

Payne County Historical Review

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From "John Lloyd Jones: Memories of College Life at Oklahoma A&M"



PAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Editor's Note

In this issue of the *Review* we take another look at some familiar themes: student life at Oklahoma A&M College and the early years of a small community in Payne County. No matter how many times we return to these subjects, though, each story always casts a new light on the subject, and we are privileged to see another aspect of our rich and fascinating history. Our thanks go to the family of John Lloyd Jones and to Ed Darby for sharing their stories with us.

This issue also includes information about Oklahoma's centennial celebration and how you can become a part of it. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in an event commemorating 100 years of statehood, so don't miss out on your chance to be a part of history!

John Lloyd Jones: Memories of College Life at Oklahoma A&M

by
John Lloyd Jones*

During the 1920's when I was in high school at Seiling, Oklahoma, I played four years of football, had parts in three school plays and played a trombone in the school band for two years. I also played basketball for two years. Football was my first love in sports. In my junior year I dropped out of school and worked in the lumber mill making posts. The year before I was involved in a prize fight which netted me enough to pay for my band instrument. I graduated from high school in 1925.

I took a job tearing down our old school house and building a new one. This was a fun summer. I had decided that I would go to college. The boy I worked with that summer I had grown up with and his father was the contractor on the school house. The son had just completed his first year at the Oklahoma A&M college so he influenced me to go there. His name was Hyrum Peter Steven Moldrup. He graduated in electrical engineering in 1929 and worked for Oklahoma Gas & Electric. He retired as district superintendent. The summer job paid 55 cents an hour and I was able to save \$65, which was my entire nest egg.

The college was at Stillwater, Oklahoma, about 125 miles from Seiling. Before college opened that fall of 1925, I was able to catch a ride over to Stillwater to look for



John Lloyd Jones in 1930, when he was a junior at Oklahoma A&M.

*John Lloyd Jones was in the service in the Pacific during World War II. He lived in Fort Collins, Colorado, from 1938 until his death in 2003, at the age of 96.

work during the school year. It was a small town of around 10,000 people. The main street was paved with brick and was about five blocks long. There were a few other paved streets which led to the college campus. There were perhaps eight to ten main buildings and several barns on the college farms. A spur railroad came near the town about a quarter of a mile from Main Street.

To me this was a big town compared to Seiling. The college population at its peak was around 3,000. Many of the students worked, so jobs were pretty scarce. Since I had gotten there early, I found an old man who ran a filling station who said he might use me as a night man if I would work Saturdays and Sundays. I assured him I could do that. He said he would pay me \$3.50 a week and I could have a cot in his oil room. The water was outside by the pumps. I went back home with high hopes and got a few clothes together and counted my money. My mother had an uncle and aunt who lived east of Stillwater about a hundred miles. She hadn't seen them in about 30 years but had kept in touch. Their names were Uncle John and Aunt Lillie Jones. She had persuaded my brother Bert to drop me off at Stillwater on the way to Claremore to see them.

When we got back to Stillwater, I had them stop at my future home. It had been a few weeks since I was there and the old man didn't even remember me. Well, that about knocked the tail off my kite. I must have done some tall talking, so he said get your bag and put it in the oil house. The place was called Sallers Livery Stable. I guess it hadn't been too many years since it was filled with horses for it still smelled great. I got broke in real well the first night. One section of the barn was used as a car storage and they were jammed in close together like sardines. There must have been 20 cars in there. In the middle of the night I was awakened by a very loud car honking. I hadn't been informed of any new storage but I thought I had better get dressed and go see. I couldn't see any other car and the sound was coming from the storage place. I wasn't afraid of most anything but this was a strange place and something I could hardly figure out. The horn kept blowing and it was clear in back. All kinds of things went through my mind. Perhaps someone was drawing me away from the cash box in the office. I couldn't put

up with the noise, so I crawled over about ten cars and located the culprit. No one seemed to be in the car, so I raised the hood and jerked the wire off and the thing shut up.

The next day I investigated an old hotel across the street. It was run by an old couple that had come off the farm. They served family style, all you could eat for 35 cents. About a block away was a one-counter restaurant where I could eat breakfast with three hot cakes for 15 cents and for supper a big bowl of vegetable soup for 15 cents. The college cafeteria served a plate lunch with cobbler dessert for 15 cents, so most days I would eat for 45 cents and fill up on Sunday for 35 cents.

In due time I was registered in school, had been run through the paddle line with the other freshmen, and had become a full-fledged student. I think my registration was \$18.00, plus some books which I bought second hand. My work assignment was 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 10 p.m. and all day Saturday and Sunday. Well, that time divided into \$3.50 per week came out to be about 5 cents an hour. That must have been the minimum wage.

One night about a month later a young man stopped at the filling station and offered me a job at his garage. He and his dad owned a Chevrolet agency and needed a night man. He offered me \$7.00 a week. I accepted before he could back out. By Thanksgiving time I had saved enough money to buy some new clothes. I finished up my school year, 1925-26, but had some problems with grades. I decided that summer to work the next year and try to make enough money so that I wouldn't have to work such long hours. I was out a year and a half before I started back. During that time I took special training in auto mechanics and car painting. In 1924 DuPont had developed a new car paint called DuPont Duco Lacquer. They tried it out on the Oldsmobile car and the next year on Chevrolet and Buick.

At about this time they were introducing this new product to the dealers, so I was able to get in on the ground floor. In order to teach their dealers how to use this new paint, General Motors set up schools for that purpose. I was one of their first students. The school in our territory was set up in Oklahoma City. This was my first experience in

a large city so I had a lot of experiences in quick order. One of the main outside attractions was a ticker tape parade for Charles Lindbergh, who had just completed a solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. He was riding in the back seat of a large touring car. He was seated in the back with his feet on the cushion and sitting on the back rest where the cloth top was folded. His hair was blowing in the wind and he was smiling and waving at everyone. I guess he was my first glimpse of a national hero. The following year I was sent to a Chevrolet Motors mechanics school. As I recall, my salary was raised to \$16 for a 54 hour week. This included an eight-hour shift every other week on Sunday.

During the next year and a half, which included fall of 1926 and fall of 1927, I became more skilled in my new trade of car painting, body repair, and engine repair. In those days car bodies were made from hard wood covered with metal in most areas. The top was covered with a water repellent fabric. A repairman needed to have some skills with wood and also with fabric. I mention this because some might think we always had steel bodies on cars. I had a room in the upper deck over the show room. I had a cot to sleep on and I used my suitcase to store my clothing. Not much room, but I never had much where I came from. I finally rented a room for \$8.00 a month and they furnished linens. It sure seemed nice to have my nights off. My job was to take care of the storage cars and trucks and take care of all the wrecker calls. Stillwater was located quite close to an oil well field so we got our share of drunk driver trade. The oil field business was a hazardous occupation in those days. All the standard derricks were made from heavy select wood timbers. Most of the timbers were hauled with horses and wagons to the location. Very few trucks could traverse the roads in wet weather. The wood derricks were nailed and bolted together and swung in place. The workers were called riggers, rough necks, and teamsters. Some worked long hours, making their jobs even more hazardous. They made good money and spent it freely.

In 1927 I bought my first real car, a 1925 Model T Ford Coupe. I bought it from Earl Van Deventer. He bought it new while he was working for a Ford dealer. He put all the extras on it that weren't factory equipment, like bumpers, shock absorbers, Bosh

ignition system, motor stabilizer, and other gadgets.

I asked my boss, Mr. Rich Ward, if I started back to school if I could work the odd hours that I wouldn't be in class. I guess I was lucky being the only car painter that he had. I talked to my friend Pete Moldrup that summer about going back to school. Pete had been instrumental in helping me get started in the first place. In 1928 Pete was a junior in the School of Engineering. He and I were rooming and boarding together while I was still working steady at the car agency. There were two brothers from our church, Lorn and Ralph Viceosy, staying there also. One day a tall farmer looking fellow came to inquire about a room. He was a pleasant chap dressed in blue jeans and carrying a blue jacket on one arm and the other was wrapped around a sizable bundle. His jeans were clean, but you could see that they had been washed many times for the suspenders had shrunk six or eight inches. To make up the difference, he had tied white cord to make them long enough. Well, it didn't take long to find out that he and I had worked together in the harvest near his house in 1921. We kept in touch as long as he lived. He completed his master's degree in education and taught many years in the Indian Service and public schools.

In the spring of 1928, I started back to school. I had been rooming with my friend Pete Moldrup and another friend I had worked with a few years before, and we decided to rent a house and have a few friends move in with us. It wasn't hard to talk my mother into moving from Seiling to Stillwater to take care of the boarding house. I was able to rent a place one block from the campus. It was a two-story frame with enough rooms for housing about five boys and my mother. I think most of the boys from our previous boarding place moved in with us.

My job at the garage was paying me 55 cents an hour and I could work all my spare time. I had bought a Chevy sports car (Cabriolet) and now I had everything but a fraternity pin. The car had a stationary cloth top. The back of the top opened up to a rumble seat that could seat two people. I painted the car an off white. The wheels and body were striped with a pale orange pin stripe. I kept the thing polished so it looked like

porcelain. I could make it from class to work without missing any time. Some time after Pete graduated, we moved to another location. It was a little closer to work but about the same to school.

I was working for a degree in entomology (a branch of zoology dealing with insects) and after graduation did work on a master's degree, completing all the required work except my thesis.

In 1929 I was dating a freshman girl from Oklahoma City by the name of Johnnie McCollough. She was chumming with a girl classmate by the name of Mazelle McAlister. We often double dated. That summer Johnnie went home for vacation and Mazelle and I dated steady. Mazelle's sister, Edith, came to Stillwater that summer and enrolled for summer school. Snowy [Harold Schnorenberg, a friend and colleague of the author's] had taken a job what summer with the department, so he was able to spend a lot of time with Edith, which she didn't seem to mind. That Christmas Snowy and I were invited to spend Christmas in Denver with the family. The trip was quite eventful. Besides Mazelle, we brought two other girls. The two rode in the rumble seat covered with a bear skin robe. In those days few people had heaters in their cars (especially poor students). We provided ourselves with three nice round river rocks and since all gas stations had pot-bellied stoves, we would make a long pit stop to warm our rocks. Before we made it into Denver, the motor was fouling a couple of spark plugs, so at every gas stop we went to a drug store and bought a pound of moth balls and put them in our gas tank. Our luck ran out when we started to fight the traffic across Broadway, just three blocks from our destination. Only two spark plugs were firing in our four cylinder motor. We could hear the bad words and see the dirty looks and hear the honking horns. Snowy and I enjoyed our stay with the family and we returned without mishap.

In the summer of 1930 we returned to Denver for a visit. My mother came along to get acquainted with the McAlister family. On our way back she wanted to go visit her brother who was working in a new oil field at Borger, Texas. He was a carpenter building wooden oil well rigs. The field was so new that all available rooming houses were

full, so we drove out in a wheat field and made our bed in the stubble. The next day we found Uncle Claude and a place to eat. Those were the days before motels.

On June 1, 1931, Mazelle McAlister and I were married. She was a sophomore that year and I was a year from graduation.

Saving the Past Through Oral History

by
Barbara Dunn



Mary J. Brett

On Sunday, October 18, the Sheerar Museum and the Payne County Historical Society cosponsored a very entertaining and educational program on the hows and whys of oral history. The two speakers, Mary J. Brett and Dr. Mary Jane Warde, each provided tips on how to record and interview family members to capture family history and life in times gone by.

In the 1960's Mary Brett recorded her grandmother, Bessie Sammons, recalling her life in Stillwater after the land run of 1889. In the recordings Bessie recounts living in a tent by Stillwater Creek, observing the opening of the Cherokee Outlet as a 12-year-old girl, and life "back in the states" as a 21-year-old woman in 1907, when Oklahoma became a state.


Mary Brett originally made the recordings for the benefit of her family, but she now shares them with Oklahoma history classes in Tulsa. She is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma with a degree in speech pathology and a minor in history. She is married to retired Judge Thomas R. Brett, lives in Tulsa, and has four chil

dren, eleven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

During her talk, Mrs. Brett revealed more of her family history. Her father, Guy James, was CEO of Guy James Construction, a company that built dams across the country. He was a graduate of Oklahoma A&M and an inductee into the Oklahoma State Engineering Hall of Fame. Mrs. Brett recalled: "He would sing 'OAMC' at the drop of a hat . . . actually, a hat didn't need to drop for him to sing."

Mary Jane Warde, the second speaker, discussed methods to record and interview family members at reunions, weddings, and other family celebrations. She has been a Stillwater resident since 1972. In the 1980's she helped revive the Payne County Historical Society and she is a past president of the organization. She holds a B.A. from the University of Tennessee, Martin, and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Oklahoma State University.

For the past seven years she has been Indian Historian and Archivist at the Oklahoma Historical Society. Through special projects and field work with the OHS, she has conducted or participated in more than seventy oral history interviews, including those of Stillwater residents, the former speaker of the Oklahoma House, and Indian singers, artists, tribal leaders, veterans, Sun Dance priests, and medicine people.



Vignettes of Early-Day Marena
as related to me by my father, Willis Foster Darby,
and my mother, Bessie Deoria Kerns Darby.

by

Ed Darby

Over 30 years before I was born, Marena, Oklahoma Territory, supported the surrounding farmsteads with the P. H. (Henry) Sullivan general store, as well as a post office, doctor's office, livery stable, church, and cemetery, among other entities.

During the interval of 1905-07, my father drove a horse-drawn freight wagon for P. H. Sullivan while my mother was a housekeeper for Mrs. Sullivan. Dad hauled supplies from the Mulhall depot of the Santa Fe Railroad for the store and on occasion hauled freight from Stillwater.

Marena was a small town in western Payne County. The town, which is no longer in existence, met the needs of the citizens of the area during the early days after settlement. To learn more about the history of Marena, read the article "Remembering Marena" by Jeanette Waller Sneed in Volume XXVII, No. 1 (2004) of the Payne County Historical Review. The accompanying photograph of Marena stores is from the collection of Jeanette Sneed.

Courtship and Hardship

Although they grew up as children in the community (their homes were about five miles apart), my parents had never met until their employment by the Sullivans. Such were the limitations of travel in the early 20th century and the importance of Marena in providing essential goods and services.

Their employment by the Sullivans led to their acquaintance, courtship, and subsequent marriage on November 5, 1908. My industrious mother was busy during the summer of '08 canning fruits and vegetables, quilting, and sewing her wedding attire.

Following their wedding, they began the journey to their new home near Red Rock. Dad had rented a parcel of land from Lou Hagen that adjoined the south perimeter of the 101 Ranch. They encountered a "blue norther" during the trip and Mom's glass jars containing the fruits and vegetables she had canned froze and burst, and a flock of cooped chickens froze to death. It was a long and meager winter while awaiting spring to plant their first crop. Mom recalled the long winter and lonesome time while Dad found part-time work wherever he could. She recalled that day upon day would pass with only the sight of an occasional cowboy riding the fence line of the 101 Ranch.

Return to Marena and Acquisition of Farm and Family

After one crop on the parcel near Red Rock, my parents returned to the Marena area, whereupon they sharecropped on the Nicely place. In 1910, their first child, Franklin Earnest, was born with the assistance of Mrs. Nicely, a midwife.

Within a year or two, they negotiated the purchase of 160 acres, the SW 1/4 of Sec. 19N, 1E. The purchase contract required their providing for David Kerns, a bachelor and uncle of Mother's, the terms being that they would provide him domicile to include meals, laundry, and housekeeping of an adjoining house as well as an annual mortgage payment.

After a year or so, they became weary of his care and perpetual demands beyond the terms of the agreement. Blessed with good crops and an initiative to save, they paid

off the mortgage in three years and became land owners “free and clear” of the agreement.

A second child, Leta Molinee, was born in 1914, delivered by Dr. Paul Friedemann of Marena.

Times had never been better for this young family. The scrub oaks that obscured the property were cleared by a large herd of Angora goats, thereby providing pasture for their beef and milk herd. The bottom patches of land produced good crops of corn, oats, and sorghum. Cotton was grown on the upland. With a good market for the Angora wool, farm crops, products from the dairy herd and poultry flocks of chickens and geese, supplemented by a large garden, orchard, and an ample supply of beef and pork, they experienced a new level of security and independence. Indeed, this was no small achievement for a young family.

The First Automobile in the Marena Community

In 1916 Henry Ford’s “Tin Lizzies” were rolling off the production lines and the line workers were earning five dollars a day! Rural folks were impressed how the Model T could navigate the wagon wheel muddy ruts, ford a stream, and even provide auxiliary power for a “buzz saw” and hammermill. And the status symbol of owning an automobile was worthy of note!

Dad ordered a “T” from the Stillwater dealership and was soon notified it had arrived at the Santa Fe depot with the wheels to be installed and to be serviced at that site. So, father and son (six-year-old Frank) went to Stillwater and assisted in the final assembly and service. The purchase agreement provided the Ford mechanic would accompany them back home while providing driving instructions along the way. Also, he would spend the night to include a briefing on the care, service, and routine repairs of the machine. Knowing my mother’s pride and reputation in meal preparation, I’m sure he found the supper meal and hearty breakfast an extra dividend. The following day,

Dad drove the “T” back to Stillwater accompanied by the mechanic and young Frank.

It was fall in Oklahoma, the crops were “laid aside,” they had a new automobile (the first in the community), and a young, vibrant family was looking for an adventure. What could be more adventuresome than going to the State Fair in Oklahoma City! Never mind the unimproved dirt roads, limited fueling stations, and even more scarce, knowledgeable mechanics along the way.

Mom often expressed, even in her later years, the excitement and daring in undertaking this trip. The family and another couple about their age embarked “well before daylight” and returned the following morning “shortly before daybreak.” Indeed, it was an adventure with carbide lights, cloth top, and plenty of lap robes or quilts to break the fall chill. It was a memorable event!

OKLAHOMA'S STATEHOOD CENTENNIAL

Dear Members and Friends of the Payne County Historical Society:

In 2007 Oklahoma will celebrate the centennial of statehood. Many local organizations, including the Payne County Historical Society, are planning programs, lectures, ceremonies, tours, publications and exhibits to commemorate the centennial. A local Stillwater Statehood Centennial Committee has been organized to coordinate and publicize these events. If you have a program or event you would like to have included as part of the Stillwater celebration, contact the Stillwater Statehood Centennial Committee c/o the Payne County Historical Society at P.O. Box 2262 or c/o of the Sheerar Museum at 702 S. Duncan Street in Stillwater.

Following are some dates regarding the centennial and an interesting account of how Stillwater celebrated the anticipation of statehood on July 4, 1906, just after President Roosevelt signed the Enabling Act providing for joining the two territories of Oklahoma into a single territory.

Thank you for supporting the Payne County Historical Society in 2005.

Barbara Dunn, President
Payne County Historical Society

Oklahoma Statehood

- On June 16, 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Enabling act, which provided for joining the two territories of Oklahoma into a single territory.
- On November 6, 1906, delegates were elected to a constitutional convention to draft a constitution for the proposed state.
- On September 17, 1907, voters in the territory approved the constitution by a vote of 180,333 for ratification to 73,059 opposed.
- On November 16, 1907, President Roosevelt signed the Statehood Proclamation making Oklahoma the forty-sixth state "on equal footing with the original thirteen states."

A Grand Celebration

On July 4, 1906, Stillwater held a grand celebration: "A Significant Salute to Statehood." The *Stillwater Gazette* reported and promoted the event:

A Significant Salute to Statehood: "One Blaze of Glory from Sunrise to Midnight"

The festivities were sponsored by the Stillwater Business Men's Club. They raised \$759.00 for the event from 171 contributors. Major donors included the Lahman Keiser Ice Company, Katz Bros., and The Gazette, who contributed \$15 each. \$10 contributors included the National Bank of Commerce, Diamond Pharmacy, Hesser & Son, Abercrombie and Miller, Anheuser Busch Co., First National Bank, Stillwater National Bank, Pioneer Phone Co., Willis Hardware Co. and Stillwater Mill and Elevator Co.

The Stillwater Gazette advertisement for the day listed the following activities:

*"Hon. A. H. Huston, of Guthrie, and Other Speakers will address
the People at Court House Square"*

*"A Parade that will be Stillwater's Greatest Achievement
Portraying the Glory and Triumph of a Wonderful People"*

"Three Bands of Music"

"Gand Chorus Singing By Twenty-five of Colombia's Fairest Daughters"

"Free Daylight Minstrel Show"

*"Fire Slide of Life. . . A perilous journey by Prof. Nichols, while his entire body is
wrapped in flames. Two exhibitions - Absolutely Free"*

“The Great Sensational Fire Run”

“\$500 Worth of Fireworks, Grand Historical Statehood Display, the biggest ever shown in the County”

\$100 in cash prizes were given to winners of various events—Barrel Race, Sack Race, Obstacle Race, 100 Yard Dash, Pony Obstacle Race, Egg Race on Ponies and “Greased Pig to person catching him.”

**“No Matter what you had planned to do,
you can have a Better Time at Stillwater.”**

Payne County Historical Society

The Payne County Historical Society is organized in order to bring together people interested in history, especially the history of Payne County, Oklahoma. The Society's major function is to discover and collect any materials that 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 *Payne County Historical Review* free. In addition, the Society sponsors informative meetings and historical outings several times a year.

Yes, I want to be a member of the Payne County Historical Society. Enclosed is my check for:

- \$12.00 for Individual Membership
- \$17.00 for Family Membership
- \$20.00 for Institutional Membership
- \$100.00 for Life Membership

(Membership includes subscription to the *Payne County Historical Review*.)

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Stillwater, OK 74076

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