The Annual Meeting of the Oklahoma Historical Society will be held in the Auditorium of the Historical Society in Oklahoma City at 9:30 a.m., Thursday, April 28, 1960. The five members elected to serve for the next five years on the Board of Directors of the Society will be announced at this meeting.

Meschach H. Couch Letter, 1885

The following letter was written by Meschach H. Couch to his brother-in-law, Harden Holbrook of Trap Hill, North Carolina. Captain William H. Couch, who lived in Oklahoma City in 1889 and who had been leader of the “boomers” after the death of David L. Payne, was born in December, 1850, at Trap Hill, a son of Meshach H. Couch. The original of this letter was discovered by Meschach’s great-granddaughter, Miss Edna Mae Couch of Supply, Oklahoma, on a visit to Trap Hill in 1957, where it had been in the possession of the descendants of Harden Holbrook for seventy-two years. Her brother, Charles Couch of Shawnee, presented a photostat of Meschach’s letter to the Editorial Department, of which this is a transcript with a few punctuation marks added for clearness:

Feb. 8, 1885

Dear brother: It is with pleasure that I set myself to drop you a few lines to let you now that I have not forgotten you. Though I have not had a letter from you in a long time though I think of you often. We are all well and hope that these few lines will find you all well. Times are hard here. Though stock is bearing a good price, corn is twenty five cents a bushel and plenty. Wheat sixty five, hogs four dollars gross. I think times will be better soon after the president takes his seat. A great many people are howling about the defeat of Blaine. I think it is all right for the democracy has got to be so corrupt that poor men cannot have justice and nothing but a change will open the eyes of the people. We have been combated with the government for over four years trying to settle the Oklahoma lands which does belong to the U.S. and is government lands and we as American citizens have a right to settle on as homestead or preemption. but we have been rejected by the militia, tied and hauled out and turned over to the U.S. depity marshal and reign before the U.S. court and tried and decided that it is government land and no crime to go there. Yet the president of U.S. and the secatary of the intearier and the secatary of war uses the army to put us out, leaves the cattle kings and their plauere (pleasure) to hold the oklahoma country for gaising purposes. They hold their cattle there. I think time has come when we ought to all sheare alike. If we atte be brought out, I think they ought
OFFICIAL BALLOT

OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In accordance with Section 3 of Article IV of the Constitution of the Oklahoma Historical Society the following are submitted as nominations for Directors of the Society with term expiring January, 1965:

☐ N. B. Johnson
☐ Baxter Taylor
☐ Robert A. Hefner
☐ Fisher Muldrow
☐ J. Lloyd Jones*

(Vote for 5)

*Nominated by the Board of Directors by special action to replace Judge Edgar S. Vaught, who died in December, 1959.

NOTE: No additional nominations were received from the membership in accordance with Article IV of the Constitution.

This ballot submitted through The Chronicles of Oklahoma in accordance with action of the Executive Committee on October 15, 1959, as provided by the Constitution:

Five members of the Board of Directors shall be elected annually by ballot by members of the Society in the following manner: Prior to the tenth day of January of each year the Administrative Secretary and the Treasurer shall prepare ballots upon which appear the names of the five directors whose terms will expire that year, unless otherwise directed in writing by such director, and the names of such other eligible persons who may be nominated thereto in writing filed with the Administrative Secretary by the first day of such year by twenty-five members who at said time are entitled to vote at the annual meeting. Such ballot shall be mailed by the Administrative Secretary to each member of the Society entitled to vote at the annual meeting, who shall mark such ballot for not more than five, and shall then return same in a double envelope, the inner one being a plain envelope upon which the member must sign his name. Upon prior direction of the Executive Committee, in lieu thereof, such ballot may be printed in The Chronicles of Oklahoma, in which event the Executive Committee will provide adequate instructions for the return and protection of the ballot. On the fourth Tuesday in January, or as soon thereafter as possible, the President, a Vice-President, the Administrative Secretary, and the Treasurer shall meet and open the ballots, counting the same, and retaining the envelopes and ballots in a safe place until the next regular quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors, when such ballots, together with the envelopes and the results of the canvass shall be delivered by proper certificate to the Board. After being satisfied as to the correctness of the canvass, the Board of Directors shall declare the five receiving the highest vote as directors of the Society.

This ballot shall be returned within 10 days after receipt in an envelope marked "Ballot" and with the member's name on the face of the envelope.
to bring out the cattle kings. If I am not aloud to settle on one hundred and sixty acres, I dont think that any other livin man ought to be aloud his thousands of acres, no not even president of the U.S. this land nowned (now owned?) as the oklahoma land is not claimed by any tribe of Indians nor do not object to the settlement there by the whites. It is nothing else but the cattle kings and their money paid to the officials at washington that ceeps us out. I now say that we will start from arkansas city the fifth of March with ninety days rashiens, each beleaving that the president will not reject us from the promas land any more and that we will be aloud to hold our claims under the squaters right as law abiding citizens. We believe that on the fifth day of march we will have promptly on hand from five to ten thousand people to go with us to oklahoma country. Lots of people are going to take their women and children beleaving that they will not be molested any more. I have located my clame on the north canadian. also all the boys that is old enough have located their clames there. the north Canadian is a very fine stream. the bed of the river is about thirty yards wide, the banks from ten to thirty feet high so you can see that it cannot over flow its bottoms. the valey is from two to three miles wide, mostly parrier as level as the floor. no rock in the bottom, some in the hills.

Now, harden I will give the description of the oklahoma country. There is a strip called the cherocees strip lays south of the Kansas line fifty miles wide between Kansas and the oklahoma lands running east and west. The oklahoma north line is about one hundred miles due south of here. The first stream is about one hundred miles due south of here. The first stream of much size is the simerone river which runs east and a little south, which has many tributaries furnishes plenty of water for stock. the simerone is salt water which is fine for stock. The next stream south is deep fork twenty five miles. The water is free stone water. The next stream south is the north canadian. this is soft water ore free stone water. this is the pertiest stream I ever saw. the bed of the river is sandy and there is no edy water in the stream unless there is a drift of logs to back the water. the water is from two to three feet deep in a comon time, runs purty swift. The next stream south is the south canadian. the bed of the river is sandy, the bank is low, dont afford (as-mu) any more than the north canadian. The next stream south is the washita is the south boundary of the oklahoma lands. the most of these valies along the streams are parries. Along the banks of the streams are timber and back of the slopes of the hills is timber. A great deal of the up-land is parrier, fine farming long. this country is a fine countries for farming pernises. as fine a stock country as I ever saw Kentucky not excepted. The grass grows fine among the timber also on the parries. these cattle men hold their stock there through the winter, they live on the grass without any hay or seed prepared from them. It is consider-able warmer there that it is here. after reading my letter I see that I have not said any thing about the valies along the streams. They are as fine farming land as a man can wish. we have taken seven clames, a hundred and sixty acres each, all in Canadian bottom. I have been writing to your son James. we have been corresponding some. he talks like he was comming here and going with us to oklahoma. I think it is the best thing he can do. I expect him here in a few days. If you have any noting of ever coming west to settle this the best opertunity you will ever have. I would be glad have you to come and go with us and any others who wish to go. I now that it looks like a long ways to go on and unsertainty yet I believe we will be able to get there this spring. I consider when ever the government exknowledge our (sentiment) settlement we each will be three thousand dollars ahead. The reason why I say this whin I came here taken this clame I give three hundred dollars for it and now I can get six or
eight thousand dollars. I certainly can do as well in Oklahoma, so can you or any one else that goes there and takes a first choice claim, so will close from M. H. Couch.

to H. Holbrook and family

Note:

(A sentence inverted at top of page 8 in the original letter) please show this to your friends. I would be glad to have you come & go with us.

GEOLICAL REPORT ON THE HEAVENER "RUNE STONE"

A report from William E. Ham, Associate Director of the Oklahoma Geological Survey, on his visit to the Heavener "Rune Stone," in LeFlore County, is given in the following letter to Mrs. J. Ray Farley who has devoted several years to solving the mystery of the great rock and its inscription:

State of Oklahoma
OKLAHOMA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Norman, Oklahoma
January 18, 1960

Mrs. J. Ray Farley
Heavener, Oklahoma
Dear Mrs. Farley:

The pictures I took of the inscribed stone at the time of my visit early in November were received from the processor last week. Two color transparencies are inclosed which you may keep. One of them shows the full line of characters, and the other shows a close view of the first five. It was a cloudy day when I took them, but by following your suggestion of marking in the grooves with chalk I was able to get a fairly good transparency.

I was not able to expose all the film on this roll until the middle of December, and with the Christmas rush the processing plant in Dallas could not give good service.

The observations I made and discussed with you in Heavener, you will understand, are those of a geologist rather than of an archeologist; and it is clear that at the present time there is no geological basis for establishing the date, even approximately, at which the inscriptions were made.

The inscribed stone is on the southwest face of Poteau Mountain about 1 1/2 miles northeast of Heavener, in the SE 1/4 SE 1/4 sec. 17, T. 5 N., R. 26 E. This stone is not "in place" but it is a detached part of a bed of sandstone 15 feet thick that crops out just above it as a conspicuous bench along the side of the mountain.

By field examination it can be readily shown that a pie-shaped block of the bedrock has fallen away from the face, tipping forward and at the same time separating into layered slabs. Each layer slid over the one below it, somewhat like the cards of a tipped-over deck. The top layer, about 16 inches thick, moved the greatest distance away from the face and it also moved the greatest distance down the slope, with
the result that it came to rest on end in an upright position where it lodged in rocky soil. This top layer is the slab on which the characters are inscribed.

The stone is a light brownish-gray fine-grained sandstone of the McAlester formation, Pennsylvanian in age. It is firmly indurated with silica cement, and is so tough that it can be broken by a geologists' hammer only with considerable difficulty. The characters were therefore cut into this stone with a sharp tool, such as a metal chisel or a sharp-edged flint striking stone.

Once engraved, the characters might remain virtually unchanged for hundreds of years, for the well-cemented sandstone rock is weathered slowly and is dissolved hardly at all by chemical action. Judging from this evidence, it is not impossible that the cutting was done a thousand years ago.

The line of characters is about five feet above the ground, approximately at the proper height to have been cut by a man standing upright. It therefore seems reasonable that the inscription was made after the sandstone slab had moved to its present position. There is no geological basis for estimating how long ago this happened, as it could be less than 100 or more than 5,000 years ago. It certainly happened more than 75 years ago, for an oak tree estimated by Mr. Paul Timko to be that old is growing among the slabs of the detached block, between the inscribed stone and the cliff face. The stones could not have moved around the tree; instead it is clear that the tree has grown there after the stones had fallen.

There is hardly any more that I can do to help in solving the mystery. Unfortunately no decisive conclusions were reached, but the geological observations at least do not conflict with the concept that the inscriptions were made in antiquity.

Sincerely yours,
OKLAHOMA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
/\/William E. Ham, Associate Director

WEH:ze
cc: George H. Shirk

THE GRANT FOREMAN PAPERS: INDIAN AND PIONEER HISTORY

The work of gathering and compiling the data in 112 volumes, now well known as "Indian-Pioneer History" in the Oklahoma Historical Society, is itself a part of history of W.P.A. days of nearly a quarter of a century ago. Mrs. Elizabeth Williams Cosgrove, of Muskogee, who served as an editor on W.P.A. Project 131 in Oklahoma, has contributed the following interesting notes on this work:

Indian-Pioneer History Project, W.P.A. 131

In December 1936, W.P.A. project was set up in Muskogee under the direction of Oklahoma's distinguished historian, the late Dr. Grant Forman. It was sponsored by the Oklahoma State Historical Society, the University of Oklahoma and the Works Progress Administration. The working force comprised the supervisor, two editors, forty four typists and the field workers. Only the supervisor and the two editors
Field-workers, men and women who were paid small salaries were found in almost every county in Oklahoma. These field-workers were instructed to locate as many men and women, Indian, white, negro, mixed-blood or foreign born, as possible, who had lived in the Indian Territory during or prior to the year 1900 and to obtain from each, reports of his or her early-day experiences. In cases where the Indian or pioneer suffered from blindness or because of the infirmities of age, was unable to write, his or her narrative was dictated to the field-worker.

It is impossible to imagine a more heterogeneous group of people than those interviewed. There were cowboys, cooks, wranglers who had driven trail herds from Texas to Montana, from Camp Supply, Caldwell and the Kiowa Agency to market. Stage-drivers along the old Texas Trail as well as those who drove from Boggy Depot to Cherokee Town and White Bead Hill. Teachers, carpenters, farmers, students from old government and tribal schools and seminaries gladly told their stories as did missionaries among the Five Civilized Tribes. Indians on reservations, travelling salesmen, representatives of early-day insurance companies, U. S. marshals, railroad detectives, Light-Horsemen, Indian police, faro table operators, saloon-keepers, whisky-peddlers and pioneer mine operators were all interviewed. The stories of town-site promoters, founders of now almost forgotten ghost-towns, of "boomers" who ousted "sooners" and of "nesters" as the quiet settlers were called, were recorded. The Grant Foreman Papers contain also stories of merchants, doctors, ministers and civic leaders who grew up with the towns which they helped to found. The Indians told of the details of early-day life, customs and traditions while the negroes contributed a priceless collection of folk-lore and legend.

These written interviews were sent to the Muskogee office by the field-workers where they were edited, typewritten and bound and, on July 29, 1937, by order of their sponsors, were named the "Grant Foreman Papers." Of the two sets of the Grant Foreman Papers, each set containing 112 volumes, one is in the library of the University of Oklahoma in Norman, the other in the Indian Archives of the State Historical Building in Oklahoma City, where, according to the Archivist, Mrs. Rella Looney, these books are in almost constant demand not only by students and researchers but by the police, F.B.I. and other organizations. Each volume contains 500 pages with about 100 interviews in each book making a total of more than 45,000 pages and 11,000 interviews. Although it was realized that the surface of Oklahoma's "unpublished history" had barely been scratched, the money allotted for this project was exhausted and the work closed on January 24, 1938. It was on that date that the supervisor made his final report to the Oklahoma Historical Society.

In his foreword to these papers, Dr. Foreman writes:

"The field workers of the Indian-Pioneer History Project were instructed to record interviews as nearly as possible in the language of the persons interviewed so as to preserve the atmosphere and verities of the subject. . . . It is only of late years that the people of Oklahoma are beginning to realize the color, life, romance and tradition which have gone into the making of the history of our state. The saga of Oklahoma is like a great tapestry into which are woven threads of the lives of men and women of many varying races and creeds. The Indian has left in Oklahoma larcenies of legend and phantasy as well as an abundance of history. From the pioneers whose lives are buldled into the very bone and sinew of the state, we have priceless records of times when a one-room box house was considered a palatial abode and when
most of the dauntless men, women and children who came to early-day
Indian Territory lived with fleas, pole-cats and rattlesnakes in caves
dug out of the earth. .... There may be occasional mistakes of his-
torical fact in these papers. These stories are intended to preserve
simply the recollections of old-timers, both Indians and Whites and
such accounts are necessarily subject to the vagaries and limitations of
the human mind but the great preponderance of the stories in these
volumes are correct. In the aggregate, they present an accurate cross
section of life in the Indian Territory, absolutely authentic in its broad,
historical application. The pictures of pioneer living, especially, given
in these interviews may be relied upon."

Here are some verbatim excerpts from the "Grant Foreman Pa-
ers":

"I walked most of the way from Georgia and helped to drive a
herd of cattle. When we reached the Territory we made us a dugout
and covered it with cottonwood lumber and it warped and my laud!
How it did leak!

"Big prairie fires would break out and we would have to get on
horses and drive the stock all into the corral to keep them from burn-
ing to death.

"When we would go to herd the cattle, we would always carry
a big stick with us as the rattlesnakes were so thick that we would
kill four or five big ones every morning.

"My father was dead and although I was a girl, I had to work
like a man."

"I have been to many an Indian dance; they would beat the
drums just a whing, whang, whing all night long and then, they would
give the warhoop."

"The Indians were our friends; the white men didn't treat them
right. The Whites stole the Indians' wood and posts. Several times
my mother traded a quilt for a load of wood for we did not steal
from the Indians. We loved them."

"I have seen a string of Indians on horseback nearly a mile long
passing our house. I have lived beside Indians and beside white men
married to Indian women and I have never had better neighbors."

"I swam Red River with my year-old baby in my arms. I had a
few safety matches and I struck them in my hair and when I reached
land, I laid the matches out in the sun and they dried out all right.

"At Tecumseh, the men started a newspaper but the women got
hold of all the news first and spread it and, pretty soon, the newspaper
went broke and stopped."

"It was Memorial Day and we wanted to have us a celebration
but no one had died and we didn't have no graveyard so we went
down to the creek and had us a fish-fry."

"My husband left and departed for parts unknown. This gave
me a widow's claim to the land, me and my seven children. Mary was
the oldest, she was thirteen and I would leave her at home with the
others and, with my Sammy, eleven, I would start out for El Reno,
sixty miles away. There was no bridge over the South Canadian
River and the sand in it was 'quicky' and, many times, Sam and me
have camped out in bad snow-storms on the open prairie, waiting for
the South Canadian to go down so's we could cross."
"My wife and I didn't mind the dust nor the heat nor the hardships. We followed runs and openings just like children going to circuses."

"In the Run of 1880, I seen an old man and old woman ridin' in a cart to a dog and a goat."

"There were no schools near our claim for about twelve years after we came to the Territory."

"We organized a Sunday School and church in the blacksmith's shop in Arcadia and the Baptist preacher came from Edmond once a month to preach us a sermon. He used the anvil in the blacksmith's shop to lay his Bible on."

"Every summer we would go to camp-meetings where we would all spread our dinners together and have a wonderful time, talking over our trials and hardships and when the preacher would get us all stirred up with one of his 'powerful' sermons, if we shouted our sunbonnets off and our long hair down, it was nobody's business but our own."

"The greatest amusement for all the young folks of the community was Singing School. We would gather at the different houses and sing of a night and about twice each month, the neighbors would hold 'Literaries' and spelling bees and box socials."

"In those days, it was very usual to bring calves, pigs and chickens into the dugouts to keep them from freezing to death just as old Noah did in the ark."

"Our oldest boy, nine years old was taken very sick and we got Dr. Davis, an old pioneer doctor living in a dugout on Elk Creek. He came and said that Bobby had appendicitis but that it was too late to operate."

"So Bobby died."

"We took some of the lumber that was for our new box-house and made him a coffin and covered it with black calico. Then we buried Bobby in the Aeeral graveyard."

"Here is an old Indian; let him speak."

"The first man to be created was a Redman. Adam means 'Red' but when Noah built the ark, there was no room for the Redman and, as there was no water above the clouds, the Redman went to the high peaks above the clouds and there he stayed until after the flood was over so that the Redman was here before the flood as well as the white man and, if the white man wonders where the Indian came from, the Indian wonders the same thing about the white man."

**Miscellaneous Notes**

Carolyn Thomas Foreman (Mrs. Grant Foreman) of Muskogee received the high honor of a Distinguished Service Award from the American Association for State and Local History in the summer of 1959, for her work in Oklahoma and American Indian history. Mrs. Foreman has given many years to research and writing that has appeared in publications over the country, her widely known books including *Oklahoma Imprints* and *Indians Abroad*. She is well known among readers of *The*
Chronicles of Oklahoma, in which more articles have been contributed by her than by any other one writer to this date, on a diversity of Oklahoma historical subjects—military men, government officials, Indians, pioneers, early towns and other places.

The Oklahoma History Section of the Oklahoma Education Convention met in the Auditorium of the Historical Building on October 23, 1959, with Dr. V. R. Easterling, presiding. Editor R. G. Miller of the "Smoking Room" column, The Daily Oklahoman and Oklahoma City Times, was the principal speaker giving an informative talk on points of interest in Oklahoma history and the present day, and stressing the promotion of state pride in its history, its achievements and its development. Mr. Don Odum of Guthrie told briefly of his efforts in the public schools for a better knowledge and respect for the Oklahoma State Flag and other emblems. Mrs. Mary McCain, Director of the Oklahoma history programs at the Educational Broadcasting Center at Central High School, Oklahoma City, told of the programs given during the week throughout the school year, urging Oklahoma history teachers to take advantage of this opportunity for their classes by tuning in on the KETA-TV history programs over Channel 13.

The Oklahoma Memorial Association met in the Auditorium of the Historical Society Building, the morning of November 16, 1959, with the Hon. Wm. J. Holloway presiding in the Memorial Program for those former honorees of the "Oklahoma Hall of Fame," who had died during the year since November 16, 1958. Dr. Charles Evans, Secretary Emeritus of the Oklahoma Historical Society, gave the address commemorating these honored dead: Judge Frank Bailey, Chickasha; Dr. W. G. Beasley, Ardmore; Mr. C. B. Goddard, Ardmore; Maj. Gen. Wm. S. Key and Hon. Luther Harrison, Oklahoma City.

The Oklahoma Historical Society held its first open house in many years in the Historical Building on Sunday afternoon, November 22, 1959, with Mr. C. Harry Sacher serving as general chairman and co-ordinator for the Committee in Charge of the event. It was co-sponsored by the Committee on Education of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce and the Oklahoma City Federation of Women's Clubs, Mr. David Bridges and Mrs. George E. Calvert serving as chairmen, respectively, for the sponsoring agencies. The public was invited, and the event was outstanding in the history of the Society with more than 5,000 visitors in attendance. Lines stood three deep most of the afternoon viewing the rare historical exhibits of the museum on the fourth floor and the fine collections shown in the corridors and the Memorial Rooms elsewhere in the Historical Building. Beautiful organ music was provided by a gifted musician. In the gallery on the third floor, punch was served from the 12-gallon
bowl of the handsome silver service set from the historic battleship U.S.S. Oklahoma. Lieut. Gov. George Nigh was ex-officio host for the Committee in charge. Other hosts included Mayor and Mrs. James H. Norick, Dr. and Mrs. Melvin Barnes, Mr. and Mrs. Donald S. Kennedy, all of Oklahoma City; besides Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society who were present—George H. Shirk, President, and Justice and Mrs. N. B. Johnson, Judge and Mrs. J. G. Clift, Mr. and Mrs. Exall English, Mr. and Mrs. Milt Phillips, Dr. Emma Estill-harbour, Mr. and Mrs. Joe W. Curtis, Mrs. George Bowman, Dr. and Mrs. L. Wayne Johnson and Miss Genevieve Seger.

The Association of College History Professors in their Twelfth Annual Meeting convened in Oklahoma City, with Oklahoma City University as host, December 4-5, 1959. The Program on December 5 was given in the Auditorium of the Historical Building, with Dr. Rob Roy MacGregor, presiding and Mr. Elmer L. Fraker extending the Welcome to a large crowd of history professors attending from Oklahoma colleges and universities. The discussion topic for the morning session was "Problems of National, Regional and Local Archives," Dr. Joseph Stanley Clark serving as moderator. Participants in the discussion were Phillip C. Curtis, Director of Harry Truman Library, Independence, Missouri, "The National and Regional—A Review by means of Film and Discussion"; Mrs. Hope Holway, Archivist on "The Gilcrease and Alice Robertson Collections," Tulsa; Ralph Hudson, State Librarian, on "Resources of the State Library", Muriel H. Wright, Editor of The Chronicles of Oklahoma, on "Archival Sources of the Oklahoma Historical Society" in general; Mrs. Rella Looney, Archivist of Indian Archives, "Sources in the Indian Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society."

The Chronicles of Oklahoma, quarterly magazine of the Oklahoma Historical Society, was honored with the "Distinguished Service Award" given by the Oklahoma State Writers, Inc., on November 14, 1959, bearing the signature of Henry Carlton Jones, President of the Writers organization, by approval of its Board of Directors. The beautiful certificate of this Award states that it is presented "in appreciation of distinguished and significant service to Oklahoma writers, by providing facilities for their works, and in furthering, fostering and encouraging the writers of Oklahoma." Others in the state receiving the "Distinguished Service Award" from Oklahoma State Writers on the same day were the University of Oklahoma Press, publisher for over thirty years of many beautiful books on the history of the Southwest; Orbit, Sunday magazine of The Daily Oklahoman; and Oklahoma Today, the handsomely illustrated, quarterly magazine published under the auspices of the State Planning and Resources Board at the State Capitol.