

PAYNE COUNTY

HISTORICAL REVIEW

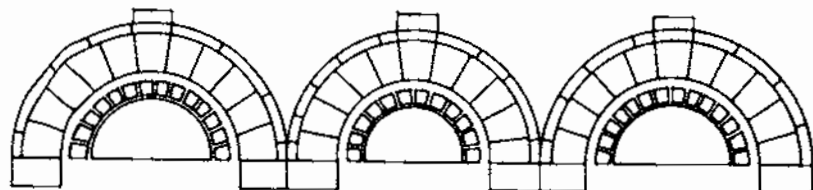
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Horsethief Canyon: Landmark on the Cimarron River

by LeRoy H. Fischer and Thomas D. Isern

In the northeastern corner of Logan County, Oklahoma, midway between the towns of Perkins and Coyle, lofty, forested bluffs of red shale and clay loom above the southern bank of the Cimarron River. The heights afford extensive vistas of patchworks of fields and pastures to the north, east and west. Below, a raised embankment, the remains of a railway with tracks removed, threads its way between the edge of the river and the base of the escarpment.

At one point where tributary waters have cut a broad, V-shaped opening through the bluffs, a deep canyon extends for 400 feet to the south and east. The canyon narrows as the distance from the river increases, while its walls, covered with cedars and with white, black and chinkapin oaks, become steeper. The upper extremity is a natural amphitheater: three distinct crescents of russet shale are stacked one above another, each a partial circle encompassing the end of the canyon at its own level. The uppermost shelf forms an arc of 200 feet; it overhangs the lower outcroppings and the floor of the canyon fifty feet below. Water has undercut each shelf and created caves in which a person can stand. From the midpoint of the top shelf falls a trickle of water that originates in a seeping spring forty feet away. Precariously perched cedars threaten to follow the water over the edge.

LeRoy H. Fischer, Oppenheim Regents Professor of History at Oklahoma State University, and Thomas D. Isern, presently Director of the Research and Grants Center at Emporia State University in Kansas, wrote this article on Horsethief Canyon for the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume LVI, Spring 1978, Number 1. This article is copyrighted 1978 by the Oklahoma Historical Society and is used here with their permission and that of both the authors.

Since the earliest settlement of the region, this landmark has been known as Horsethief Canyon. Such a spot invariably becomes the focus of much local folklore. The story of Horsethief Canyon illustrates how popular legend and historical fact may intertwine.

Horsethief Canyon lays on the northern edge of the Iowa Indian Reservation, established in 1883, but the area north of the river was part of the Unassigned Lands. Prior to the coming of the homesteaders, line camps for cowboys attending nearby herds dotted the valley. Settlers quickly filled the prairie north of the river after the opening of the Unassigned Lands in 1889. The Iowa Reservation was opened by a land run in 1891. In 1900, the Eastern Oklahoma Branch of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway built along the Cimarron River past the mouth of Horsethief Canyon. This sparked the founding of the village of Goodnight about a mile east of the canyon. Goodnight once possessed several businesses, a depot, a post office and a school, but the only present remnant of the town is the shell of its schoolhouse.

Early settlers from north of the river who visited Horsethief Canyon found a dugout on the western wall and a rail fence across the canyon's entrance, together with feed boxes of split logs. This gave rise to speculation that the place was a haven for horsethieves, but the facts were unclear. There was no evidence that notorious desperadoes such as the Doolins used the canyon. Tales of outlaws there related by Frank "Pistol Pete" Eaton of Perkins were vague as to the persons involved. Probably the dugout belonged to line-riding cowboys. After the settlement of the area some line riders remained as drifters of uncertain means of support called "long riders." Some of these suspicious long riders may have frequented the canyon. Apparently vagrants often camped there, and no doubt some of them were horsethieves. However, the place was by no means a hideout, terrain and vegetation made it more of a trap than a bastion.¹

Tales of outlaws persisted, reaching a peak in a yarn that originated with a former railway station agent at Goodnight. According to this account, on a snowy morning in 1905, a stranger wearing dark glasses and a beard got off the train in Goodnight and inquired about the way to Horsethief Canyon. He proceeded there alone carrying a canvas bag; he returned in the evening to board another train. A few days later the railway agent went to the canyon, where he found recent excavations and empty cans. Three oak trees surrounding the holes showed scars where they had been blazed years earlier. The stranger, so the story said, was Emmett Dalton, who was returning to recover riches buried prior to the Dalton gang's disastrous raid on Coffeyville, Kansas, in 1892. Unfortunately for a good tale, Emmett Dalton was not released from the Kansas State Penitentiary in Lansing until 1907.²

An equally lurid part of the folklore of Horsethief Canyon was Goodnight's chapter of the Anti-Horse Thief Association. This organization originated in Missouri and spread into Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory during the 1890s. Its purpose was to conduct independent investigations of thefts from its members, who wore an identifying pin marked "AHTA". Most of the men in the area attended the association's biweekly meetings in the schoolhouse at Goodnight. Although seldom effective against criminals, the organization flourished as a fraternal society. However, some oldtimers insisted that the Anti-Horse Thief Association met in Horsethief Canyon. Accused thieves, it was said, received midnight trials from horseback juries, then were hanged from a great oak. Names and dates of such incidents never surfaced.³

Whatever the legends surrounding it, Horsethief Canyon also had a real role in the lives of early homesteaders in the area. The canyon's walls and the adjacent bluffs were a source of cedar timber for buildings and fence posts. Cedar was scarce north of the Cimarron River, so settlers crossed the stream and

cut timber illegally on the Iowa Reservation. Almond T. Greene, a freighter who formerly had hauled supplies to line camps in the Cherokee Outlet, built a one-and-one-half-story home of cedar on his claim near the river. He also sold cedar posts in Arkansas City for ten dollars per hundred. Such poaching was no matter of conscience, for Greene was a religious man who often set up the tents for revival meetings. E.T. Edmundson of Coyle cut cedar from the canyon for sale and for personal use as late as the 1920s.⁴

Horsethief Canyon also was a popular place for recreation. Numerous children of local pioneers came there to play during the 1890s and 1900s; after crossing the river, they often dried their clothes before a fire built beneath a hole which formed a natural chimney in the canyon's second shelf. Sometimes entire families, such as that of former Texas Ranger Charles B. Cruse, came there for picnics or for overnight campouts.⁵

In 1907, residents of the area began a custom of holding an annual gathering at the canyon on Easter Sunday. The first such affair apparently was organized by the Anti-Horse Thief Association. Roy Hays, president of the association, was the day's master of ceremonies, while Major Gordon W. Lillie, "Pawnee Bill," gave the featured address. Present were Frank Eaton, Rolla Goodnight, Zach Mulhall and other nearby celebrities, as well as a crowd of several hundred. By the 1920s such gatherings had ceased, but a new organization, the Old Settlers' Association of Payne and Adjoining Counties, brought new social life to the canyon. Founded in 1922 and succeeded in 1927 by the Old Settlers' Sons-Daughters Association of Oklahoma, this organization for many years held an annual encampment or pageant on the farm of Bert Frame, adjacent to Horsethief Canyon.⁶ The ceremonies featured excursions to the canyon.

Perhaps it was young people, not old settlers, for whom Horsethief Canyon held the greatest fascination. The Old Settlers' Sons-Daughters Association of

³Kent Rugh, "AntiHorse Thief Group's Pioneer Members Sought," Sunday Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), December 30, 1973; Interview, Leonard Parks; Interview, E.T. Edmunson, May 20, 1976; Robert Cunningham, "The Bad Nights at Goodnight Recalled," Guthrie Daily Leader (Guthrie), April 15, 1973.

⁴Interview, Parks; Interview, Edmunson.

⁵Interview, Parks; Interview, Paul Cruse, May 15, 1976; Robert Cunningham, "Happy Cimarron River Memories Still Echoing," Stillwater News-Press (Stillwater), May 29, 1972.

⁶Interview, Ward Hays, January 4, 1977; Robert Cunningham, "Ward Didn't Have 'Pipe' Dream at Goodnight," Guthrie Daily Leader, April 15, 1973, Mary Amorette Kelso Buffington, That We May Not Forget (Stillwater: Mary Amorette Kelso Buffington, 1972), pp. 58-60; Tulsa Daily World (Tulsa), May 27, 1928; Interview, Sybil Wall, April 10, 1976.

⁷Undated newspaper clipping in possession of Sybil Wall; Stillwater News-Press, November 24, 1974; Daily O'Collegian (Stillwater), November 23, 1974.

⁸Present owner of the property embracing Horsethief Canyon is Ben Holder of rural Perkins. The property is not open to the public.

My First Trip to Horsethief Canyon Easter Sunday, 1907

by Ward Hays

I get many request for stories that I have written before. I am real proud to rewrite todays request as it is the first story that I ever wrote...My first trip to Horse Thief Canyon. This story is as near as I can remember. The first story was written 76 years ago this Easter. I was eleven years old and it was my first year to go to public school. My first trip to Horse Thief Canyon, as far as we know, also was the first Easter pagaent ever held in Oklahoma, which gave me three firsts—first trip to the canyon, first Easter pagaent and my first story. That fall in November of 1907 I had another first by covering the story of our first elected Governor, Governor Haskell.

I was really thrilled Saturday morning before Easter Sunday when my Uncle Roy Hays called me from Goodnight, Oklahoma, and said that if I came down he would take me to Horse Thief Canyon the next day where he would attend a meeting of the Anti-Horse Thief Association. My Uncle Roy lived about two miles north across the Cimarron River from the Horse Thief Canyon. I left home on foot to go to my Uncle Roy's which was eleven miles southwest of our home. After eating an early lunch and packing my dress clothes in a flour sack to keep them clean, I sprinted the eleven miles in less than four hours. The first thing I did after arriving at my Uncle's was to shed my muddy clothes as it had been raining. I did not get much sleep that night thinking of the trip I was to make the next day.

By ten o'clock that Sunday morning we, I and my uncle, had packed lunches and were headed for the

Ward Hays, newest honorary life member of the PCHS, recounts his first trip to Horsethief Canyon in 1907.

Cimarron River where my Uncle had a rowboat. It was tied to a cottonwood tree a mile and a half south of Progress School on the river. When we got to the river it was bank full, muddy and full of trash and trees. It looked very scary to me but my Uncle Roy said we could make it OK. We would pull our boat up the river, then float down the river with the current.

Just before my Uncle and I had left for the river, my grandmother had asked me to light her little clay pipe she smoked, with a coal of fire from the hearth. In lighting the pipe I had taken a few puffs on the pipe. The tobacco was very strong. As soon as my Uncle Roy and I got in the boat the rolling, tumbling waters of the river started my stomach to rolling and I was soon feeding the fish my supper and breakfast. Uncle Roy told me to lie down in the boat but that did not seem to help much. In trying to dodge the brush and trash that was floating in the river, my uncle lost one of the oars to the boat, but he managed to keep the boat upright and drifting towards the south side of the river, I sat up and could see several people coming toward the river. My uncle fired his six gun twice and some men came to the bank of the river and threw a rope to my uncle. The two men that threw the rope were Frank "Pistol Pete" Eaton and Rollo Goodnight, Pete's bosom friend.

I looked as if I had been wallowing in the hog pen, but not for long as two beautiful ladies by the name of Maggie Montgomery and Lucille Mulhall, whose names are legend today, took me in hand and cleaned me up so that I looked and felt like a new person. Those two women remained my friends through the years. It was Maggie Montgomery that first taught me to square dance.

There were many speeches that day on how to curb the horse stealing which seemed to be big business for the horse thieves in those days. At the mouth of the canyon was some pole fencing and a small log cabin that was badly in need of repair. There were three tiers or ledges to the canyon. The middle ledge was the largest

and on that ledge was where the basket lunch was held. I would guess there were at least 500 people at the canyon on that Easter Sunday 1907. Among them were famous men like Pawnee Bill, Zack Mulhall and his daughter, Lucille. They were well known for their showmanship in those days. Zack Mulhall and his daughter were trick ropers and Pawnee Bill was known for his marksmanship, by shooting marbles from between his wife's fingers. Later he shot two of his wife's fingers off. Bill never shot marbles from between his wife's fingers again.

It was easy to see that Horse Thief Canyon had been used to corral horses as there was a small forge anvil and other blacksmith tools that had been used to shoe horses. Some of the neighbors had found some gold and silver coins. It was believed besides the horse thieves using the canyon, bank and train robbers such as the Daltons and Doolins, Al Jennings and Black Yeager from over Blaine County way had all used the Canyon to hide out in at different times.

Easter Pageants were held at the Canyon for many years and Horse Thief Canyon became well known for other picnics besides the Easter Pageants. I believe it was about 1930 the last time I was at the Canyon when I took a carload of college students to the Canyon to take some pictures. On my first visit to the Canyon, the Canyon was in a beautiful setting—the redbud, dogwood, and sand plum bushes were all in bloom from the waters edge along the river to the top of the bluff the Canyon was in. I hope to be able to visit the Canyon again this Easter. The Holders that own the canyon gave me an invite; they said if I had no way to get to the Canyon they would come after me. The first story that I wrote of the canyon titled "My First Trip to Horse Thief Canyon" was widely published. The Stillwater Gazette first published the story, then the Guthrie Leader. The Holders have a copy of the story that came out in the Guthrie Leader. On page 383 in Volume 2 of the Cimarron Family Legends is the story of the Horse

Thief Canyon pretty much as I wrote the story in 1907. I gave the story to a college student, a history major, to write with the understanding that he was to tell where he got the story. But the story did not mention my name. But even so, the fact that my story was used proved to me that even though I was not but eleven years old, the story had become history worth telling.

Those making speeches that Sunday in 1907 at the Horse Thief Canyon were Roy Hays, President of the Anti-Horse Thief Association, also master of ceremonies. Other speakers were Major Gordon W. Lillie, better known as Pawnee Bill, Frank "Pistol Pete" Eaton, Rollo Goodnight and Zack Mulhall.

It was believed the Anti-Horse Thief Association was first organized by my Uncle Roy Hays. Horse Thief Canyon became a recreation spot as early as 1900 and some say as early as 1890. People gathering plums along the Cimarron River would wade across the river and cook their meal in a fireplace with a natural chimney.

Funny markers on rocks and trees led some people to believe that the outlaws had hidden money they had stolen in the Canyon. If I was a mind to I could write a story just on rumors alone that were told about Horse Thief. Rumors are like prairie fires--the farther they go the bigger they get. But for one that has never been to the Canyon it is worth the time it takes to visit it. I hope to go to the Canyon while the redbud are in bloom. I used to enjoy riding along the high bluff of the river on the train when the redbud were in bloom, riding the little train everyone know as Fogarty, so named after the conductor. Fogarty would stop his train on the section line if it was near your home to keep you from having to walk. Fogarty was a prince of a man loved by everyone who knew him.

I wish to dedicate this story to Mr. & Mrs. Ben Holder and family who now own Horse Thief Canyon. I don't know of a more beautiful spot to build a home than

where the Holders are building theirs overlooking the Cimarron River 500 feet below. The beautiful setting for a place to live is bound to make for a beautiful life for those that live there. My blessings for you, Mr. & Mrs. Holder, and may the Cimarron River and the high cedar bluff bring you many blessings through the years.

My Second Trip to Horsethief Canyon

by Ward Hays

My second trip to the canyon was just as dangerous and exciting as the first. The second trip came in 1912. When I and my boyfriend, both 16 years old, took our 15 year-old girlfriends to the Canyon for the Easter Sunday basket dinner.

My boyfriend had a new buggy, and a pretty pair of ponies with new buggy harnesses. The mothers of the two girls had spent much of their butter and egg money to buy clothes for the Easter affair so their daughters could show off their boyfriends from Stillwater.

My girlfriend lived on the farm that the Progress School house is on while my boyfriend's girlfriend lived just across the river from the Canyon, but there was no ford on the Cimarron River in that location. The basket dinner was supposed to be at noon. My girlfriend was slow about getting ready so we drove to my boyfriend's girlfriend's house and picked her up. By the time we got back to my girl's house, she was ready. It was then 10:45. To go by the bridge at Coyle to the Canyon it would be 12 miles and take three hours, but by fording the river just north of Goodnight it would be only two and a half miles to the Canyon. So that was what we decided to do.

The ponies we were driving had never been in the water before. When we got to the river it had rained a few days before and the river was over the sand bar. We told the girls to get up on the back of the buggy seat in case the water was deeper than we thought. There was a real steep embankment where we entered in the river and the horse did not want to go down the

Ward Hays continues his reminiscences about Horsethief Canyon and relates his second trip in 1912.

embankment. While my boyfriend held the reins I layed the buggy whip to the horse and they plunged into the river. The water was deep enough that it swam the horses and came over the top of Buggy Box. The horses began to lunge and we were in real trouble as one of the horses turned over on his side. But by that time the other horse had solid footing and was pulling buggy and horse out on to the sand bar. I don't know who was the worse scared: the horses or we boys and girls. The girls were scared so bad they could not speak for several minutes. Then one of the girls began to laugh and said what will mamma think she spent her butter and egg money for. Her pretty white dress with its pink ribbons, her white shoes and cute little homemade hat was spattered with dirty water and mud. My girlfriend began to cry. I did not know what to do or say. Then a thought came into my mind. Listen you girls I said, don't mind the mud on your clothes. Let's get to the picnic before all the food is gone. The horses were standing shaking like a leaf on a tree when the wind is blowing.

We got some grass and cleaned the buggy and the girls shoes the best we could and in 30 minutes we were at the Canyon having as good a time as any one. The story of the river mishap had beat us to the Canyon. Some boys and girls walking down the railroad track had seen the whole thing and had spread the news.

The thing we all dreaded most was taking the girls home and explaining how the girls got so muddy. But there was no explaining to do as the news of our plight had reached the girls homes long before we got there. It was about six p.m. when we got to the girls homes. This time we came by Coyle and across the bridge.

My boyfriend's girlfriend had asked my girlfriend to stay with her that night. She thought that would make things better as her mother would not scold her in front of someone. As we drove in the yard my boyfriend's girls father came to meet us. He had a grin on his face. You boys unhitch your horses and put them in the

barn. And feed them. They are probably plenty hungry after the ordeal you boys have put them through today, he said.

When we went into the house all my boyfriend's mother said was, well you are pretty looking sight. I just as well saved my butter and egg money and made your clothes out of burlap. I am sure they would have looked as good as those clothes you have on.

Then the mother looked at my friend and me and said it would not hurt us to clean up a bit before supper and handed us a clothes brush. Then she told her daughter to take her friend upstairs and see if she couldn't find some clean clothes for them both.

The sandy mud on my friends clothes and mine had dried. We got most of the mud off but the press in our pants was gone.

After the evening meal my friend's girls mother said, are you kids going to church tonight at Hopewell. If you are, you had better be on your way. Or should Dad and I come along to see that you get there without mishap. We assured them we could make it OK.

Neither of the girls parents ever spoke of the ordeal again and my boyfriend and I made many trips to the Cimarron Valley that summer and fall to see our Cimarron Valley Queens and to take them to Hopewell Church. While my boyfriend and girlfriend have been gone for many years, my boyfriend's girlfriend lives in Coyle, Oklahoma. I have many fond memories of the wonderful people that lived and farmed in the Cimarron and their beautiful daughters that so willingly went to dance parties, and literaries with my friend and me. The country was so alive with young people, fun loving in those days.

Grandfather's Tales

by Ralph Pearson

GO FLY A KITE

1906-09 I have recorded in these stories many of our group projects, things which required combined action. The beginning of the air age occurred about this time, and we kids learned of the successful efforts of the Wright brothers, and the failure of Langley, and of other birdmen. As a youth, I thrilled to the acrobatics of Lincoln Beachy, the only man to take off, fly and land indoors. The Seattle World's Fair was girding for a super attraction. The machinery was moved in, Beachy used its half mile length for an airfield, taking off from one end, rising to clear a table in its midst, and landing at the far end. And that record still stands. Indoor flight Number One.

Newspapers showed pictures showing him flying beneath Niagara Falls Bridge, with but a few feet between his wingtips and the piers of the bridge. All this with an engine of rated horsepower that would not be sufficient to drive a car at present.

A lot of charisma went out of flying when a balky engine dumped him in the ocean off San Francisco Bay. But this story is about kites, and kites are not a modern invention. To me, kites were an individual project.

The contrast between kite flying, then and now, is that very few fields are safe for flyers now. High voltage electric lines have invaded much of the countryside. Also, aeroplanes, high overhead, regard kites as dangerous to their wellbeing. Kite flying, too, beside a major highway results in numerous collisions, as

The *Review* continues Ralph Pearson's stories about life in Stillwater from 1893 to 1916.

car drivers daydream of their youth, and neglect to drive carefully.

No kid of my era would confess that there was anything he had not learned about kite flying. All had experiences with kites. Any boy, flying a storebought kite, was suspected of being weakminded. And every kid that did not hoard straightgrained lath, suitable paper, and cord string, was not regarded as suitable companions of those who did.

It was cord string that was the problem of high flying. With unlimited wealth, balls of string could be bought for money. Stores had various sizes, for 5, 10, or 15 cents. But to me it meant watching every purchase of family or friends, with a "Can I have the string?" Every piece thus gained was neatly and securely tied to the protruding end of the ball. Well do I remember that lesson when my current favorite flyer had reached maximum altitude, and my kite lodged in a tree, some two blocks away. I always needed every cent I could get, for more important projects. But many beautiful moments flew at the end of a knotted string.

You could not send a message to a kite over a knotted string. That was done by cutting a hole in a sheet of paper. Then making a cut from the hole to the rim, and pinning it as a cone on the kite string. The wind, which kept the kite aloft, would blow the cone up the string until it reached the kite, but only if the string was smooth. I never had much success in giving my kite written orders, for I never had smooth string, and the orders never reached the receiver. So I don't know if it was true or not that the kite would fly upside down, upon orders from the ground. I suspect that was just one of the tales of the big boys, to give them a feeling of superiority.

I often wanted a box kite. That desire to build one . . . has persisted, even to old age (to build one of sufficient size to hoist a camera and timer). Particularly, a stereocamera. I was always fascinated with maps and air photographs. Most pictures that are

taken from planes are taken from such heights that render ground details so small that it is hard to learn anything from them. But at a height of 150 to 300 feet, a more vivid understanding would be had. But I have never found a plan to work from. There must be plans, for at one time the Army had a man-carrying box kite.

In the lives of those interesting Chinese, it was mature age that developed radical changes from that of youth. Perhaps kite flying should be included amongst the activities of the senior citizens. Contests could be sponsored between drivers of wheelchairs that would set old arteries pumping. The advice of pundits would become a course in geriatrics. Go fly a kite.

Benjamin Franklin was always old. At least it is so in his pictures. He flew a kite in a thunderstorm, and lived to profit by it. Some who have attempted to duplicate his feat have not been so fortunate. So be careful where you fly your kite.

It is possible to arrange a spectacle, as a sideline of kiteflying-- a parachute descent. Take one small doll, make a parachute out of a man's handkerchief, and fasten the doll securely to the lines. Two bent pins are also needed. One in the kite tail, one in the top of the chute. Hook them together as the kite is ready to launch. A mild breeze makes recovery easier, and prevents premature unhooking. When the top height is reached, a series of sharp jerks will have a whipcracker effect upon the kite's tail, causing the doll to hit the silk. Then all that is needed is to keep the fearless birdman in sight, so it can be repeated, right soon.

The tale has been told of Jim and his gang, telling the small fry that they were building a big kite, one of a size to hoist the smallest member of their gang, who would then ride the parachute down to earth. Then they flew their regular kite, with the doll dangling. Of course, the small fry informed their folks, and so a mixed audience was had, some making protests at the danger involved.

Their gang member was quite a hero, when he came out of hiding to receive the homage that rightfully belonged to his standing. GO FLY A KITE.

WE PLAY HOOKY FROM GRANDMA

1907. It is difficult to explain how we younger children, Fred, Kate, myself and Glen were brought up by Grandma Moore. But this story is of the fact, not the reason that she was our babysitter during daylight hours. I am sure that Gran'ma did not enjoy being an ogre, any more than we did. There were slight rebellions against her iron hand from time to time, and this story records one of them.

It was a bright summer day, and that alone encouraged an adventurous spirit in young hearts. Our off-and-on companions, neighbor boys of about the same age as Glen and I, Bruce and Don Chandler, were playing in the peach orchard, when we got the idea that a trip to the forty would be full of adventure. Since Gran'ma did not approve of the Chandler family, she had shut herself in the house. I don't know where Kate was, possibly at the Prachts, as there were girls of her own age there. So we were on the loose, with no spies to mark our going. We could see the barn on the forty from where we were, so we took off across the Adams acres, as the crow flies; that is, diagonally to the property lines.

Many wonderful things were to be seen at the forty. But in later years, when I was big enough to hoe or pick up potatoes, or even drive the hay rack wagon while stronger muscles than mine pitched it full of hay, it did not seem to be near as entrancing.

The timbered banks of the creek were fenced, as was the home of from 20 to 30 red hogs. Slop from the hotels and restaurants, plus any food item that hogs would eat, was hauled and stored there. One thing that was always in supply was stale bread from the bakeshop

of Charlie and Jim. The custom of that time, preceding the wrapping of bread with waxed paper by six or seven years, was that bread was fit for toast the second day. On the third day it was garbage.

Our company of explorers approached the unknown. The remains of a spring garden there had not been plowed as yet. There we found icicle radishes of tremendous size. Summer had added a bite. They bit back. Alone, they failed to satisfy our growing hunger, so we found some of the pig's bread, rock hard, with the older loaves laced with green. Now we were feeding! The green parts of the loaves we were eating were saved for the fishes. One of the attractions of the Forty was a boat with enough water to float it, and it was that boat that was our dining hall. So we appeased our afternoon hunger with bread and radishes and considered ourselves happy with food that Fritz and the rest of the canine tribe would have turned up their respective noses at.

After so long a time our freedom palled, so we looked for new worlds to conquer. We returned to the cleared spot to make a discovery. The sun was halfway down the western sky. Somebody might have missed us from home. So we took a goodbye to the Forty and plodded toward home to find the household upset.

Gran'ma could not find us. Kate was sent to the different neighbors, even to the mother of the Chandler boys, who was not very concerned that her children were also missing. Word was sent to Mother Pearson, to where she was working in the business adventure of Charlie and Jim, and she returned to home to supervise the search.

It was a hot welcome home when we got there. Glen, being the younger, the blame and its punishment fell upon me. Maw stripped me to the raw and covered me with mud, then clothed me with an old dress of Kate's and I had to do without my supper. But I was well-filled Dobey-dried bread and bitey radishes. So I

did not suffer much from that. But I had to take a bath and several rinses before I was allowed to crawl into bed.

Gran'ma was in the last half of her seventies at this time. I have often said that no woman of that age should be saddled with responsibility of young children. Mother Pearson, who in her fifties was so kind and patient, was the same age as Gran'ma Moore who was at the time of this incident, when I found her poking under a table with her cane at Patty who cringed with fear. So I think that the unkindness toward the old folks is duplicated in torture of the young ones in their care.

TRIP TO POINTS EAST

1910 In my discussion on cameras I promised another story of a trip on the railroad with a camera. This story will complete that promise.

The house on Adams Street was no longer ours and the family had moved to 801 S. Hester the winter before. The health of Grandma Moore was still stable. The forty acres on the creek had been sold so there was nothing to keep Dad Pearson at home.

Uncle Bob of Indiana had visited Oklahoma before the turn of the century but it had been thirty-one years since Dad had seen his other brother, Jim, who lived in Ohio. As an added attraction, there was a series of conventions that summer where Pastor Russell would be one of the speakers. So the itinerary of that trip was planned to cover all the potentials of that multi-purpose trip and I was young enough to go half-fare so I was included as a companion in the wanderings.

We left Stillwater by way of the Santa Fe on May 29, 1910, to Pawnee. After a wait, we boarded the Frisco for Tulsa and points East. My memory does not recall if we changed trains at Tulsa or continued our way on the same train, but we left Tulsa after dark. By

daylight next morning we were at Monette, Missouri. The coach was not too well filled with passengers and it was one with an oversized washroom. The wall next to the washroom had an extra long seat on which Dad Pearson was stretched out, more comfortable that he would be in a regular seat. Me? I was awake and stirring. When I discovered that two locomotives were pulling the train I hurried to where Dad Pearson was snoring his best to share with him that we had a double header on. He was not as excited as I was. Shaking to arouse himself he inquired if I had woken him just to tell him that we were being pulled by a double header? A fellow passenger spoke up with a quip "Maybe the kid thought you would sleep sounder if you knew we had a double header pulling us." His remark with the double meaning on the snoring caused considerable laughter among the passengers who had also suffered. Several times during the rest of the morning our funny man made remarks that entertained the travelers. One was a sing-song parody of the conductors announcement of train stops and connections but the parody never mentioned trains but was all about a coonhunt with hounds.

A few years ago I wet over into Missouri with Jack. We stopped at the Will Rogers Memorial at Claremore. I got the idea that our funny man was the humorist himself who in coming years would make the world laugh. Perhaps he was on his way to New York stage at that time, returning from a visit with his folks in Oolagah and visiting boyhood scenes.

In due time, that morning, we came to St. Louis where we would have to wait until nine to ten that evening. Since we had time for a tour of the city sights, that is what we did.

We crossed the Mississippi River and back on a ferry boat. It was somewhat different from the traditional Stern Wheeler neither of the paddles were at the sides. A wheel-well was in the center of the boat and it was from that center that the paddles did their job. After

this excursion, we followed a crowd loading on a street car which delivered its load at Jefferson Barracks where Memorial Day services were underway. But we stayed with the trolley car until it returned to the Union Station where we stayed out our waiting time. One of the sights there was the train-shed with 23 tracks where that many passenger trains could be loaded or unloaded.

We boarded our train for Huntington, Indiana, well after dark. It was daybreak, the next morning when we landed on the soil of Indiana. There was an early bird restaurant open where we got our breakfast. While we were eating, Dad questioned the owner about transportation to Lanchester, a village about 10 miles away, where Uncle Bob lived.

A couple of young men pointed out, as owning an auto, and who took us there in a 20 minute ride. Since Dad had not given his schedule to Uncle Bob, he and Aunt Linda were rather surprised when we pulled up at the front gate so very early in the morning. But both were glad to see us and made things very pleasant for us throughout our stay. Uncle Bob had visited Dad and Uncle Tom in 1898, while I was still a baby. So his first question was, "Is this Jum?" Jumbo was a nickname when I was a baby.

Dad was wanting to see the country of his youth, with a possibility of relocating in one of those states. I don't know where he went at times, but I stayed with Aunt Linda while he and Uncle Bob went places. I suppose he visited the cemetery where my Gran'pa Pearson was buried but I was not along. I was along when we visited the Buzzards.

George Buzzard was the husband of my Aunt Kate. She was very bad off with T.B., when Dad Pearson made the trip to Indiana in 1893. She died soon after, and Buzzard had remarried. That is the only place where I went with Dad while we were at Lanchester. Ed, Uncle Bob's oldest, borrowed a team and buggy from a farmer where he worked and drove us to Huntington, or was it Ft. Wayne, where we took the interurban for Ohio? The

Ft. Wayne, Picqua, and Dayton. Uncle Bob went with us. It had been several years since he had been to Ohio, but he was our guide. Electric interurban lines laced the countryside in both states, and there were connections that led to within one-half mile of the farm that Uncle Jim rented.

Uncle Jim was very busy, as was also his family, this was the season when all worked. Yet, while his two brothers were there, he took a day off and harnessed a team to their "Sunday" surrey and took us to the cemetery where my Grandmother Pearson was buried some forty-five years earlier.

It seemed rather queer to me that Gran'pa was buried in one state and Gran'ma in another. When Gran'ma died in sixty-three or four, the family lived in Ohio. (We visited the site of their house on this same day.) The children were taken in by relatives, and it was Dad Pearson's hope, at the time that Gran'pa would be able to reestablish a home. Work was scarce as the big armies were being disbanded, and much younger men were willing to work for less than a living wage. So Gran'pa was forced to seek work in another state. He found work on a stockfarm, and had to get out in the rain to take care of newborn lambs. He died of pneumonia at 64.

Dad's hang-up concerning his relatives prevented him from trying to find a better place than Oklahoma. During this trip, he neither visited with any of his cousins, nor did any of them seek him out. To him, his family ended with his brothers and sisters. So I know very little about anyone more distant.

A few words about the changing customs of burying. The Quakers at the time of Gran'ma's death did not believe in putting up marked stones. So Gran'pa picked a field of stone of about 35 lbs. to mark the grave. When her three "boys" looked for that stone, they found four other stones of near identical size, within a short distance, four other families had the same idea. Any of the five graves could have been

Gran'ma Pearson. Handsome stones bloomed in the newer part of the Westfork burying grounds, bearing dates for some thirty years later.

We found that the Quaker meetinghouse which housed the meetings of our ancestors for more than 100 years was being used as a tobacco drying barn. I have been informed, in recent years, that now the yellow brick of the meeting house has been used to make a wall at the front of the cemetery, which is just across the road from where the meetinghouse stood.

While we were there at Uncle Jim's, Uncle Bob, Dad, and I went sightseeing in Dayton one day. Uncle Bob was an old soldier, and he wanted to see the old soldiers home there. Perhaps he thought he would meet someone he knew, or perhaps he was looking for a future refuge. One of the sights there was a cyclorama of the battle of Gettysburg. A circular exhibit of painting and plastic art which now can be seen only at Gettysburg. And we had as a self-invited guide an old soldier "who was there".

The grounds of the "home" was not too far distant from the newly established "Wright Field." But we did not see any airplanes, flitting to and fro. My first view of an airplane in flight was nine years later. But there was a gas-filled balloon moving around through the sky for about two hours and eventually dropped a rope to the ground, and he was hauled down out of sight behind the intervening trees. So knowledge was gained of the air that navigation of the new medium might be a science, as well as an art.

The squirrels in the trees at the home were very tame. They were the grey variety, not the reds of Oklahoma. They would eat from the hands of those in uniform. The rest of us had to toss the peanuts towards them where they were quickly grabbed and carried a safe distance before eating their handout. We watched where a squirrel was searching the pockets of a veteran who was sleeping on the bench in the sun. The "frisk"

was poorly done, for the victim awoke cursing the pest and heaving a few rocks toward his tormentor without damaging anything except the squirrel's self-confidence.

That institution was "home" to many of the "vets" who had got too old to make a living. They had to leave their families to be kept by Uncle Sam while they retained some of the harshness of army-life.

After Uncle Bob went home, Dad and I stayed another week. On one of these days, Dad went to a convention at Cincinnati. I stayed at Uncle Jim's whose youngest boy, Russell, was about my age. I suppose that I accompanied him in whatever tasks that were his lot. Russell died in 1972 of heart failure.

We left Uncle Jim's early one morning to take in a convention at Dayton where Pastor Russell was one of the speakers. That evening, he gave public discourse at a bigger hall. We had to leave early in order to make the train. After we were safely aboard, Dad went to the car entrance and watched. He was told that the train was gaining movement when an auto drove up close and two men carried the pastor to the train entrance. Several cars ahead, while another carried his baggage. The pastor had just finished a two hour sermon and probably needed all the help possible; he was 58 that year.

In the morning when we unloaded in Chicago, he appeared rested as he passed us in the care of a committee. He remarked to Dad as he passed us, "I see we got here". Perhaps he recognized him from the day before.

We attended morning and afternoon meetings, and going for a boat ride on the lake during the noon hour. This was my only view of water so wide that you could not see the other side. As our train depot was a near mile from the convention hall, we walked it while it was still light. It was after nine, again when our train started the two day journey back to Oklahoma and home with six or seven spools of exposed film to bring

remembrances of our near month absence from the things at home.

NEPHEWS IN THE FAMILY

Glen was born in 1901, and from that time until Leo's arrival in 1909, there was no other baby in the family. Glen had no little brother to boss had to wear his cast-off clothing. He not only outgrew his clothes, but he also outgrew his cute baby ways, his lisp and is credulity. But he never outgrew his dimples. The stories of his babyhood soon became twice-told tales to those who would listen.

But Leo's arrival changed all that. Once more there were cute baby stories to tell in exchange for the patience in listening to tales of other prodigies. There were wonders to perform before baby eyes and see the enjoyment and consternation mirrored in their eyes, and sometimes in their voices, accompanied by tears. But mostly, there were blank expressions on their faces signaling peace with the world, and with all that is herein.

I had memories of a younger companion growing up in my presence, since I was one step removed from the nadir of the order of hen-peck, the moluments of a youngest brother. Glen never had anyone smaller to command or control as had been the position of his older brothers. And he was eight years old when Leo was born. It was natural that he made friends early with the nephews and throughout the time they were learning to use their own locomotion.

I have often stated of that time that, "Glen could maul and rough-house them, so that from the noise you would think their lives were in danger and as soon as things quieted a bit back they came for more of the same. But let me look their way, they would run and hide behind their mother and be quiet, at least until they discovered me somewhere else." I was never

accepted as a favorite uncle. It was not until my granddaughters came visiting Gran'pa that I ever had young ones to train and mystify, and I have taken advantage of that companionship to add to my "Grandfather Tales."

Many are the small tales of Leo and Russell. Many are their childish sayings and pranks. When Leo was about three, he was walking in company of Kate, myself, and others. His legs were short and he had to make about two steps to one of our own. He turned to Kate with the inquiry, "Kate, do you want to carry Leo?"

One of the institutions of that time was a five-cent box of Crackerjack, always containing some free gift that was guaranteed to please the childish heart. In Leo's package that day was a bow-saw about the size of the palm of your hand. Leo was sawing wood, a board here, a post there, and a big weed somewhere else. But it did not cut fast enough to suit the sawer. When I came upon him, he was busy sharpening the saw-blade at the family grindstone. There were but few teeth left, but that did not worry Leo. His saws gums made about as much saw-dust as its teeth had done. There would be other gifts in a few days.

1913-1915 We lived for three years at the Hamilton place at the west end of Ninth Avenue. Many times in those years Leo and Russell walked the distance to be companions of Kate, myself, and Glen, and walking the near mile by themselves and sometimes back to town again when the day was over. Jim was running a bakery at 905 Main St. and the boys mother was needed as a clerk to sell the bread and pastry that was made there. For a time, the boys had a short-haired terrier to make the trip with them, but poisoned food found by the ranging dog ended that companionship.

Automobiles were not part of my experience at that time, that came later, but the noise of the racing engine was dear to the heart of children then, as well as now.

The horse and buggy had no identifying sounds and that deficiency probably was the reason it lost out to the more noisy contestant. One of the pictures from memory's album shows the nephews with a play "auto." Leo was at the wheel and Russell "in a hind." This mechanical marvel was constructed by Glen from a wooden shipping box, which was the only kind used in those days. Its main inventive turn was two tin cans nailed to the front as headlights. Its motor was very facile, however, and could make just as much noise as the merriest Oldsmobile when its motor was gunned. It even had twin-exhaust when operating at full speed, and if you didn't know better, you might think that the cacophony originated in the throats of the occupants. Sometimes the terrier helped them enjoy motoring, at least he added his decibels to theirs.

I have recorded in other stories how we made our own merry-go-round. Whenever there was a dearth of the vested holders of passes, Leo and Russell could ride it. A more sedate speed was had for them. At other times, we tried to get all the speed possible even to laying down and walking the spokes of the wagon wheel that bore the cross-arms from below. Strange to say, we never had any accidents there.

While thinking of the inventiveness of children, I recall a visit to the Moore cousins about 1914. This was near Marena and nature had endowed the countryside thereabouts with plenty of hills. My cousins, Bub, Willard, and Chad, were the possessors of a junk buggy that had been stripped of shafts or tongue. The body, too, had been removed and a couple of boards substituted. There was plenty of kid-muscle to haul the coaster to the top of the hill, and with guide ropes fastened to the front axle, we all loaded on behind the steersman and gravity did all the rest.

The free-wheeling era of automobiles came some 18 to 20 years later, with not near as much fun.

In the fall of 1915, Dad Pearson rented a farm

southeast of town and we lived there the next four years. We began to move by stages. A load a day, while the rest of the day was used in fixing fences, etc. before going back home in the evening. Glen declared he would never move that junk again. "I'll just walk off and leave it." But he did move it again when we moved to the farm south of the creek four years later, i.e., 1919-20.

But back to the 1915 move; one day the wagon was loaded with junk and the mules were hitched to it. The spring wagon was loaded too with old Molly between the shafts. Molly would have followed with a lead-rope, but Glen put Leo on the seat and gave him the lines and told him to follow the wagon. Leo was past six at the time while Molly was very near the end of her string. But the young boy and the old mare made the move without incident.

It was in the years that we lived at the Matthew's place, possibly 1917, that the nephews rode their tricycles to Gran'ma's. One day Russell's transportation had a broken wheel. The spokes had pulled out from the rim of that steel-shod wheel. Why? That I do not recall, but there was nothing we could do with the wheel. So Glen and I removed the damaged wheel and placed the good rear wheel in the center and bent the frame to fit, making a bicycle with front wheel drive.

A sharp slope away from the furnished motive power and in a short time, Russell was able to use the pedals and keep himself balanced, too. That evening, he created quite a sensation in front of the bakery, pedaling among the crowds that were bound for the picture show that was in the east side of the 900 block of Main at that time, 1919. In later years, the boys had a shetland pony to ride and to take them wherever they wanted to go. Billy, the pony, was like all horses, he did not always do what the riders wanted him to do. He could buck when one of the nephews did not do to his pleasing. But when I got on him to take the kinks out of him, there was not a sign of rebellion; too much weight. Memory does not recall when Billy was sold or

to whom. But there is a picture of Aunt Anna riding Billy in the barnyard of the farm south of the creek. Billy did not look like he was enjoying it. That picture was taken in either 1920 or 1921.

Jim and his family moved to California in 1922 and the nephews were grown before I saw them again. But by this time, there were other Pearson grandchildren, Kate's, Johnny, Jimmie, and Virginia. She, too, moved to California soon after "Gina" was born. Helen came shortly after to be companion of her Grandfather, as we lived on the farm in the small house when Helen was three-and-a-half, Lola Dene was that age. Patty Lou became the first of eighteen great-grandchildren.

Each of these young ones has produced baby stories and cute sayings galore which has been repeated wherever a hearer is found.

Since many of these children were raised far from the Oklahoma country which has always been my home, vivid knowledge of their capers has not been my privilege. Even my own granddaughters were raised afar where my only connection was letters with annual vacation visits and some years, not even that. Instead of a steady progression, my memories of them is a series of large jumps, one year to the next.

Dad Pearson voiced the feelings of Grandfathers-Unlimited, when he stated, "I love to have my grandchildren visit me, but I am twiced pleased when they leave before dark."

June 20, 1973

News and Notes

Letter Regarding Little Tom and Fats

I have read *Little Tom and Fats*, every line, a distinction given to no other book that for years crossed my desk. I know the region of Ripley and Stillwater since 1927 and I suspected the book would be interesting. It obsessed me and I need to say something.

I knew the Berry family on four counts: History programs with students at the Berry home; Nellie and Sam in community history programs; Bill as organizer of the Speakers Club at A. and M. College, coworker in the prelaw fraternity and as court justice; Veneta and Jim, I have been in their home and from Jim I got a bit of political help. Many things I did not know—Outlet ranchers were of the same Berry family. I never suspected that the family knew about log cabins. I was born in one and lived in another. McGinty lectured to my classes, Pete reviewed his book there and he rode in parades.

For this show, Veneta sets the stage and Fats takes over. The book is delightfully written. It records social development in central Oklahoma and describes interesting families. It is the hardest kind of book to make interesting but it does not lag a minute. I like the simplicity and the human sympathy in it.

Mitchell presents a picture of rural life typical, not only of Oklahoma but, of the nation. Much of what he tells of Ripley, I experienced in West Virginia—coal-oil lamps, cars, radios, schools, churches, KKK, farm life, notching ears of animals, preparation for Christmas, etc. Trials and tribulation are in the story but, through it all, Ripley is a community where the reader would like to live. Personalities are as distinct as if they appeared on stage. Little Tom learns from environment, the city kid from books. Bundo represents a type, so does Mrs. Williams — yes, Poison, too. Persons my age have met them all.

Mitchell is a philosopher and holds interest of the reader by interpretation of common events. Any youngster who sees western movies could profit by Spikenard's exposure of the

I knew Mayme Lytton, she was my mother's neighbor. We had an old stock tank on the farm and it had "Lyttons Hardware" on it.

Clarrey Graham Cook
Perkins, Oklahoma

Honorary Life Member – Ward Hays

According to the bylaws of the Payne County Historical Society, each year the Board of Directors may select a person to receive an honorary life membership at the annual meeting in June. This year the Board has chosen to honor a man who has been writing historical articles for more than 70 years, who as a boy of eleven reported the inauguration of the first governor of Oklahoma for the Stillwater newspaper. He served as editor of the *Cimarron Family Legends* for many years and still writes for the *Perkins Journal* and the *Central Rural News*. He has written many articles on the history of Payne County. He was a charter member of our society and is a contributing editor to our society's quarterly. It is a pleasure for me to present on behalf of the Board and the Payne County Historical Society an Honorary Life Member Certificate to Ward Hays.

Doris Scott, Vice President

Minutes

June 7, 1983

The PCHS met at Roxie Weber Plaza for its annual business meeting. Doris Scott presided in David Baird's absence.

Mrs. Scott paid tribute to the late Bob Donaldson for his continuing contributions to the society as a charter member.

Treasurer Ray Burley reported \$516.47 in checking; \$1,488.14 in the book account for the Berry project; \$801 in certificate of deposit, which will mature January 1, 1984; and \$351.63 in a savings account at First National Bank. He reminded members that dues will be due July 1. The annual report of the treasurer was approved.

Dr. Lawrence H. Erwin reported on the Historic Sites Committee, which met February 21, and urged the involvement of youth groups of Payne County that they may become participants in preserving our historical background materials.

Dr. Hobart Stocking showed his map of all earlyday post offices and the date each was founded, a continuing project.

Sen. Bernice Shedrick has advised Dr. Erwin she will try to locate funds to help finance commemorative highway markers.

H.F. Donnelley reported on the Witness Tree, site of an early massacre and urged that it be preserved and marked.

Tom and Maria Reyburn and Winfrey and Barbara Houston were presented certificates marking their efforts in preserving several of Stillwater's older buildings.

An honorary life membership was conferred on Ward Hays, who has devoted his life to writing about this area.

Dr. LeRoy Fischer, chairman of the nominating committee, presented the slate of officers, which was accepted by acclamation. Carol Bormann will serve as president; Doris Scott, vice president; Doris Dellinger, secretary; Bill Warde, treasurer; and filling two positions on the board of directors for three-year terms will be Lawrence Erwin and Lawrence Gibbs.

The program on the controversial site of the battle of Twin Mounds was given by Tom Franzmann, Oklahoma State University student.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m. Sixty-one members and guests were present.

Respectfully submitted,

Doris Dellinger
Secretary

Minutes

September 13, 1983

The PCHS met at the Citizens Bank for the first fall meeting. Carol Bormann presided.

Minutes were read and approved. Co-treasurer Mary Jane Warde reported \$4663.51 in checking; \$451.63 in savings; and \$595.02 in a certificate of deposit. Approximately \$57 remains in the postal account.

Editor Ann Carlson reviewed the status of the next two copies of the journal. Iris Erwin will assist with the mailings.

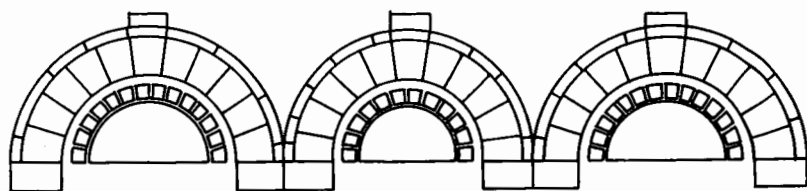
The new logo for the PCHS depicts the sandstone arches on the front of the Citizens Bank and will be used to identify the organization in a variety of ways, including membership cards and stationery. Nick and Carol Bormann designed the logo to help increase the group's identity in the community.

Members were asked for suggestions for special uses for the \$1,000 donation left the group by the late Bob Donaldson, a charter member.

The evening's speaker, Alvan Mitchell, was introduced by Ann Carlson. The California author, a former resident of Ripley, spoke on "Making History Come Alive" before autographing copies of his book, Little Tom and Fats. Also autographing the books were Veneta Berry Arrington, whose history of early Ripley introduces the book.

Thirty-two attended.

Respectfully submitted,
Doris Dellinger
Secretary



PAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OFFICERS

Carol Bormann, *President*
Doris Scott, *Vice-President*
Doris Dellinger, *Secretary*
Bill Warde, *Treasurer*

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Hobart Stocking, *term expiring 1985*
Julie Couch, *term expiring 1985*
Lawrence Erwin, *term expiring 1986*
Lawrence Gibbs, *term expiring 1986*

Payne County Historical Society is organized in order to bring together people interested in history, and especially in the history of Payne County, Oklahoma. The Society's major function is to discover and collect any materials which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the area.

Membership in the Payne County Historical Society is open to anyone interested in the collection and preservation of Payne County history.

All members receive copies of the *Review* free. In addition, the Society sponsors informative meetings four times a year, the first Tuesday in March, June, September, and December, 7:30 p.m. Two outings; one in the fall and the other in the spring, are taken to historical sites in the area.

Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month that a regular meeting is not scheduled. These luncheons are held at 11:45 a.m. in Stillwater. All members are encouraged to attend.

Payne County Historical Society

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