

## **HENRY VOGEL: A White Laborer in Indian Territory**



Henry Vogel, territorial stonemason.

*By Brad Agnew*

The Oklahoma Image project focused attention on the varied ethnic and national backgrounds of the pioneers who helped build the forty-sixth state. While the project published no book on the Swiss contribution, there was at least one emigrant from Switzerland who left a legacy of homes, schools, and other public and private buildings across the eastern half of Oklahoma. Henry Vogel, a Muskogee contractor, literally began building from his arrival in Indian Territory in 1887 and continued beyond his semi-retirement in 1945.

In January, 1951, Vogel began recording his "life history" in a sixty-six-page, handwritten autobiography. For the past thirty years the account has been preserved by his only surviving child, Miss Elizabeth Vogel, who still resides in the home her father built in Muskogee. She has consented to the publication of her father's story which captures the flavor of a man and an era, both long past.

Born in 1864 in northern Switzerland, Vogel and his family emigrated to America in 1874 and moved west by stages in search of land. Short spurts of formal schooling were sandwiched between periods of work. In New Jersey Henry spent six arduous months apprenticed to a baker, and in Illinois he hired out as a farm hand for three years. Ultimately, following in his father's footsteps, he became a stonemason.

In the mid-1880s his father sent him to inspect a homestead in southwestern Kansas. His favorable report prompted the family to sell their home in Illinois and move to Harper County on the plains of Kansas. To supplement the family income, Vogel and his father worked on various building projects throughout the region, ultimately going to work for the Santa Fe Railroad.

In 1886 young Henry married Idella M. Brown, the daughter of the family homesteading an adjacent quarter section. For a few years, she followed him from job to job until the disastrous year of 1887, when a searing drought withered corn across the Great Plains within forty-eight hours. The railroad went into receivership, and Vogel and his wife followed her family to Siloam Springs, Arkansas, located just across the border from Indian Territory. The town had briefly flourished before health seekers deserted it for Eureka Springs. By the time the Vogels arrived "the town was dead," and when work was available, the prevailing pay was a dollar a day. While there Mrs. Vogel gave birth to her first child, a girl who lived only eighteen months. Leaving his wife with her parents, Vogel and several companions walked seventy-five miles to Fort Smith in search of employment. The town was experiencing a building boom which elicited a number of comments from Vogel.

If whiskey could make a town, Fort Smith ought to be as big as Chicago. About every other door was a saloon, and bootlegging to the territory was flourishing. Fort Smith was also the seat of the U. S. Court over which the famous Judge Isaac Parker presided. The Courthouse was a one-story building 100 feet square with the jail in the basement. It was on a block of ground with a stone wall around it, and right in the front yard they had constructed a gallows, built with uprights and cross beams of 12" × 12' rough hewn oak timbers. They could, and did several times, hang six at one time. Fort Smith had at that time one main street named Garrison Ave.

When we got to Fort Smith, it had been raining; and Garrison Ave. was just a mud hole; and there were signs all along it saying "Call for Ferry" and "No Fishing Allowed" and others; and the merchants were agitating to get it paved; and shortly afterwards they got a brick maker to move there and soon paved Garrison Ave. and other streets paved with brick. I got a job at my trade and I and a brother-in-law remained in Fort Smith about two weeks. . . .

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA



The young Vogel learned the values of pioneer life—hard work and honesty—as his immigrant parents moved west with the tide of settlement (Courtesy Brad Agnew).

---

We bummed our way on a Frisco freight (that was the only R.Rd. that was in Fort Smith) to Fayetteville, a town about forty miles from Siloam. Of course we walked [to Siloam]; it took us two days.

Another job hunting expedition took Vogel across the border of Arkansas into Indian Territory.

That fall I must have heard of Tahlequah, the capital of the Cherokee Nation and that they were building a big school building there. At that time northwest Arkansas was very well developed for farming, and there were many good apple orchards. . . . Quite a few farmers would load their wagons in the fall with apples, both dried and fresh, hams, bacon, eggs, and other things and drive in to the territory of the five so-called Civilized Tribes. And those Indians really were as well civilized as most whites. Each tribe had schools and a capitol where their legislators would meet to transact business just like any state. Their governor was called chief.

Well, I got to know one of those farmers, a young man by the name of John Rogers, and asked him to take me with him on his next trip. He said all right so one day we started, and at that time there were two ways, just wagon tracks. One was called the river route because it followed the Illinois River to within two miles of Tahlequah, and the other was called the hill route. Johnnie took the river route. It took us two days. We camped in the woods one night and drove in to Tahlequah about five o'clock; and as this was in November, it was getting dusk.

Vogel and Rogers reached Tahlequah in the aftermath of the disputed election of 1887 in which Joel B. Mayes defeated Rabbit Bunch for the of-

office of Chief of the Cherokees. Vogel provided a vivid description of the tension which followed the election.

The Cherokees had just had an election for chief, and of course there were two parties, one was the full-blood party called Rabbit Bunch. Their man was a full-blood. The other party was composed of the half-breeds and was headed by a man, Joel Mayes by name. The full blood let it be known that if Mayes was elected, he would be killed before he was installed. Johnnie knew all this, and the evening we arrived happened to be inauguration day. We had met two or three men leaving Tahlequah, and Johnnie asked how things were. They all told him things looked bad; and as we drove up the main street, about every man we saw had a Winchester, and I began to get scared, but I found myself a place to stay.

That evening Vogel met several men who were employed in the building of the Cherokee Female Seminary. They talked until after 10 P.M. Vogel declined an invitation to spend the night although he feared that he might encounter trouble in the streets.

I did not want them to think I was afraid, so I left to get to my room. I had to go by the capitol building. The street was dark and I took down the middle of it. Well, nothing happened and I got to my room safe and sound (and was I glad).

The next morning I went to the building site and met the contractor. His name was Illsley and his foreman, by the name of Baker, both from St. Louis. Well, they told me to go to work which I did. I worked there for over two months on the foundation. It was a large building about 100 × 200 feet and the same building is today the Northeastern O. St. College. . . .

Now I want to tell where the material used in the building came from. The only R.Road [railroad] in the Territory and the nearest station was at Muskogee, twenty-eight miles and no good road from there. It was not practical to haul from there, but as there was plenty of good lime and sandstone close to Tahlequah, they quarried the stone there for the foundation and window sills. As for the brick there was plenty of good clay so the brick were burned close to the building, and at that time there was a good deal of yellow pine in Cherokee Hills and a few small saw mills. All the joist[s], studdings, and flooring was cut there, and the lime for mortar was burned close by in the woods.

At that time Tahlequah was for miles surrounded by woods, and there were plenty of deer and turkeys in those woods.

Now a description of Tahlequah—it was a one-street town at that time. That street is now the 62 Highway and now the main street. The population about 750. The Capitol Building was in a square of ground, and the same building is now the Court House of Cherokee County. Then there were two store buildings, one owned by a man named Thompson, the other Stapler Bro. Both were for that time big stores. There was, and it is still standing, a

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

jail building with a gallows in one corner of the lot. Then there was a[n] old frame building used for a hotel, and it was the social center of the town. Of course, there were no modern improvements like sewers and water works. Everybody used water from the large spring. The springs made a small brook. . . .

Now back to my own story. Of course I went home to Siloam and back several times; and as there was a mailhack running from Tahlequah to Siloam, there one day and back the next, I would ride from Tahlequah to Siloam but to get back if the hack did not [run] when I was ready to go, I would walk; and one time I made it in one day.

This route, called the "Apple Road," passed Hildebrand Mill and followed Nine-Mile Hollow to Post Oak Flats, just a few miles from Tahlequah. Vogel was returning to Post Oak Flats when he was suddenly accosted.

All at once a young Indian stepped in front of me and stuck a pistol in my face. He searched me and asked me who I was. Well, I told that I was on my way to Tahlequah where I was working on the new Female School Bldg. Finally he said, "It is a good thing I don't think that you are a posse man or I'd killed you right here." Well, I told him I wasn't. If I had been carrying a pistol he probably would have killed me. I don't think I even had a pocket knife. He then got friendly and pulled a pint of whiskey out of his pocket and gave me a drink, and he took one and went to his horse got on and rode off, and I started on my way (and was I glad to go). . . .

At that time the U. S. Marshals out of Fort Smith were all the law officers. They had jurisdiction over both whites and Indians. Well, some were good men, but a good many were unprincipled who treated their prisoners bad; and a posse man was a marshal's helper; and if they and the marshal were the rough kind, their prisoners suffered accordingly. For instance the marshal could start in Fort Smith, go just across the Arkansas River, and arrest a man. He could keep that man with him on the whole trip which might take three month[s], chained all the time and only half feed him and otherwise abuse him; and all the time the government paid so much a mile and so much a day for feeding him. It was no doubt a money maker for the marshal, and the posse men were paid by the government too. The Indian who held me up had no doubt had experience.

Well another time I started for Tahlequah on a day when the mailhack was running. We started early. It was a cool, clear December morning, and we put the curtains down on the northside. Well, after we passed the Hilderbrand Mill and had started up the Nine-Mile Hollow, a man on horseback stuck his head around the curtain and said hello. Well, the driver stopped; I always thought the driver knew the man. He was a half-breed Indian. His name was Bud Trainor, I soon learned, and quite a character in his way. He was a little older than me and well built and had already killed a

man, and he told us all this after he got in the hack. Well, he told the driver that he was cold, and his horse was tired as he had been riding since long before daylight [and] that he started from Bob Flats Distillery about ten miles east of Siloam. He wanted to put his load in the hack and get in himself. The driver told him all right so he got off his horse, tied him to the back end, and put the load, twelve gallons of whiskey, in the hack, and got in himself between me and the driver.

The first thing he did was to pull a 45 [caliber] pistol from each hip into his lap and told us that the marshals were looking for him. Of course we knew he was a bootlegger. The next thing he did was to pull a flask out of a pocket, and we all took a drink, and from then on the trip was interesting in a way. He rode with us to within about three miles of Tahlequah. He was liberal with his whiskey, and the driver got good and drunk, and Bud himself got tipsy. As for myself I drank with them too but small drinks and so kept sober. I had to do the driving aft[er] the driver passed out. Once we saw a wagon coming towards us, and it looked like it might be a marshal's outfit, and Bud said, "if that is a marshal's outfit, here is where we have it," and he pulled both the 45's out and cocked them (and that was one time I got really scared you bet), but we were lucky. It was a farmer with whiskers all over his face. He had a good span of mules and new wagon just like the marshal used. He also had a sheet over the wagon bed. Well, when we got closer, he just drove off the road and went by. He [did] not even look at us (I was sure relieved).

As we drove along, Bud got to showing us how he could shoot and he let me shoot too. After the driver passed out and Bud got tipsy, I wanted to quit drinking; but having always been told to not cross an Indian, I was afraid to refuse to drink with him; but I finally screwed up my courage and told him that [I] did not want to drink any more.

Well, we got within about three miles of Tahlequah when his partner met him. He had told about his partner. He was a nice looking white man. Bud got out and they divided the whiskey and rode off. Well, we crossed the Illinois River and got to Tahlequah all safe and sound after a nice all-day ride. As for Bud I only saw him afterwards but learned about his folks. He had told us about his father. He was an Irishman who liked his whiskey too well, and when he was drunk he would get on a tear and want to fight everybody. So one day he ran into the High Sheriff of the Cherokee Nation who killed him and Bud bragged he was going to kill the sheriff but never did. Bud got killed about ten years afterwards.

Trainor's father, also named Bud, was shot and killed in 1885 by Jackson W. Ellis, the Deputy United States Marshal for the Western District of Arkansas.

After completing the foundation of the female seminary in Tahlequah in January, 1888, Vogel returned to Siloam Springs where he worked on small construction projects. While there in January, 1889, the Vogels'

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

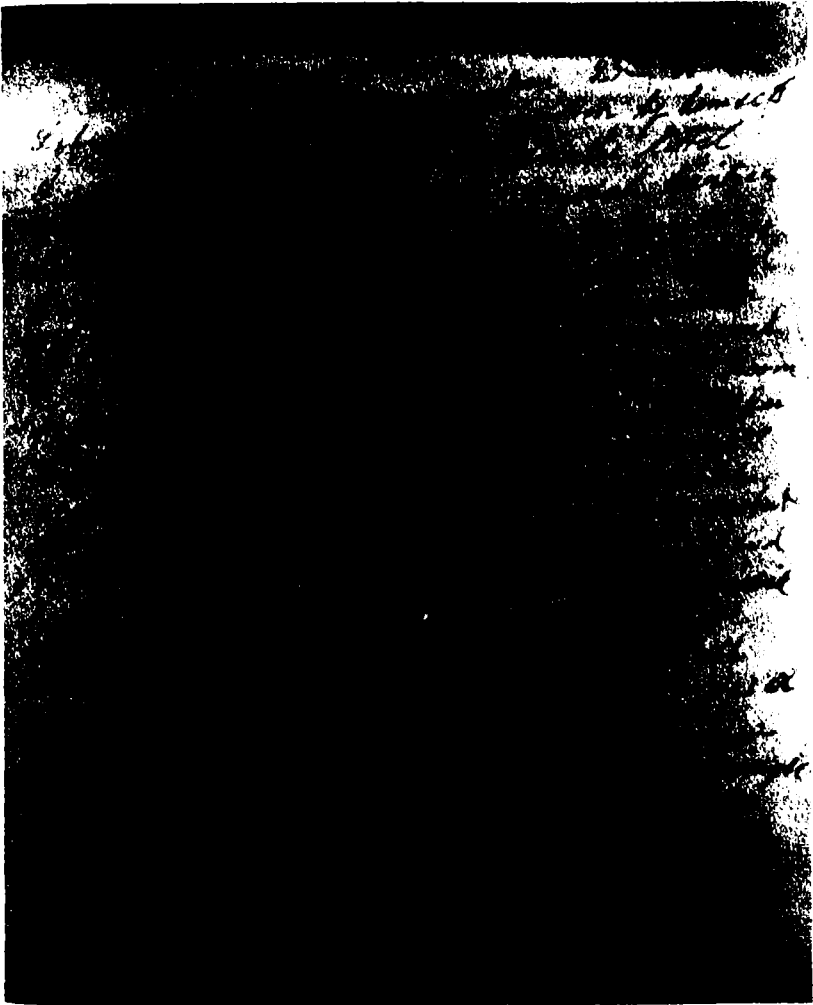
second daughter, Victoria, was born. Shortly thereafter Vogel and a fellow stonemason were hired to build the foundation of the Cherokee orphan asylum.

The asylum was located on Grand River right where the town of Salina is now. At that time the home was just one large brick building. It was built by one of the famous Rosses of the Cherokees and was two stories and a basement about 50 × 80 feet; and there I saw the only brick building with beaded joints, and I was told it was all built by slave labor. At the time we went there, the Cherokees had already built one addition to it, and at that time there were 200 children there.

I bought a tent to live in; and we hired a man to haul us there, loaded our cook stove and what little furniture we owned at the time, and started out. My wife's father went with us. So did her young brother Jim. Our way was past the Hilderbrand Mill, then up the Nine-Mile Hollow; then we turned northwest up and down hills and hollows, no houses, all woods, lots of yellow pine. Now our baby was only a few weeks old, and this was in February. In the afternoon it started to rain and then snow; and as we had to camp out one night, we commenced to worry about the baby; but just before dark we came to a log house and stopped our teams to see the folks about us staying in the cabin. It was one big room about 16 × 20 feet and a big wood fireplace; and all that were living there were a man and wife, both full-blood Indians. They told him [the teamster] no, but he came out and told us that they refused to let us in. But he said, "we will move in anyway." He wasn't going to let the baby stay out in the snow so we carried in our bedding and food for supper. We cooked in the fireplace and spread our beds on the floor and spent a comfortable night thanks to our teamster. By morning the weather had cleared, and the day commenced to shine. All this time the Indians had not spoken a word to us, but we left them a dollar and moved out and went on toward the asylum.

We arrived there in time to make camp, but now I must tell about the salt wells we passed about two miles from the asylum. The U. S. government must have drilled them. There was three wells. Some folks claimed they were 1200 feet deep. They were lined with . . . twelve-inch pine logs with four-inch holes bored lengthwise, and those logs were petrified and look[e]d just like glass. We stopped and examined them; the salt water was running from all the wells. It ran into the Illinois [actually the Grand] River about 100 feet from the wells. . . . At that time there were three cast iron pans used for evaporating the salt water. They were one inch thick, about six feet across, and about sixteen inches deep. The pans were round. Which ever way the wind blew there would be [a] disagreeable smell that would almost make a person sick, and then there would be million[s] of little black gnats that would get in one's nose and eyes.

The salt springs described by Vogel were among the most important in Indian Territory. They were located near the trading post of Colonel A. P.



The first page of Vogel's handwritten autobiography (Courtesy Brad Agnew).

Chouteau, who sold them to Sam Houston in 1830. Ultimately expropriated by the Cherokee Nation, the springs were operated by Lewis Ross, who leased the site from the tribal government headed by his brother, John. Cherokee records do not suggest that the federal government financed drilling in the area. Most accounts of the salt works refer to springs rather than wells. Upon arrival at the asylum Vogel and his companions demonstrated their versatility as builders.



## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

We put up our tent about 100 yards from the job and started to get busy. The contractor showed us where we could get the rock. It was limestone—came out in flat layers easily quarried. It was about one-half mile southwest of the job in a deep draw. The contractor asked us about burning lime for the job. My partner knew about burning lime, so we took on that too and started to build a kiln in one side of the draw, and we put Mr. Brown, my father-in-law—he was a expert with an axe—to cut the hickory trees to burn the lime with. In due time we got all the stone quarried for [the] job, and the lime burned, and started on the foundation; and by the end of May, we finished.

Now a little about how the wife and baby got along and other incidents. We all kept well; we got water from a spring house built out of cut limestone over a running spring. We also got milk. The Orphans' Home had or kept fifteen or twenty cows and plenty of milk. To get supplies and mail we had to go to what was called Locust Grove Store and Post Office about three miles from the asylum. The superintendent[']s name was Thompson, a retired Methodist minister, and he sure treated those children fine. He bought lots of their supplies from farmer[s] that brought hams, bacon, eggs, and fruit by the wagonload which be bought and fed to the children. The bigger boys had to chop the wood for fuel and milk the cows, and the girls helped in the house; and there were a few teacher[s] at the asylum.

Now boys will be boys, so I want to tell about the boys there. After night some of them often would get out and get in [the] basement and hook eggs and get washbowls [and] go out in the woods and boil and eat eggs. The way we found out we found a lot of bowls the boys would not take back. They were all graniteware, and we brought several to Muskogee.

I do not know just when but before the allotment, the Orphan Home burned clear to the ground, and all that is left of it today is the springhouse, and today there is a big schoolhouse built by [the] town of Salina built around it. We finish[ed] our job the last week in May and got all settled, and I commenced to think about what to do next. My partner and my wife's brother Jim (the father had some work to do for the asylum and remained with us) went back to Siloam Springs.

Now I must somehow have heard about Muskogee, so I made up my mind to go there. I did not like to leave my wife and baby there in the woods although it was a safe place, and her father was with her. So on the second day of June, I think it was Sunday, I started to walk to the railroad station, then called Pryor Creek, to take the M.K.&T. train for Muskogee ten miles west of the asylum. To get [there] I had to go about a quarter of a mile to the Grand River where there was a ferry that belonged to Sam Mayes, who had a cattle ranch on the other side. His house was close to the river. He was a brother of Joel Mayes, the then Chief of the Cherokees, and was afterward its elected Chief.

Well, I got ferried across, . . . and I started to walk again; and on the whole ten miles there wasn't a house; and as I remember all there was of

Pryor then were two store buildings; and I did not see or speak to a single person except the railroad agent. That day the train came along about six o'clock. . . .

Well, we arrived in Muskogee about eight, and it was dark and sprinkling, no lights, and the only thing I could do was to follow the few passengers the way they went. And after walking up what is now Broadway, I saw a light and headed for it.

Muskogee was crowded with lawyers present for the opening of the federal court. Ultimately, Vogel found lodging in the loft of a livery barn. The next day while looking for work Vogel encountered C. T. Illsley, the contractor for whom he had worked while building the Female Seminary in Tahlequah. Vogel accepted Illsley's offer of a job and went to work immediately on a depot and hotel for the M.K.&T. Railroad.

After I had worked there two weeks I concluded that I had better go and get my folks, so I got on the train and went up to Pryor Creek. I got off there about eleven o'clock in the night and started to walk to the asylum, but as I could not get the ferry till daylight I stayed on the prairie and laid down on the grass. When day came I went to the river and soon got across. The folks were glad to see me, and I them. I hired an Indian for the next day to haul us to the railroad at Chouteau Station south of Pryor. My wife's father came with us, and in due time we arrived in Muskogee.

I had failed to rent a place to live in, so all I could do was set up the tent . . . just north of where the Christian Church is now. We lived there about a month and had one bad storm. I thought the tent would blow away—we camped there two or three weeks then I rented a three-room box house from Capt. Severs. It was on the lot where the Griffin Wholesale Co. is now located. We lived there five years.

At this time I worked on the Adams Hotel as the depot building was called, and that fall Mr. Illsley got a contract to build a two-story brick building to be used as a bank. There was an organization formed, and applied, and got a charter for a National Bank. It was and is today the first bank in Oklahoma. I helped to build the building from foundation to the roof. I had by this time taken up bricklaying.

There was at that time a contractor in Muskogee named W. A. Maddin with whom C. W. Turner was in partnership. Turner was at that time the biggest merchant in the Territory, and his influence extended to all the Five Indian Nations. At that time the Seminole Nation were [sic] ready to build two boarding schools for their children, and Maddin and Turner were given the contracts. And myself and a lot of other men went [to] work on the buildings. The first was called Mekasukey. It was located twenty miles west of Wewoka, the capital of the Seminoles' Nation which consisted then of the council house and one store which was owned by the Brown Bro., both Seminoles, one of whom was chief.

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

After I had worke[d] a few weeks, I saw it would be a long job. I made up my mind to move my folks out there. So I hired a team and loaded some household goods and our baby, we had named her Victoria, and wife. I still had the tent, so [I] took it too and started back to Mekasukey, a 120-mile drive. It took us four days. We had to go through Okmulgee, the Capital of the Creek Nation, forty miles west of Muskogee. From then on there was not one home, and we only saw one man, a full-blood Indian; and he either could or would not talk to us. Until we got to Wewoka, I did not sleep much on that trip because the wife would not, nor let me sleep.

Well, we got to the job and I set up camp. Our baby soon was a favorite in the camp; she could toddle by then. We stayed five months at that place, and I was setting the last cut stone when the baby took sick, and we got [the] nearest doctor from Wewoka to see her; and as he charged twenty dollars, we thought that we had better get back to Muskogee. So I again hired a man and team to take us. Now, one of the other men came to me, said he liked the baby, and hoped she would get well; and he gave me a pint of whiskey for the baby and we used it on her, and we always felt truly thankful to him, for we always thought that the whiskey saved her.

Vogel reestablished his family in Muskogee where they remained the next spring when he returned to the Seminole Nation to help build Emahaka Academy for Girls. Work on the project was interrupted by the return of several men sent to Oklahoma City to obtain supplies.

Well, they got back one afternoon and brought a lot of whiskey back with them. Now no one intended to get drunk; but somehow all the men met at one place; and when I and two men got there, it was already dark; and all that were there were already drinking and we joined them. Well, by midnight the whole gang was drunk, and there was no work done the next day.

Some days afterwards, it rained too much to work, and Mose Anspawh—I was boarding with him—said to me, "Henry, let's go to Wewoka and see them shoot that man." At that time it was the custom and law of the Seminoles to execute for murder by shooting. A date was set, and the man was turned loose and was told come in on the day set for his execution. I agreed to go with him and we started, but when we got about half way, all at once Mose stopped and said to me, "Henry, let's go back. I don't want [to] see the Indian shot." So we went back. I have been sorry that I did not go and see it. The Indian came in, and he, as was the custom, picked his best friend to shoot him. This man was the last man to be executed by the Seminoles.

Shortly afterwards I was called back to Muskogee by Mr. Maddin. He had gotten a contract from the Creek Nation to build a string of school houses in different parts of that nation and wante[d] me to start them. Also two orphans' home[s], one for Indians and one for colored citizens, and five schools. I am sure that I helped to build more schools and orphan homes

than anyone living for the Indians. So about the first of June myself and four other men (one was my brother Albert) and a man and wife who owned a team loaded up and started to go to the location. It was right where Broken Arrow is now. . . . We drove about four miles northwest to the Arkansas River to a ferry landing called Spaulding Ferry.

We got to the river, and the ferry was there and a full-blood Indian to run it, but the river was bank full with the yearly June rise; and when I asked the Indian to take us across, he pointed to the river and shook his head meaning no. It was just a pole ferry. He knew his job, but we did not; and we kept pestering him to take us across until he must have got disgusted or mad (Indian[s] like he did not talk), and about four o'clock he made signs for us to drive on. We did, and right there the expedition came very near to a fatal and final end. We had told him we would help him pole, so we all got a pole, and he turned loose, and we started, but not across but down the river. The poles were too short to pole the ferry, and the current took us down stream, and there we were. Of course, we were scared. The ferry man was aboard too. Fortunately, we found a board about ten feet long loose on the floor, and just to be trying something we rigged it on the back end of the ferry for a rudder, and it worked, and we steered the ferry toward the bank until we could reach brush limbs to help hold us to the bank. We had drifted about one mile when we came to an old landing, and we managed to land and all got out safe (and were we glad).

We camped there that night and by morning the water had run down, and we made it across and got to the location and the next day went [to] work. We found a place to quarry stone and started and finished the foundation. It took us about three weeks.

The next job took Vogel to the site of a burned out Baptist mission at Wealaka in the Creek Nation. While there the construction crew became involved in an "exciting and at once dangerous incident."

At that time the Dalton brothers, who were outlaws, were loose in that country, hunted by the U. S. marshals. Well, one morning an Indian rode up to the job and asked if any of us knew the Dalton boys. One of my [friends] said he had seen one or two of them. Well, the Indian said, "Us Indians have just killed two white men back there in the woods and think maybe they are part of the Dalton gang and would like for you to look at them." Of course, we went with him. It was about one-half mile to where they had left the bodies. So we started. The Indians were all on horseback and got some ahead of us who were afoot. The Indians all had guns of all kinds. There were twenty-five or thirty of them. We first came to the place where those men were cooking breakfast; and, so the Indians said, those men started shooting and started to run up a slope (there were three of them) into the woods. The Indians all shot back, and when it was over, they found two of them dead. The other one got away.

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA



"Vogel & Rooney—Brick and Stone Contractors." Vogel owned and operated this business in Muskogee during the early years of the twentieth century (Courtesy Brad Agnew).

---

Well, we all started up the slope and the Indians being [on] horseback got ahead of us, we being afoot. Well, all at once the Indians turned tail and came tearing down the slope; and not knowing what was wrong, I sure got scared and got behind a big tree. I hollered at them to stop as they had guns and we did not, but none stopped. I said all ran, but I learned that two did not run. They had just dropped behind their ponies. Now, the cause of all this commotion was that two white men were standing by the bodies looking at them; and that scared all but the two who leveled their Winchesters on the white men when luckily one of the Indians recognized them, or there would have been two more killed. The men were hired hands from a farm owned by Chief Pleasant Porter of the Creek Nation. Of course, we learned all this after we all got to the dead men; and after searching them we knew that they were not Daltons but from letters in their pockets that they were from the Shawnee country and wanted by the officers there. What got the Indians after them [was that] they wandered around the country for several days and gone into every cabin they came to scaring the folks and stealing whatever took their fancy. So the Indians got together and caught up with them and that was the end.

The next job we went to was Okmulgee, then the capital of the Creek Nation. At that time Okmulgee had two general merchandise and one little drug store and the stone capitol just like it is at this time. The building was to [be] an orphan asylum.

After several other jobs Vogel returned to the asylum in Okmulgee to dig and wall up a cistern.

We had a tent to sleep in and tried to eat at the asylum but could not stand it and went to cooking. We bought supplies in Okmulgee; and I started to and did make biscuit[s]; and we lived like lords. I can't to this day see how those kids could eat the grub the superintendent fed them. His name was Tiger.

Vogel continued working on construction projects throughout Indian Territory until he established his own brick and stone contracting firm in Muskogee.

And now to get back to Muskogee to cover the 61 years I have lived here. After living in the box house on S. Cherokee, I made a deal with Joshua Rose for a small piece of ground on what [is] now E. Okmulgee. He told me he could not give me title, but only was selling me his improvements. . . . Of course, I knew that already. Well, I started to build a four-room cottage. One day after I got started, a friend came to me and said, "Henry, you are a damn fool. They will take it away from you;" and under the consisting [sic] conditions [they] could have done so; and we lived in that house until the Indian land was allotted when all the towns in the Indian Territory were surveyed under the Dawes Commission; and I got title. Since then I have built four more houses but sold all but where we are living now at 1518 W. Okmulgee.

I am getting tired of writing and shall try to get through. I will tell about my children. In 1892 my wife presented me with twins, a boy and girl, and they created quite a sensation. I think everybody in Muskogee came to see them. In 1895 a baby boy was born to us, and in 1900 a girl was born. Four of the children are living today.

Muskogee commenced to grow. In due time we got three more railroads; and after the allotment Muskogee was incorporated; and as water is one thing all towns must have, we voted bonds; and our first water works were built. . . . Since that time Muskogee has had to enlarge twice. . . . Well, one thing call[s] for others, so in due time we also put in sanitary sewers and storm sewers with paving also walks on all streets; and the first telephone systems was built by A. Z. English who sold out to the Bell Co. (and according to good information from them I am the oldest continuous subscriber to now). The first electric light plant was built by C. W. Turner. It was located about the northeast corner of the Bass Harbour building next to the R.Rd. switch. He sold to the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Co. And so Muskogee grew to its present size.

In the meantime, of course, there was a great deal of building. Of that I have my full share. I just want to tell about one building that is now standing on the N. West corner of Broadway and Third. It was built for C. N. Haskell and Co., and I and John Hosmer built it. Mr. Haskell told me it was the first five-story building in Oklahoma.

Skipping rapidly to the 1930s, Vogel related a problem arising from a

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

W.P.A. contract he was awarded to build an Indian school in the Choctaw Nation.

Some man in Washington had read in my application that I was born in Switzerland and wanted proof that I was a citizen; and he gave me two weeks to get proof. I did not know for sure where to look for proof. I did know that father took out his first paper in New Jersey but not where he got his final paper. At that time all one had to do [was to] go before any county judge, but as we had moved to Illinois, I figured father must have gone before the county judge in Pontiac, the county seat of Livingston County, Ill.

So I got busy, and I was right. At the same time I went to a good friend of mine, Charlie Miller, who was district attorney of the U. S. court at Muskogee. He took the matter up with the land office in Washington, made official [application] with them, and in due time they sent him father's final paper. How they came to have it, I do not know. I have the paper now, but it was too late to save my job. Up to that time, after I became of age, I had voted in all elections. I voted for McKinley in Arkansas and came very near being mobbed there when I hurraed after McKinley was elected.

Well, being now sure that I was a citizen of this great country, I will close this story of my life with a few comments on my whole life. I was fortunate to be brought to this great country. Of course, I am not one of those emigrant[s] that wound up millionaires, but I have had a very pleasant life, always in good health. . . . Now I can eat and sleep good. I eat with my own teeth, and have done all this writing without glasses. I am now in my 88th year.

Henry Vogel died in April, 1951, just two weeks after he finished his "life history." Even before his death many of his buildings had been demolished. Ultimately, time will erase all physical evidence of Henry Vogel's craftsmanship as a builder. There remains, however, in his "life story" a sense of determination and spirit that defies time.