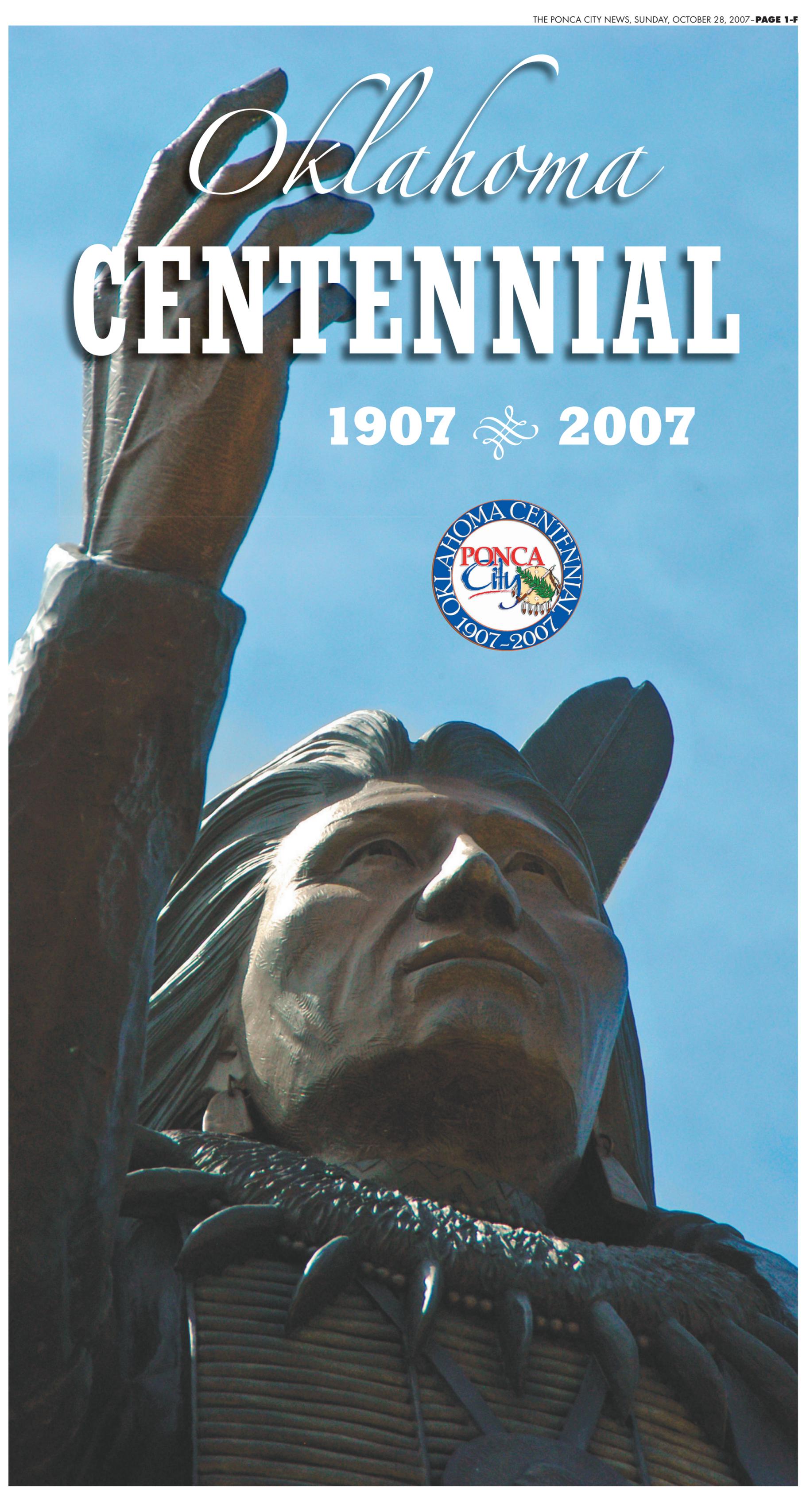


*Oklahoma*  
**CENTENNIAL**

**1907** *~* **2007**





**FIRE DESTROYED** a large part of Newkirk in 1901. This picture shows the scene on Main Street looking south. (Photo provided by Karen Dye)

## Newkirk's Downtown Fire Burned Many Businesses

**Editor's Note: The following information and accompanying photograph were provided by Newkirk historian Karen Dye.**

**NEWKIRK** — One of the greatest fears of early day communities struck Newkirk on Nov. 15, 1901. The entire east side of the 100 block of North Main burned to the ground.

The block consisted of frame buildings which were apparently not in the best condition.

During the conflagration, many of the stone buildings on the opposite side of the street suffered scorched paint and broken windows from the heat.

The fire originated in the second floor of Ward Brothers Restaurant, three doors from the south end of the block. This would be where the north portion of Albright's is today. Nearly every business in town was lit by a gasoline lamp.

Frank Jemison made the rounds of the town each day and cleaned the lamps and in the evenings lit them.

On this particular evening, he was filling a lamp in the Ward building when his companion struck a match near the gasoline can. The can exploded and within seconds the second floor was in flames.

The lamp was thrown out of the window and Carl Matthews tried to secure the container. Matthews was overcome by smoke, fell into the burning oil and was badly burned.

City Marshal Wooden was able to rescue him. Both Jemison and his young helper were also burned.

The fire moved north destroying every thing in its path.

It was contained in the front half of the block by heroic efforts of citizens who spread blankets drenched with salt and water over the front of buildings on the west side of the street.

Farmers loaned their teams and wagons to help remove goods.

Harry Choppe recalled that the owner of the confectionery rushed buckets filled with candy across the street for safety from the fire.

He failed to consider the unlimited appetites of the children watching the fire and lost his entire stock of candy.

There was no water system at the time and the fire was fought with buckets of water. An early city ordinance adopted Feb. 5, 1894, for fire protection, required that every business house have a barrel of water on hand to be used in case of fire.

Such measures had little

effect on a fire of such magnitude.

Sixteen special watchmen were hired for \$1.50 each to help guard the goods of the burned out merchants.

The insurance on the burned buildings, all of which were frame, were small as the rates were very high.

The merchants burned out were: Dr. J.H. Miller, Day & Gibson, M.E. Scofield, King's Department Store, Snell & Moore, a grocery store, Wilse Patterson Lunchroom, Govier & Tanner Saloon, Ward's Restaurant, Pelzer's Barber Shop, Shoap's Bakery, Crabb's Barber Shop, J.L. Bussard, St. Joe Saloon, Cyclone Restaurant, T.D. Tyler Building, Henry Kuchler Meat Market, Byron Williams, H. Carpenter, F.M. Morrison, A. Spence, Luken's Shoe Store, Lennis Sears Saloon, Stanley Blue Point Eating House and Shooting Gallery and Pabst Brewing Company.

As a result of the fire, a special session of the Board of Trustees was called by mayor George Alberti Jr., on Nov. 16, 1901, to pass an ordinance prohibiting the building or location within certain fire limits of the City of Newkirk, any lumber yards or any building or structure except of stone, brick or other combustible material.

Soon after, C.W. Wooden was appointed chief of the Fire Department and allowed to select 24 men for the fire department. Jemison was instructed to not fill any gas lamps inside of buildings.

By 1903 the block had been completely re-built primarily with substantial, two-story, white limestone buildings.

As a result of the fire new fire fighting equipment such as buckets, nozzles, ladders and hoses were purchased by the city.

A volunteer fire department of 24 men was organized and every precaution available at the time was taken to prevent another disaster.

## Famous Marland Gardener Came To Ponca City in 1918

**1918** — Henry Hatashita, a young Japanese man, came to Ponca City to be E.W. Marland's personal landscaper and gardener. A graduate of the University of Kansas, Hatashita was responsible for the plantings at the first Marland home on Grand Avenue. They included botanical gardens that reached from Tenth to Fourteenth Street, and from Grand to Central.

A greenhouse was erected along Fourteenth to start new plantings. There was an abundant vegetable garden adjacent to a lilac thicket.

The evergreen hedges that bordered the property suggested the formality of a Versailles garden.

Flanking the east terrace of the home were two large water lily ponds. Hatashita and his crew of 30 men were also responsible for the design and landscaping of a nine-hole golf course.

It covered approximately 24 square blocks, extending from Grand to Highland Avenue, from Tenth to Twelfth Street, across from the new Marland home.

Lew Wentz made his first million, given a boost by high oil prices and generously producing leases.

A third refinery, the Lake Park Refinery, opened at Fourteenth Street and Lake Road, where the Pioneer Woman Statue now stands.

Marland reorganized his geological corps under Spot Geyer. Geyer, who had been a University of Oklahoma football star, was ideally suited in temperament for Marland. Both shared a love for poker and both were willing to take chances in a business where risks played an important role.

Nickles & Gentry Body Shop opened on North First Street.

At the 101 Ranch, a group of German prisoners of war were helping construct several new buildings.

Van Winkle's Clothing Store for Men, founded by Marvin Van Winkle, opened at 212 East Grand. It soon became the leading men's haberdashery in the city.

The Ponca City Courier and The Ponca City Democrat consolidated and became The Ponca City News, published by Richard Elam. The new daily was printed on a 12-page Duplex, a flatbed press which was slow, rickety, and undependable but still turned out more and bigger papers faster than the sheet-fed presses of its predecessors. The new business venture was financed by Lew Wentz.

The Daughters of the American Revolution organized a local chapter.

The "Bone-Dry Law," passed in 1917, became one of the state's most contested laws because it failed to exempt liquor distribution for sacramental use in churches. Yet, the law provided the exceptions for hospitals, pharmacists, universities, and scientific institutions. The Roman Catholic Church challenged the law, and in May 1918, the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled that the distribution of wine for sacramental purposes would be exempt from the law. In December, the law's intent was further diminished by a ruling that allowed an individual to possess liquor, as long it was not received from a common carrier.

World War I ended.

**1919** — William McFadden was easily the winner in the mayoral election, by a vote of 466 to 169.

His opponent was S.H. Shaffer. This was Mayor McFadden's third consecutive election. Councilmen elected included J.H.

Koller, Ben Dawson, J.M. Allison, Ben Frank, and J.W. Stevenson.

L.K. Meek joined E.W. Marland, Dan Donahoe and others in the Security State Bank. Meek became president of the bank.

The Chamber of Commerce opened the first hospital in Ponca City. Located in a two-story former boarding house at 305 West Grand, it was known as the Jones Flats. J.S. Hutchins was the chairman of the hospital committee.

The Sisters of St. Joseph at Wichita took over the management soon after the hospital opened.

The cornerstone of the Moose Lodge was laid at 111-113 North Third Street. The post office occupied most of the first floor of this building for 14 years.

There was a housing shortage in Ponca City, with the population having almost doubled to 7,000. The city had ten miles of brick streets, two paid firemen, and two grade schools.

Downtown Ponca City was congested with automobiles during peak hours, and auto garages and showrooms were located in almost every block of the business section.

Alma Miller England and her husband, William, built a 5,000 square-foot home at Central and Eighth Street. Alma was the sister of the famous Miller Brothers, and her husband was their attorney.

Richard Elam, publisher of The Ponca City News, was not successful in managing the newspaper, so Lew Wentz recruited Clyde E. Muchmore from Kiowa, Kan. Wentz was determined that Ponca City would have an improved newspaper that would promote the community.

Kay County Gas Company executives announced that plans were almost complete to distribute 1 million shares of Kay County Gas Company stock to employees at \$1 per share.

Employees of Marland Refining Company received a 12.5 percent dividend on their salaries, the same amount as stockholders received on their stock.

The George H. Brett oil well was drilled. Located near Ponca Indian land, it became the best well in the entire mid-continent area.

With the rapid growth of the city, public expenditures increased for water, sewer, and roadway expansion, and some citizens felt that the old political process was wide open for graft, corruption, and favoritism. A local citizens group prepared a proposal to revise the city charter, creating a three-man city commission. On April 1, at a regular city election, a board of freeholders was elected to prepare and propose a new city charter. On June 8, the charter was completed and signed by nine community leaders who represented five different wards in the city. It was then sent to the governor. Mayor McFadden was out of the city at the time.

The Marland Refining Company and Kay County Gas Company announced the master plan to build a Model City for their employees, to be located just north of the Marland Refinery. The companies pledged to spend \$1 million to improve the site and construct new homes for 1,000 people.

M.G. and Eudora Gill purchased the Hayden Furniture and Undertaking Company and the Smith Funeral Home. They located their new business at 104 East Grand, the future site of the Ponca Theatre.

Claire and Ellen Burns opened a wholesale dairy business on South First Street, the Ponca Milk and Creamery Company.

## Local Tank Farm Immense Project

**1916** — William McFadden, executive vice president of Marland Oil Company, and mayor of Ponca City, directed the building of the tanks on the present ConocoPhillips property.

The "tank farm" constituted the largest above ground storage complex in the world. Filled with crude oil, the tanks held a fortune. Oil prices tripled in reaction to the war in Europe. "E.W. Marland and the company made \$25 million."

McFadden said, "and it took him until 1928 to spend it all. We started slowly, but got to the point of building a tank a day for a time." Filling those tanks with crude oil and realizing huge profits when the war broke out gave McFadden and Marland a big jump on the fortunes they both made.

Mayor McFadden was a prime mover in urging his fellow commissioners to purchase land for the new city hall. He also sponsored the

bond issue that resulted in the construction of the auditorium section of the Civic Center. One source says he "forced through the purchase of the additional site." Around 1900, B.S. Barnes had built a home on Grand Avenue between Fifth and Sixth streets. Barnes had the house moved so that the new Civic Center could be built.

The Marland family moved into their new home on the southeast corner of Tenth Street and Grand Avenue. The property extended east to Fourteenth Street. The four-level Mission/Spanish Revival home was stucco with an Italian clay barrel tile roof, 22 rooms and an indoor swimming pool.

Architect Solomon Layton, who also drew the plans for the State Capitol building, the Skirvin Hotel, and the Oklahoma County Courthouse, designed the home. The local contractor was Mr. O.F. Keck.

(See PROJECT, Page 11F)

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# Legendary Bill Pickett a Star for 101 Ranch Wild West Show

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Bill Pickett, a native of Texas, is one of those heroes that Oklahoma and Ponca City in particular, adopted as their own after he became famous at the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch as a champion bulldogger. This is a reprint from the from program promoting the bronze statue of Pickett entitled "The First Bulldogger, Bill Pickett" unveiled in 1986, sponsored by the North Fort Worth Historical Society.

In the early spring of 1932, a large crowd of mourners gathered at the 101 Ranch in Oklahoma to pay final tribute to the man they loved and respected W. M. "Bill" Pickett.

Bill had died of injuries received several days earlier when he was kicked in the head by a wild horse in the ranch corral. Pickett's many friends attended the funeral in honor of this Black man described as a "real" cowboy.

Born in Texas in 1870, Bill grew up near Austin watching the cowboys on horseback round up stray cattle. His interest sharpened while observing the bulldogs catch and subdue cattle by biting the animals. To the amazement of the cowboys, Bill began to imitate the working dogs.

He would catch the steer

by the horns, twisting the animal's neck until he was able to reach over and sink his teeth into its lip. This was the beginning of a career that would make Pickett world famous with his "bite 'em down" style of bulldogging.

By the 1890s Bill and his four brothers had established the Pickett Brothers Bronco Busters & Rough Riders Association. The five brothers were in the business of catching and breaking wild horses and cattle for Texas ranchers. Also, Bill's bulldogging exhibitions were gaining in popularity. Eventually, he would become the "star attraction" at county fairs and wild west shows with these demonstrations.

During his career Pickett appeared several times in Fort Worth. Once in 1905, he and humorist Will Rogers appeared at Haines Park during a roping and riding contest. Will Rogers, the champion trick roper of the world, will give an exhibition the same as he gave at St. Louis, when he was awarded a gold medal.

**101 Ranch Star**  
In 1908 Pickett moved his wife and children from Texas. He had been hired as a cowhand on the 101 Ranch in Oklahoma. He worked on the

ranch when he was not traveling with the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Wild West Show. Also in 1908, he was a featured attraction at the grand opening of The Coliseum in North Fort Worth.

Pickett did not always use the "bite 'em down" method of bulldogging. Naturally, other cowboys began imitating his style of steer wrestling. Rodeo contests began replacing wild west shows, and one of the major events of every rodeo was bulldogging.

Bill worked for the Miller's 101 Ranch for more than a quarter of a century. Among his friends were many celebrities of national acclaim. On the day that Bill died, Col. Zack T. Miller wrote and dedicated a poem to his memory. Perhaps the last six lines sum up the respect earned by this "real" cowboy: *Like many men in the old-time West, On any job, he did his best. He left a blank that's hard to fill For there'll never be another Bill. Both White and Black will mourn the day That the "Biggest Boss" took Bill away.*

In 1971, Bill Pickett became the only Black cowboy to ever be inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame.



COWBOY BILL PICKETT, world famous for his bulldogging style, was a star attraction at the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Wild West Show.

## New Three-Man Commission As City Continues To Grow

1920 — As a result of the new City Charter, adopted in 1919, a three-man Commission form of government went into effect. The three commissioners were the only officers of the city that were elected by the people. All other department heads were appointed by the commissioners for a term of one year, and could be reappointed. The business affairs of the City were conducted and carried out by the Board of Commissioners in three departments. Mayor Harry Cragin was Commissioner of Public Safety, J.S. Hutchins was Commissioner of Finance, and L.K. Meek was Commissioner of Public Property. The first city manager was Hugh Johnston, who also acted as chief of police.

The newly formed commission reorganized the municipal electric department and put it on a paying basis.

With the population of Ponca City at 7,000, the city was growing so fast, an average of one new house was

## 'Dude Ranch' Established During 1879

1879 — Colonel George W. Miller, a Confederate veteran, founded the 101 Ranch in northern Oklahoma. He and his wife, Molly, sons Joe, Zack and George Jr., along with daughter, Alma, helped establish the ranch.

It was a sprawling 110,000 acres of leased Indian lands that spread across four counties.

A city within itself, it was a self-sufficient showplace, employing thousands of people. They had a school, show grounds, general store and café, hotel, blacksmith shop, leather shop, dairy, saddle shop, meat packing plant, and oil refinery.

The ranch had its own newspaper, magazine, and even its own scrip (money). They built homes for employees along with guesthouses and a "Dude Ranch." The 101 Ranch became one of the largest diversified farms with cross breeding of animals and agricultural products.

1880 — In January, 1880, the editorial page of the Arkansas City Traveler commented that a bill had been introduced in Congress for the organization of the Territory of Oklahoma.

The newspaper encouraged all who believed that the Territory should be open to white settlement to sign a petition that would create an organized government for the Indian Territory. "With the Territory organized for settlement, our farmers would find an excellent market for their produce, and our towns on the border would receive trade and activity that nothing else can supply."

The editors were concerned that there were people who wanted to force the question in Congress by organizing the Territory for their particular benefit, or by going in as "squatters."

1880 — In October 1880, the population of the Ponca in Oklahoma was 530, under the leadership of White Eagle, Black Crow, Rush Into Battle, The Chief, Big Bull, Big Soldier, and Child Chief. It was recorded that they had built 80 houses and they owned 350 head of cattle and 600 horses along with wagons that had been provided. In addition, 350 acres had been planted with corn and other vegetables.

completed every day. The library loaned out more than 5000 books in one year, and the building was beginning to bulge.

Marland incorporated the refinery into the Marland Oil Company, creating an integrated company engaged in oil exploration, production, natural gas distribution, refining and marketing.

There were 1,000 telephones in Ponca City.

Garfield School opened on south Seventh Street. The school was comprised as four two-room frame bungalows on lots obtained from the federal government. Additional lots were purchased from local owners.

A new building for Lincoln School opened beside the original one-room schoolhouse.

The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, and women could now vote. Oklahoma elected its first congresswoman, Alice Robertson, from Muskogee. Her campaign message was "I am a Christian, I am an American, I am a Republican." Her slogan promised, "I cannot be bought, I cannot be sold, I cannot be intimidated."

E.W. Marland was responsible for bringing the sport of polo to Ponca City. He established three fields for practice and competition. George Marland, E.W.'s adopted son, was an accomplished player.

Virginia Marland, E.W.'s wife, was diagnosed with cancer and went to Kansas City for treatments.

1921 — L.K. Meek obtained controlling interest of Security State Bank and boosted the bank to the top of all other state banking institutions.

The hospital was considered a firetrap, so a fund

drive began to build a new hospital, organized by the Sisters of St. Joseph at Wichita, Kansas.

The first well of the Three Sands field near Tonkawa came in, and the oil boom began in earnest.

Dr. W.P. Haseaman developed the first experimental seismological equipment for the Marland Oil Company.

L.A. Cann, Kay County Commissioner, suggested the creation of a millage levy to finance the building of the new Kay County Courthouse in Newkirk.

Mayor Harry Cragin established the Cragin Lumber Company, operating eight lumberyards in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. He entered into the home building business on a wide scale and became co-owner with W.W. Hickman in the Cragin-Hickman Hardware Store.

T.J. Cuzalina moved to Ponca City and established the Cuzalina Drug Store at the corner of Grand Avenue and Second Street.

Charles H. Ruby died. He had brought in Ponca City's first gas well and founded the first gas company here.

Marland Oils opened the first filling station at Pawhuska. On opening day, customers received free oil with the purchase of gasoline. The red triangle sign was becoming a familiar sight, as were the unique brick buildings that were landscaped by Henry Hatashita, Marland's gardener.

The Rhodes House at First Street and Grand Avenue received a new façade.

The exterior was a Spanish style stucco with a red tile roof. An arcade was built on ground level on the two sides that faced the streets, and the building was renamed the Arcade Hotel.

## City's First Historic District

North Sixth Street, between Hazel and Cleveland, was established when Oklahoma was still a Territory and Ponca City was young.

In the early days, as towns sprang up all over Oklahoma, many of the merchants and businessmen lived in or very near the downtown or business district in their respective towns. Ponca City was no different — many of Ponca City's early settlers and businessmen lived on North Sixth Street.

Most folks walked to work or traveled by horse. Only the wealthy could afford an automobile. Thus the folks who lived on North Sixth Street

were situated in a desirable location because of the proximity to downtown and its thriving businesses.

The original homeowners who lived on North Sixth Street were doctors, mayors, business owners to name a few and were instrumental in the development of Ponca City. They left behind a rich history in the beautiful homes, framed by wonderful red brick, along North Sixth Street.

As time has moved on, the homes have mostly remained as they were when Ponca City was new.

In 1998, Mindy LittleCook and Timilyn Crank, residents of North Sixth Street, approached

Bret Carter, a member of the Ponca City Historic Advisory Panel, to inquire about the steps necessary for the neighborhood to become a designated historic district.

Todd Kennimer, a city planner, as well as member of the Ponca City Historic Advisory Panel, were also instrumental in providing valuable information and research for the neighborhood.

The residents acknowledged the importance and value of the historic homes as well as the brick streets and organized to preserve the historical integrity of the neighborhood by seeking historic designation.

(See DISTRICT, Page 11F)

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# Early Battles Fought for Kay County Seat

**Submitted by Loyd Bishop**  
 A battle — some might call it a war — fought to determine which town would be the county seat of Kay County probably caused more of the bitter feelings between Blackwell and Ponca City than the intense sports rivalry that once existed between their high school teams.

In the early days of the towns' existence, the developers of the two communities had to plot and scheme to establish their place in the sun. Whatever trick could be pulled to establish superiority over the competition was the rule of the day.

First, Blackwell boosters had to overcome the "town across the street" known as Parker, and Ponca City literally stole the train station from its nearby rival, Cross, assuring Ponca as a stop on the main line railroad from Chicago to Houston. Parker and Cross eventually were absorbed into the respective city limits of their rival communities.

With the next door neighbors subdued, it was time to do something about competition from their neighbors across the county. There seemed one sure method to insure success in this "survival of the fittest": get your community named the county seat.

This accomplished, the status of a community would not be questioned. All county citizens would have to come to your town to conduct legal business.

The battle for the county seat of Kay County began within a few years following the Run of 1893 when the county was settled. It seemed impossible to most citizens that the county seat would be moved from Newkirk, but Blackwell certainly saw the advantage of having it moved there. Folks in Ponca City had probably thought of the possibility of moving it to their town, too.

**Even Field**  
 Today if such a battle were to be waged, Ponca City probably would be an easy winner simply because of its population. Back then the situation was quite different. The battlefield was basically even. The populations of the competing cities were nearly the same. In July 1907, just before Oklahoma Statehood, Blackwell had 2,644 citizens, Ponca City 2,521, and Newkirk 1,778. Though smaller, Newkirk had the advantage of having been named the County Seat by the U.S. Government.

Before the land rush, Kildare already had an established train station serving the ranchers who leased land from the Cherokee Nation. Thus, it would have seemed the logical location to be the county seat of County "K". This possibility seemed logical to some members of Cherokee Nation, too. They claimed allotments in the Cherokee Outlet near the Kildare train station.

They had in mind establishing a town beside that station. Kildare could have been an appropriate choice, but the allotments given to Cherokee Tribal members disqualified the town from becoming the county seat because of the U. S. Congressional legislation opening the territory to settlement.

The Federal Government did not look upon these opportunists favorably. Hoke Smith, a one-time senator from Georgia and secretary of state, disliked what seemed to him an unfair advantage given to those who could get allotments near proposed county seat locations.

To prevent these opportunists, the actual locations of all new county seats were kept a secret until it was too late for allotments to be requested and issued.

The Presidential Proclamation of Grover Cleveland specifically named two quarter sections of land to be the location of the county seat. The present day courthouse is now situated on part of this land. The original name of the townsite was Lamereux, but the Post Office established on Oct. 5, 1893, was named Santa Fe.

In January 1894, the Post Office name was changed to Newkirk, so named to distinguish it from a train stop two miles north known as Kirk.

**In the Center**  
 The Federal government wanted the county seats to be located close to the geographical center of the county. It was thought that a citizen of the county should be able to ride his horse to the county seat, conduct business and return home within a day.

The communities of Newkirk, Kildare, and Blackwell all met this requirement. Ponca City was within a "stones throw" of being as close to this center as were the other towns.

The location that became Newkirk was probably chosen because it was adjacent to the only existing railroad passing through the county at that time.

Interestingly, by the time Oklahoma became a state and the county seat war was at its peak, trains left Blackwell in six directions. It was directly connected by railroad to more Kay County communities than was Newkirk.

The proximity of the courthouse to the geographical center of the county seemed to be

an important issue to citizens in distant areas of the county; much press coverage at the time was given to this issue.

Since Blackwell was not quite as close geographically as were its competitors, Blackwell newspapers made much of the idea that it was better situated to the center of the tax base and population center of the county.

The Federal laws were specific about the location of the county seat, but this did not inhibit communities in this county, or other counties, from trying to challenge the law. Within five years of the establishment of the new territory, Blackwell began the quest to become the "queen city" of the county. To lessen Newkirk's claim on the title, Blackwell folks referred to Newkirk as the "temporary county seat."

The laws of Oklahoma Territory also made it difficult to move a county seat. Three fifths of the qualified taxpaying citizens had to sign the petition to call an election to change the seat of government. However, if this nearly impossible task of obtaining the signatures was successful, only a simple majority of voters was required to move courthouse.

In late 1900, Blackwell began a petition drive to call an election to allow the removal of Newkirk as the county seat.

Through some parliamentary maneuvering by the county commissioners, the presentation of the petition was prevented in January 1901.

The Territorial Supreme Court eventually ruled county seats could not be moved as long as Oklahoma remained in territorial status. Blackwell's ambitions faded until Oklahoma became a state in November 1907.

So strongly did Blackwell want to be a county seat that there was a political maneuver during the constitutional convention to divide Kay County in half, thus making Blackwell the capital of the western part. When that failed, Blackwell proponents tried another way.

**Up to the Voters**  
 The Constitution of Oklahoma did provide that all county seats were to remain the same until changed by the qualified voters of each county. To call a vote required the presentation of a petition signed and verified by 25-percent of these voters. Then the governor was required to call an election to settle the location of the county government.

Since these elections had to be completed by April 1, 1909, Blackwell citizens wasted no time forming a committee to raise the signatures required for a vote in Kay County.

Voters from all over the county, weary of a fight that had already lasted for 10 years, decided to sign the petition to put an end to the prolonged war.

On June 24, a committee from Blackwell presented the petition to Gov. C. N. Haskell at the capital in Guthrie, Okla.

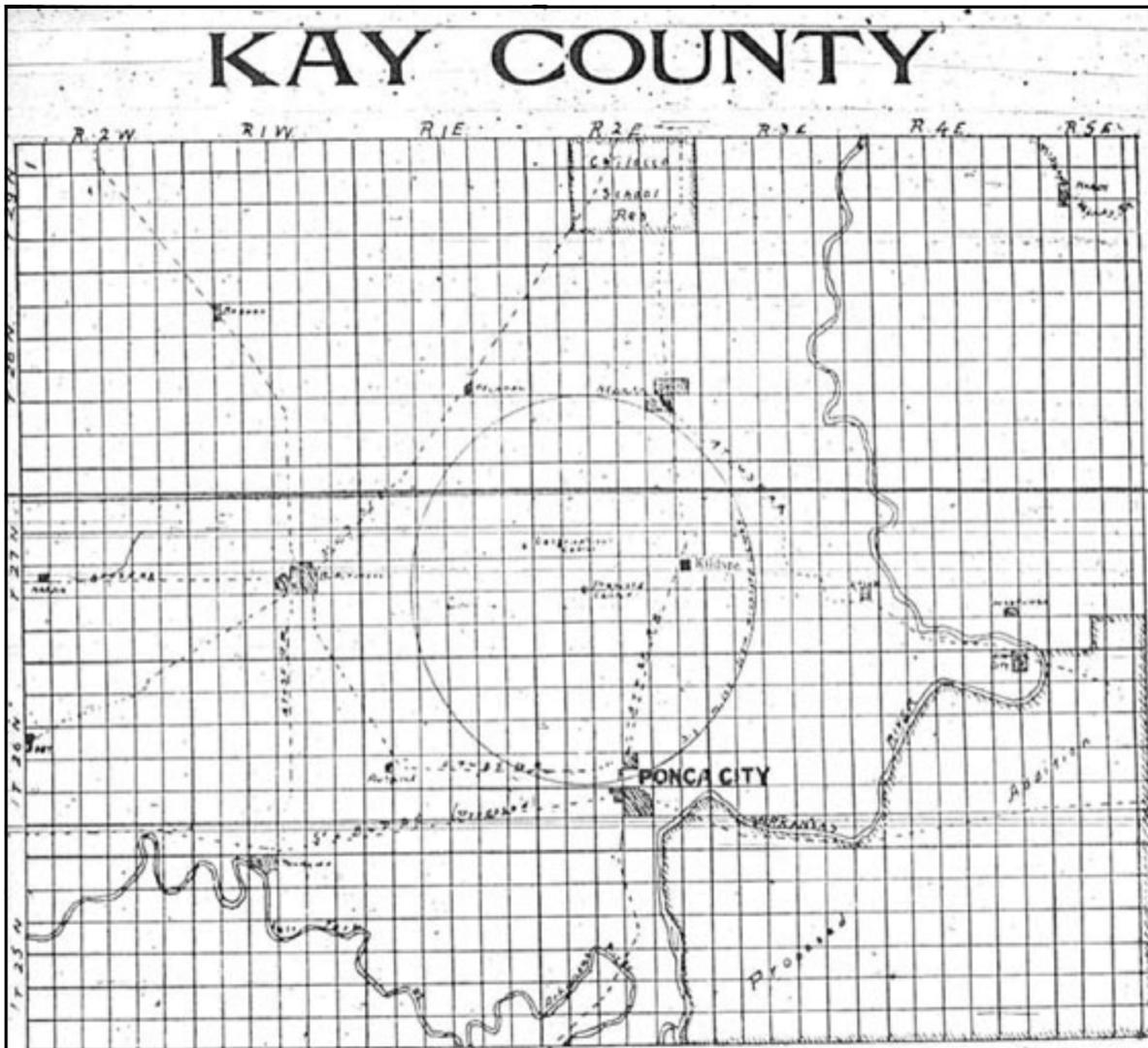
Two thousand six Kay County citizens had added their signatures to Blackwell's petition. The governor set the election for Sept. 3, 1908.

The battle between communities before this date had been only a mean spirited name-calling, now there was a full-fledged war.

So confident that Blackwell would win this vote the Blackwell Times Record carried a banner headline, "Petitions Are Filed, The County Seat to be Moved."

The newspapers in Ponca City, Newkirk and other Kay County communities railed against the move, publishing articles about the expense of the move and how economically imprudent it would be to change the status quo.

(See COUNTY, Page 11F)



Map Showing the Boundaries of Kay County as They Will Appear if the People Vote Ponca City the Permanent County Seat.

IF PONCA CITY were voted the county seat, a petition would have been sent to the State of Oklahoma asking for an area in Osage County that matched the Kaw Territory which had been added to Kay County at statehood. This map shows Ponca City of the proposed Kay County.

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# Chamber of Commerce Driving Force in the '20s

1922 — The Chamber of Commerce was growing rapidly, becoming the central point for all community activities. Fifty directors, representing the 310 member businesses, met three times a month. The Chamber was also the parent organization of the Humane Society, Boy Scouts, Public Health Association, Ponca City Band and the Retailers Credit Association.

Chief industries were the two oil refineries, representing an investment of \$10 million and employing more than 1,500 men. Approximately 25,000 barrels of oil daily were required to supply the Marland and Empire refineries. Both companies had contracts with Santa Fe to supply 1,000 barrels of fuel oil daily for a year.

The Oklahoma Press Association hosted their four-day annual meeting in May. Local officials planned many activities to make the 400 guests welcome. They toured the city, the oil fields and refinery, and were guests of the Miller Brothers at the 101 Ranch. They held their meetings in the city auditorium, which could seat 1,100.

Many homeowners participated in the annual "City Beautiful" campaign. The Ponca City News reported that "lawns are clean, unsightly places have been eliminated and parking areas along the 150 blocks of paved streets are improved. Many citizens have planted alfalfa and garden crops on the vacant lots to prevent weeds from infesting those places."

The city spent \$2 million to pave 12 miles of streets, comprising 50 blocks on 17 streets.

The business district, known

as the "White Way," had 1,000 lights, five on each light post. W.H. Hannah organized the Ponca City Band. That summer they played 25 concerts, entertaining citizens at the city park, the business district and at all community events.

Mayor Cragin resigned. His business, the Harry Cragin Lumber Company, required his full attention. Hugh Johnston, city manager/chief of police, also resigned. J.S. Hutchins, commissioner of public finance, was named acting mayor. He immediately called a special election to fill the vacancy. Preston Lowrance was elected to serve out Cragin's term. He was the only person who filed, and the only one on the ballot, but he did receive 150 votes. His first official act was to appoint S.A. Dellaplain as the new chief of police, with a salary of \$250 per month.

1923 — Construction had reached an all time high. Six apartment houses, a six-story hotel, 150 residences, 26 business buildings, two churches, and two schools, representing close to \$8 million in expenditures, were all going up that spring. In March, it was announced that a new housing addition would be built east of the Marland golf course. Referred to as the Country Club Addition (or Snob Hill), it was to have 50 building tracts with homes that would range in value from \$15,000 to \$50,000.

At the same time, Marland opened the Acre Homes housing development. The 200 acres were divided into 209 home sites, plus a reserve for a park and a school.

A.L. Bogan and Marie Martin Harris donated land to the

city to build the Bogan Swimming Pool.

George Humes purchased Morrison Drug Company. It became Humes Rexall No. 1 in the 200 block of East Grand.

Mid-West Creamery (formerly known as Ponca Milk and Creamery Company) opened a new facility at North Union and West Cleveland Avenue.

Marland purchased land east of Fourteenth Street from Lake Road to Hartford and created "The Game Refuge." He described the area as "a habitat for animals and birds and where nature might reign supreme." A six-foot game fence surrounded the preserve, eight islands were constructed in a lake, and a natural swimming pool was located in the old rock quarry.

Orville P. Callahan was elected mayor. He immediately announced his intention to increase the police force. Sid Dellaplain, chief of police, resigned the same day Mayor Callahan took office.

The city built new offices on either side of the civic auditorium, providing fire and police headquarters and offices for city officials. The old city hall and tower were torn down.

Work began on enlarging the city's electric and power plant.

E.W. Marland sold \$12 million of Marland Oil stock to J.P. Morgan and Company.

1924 — The Jens-Marie Hotel opened at Second Street and Cleveland. Four pioneer oilmen funded the \$350,000 building. The new six-story brick structure became the Mecca for men in the oil boom era.

(See CHAMBER, Page 10F)



THE PREDECESSOR of Pioneer Bank was the First National Bank in Kaw City, shown in its early days.

# Pioneer Bank Originated As Kaw City's First Bank

Pioneer Bank, which has become RCB Pioneer within the last year, had its beginnings in Kaw City with a two-story building in 1902.

The original bank, The Bank of Commerce, was founded in Oklahoma Territory by the Eastman family, which had successfully established a bank in Newkirk, which bears their name yet to day. Another founder was John E. Hoefler, a grocery merchant from Kildare, Oklahoma Territory.

According to the history of the bank, the founders visited the Kaw City town site even before the survey was complete and decided to be a party to the adventure of building a new town. E.B. Eastman purchased lots at Main Street and Fifth Avenue in early July 1902.

On Sept. 26, 1902, articles of incorporation were filed with the Secretary of Oklahoma Territory and a charter for The Bank of Commerce of Kaw City. The new bank had capital of \$10,000 and a surplus of \$5,000.

The safe was brought in by haulers over the laborious road leading to Kaw City from the railroad. The building and fixtures coast a total of \$2,162 and the vault another \$500.

On Oct. 13, 1902, the bank opened its doors for business, banking hours were 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., six days a week.

Officers of the bank were E.B. Eastman, cashier, and John E. Hoefler, assistant cashier.

In order to become a stronger financial institution and to better serve the community, it was decided The Bank of Commerce should become a national bank.

On Jan. 15, 1907, the capital stock of the bank was increased from \$10,000 to \$25,000 and on March 4, 1907, a charter was issued establishing The First National Bank of Kaw City, Oklahoma Territory. Officers of the new bank were, E.B. Eastman, president, C.A. Eastman, vice president, J.S. Eastman, vice president, John E. Hoefler, cashier and F.E. Eastman, assistant cashier.

**Statehood Changes Banking**  
On Nov. 16, 1907, Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory were combined as the 46th state of the union. Any competitive advantage gained by becoming a national banking institution was short lived. The celebration of statehood was overshadowed by The Panic of 1907, which presented the worst economic downturn in the United States since the demonitization of silver in 1893.

The resulting economic disaster resulted in many bank failures, especially in Oklahoma, and focused the attention of the public on the need for security for their deposits.

In December, as a result of the panic, the state of Oklahoma passed the guaranty deposit law, which insured the deposits in state banks. The federal insurance programs were still three decades and a great depression away. It made sense for Oklahoma to establish its insurance system. In order to afford this protection to its depositors, it was necessary for The First National Bank of Kaw City to revert to a state chartered institution.

On Feb. 3, 1909, The First State Bank of Kaw City was organized and assumed all of the assets and liabilities of the national bank.

**Constructs New Building**  
The First State Bank announced it March 1909 that it would construct a new brick

building to replace the frame building that had housed the bank since its inception. The new buildings and fixtures cost just over \$7,000 and represented a substantial investment at that time.

On Nov. 1, 1909, the first major change in management of the bank took place. John E. Hoefler, H.E. Guy and W.S. Cline purchased all of the stock owned by the Eastman family.

The cost of guaranteeing deposits under the state guaranty deposit law had become almost prohibitive and the advantages of a national charter seemed to far outweigh those of the State of Oklahoma. On July 29, 1911, a special meeting of the stockholders was held to transact such business as was necessary to convert The First State Bank of Kaw City to a national bank.

This was accomplished, effective Aug. 28, and an organization certificate was received from the Comptroller of the Currency designating the new national bank as The Farmers National Bank of Kaw City, Oklahoma. The bank officers of J. E. Hoefler, W. S. Cline and H. E. Guy remained the cashier. A. J. Sanderson was added as assistant cashier. In 1913 H. E. Guy resigned to follow other endeavors.

**World War I to the Great Depression**

The teens were generally good years for The Farmers National Bank. Economic conditions improved throughout the country during the war years.

World War resulted in the development of the western Osage oil fields and oil was discovered and developed during the latter part of the decade on the Osage lands to the east. The only incident to break the serenity was a bank robbery that occurred during the spring of 1915 in which the robbers made off with about \$2,000. They were captured a short time after the robbery in a small town in southern Kansas.

Changes in the bank management during this time were limited to the positions of cashier and assistant cashier.

Mr. Sanderson resigned as assistant cashier and was replaced by John S. Elwell who also resigned to enter the army. On Jan. 1, 1918, Lavern M. Cline of Newkirk was elected assistant cashier and the following year was promoted to cashier, filling the position that had been vacant since the resignation of H.E. Guy.

As the 1920s began, the bank was destined to undergo still another name change. Since it had been the first national bank organized in Kaw City, there was a desire to have this fact recognized. An earlier charter, The First National Bank of Kaw City, had been relinquished; therefore, a different name was necessary.

On July 12 1920, an application was made to and approved by the Comptroller of the Currency for a name change to The First National Bank in Kaw City, the changing of the preposition "of" to "in" being sufficient to meet the legal requirements.

**The Great Depression, World War II**

**And Emergence into the '50s**  
On Oct. 24, 1929, the most significant financial event to hit the country occurred as the prices in the stock market crashed.

This started the broad economic downturn of the Great Depression, forcing many businesses to close their doors. All too many of Kaw City's townspeople had to leave for other parts of the country for there was simply not enough work to be had in the community.

As the effects of the depression became more pronounced, it was evident that there was not enough business in the Kaw City trade area to support two banks. The First National Bank made an offer to purchase its rival bank and the offer was accepted.

(See PIONEER, Page 6F)



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# Pioneer Bank

(Continued From Page 5F)

On March 12, 1932, The National Bank of Kaw City went into voluntary liquidation with The First National Bank acquiring its assets and assuming its liabilities.

The depression wore on and the people throughout the country were frightened. Hoarders began to withdraw money from the banks and by early 1933 a serious banking crisis had developed. State after state, including Oklahoma, closed their banks to prevent runs and on March 5.

Shortly after his inauguration, President Roosevelt ordered all banks closed. The moratorium, or bank holiday, ended on Wednesday, March 15. The First National Bank in Kaw City opened that day on an unrestricted basis. The government passed a new banking law, which restored confidence and deposits began to flow into the banks again.

As a result of the bank holiday and the crisis, many communities and businesses issued their own script to cover the demand for increased cash transactions and to show confidence in the local economy. In Ponca City, script was issued by Security Bank, The Ponca City News, the Dairyland Creamery and Ponca Milling Company. The country made it through the crisis and the reduction of the number of Kaw City banks to one ensured the success of the First National Bank in Kaw City.

The remainder of the 1930s were not good years by any means; however, through unyielding perseverance by strong and conservative management, The First National Bank was able to retain its financial integrity and at the same time provided the services which the community had come to expect.

J. E. Hoefler continued to serve as president and probably exerted a greater degree of influence than anyone else on the course taken by the bank. W. S. Cline, who had been an officer of the bank since 1909, was forced to resign as vice president because of ill health and was replaced by Lavern M. Cline, the cashier. Other officers serving well during these years were Reval Richard, R. R. Cross and John E. Hoefler Jr., who became cashier.

The economy improved during the war years of the 1940s but Kaw City did not prosper. Its young people were called to serve their country and many of the older generation sought high paying defense jobs in the cities. The exodus of Kaw City's citizenry, which had begun during the depression years, continued. Through this decline, The First National Bank remained a leader in the community. It was a proud institution.

In 1950, the grand old man of the bank retired. On June 30, John E. Hoefler resigned as president of The First National Bank in Kaw City. This ended his active career with the bank that had spanned almost half a century. That same month, he was appointed by the governor of Oklahoma to the rank of honorary colonel on the governor's staff in recognition of his many civic contributions. Lavern M. Cline was elected president to replace Hoefler and John F. Hoefler Jr. was elected vice president and cashier. He resigned a short time later because of other interests and Lillian Brill was appointed cashier.

**Construction of Kaw Lake**  
Migration from the farms to urban areas continued. Small communities became even smaller and Kaw City was no exception. A need for the bank still existed in the area but a time would come, if the population trend continued, when the dwindling economy would make it impossible to maintain a profitable operation. These considerations seemed of minor importance, however, when in 1957 a move was started to construct a dam across the Arkansas River about eight miles east of Ponca City.

It is indeed ironic that the circumstances, which appeared to signal its end, would actually continue the bank's existence. Two Ponca City businessmen wanted to establish a new bank in that city and the most practical way to accomplish this was to move a bank already in existence. Inasmuch as The First National Bank in Kaw City would eventually have to be liquidated or moved, it was a perfect candidate.

On March 12, 1960, the end of an era took place. A group of somber men met in the banking room of The First National Bank when S. Bee Crawford and L. D. Gilbert purchased all of the stock interests of the Cline and Hoefler families. This was only the second major ownership change in the bank's history and the first time ever that some of its stock was not owned by the Hoefler family.

Cline was requested to continue the operation of the bank until approval could be obtained from the Comptroller of the Currency to make

the move to Ponca City. An application was filed, but then the unexpected took place. The request to move the bank was denied. This turn of events prompted Crawford and Gilbert to sell their interests to a group of area citizens in August of that same year.

For the next five years business was conducted as usual in the same location. Harold E. Boxley was president of the bank and remained in that capacity for some time.

When it became evident that the Kaw Dam and Reservoir would be a reality, an application to move the bank to Ponca City was again submitted to the Comptroller of the Currency. This time approval was granted. The capital stock of the bank was increased from \$25,000 to \$112,500 and in September 1965 the doors of the new, contemporary bank building on Fourteenth Street in Ponca City opened for business under its new name, The Pioneer National Bank, Ponca City.

### R. D. O'Meilias Becomes President

The 1970s for Pioneer National Bank began with R. D. O'Meilias as its fifth president. The bank had accomplished tremendous growth; its surplus and undivided profits grew from \$250,000 in 1965 to well over \$1.35 million by its 75th anniversary in 1977 and its assets increased from \$1 million to almost \$22 million. In 1977, the bank added a drive-up facility on Lake Road adjacent to the main bank.

After the death of O'Meilias in 1979, Carl R. Renfro was elected president and chief executive officer. A holding company, Pioneer Bancshares Inc., was established that year. At the end of the decade, Pioneer National Bank had assets of \$29 million.

In 1980, the bank converted from a national bank back to a state institution and established its name as Pioneer Bank and Trust. In that same year, Pioneer Bank added a trust department and the Pioneer Action Center. The Pioneer Action Center encased an Automated Teller Machine, which was a necessary service to keep up with the banking industry. Due to the success of the bank and the surrounding area, Pioneer Bank and Trust soon outgrew its building and decided to proceed with a building expansion. The ground breaking for what was soon to be called the Pioneer Towers took place in 1980. The expansion was to increase Pioneer Bank's floor space by five times. The construction was completed in 1982.

Pioneer Bank and Trust, after the construction of the Pioneer Towers in 1980, appearing much as it does today.

In 1982, the bank's seventh and current president, Thomas A. Quillin Jr., was elected by the board of directors. Carl R. Renfro remained the chief executive officer.

July 1982 is a month that will remain significant in Oklahoma banking history. On that date, the most significant bank failure in post depression America, that of the Penn Square Bank in Oklahoma City, combined with a downturn in the oil industry, started a general recession in the banking industry. For the first time since the depression, people saw local banks fail in towns across the nation. Despite this economy, Pioneer Bank and Trust never had a losing year.

### North Fourteenth Street Branch

In 2002, Pioneer Bank and Trust heralded the creation of a full service branch named Pioneer Bank and Trust North Branch, located on north Fourteenth Street in Ponca City. By June of 2002 Pioneer Bancshares Inc. with its two subsidiaries, Pioneer Bank and Trust and Bank of Nichols Hills, had assets in excess of \$230 million.

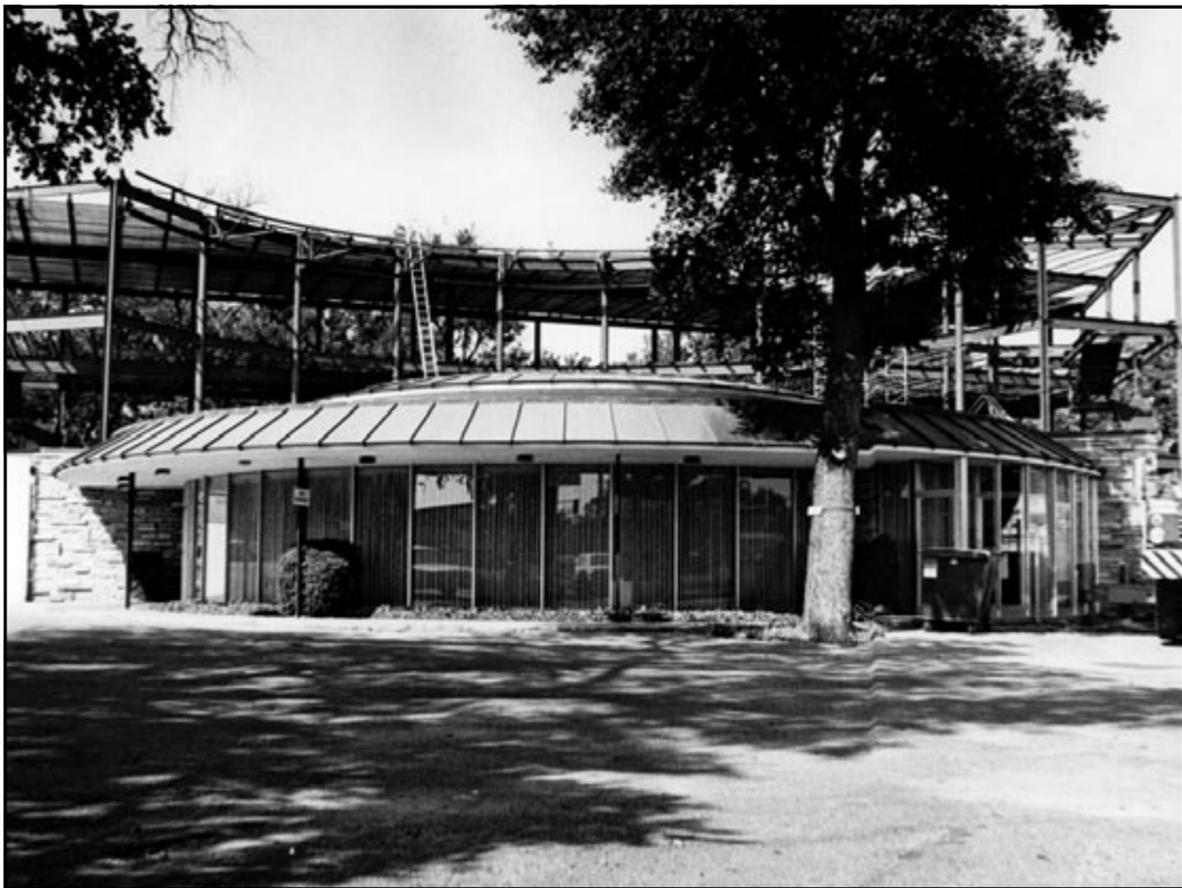
In 1986, the bank established a senior citizens' group called PrimeTimers. The decade of the 1980s closed with the bank holding \$71 million in assets.

The 1990s saw a remarkable expansion of the national economy and unprecedented growth of the bank. Loan production offices were opened in various locations; one in Wichita, Kan., one in Blackwell, and one in Bartlesville. In addition, the bank's holding company, Pioneer Bancshares Inc., established a new bank, in the Oklahoma City area, called The Bank of Nichols Hills. By the year 2000, the combined assets of the two banks had grown to more than \$200 million.

On the 100th anniversary of the bank, the Bank's Board of Directors and management have positioned the bank to expand its presence in Oklahoma as well as adjoining states. The bank is dedicated to remain a locally owned and operated community bank.

### RCB & Pioneer

On April 14, 2006, Pioneer Bank and Trust became big-



**DUE TO THE SUCCESS** of the bank and the surrounding area, Pioneer Bank and Trust soon outgrew its building and decided to proceed with a building expansion. The ground breaking for what was soon to be called the Pioneer Towers took place in 1980. The expansion was to increase Pioneer Bank's floor space by five times. The construction was completed in 1982.

ger, stronger and better by joining with RCB Bank of Claremore, Okla. Even though the bank still had the same familiar faces, the loan capacity has increased significantly and the financial strength is supported with more than a billion dollars in assets and almost \$100 million in capital.

"We're proud of our history of service, not only to our customers, but to our community as well," explained Carl R. Renfro, CEO and chairman of the Board.

Renfro became president in 1979 and in 1984 became chairman and CEO. He retired Dec. 12, 2006.

He was described as a visionary leader, who dedicated his time, talent and experience to projects that truly made a difference in his community.

Upon Renfro's retirement,

Tom Quillin, who had served in the capacity of president, became CEO.

### PrimeTimers

An elite group of customers at Pioneer Bank and Trust are the PrimeTimers. As a PrimeTimer members can take advantage of a wide variety of banking benefits along with frequent trips and events at special rates. Kate Morton, PrimeTimer director, can help members choose what is just right for them.

In order to take advantage of this hassle-free travel, a new or current bank customer, need only be 50 years of age or older and have a savings or checking account at PBT.

PrimeTimers also receive free checks and a list of merchants that will give discounts to PrimeTimer members. Local events, movies,

extended tours, day trips and a monthly newsletter are benefits of being a member of this club. Approximately 2,200 citizens are enjoying "the time of their life" with PrimeTimers.

The bank is a Certified Lender through SBA for many years. This Certified status is indicative of the expertise of our staff in working with SBA regulations and credit issues assuring a smooth loan process.

Through the relationship with RCB, the Pioneer Trust department has been expanded and education funding, life insurance and other investment alternatives have become available.

### Growth & Reinvestment

"Unlike out-of-state corporations that drain profit from Ponca City, PBT brings money into Kay County from both Wichita and Oklahoma

City," said Quillin. In Wichita, PBT is a leader in providing real estate loans for both commercial and homebuyers. "This is very important, as all the profits from the Wichita office come right back here to Ponca City," Quillin added. "Our Wichita office is located at the corner of 21st and Tyler."

Likewise, the Bank of Nichols Hills, chartered in Oklahoma City in May 1996, is a sister bank. It is a vibrant bank in Oklahoma City, with the main branch located at 2644 Northwest 63rd, a downtown branch at Sixth and Broadway and another full service branch at 610 South Kelly in Edmond.

As of 2006, the Pioneer Bank/RCB Family represents \$1.07 billion in assets, ranking it as one of the top 10 financial groups in the State of Oklahoma.

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# Soldani Family Build New House on Site of Former Home

1925 — Ponca City had 15,000 citizens and 18 miles of brick or concrete streets, three fire trucks, five grade schools, and more than 20 hotels, with nine in two blocks of South First and Second Streets.

The Soldani family tore down the house at Central and Ninth Street where they had raised their 10 children. The new house was built over the original basement and the cut sandstone blocks at the original porches were kept intact with the new house designed around them.

The architect was George F. Cannon and the contractor was O.F. Keck. They paid \$92,000 for the new 8,000-square-foot residence.

Architect John Duncan Forsyth learned that oilman E.W. Marland was planning to build his "Palace on the Prairie." After following Marland clear to Estes Park, Colo., Forsyth was finally able to talk to Marland, and he received the commission to design the mansion.

The Marland gatehouse, located at 747 North Fourteenth Street, was the first building on the Marland Estate. Forsyth and his staff of architects used the building as their office. It was also Mr. Marland's very private office.

The C.R. Anthony store opened in Ponca City.

The new Gill Funeral Home building was completed. Located on the southwest corner of North Second Street and East Cleveland, the two-story structure cost \$35,000.

The Ponca City Lions Club built a model home in the recently developed Acre Homes Addition. Located at 144 Fairview, it was built on land whose original covenants included "the ownership of only one mule." Sid and Birdie May Dellaplain were the first owners.

The National American Legion organization allocated \$75,000 for Oklahoma to provide help for the needy children of World War I veterans. Marland convinced them to start a Home School in Ponca City for these children. He donated 120 acres of land, and he and Bill McFadden each donated \$35,000 to build the first two billets.

In March, the D.A.R. raised

\$5,500 to build the War Memorial Water Fountain at the Civic Center. The names of all the people who donated were placed in the cornerstone of the fountain. Nov. 11, 1925, Armistice Day, the fountain was dedicated and Mayor Callahan accepted the fountain for the city.

Jack and Jim Trout uncovered the bronze marker with the names of 293 area men who had served in World War I.

The hospital fund drive raised \$250,000 and construction began on a new hospital at Fourteenth Street and Hartford, on land donated by E.W. Marland.

In the 1920s, the military leaders at Fort Sill, Okla., deemed the original state flag unacceptable. They, with other concerned citizens and organizations, including the Daughters of the American Revolution, sponsored a statewide contest for a new state flag design. Louise Fluke, a Ponca Citian, was urged to enter the state flag contest. She actually submitted two designs, and one of them was unanimously selected. The new flag was adopted by the state legislature.

The new "101 Ranch Great Far East and Real Wild West Show" took to the road once again in 30 new steel railroad cars including a magnificent private car for the Miller brothers.

An Arabian troupe, Scottish and Russian bands and several new circus acts were added to the show.

1926 — The new 50-bed "Hospital on the Hill" opened.

In May, a construction camp was located near the south water tower. The settlement included many children of school age. They were attending Garfield school, which was causing crowded conditions.

The board of education built four frame bungalows on loaned lots to serve as a temporary "school" in the area. Originally known as the South Side School, the name was later changed to McKinley School.

Curtis Hall was elected mayor. He had been a city council member for 14 years, and in 1919 had helped draft the City Charter. He also



THE SOLDANI FAMILY tore down their house at Central and Ninth Street where they had raised their 10 children. The new house was built over the original basement and the cut sandstone blocks at the original porches were kept intact with the new house designed around them. The architect was George F. Cannon and the contractor was O.F. Keck. They paid \$92,000 for the 8,000-square-foot residence.

designed the new fire station on West Grand. His commissioners were F.D. Sparks and Ben Dawson.

Mrs. Mary Virginia Marland died on June 7. She had been ill with cancer for several years.

On Aug. 18, a bond issue was approved to build a new high school. The land on North Fifth Street was purchased from E.W. Marland. Smith & Senter were the architects who specified Spanish architecture for the new building, complimenting other public buildings in the city.

Attucks School was built for the African American children living in south Ponca City, which was known as Dixie Hill.

In October, E.W. Marland invited 12 of the leading sculptors of the world to submit competitive designs in the form of small models,

depicting a pioneer woman.

Marland invited artist Jo Davidson to come to Ponca City to sculpt statues of his two adopted children, Lydie and George and of Marland himself.

On Oct. 10, The Ponca City News published an unusual special section devoted to polo. A nine-team Polo Tourney was scheduled to open that day.

Marland encouraged his associates and the whole community to ride to the hounds and learn jumping. Farmers installed "jumps" in their fences and many children learned horsemanship.

On Dec. 16, the city council approved a bond issue election for a new water and light plant (\$300,000), and for purchasing additional land

for parks (\$50,000).

Lew Wentz helped organize the Oklahoma Society for Crippled Children, and contributed more than \$50,000 to the society that first year.

On Dec. 23, the residents of Cross petitioned to be annexed into the city. Throughout the year, several other areas were annexed, and the city limits were extended.

## Old Cross School



THE CROSS School was one of seven grade schools in the Ponca City system after the residents of Cross petitioned to be annexed into the city on Dec. 23, 1926.

## Round Grove Church Survived Until Early '60s

The history of Round Grove Church begins in 1896 and continues for 67 years when active members dropped to nine. The church was located five miles west of Ponca City on the Blackwell shortcut.

In the summer months after the Cherokee Strip, a group of pioneers met in Snyder Grove for church and Sunday school. Winter meetings were held in the Robert Parmley home, half-mile west of the Grove, which had a large room.

Later the Union Sunday school services were held in the Round Grove school building, a half-mile further west.

Many different denominations were represented each Sunday, but the majority were Baptist and, on April 26, 1896, at a meeting in the school, the decision was made to organize the Round Grove Baptist Church.

The Rev. Mr. Via served as moderator, Williams Phelps was clerk and James Finley, deacon. Members of the new church left Round Grove and began meeting in the Finley School and talking about constructing a church facility. Work began in 1900. In 1908, the church building was completely destroyed when struck by lightning.

The tragedy shocked the people but they immediately made plans to rebuild.

The insurance people refused to pay, but they (the church members) took it to court and won. With the insurance money and subscriptions, the church was rebuilt in 1916.

Changes made in the building included removal of the cupola and belfry as they seemed to leak and the hitching rack in 1939. Heat was furnished by a big round oak stove and coal oil was used for light until 1949. That year they church had the opportunity to tie onto a gas line and rural electrification made electric lights possible.

The church took pride in the ordination of three of their young members — Elzie Gaywood in 1933, Bennie Kimbrough in 1951 and Bob Ross in 1956.

The church struggled from "about 1950 to 1962." It could pay its way and upkeep, but no workers.

The church building and contents were sold at auction, and the last meeting was held in the Floyd Pickett home Feb. 4, 1963. After all the bills were paid, there was \$850 in the treasury. It was voted to give \$50 to the Round Grove Cemetery in memory of the old timers buried there. The remaining \$800 was divided between the Baptist Children's Home and Boys Ranch.

## Celebrate Oklahoma's Centennial, with a little piece of History!

### Pioneer Woman Statue

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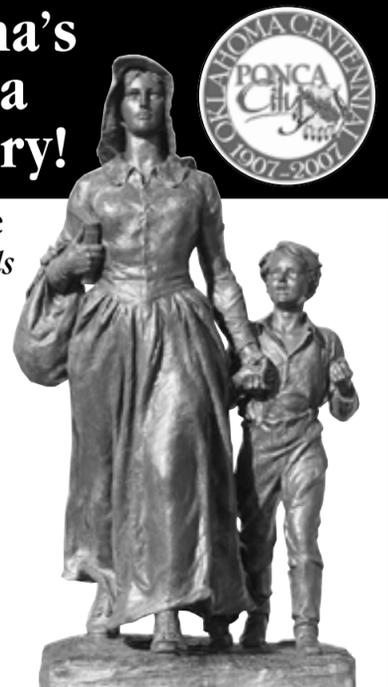
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# Senior High School Built in 1927

1927 — Construction of a new high school began. Designed by architects Smith and Senter, the architecture of the building was modified atmospheric Spanish, with natural stone steps and red Spanish tile cornices. The building cost of \$312,097.

There were seven grade schools in Ponca City — Garfield, Jefferson, Lincoln, Cross, McKinley, Roosevelt and Sunnyside. A new addition to Jefferson was completed and Roosevelt was remodeled. A public evening school offered industrial, commercial, vocational agriculture, and home economics classes.

The Cross townsite was finally incorporated into the city limits of Ponca City. The mayor appointed a committee to rename the streets in the original town of Cross, since it had been annexed into the city.

The city expanded the electric light plant to include outlying areas.

Ponca City's population had increased to 16,000, and the one-a-day new home average continued.

In February, Marland spoke to prospective sculptors who were engaged in designing a model for the statue of the "Pioneer Woman of America."

He had initiated a contest with 12 artists, inspiring each of them to submit a model of their interpretation.

Four months later, the models were transported across the country and 750,000 people cast votes for their favorite statue. Artist Bryant Baker's model was the most popular by a large margin.

At the same time that Marland commissioned the artists for the Pioneer Woman, he contracted for five additional

statues: William McFadden, the Plainsman; John Bull, the Ponca Indian; Mrs. John Bull, an Indian woman; Belle Starr, the outlaw queen; and George L. Miller of the 101 Ranch. This group of statues lined Monument road for several years, hence the name of the road.

On March 10, the doors of a new model home opened to the public for two weeks. The \$15,000 house was located at 920 North Fifth Street. A total of 29 merchants and businessmen participated in the building of the home. The Ponca City News, under the auspices of the "National Better Homes Bureau," sponsored the project.

Mayor Curtis Hall passed away. H.C. Mulroy, commissioner of finance, was elected to serve the balance of Hall's term as mayor.

He ran unopposed, but 418

citizens cast votes in his support. The new mayor appointed George Smeed as city manager, Sam Tulk as police chief, and George Brown as fire chief.

The city built a new fire station on West Grand Avenue, and dedicated it in memory of Mayor Hall.

The city fathers created a Regional Planning commission.

They also created the office of Building Commissioner, establishing regulations for construction, repair, removal, safety and inspection of buildings.

Through his railroad connections, Mayor Mulroy was able to secure improvements on the Rock Island extension, thus connecting Ponca City to 10,000 miles of Rock Island lines. He also was able to get the airmail stop for Ponca City.

Citizens passed a \$55,000 bond issue to construct the South Avenue underpass, in partnership with Atchison, Topeka, Santa Fe Railroad. Construction began immediately.

Orville Savage Motor Company, 200 West Grand Avenue, opened on Sept. 16 in a brand new brick building designed by local architect George J. Cannon.

Dr. Dewitt's Clothing Hospital opened at 112 North Fourth Street, specializing in dry cleaning and tailoring.

Paris Furniture Store at 409 East Grand Avenue opened. Architect John Duncan Forsyth designed the Spanish eclectic style building at a cost of \$100,000. The store had an interior atrium open to the second and third floors with a large amber glass skylight.

William McFadden was a large contributor to the Camp Fire Girls. He was instrumental in establishing Camp McFadden, located ten miles east of town.

In April, 220 Ponca City citizens subscribed \$80,000 to build a country club. Plans called for a lake, clubhouse, roads and an 18-hole golf course. The group paid \$21,000 for 240 acres; in September, they acquired another 125 acres. They named it the Rock Cliff Country Club.

Bolton Wittmer built the Blaine football stadium and fieldhouse at Ponca City High School as a WPA project.

Every plant that would possibly grow in this climate could be found on the estate where the new Marland Mansion was being built.

(See SCHOOL, Page 10F)



BRYANT BAKER was the sculptor selected to create The Pioneer Woman Statue, which was unveiled on April 22, 1930. The 17-foot statue weighed 12,000 pounds, and cost \$300,000. It remains a lasting symbol of Ponca City and Oklahoma.



TWELVE ARTISTS entered a contest by E.W. Marland to create The Pioneer Woman statue. The models were transported across the country and 750,000 people cast votes for their favorite statue. This was one of the candidates, now on display with the other models at Woolaroc Museum near Bartlesville.



LOTS OF FISH were hauled in from local rivers in the pre-statehood days. This 1906 photograph shows a total of 449 pounds of fish and the proud fishermen and friends.

# WBBZ First Broadcast From Stage at Poncan

1928 — In January, Ponca City had its first radio broadcasting station ... for a week. WBBM, a 100-watt station broadcasting from a portable transmitter, aired programs from the stage of the Poncan Theatre. The first regular program featured the First Christian Church choir. Citizens could purchase portable receivers and listen in their cars ... from as far as a block away. Later in the year, Charles Carrell made the decision to permanently locate the station in Ponca City. He chose WBBZ as the call letters, which stood for "World's Busiest Business Zone."

Students moved into the newly completed high school in late January.

The first Board of Education was formed, with nine members and a treasurer.

Construction of E.W. Marland's "Palace on the Prairie" was completed. Built at a cost of \$5.5 million, the three-story mansion had 55 rooms, including 12 bathrooms, three kitchens, two tunnels, an elevator and a dumbwaiter. Mr. Marland moved in, along with Lydie and George, his adopted daughter and son.

The children of Ponca City were invited to a riding party on the grounds of the Marland Estate. He treated them to a meal, then entertained them with a child size circus. Each child received a silver loving cup engraved with his or her name.

John Duncan Forsyth designed the Marland Oil room and the E.W. Marland Room on the fifth floor of the Marland Oil Company headquarters building, at a cost of \$50,000. The rooms featured American walnut paneling and ornamental carvings of English limewood, portraying the implements used in the oil industry at that time. They included rock bits, a hand winch, and a wellhead pump, interspersed with flowers of the Southwest. There was even an oil derrick, with traveling blocks, elevators, and doghouse.

Building permits for 1928 totaled more than \$2 million. New building projects included the new Kress building at 107 East Grand, the Marland building at Fourth and Grand, St. Mary's Catholic school on South Seventh Street, Ponca City Milling Co. offices, Long's service station on North Osage, The Marland Industrial Institute, the railroad underpass on South Avenue, and the Rock Cliff Country Club, plus many more new residences.

All the major building projects that had started in 1927 were completed in 1928, including the American Legion Home School. The E.W. Marland billet housed 20 boys plus a dining room, kitchen and living room. The Bill McFadden billet provided housing for 20 girls.

Construction of the Wentz swimming pool began on a hilltop northeast of town. Built at a cost of \$95,000, it had the distinction of being the finest

outdoor pool in America. The water tower and pumping station were also completed and one model cabin was set up.

In May, Marland relinquished his title as president of his oil company in return for board chairmanship. Dan Moran was chosen to succeed Marland as president.

On July 14, E.W. Marland married Lydie Roberts in Pennsylvania.

On Nov. 1, E. W. Marland resigned from the chairmanship of Marland Oil. William McFadden also submitted his resignation.

George Marland resigned from Marland Oil and, with George and Wesley Nunn, purchased a Buick agency.

Unable to pay the utility bills at the mansion, E.W. and Lydie moved into the Artist Studio on the Marland Estate property.

Bill Caffey, gatekeeper for Marland Oil, won \$4,500 in the annual Terrapin Derby at the 101 Ranch. He used the money to pay off his home mortgage and to get married.

The City Council passed an

ordinance prohibiting slot machines.

In December, a \$100,000 bond issue for a new library was defeated by 36 votes, even though most leaders in the community favored the proposal.

As part of the 101 Ranch Rodeo, George L. Miller and Buck Hoover decided to use an airplane to bulldog a steer. With 10,000 people watching in the stands, Hoover was going to drop from a rope ladder onto the steer's back, and throw him to the ground. Suddenly, the plane went into a tailspin, and landed in a sweet potato patch. The two men were only scratched and bruised, but the plane was destroyed.

Fred Pickrel moved to Ponca City to manage the Poncan Theatre. He brought in musicals, plays, and famous entertainers such as The John Phillip Sousa Band, Sigmund Romberg, and Sally Rand, who appeared on stage with only her fans and a large transparent bubble balloon.



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# Conoco Comes From Merger Of Marland, Continental Oil

1929 — Marland Oil Co. and Continental Oil Co. entered into a plan of reorganization. The two companies merged under the name Continental Oil Company, better known as Conoco. The new company's logo incorporated the Marland red triangle and the Conoco name.

Continental Oil Company took over the Marland Industrial Institute, and the complex became known as the Quah-Ta-See-Da Club, providing additional facilities for Ponca City's newest golf course at the Rock Cliff Country Club.

Lew Wentz sold his oil holdings just before the stock market crash in October.

The City Commission agreed that the city would not hire employees over 50 years of age until those persons passed a rigid physical examination.

Ponca City started construction on an airport, one of the earliest municipal airports in the country. Mayor Mulroy was responsible for getting permission from the U.S. Post Office to secure an airmail stop for Ponca City.

Talking movies were here to stay, and the Ponca Theatre was wired for sound.

Polo playing began in the spring. It had become the elite thing to do in Ponca City to be part of the "horsey set." Ponca City's polo fields of Bermuda grass were noted to be most easy on the ponies' legs. There were stables in many areas on the east side of town, with trainers and grooms working the horses, a tower for grain storage, a tack room and a feed room, and sometimes a blacksmith shop.

Bill Vanselous, owner of the Big V Ranch, began experimenting with types of

corn that resisted drought. He developed a white corn that was particularly adapted to western Oklahoma. In 1929, the Big V produced 50,000 bushels of white corn, and it was soon in demand all over the country.

The Royalty Building was constructed at Fourth Street and Grand Avenue. John Duncan Forsyth, architect for the Marland Mansion, designed the mission-style structure. The two-story building had a retail business on the main level and office space on second floor for Marland.

Sunday, Oct. 29, opened the fox hunting season, and it continued through Dec. 29.

The farmers in this area made their land available for the hunters. Marland had imported red foxes from Pennsylvania into Oklahoma, as they were not indigenous to this area.

The foxes had a tendency to raid the farmers' chicken houses, but Marland saw to it that all claims were paid promptly.

On June 16, Mayor Mose Shire resigned his position as mayor. Six days later, a mass meeting of more than 75 businessmen nominated H.F. Harter to serve as mayor for the balance of Shire's term.

Mayor H.F. Harter presided at the dedication of the new Ponca City Airport, with a reported 30,000 people in attendance.

The celebration included a 300-mile air race from Ponca City to Tulsa, and onto Wichita, then back to Ponca City.

The city had a contract with Continental Oil to construct individual hangars and then lease them to employees of the oil company.

The Nickles Machine Company opened a new building

on South First Street.

1930 — The Pioneer Woman Statue was unveiled on April 22. Created by sculptor Bryant Baker, the 17-foot statue weighed 12,000 pounds, and cost \$300,000. It is mounted on a pyramid limestone base, making the total height over 30 feet. The monument was conceived, directed and partially financed by E.W. Marland.

More than 40,000 people gathered for the festivities and to hear Will Rogers speak. The event was broadcast nationally on NBC Radio. President Hoover addressed the crowd via NBC wire from Washington. Marland presented the statue and the land surrounding it to the State of Oklahoma.

Herman Smith opened Smitty's Boys' and Men's Wear, leasing the boys' department in the Johnson Clothing Store.

A record number of turtles was entered in the 101 Ranch Terrapin Derby. Clara Day won first place with her turtle "Goober Dust" and collected \$7,100.

Genuine Hickory-smoked Bar-B-Q was the specialty of The Pig restaurant, located north of the hospital on U.S. 77.

William Vanselous died April 7, leaving the Big V Ranch to his children, Edward, Grace, Kay, and Oklahoma, to operate. They continued their father's innovative practices. They used a small airplane to patrol their acreage and helped pioneer the use of electric fences in Oklahoma.

The city passed an ordinance prohibiting barbed wire fencing in the city limits.

The 1930 census showed Ponca City's population at 16,136 citizens.



PONCA CITY High School students attended classes in this building before moving into the current facility in late January of 1928.

## Pioneer Genealogical Society Helps People Trace Ancestry

The Pioneer Genealogical Society organized March 29, 1971, with 17 citizens present. Today the membership totals 84 active members.

The group first met at local churches then, in later years, moved to the Ponca City Library where they still meet on the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. Guests are always welcome.

The PGS Web site reads "Pioneer Genealogical Society welcomes those interested in discussion and exchange of information about genealogy. Our purpose is to study methods available to members for genealogical research and to develop and maintain ancestral records and family charts. Informative programs, workshops and other events are presented for the genealogist. PGS also collects and preserves both genealogical and related historical materials for public use. These materials are available in the Genealogy Room of the Ponca City Library."

Presidents who have served through the years include the founding member Eugene C. Rivers (1971-1973), Edythe

Giesecker (1974), George Hill (1975), Valda Johnson (1976), Marion E. Lee (1977), Beulah McKay (1978-1979), Marion E. Lee (1980), Sharon Primeau (1981-1982), Ramona LeBaron (1983-1984), Dora Belle Steffey (1985-1986), Marlene Hume Stewart (1987-1988), Edith McCallick (1989-1990), Bill Ziegenhain, (1991), Hanford Hull (1992), Graydon Brown (1993-1994), Paula Denson (1995-1997), Sandra Graves (1998-2000), Sue Clinton (2001), Gloria Bottrell (2003), Sandra Pendergraft, (2004-2006) and Kathy Zehr (2007).

Over the years PGS has purchased and donated more than 500 books for genealogy research to the Genealogy Library located in the basement of the Ponca City Library. Thousands of books have also been donated as memorials from living members or from the estates of former members to help create one of the most extensive genealogy libraries in Oklahoma.

In addition to donating books and providing educational programs to educate and help genealogists and historians, the group has also

donated thousands of hours to projects preserving the history of the area. Presently the group is involved in an ongoing census of all area cemeteries. The information from these 3-4 year surveys will soon be available on CDs or for interested researchers.

In previous years PGS volunteers spent 3-4 years indexing all county marriage, funeral and numerous other area records which are now available on microfilm in the Genealogy Library.

Numerous members aided with the editing and publication of the 2-volume North Central History Book "Rooted in the Past — Growing for the Future" in 1995.

More than 1,500 files have recently been made available in the archives room for research relating to the Cherokee Strip pioneers and their descendants.

Currently the group is celebrating the Oklahoma Centennial by offering a limited number of Centennial Collector's Envelope with numerous Centennial and Ponca City logos, stamps and other themes.

## Conoco Magazine Featured Merger of Two Oil Companies

**Editor's Note: In July 1929 Continental Oil Company the first issue of The Conoco Magazine was dedicated to "The Merger of Two Outstanding American Oil Companies." The following comes from that publication.**

The official statement on the merger, signed by D.J. Moran, president, and E. T. Wilson, chairman of the Board reads, "Merger of the Continental Oil Company and the Marland Oil Company has been accomplished, and the new company in the future will be known as the Continental Oil Company."

The purpose of this announcement magazine is to acquaint stockholders, employees and distributors with the new Continental Oil Company and with its trade mark, a new symbol of a greater service. It is further designed to introduce both organizations, one to the other, and to aid in tying the two units together into one family group.

The union of the Marland Oil Company and the Continental Oil Company brings together two outstanding producers, refiners and marketers in the petroleum industry. The united resources and facilities thus made available under one control will offer exceptional service to the consumers of motor

fuels and lubricants within the new company's wide marketing area.

Business of the new Continental Oil Company will go forward much as it has under the separate organizations. Because of the widespread activities of the new company it will be necessary to maintain two main offices, at Denver, Colo., and Ponca City, Okla., and division and district offices of both organizations will be maintained as in the past, all operating under the name of the Continental Oil Company.

Every effort will be made to utilize the entire personnel of the organization. Enlarged activity will present new opportunities, and it is felt that the merger will be particularly beneficial to employees.

The union of the Continental and Marland Companies is advantageous because of the almost perfect blending of the properties and activities of the two organizations.

**Retail Marketing Activity**  
A new symbol of the new company is intensive in 28 states and the District of Columbia.

The new Continental Oil Company will operate a total of 2,294 marketing stations, including 976 company-owned service stations and 1,318 company-owned bulk stations. These figures do

not include the thousands of dealers who have been selling one or the other company's products.

Refining capacity will be 66,750 barrels daily, with the new Continental Oil Company operating eight refineries, so located as to give the most efficient service to all regions of the marketing area.

Total oil production will be gross 104,324 barrels daily, an amount so much greater than previous refining capacity that the Continental Company will be permitted to select the highest quality raw material for the manufacture of Conoco Products.

Quality, service, and, above all, the same high standard of honest business administration which have characterized both Continental and Marland will support the new Continental Oil Company's trade mark — a new symbol of a greater service.

**Members of the Board**  
In addition to D.J. Moran, and Wilson, members of the Board were S.H. Keoghan, chairman executive committee; W.W. Bruce, executive vice president; W.H. Ferguson, executive vice president; E.J. Nicholos, vice president in charge of production; Walter Miller, vice president in charge of manufacturing; K.S. Karstedt, vice president in charge of sales; B.H. Markham, comptroller and assistant to the president, and G.F. Smith, treasurer.

## Merry Matrons Organized

The Merry Matrons Club was organized in 1910 with Mrs. Ed Walker, Mrs. John Kygar, Mrs. Ed Thompson, Mrs. Charles Crooks and Mrs. Rosa Shreckengaust as charter members.

The members brought along their fancy work for a social get together once every two weeks until World War II came along. With the gas rationing, members voted to meet only once a month. Every fourth month they held a luncheon

to celebrate members' birthdays.

To make contributions to worthy projects in the community, members served lunch at sales, pieced and quilted quilts and made hope chests for sale.

Club membership in 1969 was 15. Edna Quimby served as president, and other officers were Thelma Main, vice president and Fern Countryman, secretary-treasurer.



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# Chamber . . . . .

(Continued From Page 5F)

There were 125 guest rooms including 12 luxurious suites. Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Wiker were the first lessees and managers.

The six-story Masonic Building at Third Street and Grand Avenue was built, funded in part by Lew Wentz. This was the first real office building in downtown Ponca City. Security Bank and Trust occupied the first two floors. Lew Wentz organized the Wentz Oil Corporation on the third floor.

The new Garfield School building was completed at a cost of \$104,297.

Southwestern Bell Telephone erected a new building at Second Street and Chestnut. The Ponca City News moved into their new building at Third Street and Cleveland. Roy Mertz opened Mertz Machine shop at Pine Street and Grand Avenue. Donahoe Milling Company added to their elevator storage in anticipation of building a new flour mill.

At the Colony Restaurant in New York City, sculptor Jo Davidson was introduced to E.W. Marland. He shared his dream of a sculpture to honor America's pioneer woman,

whom he referred to as "America's Sunbonnet Woman." A few months later, Marland met with the artist in Paris and contracted with him to create three statues, one of himself as an oilman and the other two of his adopted children, Lydie and George.

The Ruby Hospital and Maternity Home was opened. Mrs. Ruby transformed her home into a "Protestant" hospital as a living monument to the memory of her husband, Charles, who had founded the Ponca City Oil, Gas and Mineral Company. It was Ida Ruby's goal to furnish the best hospital service at the lowest possible cost.

The Terrapin Derby became a new event at the annual Labor Day 101 Ranch rodeos. Joe Miller thought of the idea while watching land terrapins (turtles) crawl to get out of the sun. All turtles were identified by numbers painted on their backs. The entry fee was \$2 for each turtle entered in the race. Of this, \$1 from each entry went to the first place winner and the remainder went to second and third place winners. The winner was "Shingles," owned by former mayor Harry Cragin, who won \$114.



WHICH MAN has the oil well? The one with the biggest smile, of course. It's E.W. Marland, second from left, who led the march of the oil industry into Ponca City. After nine tries, Marland struck oil on the Willie Cries for War allotment in 1910, 51 years after the nation's first oil well was drilled in Pennsylvania. He not only built a mighty oil company, but overhauled a city's way of life, served the state as governor and carved a big place for himself in the history of a colorful era. Above, Marland is celebrating the successful completion of another producer with a group of friends: top row, from left, Thomas White, brother of Pat White of the old firm of White and Harry Sinclair; John G. McCaskey, former partner of Lew Wentz; J. L. Donahoe, Tulsa royalty buyer; Dick Gray, Prairie Oil and Gas, Tulsa; W. P. Thompson, Bradford, Pa.; Ross Ranney, Tulsa, and George H. Brett, Ponca City pioneer merchant. At Marland's right is Murray Doan, Tulsa, and the rest of the front row includes. F.S. Henry; R.A. Griffith of Sinclair Oil; Nell Stoppard (Mrs. Homer Gray, Tulsa); William Black, Tulsa drilling contractor; Hugh King, Tulsa oil producer; Al Braymer, Gypsy Oil Company production superintendent, and Bob Hileman, Mid-Continent Petroleum, Tulsa.

## Newkirk Quick To Meet Educational Challenges

NEWKIRK — When Newkirk was opened to settlers in September, 1893, there were no free public schools for the children to attend, but the U.S. government had made arrangements to set up a school system.

According to an article in the 1968 Cherokee Strip edition of The Ponca City News, R.R. Talley, superintendent of the Norman school, was brought to Newkirk to supervise the opening of the school.

Before the opening of the Newkirk School, the community was served by subscription schools which were opened in some vacant buildings. Parents had to pay tuition for their children to attend these schools.

According to the 1968 article, the first school, for children grades one through four, was opened soon after the run, in a store building on Maple Avenue.

The article said that Thomas Pate was the teacher and he was assisted by two teachers, Nettie Cook and Ona Cockran, who left the job in January to teach in the first free public schools.

## District . . . . .

(Continued From Page 3F)

They attended meetings, gathered information, wrote letters and waited to hear back from the State Historic Preservation Office in Oklahoma City.

Their diligence paid off. On July 26, 1999, North Sixth Street was granted the status of a historic district by Mayor Tom Leonard and the Ponca City Board of Commissioners.

The neighborhood celebrated being the first historic district in Ponca City with homemade cookies and old-fashioned lemonade at the home of Jim and Jannie Ross, 402 North Sixth Street, also known as the Barnes Home.

The residents subsequently voted and agreed upon the name Gateway Historic District. The name was derived both from the neighborhood's location, which is just south of the Ruby Memorial Gates which leads to Pioneer Park, and because the street serves as a gateway between downtown Ponca City and the park.

T.J. Blevins, Amos Spray and A.T. Hughes were named as the first board of education for the free school system. For three years, school was held in a building furnished by Judge Woodsaw.

Cockran was put in charge of the elementary grades and Cook, the intermediate grades. Mary Burk was in charge of the primary grades and D.J. Cowan, the high school.

The first school property owned by the district was the site of the old elementary school, which currently a senior citizens housing area. The property was deeded to the schools by the city council Aug. 6, 1896.

A two-story structure was built shortly afterward, and classes were moved into the new school in 1897. The building served all grades through high school until 1901 when the city deeded the present high school site at Ninth and Main to the school district.

The original stone grade school building was torn down in 1934, and was replaced by a one-story building, made of the same stone. In 1968, the rebuilt grade school was one of two schools serving grade school students.

Both of the grade school buildings were scheduled to be abandoned with the start of the 1968-69 school year, for a new \$240,000 elementary building at the southwest edge of town on the south side of U.S. 77.

St. Francis Catholic School was also in operation in 1968, serving students through the eighth grade.

The first high school built in 1901, was a two-story stone building with a large room on the second floor, used as an auditorium. The first floor had one room for the seventh and eighth grade and three rooms for high school grades.

At the start of the school year in 1915, grades eight through 12 started classes in a new three-story red brick building. Classes were held in this building through the 1952-53 school year.

The present one-story brick high school building was completed in 1953, for grades seven through 12.

## School . . . . .

(Continued From Page 8F)

Henry Hatashita, Marland's gardener, patterned the 60 acres of magnificent gardens after the formal gardens of Hampton Court in England. Workmen installed lead gutters, drain pipes and water boxes, bearing the initial "M," and the date "1927."

The drainage of the south terrace came through a carved head of Pan, emptying the runoff from his mouth into the well under the front terrace.

The Poncan Theatre opened on Sept. 20, with seating for 1,200. Originally designed as a vaudeville house and silent movie theater, it cost \$200,000 to construct, plus \$80,000 for the technical equipment. They also installed a new \$22,500 Wurlitzer pipe organ.

WBBZ Radio, a touring radio station from Indianapolis on the Redpath Chautauqua Circuit, began broadcasting from the stage of the brand new Poncan Theatre.

The first "talkie" movie was produced — "The Jazz Singer," starring Al Jolson.

Chris and Kitty Williams gave birth to triplets, Clarence Northcutt (named for the doctor who delivered the babies), Donald Worthington, and Davis Christopher, better known as Doc, Don and Chris. They were the first triplets born in Ponca City.

On Oct. 21, Colonel Joe Miller of the 101 Ranch was killed by carbon monoxide gas in the garage of his newly completed ranch home.

The Ponca City News headline on Dec. 11 read: "Marland Educational Plant to be Started Near Here at Once." The first unit of a school and recreation plant was getting under way on a site near the Rock Cliff Country Club.

Marland Refining Company occupied spacious offices on the 17th floor of 50 Broadway, New York City. The New York District of Marland Oil now had a retail department that maintained 48 service stations in New Jersey.

Lew Wentz purchased the first Model A Ford to be sold in Oklahoma.

The stone entrance to Pioneer Park, at the north end of the Historic Gateway District on Sixth Street, was built as a memorial to Charles Ruby. Two identical memorial plaques read "In Memory of Charles H. Ruby, Pioneer Gas Prospector, 1843-1921 — First Gas Found in 1905."

Lew Wentz received permission from the commissioners to show free movies at the City Auditorium.

Fairfax Mayor Dale Beaver had the winning turtle in the 101 Ranch Terrapin Derby. He purchased his own drug store with the \$3,780 winnings.

## White Eagle Monument Stands in Rural Pasture

The White Eagle Monument, located in a field a quarter of a mile off State Highway 156 near Marland, was an Indian trail marker that George L. Miller of the 101 Ranch had reconstructed as the White Eagle monument.

Miller dedicated the monument to the memory of White Eagle, chief of the Poncas, who led his people from their Nebraska-Dakota home to the new reservation. The reconstruction project was taken by Miller at the request of the State Historical Society.

Before the opening of the Cherokee Strip to white settlement, Indians had constructed stone and mud plaster pillars about five feet in diameter and 15 feet high on hilltops across the plains. The pillars stood every few miles, visible for a great distance.

Several tribes of the southern division of the Siouan stock including especially the Osage, Kaw, Omaha and Poncas used the markers. These tribes' hunting grounds and ranges extended over a large territory.

The pillars served as post offices, newspapers and information bureaus for members of the same tribe or friendly tribes traveling along the route.

A small pile of twigs or sticks, apparently dropped by accident at the site would reveal to later passerby the number and identity of the previous group,

their destination and the date of their visit.

Crazy Snake, a former companion of White Eagle who had participated with him in the tribe's sun dances, dedicated the rebuilt marker in August, 1927. The replaced marker was 14 feet high and surmounted by a white eagle.

The monument, unveiled by the late Mrs. Leane Waters, daughter of the late chief, had as its inscription:

Re-erected to the memory of Chief White Eagle (1840-1914) Who Led His People to Civilization and Favored the White Mans Ways. Erected by Miller Brothers, 101 Ranch, June, 1927.

Although the monument was named after Chief White Eagle, he is buried at the Ponca Indian Cemetery.

However a famous black cowboy, Bill Pickett is buried at the site. Pickett pioneered the sport of bulldogging on the ranch and performed the fete during the Wild West Show. Pickett died in April, 1932.

Unmarked graves at the site are believed to be Henry Clay, who died in early 1930s of pneumonia, he was a black cowboy. Curbstone Kirby, who died in the early 1930s was a Spanish-American War veteran and was an ox driver at the 101 Ranch. Also buried there is Gladys Hamilton, daughter of a 101 Ranch hand Rhyme.

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# County Seat

(Continued From Page 4F)

Blackwell newspapers vowed that it was the smartest move the voters could make, and that the amount of capital expenditures made by the county to that date did not amount to enough money to make any difference.

Aside from that Blackwell said, the buildings could be sold to help finance new structures in Blackwell.

The Newkirk Republican News Journal disputed these claims, and argued that if the county seat were to be moved to Blackwell, the land in Newkirk along with the buildings constructed upon it would revert to the U. S. government at great loss to the taxpaying citizens of Kay County.

The Newkirk paper even accused the Blackwell supporters of offering the lots in Blackwell as a bribe to influence voters to support the change. The News Journal added the accusation that the land claimed to have been set-aside by the Federal government for a courthouse in Blackwell was, in fact, privately owned. The newspaper suggested that even if it was government land, as claimed, the area in Blackwell was less than half the land the government had set-aside for county use in Newkirk.

Newkirk supporters claimed the land for a new courthouse building in Blackwell would have to be purchased, at great expense, from the City of Blackwell.

Additionally, the taxpayers of Kay County would have to pay rent to private Blackwell property owners for space in which county officials could conduct business until a new courthouse could be constructed.

## Sneers and Jeers

The News Journal snidely commented that the reason Blackwell wanted the change was not convenience to the citizens of the county, but to enrich the pocketbooks of several prominent residents who owned buildings formerly occupied by saloons. The saloons had been closed on statehood day by the prohibition provision in the Oklahoma Constitution.

This sneer may have been aimed at Blackwell citizens who may not have been viewed to be as sophisticated as those of Newkirk. No doubt Newkirk and Ponca City had as many "sample rooms" per capita as did Blackwell.

The Blackwell committee was indignant at the accusations from Newkirk newspapers and thought the economic arguments were simply a ploy to try to delay the vote until after the April 1, 1909, constitutionally-mandated deadline that would end such votes. If Newkirk could stall the vote long enough, it would effectively block the Blackwell bid to win the county seat race.

The Tonkawa News wanted to remain neutral in the issue of the county seat relocation, saying this was a question that each voter must decide for himself based on each individual's best interest. However, the editor pointed out that at a time when half the roads and bridges in the county were completely washed or worn out, it seemed foolish to spend money to construct a new county seat when the limited county tax money could be better spent elsewhere.

The article also mentioned that there had been threats to remove the state institution at Tonkawa.

Though not stated what that institution was, it probably was the school now known as Northern Oklahoma College.

Whatever the institution was, it was seemed certain to the people of Tonkawa that the Blackwell "boomers" were participants in this plot. If this were the case, the matter would not have endeared the voters of Tonkawa to Blackwell. The Tonkawa News eventually endorsed keeping the courthouse in Newkirk.

But, a new player was about to enter the stage. The July 9, 1908, edition of the Ponca City Daily Courier proposed a simple solution to the problem of the fight between Blackwell and Newkirk. Simply vote to move the seat of government to Ponca City.

A town meeting was called for July 13 to discuss the possibility offering the City of Ponca City as a candidate in the county seat contest. All of the early movers and shakers of Ponca City attended.

## Blackwell Favored

From the discussion, it was generally thought that if Ponca City did not enter the race, Blackwell would almost certainly win the election. It seemed that none of the people at the meeting were in favor of moving the county seat at all, and especially not to Blackwell.

Ponca City leaders conjectured that if the vote could be split sufficiently Blackwell could not win a clear majority vote. A run-off election would be required to settle a location for the courthouse.

A committee was appointed to go out into other areas of the county and see what the voters mood was concerning this issue and to find out if Ponca City was a viable candidate. The committee was to report their findings at a meeting the following Monday.

The opposition of all the early Ponca City leaders to Blackwell's desires set the stage for the long standing hard feelings between the two communities, bad feelings that still exist to some extent 100 years later.

Intending to split the vote and succeeding in blocking Blackwell's ambitions, Ponca

City leaders soon warmed to the idea of actually winning the vote and moving the county government to their community. Such a move could bring many economic advantages to their city.

At a meeting reported in the July 21 edition of the Ponca City Courier, a committee was formed to circulate the petitions required to get Ponca City added to the list of contenders in the upcoming vote.

The Courier of Aug. 4, 1908, reported the committee was at the capital in Guthrie to present the petition. Ponca City was now officially in the contest. All the town had to do was secure a first or second place finish in the race and victory, they thought, would be assured.

As reported in the July 30, 1908, Ponca City Courier, Kildare was so encouraged by the successful petition drive conducted by Ponca City, that it jumped into the fray, too, though town leaders previously stated they were not interested.

Apparently their petition drive was not successful, or perhaps it arrived at the Capital in Guthrie too late. At any rate, Kildare was not named on the September ballot.

There being no desire in Ponca City to lose the vote; the town began to work vigorously to win the election. Ponca City leaders offered the county citizens reasons they should consider it the best place for the new government center.

## Osage Area Needed

If Ponca City were voted the county seat, a petition would be sent to the State of Oklahoma asking for an area in Osage County that matched the Kaw Territory which had been added to Kay County at statehood.

With the addition of this Osage land, Ponca City would be closer to the geographical center of Kay County than either Blackwell or Newkirk. It would also increase the county tax base resulting in tax savings to the Kay County taxpayers.

Newspapers at the competing cities hooted at the possibility of this happening, as, they said, there was no possibility that Osage County would give up its land.

Ponca City also proposed that the county offices could immediately occupy the recently constructed City Hall for use as the courthouse until a permanent county courthouse could be built.

The new City Hall was a red brick building, now demolished, located at the corner of Fifth Street and Grand Avenue where the statue of E. W. Marland is now situated.

As the day of the vote approached, Ponca City leaders mounted a drive to bring

out the voters. A big town meeting was held in Tonkawa with over 50 of Ponca City's leading citizens who had driven there in automobiles. On Aug. 31, 1908, a special train decorated with flags and banners and carrying over 300 city residents visited every town in Kay County.

The Poncans first called at Kaw City, Uncas, Newkirk, Kildare and Ponca City in the early part of the day, later, going to Autwine, Blackwell, Tonkawa, Braman and Nardin before returning home that evening.

Contrary to what one might think, the train was well received at Blackwell. The Poncans were met at the train station by 200 Blackwell residents and escorted to the town bandstand.

The Rev. Harris welcomed them as citizens of Kay County and good neighbors here to campaign for the laudable cause of obtaining the county seat.

H.C.R. Brodball of Ponca City brushed off that comment saying the group from Ponca City was merely returning the favor of a visit by the Blackwell citizens on July 4.

The report in the Blackwell Times Record did rub it in a bit that the train had to come to Blackwell because they could not get to any other of the Kay County communities except through this important railroad center.

## Day of Reckoning

Sept. 3, 1908, the day of reckoning had arrived. There was to be no more shouting, no more accusations. The voters were going to the polls to decide the three city's fate.

The next day the Ponca City Daily Courier carried a banner headline, "Ponca City Drops Out."

The town had finished in third place with 1410 votes, well behind the 2079 votes received by Blackwell, and the 1947 garnered by Newkirk. To Ponca City citizens, it was more important in this vote that Blackwell had failed to obtain the necessary majority over both Newkirk and Ponca City. Blackwell had not won the outright removal of the courthouse from Newkirk.

Despite heavy rains that fell on the region on this election day, over 200 more votes had been recorded in the county seat election than in any previous election in the county. This was at an election in which only property owners

could cast ballots, and in which women were not yet allowed to vote.

The final vote as certified by the State Election Board was Blackwell, 2,080, Newkirk, 2,060, and Ponca City, 1,383. The acting Governor Bellamy issued a call for another election for Dec. 2, 1908. The two cities leading the vote were named candidates for the second race.

The results of the December election were Newkirk, 2,707 votes, and Blackwell, 2,656 votes. A mere 51 votes had decided the location of the county seat. Gov. C. N. Haskell declared that Newkirk was to be the county seat by official proclamation on Dec. 26, 1908.

A look at the vote totals indicates that Blackwell did not pick up the needed amount of votes from other Kay County towns.

Of the 68 ballots cast at Tonkawa in September for Ponca City, 30 went to Newkirk while Blackwell gained only one vote.

At Ponca City, the September vote showed 668 voters voted in favor of their own hometown.

At the December ballot, 405 of those voters supported Newkirk, and only 139 new votes were cast for Blackwell.

Nearly all of the voters in Kaw City who favored Ponca City in September favored Newkirk in December.

The totals in the rural precincts remained approximately the same for both ballots. Most of the rural voters in the west half of the county favored Blackwell.

The rural precincts in the eastern part of the county overwhelmingly favored Newkirk.

Was there a conspiracy among the leaders of Tonkawa, Kaw City and Ponca City to influence their citizens in a vote against Blackwell? It was rumored there was such a deal. The large number of votes recorded for Newkirk in the three towns would seem to indicate there may well have been. Certainly the voters in these towns didn't seem to like Blackwell very much.

The December vote, however, did not end the shouting and accusations of misdeeds.

Even after the governor's proclamation stating Newkirk had won, Blackwell did not give up their chase easily. They contested the election on several fronts.

Most important of these reasons was their claim that as many as 1,134 voters had not been legally certified or not properly sworn in by precinct workers before casting their ballots. This, the attorneys for Blackwell said, would disqualify 1,221 voters for Newkirk.

The Ponca City Democrat in January 1909 declared that voters had decided the issue of the location of the county seat perhaps for all time.

Now, the paper declared, to remove the county seat to another place, a two-thirds majority would be required, not just simple majority of votes. The newspaper reminded us that if 26 people had changed their minds at the polls, the result would have gone in Blackwell's favor. The Democrat congratulated Blackwell for its fighting ability.

These congratulatory remarks were a bit premature for it was not until Jan. 30, 1912, that the Oklahoma Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision declaring Newkirk to have been selected as the county seat of Kay County. The war was finally over.

## No Animosity?

An editorial in the Ponca City Democrat in 1908 said it was not that Ponca City hated Blackwell, or its people, but having the courthouse remain in Newkirk was in the best interests of Ponca City.

They had voted in a purely local self-preservation motive that would best benefit their town. At that time, self-preservation seems to have been the reason for the great "County Seat War" for every Kay County community involved.

Ironically, the year that the issue was finally settled, 1912, was the same that year the oil industry began to bring incredible wealth into the economy of Kay County. With oil money flowing freely, it was assured that all these Kay County towns would survive quite nicely.

By that time things were doing fine, and it didn't really seem to matter to Ponca City or Blackwell where the county seat was located.

The story of the Supreme Court decision ending the war was a proud headline in the Newkirk Republican News Journal. The story was not mentioned in the newspapers of the two other competing towns.

# Project

(Continued From Page 2F)

Some of the unique features in the home were a built-in vacuum system, air conditioning, a game room, and a three car attached garage. The marble fireplace in the living room originated from the Mexican palace of Maximillian. The carriage house stood on the west edge of the property.

Virginia and E.W. Marland adopted her niece and nephew, George and Lydie Roberts. The children had come to Ponca City from Flourtown, Pennsylvania to visit about four years earlier. Virginia convinced her sister and brother-in-law, Margaret Collins Roberts and George Fredrick Roberts, to let her and E.W. adopt the two teenagers.

Mr. Marland also built a home for his sister, Charlotte, on the northwest corner of Tenth Street and Grand Avenue. It was Italianate Revival style, and also designed by architect Layton. "Lottie" Marland was president of the hospital guild, loved music and fine arts. She owned the first electric car in Ponca City. The one-seated vehicle was guided not by a steering wheel but by

a swinging tiller similar to a boat's steering mechanism.

1917 — The city began construction of the Civic Center Auditorium. Before it was completed, it was used on Oct. 2 to send off 141 Kay County soldiers leaving to fight in World War I.

With the discovery of oil and the new wealth that came with it, Ponca City became a thriving modern city. Hundreds of new homes were built in the late teens and early 1920s in the central part of the city.

Due to the increased need for oil in the war, the price of crude went up to \$3.50 per barrel.

All frame buildings on Grand Avenue, between First and Fourth Streets, were condemned.

Ponca City Refinery was sold to Empire Refinery Company.

The Oklahoma Legislature passed the "Bone-Dry Law." The law stipulated "it shall be unlawful for any person in this state to possess any liquor received directly or indirectly from a common or other carrier." The measure had the firm backing of the state's

Anti-Saloon League. Violation of the law constituted a misdemeanor and carried a penalty of up to \$500 in fines and six months in jail. The bill's passage marked 10 years since Oklahoma had entered the Union as a dry state.

The new Marland home was the entertainment place for many of the young people in town. The indoor swimming pool attracted George and Lydie's friends, and Mrs. Marland always kept an assortment of extra bathing suits for guests. The young men and women of that era enjoyed swimming, horseback riding and costume parties.



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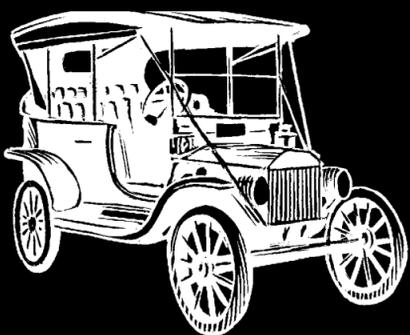
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