

Payne County Historical Review



PAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume XXXI No. 2

2008

Contents

First Methodist Church: The War Years.....	3
<i>Will Paine</i>	
Browned New Potatoes	7
<i>Edna Eaton Willson</i>	
New Books About Billy MGinty and Otto Gray	10
<i>Carla Chlouber</i>	
Setting Up Shop in Marena.....	13
<i>Ward Hays</i>	
Annual Report.....	16
<i>Adelia Hanson</i>	

The *Payne County Historical Review*, P.O. Box 2262, Stillwater, OK 74076, is published once a year by the Payne County Historical Society. The editor is Carla Chlouber. The Review is distributed without additional charge to the members of the Payne County Historical Society. Single issues, when available, may be purchased for \$3.50 each.

The *Payne County Historical Review* welcomes readers' comments, news, or requests for information. Family histories, photographs, or maps are also welcome. No payment is made for articles published in the *Review*. For more information about the Payne County Historical Society, visit the Society's web site at:

www.cowboy.net/non-profit/pchs/

Editor's Note

We hope that you enjoy reading the *Payne County Historical Review*. The history of Payne County is fascinating, with hardworking settlers, visionary businessmen, dedicated educators, and fearsome outlaws all taking part in our past. And that's just a small part of Payne County's history. There is enough historical material in Payne County to publish the *Review* every month, if we had the resources. But we don't, and so we are changing our publication's schedule from twice a year to an annual basis.

A *Review* published once a year will have more pages and more Payne County history. We hope, too, that we will have more authors, with many of you submitting family stories, school histories, histories of local organizations, and much more.

The deadline for submitting articles for the 2009 *Review* is July 1, 2009. Articles may be submitted to the Payne County Historical Society's address, which is P.O. Box 2262, Stillwater, OK 74076. Manuscripts may also be sent to Carla Chlouber, P.O. Box 1852, Stillwater, OK 74076. You may also e-mail questions or articles to Cchlouber@aol.com.

Carla Chlouber



Stillwater's First Methodist Church: The War Years

by

Will Paine

Stillwater's North and South Methodists united in 1939 to form The Methodist Church. In June of that year the South congregation in Stillwater merged with the North church at 7th and Duck, trying to feel at home in a new space with another congregation twice as large. Nineteen forty-one found a new pastor, Joe Bowers, working to unite two groups of people, combining two membership rolls and two financial systems.

Christmas of that year brought the stunning reality of war. Rev. Bowers wrote in his letter to the church members, "As Christians we failed Him some twenty five

years ago and because of this failure, many are being called upon to pay the supreme sacrifice. Within the next decade (beginning now) we are to be given another chance. It will take the best we all have of thought, of sacrifice and of action to avoid another such failure. . . . Let us pray that somehow before the coming of another Christmas Day the world may find the beginning of the reign of the Prince of Peace.”

The church records reveal the effort by many people to keep the church functioning during the disruption caused by the war. Dollars were tight, in part the result of the wage and price controls in place to hold down inflation. A great many families in the church made a pledge of no more than \$26 a year—or 50¢ per week. Glen Brinson’s pledge was “use of my car for church.” Mr. C. A. Melton sent a year-end letter to the church treasurer: “Our pledge to the church for the year just ending was \$100.00 to be paid in cash and otherwise. To me it was all cash but to the Treasurer it was mostly otherwise.” He enclosed an itemized list of expenses he had paid on behalf of the church, with a check for \$3.63 for the balance. There must have been weeks when there was not much money in the church’s account, and he had simply paid some of the bills.

Betty Rutledge was a college student. Since she was the only member of the Ripley church who could play the piano, she went home every weekend. She remembers that every Sunday morning one of the men from the Stillwater church showed up to conduct the church service. The same men—on rationed gasoline—enabled the Methodist churches in Glencoe and Pawnee to stay open.

The women’s organizations of the two churches quickly came together to become the Woman’s Society of Christian Service. They were effective in community service and war work, such as Red Cross training, blood drives and courses in nutrition. The following are some of their more interesting reports:

1942. “Books for U.S.O., U.P.A., white and negro nurseries. Sent cookies to soldiers. Served refreshments to Navy men at Recreation Center.”

1943. “Assisted with the entertainment of service people and students on Saturday nights. . . contributed \$50.00 toward supervised negro recreation program carried on for ten weeks during the summer. . . Visited the County



1940s Bible School

Farm and sent cards and gifts to inmates at holiday season and birthdays.”

1944. “Sent \$55.47 worth of supplies to a needy Indian preacher and his family... Due to inflation in China an emergency call came from the Woman’s Division for cash supplies for the feeding of missionaries still in China. \$218 was sent in answer to this call.” When we remember the value of a dollar at that time, we can see that the women raised large sums indeed.

Even during the war, mundane problems persisted. The Board minutes for 1944 report: “Earl Gray spoke of the stains from the backs of the pews, getting upon the clothing of those seated therein. This matter has been up for discussion before but thus far no remedy has been found.” And the ongoing concern, “repairs being made in the basement of the church.”

But also in the minutes for 1944: “Elton Smith is expecting to leave for Army

service within a very short time. Our prayers and good wishes go with him.” A search of church records finds that Elton and Maurine Smith joined the Methodist Church South in 1938 and presented a baby for baptism in 1939. A pencilled note identifies him as “Prof. A&M.” He and his wife were serving as advisors to the high school youth group when he was called up.

Browned New Potatoes

by

Edna Eaton Wilson

Mrs. W.O. Eyler of 136 Orchard Lane is one of Stillwater's pioneer mothers who has lived hereabout since the beginning of the city. She was Mary Duck, one of the family for whom Duck Street was named.

The Eylers were gardeners and vegetable growers from long ago, as the sale of fresh berries and vegetables was a source of income used to help rear and educate six sons and daughters.

Mrs. Eyler was famed as "a cook par excellent" as folk said in those days, and she still keeps her hand in occasionally with the range and the skillet.

Asked about recipes for vegetable cookery, Mrs. Eyler laughed, "Oh, I never bothered about recipes, I just fixed 'm!" But the truth is, everyone who ate at her table enjoyed the ways she "fixed" food. Here we give, among other things, the way Mrs. Eyler "fixed" browned new potatoes.

First, dig the potatoes right from under the vines, and wash three times to be sure all the gritty soil is gone. Scrape off the skins and wash again, and cook in salted water until the potatoes are tender, about a half hour. Have some good shortening hot in a skillet and dip the potatoes from the boiling water with a slotted spoon or drain the water from the potatoes and put them into the hot fat. We used to use sweet bacon dripping, good sweet lard, or even butter, but any good cooking oil will do. Turn the potatoes with a spatula; keep turning until all sides are a nice brown. Lift from the skillet and drain a minute on absorbent paper. Place on a hot platter and sprinkle lightly with pepper.

For a delightful way to fix creamed new peas here is another of Mrs. Eyler's recipes. The peas may be cooked with or without new potatoes.

Pick and hull garden peas as soon as the peas are large enough to eat. Wash and boil in salted water to cover. If peas and potatoes are wanted, put in new potatoes when the peas are put on to cook. Of course, the potatoes have been washed and the skins scraped and washed off before being added to the peas in the kettle. Boil the vegetables until tender. Make a cream sauce by stirring together three tablespoons of flour with $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cupful of cold water until a smooth paste is formed. Pour the mixture into the vegetables, and cook until a sauce is formed. Pour this mixture into the boiling vegetables, and cook until the cream sauce is thick and cooked. Season with a lump of fresh butter.

Another thing my family liked was farm style green beans. Pick, wash, snap and break a quantity of green beans. Put into a kettle. (We used a big old iron pot, and we cooked on a wood-burning range.) Put in a quart of water, and a chunk of good smoked ham or a chunk of bacon, or a ham nock. Cover with a lid and boil at least an hour and a half. Sprinkle salt on the beans to season and add water occasionally so the beans do not get too dry. Now put in as many cleaned new potatoes as your family will eat for a meal, right on top of the beans, and cover after sprinkling a little salt on the potatoes. Continue cooking for a half hour or longer after the potatoes have been added. The potatoes cook in the steam from the beans.

With the green bean dinner we often served corn bread, fresh butter, and fresh dewberries with cream for dessert.

“We ate lots of salads when our gardens were on, too,” Mrs. Eyster says. “But I don’t believe we called them salads. We just said ‘green stuff’ and ate ‘em.”

Wilted lettuce was made by putting salt, pepper, and a little vinegar on the cut-up lettuce, and pouring over all the hot bacon fat, and stirring quickly until the lettuce wilted.

Fresh cabbage slaw was made by adding cream, sugar, salt, pepper and vinegar to finely cut or shredded fresh garden cabbage.

Then there was corn! Picked quickly husked and silked, and put on in freshly

boiling water and cooked five to seven minutes and served hot with fresh butter, pepper and salt!

Only those who have their own gardens can know the truly fresh flavor of vegetables that are prepared and cooked within minutes of being taken from the ground, stalk or vine.

But in these days where there are canned or frozen vegetables always to be had, with shipped in “fresh” vegetables at almost any time of year, folks miss a lot of the flavor we used to savor in our seasonal vegetables.

Editor’s Note: Edna Eaton Wilson was a Payne County writer who wrote for local newspapers. This undated article was in a scrapbook donated to the Sheerar Museum in Stillwater by Lawrence Gibbs. The newspaper article is probably from the 1960s, with Mrs. Eyler recalling what it was like in Stillwater’s early days. The article is courtesy of the **Stillwater NewsPress**.



Sitting in front are Billy McGinty, on the left, and Otto Gray on the right.

New Books About Billy McGinty and Otto Gray

by

Carla Chlouber

Oklahoma's famed humorist Will Rogers said, "I never met a man I didn't like." He could have added the following words to that statement: "And I never met a man who didn't like Billy McGinty."

Will Rogers knew his fellow Oklahoman and cowboy when both appeared on vaudeville, and he had a high opinion of Billy McGinty, as did everyone who knew him. Will did rope tricks and cracked jokes, and Billy rode broncos in Madison Square Garden and on vaudeville .

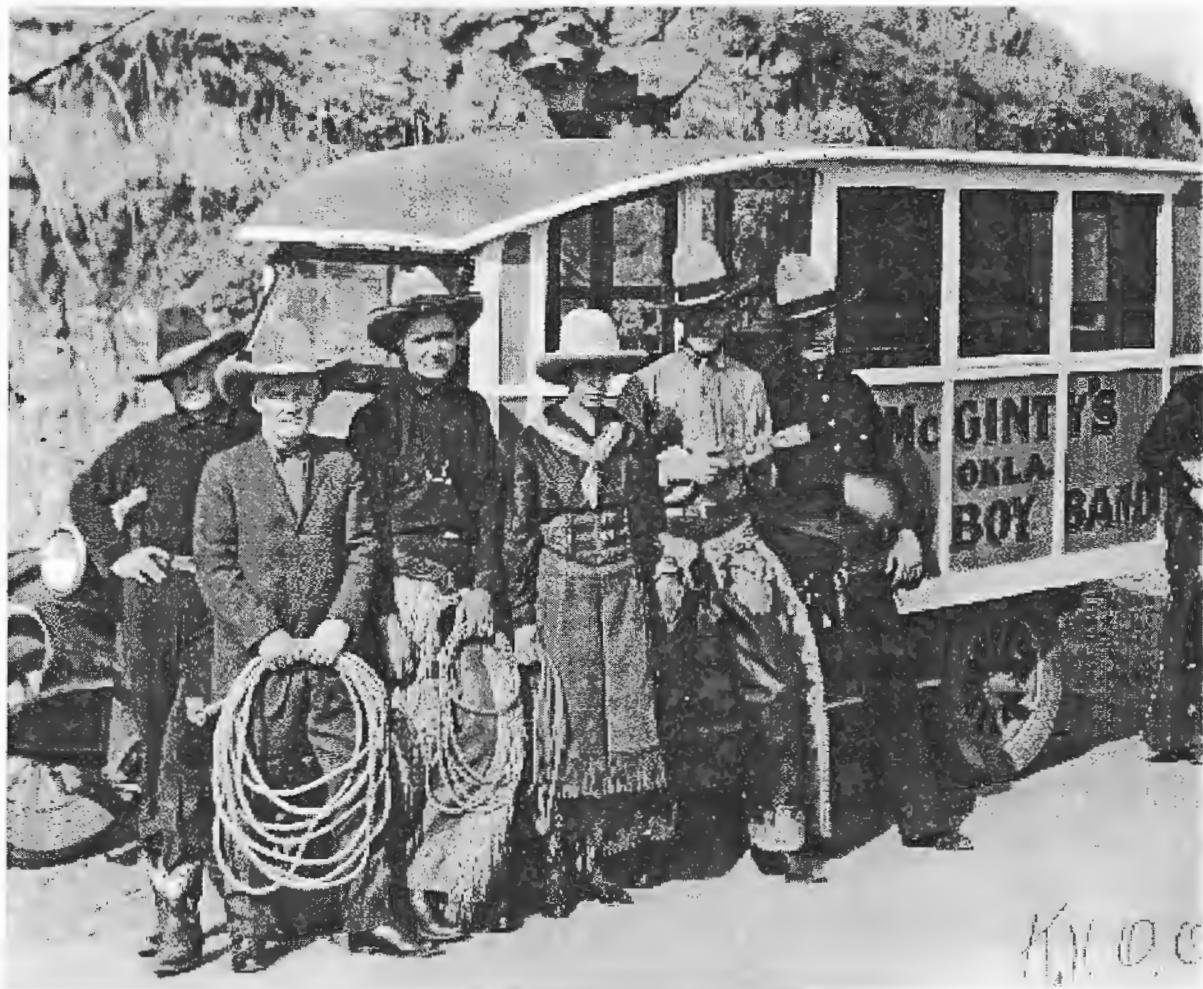
In 2008 two books about Ripley resident Billy McGinty were published. One of the books, *Oklahoma Rough Rider: Billy McGinty's Own Story*, was published by the University of Oklahoma Press. The book, based on Billy's own story as told to Payne County newsman Glenn Eycler in the 1930s, was edited by Jim Fulbright and Albert Stehno.

The other book about Billy McGinty published in 2008 is entitled *The Oklahoma Cowboy Band*. Written by Carla Chlouber and published by Arcadia Publishing, the book includes photographs and text covering the history of America's first western band to play over the radio and perform on vaudeville. Otto Gray, Billy McGinty's friend, played a crucial role in the history of the band.

Billy McGinty, whose family homesteaded near Ingalls, Oklahoma Territory, was recognized as one of the best bronc busters in the country. He was also the first cowboy to be filmed on a bucking horse. Before that, he was a Rough Rider with Teddy Roosevelt in the Spanish American War. After Teddy Roosevelt became president of the United States, he kept in touch with the Rough Riders, especially Billy McGinty, who was one of his favorites.

The Oklahoma Cowboy Band was first called Billy McGinty's Cowboy Band and Billy continued to give his name to the band for the next three years. His friend Otto Gray took over the management of the band after the first year, and in 1928 the band became Otto Gray and His Oklahoma Cowboys. The band was often called the Oklahoma Cowboy Band whether it was led by Billy McGinty or Otto Gray.

Gray's wife, Florence, was always called Mommy on stage. Their son, Owen, stayed with the band throughout its years of touring and performing in cities like Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Albany, Schenectady, and New York City. The Oklahoma Cowboy Band was the first



commercially successful western band on vaudeville, and the band inspired many imitators.

After Billy McGinty quit touring with the Cowboy Band, he and his wife, Molly, remained in Ripley, where they were highly respected members of the community. Otto Gray continued to perform on vaudeville until 1936, when he and Mommy returned to Stillwater, the town they had always called home.

Setting Up Shop in Marena

By

Ward Hays

Let's journey back to April 22, the day of the run into Indian Territory when Payne County and Stillwater were born. The shot was fired; the race was on. The starting line was about where the airport is now. It was 12 noon. The shot was fired; the race was on. The appointed moment had come. The blue coated soldier at the head said it was exactly noon sun time. Nervous horses took their cue from nervous riders and away they flew guided by the strong hands they knew. Out of the old and into the new. When this portion of Oklahoma was opened to settlement, of which Payne County was the very northern part, the people that made the run got homesteads. Many changes had to be made to what those people had been accustomed to in their former homes.

About the Author: Ward Hayes was a lifetime resident of Stillwater and a charter member of the Payne County Historical Society. He was an editor of *Cimarron Family Legends* and wrote for the Perkins Journal and Central Rural News.

"Setting Up Shop in Marena" is an excerpt from an article titled "Stillwater and Payne County Early Day Post Offices." "Stillwater and Payne County Early Day Post Offices" was published in the Volume III, Number 1, Summer 1982, issue of the *Payne County Historical Review*.

There were no roads to railroads, no stores, no post offices and only a few cattle trails.

My father and mother, eight uncles, one aunt, and my grandmother were among those people. There were thousands of people in this country soon after the opening. The people who made the run in 1889 brought what few things they could with them, like a few things to cook with or a handful of garden seed and a hand planter we called a corn jobber. But besides their courage, determination, and enthusiasm, they brought with them a deep faith in God. Religion was a common bond among the early settlers. That faith in God is still with most of us today.

After being turned down by the war board three times in World War I, I was ordered to the farm. The reason I was turned down was an irregular heart beat. So I came back to Stillwater and share-cropped with my uncle one mile north and four miles east of Coyle, Oklahoma. I made a good 30 acre cotton crop. When the cotton was all gathered, I bought out the last grocery shop in Marena, which was eight miles west and three miles south of Stillwater. Marena had three stores, a livery stable, blacksmith shop, cotton gin, school, and a church and a doctor at one time.

I went to college and took a short course in cream testing and opened up my grocery store on February 2, 1919. I left Stillwater at 8 a.m. with three wagon loads of groceries and tobacco. Snow had covered the ground for 30 days and the snow was from four inches to four feet deep in the roads in drifts. By noon we had made six miles, a little over half way to Marena. We fed the horses and ate some cookies and made coffee for ourselves and moved on. Darkness came before we got to Marena. Then we saw the lights in the store that I was moving into. Several people knew we were coming and they were there waiting for us with a warm fire and plenty of coffee. We pulled the freight wagons loaded with groceries up to the back door. Then the men put their horses in the

barn and fed them, came in the store, opened up some pork and beans, ate their lunch, threw their bed folls in the corner and went to bed. But no bed for me that night. Some dozen young men stayed and we put up on the shelves all the groceries and tobacco. I sold \$150.00 worth of goods that night, most of it was tobacco, as the snow had been too deep and the weather too cold for anyone to get to town.

I was soon doing a good business, buying cream twice a week. The cream I bought on Tuesday I paid for on Friday, and the cream bought on Friday I paid for on Tuesday. I had their checks ready when they brought the cream in. The cream went to Mulhall and on the fast train to Kansas City the same day I bought it. I had one country girl working in the store on Tuesdays and Fridays, the days I bought cream, I had two girls working. By June of 1919 I was buying from 80 to 100 ten gallons of cream a week. I paid 2 cents a pound more for cream than they did in Stillwater or Perry. That 2 cents was my commission. The money I made was by selling groceries to the people who brought in the cream.

Running the grocery store was a real joy, but next year the war was over and the Model T Fords were taking over the country. I saw the handwriting on the wall and sold out while business was still good and went to Hobart, Oklahoma, to work for Griner Electric Company.

Payne County Historical Society Annual Report

- The Payne County Historical Society met for its annual meeting February 2, 2008 at the Stillwater Public Library. President Jim Showalter presided for the election of new officers. There being no nominations from the floor, the slate suggested by the board was accepted: President, Adelia Hanson; Vice President, Barbara Dunn; Immediate Past President, Jim Showalter; Secretary--open position, Barbara and Adelia served to take minutes. Elvis Howell continued as treasurer and Carla Chlouber as editor of the *Payne County Historical Review*.
- The program for the meeting was the viewing of a video tape made from 1918 film footage of activities surrounding the Cushing Oil Field in its early years. This brought good memories and discussion from those attending who had their own stories to tell.
- In February the board learned that the Public Library, which has supplied the room that houses our archives since the new library was open, now wishes to end the arrangement by the end of 2008. We had to the end of the year to find another place and remove our furnishings and boxes of archival records. The need to move resulted in investigation and discussion for several months. Discussion with the assistant city manager did not result in any offering of other space.
- The Sheerar Museum made an offer when it became possible to create a storage room out of balcony space in its auditorium. The Historical Society Board accepted this offer by vote at their May meeting. The main benefit of having the archives in the museum building is **access**. Whereas in the library there were no open times for the public to visit because the Historical Society has no staff, the museum **does** have staff and maintains open hours every week. The museum would also **like** to catalogue the collection on its data base, if the membership agrees to **merge** the collection with the museum's collection. If this were done, the Payne County Historical Society Collection would still remain a distinct collection with its own name and storage space within the larger museum collection and database. In addition its contents would be searchable--once the cataloguing takes place.

- This museum storage space was built in August. In October Boy Scout Troupe 818 moved the shelving and tables to the new space. Board members Kent and Dorothy Carmain disassembled and then reassembled the bolt-together shelving for us. In December Boy Scout Troop 828 moved the boxes of archival material into the new space at the museum.
- The Historical Society board also nominates candidates for the historical division of the Stillwater Hall of Fame. This year we nominated two names from Stillwater's early history, William Abercrombie and James Mathews. The board also wrote letters in support of the Washington Irving Trail Museum's nomination of this area as a part of the Washington Irving Scenic Byway and the Cimarron River as a Scenic River. No action has been taken on the two programs.
- Besides the annual meeting program, there were three other public programs sponsored by the Historical Society. The first was in April: Publishing History by Doug Dollar, publisher of New Forms Press. In June, we organized a field trip to the Iowa Eagle Aviary. And in September we heard from Carla Chlouber, whose book about Otto Gray's Cowboy Band was newly out.
- Mrs. Chlouber is the editor of the Payne County *Historical Review*. She and the board are always interested in suggestions for topics. If you have some kind of Payne County related story or memoir, we'd love to be able to publish it.
- Dorothy and Kent Carmain have served their three years on this board and have declined a second term. One of their services for our board was to sit as representative on the board of the Pleasant Valley School.

Payne County Historical Society

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

Membership in the Payne County Historical Society is open to anyone interested in the collection and preservation of Payne County history. All members receive copies of the *Payne County Historical Review* free. In addition, the Society sponsors informative meetings and historical outings several times a year.

Yes, I want to be a member of the Payne County Historical Society. Enclosed is my check for:

- \$15.00 for Individual Membership
- \$25.00 for Family Membership
- \$20.00 for Institutional Membership
- \$100.00 for Life Membership

(Membership includes subscription to the *Payne County Historical Review*.)

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Mail to:

Payne County Historical Society
P.O. Box 2262
Stillwater, OK 74076



Payne County Historical Society
P.O. Box 2262, Stillwater, OK 74076