



## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame

**Donald E. Green and Marvin E. Kroeker**

by *Linda D. Wilson*

Since 1993 the Oklahoma Historical Society has annually honored up to four individuals, both professional and amateur, in its Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame. Recipients are selected on the basis of their contributions to the preservation, collection, interpretation, and dissemination of Oklahoma history. This criteria was first published in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 72 (Summer 1994).

Early honorees included Grant Foreman, Joseph B. Thoburn, Muriel H. Wright, Edward Everett Dale, and Angie Debo. In addition to historians, the award has been bestowed on artist Charles Banks Wilson, Cherokee genealogist Emmet Starr, author John Joseph Mathews, and Apache and educator Mildred Imach Cleghorn. The inductees are honored at the Awards Banquet held during the Oklahoma Historical Society's Annual Meeting in April each year. In April 2009 Donald Green, Marvin Kroeker, Michael Wallis, and Mary Jane and Quintus Herron were inducted into the Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame. Green and Kroeker are featured in this issue of *The Chronicles*, and Wallis and the Herrons will appear in the Summer 2009 issue.

#### **Donald E. Green**

Historian and educator Donald E. Green has Texas roots, having been born in Wellington in Collingsworth County. He states that he is a fifth-generation Texan but has "been trying to live it down for the last forty years." Growing up in the Texas Panhandle near the Oklahoma border, Green lived in an unpainted, two-room house on a hard-scrabble cotton farm during the Great Depression. As the prices for agricultural commodities increased during World War II,



the family's financial status changed, and they moved into a five-room house. However, it lacked electricity and running water.

Green started his formal education at Samnorwood, an independent school district, in northern Collingsworth County. He studied by kerosene lamps until his father moved them to a modern home in Wellington. There he finished the fifth grade. After completing high school Green enrolled in college with the intention of majoring in theater because he had performed in numerous school plays. However, a history professor made an impression on young Green, who soon changed his major. When he announced to his parents his intentions, his practical-minded mother wanted to know what he could do with a history degree. His father's quick response that their son would be "an educated man" closed the subject.

In 1958 Green received a bachelor of arts degree from Abilene Christian College. This was soon followed by a master's degree in history from Texas Technological College (now Texas Tech University). He went on to attain a doctorate from the University of Oklahoma (OU) in 1969. Before attending OU he had accomplished some graduate work at the University of Berkeley, studying under Kenneth Stamp, Carl Bridenbaugh, and Clark Spence. At OU Green's mentors included Arrell Gibson, Eugene Hollon, Donald Berthong, and Gilbert Fite.

Green's studies at Berkeley were cut short by the Berlin Wall foreign crisis in 1961. He was among the reservists mobilized by President John F Kennedy. In spring 1962 Green accepted a teaching job

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at Oklahoma Christian College, and he continued his doctoral degree work at OU. After completing his dissertation in 1969 he joined the history department at Central State College (now the University of Central Oklahoma) in Edmond. He served as the chair of the history and geography department from 1982 to 1990. Green then accepted the position of dean of liberal arts at Chadron (Nebraska) State College, retiring in 2002.

In addition to his roles in higher education Green has been active in community projects such as the movement in the 1970s to restore, conserve, and preserve downtown Guthrie. While serving at Chadron State College, he and Dr. Ron Hull organized the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center on that campus. The center is a museum to commemorate well-known writer Sandoz as well as a research facility to house western Nebraska's first archives. Green has served on the board of the Oklahoma Historical Society from 1979 to 1981 and from 1984 to 1990. At one of those board meetings he made the motion, which was passed, to purchase the Battle of Washita site. For his many years of dedication to the teaching and preservation of history, the Oklahoma Historical Society names Donald E. Green to the Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame.

### **Thesis**

"General John Armstrong: Statesman of Embargo Diplomacy." Texas Technological College. 1959.

### **Dissertation**

"The Irrigation Frontier on the Texas High Plains, 1910–1960." University of Oklahoma. 1969.

### **Books**

*Land of the Underground Rain. Irrigation on the Texas High Plains, 1910–1970.* Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1973.

*The Creek People.* Phoenix, Ariz.. Indian Tribal Series, 1973.

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*Panhandle Pioneer: Henry C. Hitch, His Ranch and His Family.* Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Heritage Association, 1979.

*A History of the Oklahoma State University Division of Agriculture.* Stillwater: Oklahoma State University Press, 1990.

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*Rural Oklahoma*. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1977

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- "The Land Speculator as a Developer and Promoter of Irrigation on the Texas High Plains." *West Texas Historical Association Year Book*, 46 (1970).
- "The Playa Lake in the Historical Development of the High Plains." *Playa Lake Symposium*, International Center for Arid and Semi-Arid Land Studies Publication Number 4. Lubbock: Texas Tech University, 1972.
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- "The Modern Cattle Industry in Oklahoma: Change and Continuity." In *Ranch and Range in Oklahoma*, ed. Jimmy M. Skaggs. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1978.
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- "The Oklahoma Land Run of 1889: A Centennial Re-Interpretation." *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 67 (Summer 1989).
- "Land of the Underground Rain in Eastern New Mexico." *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review*, 62 (1990).
- "A History of Pump Technology in the Ogallala Aquifer." In *Groundwater in the High Plains*, ed. David E. Kromm and Stephen E. White. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992.
- "The Creek Indians" and "Opothle Yaholo." *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, ed. Richard N. Current. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993.
- "William F. Harn," "Wesley Merritt," and "Settlement Patterns." *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, ed. Dianna Everett et al. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society. Forthcoming.

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### **Marvin E. Kroeker**

Born on September 20, 1928, in Corn, Oklahoma, Marvin E. Kroeker received his early education in that community. He attended a one-room school known as Pleasant Ridge and was tutored by his father. On May 30, 1950, Kroeker married Lily Ruth Siemens, and they would have three children. That year he also graduated with a bachelor's degree from Tabor College, a Mennonite college established in 1908 in Hillsboro, Kansas. He returned to Oklahoma and finished his master's degree at the University of Oklahoma (OU) in 1954. His mentors, Edward Everett Dale and Carl Coke Rister, inspired his interest in frontier and American Indian history. Studying under Donald Berthong, Gilbert Fite, Eugene Hollon, and Arrell Gibson, Kroeker completed his doctoral dissertation at OU in 1967.

Beginning in the early 1950s Kroeker began his professional career as a public school teacher in Kansas and California. From 1956 to 1966 he was an associate professor at Tabor College. He then accepted a position as professor of history at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma. From 1988 to 1993 he was chair of East Central's history department. He developed and taught the first American Indian history courses to be offered at that university. Those courses were the forerunners of the recently established Native American Studies program at East Central. In 1990 and 1991 he was co-director of the National Endowment for the Humanities' summer seminar for teachers held at the university.

Since 1989 Kroeker has been a member on the board of directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society. From 1990 to 1996 and from 2008 to the present he served as vice president. While he was serving as president of the board from 1996 to 1999, the Oklahoma Historical Society received its first legislative appropriation for the new History Center. For many years he has been a member of the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board, of the board of directors of the Associates of Western History Collections at OU, and a member of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies Advisory Board at Tabor College. In 1989 he directed a study tour of the Ukraine, Central Asia, and Siberia. While on this trip, he returned the village where his grandparents had lived, and he interviewed ethnic German survivors of labor camp life during the Stalin era.

As chair of the Ada Wintersmith Park Amphitheatre Restoration Committee, Kroeker planned and coordinated the restoration of the

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natural-stone amphitheatre built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933–34. Through his efforts the Wintersmith Park Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. He spearheaded the efforts for establishing historic markers in Ada, Colony, and Corn, Oklahoma. His most recent project has involved the publication of the first comprehensive history of the Presbyterian Church in Oklahoma. Authored by Michael Cassity and the late Danney Goble, the work is forthcoming from the University of Oklahoma Press. For his many years of service on the OHS board of directors and his academic and public contributions to the perpetuation of history, the Oklahoma Historical Society names Marvin E. Kroeker to the Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame.

### **Thesis**

“The Mennonites of Oklahoma to 1907 ” University of Oklahoma, 1954.

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## Dissertation

“William B. Hazen: A Military Career in the Frontier West, 1855–1880.” University of Oklahoma, 1967

## Books

*Great Plains Command: William B. Hazen in the Frontier West.* Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1976.

*Comanches and Mennonites on the Oklahoma Plains: A. J. and Magdalena Becker and the Post Oak Mission* (Winnepeg, Canada: Kindred Publications, 1997).

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“The Depression Years.” In *The East Central Story: From Normal School to University, 1909–1984*, ed. John A. Walker. Ada: East Central Oklahoma State University, 1984.

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# Lincoln's Legacy in Oklahoma

by Richard Sias and Bob L. Blackburn

The State of Oklahoma joins the rest of the nation in celebrating the legacy of Abraham Lincoln during the bicentennial of his birth on February 12, 1809. Through educational programs, speeches, publications, and performances, we hope to raise awareness of Lincoln's impact on our history and the relevance of his message for our lives today.

Oklahoma's development as a territory of the United States is in many ways attributable to the Homestead Act, passed by Congress in 1862. Whereas many western states can claim Lincoln's promise of free land as their own heritage, Oklahoma is the only state in the Union where the Homestead Act was implemented primarily through land runs. The first of these took place on April 22, 1889, when more than fifty thousand land-hungry pioneers from all walks of life competed for free land in the central part of the present state. Other runs followed in 1891, 1892, and 1893. The hope and drama of those events, combined with the promise of new opportunity for all men regardless of race or economic status, imprinted on the Sooner State a personality that still affects public life in the twenty-first century.

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- LaForte, Robert S., ed. "Recollections of an Oklahoma Pioneer," 55 (Spring 1977): 56-63.
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**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,**  
To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

 **Whereas** There has been deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States a Certificate of the Register of the LAND OFFICE at Indian Oklahoma, whereby it appears that, pursuant to the Act of Congress approved 20th May, 1882, "To secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain," and the acts supplemental thereto, the claim of Jordan Lambert has been established and duly consummated, in conformity to law, for the East half of the North East quarter of Section thirty six in Township twenty North of Range ten East of Jordan Meridian in the Oklahoma Territory

according to the ORIGINAL PLAN of the Survey of the said Land, returned to the GENERAL LAND OFFICE by the Surveyor General:

**Now know ye,** That there is, therefore, granted by the UNITED STATES unto the said Jordan Lambert the tract of Land above described: **To have and to hold** the said tract of Land, with the appurtenances thereof, unto the said Jordan Lambert heirs and assigns forever.

**In testimony whereof** William McKinley PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the seal of the GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed. GIVEN under my hand, at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the twenty fifth day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and one and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and thirty & eight.

By the PRESIDENT: William McKinley Secretary,  
Edmund C. Ross Recorder of the General Land Office

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