

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

THE JAMES K. HASTINGS PAPERS

The *Papers of James K. Hastings*, a manuscript volume of 82 pages, has been placed in the Oklahoma Historical Society. In the Run of '89 Hastings took a homestead in present Payne County, and has lived in the county more than sixty years. He was a teacher, farmer, justice of the peace, and county surveyor.

In the collection are such rare documents as a leave of absence issued to a homesteader by the Guthrie Land Office, 1889; a teacher's contract in Payne County, 1896; and a Democratic-Populist ticket, Payne County Primary Election, 1904. There are a number of short, unpublished articles. The volume contains the manuscript copy and the printed copy of three of the author's articles in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*.¹ It also contains one of his articles in the *Colorado Magazine*, and one in the *New Mexico Historical Review*.²

Hastings was born in Kent, Ohio, December 9, 1867, the son of John Irving Hastings and Charolette Minerva Blake Hastings. He graduated at Kent High School. Part of his early life was spent in Colorado and New Mexico. He has been a man of exceptional physical and intellectual vigor. He has had no use for tobacco, and he stood as an ardent opponent of intoxicating liquors. Early in life he acquired an appreciation for historical materials, and was able to set forth vividly in writing the conditions under which the first settlers lived.

The papers were arranged by Dr. B. B. Chapman as part of a project of the Research Foundation of Oklahoma A. and M. College. Materials such as the Hastings papers form the basis of historical research.

 EARLY HISTORY OF BLUEGRASS, OLD BEAVER COUNTY

The post office called Bluegrass was established on September 13, 1886, with William B. Stanley³ as first postmaster, near the eastern boundary of No Man's Land now comprising the Panhandle of Oklahoma. This whole region became Beaver County when it was

¹ "The Opening of Oklahoma," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (Spring, 1949), pp. 70-75. "Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College and Old Central," *ibid.*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (Winter, 1949-50), pp. 81-84. "Log-Cabin Days in Oklahoma," *ibid.*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2 (Summer, 1950), pp. 143-153.

² "A Winter in the High Mountains, 1871-72," *Col. Magazine*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3 (July, 1950), pp. 225-234. "A Boy's Eye View of the Old Southwest," *New Mex. Hist. Review*, Vol. XXVI, No. 4 (Oct., 1951), pp. 287-301.

³ George H. Shirk, "First Post Offices within the Boundaries of Oklahoma," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXX, No. 1 (Spring, 1952), p. 46.

organized as a part of Oklahoma Territory in 1890, and is referred to in Oklahoma history as "Old Beaver County" to distinguish it from present Beaver County in the state. Two days after the establishment of Bluegrass post office, the first step was taken by the settlers of the region in the movement to organize No Man's Land as Cimarron Territory. This was never approved by Congress but the area was referred to as the Public Land Strip in the Organic Act approved May 2, 1890, which designated the same area as Seventh County in the organization of Oklahoma Territory. The name Beaver was chosen for this new county, by popular vote at the first election in the Public Land Strip on August 5, 1890, called by Governor George W. Steele recently appointed executive for Oklahoma Territory. The new county was named for Beaver River⁴ which flows through the entire length of the Panhandle except for a thirty mile bend south across the line in Texas. People in Northwestern Oklahoma still call the stream Beaver River even though some modern maps show it as the North Canadian.⁵

The following notes on the early history of Bluegrass are contributed by H. S. Judy, of Woodward, Oklahoma:

—Ed. (M.H.W.)

BEAVER COUNTY IN THE 1890's

The first legal and authorized election was held in Beaver County, Oklahoma, in 1890, soon after it was organized as a part of Oklahoma Territory. Beaver County then covered the entire Oklahoma Panhandle, now divided into Beaver, Cimarron and Texas counties. The writer at the time of the first election was a small boy and lived in the east part of the County, then and now known as Bluegrass Precinct. Some of the early settlers in that neighborhood discovered a rank growth of salt grass in the Kiowa Creek valley early one spring, thought it was bluegrass and gave their first postoffice, store, school district and voting precinct the name "Bluegrass."

The Bluegrass store and postoffice was started by John T. Stanley, a pioneer of that neighborhood. He settled there before the county was surveyed in section lines. He made a crude survey from a zinc tube a few miles away on which the section, township and range numbers were stencilled. He located and squatted on his claim with 80 acres on each side of the road and built the Bluegrass store building on the west side of what he thought was the section line. He also set out cottonwood trees on each side of the road, which made rapid growth and were large trees when that territory was surveyed and section lines established. It then developed that the Bluegrass store and the row of cottonwood trees on the west side of the road were right in the middle of the section line,

⁴ On a very early map showing Spanish names of the streams in this region, Beaver River is shown as *Rio Nutria* which means "Otter River" in Spanish. It was probably named by early Spanish explorers for the otter found along the stream, which reminded them of a species of the otter-like animal called the coypu that they had seen in northern South America. The plucked pelt of the coypu is called "nutria" in the fur trade, a fur noted a hundred years ago in making men's "beaver" hats.

⁵ Rand McNally *Pocket Map*, 1948.

Mr. Stanley refused to move his store or cut down the trees. He later homesteaded the two eighties and gave the public road according to the old erroneous survey instead of the legal survey, which road exists to this day with a jog back to the correct section line at the south end of the Stanley homestead. Bluegrass precinct was thickly settled in those days and Bluegrass store and school house was the center of most business and social activities. It was the meeting place of the Bluegrass Vigilance Committee, before law was established, which dealt with thieves and criminals in a very effective but abrupt and hasty manner. Sunday school and church services were held most every Sunday at the Bluegrass school house. Naturally, Bluegrass was chosen as the voting place for the first election in that part of Beaver County.

Willis B. Stanley, a son of John T. Stanley, was elected on the Republican ticket as the first County Treasurer of Beaver County. The officers in charge of this election were John R. Farra, Willis B. Stanley, H. French, John T. Stanley and John Van Geisen. The Democratic and Republican parties were both represented by a full list of candidates. The first County officers were about evenly divided between the two political parties.

Court was held at Beaver [Beaver City], the County Seat soon after the County was organized, with a Judge from the east side presiding and with Chris Madsen, noted peace officer there to keep order. As this was the first legal court ever held in Beaver County, the rules, regulations and restrictions of the court procedure were very galling and annoying to many who were used to the old wild care free days and way of life before the law came to Beaver County.

Court had been going awhile when a delegation of cow punchers, after taking on stimulating refreshments at a local saloon decided to adjourn court. They stated that courts were unnecessary and not needed; that they lived there many years without courts and could continue in that way. Soon after this announcement was made to the court, Chris Madsen went into action and pistol whipped one of the leaders with his "45," and restored order and convinced these parties that the court was there to stay.

One cow puncher got a prison sentence for stealing cattle. Convicts at that time were taken to the prison at Leavenworth, Kansas, for confinement as Oklahoma Territory did not have a suitable prison. It was customary for the prison authorities at that time to learn prisoners some trade if they desired, usually along the line of work they were familiar with. This prisoner was asked what kind of work he did before he came there and what kind of work he preferred while serving his term. He replied that he had always punched cows and that was the only kind of work he was fitted for and asked that he be allowed to herd the town's milk cow herd. It is not on record that he got that job.

A short time after Beaver County was organized, the Bill Doolin gang of outlaws robbed a train at Cimarron, Kansas, and the report was they got away with \$15,000.00. Four of these outlaws, Bill Doolin, Arkansas Tom and two others stopped for a meal at the Del Hesse ranch just east of Bluegrass P. O., on their way back from Cimarron, Kansas. There was a \$5,000.00 reward for Doolin, dead or alive. The sheriff from Beaver, Frank Healy, soon appeared and drafted a posse of men from the Bluegrass neighborhood to pursue and capture these outlaws. Among those on the posse were Tom Seward, George Petty, J. T. Stanley, John Marshall, Del Hesse and possibly others. These were joined by Geo. Gillian and Bill Cavin from Englewood, Kans. They overtook the outlaws a few miles south of the present town of Laverne, Okla. One member of the posse was sent to old Fort Supply to get out soldiers to come up Wolf Creek

and head them off. The soldiers were too slow in getting started as there seemed to be a lot of red tape about starting the U. S. army on an expedition of this kind.

In the meantime, the posse was engaged in a running fight with the outlaws until near dark when they went into a large willow thicket north of the present town of Fargo, Okla. Just before this, some members of the posse shot Doolin in the foot and wounded his horse so he had to abandon it and rode on the same horse with Arkansas Tom. The soldiers arrived about dark, charged the willow thicket but the outlaws all escaped. Arkansas Tom kept Doolin concealed in the canyons near the present town of Camargo, Okla., until his wounded foot healed. The total result was one captured crippled horse by the posse men, no reward money and Doolin was wounded in the foot.

There is still a school house and voting precinct known as Bluegrass, but no store or postoffice. When the Katy railroad [M.K.&T.] built near there in 1912, the town of Laverne was started a few miles east of Bluegrass, and it is the principal trading point for that community now.

—H. S. Judy

OKLAHOMA'S HISTORY DISCUSSION COUNCIL

In February of this year the Oklahoma City Greater Libraries presented to the Oklahoma Historical Society a plan and a program for a series of discussions of Oklahoma. The purpose was to arouse a larger and deeper interest in all Oklahoma history. The discussions were to take place in the Auditorium of the Society each Thursday evening from 7:30 to 9:00 p. m., beginning March 6, and ending April 24. Stated subjects were set forth and the general public was invited to participate in any and all sessions without charge.

The two young men appointed by the Oklahoma City Greater Libraries to conduct these programs were Mr. Robert Duncan and Mr. Walter Gray. One or more authoritative historians of the State were to open discussions and then under the direction of a chairman in due season the audience was invited to participate.

The Oklahoma Historical Society through its Secretary earnestly endorsed this movement and gave it as much publicity as possible through letters, newspaper articles, etc. Mr. Duncan and Mr. Gray, ably and vigorously, attended to every detail of securing public interest and guarding carefully the development of each subject, both as to speakers and preparation for the opening and closing of each session and advising as to the length and closing of each evening's program.

The dates, subjects and speakers for each program is here set forth: March 6, "Oklahoma Folklore," Bob Duncan, Folklore Consultant, Oklahoma City Libraries; March 13, "Oklahoma's Cowboys," Dr. E. E. Dale, Research Professor of History, University of Oklahoma; March 20, "Religious History of Oklahoma," Rev. Rupert Naney, Nichols Hills Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Dr. John R. Abernathy, Associate Minister, St. Luke's Methodist Church, and

Miss Muriel Wright, Co-Editor, *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*; March 27, "Oklahoma's Art, Music and Literature," Dr. Angie Debo, Curator of Maps, Oklahoma A. & M. College Library; April 3, "Early Visitors in Oklahoma," Dr. O. W. Davison, Director, School and Community Services, Extension Division, University of Oklahoma; April 10, "Oklahoma's Indians," Dr. M. L. Wardell, David Ross Boyd, Professor of History, University of Oklahoma; April 17, "Political History of Oklahoma," Panel of prominent Oklahomans, including Governor Johnston Murray and Jo O. Ferguson, Editor of the *Pawnee Chief*, Pawnee, Oklahoma; April 24, "History of Oklahoma City," U. S. District Judge Edgar S. Vaught, Oklahoma City, and Dr. Charles Evans, Secretary, Oklahoma Historical Society.

Needless to say this series of discussions awakened great interest in Oklahoma City and certain historical centers over the state. Good audiences of some one hundred and more were always present and individual interest was so intense at times that the audience took over the program. It was such a success in every way that there was a call from the public to make it an annual institution. On the last night Mr. Gray and Mr. Duncan, speaking for the Oklahoma City Greater Libraries, and Dr. Charles Evans for the Oklahoma Historical Society, expressed complete faith that it would become an annual affair.

—Ed. (C.E.)

LIGHT ON OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL MARKERS

The government of Oklahoma, through legislative enactment gave \$10,000 for historical markers, to be placed at certain points, telling of heroic events in pioneer life. These markers were developed and placed under the auspices of the Oklahoma Historical Society in co-operation with the State Highway Department, in the years of 1949-1951. The original committee appointed by the Board to choose these pivotal points consisted of General W. S. Key, President, Miss Muriel H. Wright, Associate Editor, and Dr. Charles Evans, Secretary.⁶

Miss Wright has recently compiled the inscriptions of the markers that were visited on the historical tour made by the Society and friends, April 25, 26 and 27, 1952.

The Editor believing it will greatly help the people of Oklahoma and the readers of *The Chronicles* to read these sketches is placing them in this issue of *The Chronicles*.

—Ed. (C.E.)

⁶ Col. George H. Shirk was active in this work, and became a member of the Committee in 1950. The detailed program for 1949 and for 1950 in completing the Oklahoma Historical markers was published in *The Chronicles* for each of these two years, Vol. XXVII, No. 4 (Winter, 1949-50), and Vol. XXVIII, No. 4 (Winter, 1950-51), respectively.

OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY TOUR
APRIL 25, 26, 27, 1952

Leaving Oklahoma City south to Norman—

Historical Markers erected by the Historical Society visited en route on Tour:
 Inscription on Marker with location in parenthesis following:

1. "The University of Oklahoma: Established Dec. 19, 1890, by First Legislative Council, Oklahoma Ter., with \$10,000 grant from Cleveland Co., and 40 a. site donated by citizens of Norman. Opened Sept. 15, 1892. David Ross Boyd, President. WNAD, radio station, established 1923; and University Press, 1929."

(On U.S. Highway #77, three blocks south of Boyd Street, Norman, Cleveland Co.)

NOTE:

Stop made at Lexington, at Y on U.S. #77 before crossing bridge, to visit Historical Marker, granite shaft erected by Colonial Dames of Oklahoma, marking site of Camp Holmes in vicinity where U.S. made 1st treaty with Plains Indians on Aug. 24, 1835.

2. "California Trail: Crossed here—Caravans of gold seekers in the Rush for California traveled this Trail in spring, 1849, under military escort commanded by Capt. R. B. Marcy. Route lay west from Ft. Smith, south side of Arkansas and Canadian rivers, across Oklahoma. Camp ground and spring, 3 mi. west, well known on this famous Trail."

(On South side of Wayne, McClain Co., roadside park on U.S. #77.)

3. "Fort Arbuckle: One-half mile North—Established in April 1851 by Capt. R. B. Marcy. From here in 1852 Capts. Marcy and Geo. B. McClellan, later Comdr. in Chief of Army of Potomac, set out to explore source of Red River. Post abandoned to Confederates May 3, 1861. Again garrisoned by U.S. troops after Civil War; abandoned 1870. Initial Point for land surveys is 1 mi. south at intersection of Indian Meridian and Base Line."

(At Hoover, Garvin Co., State Highway #7, about 7 miles west of Davis.)

4. "Ardmore: Post Office named for Ardmore, Pa., and established Oct. 27, 1887, on Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe R.R. built north from Texas. Home of Lee Cruce, 2nd Governor of Oklahoma 1911-15. Hargrove College opened by Methodist Church, in 1895, became Carter Sem. in 1917 for Chickasaw Indian girls, named for Charles D. Carter, M.C."

(Ardmore, Carter Co., north city limits on U.S. #77.)

5. "Tishomingo: Capitol of the Chickasaw Nation which was organized in 1856, under a written constitution. Named for revered Chief Tishomingo who had died on the Trail of Tears during Indian Removal from Mississippi. Last Chickasaw Governor was Douglas H. Johnston who served 39 years. Stone capitol was built in 1897. The Chickasaw Academy for boys opened in 1851, about 3 miles of S.E."

(At Tishomingo, Johnston Co., near junction of State Highways #99 and #22.)

6. "Fort Washita: 4.5 mi. S.W.—Site selected and named, 1842, by Gen. Zachary Taylor, later Pres. of the U.S. Post established 1843 by 2nd Dragoons. Garrisoned until Civil War. Braxton Bragg, post comdr. in 1854, later Lieut. Gen. in Confederate Army. Occupied throughout Civil War by Confederate forces. Not occupied at any time thereafter by U.S. troops."

(Marker 1 mile south of Nida, Johnston Co., on State Highway #299. Site of Fort Washita is in N.W. Bryan Co.)

7. "Camp Leavenworth: About 2 mi. South—Named for Gen. Henry Leavenworth who died near here, July 21, 1834 while enroute from Ft. Gibson to Wichita Village in western Oklahoma for a peace conference with the Plains Indians. The expedition continued under Col. Henry Dodge, assisted by many notable officers and civilians including Lt. Jefferson Davis and George Catlin, the artist of Indian life."

(At Kingston, Marshall Co., west limits of city, on U.S. #70.)

8. "Durant: Home of Robert Lee Williams, one of Oklahoma's foremost citizens. Member Constitutional Convention; Chief Justice State Supreme Court; and Governor 1915-19. Later, was Judge on U.S. District Court, and Judge on U.S. Appeals Court, 10th Circuit at time of death, 1948. Was President of Oklahoma Historical Society since 1938."

(At Durant, Bryan Co., north side of City limits, on U.S. #69-75.)

9. "Chahta Tamaha: 3 mi. N.E.—Armstrong Academy, established by Choctaw Nation and named for Wm. Armstrong, Indian Agt., was opened there, 1845. Rev. R.D. Potts, Supt., under Baptist Miss. Soc. Post Office established Nov. 1850. Confederate capital during Civil War. Choctaw capital, 1863-1883. Noted chiefs there included Peter P. Pitchlynn, Allen Wright and Jackson McCurtain.

(At Bokchito, Bryan Co., about 2 miles, at junction of State #2 and #2A.)

10. "Goodland Mission: 2 miles west—Begun 1848 by Rev. John Lathrop of American Bd. of Foreign Miss. Rev. O. P. Stark, Supt (1850), built 1st church. Mrs. Stark opened 1st school there. Others in the service through 100 years included W.J.B. Lloyd, J.P. Gibbons, Bella M. Gibbons, Silas Bacon, Mr. and Mrs. B. McCann, Ebenezer Hotchkins, S. Bailey Spring, and E.D. Miller."

(South of Hugo, Choctaw Co., about 2 miles, at junction of State #2 and #2A.)

11. "Rose Hill: Site 1 mile south—One time noted plantation home of Col. Robert M. Jones, wealthiest Choctaw, owner of 500 slaves. A Southern leader he served as delegate from Choctaw Na. to the Confederate Congress at Richmond, Va. Baptist mission of "Providence" near by, closed about 1843; was acquired by Jones, and converted into his Rose Hill estate."

(In Choctaw Co., on U.S. #70, east of Hugo about 2½ miles.)

12. "Goodwater Choctaw Mission: Site about 6 miles south. Mission was opened in 1837, by Rev. Ebenezer Hotchkins, under auspices of American Bd. of Foreign Missions. Kunsha Sem. for girls was located there, 1842, by the Choctaw Council, through influence of Israel Folsom, noted Choctaw."

(In Choctaw Co., on U.S. #70, about 1 mile west of Kiamichi R. Bridge.)

13. "Spencer Academy: Site 8 mi North—Noted school for boys, established by Choctaw Nation, 1841; named for John C. Spencer. U.S. Sec. of War. Students who were later prominent leaders included Coleman E. Nelson, Allen Wright, Jackson McCurtain, Charles S. Vinson, B.F. Smallwood, Jefferson Gardner, Simon T. Dwight, Eliphalet N. Wright, Homer Davis."

(In Choctaw Co., on U.S. #70, east side of Sawyer.)

14. "Fort Towson: Near here, N.E.—Established May, 1824, under command of Col. Matthew Arbuckle to guard this region on Spanish border. Headquarters of Gen. S.B. Maxey, C.S. Army; abandoned at close of Civil War. In the vicinity, Doaksville was important trading center and one time capital of Choctaw Nation. George Hudson, Principal Chief, 1860. Noted Choctaws included David Folsom & Robert M. Jones."

(At Ft. Towson, Choctaw Co., east city limits on U.S. #70.)

15. "Wheelock Mission: 1.5 mi. North—Established by Rev. Alfred Wright in 1832, missionary to the Choctaws for 33 years; also, physician, and translator of New Testament and many other books, into Choctaw. The stone church there is the oldest church building in Oklahoma. The Choctaw Council established the Seminary for girls in 1842. Harriet B. Wright, Principal. Rev. John Edwards in charge, 1853-59."

(East of Millerton, McCurtain Co., about 1½ miles on U.S. #70.)

16. "Miller Court House: Oklahoma's 1st post office, about 9 mi. south, established Sept. 7, 1824. J.H. Fowler, Postmaster, at county seat of Miller Co., then part of Arkansas Ter. County abolished Oct. 1828, as land had been ceded to Choctaw Nation. Court house destroyed by fire in Nov. 1828."

(At Idabel, McCurtain Co., at junction of U.S. #70 and State #87.)

17. "Eagletown: First permanent settlement among Western Choctaws. Postoffice established July 1, 1834. Rev. L.S. Williams, P.M. Stock-bridge Mission established here 1836. Rev. Cyrus Byington, Supt. Here he produced monumental "Dictionary of Choctaw Language." Iyanubbee Seminary for girls established here in 1842 by Choctaw General Council."

(At Eagletown, McCurtain Co., on U.S. #70 east of bridge over Mountain Fork R.)

18. "Choctaw Capitols: Near here is site of "Nanih Waiya," first Choctaw capitol and council ground where first Constitution written in Oklahoma was adopted by Choctaw Nation, 1834. Joseph Kincaid, Thomas Le Flore, and Nitakechi, Chiefs. Tushkahomma Council House, last Choctaw capitol, one mile N.E. erected 1884, Jackson McCurtain, Princ. Chief.

(West of Tuskahoma, Pushmataha Co., on State #271.)

Note:

Visited Jones Academy, about 2 miles northeast of Hartshorne, Pittsburg Co., school for Indian boys maintained by Federal Govt. This Academy was established by the Choctaw Nation and first opened in 1892, named for Wilson N. Jones, Principal Chief of the Choctaw

Nation, 1890-94. The Academy was operated by the Choctaws until about 1930 when their tribal government properties were closed. Some of the buildings and the land are still owned by the Choctaws.

19. "Whipple Survey: Crossed here—Lieut. A. W. Whipple (later Maj. Gen., U.S. Army), under instructions of Jefferson Davis, U.S. Sec. of War, made first railroad survey from Ft. Smith to Pacific Coast, 1853. H.B. Molhausen, artist, Jules Marcon, geologist, and other scientists in party, crossed here Aug. 10, from camp a few miles east near a Shawnee town.

(About 5 miles south of Calvin, Hughes Co., on U.S. #75.)

20. "Fort Holmes: In immediate vicinity—Established in 1834 by Lt. T. H. Holmes, later Lt. Gen., in Confederate Army. Post visited in June, 1834, by Gen. Henry Leavenworth on his Expedition to Plains tribes. Edwards' Store, site one mile west and across Little River, was the last trading post on California Road, for emigrants during the Gold Rush, until reaching Santa Fe. Jesse Chisholm partner in the store, 1836.

(At Bilby, Hughes Co., on State #64.)

21. "Emahaka Mission: Near here N.E.—School for Seminole Indian girls established 1894 and operated by Seminole Nation. Rev. W.P. Blake, first Supt. Mrs. Alice Brown Davis, who later became first woman chief of the Seminoles was the Supt. at Emahaka Mission in 1908. The school was abandoned in 1914, and the imposing building accidentally destroyed by fire in 1927.

(South of Wewoka, Seminole Co., about 5 miles at intersection of U.S. #270 and #56.)

—M.H.W.



PAUL NESBITT