

## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

INDEX VOLUME XXII, *The Chronicles*

Members of the Oklahoma Historical Society and libraries receiving *The Chronicles* may secure the Index of this quarterly journal, Volume XXII, upon request addressed to the office of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Historical Building, Oklahoma City 5, Oklahoma.

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 REPRINTS OF THE HISTORY OF OKLAHOMA EMBLEMS

A limited number of reprints of the "History of Oklahoma Emblems"—State Flag, State Seal, etc.—which appeared in *The Chronicles*, XXII (Winter, 1944-45), No. 4 are available at fifteen cents per copy and may be obtained by forwarding this amount in stamps or coin to Oklahoma Historical Society, Historical Building, Oklahoma City 5, Oklahoma.

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 NEWS ITEM ON THE OPENING OF "OKLAHOMA" APRIL 22, 1889

A report of the Run into the Oklahoma Country, April 22, 1889, published on April 27, 1889, has been received from a member of the Historical Society, Dr. R. V. Steele, Penrhyn Lodge, Gloucester Gate, N.W.1, London, England. A layout of interesting scenes evidently drawn from life in the Oklahoma Country was used as an illustration with this report and appears at page 14 in this number of *The Chronicles*. The news item was as follows:<sup>1</sup>

## The Rush for the Oklahoma Territory

For many years past the land-grabbers in the United States have cast longing eyes at that district called the Indian Territory between Kansas and Texas which was reserved by the United States Government for the use of the original Redskin owners of the soil, and much trouble has been experienced in ejecting "boomers" or settlers who have illegally tried to form settlements in the coveted territory. Lately, as the Indians have so largely decreased in number, the Government decided to throw open a large portion of about 1,387,800 acres known as Oklahoma, and situated on the eastern side. It was accordingly announced that the land would become the property of the first occupiers at noon last Monday. The land as we described last week, is exceedingly fertile, and, being virgin soil, will for a year or so yield enormous returns for the most primitive tillage.

<sup>1</sup> Since this number of *The Chronicles* was sent to press, word has come to the Editorial Department reporting that this news item and accompanying illustrations (see page 14) very probably were first published in *The Graphic*, a London illustrated weekly, on April 27, 1889. Doctor Russell V. Steele served as a medical officer in the Royal Army Medical corps, World War I. The fourth in a line of doctors in his family, he is in active practice with his brother. He is interested in military history and in history of the Old West, and is a member of several state historical societies in this country. His articles have appeared in the *Journal*, Society of Army Historical Research of which he has been an active member since its inception in 1921.

Consequently, people flocked from all the surrounding States to take up their positions on the frontier ready for the rush. Trains of wagons miles long wended their way to the border until fully 50,000 people—quite 40,000 more than the land would accommodate—were assembled. A strong body of troops prevented the “boomers” from making any premature rush, and the commander, General Merritt, wisely ordered the soldiers to take possession of all their guns and pistols, so far as possible to prevent bloodshed. On Sunday night many attempts—some successful—were made to elude the vigilance of the troops, and the scene when the appointed hour of noon arrived was wildly exciting. An uninhabited region was turned in an instant into a country teeming with people. Men rode hard on the fleetest horses they could obtain, followed by all conceivable varieties of vehicles loaded with household goods, women, and children. By nightfall 10,000 settlers had secured possession of all the desirable land, and in a few hours large towns literally sprung into existence. It is said that 100,000 persons composed the invading army, the greater portion of which will have to retire disappointed. Several affrays occurred, and some little bloodshed; but, on the whole, better order prevailed than could possibly have been expected under the circumstances.

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#### “MISTLETOE LEAVES” FORERUNNER OF “THE CHRONICLES”

The first publication of the Oklahoma Historical Society, called *Mistletoe Leaves*, Volume 1, Number 1, was published at Kingfisher, Oklahoma, August 5, 1893. The masthead bore the imprint of “Oklahoma Press Association” and the names of officers as follows: President J. E. Quein, Edmond; Vice-Pres. E. E. Brown, Oklahoma City; Secretary H. C. Gilstrap, Chandler; Treasurer Effie Gilstrap, Chandler; Hist. Custodian W. P. Campbell, Kingfisher.

The Oklahoma Historical Society was organized at the annual meeting of the Oklahoma Press Association, held at Kingfisher, on May 27, 1893. Members of the association present were Frank Greer and John Golobie, *Guthrie State Capital*; W. P. Thompson, *Guthrie News*; Frank Prouty, *Guthrie*; Mr. Pitts, *Guthrie Leader*; E. E. Brown, *Oklahoma City Journal*; Frank McMasters, *Oklahoma City Gazette*; Rube Weesner, *Hennessey Democrat*; J. B. Campbell, *Hennessey Clipper*; J. E. Quein, *Edmond News*; Mr. Owen, *Edmond Sun*; H. B. Gilstrap and Miss Effie Gilstrap, *Chandler News*; E. E. Hunter and Mr. Hummer, *Okarche Times*; F. T. Cook, *Cloud Chief Sentinel*; J. L. Admire, *Kingfisher Free Press*; Frank Purcell, *Kingfisher Times*; and W. P. Campbell, Kingfisher. (Ref: Thos. H. Doyle, *History of the Oklahoma Historical Society*, 1935.)

The following item with reference to the Opening of the Cherokee Strip, which afterward took place on September 16, 1893, appeared in *Mistletoe Leaves*, Vol. I, No. 1, page 2:

“As a matter of historic interest *Mistletoe Leaves* states that citizens of Kingfisher began forming a line in front of the Kingfisher landoffice Aug. 3, to be ready to file when the Strip opens. There are now 27 in line, J. L. Shobe of Kingfisher holding first place. Same date a line was formed in front of the land office; now in line, 108, Dan Ryan and J. C. Caldwell, also of Kingfisher, first and second places.”

Tradition has it that the first grave made in the Oklahoma Country in the winter after the Opening of 1889 was covered with mistletoe since there were no other floral offerings in the new country except the green of the mistletoe with its white berries growing in great clusters on the elms along the dry creek beds and branches. All through the winter the green bank of the lonely grave could be seen far across the prairie against the sere brown grass or the melting snow of early spring.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the mistletoe became associated with sacred thoughts among the pioneer settlers in the Oklahoma Country, the Legislative Assembly adopting it as the floral emblem of the Territory of Oklahoma by an act that took effect February 11, 1893. And the Second State Legislature likewise designated the mistletoe as the floral emblem of the State of Oklahoma in 1909.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE U. S. S. *Oklahoma* AND ITS FLAG

During ceremonies at a joint session of the Oklahoma State Legislature, March 1, 1945, the flag of the U. S. S. *Oklahoma*, saved from the battleship sunk at Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, was presented to the Historical Society. State Commandant J. B. Koch, American Legion, Department of Oklahoma presented the flag to Governor Robert S. Kerr who in turn gave it over to Dr. Charles Evans, Secretary of the Oklahoma Historical Society. The historic flag and the great steering wheel of the U. S. S. *Oklahoma* are now on exhibit in the museum in the Historical Building.

The *Pearl Harbor Banner* for November 3, 1944, reported that the flag of the U. S. S. *Oklahoma* was held reverently by Legionnaires of Pearl Harbor's Post 24 just before the famous banner was folded for the last time on board the once proud battleship. Under the heading "U. S. S. *Oklahoma* Decommissioned! Flag Going to State Governor to be Flown at Proposed 'Tomb of Unknown Sailor'", the same paper stated in part:

#### "Memorial in Oklahoma Planned"

"In a simple, impressive ceremony on the stripped down deck of what was once one of the mightiest battleships of the United States Fleet, the flag of the U. S. S. *Oklahoma* was lowered for the last time on Friday, September 1st, 1944. The sounding of taps over the quiet waters of Pearl Harbor's West Loch sadly announced the decommissioning of the vessel, and shortly after the ceremony salvage workers took over the ship from its regular crew . . ."

The *Oklahoma City Times* for Tuesday, October 24, 1944 gave the following report:

<sup>2</sup>Information given by the late Dr. Joseph B. Thoburn, Oklahoma Historian, and Dan Peery, Secretary of the Historical Society, 1930-36.—Muriel H. Wright.

<sup>3</sup>Dec Paradis Jackson, *History of Oklahoma Emblems*, in *The Chronicles*, XXII (Winter, 1944-45), No. 4, pp. 458-463.

**"Battleship Oklahoma Ends Long Service as Combat Vessel"**

"Pearl Harbor, Sept. 1, 1944—(Special)—(Delayed).—The U. S. S. Oklahoma was decommissioned here today; the once mighty battleship carrying the name of the Sooner state has come to the end of her career.

"While 'Evening Colors' was played on a bugle, the Oklahoma's flag was hauled down by Machinist C. V. Stein of Norfolk, Va., a member of the crew aboard on Dec. 7, 1941. He handed the ensign to Commander Solom Isquith, captain of the Oklahoma.

"The captain turned to the officers and men assembled on the battle-scarred deck. "Today the life of the ship will come to an end—as a combat vessel—after 35 years of honorable service in all oceans of the world," he said. "We will be sorry to leave her."

"The Oklahoma, up from the bottom of Pearl Harbor but with her superstructure gone and without guns in her turrets, has been turned over to the commandant of Pearl Harbor navy yard. Future plans for the battered and buckled hull were not announced today."

The following notes giving a brief history of the U. S. S. Oklahoma were compiled by the American Legion, Department of Oklahoma, J. B. Koch, Commandant:

**U. S. Battleship Oklahoma**

The world's greatest battleship was consecrated to a "Mission of Peace" on Monday, March 23, 1914, at 12:14 o'clock, in Philadelphia, Pa.

For the first time in the history of the navies of the world, a battleship, the "Oklahoma," was christened for peace and not for war, and as the giant vessel slipped into the Delaware from the ways of the New York Ship Building Co., Bishop E. E. Hoss of Oklahoma uttered a prayer that God would hasten the coming of that golden age when all nations should be bound together in a universal brotherhood and that peace on earth and good will to men may find its fulfillment under the whole heaven.

The Oklahoma was launched in the presence of Secretary of the Navy Daniels, Navy officials, members of Governor Cruce's staff, members of the Oklahoma delegation, including Senators Owen and Gore, and many Oklahomans.

The ship was christened by Miss Lorena B. Cruce, daughter of Governor Lee Cruce, a princess of Indian blood, with the words "For the United States Government, I christen thee 'Oklahoma.'"

A silver service set, purchased with an appropriation of the State of Oklahoma of \$7,500, was presented to officers.

Cost of the battleship was approximately 15 million dollars. It had a displacement of 27,500 tons; its armament consisted of ten 14-inch guns; twenty-one 5-inch guns; four 3 pounders; two 1 pounders; two 3-inch field pieces; two machine guns; four 21-inch torpedo tubes. It was 575' in length, with a beam of 95'; portion below the water level, 28' 6". Sixty-three officers and 1009 men manned the ship, which could make 20½ knots per hour.

After service in World War I, the 28 year old dreadnaught was captured by Japanese bombs and torpedoes within 10 minutes after start of the December 7 attack. It was righted and drydocked in a brilliant engineering achievement concluded December 28, 1943. Nine months later she was formally taken out of naval service on September 1, 1944.

## IN MEMORIAM

During the year 1944, death has taken from the membership of the Oklahoma Historical Society, the following:

**LIFE MEMBERS:** Pratt Barndollar, Coffeyville, Kansas, D. Nov. 28, 1944; J. T. Griffin, Muskogee, D. September 14, 1944; Hugh Johnson, Oklahoma City, D. January 10, 1944.

**ANNUAL MEMBERS:** Professor John W. Alley, Norman, D. May 15, 1944; W. I. Ayres Shawnee, D. August 14, 1944; Albert C. Couch, Luther, D. February 23, 1944; C. E. Foley, Eufaula, D. February 26, 1944; George Riley Hall, Henryetta, D. April 13, 1944; Ellis H. Hammett, Coweta, D. April, 1944; David W. Hazen, Portland, Oregon, D. February 26, 1944; W. E. Hightower, Oklahoma City, D. February 4, 1944; Judge John H. King, Edinburg, Illinois, D. November 12, 1944; Mrs. J. A. Lawrence, Tahlequah, D. April 4, 1944; Elmer J. Lundy, Tulsa, D. April 17, 1944; Christian Madsen, Guthrie, D. January 9, 1944; Mrs. Ellen H. Miller, Bartlesville, D. November 13, 1944; Dr. W. B. Morrison, Durant, D. March 30, 1944; A. H. Murchison, Los Angeles, California, D. April 3, 1944; L. E. Phillips, Bartlesville, D. April 16, 1944; R. B. Rice, Oklahoma City, D. January 11, 1944; J. O. Tuton, Lawton, D. July 12, 1944.

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OKLAHOMA WAR MEMORIAL RECORDS

The Editorial Department wishes to express appreciation and make acknowledgments to the following for their assistance in securing data for the records of the Oklahoma War Memorial—World War II: C. S. Harrah, Acting Adjutant, American Legion of Department of Oklahoma; Eighth Naval District, Branch Office of Public Relations (by Ruth M. Tjaden, Lieutenant-jg, USNR), Federal Building, Oklahoma City; Mabel B. McClure, Librarian, Carnegie Library, Enid; Norah L. Francis, Librarian, Carnegie Library, Elk City; Adjutant General's Office, Major Charles D. Keller, Operations Officer, State of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City; Dr. Fred S. Clinton, Tulsa; Mrs. L. K. Meek, Ponca City; Miss Ella Ketcham, Oklahoma City.