

## SOME HISTORY OF GRADY COUNTY AND PARR POST OFFICE

By Hobart D. Ragland\*

Following the Civil War, Mr. Perry Hall moved to a site just north of the big springs in southern Grady County from which the town of Rush Springs gets its name. He had formerly been a freighter from Fort Arbuckle to Fort Sill. His wife's name was Patsey (Martin) Hall and they were Choctaw Indians, having come over from Mississippi when this tribe was moved to the Indian Territory.<sup>1</sup>

Their home became the stopping place for many of the early white travelers.<sup>2</sup> These travelers often came up the old Chisholm Cattle trail. This trail ran about one and one-half miles east of Rush Springs and some traces of it are still visible.<sup>3</sup>

In 1871 the old trail from Caddo to Fort Sill was cut through by the springs.<sup>4</sup> A little settlement grew up consisting of some seven or eight houses and a stage stand.<sup>5</sup> After the freight station had been moved to points in Texas,<sup>6</sup> the little settlement practically died out. By 1891 only three houses were left.<sup>7</sup>

In the meantime, another settlement was growing up about four and one-half miles southeast of present Rush Springs. It is known by old settlers here as the old Huntley Ranch and Parr post office.

Mr. Samuel Huntley the founder of the ranch which bears his name had moved there in 1878 and established the ranch the next year.<sup>8</sup> He had formerly been a freighter on the old Caddo-Fort Sill route. He had prior to this worked on the road-bed of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad which was built in the early 70's. Just before coming to the ranch place, he was in the employment of

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Patsey Blundell to author. Mrs. Blundell is the grand-daughter of Perry and Patsey Hall. She lives about six miles north of Duncan, Oklahoma.

<sup>2</sup> From the article "John C. Bradshaw" in *The Chickasha Daily Express*, September 8, 1937, Sec. A, p. 11, Col. 3f.

<sup>3</sup> H. S. Tennant, "The Two Cattle Trails," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XIV, No. 1, (March, 1936), pp. 84-123.

<sup>4</sup> From the article "W. L. McGranahan," in *The Chickasha Daily Express*, September 8, 1937, Sec. A, p. 11, Col. 1.

<sup>5</sup> W. S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1943), pp. 357.

<sup>6</sup> *Neath August Sun*, 1901, p. 24f.

<sup>7</sup> John L. Coyle to author. John L. Coyle lives in Rush Springs. He remembers coming through here in 1891. His life story is found in *The Chickasha Daily Express*, September 7, 1938, Section C., p. 12, Column 2f.

<sup>8</sup> Tennant, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

the government at Fort Sill.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Huntley built a large picket log house on the ranch which consisted of five large rooms and two halls. This house not only served as his home but it became a stage stand and freight station for the local settlers who were settling in the rich valley of Rush Creek. It was on the roads from Anadarko, Fort Sill, Gainesville, Texas, Pauls Valley, Purcell, and the Chisholm Cattle Trail.<sup>10</sup>

The name of the stage company that operated through by this station at this time was the South West Stage Company. Two of the stage drivers were Noah Lael and Samuel M. (Mack) White.<sup>11</sup> Noah Lael at an early date had received a contract to shoe all the horses of a stage company which operated from Fort Arbuckle to Fort Sill. He later married Miss Lucy Harris, a daughter of Governor Cyrus Harris. He later settled where Sulphur, Oklahoma now is and became a wealthy ranchier.<sup>12</sup> S. M. White for a time ran a sawmill and farmed. He later was appointed as tax collector for the western part of the Chickasaw Nation. He was appointed superintendent of Harley Institute in 1893 and served until its expiration when the Chickasaw Nation became a part of the state of Oklahoma. He, too, married one of Governor Cyrus Harris' daughters. Her name was Miss Melissa Harris.<sup>13</sup>

On July 11, 1883 a postoffice was established at the ranch. It was called "Parr." E. C. Van Dalsem was appointed as first postmaster.<sup>14</sup> This post office was moved to Rush Springs when the Rock Island Railroad was built through in 1892.<sup>15</sup>

It has been claimed<sup>16</sup> that Silver City was the oldest post office in Grady County, having been established on May 29, 1883.<sup>17</sup> Fred is claimed to be the second oldest post office in Grady County, having been established on January 2, 1884.<sup>18</sup> Actually Parr preceeds Fred by almost six months.

<sup>9</sup> Luther B. Hill, *A History of Oklahoma*, (The Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago, 1908), II, p. 177f.

<sup>10</sup> See the Map of Oklahoma for 1885 in the Library of the Oklahoma Historical Society; also, the United States Geological Survey, 1898.

<sup>11</sup> Article on "Ben F. Collins," in *Indian Pioneer History*, II, p. 186. (Indian Archives, The Foreman Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1937).

<sup>12</sup> Article "R. S. Dorchester" *Ibid.*, Vol. 79, pp. 378-386.

<sup>13</sup> Gideon, D. C., *Indian Territory*, pp. 260, 261, Lewis Publishing Company, New York, and Chicago, 1901.

<sup>14</sup> George H. Shirk, "First Post Offices Within the Boundaries of Oklahoma," in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XXVI, No. 1 (Summer, 1948), p. 221.

<sup>15</sup> Shirk, *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>16</sup> Dr. Anna Lewis, "Trading Post At The Crossing of The Chickasaw Trails," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XII, No. 4 (December, 1934), p. 448.

<sup>17</sup> Shirk, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.