

NEIGHBORS IN THE CHEROKEE STRIP

*By Clara B. Kennan**

My father, A. A. Kennan, made the run at the opening of the Cherokee Strip, September 16, 1893, starting from the south side, near Marshall. The next morning after staking a claim, when he found there were four other flags on the same place, he went on to Enid and in due time bought stake rights to a quarter section eight miles east and two miles south of Enid. After he had filed on the claim and had constructed a half-dugout, he returned to Rogers, Arkansas, for my mother, Rosa, my brother, Harry, and me. I was a year old the day he made the race, and Harry was sixteen months older. Next spring he moved us out to our new home.

My parents had married at twenty, and at twenty-four they still had a part in the nursery and fruit-growing establishment of my enterprising Grandfather Kennan and lived in one of the houses on his place. They thought that getting a claim in the Cherokee Strip would bring them greater opportunities and give them a chance to make their own way. Grandfather agreed for he wanted to establish a nursery sales yard out there and furnish the Strip settlers with trees, with our father serving as salesman. Father had had some work at Masonic College, and both he and Mother were intellectually inclined, and were ambitious. Their home had been in a wooded, watered region, and they knew nothing of how to live on the arid prairie. They struggled with drought and hard times for three years on their claim in the Strip, just like the other settlers. They stayed three more years for good crops and comparative prosperity.

The stories of their adventures in the Cherokee Strip are a tradition in our family. Our mother taught a Sunday School class in the first Sunday School established in the neighborhood. Our father helped promote the holding of a "protracted meeting" in Add Pickerill's barn loft, and at the end of the meeting, when a Christian Church was organized, he became one of the elders, at the

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age of twenty-five. He was clerk at some of the elections, and he always took part in the debates on current questions at "Literary," held in the school house, after there was a school house. Old neighbors tell me that our mother was so gay and full of fun that she was a sure cure for the "blues", which were a frequent ailment among the settlers in the first three years of drought.

Aside from furnishing the fruit trees, perhaps the greatest contribution our family made to the community was through our well of good soft water. This well was dug the second year we were there, and it had a bountiful supply of the best water, a rarity in those parts then. Neighbors came for miles around and hauled water away. Our parents were happy that they could share this luxury with those whom they thought were the finest people in the world. These neighbors were steadfast friends through many hardships and, as prosperity came, shared the pleasure of their good fortune. It was because their neighbors began leaving the country that our parents sold the claim and left the Strip in 1899. Without the neighbors, life in the Strip would be unthinkable.

A recent survey shows that of the children of our immediate neighbors, on our section and the two adjoining sections on the north and south, respectively, sixteen have gone to college, most of them taking college degrees. They have become teachers, geologists, agriculturists, and ministers, or are established in good businesses, and are leaders in their communities. As far as I know, practically every family has prospered to at least a reasonable degree, and has continued among the good citizens. To know these neighbors is to know a cross-section of the Strip settlers. I will tell you something about several of them.

THE ALBERT WADE FAMILY

Albert Wade lived on the far side of the section south of us. Dollie, his wife, was the first woman our mother met after she came to the Strip. She was lonesome, and from the start loved Dollie, a bride of a few months. For more than a year we hauled water in barrels from the Wade's water hole, chasing out the snakes before dipping up the water. In November, their little son, Earl, was among the first children born in the township, the child of another family preceding him by a few hours. Arrangements had been made for the event when mother dropped in for a visit a few hours before, so she took Mrs. Wade's baking of light bread home with her to finish. When she returned with the bread next day, the baby Earl was there. Father and Mr. Wade did their harvesting together. Since Mother and Mr. Wade shared the same birthday, June 20, and as this was during harvest season, it was easy for the families to get together on this date to celebrate, and they did each year.

Albert Wade was a school teacher, having attended a little college in Southwest Missouri, near Neosho. He rode horseback to

and from his school, which at first was on beyond Luella some miles from our place. There was a little box "bachelor shack" of a schoolhouse, eight by eleven feet in dimensions, with a bench running all around the wall on the inside for seats, and desks made from *Lion* and *Arbuckle* coffee boxes (wooden) nailed up on sticks. The three Riley children and three Kelley children who made up half his school, all loved him. He was tall and handsome and strong. After school at home in the late afternoons, he would frequently work putting up hay as long as there was light to see. Clerical in ability and enterprising, Albert Wade took over the work of tax assessing in the neighborhood. In those days the assessor went about over the Territory and inspected all property. He earned money to pay his own taxes in this work. In later years, in partnership with his son, he engaged in ranching and raising pure bred cattle, and their registered herd became well known in Oklahoma.

THE FRANK PICKERILL FAMILY

The two Pickerills from Kansas were sons of a preacher. Frank's family consisted of his wife, Ida, and three little daughters, Lola, Ura, and Nina,—like stairs. Add Pickerill's wife was a bride of a few weeks when she first came to the Strip. Frank's claim was on the northwest corner of the section north of us and Add's on the northeast corner of the section south of us. They exchanged farming implements and work, and passed our dugout frequently, so we came to know them among our first neighbors. Both men were hearty in their friendliness and enthusiasm. Invariably they called out their greetings as they drove past, "Good morning, good morning, good morning!" Both could rattle off glibly the land numbers of all the neighbors' claims with much assurance. Ida could do this as well as the men, and Mother was much impressed with her talent. There were very poor gardens in the sod the first year. When Ida's mother from Old Oklahoma sent her a big mess of green beans, Ida said she wanted to invite us over to help eat them, but she had no good "side meat" to cook with the beans. We did have some, so we took it along and both families had a feast.

Mother and Mrs. Pickerill arranged the first Fourth of July picnic, over on Skeleton Creek, which was bone dry. There the neighbors met and got acquainted. Frank took along song books and everybody sang. After that we had Sunday school every Sunday afternoon at some settler's house. Frank always led the singing, beating time with the same hand in which he held the "word book." It was a mystery how he read the words! He and Father and Mr. Kelley promoted a "protracted meeting" the second fall, holding it in Add's barn loft, and they were elected the elders of the church.

At Pickerill's, too, we had our first Christmas tree. It was a dead peach tree from Pickerill's orchard, lost in the drought. Frank cut it down and nailed a brace on the end to make it stand up. Ida

and Mother wound the trunk and limbs with long narrow strips of white wrapping paper, and hung it with popcorn strings and colored paper chains. It was beautiful!

Frank was a Populist and liked to dabble in politics. In the Free Silver campaign of 1896, he was election judge for Patterson Township, and our father was a clerk. Frank Pickerill had a "big" frame house with two rooms downstairs and two half-story rooms up. There was also a sod kitchen at the rear where Mother and we children visited Ida and the girls all day while the Free Silver election was in progress.

Ida Pickerill was the school teacher. She hitched up "Old Nig," put the three little girls into the hack, and drove to the granary or other shack which served for the school before school houses were built. Nina was just a baby, so she was left at Kelley's on the way to school, and picked up on the way home at night. Ida's salary of \$25.00 a month for the three months session helped tide her family over. Mother marveled at Ida's lack of fear, especially around horses. When good crops came, one of the first things the Pickerills bought was an organ. How we all did sing to the accompaniments on that organ!

THE JESSE T. BUTTS FAMILY

The members of the Butts family were natives of Missouri who had gone to Texas and thence to the Strip. When we first knew them they rode in chairs in their wagon because spring-seats cost money. They lived to be bankers and capitalists. Father first met Jesse T. Butts on a bitter cold day in early spring when he had started out to sell fruit trees. By the time he reached their house it was too cold to go farther, so when Mr. Butts asked him to stay and have dinner, he did. Talk was on religion and politics, mostly religion. When the protracted meeting was held in the barn loft the next fall, Mr. and Mrs. Butts joined the church, in which he became a leader. Our mother liked Mrs. Butts very much. Mrs. Butts always made the Communion bread marked off in neat little "bite" squares, each one just right for a Communion portion. After church every Sunday, Mrs. Butts gave what was left of the bread to her youngest, Earl, and me, to eat. Her older sons were Archie, Eddie (who died young), and Claude (who was killed in an accident after he was grown). Orville was born in the home in the Strip. Mr. Butts farmed his claim and a school-lease quarter, and operated a sorghum mill where we had our cane made into molasses in season. In the spring of 1897, with crops looking fine, he got a job with Cunningham and Cropper in Enid, travelling over the Territory in a cart selling farm machinery. He borrowed a set of single harness from Jake Long, his neighbor, until he could buy his own. His salary was \$45.00 a month out of which he paid his expenses. That was a good salary. He was wonderfully successful at this work, and collected

every cent from his sales before the following New Year. He moved to Enid, and later became a banker and his sons after him were also bankers. He served one term as Mayor of Enid.

THE ELI ROBERTS FAMILY

The Eli Roberts family lived on the claim just north of ours, east of Enid. They were from Iowa, where they had had a productive, well-furnished farm. When Mr. Roberts heard that the Cherokee Strip was to be opened, he sold out in Iowa, loaded his household goods and his fine horses and cows into railroad cars, and set out for Oklahoma Territory. When he got as far as Wichita, Kansas, he learned that the Opening had been delayed. He stopped off there to wait, and was soon offered a portion of land which is now in the heart of the city of Wichita, for two of his fine teams, but he did not take up the offer. During the run into the Cherokee Strip, he staked his claim near ours, but there were seven other stakes on the tract. It was not until two years later that he won the claim, his case being decided in his favor because he had plowed the first sod on the quarter section.

Meanwhile, he had shipped one of the first carloads of lumber into North Enid and had built a house. Drinking water was scarce. His oldest daughter, Mary, was sent each day across the street with a bucket of milk to trade to Mrs. Dalton (the mother of the notorious outlaws) for a bucket of drinking water. When Mr. Roberts won his claim, he tore down the house in North Enid and rebuilt it on his new land. He always farmed a quarter section of school land or two in addition to his own claim. He raised fine crops of water melons, and the children had a good time selling them at the roadside to passers-by for a nickel or a dime each. Mrs. Roberts squeezed juice from the extra melons and made vinegar and sold it. She taught our mother how to make substantial shoes for us children out of the backs of old overalls, using several thicknesses as soles. Mr. Roberts and our father harvested their crops together.

It was to the Roberts's home that Mother fled with us children when she once saw a "cyclone cloud" headed toward us from the southwest. Mr. Roberts, who already had his team hitched up to the wagon, piled all of his family and us three into the wagon and stood ready to make a run out of the path of the cyclone had it come our way. However, the storm turned just before reaching us, and we were safe. The Roberts' children were Earl, Roy, Mary, Florence, Nettie, and Ella. Max was born in the new home in the Strip. Mrs. Roberts was a cousin of Dorr Feldt who invented the comptometer. Before her marriage, she had taught school, and Mr. Roberts had taught mathematics in a college for a time. They later left Oklahoma, and went west where they were successful in ranching and in the orchard business.

THE JOHN RILEY FAMILY

In July after our parents reached the Strip, they were glad to hear that a country store and post office were to be established just four miles from us, to the southeast. John Riley, a native of Missouri who had lived in Texas, was in charge. He asked to have the new post office named *Lula*, in honor of his daughter. But the authorities in Washington varied it to *Luella* to avoid confusion with another post office named *Lela*, elsewhere in Oklahoma Territory. Besides Mr. and Mrs. Riley and Lula, there were three boys, Claude, Ernest, and Johnny, the baby who was born in Missouri, the spring after the Cherokee Strip was opened. At this time, Mr. Riley was about forty, somewhat older than the average settler. He was tall and had curly dark hair and grey eyes, and was very determined. He was experienced as a surveyor, and during the first three hard years he often left Mrs. Riley and the children to see after the claim and the store and post office while he made trips to lay out town sites elsewhere, or do other surveying to earn additional expense money. At the time of the run, he had failed to get a claim, but he went on to Enid and put in a restaurant, with a grocery store in connection. Soon he traded for his claim near us. Next spring he rented out his building in Enid for the first jail in town, and went to Missouri to join Mrs. Riley at her mother's home to be present when Johnny arrived. When he returned, Mr. Riley tore down his building in Enid, moved the lumber to the claim, and rebuilt the house for the store and post office. A public spirited man, Mr. Riley helped establish schools for his children, and he took part in the church and "Literary" programs when they were established. He became prosperous in the development of oil in Oklahoma and Texas.

THE SOL GRIM FAMILY

Sol Grim and his large family lived south of Luella. He was about fifty years old. He doctored horses and carried the mail from Enid to Luella twice a week. He was full of dry humor and had a wealth of stories about his experiences while freighting through the West in connection with the building of the Transcontinental railroad. He was born in Missouri, had pioneered in Nebraska, and had begun freighting as a boy. He was a wagonmaster in 1866, for J. A. Adkinson, in company with Henry Cassidy and Bert Hazlip. His first task was to haul telephone poles from Fort Sanders to Fort Steel, a distance of 120 miles. The Indians were at war in those days, and one of his brothers was killed in the fighting. He saw other men shot down by the Indians, and once his own wagon train was attacked near Fort Laramie. He told of an early experience when he was snowed in at Pole Creek until food ran out and the cattle died of starvation. The men almost starved, too, for the cattle were too thin to be killed for food. In Julesburg, he had played pool with Kit Carson several times, and his path had crossed the paths of Buffalo Bill and General Grant. He would sometimes tell us these

stories, but he liked best to sing humorous songs to doleful tunes. One of them was "My Gal She Upset, and the Wagon Did Spill." He had exhausted his land rights in Nebraska long before the Cherokee Strip opened. But pioneer life attracted him, and he came to this country at the Opening, leased a quarter of school land and improved it. He had nine children, and already had several grand children when he came to the Strip. Later the grandchildren totaled fifty. He prospered, and later moved to Day County where he was elected County Treasurer. Some of his children's names were Sylvester, Dave, Belle, Nora, Myrtle, and Bessie. Sylvester Grim is now Judge of Cleveland County. Belle was Mrs. Daharsh, who with her husband also lived in the Strip.

THE DOCTOR VIRGIL WOOD FAMILY

The Doctor Wood family had the claim on the northeast corner of our section. We did not pass their house in going to Enid, Luella, or church and school. Yet we came to know them eventually. Mr. and Mrs. Wood were both born in Georgia but were reared in Hempstead County, Arkansas. He had taken his medical course at Louisville, Kentucky, after he was married, teaching school between sessions to earn expenses.

When Old Oklahoma was opened in 1889, Doctor Wood made the run on April 22, but failed to get a claim. He already had four children, and the day after that opening twins were born to his wife, a girl and a boy, who were given the names of *Okla* and *Homa*. He moved his family to Norman where he established a good medical practice. He took part in two later openings, but not until the Cherokee Strip was opened did he secure a claim. He had a house built, and on October 20, 1893, Mrs. Wood and five of her seven children moved to the claim. She was the first woman in that part of the country. Doctor Wood remained in Norman at his practice, and some of the children attended school there. In the spring, the rest of the family moved to the claim, after which Doctor Wood set up his office in Enid, coming out to the farm two or three times a week. As County Physician for a year, he attended the notorious outlaw Dick Yeager when he was wounded and captured and lay in the Enid jail. Doctor Wood was also a member of the Pension Board, and in 1898 he became a member of the Territorial Legislature. He was a Republican and a Baptist. About this time, he organized a Baptist church at Belleview, and was a deacon for the rest of his life. He moved his office to the farm after two years in Enid, and then he was able to take part in "Literary" and other community affairs.

His wife was a remarkable woman. Sarah Wood lived on the claim that first fall and winter with no way to get mail and groceries from Enid, ten miles away, except by help from passers by. There were very few settlers near before the next spring. She over-

saw the development of the claim, using hired help when she could get it, but doing much of the work herself with the help of the children when no other was available. The children were Beulah, Minnie, Edna, Robert, Okla and Homa, and Virgil. Two others, Dudley and Verda, were born on the farm. About 1900, the Wood family sold out and moved to Blackwell to send the children to school. They became educated men and women, and are useful, prosperous citizens. The boys became geologists and later were established in the oil business for themselves, under the firm name of Broswood Oil Company. Doctor and Mrs. Wood lived to a ripe old age. When she died, a woman's circle of the Baptist Church at Blackwell was named in her honor. When Doctor Wood died, it was said, "The poor people of Blackwell have lost their best friend."

THE HOWARD FAMILY

The Howards were a large family who lived south of Jim Hart's, on our way to Luella. Before the Opening, Mr. Howard had built a sod house on a lease in Old Oklahoma. When he won his claim in the Strip, he took all the lumber parts out of the first "soddy" and hauled them to his Strip claim to use in constructing the new "soddy". Meanwhile his boys were growing, and he soon had to build a second "soddy" in the same yard to take care of the family. Mr. Howard and his sons rented and farmed additional land, raising large crops. One claim he rented belonged to Miss Hogue, a fine school teacher who lived just west of the Howard place. He helped Father dig our good well. And when a building, formerly the home of the *Tribune-Democrat*, was moved out from Enid to the corner of Miss Hogue's claim for a school house, Howard helped build the seats for it and became a director on the School Board. The school was named Belleview, and his only daughter, Belle, claimed that it was named for her. Maybe it was.

One of the most interesting stories that attached to the Howards was how Mr. Howard's mother entered the Cherokee Strip and staked her claim on the day of the Opening. Already a grandmother with grown grandchildren, she wanted land of her own. One of her sons, who was making the race himself in a wagon, put her in the back end of his wagon, tied up in a featherbed. He had things fixed so he could push her out when he came to a good claim for her, but he did not stop running his team toward the place he had picked out for himself. His mother got a good claim on Skelton Creek, having brought stakes with which she marked her land. She also had matches, cooking utensils, kindling, and food with her. She started a fire and soon set up house-keeping at her new home.

THE AUGUST FROEMMING FAMILY

August and Johanna (Lizzie) Froemming had the claim that cornered ours on the southwest. They were Germans, jolly, hard-working, and were well-liked by the settlers, non-German and all.

August was born in Wustrow, Province Hanover, Germany. At eleven he had come with his family to Hanover, Kansas, and at twenty-two he staked his claim in the Cherokee Strip. Meanwhile, in Kansas, he had acquired a threshing machine and a teacher's license. The latter he never used. He constructed a dugout on his new land, and lived there the time necessary to hold it. In season, he would go back to Kansas to work in the harvest and earn money with his thresher to "build up on his claim." Two years after the run, he married in Kansas and brought his wife overland to his place in a covered wagon, trailing a single buggy behind, on which were a coop of eleven chickens and a dog, their only livestock except the span of mules hitched to the wagon. With the money he had earned and brought with him, he built a nice little, square house and a granary. Then for two years the young couple lived on practically nothing, like the rest of the neighbors, until the good crop came. In August, 1895, when their little son August was born, grass fires caused by lightning in a dry storm without rain, threatened the little square house where Lizzie and the new baby lay. August swiftly carried water from the well, two bucketsful at a time, to pour on the grass around the house to keep it from catching fire. He succeeded, and the house and family were saved. The family grew, prospered, and made first class citizens.

THE J. V. CONIGHAN FAMILY

It was J. V. Conighan who, in the first months after the Opening, took a barrel of water with him whenever he went visiting. And the water was always welcome, so scarce was it in those days. He had a well in a ravine half a mile from his house, and a good wagon and two water barrels, excellent equipment that many settlers lacked. It was he, too, whose first house, a temporary shack, was stolen and completely moved away one night soon after the Opening while he was gone to Hennessey to get his family and household goods. At that time, there were some unprincipled men who had gathered at Enid for loot at the Opening, and the Conighans' house was much nearer town than ours. Conighan's daughter Cora has told me that on their way to Enid from Hennessey she saw thirty-seven dead horses that had either been ridden to death in the run or had died for lack of feed and water. The grass had been burned off the land. Conighan had known the lay of the country through this region, and at the Opening he was able to come directly to the claim he wanted. His friends, the Hairs and the Kecks who made the run with him, secured claims adjoining. His son, LaVerne, followed the party into the Strip, driving a loaded Peter Schuller wagon and a span of mules. According to previous plans, he drove to the place where the trail crossed Skelton Creek and waited there until the men came for their supplies. Later, Conighan became a county commissioner. In 1919, his daughter Cora was appointed the first Democratic vice-chairman for the County. An oil well was drilled one time on the Conighan

farm, but it was a dry hole, so their prosperity came from the wheat fields.

THE WILL KELLEY FAMILY

The Kelleys were from Kansas. They did not make the run for a claim, but came down the following spring in company with Add Pickerill, and leased a tract of land. They had a loaded covered wagon, which the two Kelley boys, Chester (13) and Clyde (9) drove. The family rode overland in the house which was built on another wagon and was completely furnished with bed, stove, table, and chairs. They stopped at Frank Pickerill's place and stayed for awhile, and then moved on over toward Luella to their lease. Here was a dugout, but the family lived in the house on the wagon until Mr. Kelley could get lumber and build a little house. Besides the boys, the Kelleys had Zella, who was fifteen when they came to the Strip. The Kelleys came pretty "well fixed", and never did have as hard a time as some of the settlers. For the young folks pioneering was all a grand lark. They bought a croquet set and the neighbors would come and play in evenings until dark. But Mrs. Kelley was homesick and lonesome, and would sometimes sit in the house and cry instead of playing croquet. One year Mrs. Kelley kept Nina Pickerill during the day while Mrs. Pickerill taught school, and that was some company for her. Afterward, she had another little girl herself, whom she named Marie. The Kelleys were good church workers, he serving as elder or deacon from the time the church was established. After a few years they left the Strip and moved to Custer City, where they settled permanently.

THE SATER FAMILY

The Saters from Kansas lived north of Frank Pickerill, two miles nearer Enid than we did. They attended our church and belonged to our neighborhood. Mrs. Sater stayed on the farm with her two little boys, Ampie and Archie, while Mr. Sater clerked at Buttry's store in Enid to earn expenses, working in the store except when he needed to be plowing or sowing wheat or harvesting and threshing. One day Ampie, the oldest son who was about eight, was kicked in the head by a horse. Mrs. Sater hurriedly hitched up the hack, loaded her boys in, and drove the eight miles to Enid to a doctor. An operation was performed and the child apparently recovered, but several months later suddenly died. A daughter was born to the Saters soon after this, and they later moved to Enid.

THE TAGGART FAMILY

Several miles "south and west" of us, as the people there would have said, lived the Taggarts, F. K. (Frank) and Bill. They were from Missouri, but had made the run from the south boundary because some of their brothers were already living in Old Oklahoma, near Hennessey, before the Opening of the Cherokee Strip.

They brought along from Kansas some fine grade Percheron mares and geldings. When the Taggarts found that these animals adapted admirably to the climate in the Strip, and to pulling the gang plows and other machinery necessary, they purchased a registered Percheron stallion, a son of Champion "Casino," and a few years later bought registered mares. Along with their farming operations, they raised pure-bred Percherons and sold the stallion colts at a good profit. During the time our family was in the Strip, we knew the Taggarts largely because of their fine horses, but as was customary, they were friends, too. The Taggarts also raised Shorthorn cattle, and helped promote the livestock shows at Enid which were instrumental in forwarding the livestock industry in Garfield County. After Mr. Bill Taggart died in 1921, I am told, F. K. moved to Enid, selling the Shorthorn cattle but keeping a few Percheron horses on the farm. He became County Clerk.

THE HART FAMILY

Our father, A. A. Kennan, met Will Hart at the line on opening day, shortly before the run. Will was related to some Harts whom Father knew in Arkansas. Later, when he went out to his claim on which he had bought the stake rights, there was Will Hart on the claim adjoining on the east. He and Will camped together and helped each other build their houses. Next spring, they met at Maysville by prearrangement and made the trip out west together in their covered wagons with their families. Will was a bachelor when he got his claim, but by spring he had Dee, his bride from the Indian Territory. Will had a good wagon and span of big mules, and through the years he was a good neighbor, though he never gave much thought to public affairs. After two years, Jim Hart, Will's father, moved out and bought the claim cornering Will's on the southeast. Jim Hart had a big family of girls, who added to the gaiety of the young people in the neighborhood and furnished some of the bachelor settlers with wives.

HENRY KONEKA

Our nearest neighbor for some time was Henry Koneka, a German bachelor, who lived on the quarter-section south of us. He had a one-room box house and kept hens and cattle. After a few years he married, but his wife did not speak nor understand the English language. Koneka was a good man, and he and Father exchanged work at harvest time, and the two families helped one another as they could. However, there was a language and mores barrier here which did not exist between us and some of the other German neighbors.

ED MYRTLE

To the west of us when we first went to the Strip was Ed Myrtle. Myrtle was a Bohemian and, like Henry Koneka, a bachelor. He

was a slender, dark man, whose earthly possessions seemed to consist of one dun-colored mule. He apparently had much leisure time and no worries. After awhile he sold his claim, and the Lockridges moved there.

THE LOCKRIDGE FAMILY

The Lockridges were welcome neighbors because they had five children for us children to play with. Their house was small, but Mrs. Lockridge was a good housekeeper and always kept the place as neat as a pin. The children were Nellie, Carrie, Frank, Ernest, and little Annie Ruth. Ernest was exactly my age, both of us having our birthdays on the anniversary of the opening of the Strip, September 16. Father and Mr. Lockridge used to help each other at harvest time. Mr. Lockridge did not join the church until after we left the Strip. This had cut us off from sharing part of our Strip life with the Lockridges since Sunday was visiting day and also church day. But they were good folks and we were fond of them.

MRS. HAMMOND

Mrs. Hammond was our first teacher at Belleview School. I say *our* because when school opened there in 1896, Mother and we children attended. Mother wanted to review and take the examination for a teacher's certificate so she could teach like Mrs. Pickerill, and help out with the family income until there was a crop. She took us children along with her to school. Mr. and Mrs. Hammond lived about two miles south of Belleview. They were from Kansas where she had taught before she was married. They had two teams of of milk-white ponies. One pair had "moon-eyes," or "glass eyes," as they were called. Mrs. Hammond rode one of the ponies to school when her husband was too busy to bring her. She was a good teacher with enough experience and good sense to adapt her school to the needs of the time. The children there were from many states and other sections of the country. Some of them had a few school books and scarcely any were able to buy more. Mrs. Hammond had them pool the books and portioned these out with lesson assignments, two families using one speller or one reader when needed. She did not object to Harry and me attending with Mother, even though I was only four and Harry five. She organized the literary society that fall, and arranged so all the community could take part. The society was called "Literary" and at the meetings there was always a "paper" and a debate, besides "speeches" (we now call them "readings") by young and old. I made my own debut at "Literary" in a four-line "speech." My hair had been rolled up on rags to make my white fuzz into curls for the occasion. During the Presidential campaign in 1896, the men debated "Free Silver" and other momentous questions. By the time school was closed in late spring, crops were looking better. Mother did not take the teacher's examination, and Mrs. Hammond did not teach any

more. It was generally understood that a married woman taught school only if there was no crop and the income was essential. Otherwise she was needed more at home. Mrs. Hammond was long held in affection and esteem by all in the neighborhood. I had a letter from her less than ten years ago, when she was living over the border in Kansas. She said that she and Mr. Hammond had kept the white horses until they died of old age because they had made the crops for them feeding only on pasture and hay in the early days before there were any grain crops.

THE HELBERG FAMILY

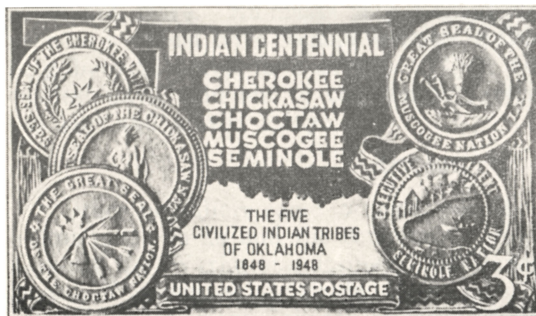
West of Frank Pickerill's lived the Helbergs, a German family. They were an admirable and serious-minded family, well-liked by all the settlers. In later years they were well-to-do, but they lived very meagerly during those first three years, like many others. The Helbergs were instrumental in getting the German Lutheran Church of Patterson Township located at the northeast corner of the section west of us. After the building was constructed, the German people in the vicinity held church and school here. After crops began, German families from Kansas came to the Strip, attracted by letters from their friends who were already settlers there. They settled in our neighborhood if they could find a place, to be near the church. We liked all of our German neighbors individually. But they had a common bond in their language and traditions, which we could not share. En-masse they seemed clannish and strange to us, even as we must have seemed strange to them when we and our first neighbors gathered in a crowd. When our beloved friends of the earliest days, sold out to the German settlers and moved away, we too sold and moved away.

OTHERS

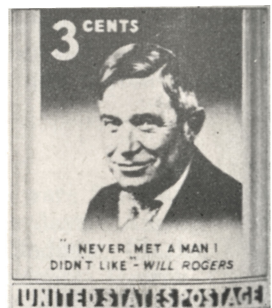
Other neighbors come to mind, people who were friends and who meant much to us and the community in early days. Among them, I recall the Warhursts, Rainey's, Goddards, Boduses, Clarks, Hopkines, Tompkinses, Atwoods, Lessingers, Dumonts, George Collet, Harry Taylor, Tom Johnson, Benton Roberts, Willie Shattow, and many more. But some other writer will have to carry the story on from here.



A Rejected Design for Indian Centennial Commemorative Stamp, 1948



Indian Centennial Commemorative Stamp, 1948



Will Rogers Commemorative Stamp, 1948