

VIRGIL ANDREW WOOD, M.D.

By Mrs. H. Hubert Wood

Virgil Andrew Wood, M. D., a pioneer physician in Oklahoma whose name is closely connected with the history of Oklahoma as a territory and a state, was Southern born and bred. He himself was a "49er" born in Barlow County, Georgia, August 12, 1849, a son of James Wood, later a Confederate Soldier, born about 1829 in South Carolina, and Mary Turner Wood, of Georgia. The parents of James Wood were both Virginians.

The globe-trotting instinct was started early for Virgil Wood, because the family, which also included his elderly grandmother, Anna Wood, moved to Texas from Georgia when he was a very small child. After two years in Texas, the family moved to the pine country of Hempstead County, Arkansas. He attended St. John's College, and later was graduated from the Kentucky School of Medicine at Louisville.¹ He was married October 4, 1874, at Ozan, Arkansas, to Sarah Catherine Robins, known as "Sallie," born in Georgia, November 3, 1855. His wife's background was southern, too, for her father, Samuel H. Robins, was born in Georgia, and her mother Sarah Turner Robins (a cousin of Mary Turner Wood) and maternal grandparents were all South Carolinians.

Dr. Wood's first years of medical practice were in Arkansas until the opening of Oklahoma in 1889. Riding a big white horse, the doctor made the run into the territory April 22, and located at Oklahoma City. Subsequently the family lived in Norman, later settling in Garfield County near Enid, before finally choosing Blackwell to call home. In Garfield County, he served four years as a member of the pension board, and was County Physician for one year. One of his patients was the notorious outlaw Dick Yeaeger while the wounded bandit was in the Enid jail. The doctor was a delegate to the Republican conventions, and in 1898 was elected to the Legislature,² where he was the author of pharmacy and military bills. Dr. Wood was a Deacon in the Baptist Church, and, like his father, was a Mason. His mother was a member of the Baptist Church, while his father was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church South.³ While living in Blackwell, Dr. Wood was for many years president of the board of education.⁴

¹*History of Arkansas & Memoirs of Southern Arkansas* (Goodspeed 1890), p. 453.

²*Oklahoma Red Book* Vol. 1 (Democrat Printing Co., Tulsa, 1912). Picture of members of 5th Legislature facing p. 298.

³*Portrait & Biographical Record of Oklahoma* (Chapman Publishing Co., Chicago 1901), p. 1273.

⁴Hoover S. Chambers, *The Enduring Rock*. (Blackwell (Okla.), Publications, 1954), p. 87.



Dr. and Mrs. Virgil Andrew Wood



Mr. and Mrs. Samuel H. Robles,
parents of Mrs. Sarah Turner
Wood.



Mrs. James Wood (nee' Mary
Turner), Mother of Dr. Virgil
Andrew Wood.



Mrs. Annal Wood, Grandmother
of Dr. Virgil Andrew Wood.

Dr. and Mrs. Wood had nine children: Beulah, Minnie, Edna, Robert, Okla and Homa (twins born the day after the opening of Oklahoma, April 23, 1889), Virgil, Verda and Dudley, all of whom attended the University of Oklahoma. Beulah was in the first group of co-eds matriculating at O. U.⁵ Robert H. played football at O. U., and made the never-to-be-duplicated touchdown of 108 yards back in the days when football fields were 110 yards long.⁶ All the boys were members of Sigma Nu fraternity, and the two youngest daughters were members of Pi Beta Phi. Two of the sons became geologists, and named their Tulsa firm the Brookwood Oil Company. The other two sons, an attorney and a businessman, also joined the firm.

Dr. and Mrs. Wood have the distinction of having by far the largest number of descendants of any family having attended the University of Oklahoma. At the last count, 33 family members were included in the O. U. roster. Sullie Wood was a true pioneer wife, and at her death, a woman's circle of the Baptist Church at Blackwell was named in her honor.⁷ When Dr. Wood died in Blackwell in 1925, an editorial⁸ stated: "the death of this much loved citizen brings sorrow to thousands of homes in Blackwell and Kay County."

Dr. Wood had the pioneer spirit when he made the run into Oklahoma in 1889, as shown in the accompanying letters written to the Editor of the *Visitor* published at Wallaceburg (now Blewins), Arkansas, in April, May and June, 1889, at the request of many friends.⁹

BOUND FOR OKLAHOMA

Atoka, Indian Territory, April 12, 1889.

Editor, *Visitor*:—A great number of my friends asked me to write them regarding our trip, and especially of the famous promised land of Oklahoma. It is impossible to write to all, so I will, through your permission, write them through the *Visitor*.

We are getting on nicely. Have been gone eight days. Are about two hundred miles from home on the M. E. & T. Railroad. It is yet about 150 miles to our destination. As I say we, perhaps it would be good to say who composes our company: Capt. Taylor, L. P. Ross and H. V. Scott of Prescott, and Maj. J. H. Steidman and myself of Wallaceburg. We have seen turkeys in great abundance, but the turkeys see us first—we have killed none. We have seen some very fine country in the Choctaw Nation, and some extremely poor. The cross timbers are about four miles through and are just now ready to launch into an almost boundless paradise. We have seen thousands of

⁵ *The Oklahoma News*, Oklahoma City, Friday, December 17, 1920, pp. 1-2.

⁶ Harold Keith, *Oklahoma Kickoff*, 1948, pp. 183-192, 209-211.

⁷ Clara B. Kenman, "Neighbors in the Cherokee Strip," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (Spring, 1949), pp. 82-83.

⁸ *The Blackwell Tribune*, March 19, 1925, p. 1.

⁹ Dates and birthplaces in this contribution to *The Chronicles*, from 1880 U. S. Census Records of Hemstead County, Arkansas.

Indians. They are now at Atoka to draw their bounty. The town is full of them of all ages, all sizes, and all sexes. They are camped all around the town, many of them women, and some of them are very old, are barefooted. All the women wear red handkerchiefs on their heads, most of them have on red dresses and wear red moccasins. The men have the red on their hats, around their necks, and some around their body. Red, red, red everything. I for one would be pleased if this big Choctaw Nation were opened to settlers. Sometimes we travel ten miles through fertile regions, and do not see one acre in cultivation. When we get to Oklahoma we will write again.

Y. A. Wood

Johnson, I. T. April 18, 1880.¹⁹

Editor, *Visitor*:—When I last wrote I thought the next letter would be written on the Oklahoma line, but our tent is pitched on the south bank of the South Canadian.²⁰

The river is high, angry and muddy. It is much larger than we had anticipated. The great waves roll and splash and leap and fall with a great noise, owing to the great amount of quicksand, the river is treacherous in the extreme, and many wagons and thousands of cattle and horses have sunk to rise no more. Campers are lined for miles on the roadside. They ride to the water's margin, and look across into the Pottawatomie Nation. They look and long and finally with a dejected appearance slowly ride back to their camp. No ferry boats are near here and we do not know when we can cross, but unless it rains, it will probably be in a very few days. We are within twelve miles of the Oklahoma line. Reports say that the boomers are counting "A hundred thousand strong." Since the writing of my last letter, we have seen some of the finest country that there is within this wide domain. It is very sparsely settled. The traveler can see ten thousand acres of fertile land in one body, and not an acre in cultivation. We have seen but very few Chickasaws; in fact they have a large country and have perhaps less than four thousand in population. They are not very friendly to the whites. They know that the whites want their country. They have recently enacted a law prohibiting the sale of prairie hay. It is against their law, yet some white men come in here and lease land for ten years from some Indian and go to getting rich. My opinion is that the man who now takes a ten year lease will eventually own the land from the fact that I think this new country will be opened to settlers later. The range is excellent. Hogs all over the Territory are fatter than they were at any time of the year in our country. Plenty of them would make good pork. White farming is almost ignored, yet corn can be bought in bulk at 18 cents per bushel. Good horses and mules are higher here than there. Ponies are cheap. Yesterday I received a fee for prescribing for a Chickasaw girl. We have a lawyer in our crowd. He also got a job and five dollars. As for game, there seem to be a good many deer and turkeys. We have seen a great many of them, but have killed none as they always see us first. They hear and see the wagon and leave. Plover are in great abundance, and there are some prairie chickens. The settlers say there are plenty of chickens, but as this is laying time, they are in unfrequented

¹⁹This location first called "Johnsonville," named for Montford Johnson, a well known rancher of the Chickasaw Nation, is near the present Byars in McClain County. This place has an interesting history dating back to the establishment of old Camp Arbuckle about a mile northwest, by Captain R. B. Marcy, Fifth Infantry, 1850. A post office called "Johnson," was established at Johnsonville on October 5, 1876, and except for a short period was continuously operated until after Oklahoma statehood. (George H. Slink, "The Site of Old Camp Arbuckle," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3 Autumn, 1949, pp. 213-15).—Ed.

²⁰The travelers had come west from Atoka by way of Lehigh, Stonewall and present Ada. The crossing of the Canadian River was a little northwest of Johnson, the road leading north by way of present Wacette in the Pottawatomie Reservation.—Ed.

places. Chickasaw plums are natives, and grow here by the millions. Our tent is in a plum orchard. We came through Lehigh, the noted coal mining town of this nation (Choctaw). There are quite a few mines in successful operation, several hundred miners at work, and the town has a population of about three thousand.

More anon.

V. A. Wood

Pottawatomie Nation, April 21, 1890.

Editor, Visitor:—This is the day that we should consecrate as a day of rest, thereby enjoying the more frequent opportunities of beholding the beauties of creation and adoring our Creator. Our tent is pitched within half a mile of the Oklahoma line and near the North Canadian.¹² There are no religious assemblies to attend here today, although there are scarcely over one thousand people in sight of our camp. Religion, law and politics are very scarce articles in this part of the Territory. Excitement and enthusiasm are at their highest. Men, women, children, mules, horses, cattle and dogs are everywhere around. The banks of the little streams are thronged to their utmost. Some are running horse races, practicing their horses for tomorrow's race. Some are shooting, some are fishing, and it seems that nearly all are cursing. Since beginning to write this letter some deer ran through the camp, and it seems that seventy-five quail were fired to no avail. After travelling through this Pottawatomie Reservation we say that we have seen but very little good country. The valley in which we are camped is fertile. I can say that what little we have seen of Oklahoma we like. Men are crossing the line all the time, and if the soldiers find them they claim to be hunting horses. The spies who steal out never bring us any grapes, any leaves, any venison or even a specimen of the soil. On tomorrow every man expects to run for life. He tells but few of his intentions as to course or locality, and those few don't believe him. Men who served as valiant soldiers for four years say they never saw such excitement and enthusiasm. I know of six doctors in these camps and not a single preacher. After the great scramble I will write again.

OKLAHOMA CITY

Oklahoma City, April 22, 1890. 8 o'clock p. m.

Editor, Visitor:—The great race is over, and our crowd got nothing save the greatest race of their lives. We tried to enter the Territory at a secluded place, but even there a hundred wagons were in line ready to fly for life. It is supposed that a thousand men entered at our secluded spot. Race horses were brought here from a thousand miles away. We are now in the city of Oklahoma. There are but few houses, nothing to buy, but there is plenty of money. The wildest excitement exists. They are laying off the city. Men are cursing, and within ten feet of me two men are at this moment about to go to shooting. It seems that but few law abiding men have secured claims. Moonshiners popped up from almost every strip of timber and almost every ravine. When they slipped in, nobody knows, but many of us are left. This is certainly the coming Eldorado of America. You can already find here the Chinese, Indians walk the streets, as well as Mexicans and a few Negroes. The whole country seems to be literally alive with human beings. As for myself, I have taken the hardest race of my life today but without avail. There is talk of a town election tonight. We are not candidates. I will

¹² The encampment was in the Pottawatomie Reservation just east of the east boundary of the Oklahoma County (Indian Meridian) and near the present site of Ramah in Oklahoma County.—Ed.

close and got away before the shooting begins. I never came here to fight, I could have done that nearer home.

V. A. Wood

Oklahoma City, April 26, 1889.

Editor, *Visitor*:—After mature deliberation, I will again give my opinion of this land of content and excitement. The saying that "There is always a calm after a storm" has not yet been verified in this case. The storm of excitement is not as high as it was on last Monday. The squatters who slipped in under cover of darkness are selling their ill gotten claims for from ten to two hundred dollars depending on location and validity of said claims. Hundreds of contents, and a feast for lawyers will likely result. As a rule it is not expected that squatters will be the permanent occupants. Many men have located claims who are not able to file on them, much less to improve them. On yesterday morning, a man came to our camp and proposed to sell his claim for one hundred dollars. One of our party went to see it, but did not like it, and the claimant relinquished it before night for \$15.00. The farmer who comes here for land need not expect to find good land unclaimed, but it is cheap.

Great excitement prevails in regard to which town shall be the metropolis. By tomorrow night 640 acres will be surveyed into town lots at this place. Stores are being erected in every direction. Many stacks of goods are on the bare ground with no covering save the canopy of heaven. Many have already put up temporary buildings and many are selling goods in tents. Gamblers, thieves, pickpockets, lottery men, lawyers, preachers and men of all shades, ages and characters are here well represented. Upon the whole, I think this country is very much overrated. The valleys are fertile and sometimes four or five miles wide. The high lands seem to be too high and sandy. No doubt but this is a good country and possesses an excellent destiny in the not distant future, but it is by no means a garden of Eden, or honey pond surrounded and ornamented with fitter trees. Neither is it necessary to be in a big hurry to come here, because there will be plenty of places to sell cheap, and besides, it is the opinion of many posted men that the Cherokee strip will soon be opened.

Potatoes are selling at 75c per bushel, and all kinds of groceries are at reasonable prices. I have seen crowded trains before, but never saw such crowds as pass on the trains during this Oklahoma excitement. Doctors are as thick here as some people claim that fiddlers are in the regions of Pinto. One man's sign reads as follows:

"To trust is to hurt.
To hurt is hell;
No trust no hurt,
No hurt no hell."

Only a few days since, and this part of the country was veiled with the tender grass, but today it is a cloud of dust.

V. A. Wood

Oklahoma City, April 27, 1889.

Editor, *Visitor*:—As I am denied the pleasure of reading your paper or even receiving a letter from Hempstead County, although I have been gone over three weeks, yet I find pleasure in addressing my friends through your columns.

We have read of a nation being born in a day, and recently it has been my lot to witness the birth of a city in half a day. This place will certainly be a good sized place. The water is good and abundant, the valley is unsurpassably

fertile, and as beautiful as the eye of man ever beheld. There will soon be a railroad junction at this point, and some day, valuable machinery all up and down this North Canadian. Guthrie has more population than this town, but the location is far inferior to this. The land is not so good, the wind is abundant, and the water supply is short. Trains, both freight and passenger, are crowded to their utmost. The majority of squatters are determined to sell their ill gotten gains at some price. I have a good horse. He was in perfect trim, his spribs were elated, he clumped, fanned, and pawed for the word to be given, and at the word go, he made it convenient to strike the ground in the high places, and after almost flying 15 miles, he found ox teams had beat him far enough to be well rested. Uncle Sam's boys failed to do their duty, but I could get a horse, if I were so inclined. Two cities are laid off here 320 acres each, and called South and North Oklahoma. Leslie P. Ross, of Prescott, was today elected City Attorney of South Oklahoma.

Two men have died here this week. A pugil et envious fight has just occurred over a town lot. It was my pleasure to get the first horse shed in this city, and it was my displeasure to pay one dollar and seventy-five cents for same. I have been in many cities, but it is a fact that a person can see more fakers here and at Guthrie in one day than I have seen in all my previous life.

It is almost impossible to get to the postoffice. The little house is but little higher than a man's head, and consequently casts but little shade. Men must crowd and jam, and many stand in the hot sunshine for hours before getting to ask for a letter. If he asks for a paper, the reply is: "Good God, man, we can't look through the papers, for there are two hundred bushels of them." At Guthrie, men sometimes pay five dollars for some other man's place in the long file. The man who files out will walk to the end of the line and be in readiness for another bid.

I believe I will be compelled to come home to hear from Sallie and the babies. Postage stamps are selling in Guthrie at 25c each, because a man can't get to the postoffice to buy.

V. A. Wood

Oklahoma City, May 1st 1889.

City elections were held here today, and there is great excitement. There is never the hundredth part of a minute that hammers and saws are not heard. People leave by the hundreds, and others take their place. Lumber and other freight comes much faster than it can be unloaded. Lots are going up every day. On last Sunday a man bought a lot for a hundred dollars. On Monday he was offered a thousand, and on Tuesday he said that five thousand would not buy it. Claims in the country are on the decline. To get to the postoffice a person has to fall into line and perhaps in two hours he can put his head into the little window. No letter from home since I left. I don't even know whether these Oklahoma squibs are printed. On last Sunday night lightning struck a poor fellow here and killed him instantly. He lived in Iowa. His remains are still at the depot, and it is now Wednesday evening. All our party save L. P. Ross and myself left for Arkansas today. I don't know when I will return. The train is about due, so I must stop for the present.

V. A. Wood

Oklahoma City, May 6, 1889.

Editor, *Vigil*:—My friends in Hempstead County are anxious to hear from this country, and they, doubtless, think that I ought to be able to tell all about it. I came almost straight from the line to this place, and saw some

of as fine country as I ever beheld, but have only been out from here just once, and then only about five miles. Reliable men leave here and visit the country in all directions. They say the country is very fine, and many claims are to be bought at very low figures. Many people are breaking sod. The building rage is still very high. No reaction in prices of town property has yet occurred. Everywhere that men dig they get plenty of water. Yesterday was Sunday, and not nearly so many men worked as on the Sunday before. Any man who can drive a mule can get employment here at from two to three dollars a day. As my party came here, we found a human skull in the Pottawatomie Nation. I sent it home by Hon. A. H. Stephens. The wind has been blowing very terrifically for nearly three days and it does seem that all the dust would be blown to the north pole, but as fast as one cloud is gone in that direction, another cloud of dust comes from the southward. Health is good, but there are some chills and bowel troubles. A great many lawyers have located here as well as doctors. I cannot say whether or not the lawyers are gaining much wealth. They are often consulted in regard to claims. Some people think that this is a lead hill, but almost everybody is friendly. When they get enraged they get no fuel in the shape of wine, beer or whisky, so they are soon cool. This climate is salubrious, and so invigorating that it almost forces a man to pinch himself that he may be convinced of his identity. Should any friend wish to ask questions about Oklahoma, he may address me at Oklahoma City, T. T.

V. A. Wood

Oklahoma City, May 16, 1889.

Rain is very much needed. Wherever a hole is dug here, water is found. Very fine fish are taken out of this Canadian River. Many people are breaking land, and some few are planting a little corn.

Citizens say that health is good here, but the doctors say it is distressingly good.

One of Oklahoma's doctors says he will leave here as soon as there is much sickness about Wallaceburg.

Good snakes aize, how ugly is that crowd of Arapaho Indians with blankets and shawls wrapped around their loins.

Out at a distance from this place in every direction men are building small houses, digging wells, and breaking the sod.

Some men leave daily, but others immediately take their place, so the great improvement goes steadily and hurriedly on.

Not many days hence an old ugly Indian carried his daughter to Ft. Reno, a point fifteen miles west from here, and tried to sell her for sixty dollars.

Still the saws are whirling and the hammers are knocking and the teams are trotting and the wagons are rattling and the houses are growing like mushrooms, and the city like magic.

It is claimed that lumber is scurving at the rapid rate of nearly 50 car loads per day, and still the supply is not equal to the demand. Lumber now sells at from 2 dollars and twenty-five cents to two dollars and ten cents per hundred.

It is claimed that there are three thousand people here and about fifty physicians. The doctor who gets no more than his pro rata of the practice only has about 60 men to his share. Perhaps one in sixty is now sick with a slight diarrhoea. As I have a gentle, educated, and popular partner, and a conspicuous location, we are getting more than our share of the practice.

Many men are here engaged in the employ of the United States. They have a good deal of resting, and some work to do as this country is under military instead of civil government. Sometimes they find whisky in the depot labeled "Culior Oil" or some other deceptive way. They immediately waste it on the ground and take good care of the owner. Recently quite a number of soldiers have been intoxicated and they claimed it was on cider. So much cider has been spilt on the streets that the town is sour.

It is contemplated that several railroads will surely form a junction here. This place is surrounded by perhaps the most fertile part of this territory. The water supply is unsurpassed. The river makes a nice bend and the city is the bend and is an nice a valley as the eye of man ever beheld. Meandering through the town from one point of the river to the other, there is a fall of twenty-one feet to the mile which by evidence that an ample supply of water can be obtained at small price. Owing to the unimpaired smoothness of the surface here it will not cost much to grade, or to start street cars. No other place in this territory possesses so many advantages which are requisite for a large city. As it now is, it is not very far from the geographical center. Should the Cherokee Strip, no man's land, the Arapahoes, the Chickasaws, and the See and Fox be opened to settlement, then it would not be far from the center. Taking all these things in view, there is certainly no question as to the destiny of Oklahoma City. After the great rush of building is over here, property will likely decline till one good crop is made, and then it will rise to fall no more until it is proclaimed that time shall be no longer. The man who is able to spend a few hundred dollars here and let it lie until then is likely to be well paid for his investment. Should any friend wish to address me my box is No. 137.

V. A. Wood

Oklahoma City, May 21, 1889.

Four newspapers are already edited here, and more expected in the not distant future.

Much work was done, even last week, toward grading the streets, and still the work goes on.

From early dawn 'til close of day the busy workmen's saws see singling, and their hammers constantly ringing.

Not many of our citizens are sick, but sickness is on the increase, or at least my partner and myself are getting more calls.

Today sprinklers were put on the streets, and ere long many more conveniences will be added 'til this will be a desirable place.

For the benefit of those who think they would like to see the best part of the Territory, I will state that it is on the two Canadians, and between them.

The first Sunday here was not much observed; the carpenters labored all day, but on last Sunday all was quiet. Many of us attended church and Sunday school.

It was predicted that at the settlement of this country the crimson tide would flow both wide and deep, but now all will acknowledge that it was a joyful surprise. People are not so peaceable today in the lovely city of Little Rock as they are in this fair promising young city. There are no saloons here, but plenty of gamblers. These gamblers don't force us to take a part.

Many men staked lots who never expected to hold on there, and as they are required to do some improving, and required to spend a little money in obtaining titles, and as many are minus that little money, they are now selling

their claims just to the best advantage. Lots remote from the busy part of the town are now on the downward tendency. Many men left their families at home, obtained claims, have built houses, and it seems that every train is now bringing women and children.

As stated in a previous letter, busy parties came in before noon of April 22 which bars them from filing. They, therefore, are holding down their claims until some home seeker will hire them to move. A retired physician was in here on yesterday. He lives ten miles from this place, says it is beautiful and fertile as the eye of man ever beheld, that plenty of water can be obtained within from ten to twelve feet of the surface, that they need a physician, and that he would insure me a relinquishment for less than 100 dollars, but while I admire and even love this pioneer country, yet I know of a little place in Hempstead County Arkansas that has a well already dug, and it is said that since my exit two brand new corners¹³ have made their arrival, and said place and said corners are drawing me like a magnet draws a needle. Another call to see the wife of a judge. Guess it will pay me best to close this epistle and trade with the judge.

Y. A. Wood

Oklahoma City, May 26, 1889.

Still the boom goes on.

Every train seems to carry some one away from this city, but it brings more than it carries.

It is estimated that there are now over four thousand people in the city, and by actual count over thirteen hundred houses, thirty-seven physicians and forty-three lawyers on last Wednesday. In one night last week, 170 car loads of lumber arrived at this place. Twenty three lumber yards are here and all are doing a good business. Oklahoma City and South Oklahoma City lie side by side with not a jog in the streets. It is said that the aggregate number of miles of streets in 33, yet plenty of men have no lot. The enthusiasm is so high, and the desire for more lots so great that on last Thursday evening hundreds of people ran on a quarter section just west, and in an incredibly short time staked the whole of the 160 acres, and they called it West Oklahoma. This land is claimed by Capt. W. L. Couch who succeeded Capt. Payne. Said Couch was here previous to April 22, and therefore it is claimed that his rights are worthless, but, nevertheless, Capt. Couch stands in with the military forces here, and above all that, he is the very leader of a nefarious and diabolical syndicate who style themselves "The Seminole Land and Town-site Company." He therefore called on the military for protection, and very soon an armed infantry and an armed cavalry ejected the claimants. The stakes were all pulled up, but this did not quell the excitement. Meetings were held for the purpose of providing methods whereby the town could be re-land, and for the purpose of expressing the overflowing indignation toward such an accused combination. This town-site company was here on the right of way; they had their pets; they had their lumber to put up shanties; they had their carpenters; they had even previously surveyed their beautiful lots, and now claim that while on the right of way they were not property in Oklahoma.

Capt. Couch is the mayor of the city, and it is now publicly asserted that he was elected in Kansas by the town-site company, and not only he, but the major part of all the council. It is their object to possess at least half of the real estate here, the water works, the street railways and to possess the

¹³ The twins, "Okla" and "Homa," born to Dr. and Mrs. Wood at their home in Arkansas, April 23, 1889.



Cherokee and Arapaho Indian Dedication at Muskogee City, Okla., meeting with members of U. S. Commission, with reference to their tribal claims in the Cherokee Outlet.

Property of J. M. Owen, Muskogee, Okla.



Street Scene in Oklahoma City, soon after the opening in 1889.
Courtesy of J. M. Owen, Photo Collection

charter for illuminating the city. Report says that tomorrow another attempt will be made to lay off the new site. The mayor with all his subordinates is now asked and urged not only to resign but also to leave the city. Quite a sensation was recently aroused here on account of the arrival of three buck loads of big Indians. They were dressed in very gaudy attire which evinced queer taste and a surplus of finances. Their moccasins were beaded in many flats. Their beads and plumes were many and gay. They had their commodious pipes of peace. The pipes were about 3 feet long and ornamented with many colors. These Indians are the chiefs of the several bands of the Arapahoes and Cheyennes. They came to hold a council with a committee of whites in regard to the Cherokee Strip. They claim that according to a treaty made about 20 years ago, the major part of said strip belongs to them, and that they are anxious to sell to the pale faces. The Strip is bound to coast. 'Till last Friday evening we had had but very little rain, but on that evening the thunder began to mutter in the distant west; as night drew near the angry lightning seemed to play base on a dark, smooth and menacing cloud. The air, the heavens and the earth were in a state of agitation. When all was calm, and daylight made its appearance, many a wet man beheld beautiful tents standing boldly on nice lakelets. Recently quite a deal of grading has been done, and no thing has been put in so you can see that wherever an embankment was made across a low place, a fish pond was made just above. Mr. Elliter, don't you suppose that was done for the benefit of the needy doctors? We can't imagine any other good results. A few words to the boys, and I will try aside my quill and attempt a pleasant journey to the region of dreams.

Boys, I know many of you personally, and I want to venture a bit of advice. Don't carry a pistol. I once thought that it would only take a pistol to make me feel like a man and look like a man. I bought one from a friend, carried it about twelve months without getting to kill a single man. I sold it back to the same fellow from whom I bought it, and have never owned one since. In those days it was bad enough to carry a pistol, but not so bad as it now is, because it is said in Holy Writ "Where there is no law there is no transgression." A person feels wrong with one in his pocket. It is no little trouble to keep it at all times concealed. It makes good people think much less of the carrier, and even the bad people respect him less. And this is not all. Were you to kill a person with it, your life would be ever after a burden to you. This is not all, for you are just as likely, and perhaps more likely to do yourself violence than to do violence to an antagonist. Just this evening a nice looking little boy was brought to my office to get a pistol ball taken out of his hand. This afternoon he was playing with a pistol when it went off accidentally. At this sitting I call to mind just 5 cases of gun shot wounds, and but one acquired *shave* by accident.

V. A. Wood

Oklahoma City, June 1, 1899.

Health is good, good.

Plenty of rain, but not in great abundance.

One day this week two children were buried here. They died of dysentery.

Town property is firm. Lots are for sale at from ten to a thousand dollars each.

We have no politics here, but plenty of mass meetings, conventions and city elections.

In the building rage there is no check, but onward and upward loom the houses every day.

There is a theatre here which is said to be excellent, but we can not say from experience.

One who has never seen the Indian trinkets would be wonderfully amazed to see the many beautiful and odd things they bring here to sell.

A few nights since, the Sac and Fox Indians had a war dance which drew together perhaps three thousand people, but did not draw your correspondent.

My correspondence to the *VISITOR* has brought me quite a number of letters of inquiry in regard to this country, and all have favored me with return postage.

One day this week a little Indian perhaps ten years of age, amused himself as well as the whites, by shooting arrows at nickels. Every nickel he hit was his, and he hit about two out of three.

The poor beggar, as well as the wealthy merchant, is here. We don't know how they got here, but their stories are so affecting, that to this writing the folk has every time been divided.

Attorney L. P. Ross, the last of my company, left on last Monday to pay a visit to his family in Prescott. When we bade him farewell we felt it would be more congenial with our feelings to accompany him.

Mr. Fletcher King, who has been gone from your township several years, is located here. He has two lots and a neat office built on as to occupy both, but one great misfortune attends him, and that is he has no woman to adorn it and make everything about it pleasant and as lucid as a new silver dollar.

I am requested to answer through the *Visitor* "If a person has filed or made application for homestead and failed to get a deed may he file and get a homestead in Oklahoma?" According to the President's Proclamation if he has failed to get a patent or deed from any cause he is not barred.

Some unprincipled men who claim to represent laundry firms have scoured the city collecting clothes to wash and Incky is the owner who ever sees his apparel again. Twice have we been thrusty imposed upon, and now we are forced to go to bed to accommodate another such rascal.

For several days there has been a man here getting the description of all stray horses (which horses are legion) and claiming to be an expert at finding horses for the reward. He had some accomplices, but a few days ago they disappeared, and last night the expert was arrested in front of our office for horse stealing. He is now on his way to Muskogee for safe keeping.

A short time since, a young man at this place who was not a gambler, and who had but little money set himself firmly against a wheel of fortune man. He was lucky, and in two hours had won about five hundred dollars which was every dollar owned by the wheel man. The wheeler then made one more desperate struggle. He took a fine gold watch from his pocket and the fortunate young man won again, and marched triumphantly away while the wheel stood as still as a statue.

Many and urgent are the recent appeals to us to return to our old home and practice our profession for those we have known longest and love best. Were our constituents as willing to serve us financially as we are to serve them professionally, never again would we be tempted to cast our lot among strangers in a distant land. However, only a few more moons, and Deo volente, we will likely go on our way rejoicing to the land that is second to but few, to gladly grasp the hands of our many kindred and friends, and above all to see at our home, the little twins whom it has never been our pleasure to behold.

V. A. Wood
P. O. Box No. 127

Oklahoma City, June 4, 1888.

A few of our best buildings are owned by Arkansas men.

There are about fifty doctors here, and plenty more expected to come.

Eighteen drug stores are here and more expected on every train.

There are nine hotels and a score of lodging and boarding houses.

No rain for several days, and the prospect is good for a dry spell.

Plenty of corn within twenty miles of here at 15c per bushel.

Health is not so distressingly good as it has been, but yet there are two doctors to one patient.

Every day men are relinquishing their claims at from \$25.00 to several hundred dollars.

Yesterday an Arkansas man brought in a nice tumor on his neck. We robbed him not only of the tumor, but of a few of his surplus dollars.

How glad we were made one day last week by unexpectedly receiving a copy of the *Visitor*. We looked all around to see if our kin folks had come.

The moon has waned and the moon has full and still we are no nearer Wallaceburg than we were on the day after the memorable rush.

A corner lot in the business part of the city sold on last Friday for \$1600.00; a lot that is not a corner lot sold today for \$500.00; out a little way another sold today for \$100.00.

It is strongly believed that the West Oklahoma town site scheme will be a success, and in that event we know an Arkansas man who has an opportunity of obtaining two lots.

A wide awake man here is now collecting specimens of all the rare animals of this pioneer country. His garden is now an attractive scene, and no telling how attractive it may be within a few years.

There are five bakeries here with large ovens; there are twelve barber shops with twenty-blue chairs; there are eleven meat markets; seven blacksmith shops; and seven brick yards. There are twenty-seven lumber yards, and one of them averages \$1500.00 freight per day. There are four banks; nine paint shops; thirty-four saloons; three tin shops; three furniture stores; and only two undertaker shops for fifty doctors, twenty-seven surveyors, forty-six real estate men, forty-two lawyers, and about one thousand gamblers. Strange indeed that there are so many doctors, lawyers, and gamblers, and not one saloon. There are five newspapers, one news stand, and a whole army of paper carriers.

A few days since we were called to go several miles into the country. No pen can describe the scenes of beauty that confronted our gaze, and no heart conceive the ethereal thoughts that permeated our enraptured being. For miles and miles, all was a perfect sea of grass which waved so triumphantly that it appeared that not one spig had ever been molested by horse, cow, deer, antelope, buffalo or by anything of a destroying nature. This sea of living green was beautified with many flowers of varied hues, and lest it might not in reality be called "The Beautiful Land," nature has planted here and yonder beautiful groves of oaks that there might not exist even the shadow of monotony. As we viewed these scenes we thought that Napoleon Bonaparte never bequeathed to one of his best friends a land of such unrivaled loveliness, or one that came so near wearing the look of Heaven upon its young and fair, smooth and virgin face. We thought that Alexander the Great never conquered

a fairer and more fertile region than this. We thought that after Hannibal had pitched his tents on the summit of the mighty Alps, that he never beheld a more beautiful land than Oklahoma. And on our return we came in full view of Council Grove, the place where the Indians have smoked the pipe of peace and held councils for over a half century. This place, owing to its timber, its water location and its unsurpassed beauty, has been reserved by the Government for some purpose unknown to me. For aught we know this may some day be one of America's finest parks. As we viewed this magnificent scenery from an eminence, we thought of poor old Moses who stood on the memorable mount of Pangs and viewed the landscape, and we wondered if we would be denied the bliss of leading our little Israelitish band into this land of promise.

V. A. Wood
P. O. Box No. 137

THE OKLAHOMA RESUME

Waltersburg, Arkansas, June 24, 1885

Early last spring when we were making arrangements to go to Oklahoma, scores of friends asked us to put them in regard to the country that seemed to be the centre of attraction for admiring millions. We then eagerly grasped the quill, and while our eyes longed to behold the attractions of the Beautiful Land, and while our aspirations ran high, and while our anticipations were bright, we penned the sentence "To Oklahoma or bust." Since then we have taken special pains as well as special pride in telling our readers of the many varieties of game with which the country abounds, of the waving seas of grass, of the flowers of varied hues, and of the not few and small ones that make glad the wanderer's heart, and furnish an abundance of shade for the joy and comfort of a thousand times more residents than ever inhabited those regions. We told you of the many kinds of soil, of the natives, and of the visitors; of the civilians and of the soldiers. We have seen and described the rapid growth of a city from the morning when the wild antelope played upon the velvet grass to the evening when they counted their inhabitants by the thousand and computed their wealth by the million. We have told you of the wide rivers that abound with the choicest fish, of the abundance of rarely accessible water, how to obtain good claims at a meager price, and above all, we have just furnished the Editor with a condensed census report of the fairest young city among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. After enjoying all these novel scenes after all these days and weeks and months of mingled joy and suspense, we are again in our own family circle, beneath our own vine and fig tree. It is with no small degree of reluctance that we shove the familiar pen aside, assume the arduous duties and responsibilities of the spade and scarpel, and say to everyone interested in our communications, Farewell.

V. A. Wood