

PAYNE COUNTY

HISTORICAL REVIEW

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Published by the
Payne County Historical Society

Payne County Historical Review

VOLUME I

APRIL 1981

NUMBER 4

The PAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL REVIEW is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October. All material being submitted for publication should be sent to the Editor, Payne County Historical Society, P. O. Box 194, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074. No payment is made for articles published in the REVIEW.

Membership in the Payne County Historical Society is open to anyone interested in the collection and preservation of Payne County history.

Dues are payable on a calendar basis, and are \$5.00. Members receive copies of the REVIEW free, but additional copies may be purchased for \$2.00 per copy.

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From the Editor

April, 1981

Dear Payne County historians,

This fourth issue of the Payne County Historical Review marks the end of our first volume and our first year of publication. In this past year many people have contributed to the success of the Review. Eighteen writers contributed articles. Some are members of the Society; others are not members but must surely be considered friends of the Society and its goals. Dr. David Baird gave encouragement and scholarly advice. Ann Carlson with the help and technical knowledge of her husband Gene laid out the editions and saw to their printing. Mrs. Marc Strand, secretary in the History Department at Oklahoma State University, typed most of the articles for us. Each of these people deserves our thanks and appreciation.

In the coming year we plan to continue quarterly publication of the review and hope to offer articles on subjects of interest to our readers. In addition, we want to provide information about sources for those doing research in Payne County history. We invite your comments, suggestions, and articles; and we welcome the help of anyone interested in the production of the Review.

All of us hope you are enjoying the Review and look forward to the next year as much as we do.

Mary Jane Warde
Editor

The Historic Preservation Survey of the Cushing Oil Field: A Summary

by George Carney

Many people have asked about the criteria used for evaluating historic resources and what types of properties are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The following information is taken from How To Complete National Register Forms (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 6, which is "Criteria for Evaluation."

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall

not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- A. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- B. a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- C. a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life; or
- D. a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- E. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- F. a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or
- G. a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

There are currently seven classifications in which a property may be placed for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The Cushing Oil Field Survey resulted in the use of six of the seven classifications; multiple resource being the only exception. A short explanation of the six classifications used in our project follows:

- (1) Building - a structure created to shelter any form of human activity, such as a house, barn,

church, hotel, or similar structure. Buildings may refer to a historically related complex such as a house and barn. Cushing Example: R. C. Jones Mansion.

- (2) Structure - a work made up of interdependent and interrelated parts in a definite pattern of organization. Constructed by man, it is often an engineering project large in scale. Cushing Example: Norfolk Bridge.
- (3) Site - the location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself maintains historical or archeological value regardless of the value of any existing structures. Cushing Example: Jackson Barnett No. 11 Oil Well.
- (4) Object - a material thing of functional, aesthetic, cultural, historical, or scientific value that may be, by nature or design, movable yet related to a specific setting or environment. Cushing Example: Wooden Pumper on Miller No. 6 Oil Well.
- (5) District - a geographically definable area, urban or rural, possessing a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development. Cushing Example: Broadway Street Historical District of Drumright.
- (6) Thematic Group - a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way. They may be related to a single historical person, event, or developmental force; of one building type or use, or designed by a single architect; of a single archeological site form, or related to a particular set of archeological research problems. They can be located within a single geographical area such as a city or county, or they can be spread throughout a state or even throughout the country. Cushing Example: Shotgun Type Houses in Cushing.

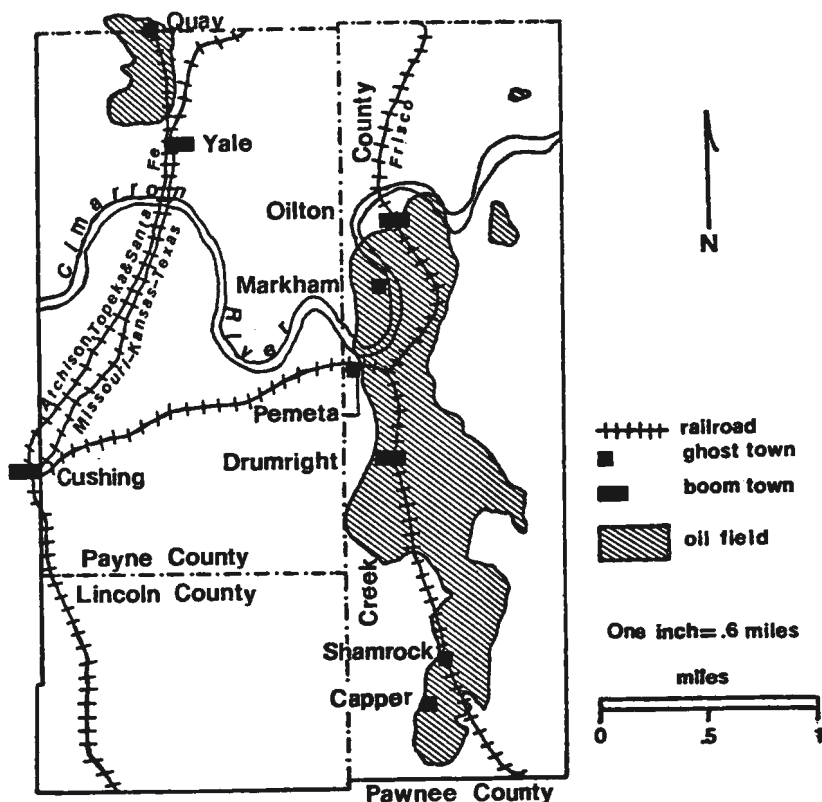
Thirty-nine individual properties were surveyed during the project time period: twenty-seven (70%) buildings, six (15%) structures, five (13%) sites, and one object. Five historic districts were identified: two in Cushing (city), one each in Drumright, Yale, and Shamrock. Within these five districts, sixty-nine buildings, four objects, one site, and one structure were surveyed. The one thematic nomination included nine buildings. Including both individual and historic district/thematic nominations, a total of 113 properties were surveyed in the Cushing Oil Field District.

Eleven resources associated with the production, refining, and storage of oil and gas during the Cushing oil boom period (1912-1920) were surveyed. Five sites, four structures, one object, and one building comprised this group. We were able to locate the first well drilled in the Cushing Field in 1912, Wheeler No. 1, which is still producing after 68 years; and the first well in Oklahoma to produce one million barrels of oil, Jackson Barnett No. 11. Only one refinery of the more than fifty that once existed in the Cushing Field remains intact--Yale Refinery--although not in operation since 1936. The Drumright Gasoline Plant No. 2 is the only structure of its type still functioning in the Cushing Field where more than thirty gas processing plants once operated. The evidence suggests that because of the decline in oil production in the 1930s that many of the historic resources associated with oil were gone by the time of our survey.

Commercial type buildings were the most numerous. A majority of these were small town two-story business structures which were used for a variety of enterprises. These multipurpose buildings played an important role in housing commercial activities which provided goods and services to the oil boom communities including attorney and physician aid, groceries, hardware, drugs, dry goods, and furniture. Banks, hotels, and depots were the most common among those buildings constructed for a specific commercial purpose.

Dwellings were also significant in number. Most of the early residences in the oil boom communities were

Cushing Oil District



Eight of the fifteen oil boom towns that developed as a result of the Cushing Oil Field retained properties of historic significance: Cushing (42), Drumright (24), Yale (14), Shamrock (9), Oilton (7), and Quay, Pemeta, and Markham (1) each. The latter three communities are oil boom "ghost towns" because of few residents (less than 25), no businesses, schools, churches, or a post office. Seven additional towns or "ten cities" which thrived during the boom era are now non-existent including Capper, Frie, Crow, Fulkerson, Dropright, Allright, and Damright.

A historic preservation survey is never finished. During the length of this project, many miles were traveled, many local residents were consulted, many phone calls were made, and a great deal of reading was

**Population of Incorporated Places
In Cushing Oil Field
1890 - 1970**

City/Town	1890	1900	1907	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970
Yale	0	0	439	685 +56%	2601 +280%	1734 -33%	1407 -19%	1359 -3%	1369 +1%	1239 -9%
Cushing	0	226	826 +265%	1072 +30%	6326 +490%	9301 +47%	7703 -17%	8414 +8%	8819 +2%	7529 -13%
Oilton	0	0	0	0	2231	1518 -32%	1225 -19%	1109 -9%	1100 -1%	1087 -1%
Drumright	0	0	0	0	6460	4972 -23%	4303 -13%	5028 +17%	4190 -17%	2931 -30%
Shamrock	0	0	0	0	1409	777 -45%	461 -41%	263 -43%	211 -20%	204 -4%
Stillwater	460	2431 +406%	2577 +6%	3444 +34%	4701 +36%	7016 +49%	10,097 +44%	20,238 +100%	23,965 +18%	31,126 +30%

SOURCE: United States Bureau of the Census

done. Several significant historic properties were uncovered, but I am also certain that we missed some important resources. One needs only to visit with someone in an oil field community and have him/her ask, "Did you see the old railroad tunnel out by Quay?" to realize that this project could go on forever. It is time, however, to stop and put the results on paper for the people of the Cushing Oil Field to digest.

I have tried to check our sources very carefully, sometimes talking to as many as a half dozen people and consulting four to five library references, in order to properly document our statements of significance, descriptions, and technical data. While I have not consciously made any errors in this report, I am sure that they are there. I, therefore, welcome any corrections, changes, suggestions, or omissions. Perhaps in another year, a revised copy of this report can be issued incorporating changes and new information that will undoubtedly be forthcoming in the days ahead.

I sincerely hope that many of the nominations we prepared qualify for the National Register of Historic Places. Those decisions will not be known for approximately six months to one year. Legislative action during the final hours of the last Congress may further delay recommendations on the Cushing Oil Field nominations. Let me say in advance that for those properties which do make the National Register the designations will give residents a sense of pride in their local history and the contribution it has made to Oklahoma. And for those nominations which are returned, they will be placed on the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory, a state register, thus insuring that they will not be forgotten by future generations of Oklahomans.

For a copy of the complete survey report, contact:

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Payne County Cemetery Records

by Ann Carlson

Historical or genealogical research often necessitates a visit to the cemetery. In Payne County such research is greatly facilitated by Volumes 1-4 of the Oklahoma Cemetery Records, Payne County.

Between 1956 and 1961 the Stillwater Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints canvassed every cemetery in Payne County and compiled a listing of markers and significant information on them. All graves are listed alphabetically by surname for each of the 37 cemeteries. The location of each cemetery is also contained in these volumes.

Copies of these records are kept in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Genealogical Society Library in Salt Lake City, the Oklahoma Historical Society Library in Oklahoma City, and the Stillwater City Library. The records were bound and contributed to the Stillwater City Library by Mrs. Veneta Berry (Mrs. J. H.) Arrington. While a part of the reference collection, these volumes are kept in a separate protected location at the Stillwater City Library.

Below is a listing of each volume and its contents:

Volume	Date Compiled	Cemetery	Number of Names
1	1956	Fairlawn (Stillwater)	4,202
2	1959	Bethel	172
2	1958	Clayton	47
2	1959	Elm Grove	360
2	1959	Glenwood	278

Volume	Date Compiled	Cemetery	Number Of Names
2	1959	Hart	11
2	1958-59	Ingalls	360
2	1959	I00F	530
2	1959	Lutheran	21
2	1959	Lutheran, United	35
2	1959	Marena	220
2	1959	(Old) Moore	4
2	1959	Mt. Hope	100
2	1959	Perkins	1,049
2	1959	Ripley	334
3	1960	(Old German) Catholic	1
3	1960	Church of the Brethern	147
3	1960	Clarkson	209
3	1960	Dunkin Bend	26
3	1960	Dunkin Family	13
3	1960	Family	8
3	1960	Greenwood	176
3	1960	Lanier	81
3	1960	(Iowa) Indian	46
3	1960	Olivet	193
3	1960	Osborn Family	

Volume	Date Compiled	Cemetery	Number Of Names
3	1960	Paradise	151
3	1960	Paradise Baptist	48
3	1960	Parotte	28
3	1960	Quay	1,413
3	1960	Underwood	127
4	1960	Driggs	96
4	1960	Fairlawn (Cushing)	2,556
4	1960	New Zion	1,001
4	1961	Oak Grove	246
4	1960	St. Leo's (Catholic)	262
4	1961	Sunset Memorial Garden	123

* * * * *

From the Stillwater News-Press, August 4, 1957:

Lulu Minta Andrews, 88, Payne County's first school teacher, died Saturday at her home at 1002 Duncan St. ...Mrs. Andrews was born in Newcastle, Pa., October 8, 1868, daughter of John R. and Pamela Ash. She came to Oklahoma in 1889 to settle southwest of Stillwater. Two years later she was married to Harry E. Andrews at Stillwater.

At Payne Center Mrs. Andrews had a subscription school in the log building known as the council house. She was the school's first teacher and the first teacher in Payne County. The Andrews staked a claim where Payne Center school was located....

Thomas J. Hoyt Remembers . . .

From the Stillwater News-Press

August 18, 1946

Probably no living person knows the history of Stillwater as well as Thomas J. Hoyt, 524 Hester, pioneer resident and member of the original town-site company which first located in Stillwater in 1889.

Hoyt has lived in Stillwater 57 of his 81 years. He was born in Winfield, Cowley County, Kansas. His two sons live in Stillwater, Gene, chief of police, and Raymond, of civil service.

Tom was a carpenter—building several houses in Stillwater in the early days and has bought and sold much real estate. He has had a colorful life, having been elected chief of police three times and was sheriff of Payne County from 1910-15.

He married Julia Jardot, April 22, 1897, and the two have been happily together since.

The period he spent as sheriff offered few idle hours as he and his deputies, Joe Floyd and Bill Dove, waged a continuous battle against the boot-leggers and gangsters. Prohibition came in with statehood in 1907 and its effect placed a heavy burden on the sheriff's office.

"Cushing and Drumright were the hotspots in those days," Hoyt stated, "and we were constantly making trips to those tough towns."

In 1915 he had the Maxwell-Buick agency in Stillwater and continued in this business until 1933. Since that time he has worked for himself, dealing in real estate.

Hoyt, still very active for his age, remembers well the year of 1886 when he first came to this territory on hunting trips.

"We would come in covered wagons and camp and hunt for from 4-6 weeks and then would return to our home in Kansas. There was nothing here but prairie land at that time."

In 1889 Hoyt was chosen on a committee of nine from the Winfield Townsite Company to go into the Indian Territory to locate a townsite that would later become a county seat.

The committee travelled into the territory with two prairie schooners, three saddle horses and the usual company camp equipment. "The first stop made for a location was three miles west of Stillwater where the Barney Heiring service station is now located [the northwest corner of Highway 51 and Country Club Road].*

"We found some Sooners who had already staked claims," Hoyt remembered, "so we went farther east where the late Robert A. Lowry had a claim. Lowry, David Husband, Sanford Duncan, J. H. Barnes and Frank Duck, each gave 40 acres to the townsite company and we also filed on 80 acres laying west of West Street and south of 6."

"Each person who drew for lots, deposited a small sum of money to keep the organization going, and paying \$1.25 to the government." he said. "They were allowed to draw one 25 to 40 foot lot for business and two of the same for residence." Before the drawing, June 11, 1889, blocks were reserved for the court house, and the Alcott, Lincoln and Jefferson schools. The block where the south high school now stands was reserved for a city park.

Each church that was then represented in Stillwater, was given a building site. They were the Presbyterian, Methodist, United Brethern and Catholic.

Hoyt said Stillwater had a bitter fight in getting Stillwater named the county seat. Stillwater was three miles south of the county line and Payne Center was three miles south of Stillwater. "The latter tried hard to get the county seat located there," Hoyt said.

"F. A. Hutto was sent to Washington, D. C., by the townsite company to get territory added to the county on the north, thereby centering the county seat. He succeeded in getting Rose, Glencoe, Eden, Walnut and Rock townships added to the county on the north," Hoyt stated, "but after the Cherokee Strip was opened, Rock and Walnut were given to Noble County by the legislator's constitutional convention." Perry was made county seat of Noble County and succeeded in getting these two townships added to their county.

"The first person who died in the new Stillwater township was 'a lady named Pierce.' She lived with her brother on the lot where the Goodholm Flour and Feed Store [Stillwater Mill] now stands. She was buried, first on the lot where the Presbyterian Church now is located, but soon was removed to the present cemetery.

The fight for the location of Oklahoma A&M College in Stillwater was a colorful one. "Kingfisher had applied for the penitentiary and we had applied for the college. The two city legislators traded their votes in order to assure both, but the El Reno legislators were waging a fight against Stillwater getting A&M.

The veteran resident chuckled as he reviewed the facts that led to Stillwater becoming the home of A&M, "The El Reno man was giving us lots of trouble in the legislature. Something had to be done. The El Reno man was very fond of whiskey so the Stillwater lobbyists nominated Frank Ellis for the job of getting rid of the El Reno legislator. Ellis, 83, still living in Stillwater, was a cow-

boy employed at the Z.V. ranch. He rode his horse into Guthrie, then the state capital, and with a ten dollar bill furnished by Bob Lowry, proceeded to get the opponent intoxicated. The El Reno gentleman was not in attendance at the legislature that afternoon, the bill came up locating the college here."

"The bill was passed but it provided for Stillwater to float a \$10,000 bond issue before it became a law. Valuations were discouraging and even after doubling and tripling them the situation still looked bad.

"They even valued the markers in the cemetery, but it was still a failure. So in order to float the bond the holders of lots were required to raise \$35 a lot to put the bond over. They still lacked \$325 so they borrowed that amount from the Stillwater Farmers and Merchants Bank. They paid the bank back by collecting a fee from each saloon keeper for a license.

"Each person who paid \$35 was allowed to file a claim against the city and the city issued warrants to pay them back.

"Even after that was done the college had no buildings. But the Presbyterian Church was turned over to the officials and the first class where the city warehouse now stands.

As enrollment increased the north and south Methodist churches and later the United Brethern were used for classes.

"The city was growing now and felt rather independent, so after 12 years of hauling merchandise by teams of horses and wagons from Mulhall, Orlando and Perry, they felt they should have a railroad procuring right of way. The Santa Fe finally came here.

"We figured we were the industrial center of the south so we thought it would be easy to get the

Frisco, also, to come through Stillwater. However, the next thing we knew the railroad had slipped down Black Bear Creek through Pawnee and we realized we didn't have the prestige we thought we had. We never did obtain the Frisco.

"The first mail was obtained through the Sac and Fox Indian Agency, now in Lincoln County north of Stroud, but the route was soon changed to the Pawnee Indian Agency, now Pawnee County. A boy named Reese Lester rode a pony to Pawnee twice a week to get Stillwater's mail.

Stillwater's first water system was a well at the end of 8th Avenue, on the bank of Boomer Creek. Bert and Oran Keller carried the water from the well to supply the town. When the grass wore off Main Street, a dam was put across the creek near the well, a chain was attached to a horse-powered lift and water was pumped into a large sprinkling wagon for sprinkling the streets.

The next water system was two large cisterns at the corner of 8th and 9th and Main. They were walled with brick and they were filled with water hauled from the creek. This served the city in case of fires.

"The first fire equipment was a cart and some long ladders with hooks on them, drawn by the men. Finally, however, horses drew the wagons.

"Turnips--cooked in every way, boiled, baked and made into kraut--was the most popular diet during the fall and winter of 1889-90. Venison, wild turkeys, prairie chickens and wild ranch hogs were also available and sometimes we ate unbranded cattle.

"The Pawnee, Otoe and Sac and Fox Indians provided the merchants with quite a bit of business. They were paid every three months by [the government. The] merchants would find out the date of the payments and would give the tribes a beef and a hog to

barbeque while they were camped at the Fair Grounds, then located south of Washington school.

"All the Indians wore blankets and about 300 or 350 came and camped as long as their money lasted. After they spent their money some of them received credit but their chiefs would make them pay all their bills the next pay day.

"An Indian trader kept a supply house for the Indian trade only, and since he lost the Indian trade to the local merchants, he complained to the Indian department in Washington, D.C. The Indian department made the Indians trade with the Indian agent, therefore causing our merchants to lose their business.

"The outlaws were well known here. Alex Campbell was president of the Farmers and Merchants Bank and when the outlaws came to town he would lock up the bank and go home, regardless of the time of day. They would ride into town and shoot things up, sometimes just in a playful mood, no harm to anyone unless they were newcomers. It would 'scare em to death,' Hoyt laughed.

"Stillwater's first sidewalk was built in front of the Swope building, where Cooksey's grocery store [9th and Main] now stands. It had short wood blocks put into the ground with oak joists and planks for the floor.

"The Swope building was the first two-story frame building. The first floor was occupied as a gambling house, while the school was on the second floor. Every Saturday night there would be a magic lantern show or a dance in the building. Rev. Foster, who built the first United Brethern Church also held Sunday School there. After the room was used for the United States federal court.

"The first sawmill was located east of the Washington school and was operated by 'a Mr. Millikan.'

He had cottonwood and some oak timber. Bob Randle also made cottonwood shingles in his shingle mill.

"There was a whiskey still and a Government bonded warehouse about 700 yards east of the city disposal plant, that produced corn and rye whiskey and peach brandy. There was also a wholesale liquor store on the lot where Shannon's now grind feed.

"Joe Marefield was the first publisher of the democrat paper, while Dan Murphy first published the republican Gazette. 'A Mr. Walker' was publisher of the populist paper and E. B. Guthrie published the paper called the Hawk.

"Stillwater was a typical frontier town. It was mostly a bald prairie, a few trees growing on Stillwater and Boomer creeks. We set dates for the planting of trees. It was the duty of every citizen to plant at least one tree on the school ground, park or court house lawn. This was well carried out by the residents. It was called picnic or community day and everyone walked to one of the creeks, dug trees about the size of hoe handles and transplanted them.

"Some of the trees now standing were planted then. The hack berry and elm tree on the curb around Dr. E. L. Hughes' office 7th and Lewis was planted in the spring of 1890 by Charles Knoblock, the trees around Dr. L. A. Cleverdon's office and home was planted by F. J. Wilkoff, member of the Winfield townsite company and first attorney to locate here."

"It was a wonderful experience in the acquiring of Stillwater. It is a pleasure to be able to see how the city and the college has developed," Hoyt said.

*Current addresses furnished by the Stillwater Chamber of Commerce and Gene Hoyt.

Historic Old Central

by Kenny L. Brown and LeRoy H. Fischer

On June 15, 1894, excitement ran high in Stillwater, Oklahoma Territory. The citizens of the small town proudly anticipated the third annual commencement-like ceremonies of the Oklahoma Territorial Agricultural and Mechanical College. The embryonic school still had no graduates but the faculty and students were to hold the yearly program in the assembly hall of the freshly-completed permanent College Building, where the first class would graduate on June 10, 1896. At last the dream of the people was realized. They now had a large substantial brick structure which assured them that the college would remain in Stillwater. Later, the town newspaper, the Eagle-Gazette, vividly described the scene: "Whose heart was so dead to pride as to refuse to respond with thrills of pleasure at the sight of our beautiful new and imposing college building, brilliantly lighted from basement to dome...reflecting bright gleams of radiance through the dusky evening, making a background of the cloudy horizon."¹

This emotional expression concerning the building was understandable. For well over three years the citizens had fought to establish the Oklahoma Territorial Agricultural and Mechanical College in their town. From the beginning, the College Building symbolized the success of their efforts. Subsequent buildings dwarfed the original structure,

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later known as Old Central. Yet, its symbolic importance did not diminish. To generations of students, Old Central represented the pioneer spirit which led to the founding and early development of the college. As the building aged and deteriorated and as it became a safety and fire hazard, many people suggested razing it. Others responded with the desire to save Old Central as a monument to pioneer education. The ensuing and long-fought struggle for the preservation of Old Central resulted in its also becoming a symbol of its own survival.

The attempt to establish the Oklahoma Territorial Agricultural and Mechanical College at Stillwater began shortly after the settlement of the town in 1889. In that year, Boomers established the municipality when the government opened the Oklahoma region to non-Indians. Typical of the westward movement, the small towns created at this time vied for the various institutions which the government would inevitably establish. These included the county seats, the territorial capitol, the prison and the various colleges, all usually provided in the early development. The residents of Stillwater simultaneously sought the county seat of Payne County and the territorial agricultural college for their new home. They decided upon the college at several town meetings just prior to the opening of the territorial legislature.²

The governing assembly of Oklahoma Territory convened in Guthrie on August 26, 1890. Almost immediately Stillwater gained an advantage when George W. Gardenshire, a Populist representing Payne County, obtained the presidency of the Council, or upper house. At once, he began campaigning to designate the college for Stillwater, making a deal with Democrats who wanted to move the capitol from Guthrie to Oklahoma City. This coalition had little effect due to the fierce competition in the legislature for these institutions. Gardenshire and the Payne County representatives in the lower house, as a result, were forced to introduce no less than six

bills trying to secure the agricultural college. Ultimately, after much opposition from legislators and governors alike, "House Bill 82" passed the legislature. It allowed the establishment of the Oklahoma Territorial Agricultural and Mechanical College in Payne County. Signed by the governor on December 24, 1890, this bill was only one advancement in the contest to acquire the school for Stillwater.³

The townspeople soon discovered that the provisions of the bill called for several sacrifices on their part. They would have to issue \$10,000 in bonds at five percent interest to pay for the first permanent college building, they would have to donate at least eighty acres of land for the school and they would have to compete with at least seven other towns in Payne County which were also eligible for the college. Probably the most troublesome problem was the issuance of the building bonds. On February 3, 1891, the county government held an election calling for county support of the bonds with the understanding that the college would be located at Stillwater. This proposal lost 776 to 375. In response, the people of Stillwater went into action to pass the bonds with support only from the town. First, it was necessary to incorporate the town before the bonds could be issued. When this process was completed in April, 1891, the town fathers set May 4 as the election day for a new bond proposal. This new question passed 132 to 0. Only the sale of the bonds remained before this legal requirement would be complete.⁴

Meanwhile, the residents also turned their attention to finding suitable land to locate the college. Eventually, Alfred Newton Jarrell, Charles A. Vreeland, Oscar Morse and Frank Duck offered portions of their land totaling two hundred acres. They received little restitution for this land which they had only recently acquired. As great as was their sacrifice, it did not insure the establishment of the college. The proposed institution also attracted

the attention of citizens of other towns in Payne County, particularly those of Perkins. By law, a commission, appointed by the governor to decide the location of the college, visited Payne County in June, 1891. After much persuasion from residents of Perkins and Stillwater, the commission ultimately chose Stillwater as the site.⁵

The only remaining factor in obtaining the college was the sale of the building bonds which had been approved by the citizenry of Stillwater. Although classes began at a local church in December, 1891, the bonds would not be sold for some time. Early in 1892, a new development shocked the residents. An investigation revealed that the bonds were illegal because the town's property valuation was not sufficient to support the bonds, the law requiring \$140,000 more than the original \$110,000 assessment. The resourceful and determined leaders of Stillwater responded by reevaluating the property. Surprisingly, a miraculous growth had occurred, and Stillwater's value had become adequate to support the \$10,000 in bonds. Only July 26 a new election made the issuance of the bonds legal.⁶

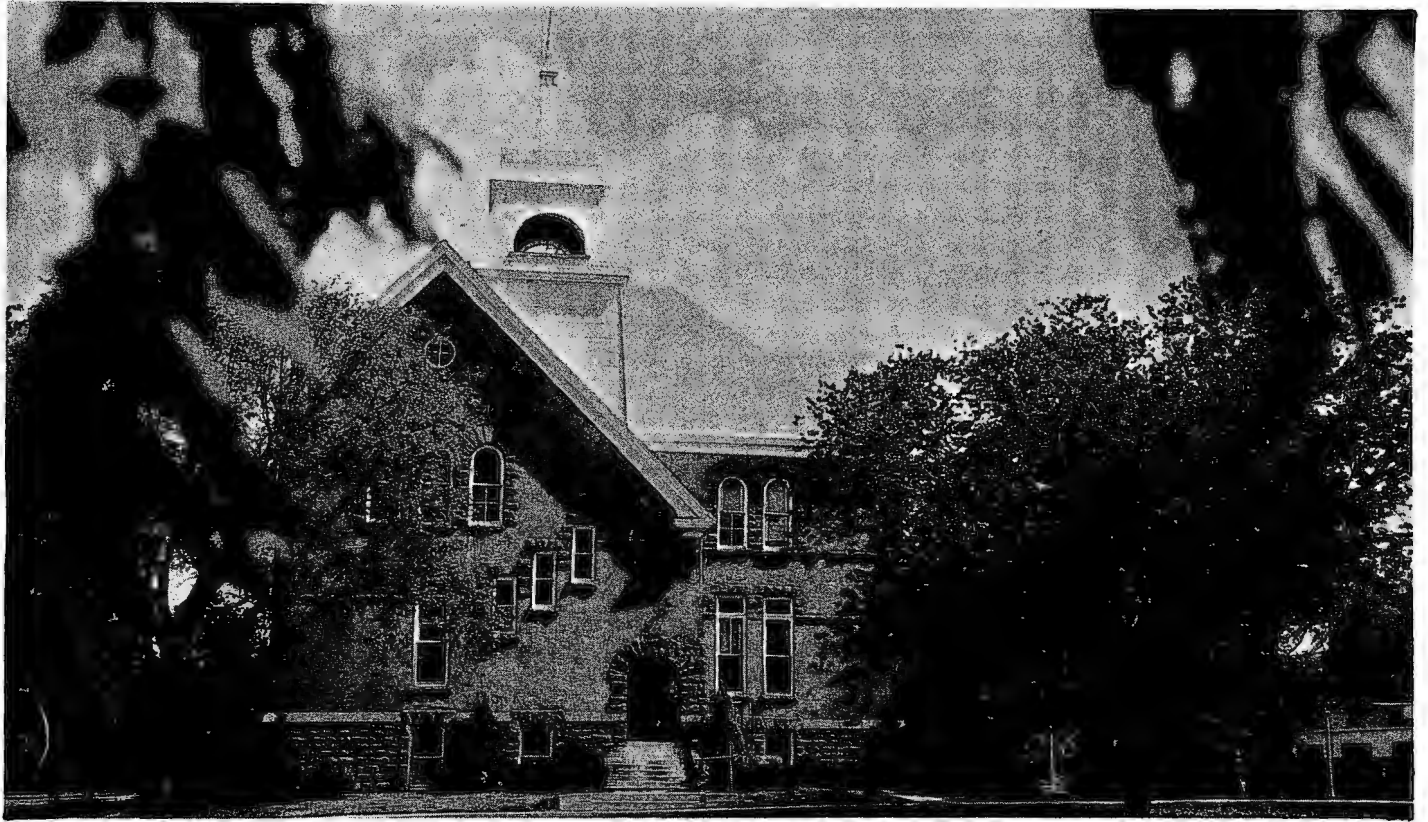
Several months followed before the supporters of the college could sell the bonds, because the economy of the region and the nation was faltering. After one unsuccessful attempt to sell the bonds to a Missouri investment firm, Joseph W. McNeal of Guthrie bought the bonds for only \$7,825. This payment was \$2,175 below par value, but it was a necessary inducement during this period of hard times. To make up this discrepancy, Stillwater's government sold warrants which brought the total to \$10,000. At least the townspeople had made the final sacrifice to obtain the college. The territorial legislature soon added \$15,000 to the fund, and on June 20, 1893, the board of regents let the contract for the building to H. Ryan of Fort Smith, Arkansas, for \$14,948.⁷

Almost an entire year passed before contractor

Ryan completed the new building which would ultimately be known as Old Central. Unfortunately, a controversy over the allocation of funds partially caused this delay. Because Stillwater had no railroad, transportation was also a problem. The nearest railroad stations were at Perry and Orlando where Ryan and his associates received the building materials and hauled them to Stillwater in wagons. A local brickmaker provided the bricks, while the sandstone came from a quarry near Perry. Several students helped to construct the structure. As a general rule, the college required that all male students work for the school at least two hours a day at ten cents an hour. In all, the contractor hired nearly fifty men to complete the college building.⁸

When completed, almost \$10,000 had been spent on the equipment and furnishing of the building, bringing the total cost to about \$25,000. It was indeed a noteworthy accomplishment for the tiny frontier town of Stillwater. The finished product pleased the overflow crowd attending the dedication on June 15, 1894. The Stillwater Eagle-Gazette stated: "The beauty of the outside appearance was almost forgotten when the magnificent assembly room was entered." One observer referred to the building as an "imposing and commodious edifice."⁹

The highly-acclaimed facility consisted of a basement and two floors. The foundation of native red sandstone surrounding the basement formed a wall eight feet high, two feet thick and one foot below the basement floor. Red brick walls extended above this foundation, with the windows and doors faced and capped with native red sandstone. Two towers ornamented the roof, one a bell tower, the other a cupola used for ventilation. The gables were covered with cedar shingles and the roof with preformed metal shingles. The whole structure was approximately sixty-seven feet square. The main entrance, on the level of the first floor, was on the south, and a door on the northwest also opened to a long stairway.¹⁰



Old Central

The structure contained sixteen rooms. In the basement was the chemistry laboratory, chemistry classroom, a gas machine, various storerooms and the furnace room housing the building's central, hot-water heating system. The first floor contained two classrooms, a reception room, the library room and the president's office. The second floor housed two classrooms, two apparatus rooms, a storeroom and the assembly hall. The assembly hall was forty by fifty feet in size. Interior stairways served the basement, the second floor, the attic and the belfry. A narrow hallway ran north and south through the basement, a wide hallway north and south through the first floor, but the rooms on the second floor fronted on the assembly hall.¹¹

In the autumn of 1894, classwork began in the building. Even from the beginning, the facility was overcrowded, for the building housed the entire college, including the administrative and faculty offices; the college library; the preparatory school; and the departments of natural science, physics, chemistry, horticulture, agriculture, mathematics, bookkeeping, language and literature, history and political science, logic, psychology and sociology and military science and tactics. Faculty members were generally pleased with the furnishings of desks, chairs, cabinets, cases and fixtures, which were "plain but well finished, suited to the building and their respective uses and durable of their kind. No public institution in the Territory is now more thoroughly or better furnished."¹²

The first college catalogue published after the completion of the building emphasized that each department was provided with abundant equipment and apparatus, such as models of flowers and seeds, microscopes, charts, herbariums, models of insects, rock specimens, thermometers, photographic equipment, test tubes, prisms, a hydraulic press, an assaying outfit and other necessities. Thus, it is not surprising that the students, faculty and townspeople

with dozens of letters supporting the continued existence of the original building, and some recommended that it be used as a museum. At this time the idea of preserving Old Central became well established. During the 1960s the building was again upgraded, and in the latter part of that decade the final and successful move was made to establish the structure as a historic site and museum.¹⁸

The 1971 session of the Oklahoma Legislature appropriated \$25,000 to the Oklahoma Historical Society for the restoration of Old Central. That same year the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Board of Regents for the Oklahoma State University signed a fifty year lease contract providing for the preservation, restoration and operation of Old Central as a museum by the Oklahoma Historical Society. Finally, on July 27, the Secretary of the Interior placed Old Central on the National Register of Historic Places under authority of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. State funds for the preservation and restoration of Old Central are being matched with federal monies. State appropriations will later be used for the development, maintenance and operation of Old Central as a museum.¹⁹

The assurance of Old Central's future is of great benefit in saving the heritage of Stillwater, Oklahoma State University and Oklahoma. The building was the answer to the hopes of the townspeople and first students for a permanent structure. It is the only landmark on the campus known to all former students and graduates. It is also a symbol of the attempts of many alumni and students who desired to preserve it as a historic site. Old Central is more than brick and mortar, for it reflects in many ways the very spirit and soul of Oklahoma State University.

NOTES

¹Eagle-Gazette (Stillwater), June 21, 1894.

²Philip Reed Rulon, Oklahoma State University: Since 1890 (Stillwater, Oklahoma: Oklahoma State University Press, 1975), pp. 2-4.

³Ibid., pp. 5-7; Freeman Miller, The Founding of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, Oklahoma: Hinkel and Sons, 1928), pp. 2-5.

⁴Ibid., pp. 6-9; Rulon, Oklahoma State University, pp. 8-9.

⁵Ibid., pp. 10-11; Miller, The Founding of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, pp. 6-7.

⁶Ibid., pp. 18-19; Rulon, Oklahoma State University, pp. 11-12.

⁷Ibid., pp. 12-14; Miller, The Founding of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, pp. 20-22.

⁸Ibid., pp. 22-23; Gazette (Stillwater), August 25, 1893, July 24, 1914.

⁹Eagle-Gazette, June 21, 1894.

¹⁰Gazette, August 25, 1893.

¹¹LeRoy H. Fischer, "Historic Old Central to Serve Again: Preserved for Posterity," Oklahoma State Alumnus, Vol. XII, No. 8 (November, 1971), p. 6.

¹²"Report of the Faculty for the year 1893-94," Report of Agricultural and Mechanical College, Exhibit "E" of the Governor's Message to the Third Legislative Assembly of Oklahoma (n.p., January 8, 1895), pp. 6-7.

¹³Fourth Annual Catalogue of the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College: Session of 1894-95 (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory: Oklahoma Print, 1895), pp. 43-114.

¹⁴Report of the President of the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College to the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture for the Year ending June 30, 1894 (Guthrie, Oklahoma Territory: Representative Print, 1895), p. 7.

¹⁵Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College: Thirty-third General Catalog, 1923-1924 (Stillwater, Oklahoma: 1924), p. 27.

¹⁶Orange and Black (Stillwater, Oklahoma), November 26, 1913 and October 4, 1915.

¹⁷Daily O'Collegian (Stillwater, Oklahoma), October 29, 1925 and February 8, 1927.

¹⁸Berlin B. Chapman, "Old Central of Oklahoma State University," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XLII, No. 3 (Autumn, 1964), pp. 281-289.

¹⁹Fischer, "Historic Old Central to Serve Again: Preserved for Posterity," Oklahoma State Alumnus, Vol. XII, p. 4; Federal Register, Vol. XLI, No. 28 (February 10, 1976), p. 6008; Kent Ruth, Window on the Past (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Oklahoma Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 66-67.

News and Notes

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.

Membership in the Payne County Historical Society is open to anyone interested in the collection and preservation of Payne County history. Dues are payable on a calendar basis, and are \$5.00. Members receive copies of the Review free, but additional copies may be purchased for \$2.00 per copy.

* * *

Everett E. Hudiburg, author of Beside the Stillwater: A Fire Protection Chronicle, 1885-1977, has made several copies of his book available to the Society. These will be included as a bonus for new memberships for the 1981-82 subscription year. Anyone else wanting a copy of the book should contact Mr. Hudiburg at 307 N. Donaldson in Stillwater or call 372-0459. The Society very much appreciates Mr. Hudiburg's contribution and his presentation at the March general meeting.

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The Oklahoma Image Historical Photographic Exhibit may be seen in the Gardiner Art Gallery on the Oklahoma State University campus from April 4 to April 23.

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Two sources of materials on Payne County history preserved at the Edmun Low Library at Oklahoma State University and at the Stillwater Public Library are Clarence Bassler's Oklahoma Scrapbook and Dr. Berlin B. Chapman's Early History of Stillwater and Vicinity. Bassler's Oklahoma Scrapbook is a miscellaneous collection of newspaper clippings on a variety of topics, people, and events associated with Payne County history. The clippings were compiled over several decades beginning in the 1940s. Dr. Chapman's Early History of Stillwater and Vicinity is a collection of photostats of original documents preserved in the National Archives. The Scrapbook is on microfilm at both libraries; the Early History may be used in the Special Collections and Map Room at the OSU library.

Both Bassler and Chapman were members of the original Payne County Historical Society.

PAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING
March 5, 1981

General meeting was held on above date in Stillwater Public Library with 20 persons in attendance.

Treasurer reported \$328.17 in account with membership of 150. Julie Couch reported that in addition to a publicity booth on April 25 (Run for the Arts), we have been asked to be tour guides for several homes that will be open. Bob Donaldson reported that George Berry is willing to donate the Pleasant Valley School and some land to move it on.

Motions were made, seconded, and carried that minutes be placed in the REVIEW and that an attendance book be purchased for each member to sign at each meeting.

President David Baird and Bob Donaldson reported they had toured the old bank building and that a request to the City Commission for space for the Society would be in order. It was agreed that members should attend meeting to show support.

Everett Hudiburg gave a presentation on the changes in fire apparatus in Stillwater.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Carlson, Secretary

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