

**WILLIAM SAMUEL KERR**

1868-1940

By Laura M. Messenbaugh

William Samuel Kerr was born near Bakersfield, Missouri, January 13, 1868, the son of William Kerr and Margaret Fore Kerr. His youth was spent in southern Missouri and Milford, Texas, where he farmed and taught school.

In 1886 he married Miss Maggie E. Wright. He moved with his family to Pontotoc County, Indian Territory, in February, 1894, living on a farm near Pecan Grove School until 1897, when he moved into the then small town of Ada. The cabin in which he and his family lived on the farm is still standing there.

Kerr helped to organize the first school district and was the first teacher employed in the Ada schools after a building was erected in 1897. He returned to the farm in 1899 and back to Ada in 1901, where he was a leading citizen and a real town-builder. A history of Ada would not be complete without recognition of the place occupied by Sam Kerr, as he was generally called, who always stood firmly for right and justice. After the Frisco Railroad was built through Ada in 1900, Mr. Kerr was very active in the affairs of the thriving town.

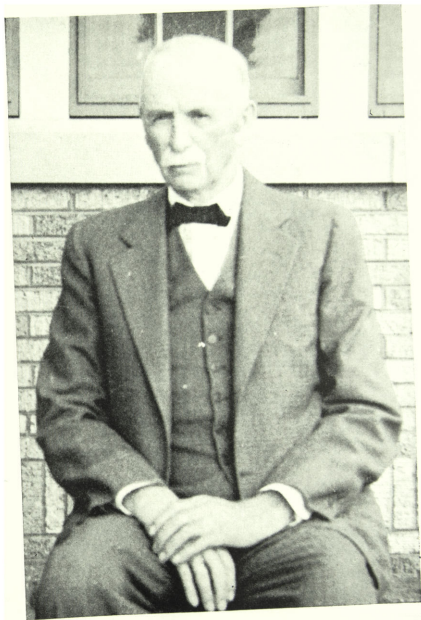
Something of the place occupied by Kerr in the early organization years of Ada and Pontotoc County is evident in the following list of activities: hauled the first load of wheat to the Ada mill; was the first bookkeeper of the First National Bank; was the first cotton buyer in Ada; the first teacher employed when a school was organized and the building was erected in 1897 to succeed early subscription school; helped bring the first telephone line to Ada from Pauls Valley; helped build the first bridge in the county on old Ada-Center route across Sandy west of Ada, in 1902; helped lay off old cemetery; was a member of the first school board; helped organize the public schools; was on the first city council; helped organize the city government; was on city council that installed first waterworks; was on the school board that built the first high school building in Ada; was on the committee that passed through the legislature the bill establishing East Central State Normal, now College; and after statehood was the first county clerk.<sup>1</sup>

Later Kerr, known generally as Sam Kerr, set out and for years managed a large truck, fruit, and small fruits place on the southwest edge of the city.

About nine years ago a heart condition developed that forced his retirement from active participation in affairs, but this did

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<sup>1</sup> *Ada Evening News*, October 8, 1940.



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not diminish his keen interest and analytical opinions on current affairs. He died October 7, 1940, at Ada, Oklahoma.

Funeral services were held in the First Baptist Church at Ada, where Kerr had taught a men's class for many years. His name was synonymous with personal and official integrity, and his passing was the occasion for deep sorrow in the hearts of the many who knew him. Dr. W. R. White, formerly pastor of the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, now president of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas, officiated. Burial was in Rosedale Cemetery.

Kerr is survived by his widow, Mrs. Kerr, Ada; two daughters, Mrs. Lois Wimberly of Oklahoma City, and Mrs. Mildred Anderson of Roswell, New Mexico; four sons, Robert S. Kerr, Oklahoma City oil man and attorney, now Oklahoma member of the national democratic committee; Aubrey M. Kerr, Ada attorney, formerly member of the house of representatives in the state legislature; Travis M. Kerr of Oklahoma City; Billy B. Kerr, Oklahoma City attorney and representative in the state house of representatives from Oklahoma County.