting will be held on Thursday, March 5, 1981, at 7:30 p.m. in the conference room of the Payne County Courthouse. Please note that this is a change of the regular date and location.

## STILLWATER'S EARLY YEARS

The Stillwater Public Library has available for loan Stillwater's Early years, a slide tape presentation, that was developed as part of the Oklahoma Images Program. The 20 minute, 80 slide, presentation was viewed at the December meeting of the Society. It is also available on video cassette.

### ARCHITECTURE IN OKLAHOMA:

#### LANDMARK AND VERNACULAR

An exhibition of 124 photographs will be on display Feb. 2-28, open house Feb. 8, 1:30-4:00 p.m. at the Sheerar Museum 7th and Duncan. This is a slide lecture by Arn Henderson, Architect.

\* \* \* \* \*

From The Stillwater Gazette, January 30, 1906, p. 1:

A farmer who attended the corn show at Stillwater told of a novel scheme which he used to enrich the ground and make the corn grown on a piece of alkali soil on his farm. He told of planting alternate rows of onions and potatoes on the land and when the crops were matured the onions made the potatoes water, which sufficiently watered the earth and made the corn yield a large crop. We trust that all the farmers will remember this simple antidote.

# New Members in the Payne County Historical Society

## Institutional Members

Arts & Humanities Council

East Central Oklahoma State University

Stillwater Public Library

University of Tulsa

## Contributing Members

James L. Daugherty

John H. Melton

## Members

Doreen Baker

Charles Platt

Edda Bilger

Kenneth Ricker

Billy Brown

Isaac S. Ross

W. J. Burke

Edmond Rutter

R. D. Cocanougher

Michael L. Stevens

Shelly Hartman

Hobart E. Stocking

Harold Mace

D. L. Vaughn

Gertrude Means

R. R. Vaughn

Juliana Moomaw

Buster Williams

William Pinkstaff

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