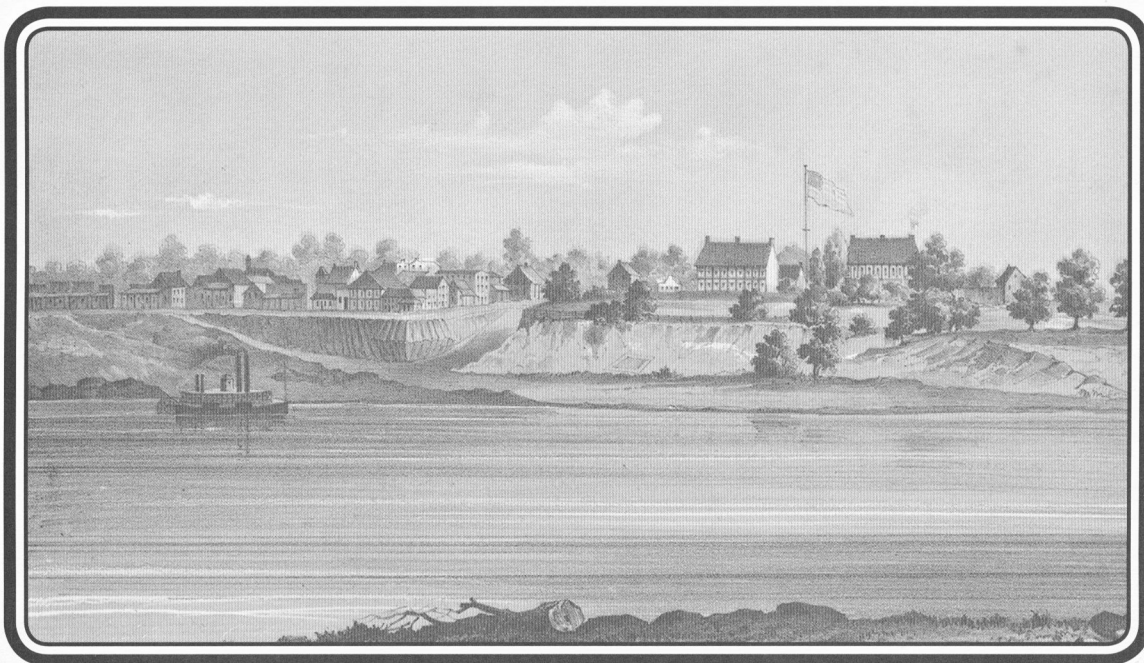
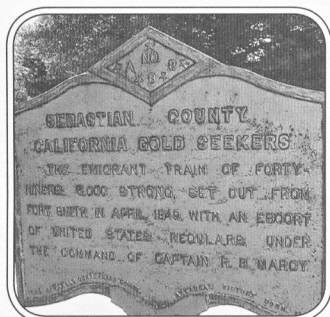


The JOURNAL



Marcy's Prairie Travelers

McClellan, Shumard, Whipple, and Mollhausen



Fort Smith and the Gold Rush

The Impact of the 1849 Gold Seekers on the City



A Biography of Earl Farnsworth

A Daughter Remembers

Vol. 34, No. 2, SEPTEMBER 2010



MISSION: The mission of the Fort Smith Historical Society, Inc., founded in 1977, is to publish *The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society* and through The Journal and other activities to locate, identify and collect historical data; to publish source materials and historical articles, all pertaining to the City of Fort Smith and the immediate surrounding area. Preservation of Fort Smith history is our primary mission and to this end, we always welcome the loan of Fort Smith historical material and will return it promptly.

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Jerry Akins	thepoet13@cox.net
Joe Wasson	joe@efortsmith.com
Billy Higgins	bandphig@earthlink.net

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Our website is updated regularly and contains information on the Organization, Membership, Back issues: How to order, Tables of Contents of Back Issues, Contacts & Links, Archives, and a Gallery of Historic Images: Views of old Fort Smith.

See the Google group, Fort Smith History Forum, for a bulletin board of current research questions. Readers may post their own research questions or topics in hopes of furthering their own research.

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The JOURNAL

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COVER: **Main photo:** Fort Smith from the west bank of the Arkansas River, as painted by artist Heinrich Baldwin Mollhausen in July 1853. Mollhausen accompanied A. W. Whipple on an 1853-54 survey of a Fort Smith-to-California railroad route. Image courtesy of the Research Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Lower right photo: The Gold Rush marker on the lawn of the Sebastian County Courthouse in Fort Smith. Photo courtesy of Billy Higgins.

Lower left photo: Earl Farnsworth, in front in the striped shirt, and Boy Scouts pose in about 1947 in front of a bus in the vacant lot on Fifteenth and G streets before the group leaves for Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. Also in the photo are L. M. R. "Mac" Rogers, front far right, and Bill McLachlan, on bus, far left. Photo courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson.

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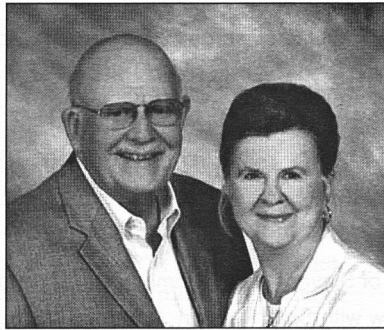
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News & Opportunities

Fort Smith Historical Society's Griffin Theater Opening Soon

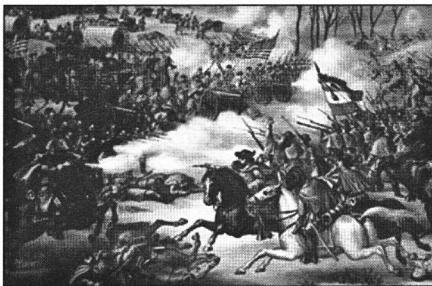
The Griffin Charitable Organization has awarded the Fort Smith Historical Society a \$10,000 donation for use in establishing a theater in the Darby Room at the Fort Smith Museum of History. This theater will be used by both the museum and the Fort Smith Historical Society to present videos of interviews with World War II veterans and other historically important subjects. The Griffin Theater, the culmination of a dream for participants in the oral history project, is expected to be completed before the end of the year. With more than 200 interviews recorded in the last five years, there is a wealth of material for the public to view. It is hoped this theater will be used by museum visitors, students, researchers, and anyone interested in the unwritten stories of World War II.



**RICHARD B.
AND JAUNICE GRIFFIN**

Third Annual Fort Smith History Conference

'The Civil War in Arkansas: Voices from the Dust'
January 28-29, 2011



"...A hurricane of fire..."

— **Mark Twain** on the Civil War

A Call for Papers and Presentations

"The Civil War in Arkansas: Voices from the Dust"

Mark Your Calendars

**Fort Smith Historical Society
Quarterly Meeting**

**Wednesday, October 13, 2010, 6:00 p.m.
Conference Room, Fort Smith Public Library
3201 Rogers Avenue**

Society Previews Plans for the History of Black Churches in Fort Smith

The guest speaker will be Kris Katrosh, director of the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Oral and Visual History at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, who will give an overview of the Pryor Center's efforts to collect, preserve, and share the oral and visual history of Arkansas.

Also on the program is a discussion of Fort Smith Historical Society's latest project, to record through oral interviews the history of the Black churches in Fort Smith. We will record and preserve on tape the memories of community members about their family life and community involvement through their churches. Researchers will be invited to provide the written history of their churches. We are asking for volunteers to help with interviews, organizing research, and contacting interviewees. Volunteers will be trained in interviewing techniques and in the use of the recording equipment with help from the Pryor Center staff. George McGill will act a contact person for this project, and will provide support for the interview project. Anyone interested participating is invited to contact us at info@FortSmithHistory.org or by calling 479-646-9140.

**All members and guests are encouraged to attend.
Visitors are welcomed.**

will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the war and its repercussions in Arkansas. A wide range of topics will be covered, including effects on civilian life; military involvement, both Union and Confederate; involvement of Native Americans, Freedmen, and slaves; individual military campaigns; bushwhackers; and the effects on Arkansas then and now. We are requesting submissions of scholarly papers and presentations such as music and living history. The conference is open to students, faculty, administrators, independent history scholars, and living history re-

enactors. This program is co-sponsored by the Fort Smith Heritage Foundation, History Tellers, Fort Smith Historical Society, Fort Smith Museum of History, the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the UAFS History Department.

Send abstracts to:

History Conference Submissions
Attn: Martha Siler
514 North Sixth Street
Fort Smith, AR 72901

Dates to remember:

- ❖ Abstracts for papers and presentations due: December 1, 2010
- ❖ Notice of Acceptance: December 5, 2010
- ❖ Manuscript for review due: January 10, 2011

Watch our website for more details and schedule:
www.claytonhouse.org



Photo courtesy of Fort Smith Historical Press

ANGUS MCLEOD HOUSE, 912 North Thirteenth Street, Fort Smith, Arkansas, burned to the ground on July 7, 2010.

Historical Home Lost In Blaze

Fort Smith lost another of its jewels in the early morning of July 7, 2010, when the historic Angus McLeod home was destroyed by fire. Early in the twentieth century, Angus McLeod, owner of the Fort Smith Contracting Company, supplied railroad ties for the Fort Smith and Western Railroad and the Midland Valley Company. He and his wife, Elizabeth McLeod, purchased lots for construction of their new home in 1904. McCleod used many imported materials in the construction of the Neo-Classical dwelling, which was completed in 1905 and was featured in the 1982 movie "The Blue and the Gray,"

The cost of the home's construction and imported materials is thought to have exceeded the 1914 sale

price of \$102,500. Shortly after completion the home was sold to Ben Wolf, and the Wolf-Pollack family owned the home until 1958, when it was sold to Mrs. Virginia Rush. It has since had several more owners, with the last being Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Hearne. The Angus McLeod house was listed on the Register of Historic Places in 1978

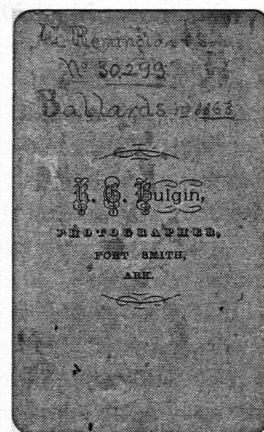


Photo courtesy of Linda Seamans McGahan

(RIGHT) John Childers in chains after his arrest.
(ABOVE) Back of Childers photo.

Photo of John Childers Discovered

The first of eighty-six men
to be executed by the U. S. District Court
for the Western District of Arkansas at Fort Smith
August 15, 1873

Mrs. Linda Seamans McGahan received this photo after her father's death and has given permission for its use to the Fort Smith Historical Society in her father's memory. Her father, Joe Seamans, worked for the Sebastian County Road Department in waste management, driving a truck throughout the county for the weekly trash pick-up. People often put items out that might be of use to others. Seamans would often pick these up and put them in the cab of his truck, as he always knew someone in need. McGahan feels sure the photograph of John Childers came to her father in a cigar box or was in a box set to the side of the road. He put the photograph with the family photos where it was forgotten for years.

When her father died, McGahan's mother gave her the family photographs, which she then put away until her retirement. While looking through the old photos recently, she saw the photograph of the man in chains sitting in a chair. The chains caught her attention, then the date. She researched the name of the man, learning who he was and the lawlessness he stood for. When contacted by Joe Wasson of the Fort Smith Historical Society, McGahan

agreed to allow the use of the Childers photograph for historical purposes. How proud this would have made Joe Seamans.

History of John Childers

John Childers, born in the Cherokee Nation in 1848, fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Returning to the Nation in 1865, he took up with seven other men whose business it was to steal, mostly horses of the Osage, and occasionally to kill men.

On October 24, 1870, near Caney Creek in the Cherokee Nation, Childers murdered Reyburn Wedding with an axe to the back of his head for his horse and property and because he was a "Kansas man." In December 1870, Childers was arrested by Deputy Joseph Vannoy near present day Bixby, Oklahoma, but escaped after they had traveled about ten miles. On January 26, 1871, he was arrested again by Vannoy and taken to Van Buren, where the U. S. Court was then located. On May 3, 1871, his birthday, he escaped again. For the third time Vannoy captured Childers. This time he was held for trial and execution at Fort Smith, where the U. S. Court had moved in 1872. John Childers was executed August 15, 1873.



Photos courtesy of the Fort Smith National Historic Site

(ABOVE) Members of Girls, Inc. are shown in the garden they created. (RIGHT) Alice, Girls, Inc. participant, with Keri Powers.



Girls, Inc. Wins First Bloom Youth Garden Design Contest

Local Group Wins National Recognition and Trip to Washington, D.C.

In June 2010, a garden created and maintained by members of Girls, Inc., was named a national winner in the 2010 First Bloom Youth Garden Design Contest. Located

near the old commissary building at the Fort Smith National Historic Site, the period garden was the only entry from Arkansas and was one of twenty-six semifinalists. The top prize was an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., in July for six of the girls and the First Bloom coordinator, Park Ranger Keri Powers.

In 2009, the Fort Smith National Historic Site received a National Park Foundation grant of \$13,000, which provided funding for the establishment of the Officer's Wife's Garden or the Officer's Family Garden. The Fort Smith Historic Site's Heritage Garden was one of twenty-six National Park gardens to receive the grant the first year it was open to proposals. Powers and Tena Coker of Girls, Inc. decided to make it a summer program starting in May 2009. The Heritage Garden is a representation of an 1860s Officer's Wife's Garden during the second Fort era. The garden is behind the officers quarters, where many of the officers' wives would have had their gardens growing vegetables, flowers and herbs. Everything in the garden served a purpose during the Victorian age; a garden was an outdoor parlor, a place to educate and to gossip.

Girls, Inc. participants ranged from five to fourteen years of age, with an average of twenty to thirty girls participating in the program. No power tools were used, only period tools. Seeds planted were from the 1860s or earlier. The only modern tool used was the water hose used by Powers when the girls were not present; the girls used watering cans. They learned how to play with tops and to make cats cradles, buzz saws, and church dolls. History lessons provided the girls the story of Judge Isaac C. Parker and the history of Fort Smith. The girls were taught gardening, sewing, quilting, and how to act like young ladies. Plans for the future include cooking in Dutch ovens and canning, giving the girls skills that will be useful to them throughout their lives.

While in Washington during the first week in July, the girls met with Senator Mark Pryor, Senator Blanche Lincoln, Congressman John Boozman, and National Park Service Deputy Director Mickey Fearn. They were invited to the White House, where they watched President Barack Obama walk across the White House lawn and board Marine One. Pryor, Lincoln, and Boozman promised to visit the girls and their Heritage Garden.

First Bloom promotes urban, underserved youth by having native or heirloom gardens planted in the National Parks. The guidelines are to teach urban, underserved youth about our National Parks through gardening. This helps promote stewardship, teaches youth about their heritage, and gives them an understanding of where their food comes from. First Bloom is about building the future stewards of our National Parks.

See www.FirstBloom.org for more information on the program.

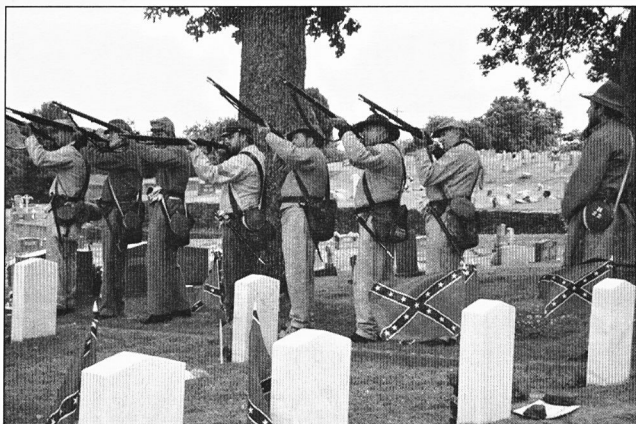


Photo courtesy of Jerry Akins

LAST SALUTE

Confederate Rest Memorial Service Held at Historic Oak Cemetery

On Sunday, May 16, 2010, members of the Varina Jefferson Davis Chapter No. 252, United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), and members of the General R. M. Gano Camp No. 561, Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), presented a memorial service in remembrance of the Confederate veterans buried in Confederate Rest at Oak Cemetery in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Guest speaker Judge Jim Spears gave a short memorial presentation.

Barbara Coleman, UDC registrar, became interested in the Confederate Rest lot at Oak Cemetery when she found the original deed for the property among old UDC records. The plot was in disarray, and only one of the graves of Southern veterans in the plot was marked. Coleman researched the veterans' records and completed the applications for the official markers, a two-year process. Sue Clark, author of *Oak Cemetery, Fort Smith, Arkansas, Fort Smith's City Cemetery*, assisted with the research. Coleman coordinated the work of members of the UDC and SCV, as well as the Oak Cemetery staff, in setting the grave markers and getting Confederate Rest ready for the ceremony. Richard Lewis, sexton of Oak Cemetery, was instrumental in seeing that the markers were received, stored, and placed correctly. Friends of Oak Cemetery donated funds to pay for restoring the coping at the side of Confederate Rest and two non-military markers, those of Mrs. Josephine Foster and Noah Belote. Members of the SCV and their families, along with UDC members and families helped set the stones.

Those buried in Confederate Rest receiving markers:

- ❖ George W. Cox, Company H, Fourth Alabama Infantry
- ❖ Christopher Cook, Company G, Second Kentucky Cavalry, (had a marker)
- ❖ John Foster, Company H, Martin's Texas Cavalry
- ❖ Josephine Foster, wife of John Foster, buried next to husband, (only woman buried in Confederate Rest)
- ❖ John R. Sy/See, Company G, Twentieth

Arkansas Infantry

- ❖ Thomas Moore, Company C, Dobbins First

Arkansas Cavalry

- ❖ Wiley W. Early, Company H, Forty-third Battalion Virginia Cavalry

- ❖ John Story, Company E, Second Missouri Infantry

❖ Thomas B Hays, Company B, Harrell's Arkansas Cavalry

❖ William J. Ming, Company B, Fifteenth Alabama Infantry

❖ Samuel Chase, Company C, Davenport's Battalion Twelfth Mississippi Cavalry

❖ Isaac M. Davis, Company A, Eighth Battalion, Georgia Infantry

❖ James McDaniel, Company C, Second Mississippi Infantry

❖ Benjamin Stephens, Company F, Fifth Georgia Reserves

❖ James B. Long, Company C, Thirty-seventh Tennessee Infantry

❖ Samuel E. Walker, Company D, Fourteenth Virginia Infantry

Those in Oak Cemetery, not in Confederate Rest, but graves received markers:

❖ Elias C. Boudinot, Company B, First Cherokee Mounted Volunteers, "Watie's Regiment"

❖ Charles W. Williamson, Company C, Eighteenth Regiment, South Carolina Infantry

❖ Agrippa S. Hopkins, Company I, Twenty-third Mississippi Volunteers

❖ Noah Belote*, Willet's Provost Guards, Arkansas Infantry

*(No marker, as no muster roll found.)

Directory for Cemeteries of Sebastian County, Arkansas

In 1998, historian Wanda M. Newberry Gray, commissioner, Arkansas State History Commission and State Archives, made an extensive effort to locate all the burial sites within the boundaries of the city of Fort Smith and in Sebastian County. A limited number of directories of her findings were published. Copies of this publication, *Directory for Cemeteries, Names, Locations, and References for Sebastian County, Arkansas*, were placed in the genealogy department of the Fort Smith Public Library and in the state archives. This list is a research tool to assist individuals in finding the cemeteries in which their ancestors are buried. It is in alphabetical order by name with locations and the name of the literature referencing the burials in Sebastian County. It is published for the knowledge of future generations of researchers. Gray has graciously

given permission to the Fort Smith Historical Society to place this directory on the Society's website.

Check it out at www.fortsmithhistory.org

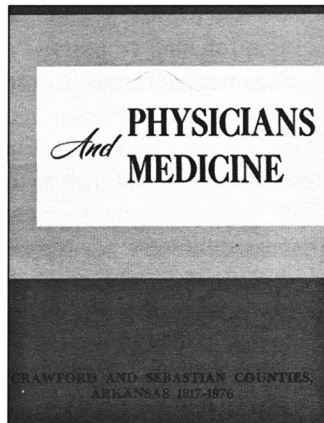
Martin's *Physicians and Medicine* Available with FSHS Donation

This 688-page historical reference, *Physicians and Medicine, Crawford and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas 1817-1976*, compiled by Amelia Martin and published by the Sebastian County Medical Society in 1977, is a fully documented and indexed text written against a background of the history of the area.

Content includes health conditions and diseases, medicines and legislation, hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, public health, and biographies of 1,535

physicians who practiced in this area from the establishment of Fort Smith Post in 1817 until 1976. It also includes a history of the Army Medical Corps at Fort Chaffee from 1941 to 1976.

This valuable, historical reference book may be ordered from the Fort Smith Historical Society. A donation of \$25 is suggested. For information, e-mail: Info@fortsmithhistory.org



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If you particularly enjoyed a feature in *The Journal*, show your appreciation for a subject you found interesting by making a contribution in honor of the writer.

Memorial gifts are a beautiful and lasting way to honor those who are dear to us. All memorials and commemorative gifts are acknowledged with a letter to both the donor and the family of the person honored.

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Marcy's Prairie Travelers

*George B. McClellan, George Getz Shumard,
Amiel W. Whipple, and Baldwin Mollhausen*

Part II

By Billy Higgins

The September 2009 issue of *The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society's* Part I article on Captain Randolph Barnes Marcy's 1849 explorations and mapping of territories west of Fort Smith concludes with the observation that "Randolph B. Marcy did his best to put Fort Smith on the transcontinental railroad map." Marcy's publications in 1854 and 1859 touted Fort Smith, Arkansas, because of the routes laid out by Marcy, as not only an excellent terminus for a transcontinental railroad, but as a preferred jumping off place for overland travel by wagon to California over his Dona Ana road. To tip off readers about his first choice, Marcy placed a drawing of Fort Smith on the frontispiece of his 1859 best-selling book, *The Prairie Traveler*.¹

Marcy's enthusiasm, energy, and experience propelled him—between 1849 and 1854—to travel through, explore, measure, plumb, build in, name features of, and chart the regions west and southwest of Fort Smith that are now part of western Oklahoma, the Texas panhandle, and north Texas.² His second expedition, actually an army assignment, resulted in establishing two military cantonments in Indian Territory, both named after General Matthew Arbuckle, at the time Marcy's commanding officer at Fort Gibson, Oklahoma.

The first of these, Camp Arbuckle was situated south of the Canadian River twelve days' ride—150 miles—southwest of Fort Smith. Today, a street sign reading Camp Arbuckle marks a dirt road that runs south from Highway 59 a mile west of Byars, Oklahoma. Not much else remains of this establishment that Marcy had improved to the point of inviting his wife, Mary, and his youngest daughter, Fanny, to join him there. Before the buildings could take on permanent stature, however, Marcy was ordered to reposition the installation farther to the west, an order somewhat disappointing because the first site that he had selected was strategically placed on the Marcy road to California.

Nevertheless, Marcy moved his troop following the Indian Meridian south to an uplift now known as the Arbuckle Mountains in Oklahoma. There in the foothills, he began construction of what would become



Photo courtesy of Billy Higgins

JUST NORTH OF THE ARBUCKLE MOUNTAINS in Oklahoma, a monument marks the location of once-thriving Fort Arbuckle. The Army post was situated on the "Indian Meridian" in the Chickasaw Nation.

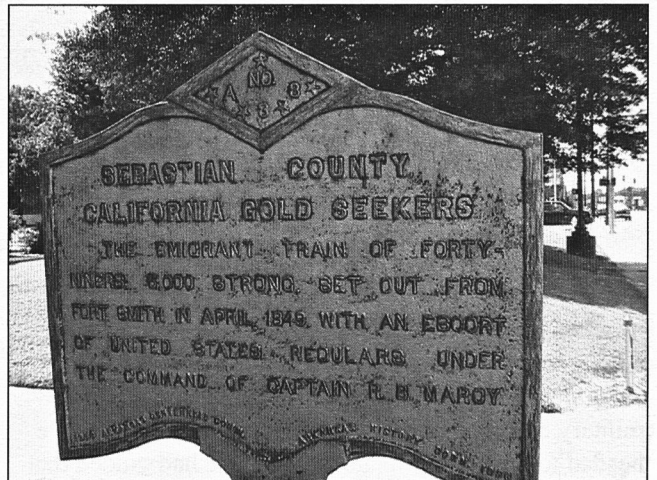


Photo courtesy of Billy Higgins

THE SEBASTIAN COUNTY GOLD RUSH MARKER stands at the side door to the Sebastian County Court House in the 600 block of Rogers Avenue in Fort Smith.

a flourishing army outpost christened with the more substantial name, Fort Arbuckle. This post, built around a well with good-tasting and abundant water, was in the heart of Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory. A drawing of

MARCY TIME LINE—Part II

Note To Reader: Randolph Barnes Marcy, born in 1812, played a significant role in Fort Smith, Arkansas's rise to national prominence in the antebellum period. This military officer led four expeditions of survey and mapping into Indian Territory from 1849 to 1854. His books and reports to Congress afterward identified Fort Smith as a logical and, to him, preferable eastern terminus for the

transcontinental railroad then being discussed.

The survey of Lieutenant Whipple in 1853-54 for the purpose of laying out the route from Fort Smith to Los Angeles was commissioned by the federal government particularly because of Marcy's influence in geographical and topographical circles at the time. Part I of the Marcy Time Line and an accompanying article can be

found in *The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society*, Vol. 33, Issue 2 (September 2009): 28-33.

Second Expedition— “Establishment of Fort Arbuckle”

May 20, 1850—Randolph B. Marcy and his wife, Mary, returned to Fort Smith (from Fort Gibson) where they stayed a

Fort Arbuckle shows ten sturdy log buildings in a square facing a parade ground with flagpole at the center. Today all that is left as a reminder of the place where a fort once stood is a stone monument just off Oklahoma state Highway 7, five and a half miles west of Interstate 35.³

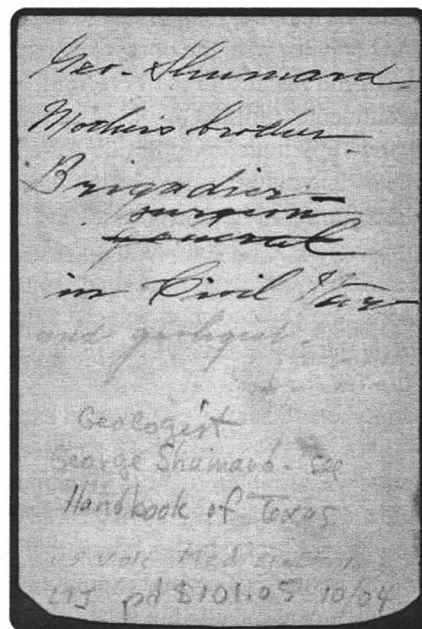
From this remote outpost Marcy was recalled for a new assignment. He reached Fort Smith in late March 1852 and spent several days in ordering equipment, provisions, and livestock for an expedition—his third—charged with discovering and mapping the source of the Red River. Stephen Harriman Long's 1820 expedition had the same charge but had not been able to determine and chart the exact source, so maps of the region were still incomplete.

Marcy had at his disposal D Company of the Fifth Infantry. Marcy was ideally situated to carry out this mission, having already contributed valuable and pertinent geographical information not only with his recent building of two army posts, but also with his 1849 military escort of the Fort Smith Company, 349 people headed to the California gold fields. He had guided that wagon train as far as El Paso, Texas, naming landmarks, measuring distances accurately, and evaluating grade and fuel supplies. Near El Paso, Marcy identified Dona Ana mission as a key transitional point on his proposed road leading to southern California, and thus the name for the route came to be Dona Ana or Marcy's Road.⁴

On this exploring of the land stretching to the west of Fort Smith into Indian Territory, much information was needed since the official records regarding geography,



Courtesy of Southern Methodist University, Central University Libraries, DeGolyer Library.
DR. GEORGE GETZ SHUMARD is shown in his Union Army uniform. Shumard was a brigadier general. On the left is the handwriting on the back of the photo.



Indians, geology, plants, animals, sources of rivers, and landforms were woefully lacking, even eight years after Texas had entered the union and fifty years after Indian Territory had become a part of the United States through the Louisiana Purchase.

To assist Marcy on this Red River Expedition, the army sent Brevet Captain George Brinton McClellan to serve as second in command. McClellan arrived in Fort Smith on April 1, 1852. The two evidently became fast friends on this mission to the Panhandle over the summer of 1852. Marcy named a stream for McClellan, a creek located on modern road maps northwest of McLean, Texas, on Interstate 40.⁵ The two rode into Fort Smith at the successful conclusion of this mission, and McClellan accompanied Marcy on a ride through Arkansas before the two officers split for their new duty assignments, Marcy heading to

MARCY TIME LINE CONTINUED

few days in the residence of Captain Caleb Sibley, a friend and fellow officer at Fort Howard, Wisconsin.

June 12, 1850—Marcy sent to Fort Gibson.

June 25, 1850—Marcy and Mary left Fort Towson for good.

June 26, 1850—While en route to Gibson, a dispatch rider intercepted Marcy and gave him fresh orders from the adjutant general in Washington. Marcy was to locate and establish a new military post on the Canadian River. Marcy left Mary and Fanny with old friends, Captain and Mrs. Whitall at Fort Washita.

July 4, 1850—Marcy arrived in Fort Smith to procure supplies for his new mission as an army post builder.

August 25, 1850—Marcy sent a dispatch to the adjutant general that he had selected the site about 150 miles west of Fort Smith, where there was water, wood, and grass. The site was a mile from the Canadian River and on the route to California known as Marcy's Road. The building of Camp Arbuckle commenced immediately.

November 11, 1850—Construction had come along so well that Marcy brought Mary and Fanny to Camp Arbuckle. In the meantime, Marcy had received an order from Arbuckle forwarded from Washington that this fortification had to be abandoned and a new site must be located farther to the west.

Winter 1850-51—Marcy, Mary, and Fanny spent five happy months at Camp Arbuckle surrounded by different tribes of Indians. Jenny Lind was touring America at the same time. Marcy wistfully longed to bring her out. Mary Ellen, now seventeen and in an eastern school, wrote to

them regularly.

January 9, 1851—Marcy began his search for the site for the new post.

February 12, 1851—New road surveyed and constructed connecting the two sites, the latter one being on Wild Horse Creek. There, Fort Arbuckle was constructed according to plans drawn up by Marcy.

April 19, 1851—Fort Arbuckle was fully manned, and Marcy turned Camp Arbuckle over to Black Beaver, Marcy's Delaware guide. Some 500 Delawares came to live in this settlement.

August 15, 1851—Marcy granted a leave from Fort Belknap, Texas, to recuperate from a recent illness. Marcy traveled back to New England.

February 14, 1852—Marcy completed a map of north central Texas reflecting his reconnaissance of the Brazos River while at Fort Belknap.

Third Expedition— "The Red River Expedition"

March 6, 1852—War Department authorized Marcy to explore and map the source of the Red River. He would have at his disposal D Company of the Fifth Infantry. Marcy's biographer, W. Eugene Hollon, wrote, "It is doubtful that another officer in the Southwest, indeed in the whole army was more qualified for this mission than Randolph B. Marcy." (p. 133)

Late March 1852—Marcy reached Fort Smith and spent several days ordering equipment, provisions, and livestock for his second expedition. He met and recruited a local physician, Dr. George G. Shumard, who accompanied Marcy as

surgeon and botanist.

April 6, 1852—Marcy reunited with Mary at Fort Washita. While there, Marcy marshaled his force, which included teams sufficient to transport supplies and baggage for five months.

Early April 1852—Marcy rode to Camp Arbuckle to re-employ his friend and guide Black Beaver. He also employed Jim Ned, a mixed-blood Delaware-African-American guide and tracker.

April 21, 1852—Captain George B. McClellan arrived at Fort Washita from Fort Smith to join the expedition. It is the first meeting of Marcy, the commander, with the young, dashing officer who would eventually marry his daughter, Mary Ellen, and rise to command the magnificent Army of Potomac. McClellan would also become one of the most, if not the most, controversial figures of the American Civil War.

April 22, 1852—The detachment set forth in two directions on its mission of exploration and mapping. Mary and Fanny left for Fort Smith, and from there, they traveled to the East. They were never to return to the American Southwest.

June 17, 1852—In the Palo Duro canyon, the expedition discovered the headwaters of the North Fork of the Red River, confirming the source of the Red River. McClellan charted the 100th meridian.

July 28, 1852—Marcy's expedition arrived at Fort Arbuckle, surprising the commander, who had received a report—erroneous, as it turned out to be—of Marcy's massacre at the hands of Comanches. The "massacre" had been widely reported in Arkansas and national newspapers.

August 12, 1852—Marcy and a party

Washington and McClellan to the Gulf Coast.⁶

An important member of the expedition was a Cincinnati, Ohio, physician, Dr. George Getz Shumard, whom Marcy had recruited to perform varied and vital duties: surgeon, botanist, geologist, collector of mineral samples, and landform artist. The 8,599 foot Shumard Peak in west Texas' Guadalupe National Park is visible

from some routes nearing Dona Ana and is named for the multi-tasked explorer friend of Marcy.⁷

Around evening campfires over meals on tin plates while recounting their stories of the day in what they thought was a glorious adventure in a beautiful land ("the Ultima Thule of the whites," McClellan wrote) Shumard and McClellan, young single men in their



Courtesy photo

CAPTAIN GEORGE BRINTON MCCLELLAN and his wife, *Mary Ellen (nee Marcy)*.

twenties and the courtly Marcy bonded on this 1852 Red River Expedition. There were signs of Indian war parties, and the men kept their rifles and pistols cleaned and loaded, so too there was the thrilling comradeship felt by brothers at arms. McClellan had ample opportunity to polish his horsemanship on this trek through true horse country, a superb skill oft noted and highly prized by the men he led during the Civil War. Interactions among Marcy, McClellan, and Shumard continued through the late 1850s and into the 1860s when the Civil War afforded them great roles—especially McClellan—on the stage of history. After this trip, McClellan met Marcy's daughter, Mary Ellen, and became one of her many suitors.

The battle for Mary Ellen's hand McClellan would win, and that sweetest victory came over a dashing West Pointer rival, future Confederate General A. P. Hill. McClellan married Mary Ellen—Nelly—in 1860.

In 1854, Shumard accompanied Marcy on his fourth and final expedition, an arduous trek to north and west Texas. This party of discovery reached the head waters of the Brazos River and once again viewed the expanse

MARCY TIME LINE CONTINUED

including Shumard and McClellan crossed the Arkansas River into Fort Smith. *The Fort Smith Herald* reported that the men appeared in extraordinary good health despite living in the open on the plains for three months.

Marcy gave Shumard a farewell handshake and mounted his horse for a ride across Arkansas to a White River landing. Marcy and his traveling companions, Captain McClellan and Mr. Suydam, boarded a steamer and continued on to Washington. Some humorous encounters of the group as they journeyed through Arkansas appeared in Marcy's *Army Life on the Border*.

1853—Marcy reunited with his family, and the captain worked on his report while living in New York. Marcy published *Exploration of the Red River of Louisiana*. Marcy addressed the American Statistical and Geographical Society in New York City, a group presided over by George Bancroft, the distinguished historian. *The New York Tribune* carried the full text of Marcy's speech.

Arkansas congressmen and some from other southern states urged that the Army place Marcy in charge of surveying routes for the transcontinental railroad. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis declined to make that appointment and, in fact, charged Marcy with unethical conduct in trying to secure the position. The next expedition of exploration from Fort Smith was led not by Marcy but by Lieutenant A. W. Whipple.

Fourth Expedition— Texas Reservation Lands

April 20, 1854—Adjutant General Samuel Cooper selected Marcy to explore the Texas frontier to determine suitable sites for Indian reservations. The reconnaissance would have assistance from the quartermaster at Fort Smith.

May 15, 1854—Marcy reached Fort Smith by saddle horse from Little Rock, the river being too low beyond the capital for normal steamboat travel. At Fort Smith, Marcy again sought out Dr. Shumard, who agreed to accompany Marcy on this expedition.

May 31, 1854—Marcy and Shumard departed Fort Smith at the head of a wagon train bound for Fort Washita.

June 29, 1854—The expedition, fortified by a military escort from Fort Arbuckle, set out for unknown country.

July 17, 1854—Marcy and company arrived at a site about fifteen miles west of present-day Wichita Falls on the Big Wichita River.

August 10, 1854—Dr. George G. Shumard wrote

MARCY TIME LINE CONTINUED

a letter (still in existence in the Marcy papers) to John Wheeler of Fort Smith. The long letter was published in several newspapers.

August 1854—Marcy's detachment was tracked for two days by a band of 250 hostile Comanches, Apaches, and Navajos. The Indians powwowed to decide if they should destroy the white "intruders."

August 11, 1854—Marcy selected a site on the Clear Fork of the Brazos for establishing a permanent camp. It would become Camp Cooper.

August 20, 1854—Marcy convened a "Grand Council" to explain the idea of a reservation to local Comanche chiefs.

September 15, 1854—Marcy, Shumard, and Parker reached Fort Smith. The captain, though anxious to see his family, remained here for a few days be-

fore traveling on.

October 24, 1854—The traveling party boarded a steamboat at Jefferson City, Missouri, to Pittsburgh. One week after leaving St. Louis they were back in New York City!

October 31, 1854—Marcy reunited with his wife and Fanny after a six-month absence.

April 22, 1855—Marcy sent a report to Congress that included a map of special importance because it was the first accurate layout of north-central Texas.

July 13, 1855—Marcy arrived in Corpus Christi, Texas, with 400 recruits.

December 15, 1855—Returned to New York City.

May 1, 1856—Returned to Corpus Christi, Texas.

May 28, 1856—Mary Ellen announced her engagement to Lieutenant A. P. Hill.

(Hill, a rival of McClellan's for Mary Ellen's hand, went on to become one of Lee's corps commanders in the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia.)

June 3, 1856—Marcy wrote Mary Ellen, urging that she reconsider the marriage proposal of McClellan, who had been a Marcy favorite since their meeting in Fort Smith and the subsequent Red River expedition. Mary Ellen gave in to parental pressure and broke off the engagement with Hill.

August 1856—Marcy served at Fort McIntosh under Albert Sydney Johnston. Johnston sent Marcy to Ringgold Barracks on assignment, an assignment that included George B. Thomas, Robert E. Lee, and Caleb Sibley, an old friend of Marcy's.

November 26, 1856—News reached Texas that Democrat James Buchanan

of the Llano Estacado. Shumard conducted geological research and sketched landform profiles, drawings that display his scientific and observatory abilities.

Upon his return to Fort Smith from this 1854 mission to the west, Shumard met and fell in love with young Isabella Clark Atkinson, daughter of a local tinsmith. In 1858, newly employed by the state of Texas, Shumard bade the Atkinson family farewell in order to survey geological deposits along the Red River. During this period of time, Shumard became engaged to Miss Atkinson. They married in 1859, as she turned twenty-one. The Shumards set about building a family—they eventually had two children—and made the city their home. The outbreak of the Civil War, the evacuation of the U. S. Army garrison from Fort Smith in April 1861, and the takeover of the fort by state militia forces compelled Shumard to uproot his growing family, and they left for Cincinnati, Ohio.⁸

In November 1861, Abraham Lincoln appointed George B. McClellan as general-in-chief of the Union armies. While exercising this command, Major General McClellan appointed his friend from the Red River survey days, Dr. George Shumard, whom McClellan called "the last Union man in Arkansas," as surgeon general of the state of Ohio. The appointment came under fire, the medical community of Ohio preferring one of their own for this political plum. "When the Cincinnati doctors learned that Shumard was 'really a reputable physician,' though long absent from Cincinnati,



Photo courtesy of Billy Higgins

DR. GEORGE GETZ SHUMARD'S TOMBSTONE is in the National Cemetery near the 1819 gravesite of early Fort Smith and Rifle Regiment surgeon Thomas Russell.

MARCY TIME LINE CONTINUED

had been elected president. Marcy was happier than if Fremont had won.

January 10, 1857—Marcy's Texas unit reassigned to Florida to quell a Seminole uprising.

April and May 1857—Marcy carried out operations against the Seminoles while his unit subsisted on alligator meat and swamp cabbage.

June 27, 1857—Marcy, Mary, and Mary Ellen reunited at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis. The army was preparing for potential trouble with Mormons in the new Utah Territory after the president had appointed a non-Mormon as territorial governor.

August 10, 1857—Marcy and his command reached Fort Kearney. In a few days, the troops continued on along the Oregon Trail to Fort Laramie.

September 1857—Mountain Meadows Massacre. A wagon train led by Alexander Fancher that originated in northwest Arkansas was attacked by Mormons posing as Ute Indians.

November 22, 1857—Marcy and his troops reached Fort Bridger and went into winter quarters at Camp Scott, 110 miles from Salt Lake City, the Mormon capital. Albert Sydney Johnston and the famed Second Cavalry arrived, and Johnston took command.

November 27, 1857—Marcy set out across the Great Basin on a resupply mission and with a company of forty soldiers (all of whom had volunteered for this arduous task), twenty-five mountain men, and sixty-five mules headed toward Fort Massachusetts, New Mexico. Marcy's mission was crucial to success for Johnston in this campaign and for the difficult job, "no better officer [than Marcy] could have been found" was a quotation from the *New Orleans Picayune*.

January 18, 1858—Marcy and his men reached Fort Massachusetts with only three mules left. One soldier had died en route because of the bitter cold and snow. Secretary of War John B. Floyd recommended Marcy for promotion to brevet major.

March 15, 1858—Marcy set out on return to Camp Scott with 960 mules and 160 horses and wagons loaded with supplies for Johnston.

June 23, 1858—General Johnston and Inspector General Marcy marched at the head of a column of soldiers through the Mormon capital with flags flying and bands playing.

July 1858—The army dispersed through Utah as Marcy played a role in selecting sites for new cantonments throughout the territory.

Fall 1858—Marcy returned to St. Louis for a trip home to his family, and as it turned out, this marked the end of his actual adventures as an explorer and mapmaker of western lands.

October 1859—Marcy began a career as a popular writer, turning his experiences into a book to help guide western-bound settlers. Marcy published *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions*. A painting of Fort Smith is the frontispiece of the book, and in the text Marcy described Fort Smith, Arkansas, as a preferred departure point for California and points west. He gave the reader a list of twenty-eight itineraries. The list began with Fort Smith. He assured the overland traveler that this route had the essentials of wood, water, grass, and flat ground and that "supplies of all descriptions may be procured at Fort Smith or Van Buren." The War Department immediately purchased 1,000 copies of *The Prairie Traveler* for distribution among the officer corps and government employees.

May 22, 1860—Mary Ellen married George B. McClellan, her interest in the dashing young officer having been rekindled.

November 6, 1860—Abraham Lincoln, Republican, elected president of the United States.

December 22, 1860—South Carolina seceded.

April 14, 1861—Confederates opened artillery fire on Fort Sumter. The shelling and subsequent lowering of the United

States flag at the federal stronghold in Charleston harbor signaled the beginning of the American Civil War.

May 6, 1861—Arkansas seceded.

June 1, 1861—McClellan, in charge of Union Army forces in western Virginia, requested that Marcy, his father-in-law, be named his chief of staff.

July 21, 1861—Bull Run, a disastrous defeat for the Union Army.

July 22, 1861—In the aftermath of Bull Run, President Lincoln appointed McClellan commander of the Army of Potomac. Marcy served as chief of staff while McClellan commanded the army. Part of Marcy's duties, especially during the peninsula campaign in 1862, was to make personal calls on Lincoln to brief him on the massive operation.

November 7, 1862—McClellan sacked by Lincoln and sent home to New Jersey.

1863-64—McClellan, after resigning from the Union Army, is nominated by the Democratic Party to run against Lincoln in 1864.

1863-1865—Marcy reassigned to St. Louis.

December 1868—Marcy promoted to brigadier general during the Grant administration.

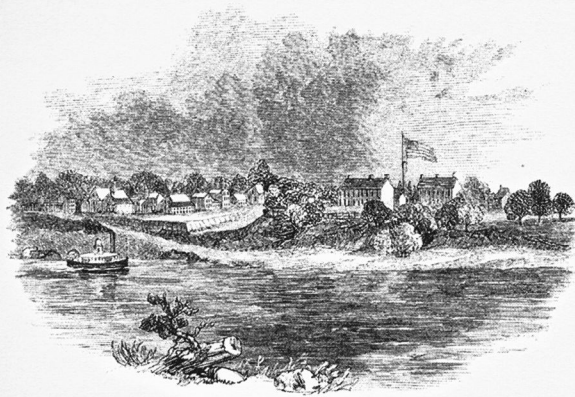
1869-1881—Marcy as inspector general traveled thousands of miles in the West and Southwest from one military post to the next.

1871—Marcy's last book appeared, *Border Reminiscences*.

1878—Marcy's beloved wife, Mary, died. George B. McClellan elected governor of New Jersey.

February 1, 1881—Marcy retired from the U. S. Army after forty-eight years of service. Few officers ever matched the length or the accomplishment of Randolph B. Marcy's army career.

1885—Marcy and McClellan, who had remained close friends since their Red River Expedition days, made a 7,000-mile trip through the West, hunting and sightseeing. They were celebrated in each city where they stopped. Fort Smith



FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS.

THE PRAIRIE TRAVELER.

A HAND-BOOK FOR
OVERLAND EXPEDITIONS.

WITH MAPS, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND ITINERARIES OF
THE PRINCIPAL ROUTES BETWEEN THE
MISSISSIPPI AND THE PACIFIC.

BY RANDOLPH B. MARCY,
CAPTAIN U. S. ARMY.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1859.

Courtesy of Fort Smith Public Library. Image reconstruction by Travis Brown

THE FRONTISPIECE OF RANDOLPH B. MARCY'S BOOK *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook of Overland Expeditions* features artist Heinrich Baldwin Mollhausen's 1853 depiction of the Fort Smith from the west bank of the Arkansas River.

their first judgment was somewhat mollified; but they never did reconcile themselves to his appointment." Shumard, uncomfortable with the situation, consequently resigned this position.⁹

Shumard went on to other significant military duties during the Civil War, including serving as medical director of Kentucky. Over the winter of 1866, and now a civilian, Dr. Shumard resided again in Fort Smith. In March 1867, he returned to Cincinnati to teach professionally, but died six months later on September 29, 1867, at the age of forty-four. Isabella—Belle—his faithful and loving wife, brought him home to Fort Smith for burial. His tombstone is in the National Cemetery near the 1819 gravesite of early Fort Smith and Rifle Regiment surgeon Thomas Russell.¹⁰

While commander of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan appointed his father-in-law, Randolph B. Marcy, as his chief of staff. But the job was not an easy

MARCY TIME LINE CONTINUED

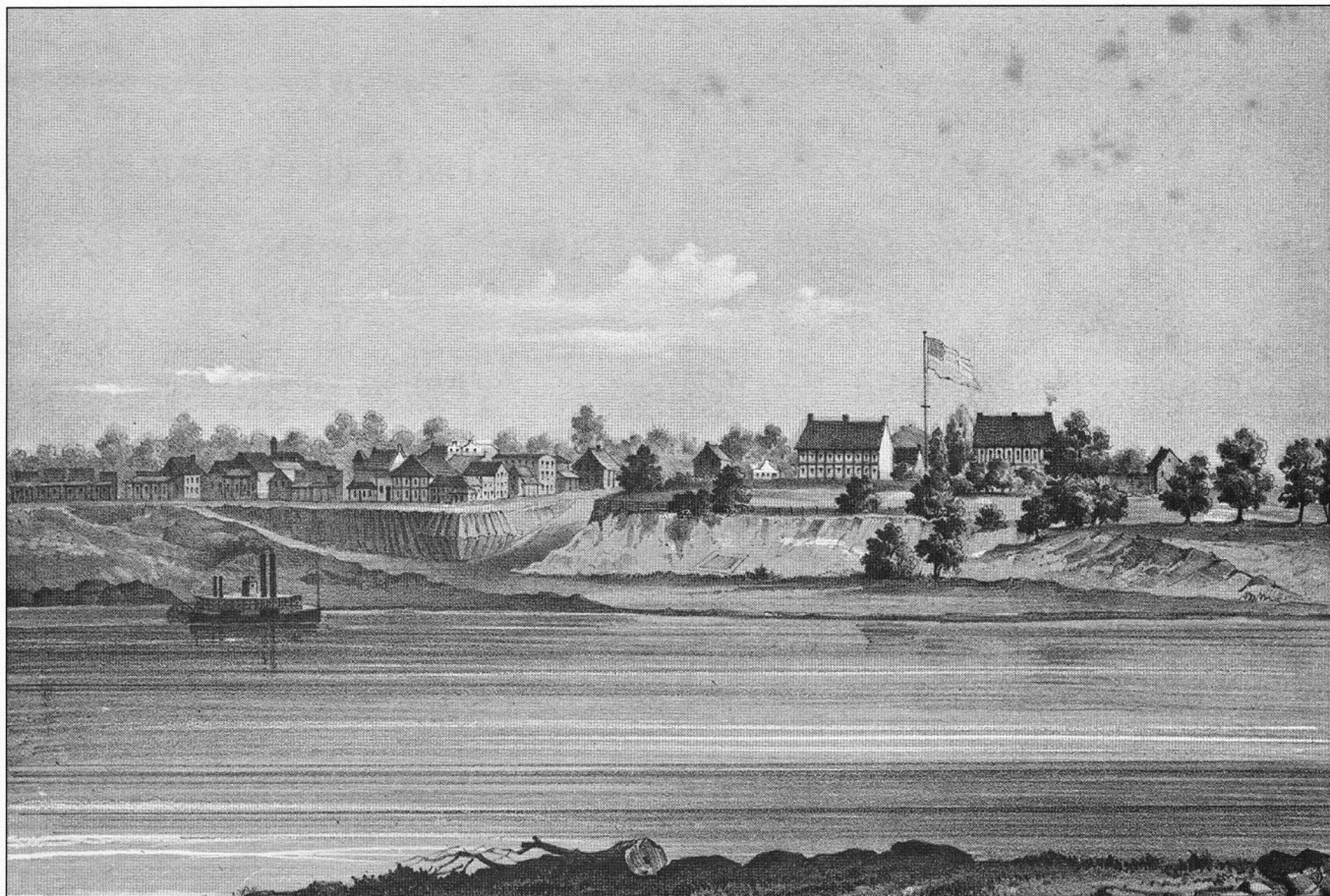
was not among their stops as their route was along the northernmost of the transcontinental railroads, the Great Northern.

October 29, 1885—General McClellan died after a heart attack. He was fifty-nine years old.

November 22, 1887—Randolph B. Marcy died at the age of seventy-five. He was buried next to Mary at the Riverview Cemetery in Orange, New Jersey.

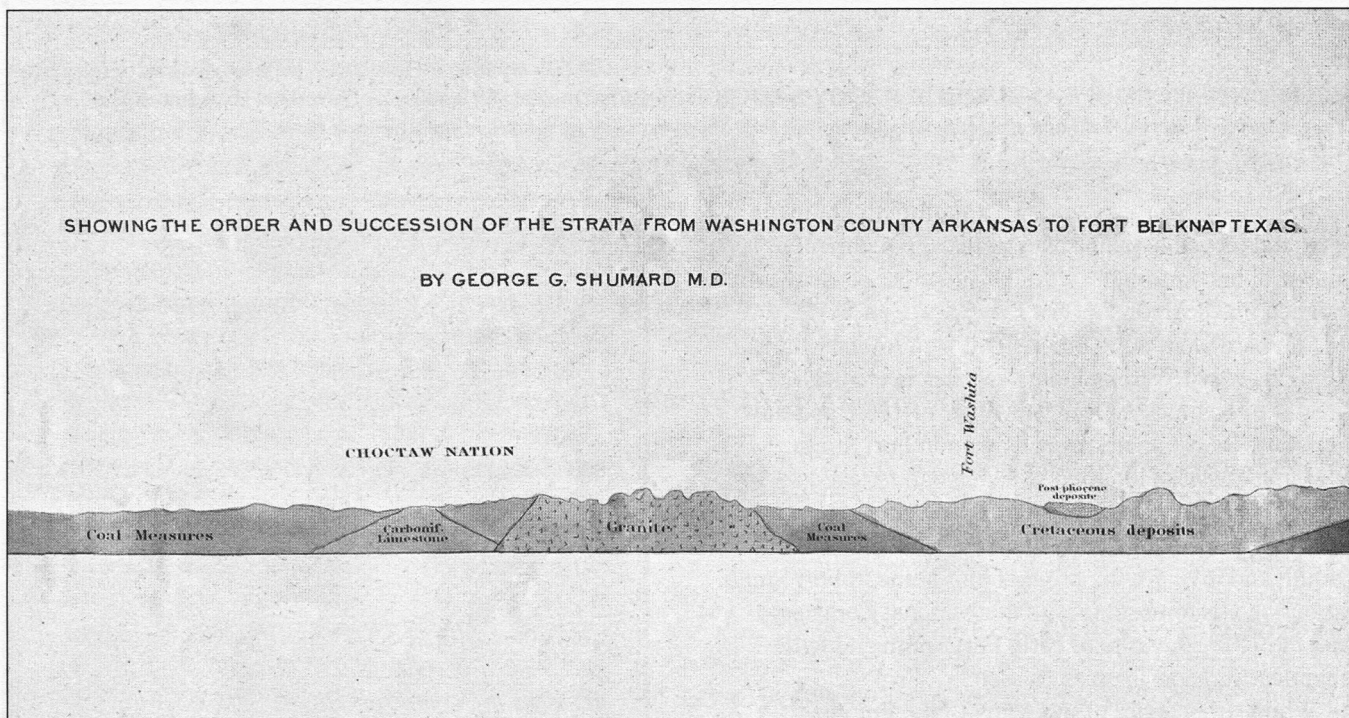
1906—Mary Ellen died and was buried next to her parents.

Randolph B. Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions with Maps, Illustrations, and Itineraries of the Principal Routes Between the Mississippi and the Pacific* (New York: Harper Bros. Publishers, 1859).



Courtesy of the Research Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society

FORT SMITH FROM THE WEST BANK OF THE ARKANSAS RIVER as painted by artist Heinrich Baldwin Mollhausen in July 1853. Mollhausen accompanied A. W. Whipple on an 1853-54 survey of a Fort Smith-to-California railroad route.



Courtesy of Fort Smith Public Library. Image reconstructed by Travis Brown

THIS SKETCH BY DR. GEORGE GETZ SHUMARD shows the strata variations between Washington County, Arkansas, and Fort Belknap, Texas.

one, and it would fall to Brigadier General Marcy to carry communications back and forth between Lincoln and McClellan, who had developed an adversarial relationship while McClellan was engaged in his ill-starred Peninsula Campaign to capture Richmond, Virginia. The animosity between the general and his commander-in-chief was revealed in the letters that McClellan wrote to Nelly in 1862. Lincoln fired McClellan as commander after his failure to follow up the Union Army's victory over Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Antietam, Maryland. McClellan ran as the Democratic Party candidate against Lincoln in the 1864 presidential election. The former major general was later elected governor of New Jersey.

Keyed by Marcy, other explorers and adventurers and military officers turned up in antebellum Fort Smith, a city facing the frontier ready to provide them with provisions, a setting, and a start from which they would make their own marks on American historical literature.

Congress and the War Department funded an expedition with the title of Pacific Ocean Route led by Lieutenant Amiel Weeks Whipple, an army engineer with previous experience in surveying western lands. Following Marcy's previous reports and surveys, Whipple sought to further define a southern route for the transcontinental railway and retraced Marcy's road to Camp Arbuckle, by then a community of Delaware Indians. Whipple surveyed a route that followed the south bank of the Canadian River into the Texas Panhandle and eventually reached Los Angeles. Whipple's company included Baldwin Mollhausen, a landscape artist and draftsman of German descent. Mollhausen kept a journal and a sketch portfolio that have survived. Because of the complexity of outfitting such an expedition that would be away for a year, much of that in open lands inhabited only by the Indians of the southern plains, Whipple's men stayed in Fort Smith for a month, whereupon Mollhausen had opportunity to reflect upon, describe in his journal, and sketch scenes of 1853 Fort Smith.¹¹ Amiel Weeks Whipple served under Major General George B. McClellan as the Army of the Potomac's topographical engineer. Brigadier General Whipple was fatally wounded by a sharpshooter at the battle of Chancellorsville in 1863.

In the decade between 1849 and 1859, Randolph Barnes Marcy and men he recruited or inspired, such as these described in this article, accumulated unparalleled knowledge about the vast territory west of Fort Smith, which Marcy saw as its portal. Marcy's mastery of the area was manifested in his four books, reports to Congress, and speeches made upon his periodic visits to the East. Marcy consistently mentioned Fort Smith and convinced thousands of prairie travelers that this vanguard city was a proper departure point for their journey through the wild west en route to California.

Endnotes

- ¹ Randolph B. Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions, with Maps, Illustrations, and Itineraries of the Principal Routes between the Mississippi and the Pacific* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1859), 1.
- ² See Marcy time line accompanying this article.
- ³ Interview with Portia Warren, Davis, Oklahoma, on August 8, 2009. Warren resides on grounds once covered by Fort Arbuckle and is a local historian and keeper of related artifacts. The drawing of the post was by Vinson Lackey and is in the possession of the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- ⁴ Grant Foreman, *Marcy and the Gold Seekers: The Journal of Captain R. B. Marcy with an Account of the Gold Rush Over the Southern Route* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), 402.
- ⁵ Randolph B. Marcy, *Exploration of the Red River of Louisiana in the Year 1852* (Washington: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer, 1853), 40. Marcy's entry for June 20, 1852: "I have called this 'McClellan's Creek' in compliment to my friend Captain McClelland, who I believe to be the first white man that ever set eyes on it."
- ⁶ Stephen W. Sears, *George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1988), 33. McClellan wrote to his mother about Marcy remarking that he "is one of the finest men I ever met with, and never saw one better fitted to conduct such an expedition."
- ⁷ Marcy, *Exploration*, "Dr. George G. Shumard, of Fort Smith, Arkansas, who faithfully discharged his duties of surgeon to the command also made important contributions to the department of natural science, by collections of specimens of the rocks, minerals, soils, fossils, shells, and plants, of the different localities which we traversed . . ." From the Introduction. Shumard had a brother, Benjamin Franklin Shumard, who became antebellum Texas' state botanist and for whom the Shumard Oak is named. Often called the spotted oak, *Quercus shumardii* is a quality lumber tree that grows well on north facing slopes in Arkansas. S. W. Geiser, "Men of Science in Texas, 1820-1880," *Field and Laboratory* (January 1958-October 1859): 26-7.
- ⁸ Roberta Shumard, "The Handbook of Texas Online," <http://www.tshaonline.org>, (accessed December 28, 2009).
- ⁹ Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War, Vol. I* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wiltach, and Baldwin, 1893), 245-46.
- ¹⁰ *Fort Smith Weekly Herald*, October 12, 1867, col. 1, p. 3 reported, "Dr. George G. Shumard, died in Cincinnati, on Sunday the 29th of September of paralysis. Dr. Shumard was a citizen of this place for many years, and married the daughter of our townsman, Mr. John C. Atkinson. As a scientific gentleman, Dr. Shumard stood very high. He accompanied Captain Maray [sic], many years ago in two of his explorations on the plains and up Red River, as geologist and physician. . . . When we last saw him, he was the picture of good health. He was suddenly stricken down by paralysis, several months ago, from which he finally died." Belle Shumard, widow of George G. Shumard, remained on the historical record until 1900 where the U. S. Census shows her living at age 59 in Springdale, Arkansas.
- ¹¹ Amiel Weeks Whipple, *A Pathfinder in the Southwest: The Itinerary of Lieutenant A. W. Whipple During his Explorations for a Railway Route From Fort Smith to Los Angeles in the Years 1853 & 1854*, edited by Grant Foreman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941), 27-36.

Fort Smith and the Gold Rush

The Impact of the 1849 Gold Seekers on the City

By Jerry Akins

It must have been an incredible scene Asa Scarborough rode into on the first day of March 1849. He and three companions had left El Dorado, Arkansas, on February 20, 1849, on their trek to the California goldfields.¹ The chaos they found at Fort Smith and the surrounding area must have been unbelievable. Fort Smith in 1849 consisted of a “commercial row” along the riverfront and a few residential streets beyond. No population number is available for 1849, but the 1850 Census shows 880 (803 white, 77 slaves). Add the hundreds of emigrants camped in all directions, all vying for camping spaces and supplies for their journey, and it must have been a mind-boggling, tumultuous scene. Every craftsman from tinker to wagon maker was busy at his trade; every merchant and farmer was selling his wares. Newspapers of Fort Smith and Van Buren were waging a competition to advertise their towns.

The great tidal wave of westward movement had been initiated when the discovery of gold in California was officially verified by President James K. Polk in a speech to Congress on December 5, 1848. From that time on, people from all points east started their move, or planning for their move, westward by every conveyance available. Some opted for the 17,000-mile trip around Cape Horn, some for the shorter route across the Isthmus of Panama. Thousands came by river and road to Fort Smith to take the southern land trails through Santa Fe.

The advertising competition was fierce between Fort Smith and the Independence, Missouri, terminus of the northern route. John Wheeler, editor of *The Fort Smith Herald*, along with other business leaders, had promoted a road to California since September 1848. In the September 27, 1848, edition of *The Herald*, there was an announcement:

PUBLIC MEETING ROAD TO CALIFORNIA

At a meeting of the citizens of Fort Smith and vicinity, held Saturday the 23d inst., at the Church, for the purpose of bringing before our next Legislature the subject of calling upon the General Government to open a road to Santa Fe and California, up the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers.

The article goes on for two full columns expounding on the reason for their proposal and is signed:

Jno. Rogers, Chairman
Jno. F. Wheeler, Secretary

On October 11, 1848, *The Herald* published a letter dated Monterey, June 28, 1848, and titled “Gold in California.” The discovery of gold was just the catalyst Wheeler needed to set the wheels in motion to achieve their goal. For all the rest of 1848, Wheeler, Fort Smith’s business leaders, and Senator Solon Borland petitioned the U. S. Congress for the proposed road. Editor Wheeler used his journal to the fullest, publishing every favorable letter and article and using his own words to promote a Fort Smith route to California. The November 22, 1848, edition of *The Herald* published a much welcomed letter from General Matthew Arbuckle, who had spent many years on the frontier. The following week, November 29, 1848, Wheeler ran a column calling attention to a circular titled, “Ho For California,” extolling the attributes of Fort Smith. Along with advertising Fort Smith, the circular announced the formation of a company preparing for the journey to California and detailed the equipment and other preparations needed by anyone intending to join the company for the trip. That circular was sent to the Arkansas Congressional delegation and other newspapers that were encouraged to publish it.²

Other articles ran weekly, comparing the conditions and attributes of the southern route from Fort Smith to the northern route. Fort Smith and Independence, Missouri, could be reached by river from Cincinnati or New Orleans:

From 1841 to 1849, wagon trains headed to Oregon and California left from Independence Town Square and followed the Santa Fe Trail into Kansas. However, sandbars building up at the steamboat landing and a cholera epidemic in 1849 prompted emigrants to bypass Independence for Westport [Kansas City]. Doing so shaved eighteen miles off the Trail, a good day’s travel, and eliminated a river crossing as well.³

The Fort Smith Herald argued that Fort Smith was the better jumping off place.

This route commencing 250 or 300 miles south of that of Missouri, caravans are enabled to start near a month earlier in the season, in consequence of the grass springing up a month earlier than in Upper Mo. ...

The Arkansas route is much the more level and direct and no place intersected by mountains or hills; it is less intersected by large streams which are subject to rise and deter the progress of caravans, although there are more wood-skirted brooks affording along the whole route agreeable camping

places and plenty of timber for the use of caravans.⁴

The efforts of *The Herald* editor John Wheeler and other businessmen, and the petitioning of Borland, paid off. One result appeared in the February 14, 1848, edition of the paper:

A Corps of Engineers with a detachment of U. S. Dragoons, and one of Infantry, have been ordered by the Department at Washington, to survey, mark and CUT OUT a road from FORT SMITH direct to SANTA FE. The Infantry will start in a few days to open the road up the Canadian, beyond the South Fork where the prairie commences. We understand the Engineers will proceed from thence to Santa Fe with the Dragoons.

The “infantry” and “dragoons,” of course, were the troops commanded by Captain Randolph B. Marcy. The Engineers were from the Corps of Topographical Engineers, eighteen men commanded by Lieutenant J. H. Simpson, who did the actual survey.⁵

The race was on, not just by the Goldseekers for the El Dorado, but by every merchant, craftsman, farmer or producer of goods of any kind, and con artists, for the dollars of the Goldseekers, before they departed. Some emigrants carried with them, at least for part of the journey, gold washing machines.⁶ Those were supposed to do the work of 150 men, but were probably among the debris that littered the trail as the journey became more difficult. One of the more interesting devices, the Goldometer, was advertised in *The Herald* on February 21, 1849; the same ad ran in *The Arkansas Gazette* on February 22, 1849.

CALIFORNIA GOLD,
DISCOVERED BY
SIGNOR D'ALVEAR'S GOLDOMETER
THE
GOLD SEEKER'S GUIDE
or
SECRET ART OF FINDING MINES OF
GOLD, SILVER, IRON, LEAD, COPPER,
COAL AND, OTHER MINERAL RICHES.

According to the articles, Signor D' Alvear, had found as much as \$3,000 a day with “a very imperfect” version of his Goldometer, which he had sold for \$3,000. But, “Signor D' Alvear, in compliance with the request of numerous scientific gentlemen, has commenced the manufacture of his new Magnetic instrument, the GOLDOMETER, which he now offers for sale, in the United States, at the remarkably low price of THREE DOLLARS each, accompanied by all instructions for use....”

But, the emigrants were more in search of supplies, wagons and mules than a magical device to find their

riches. The list of supplies for the journey was long. Article 3 of The Clarksville and California Mining Association stated:

Each wagon shall be capable of bearing 3000 pounds, but it shall not carry more than 2000, and shall be provided with four yoke of oxen, or six mules, one five gallon water-cask, one axe, two shovels, one pick-axe, one auger, one chisel, one gimblet [sic], one drawing-knife, twenty five pounds of iron, three gallons of tar, one extra horse or mule, fifty dollars in specie, and cooking utensils for at least three persons, including a tin cup for each.

John Wheeler, through his newspaper, urged the merchants, farmers and producers of goods, in and around Fort Smith, to make their products available to them. As early as February 7, 1849, *The Herald* had stated that:

It is supposed by some persons that there will be from five to ten thousand persons here in the spring, on their way to California. Should there be as many as two thousand, it will require a large amount of provisions for them.

Further down the same column:

Flour and Bacon will be in demand. We would advise those living at a distance to bring their flour and bacon here as soon as possible, and if they cannot find sale immediately, to leave it with some one to be sold on convenience.-- Look to it, farmers and traders. Be sure to have a supply on hand. We expect there will be a party here soon, who will have to purchase their provisions at this place, and will pay the cash for them.

Corn! Corn!! Corn!

Corn is very much needed here and is now worth 50 cts. per bushel. It is thought that ten thousand bushels will be wanted to supply the California emigrants. —Will our friends through the country endeavor to bring in all they can, it will command the cash in a few days—not less that 50 cents per bushel.

The competition between Fort Smith and Van Buren for the dollars of the emigrants started before the gold seekers arrived. It was intense, and in some cases a little caustic. The February 16 edition of *The Arkansas Democrat* ran the following article on its front page:

Supplies for California Emigrants at Fort Smith

The Fort Smith Herald says that all the corn, provisions, &c., which will be wanted by the California Emigrants, can be had at that place: 100 mules and 50 horses are already advertised for sale at that point, and we see, by another advertisement, that 200 Mexican mules will be offered on the

10th of March.

In addition to the above, we with great pleasure give place to the following communication, handed us by a merchant of Van Buren, now in our city. We can assure all interested in this matter, that the statements of this gentleman may be relied on; and we know him to be possessed of means to fulfill any contract he may offer to make.

Mr. Editor,— I see from a postscript to the circular of the Fort Smith and California Emigrating Company, that they say: “that from the number of emigrants congregating in the neighborhood of Fort Smith, many kinds of provisions are becoming scarce, particular corn, hay, flour and bacon;” and go on to advise emigrants to provide themselves with these articles before repairing to the rendezvous. I know not who added the postscript, and sent it forth, but this I do know, that the writer is ignorant of the resources of the country. The supply of these articles is abundant for twice such an emigration. Corn is only worth 25 cents per bushel, in Crawford County; in Washington County from 15 to 20 cts. Any amount of flour can be had at \$4.50 per barrel; and the back country is full of the best of bacon. Many of the farmers could not sell their pork during the winter at \$2.00 per hundred and made bacon of it. I would contract to deliver 50,000 lbs. of good bacon at 5c. per lb., at Van Buren, only 5 miles from Fort Smith.

Emigrants may come on with the expectation of finding at Van Buren, corn, flour and bacon plenty, and on reasonable terms; certainly for much less than they can buy and freight to Fort Smith, from any port of the United States.—There will be a good supply of mules and horses, for sale at Van Buren at reasonable prices by the first of March.

A CITIZEN of Crawford County.

The Fort Smith Herald reprinted the *Democrat* column, in the edition of February 21, 1848, and at the bottom, ran a rebuttal, saying that if, “A Citizen of Crawford County” would furnish his name and if he were “possessed of means to fulfill” his contracts at the prices quoted, “we will take pleasure in referring purchasers to him,” or “Any other responsible person who will engage to furnish provisions and forage at the above named prices.” “But,” they went on to say, “many of our citizens fear that there will not be enough to meet the demand in the spring and after the emigrants have left, will become high, and our own citizens will have to suffer in consequence.”

Sustenance for the future was not the only thing on the minds of Fort Smith citizens. The town council held a meeting on Monday, March 5, 1848, where among other items, they appointed a Board of Health.⁷ Coincidentally or maybe not, in the next column of the same issue of *The Herald* was a letter signed, “A CALIFORNIA EMIGRANT,” saying that Fort Smith “will in a few years be noted down in our maps and geographies, as one of the largest and most flourishing cities of the West. But there are some things which I, as a stranger, would

suggest should be done by your Town Council.” The things “Emigrant” suggested were, “removing of all impurities and their causes” and the draining of stagnant pools. Those things being necessary when “so large an influx of strangers are to be expected in the next few days.”

The influx of strangers had already started. On March 1, Asa Scarborough and three friends had arrived. The March 14 *Herald* announced, “The company with pack mules left here on Monday last [March 12, 1848] for California, the company is composed of hardy, persevering men, numbering about twenty.” Arkansan Scarborough and his three friends were listed among them, along with men from New York, Illinois, Germany and Ireland. This company left Fort Smith for California almost four weeks before Captain Marcy and the wagon train escorted by his dragoons.

Scarborough noted in his diary that an organizational meeting of the company had convened on March 5. In his words (and spelling):

The meeting convened according to adjournment and adopted Sutch rules and regulations as was thought nesasary for the Government of the Company and appointed the 12th inSt. For our departure. as Soon as this was made known the next day we were taunted frequently by men of other Compaies [companies] that were making arrangements for the Same expedition. we were Called Green . and told that So Small a company never Could reach there that the Camanchies would Certainly rub us out. The Commandent brigadier General Arbuckle who has Charge of this fort done all that he could to keep us from Going in So Small a band but nothing daunted we are determined to leave on the day appointed. now all hands were buisily engaged in Getting ready to leave this more than disaGreable place.⁸

Part of the reason the area was such a “disaGreable place” can be explained by an article in the March 7 edition of *The Herald*: “The river commenced rising on Wednesday last, and is now high and still rising. A great deal of rain fell during the past three or four days, and we anticipate a very considerable rise in all the streams.” The spring of 1849 was rainy, and with riverboats bringing in emigrants weekly and sometimes daily to camp on all available space no doubt it was disagreeable.

The town council was well aware of the health situation, and on Monday of the same week, they appointed a board of heath, consisting of doctors Maine, Spring, and Mayers, and reminded all that “It would be well for citizens to pay strict attention to cleanliness about their premises.” Notices such as the foregoing were about as close as the newspapers came to acknowledging any problems or negative factors in the city. They seemed to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. On March 14, 1849, *The Herald* ran this column:

EMIGRANTS

The peace and harmony that has heretofore characterized our city, while crowded with California emigrants, speaks volumes in favor of those persons that are emigrating to that golden land of the west. Not a single riot or difficulty, so far has occurred, and we sincerely hope that none may occur. But in order to insure peace and safety to all good and peace-loving emigrants, as well as our own citizens, we would advise our police officers to be on the lookout, and arrest any riotous persons forthwith, and thereby maintain the character of our city for peace and order.

Fort Smith, during the months when travelers were preparing for their journeys, was a boomtown. Was it really unlike other towns that had population explosions? Were there no gamblers, con men and thieves? Remember the gold washing machines and Signor D'Alvear's GOLDOMETER.

Fort Smith probably had its share of undesirables, but editor Wheeler was making his best effort to present a positive image to travelers, as he had from the beginning, *The Herald* being distributed as widely as he could promote it. The March 14, 1849, edition informed, "Emigrants going to California can have the opportunity of obtaining a cheap paper by subscribing for the *Herald*. As there is a mail to California we can send it to that country." Every effort was made to sell everything Fort Smith had to offer and to entice travelers to leave from here rather than the northern route from Independence, Missouri. On the same page and column was an excerpt from a letter from Independence stating that, "common mules at this place had advanced to \$110 per head." In the next paragraph, referring to prices in Fort Smith, *The Herald*, stated; "Here mules are selling from forty to sixty dollars, corn 35 to 40 cts. per bushel, bacon 5 to 7 cts. per lb., flour 5.50 to \$6 per barrel."

Along with the abundance of trade came other problems. Cholera was mentioned constantly in the newspapers of the day and in the writings of the travelers.

Woolsey Teller arrived at Fort Smith from New York on April 17, 1849, having written letters to his brother all along the way. He spoke of cholera from Cairo, Illinois, to Little Rock. But in camp near Fort Smith he mentioned the good health of the company.⁹ Citizens and travelers were reassured by *The Herald* that "Our town is perfectly healthy, having had no cases of the Cholera since the Oella left. Persons may visit our town with safety, as far as disease is concerned." The paper even reported, "The health of the town is very good, the doctors have but little to do." However, in the April 23 edition, there were two sentences: "The cholera is prevailing in several places in the U. States. Clean up your premises." By May 30, 1849, Fort Smith had avoided the disease. But citizens were warned that, "The Cholera is spreading rapidly, in every direction. Our town has thus far escaped; we should feel

very thankful, and from the warning voice abroad, we should take such steps as to insure a continuance of good health." The people were admonished again to keep their premises clean and to use lime liberally. In another column of the May 30 *Herald* was a paragraph, "Lime is in great demand. A few boat loads would be sold for the cash immediately. Bring it in." It seems every facet of goods was exploited.

By June 1849 news was returning to Fort Smith from the travelers who had left in March and April. Most of the news was of a positive nature with the exceptions of the outrageous prices for supplies and the rains.

An aspect of this migration that gets no mention is how it affected the inhabitants of the Indian Country.¹⁰ The Indians had been removed from east of the Mississippi to the Indian Country and were expected to become farmers without consideration of to whom they would sell their produce. Beginning in March 1849, those inhabitants had a market brought to them, and some made the most of it. Existing letters and journals of emigrants tell of paying several times the Fort Smith prices, especially for corn. So, the Gold Rush created a rolling economy.

The effect of the 1849-50 Gold Rush locally was to bring Fort Smith, Arkansas, to national attention, more so than Indian Removal or any previous event that had occurred. Indian Removal did change the frontier. There were many frontier forts and towns, but none that provided the equivalent of an interstate highway to Santa Fe as Fort Smith did.

Trivia: The trip to the goldfields was estimated to take six months. Most of the Arkansas travelers took seven to eight months. Asa Scarborough and the pack-mule company who had been ridiculed at Fort Smith by General Arbuckle, and called "Green" by others, made the trip in four and one-half months.¹¹

End Notes

¹ Bessie L. Wright, *Diary of a Member of the First Mule Pack Train to Leave Fort Smith for California in 1849*, 3.

² Pricilla McArthur, *Arkansas in the Gold Rush*, (Little Rock, Ark., August House, 1986), 18.

³ Independence, Mo. Website, Queen City of the Trails, p. 2, <http://www.endofthoregontrail.org>.

⁴ *The Fort Smith Herald*, September 27, 1848, 1.

⁵ House of Representatives, 31st Congress, 1st Session, Ex. Doc. No. 45

⁶ The Santa Fe Trail to California, The Letters of Woolsey Teller, April 17, 1849, Teller sold his two machines before he left Fort Smith.

⁷ *The Fort Smith Herald*, March 7, 1848, p 1, col. 1.

⁸ Bessie L. Wright, *Diary of a Member of the First Mule Pack Train to Leave Fort Smith for California in 1849*, p 2, 3.

⁹ The Santa Fe Trail to California, the Letters of Woolsey Teller,

¹⁰ "Indian Country," not Indian Territory, is the term used in The Indian Intercourse Act, passed June 30, 1834

¹¹ Pricilla McArthur, *Arkansas in the Goldrush*, (Little Rock, Ark., August House, 1986), 186.

A Folk History of Slavery in Oklahoma

Interview with a Former Slave

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, the federal government organized an initiative to document the lives of former slaves in the United States. Members of the Federal Writers' Project (1936-1938) prepared these narratives, first published in 1941, which tell us of the lives of slaves held in bondage in the mid-nineteenth century. Prepared by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the state of Oklahoma, the following narrative is reproduced just as the writer in the WPA Federal Writers' Project originally typed it. This narrative was included to offer insight into the conditions in this area where slaves often were held by members of Indian tribes. Sarah Wilson's experiences give us a view of the life of a Cherokee Freedman in eastern Oklahoma and western Arkansas at the close of the Civil War.

SARAH WILSON
Age 87 Years of Age
Fort Gibson, Oklahoma

I was a Cherokee slave and now I am a Cherokee freedwoman, and besides that I am a quarter Cherokee my own self. And this is the way it is.

I was born in 1850 along the Arkansas river about half way between Fort Smith and old Fort Coffee and the Skullyville boat landing on the river. The farm place was on the north side of the river on the old wagon road what run from Fort Smith out to Fort Gibson, and that old road was like you could hardly call a road when I first remember seeing it. The ox teams bog down to they bellies in some places, and the wagon wheel mighty nigh bust on the big rocks in some places.

I remember seeing soldiers coming along that old road lots of times, and freighting wagons, and wagons what we all know carry mostly whiskey, and that was breaking the law, too. Them soldiers catch the man with that whiskey they sure put him up for a long time, less'n he put some silver in they hands. That's what my Uncle Nick say. That Uncle Nick a mean Negro, and he ought to know about tricks.

Like I tell you, I am quarter Cherokee. My mammy was named Adeline and she belong to old

Master Ben Johnson. Old Master Ben bring my grandmammy out to that Sequoyah district way back when they call it Arkansas, mammy tell me, and God only know who my mammy's pa is, but mine was old Master Ben's boy, Ned Johnson.

Old Master Ben come from Tennessee when he was still a young man, and he bring a whole passel of slaves and my mammy say they all was kin to one another, all the slaves I mean. He was a white man that married a Cherokee woman, and he was a devil on this earth. I don't want to talk about him none.

White folks was mean to us like the devil, and so I just let them pass. When I say my brothers and sisters I mean my half brothers and sisters, you know, but maybe some of them was my whole kin anyway, I don't know. They was Lottie that was sold off to a Starr because she wouldn't have a baby, and Ed, Dave, Ben, Jim and Ned.

My name is Sarah now but it was Annie until I was eight years old. My old Mistress' name was Annie and she name me that, and Mammy was afraid to change it until old Mistress died, then she change it. She hate old Mistress and that name too.

Lottie's name was Annie, too, but Mammy changed it in her own mind but she was afraid to say it out loud, a-feared she would get a whipping. When sister was sold off Mammy tell her to call herself Annie when she was leaving but call herself Lottie when she git over to the Starrs. And she done it too. I seen her after that and she was called Lottie all right.

The Negroes lived all huddled up in a bunch in little one-room log cabins with stick and mud chimneys. We lived in one, and it had beds for us children like shelves in the wall. Mammy used to help us up into them.

Grandmammy was mighty old and Mistress was old too. Grandmammy set on the Master's porch and minded the baby mostly. I think it was Young Master's. He was married to a Cherokee girl. They was several of the boys but only one girl, Nicie. The old Master's boys were Aaron, John, Ned, Cy and Nathan. They lived in a double log house made out of square hewed logs, and with a double fireplace out of rock where they warmed theirselves on one side and cooked on the other. They had a long front porch

where they set most of the time in the summer, and slept on it too.

There was over a hundred acres in the Master's farm, and it was all bottom land too, and maybe you think he let them slaves off easy! Work from daylight to dark! They all hated him and the overseer too, and before slavery ended my grandmammy was dead and old Mistress was dead and old Master was mighty feeble and Uncle Nick had run away to the North soldiers and they never got him back. He run away once before, about ten years before I was born, Mammy say, but the Cherokees went over in the Creek Nation and got him back that time.

The way he made the Negroes work so hard, old Master must have been trying to get rich. When they wouldn't stand for a whipping he would sell them.

I saw him sell a old woman and her son. Must have been my aunt. She was always pestering around trying to get something for herself, and one day she was cleaning the yard he seen her pick up something and put it inside her apron. He flew at her and cussed her, and started like he was going to hit her but she just stood right up to him and never budged, and when he come close she just screamed out loud and run at him with her fingers stuck out straight and jabbed him in the belly. He had a big soft belly, too and it hurt him. He seen she wasn't going to be afraid, and he set out to sell her. He went off on his horse to get some men to come and bid on her and her boy, and all us children was mighty scared about it.

They would have hangings at Fort Smith courthouse, and old Master would take a slave there sometimes to see the hanging, and that slave would come back and tell us all scary stories about the hanging.

One time he whipped a whole bunch of men on account of a fight in the quarters, and then he took them all to Fort Smith to see a hanging. He tied them all into the wagon, and when they had seen the hanging he asked them if they was scared of them dead men hanging up there. They all said yes, of course, but my old uncle Nick was a bad Negro and he said, "No, I aint afeared of them nor nothing else in this world", and old Master jumped on him while he was tied and beat him with a rope, and then when they got home he tied old Nick to a tree and took his shirt off and poured the cat-o-nine tails to him until he fainted away and fell over like he was dead. I never forget seeing all that blood all over my uncle,

and if I could hate that old Indian any more I guess I would, but I hated him all I could already I reckon.

Old Master wasn't the only hellion neither. Old Mistress just as bad, and she took most of her wrath out hitting us children all the time. She was afraid of the grown Negroes. Afraid of what they might do while old Master away, but she beat us children all the time.

She would call me, "Come here Annie!" and I wouldn't know what to do. If I went when she called "Annie" my mammy would beat me for answering to that name, and if I didn't go old Mistress would beat me for that. That made me hate both of them, and I got the devil in me and I wouldn't come to either one.

My grandmammy minded the Master's yard, and she set on the front porch all the time, and when I was called I would run to her and she wouldn't let anybody touch me.

When I was eight years old, old Mistress died, and Grandmammy told me why old Mistress picked on me so. She told me about me being half Mister Ned's blood. Then I knowed why Mister Ned would say, "Let her along, she got big, big blood in her", and then laugh.

Young Mister Ned was a devil, too. When his mammy died he went out and "blanket married." I mean he brung in a half white and a half Indian woman and just lived with her.

The slaves would get rations every Monday morning to do them all week.

The overseer would weigh and measure according to how many in the family, and if you run out you just starve till you get some more. We all know the overseer steal some of it for his own self but we can't do anything, so we get it from the old Master some other way.

One day I was carrying water from the spring and I run up on Grandmammy and Uncle Nick skinning a cow. "What you-all doing?", I say, and they say keep my mouth shut or they kill me. They was stealing from the Master to piece out down at the quarters with. Old Master had so many cows he never did count the difference.

I guess I wasn't any worse than any the rest of the Negroes, but I was bad to tell little lies. I carry scars on my legs to this day where Old Master whip me for lying, with a rawhide quirt he carry all the time for his horse. When I lie to him he just jump down off'n his horse and whip me good right there.

In slavery days we all ate sweet potatoes all the time. When they didn't measure out enough of the

*"The slaves would
get rations every
Monday morning to
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*The overseer would
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Cherokee freedwoman
Sarah Wilson, 1930s

tame kind we would go out in the woods and get the wild kind. They grewed along the river sand between where we lived and Wilson's Rock, out west of our place.

Then we had boiled sheep and goat, mostly goat, and milk and wild greens and corn pone. I think the goat meat was the best, but I aint had no teeth for forty years now, and a chunk of meat hurts my stomach. So I just eats grits mostly. Besides hoeing in the field, chopping sprouts, shearing sheep, carrying water, cutting firewood, picking cotton and sewing I was the one they picked to work Mistress' little garden where she raised things from seed they got in Fort Smith. Green peas and beans and radishes and things like that. If we raised a good garden she gave me a little of it, and if we had a poor one I got a little anyhow even when she didn't give it.

For clothes we had homespun cotton all the year round, but in winter we had a sheep skin jacket with the wool left on the inside. Sometimes sheep skin shoes with the wool on the inside and sometimes real cow leather shoes with wood peggings for winter, but always barefooted in summer, all the men and women too.

Lord, I never earned a dime of money in slave days for myself but plenty for the old Master. He would send us out to work the neighbor's field and he got paid for it, but we never did see any money.

I remember the first money I ever did see. It was a little while after we was free, and I found a greenback in the road at Fort Gibson and I didn't know what it was. Mammy said it was money and grabbed for it, but I was still a hell cat and I run with it. I went to the little sutler store and laid it down and pointed to a pitcher I been wanting. The man took the money and give me the pitcher, but I don't know to this day how much money it was and how much was the pitcher but I still got that pitcher put aways. It's all blue and white striped.

Most of the work I done off the plantation was sewing. I learned from my Granny and I loved to sew. That was about the only thing I was industrious in. When I was just a little bitsy girl I found a steel needle in the yard that belong to old Mistress. My mammy took it and I cried. She put it in her dress and started for the field. I cried so old Mistress found out why and made Mammy give me the needle for my own.

We had some neighbor Indians named Starr, and

Mrs. Starr used me sometimes to sew. She had nine boys and one girl, and she would sew up all they clothes at once to do for a year. She would cut out the cloth for about a week, and then send the word around to all the neighbors, and old Mistress would send me because she couldn't see good to sew. They would have stacks of drawers, shirts, pants and some dresses all cut out to sew up.

I was the only Negro that would set there and sew in that bunch of women, and they always talked to me nice and when they eat I get part of it too, out in the kitchen.

One Negro girl, Eula Davis, had a mistress sent her too, one time, but she wouldn't sew. She didn't like me because she said I was too white and she played off to spite the white people. She got sent home, too.

When old Mistress die I done all the sewing for the family almost. I could see good enough to go out before I was eight years old, and when I got to be about ten I was better than any other girl on the place for sewing.

I can still quilt without my glasses, and I have sewed all night long many a time while I was watching Young Master's baby after old Mistress died.

They was over a hundred acres in the plantation, and I don't know how many slaves, but before the War ended lots of the men had run away. Uncle Nick went to the North and never come home, and Grandmammy died about that time.

We was way down across the Red river in Texas at that time, close to Shawneetown of the Choctaw Nation but just across the river on the other side in Texas bottoms. Old Master took us there in covered wagons when the Yankee soldiers got too close by in the first part of the War. He hired the slaves out to Texas people because he didn't make any crops down there, and we all lived in kind of camps. That's how some of the men and my uncle Nick got to slip off to the north that way.

Old Master just rant and rave all the time we was in Texas. That's the first time I ever saw a doctor. Before that when a slave sick the old women give them herbs, but down there one day Old Master whip a Negro girl and she fall in the fire, and he had a doctor come out to fix her up where she was burnt. I remember Granny giving me clabber milk when I was sick, and when I was grown I found out it had had medicine in it.

Before freedom we didn't have no church, but slipped around to the other cabins and had a little

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Cherokee freedwoman
Sarah Wilson, 1930s

singing sometimes. Couldn't have anybody show us the letters either, and you better not let them catch you pick up a book even to look at the pictures, for it was against a Cherokee law to have a Negro read and write or to teach a Negro.

Some Negroes believed in buckeyes and charms but I never did. Old Master had some good boys, named Aaron, John, Ned, Cy and Nat, and they told us the charms was no good. Their sister Nicie told me too, and said when I was sick just come and tell her.

They didn't tell us anything about Christmas and New Year though, and all we done was work.

When the War was ended we was still in Texas, and when old Master got a letter from Fort Smith telling him the slaves was free he couldn't read, and Young Miss read it to him. He went wild and jumped on her and beat the devil out of her. Said she was lying to him. It near about killed him to let us loose, but he cooled down after awhile and said he would help us all get back home if we wanted to come.

Mammy told him she could bear her own expenses. I remember I didn't know what "expenses" was, and I thought it was something I was going to have to help carry all the way back.

It was a long time after he knew we was free before he told us. He tried to keep us, I reckon, but had to let us go. He died pretty soon after he told us, and some said his heart just broke and some said some Negroes poisoned him. I didn't know which.

Anyways we had to straggle back the best way we could, and me and Mammy just got along one way and another till we got to a ferry over the Red River and into Arkansas. Then we got some rides and walked some until we got to Fort Smith. They was a lot of Negro camps there and we stayed awhile and then started out to Fort Gibson because we heard they was giving rations out there. Mammy knew we was Cherokee anyway, I guess.

That trip was hell on earth. Nobody let us ride and it took us nearly two weeks to walk all that ways, and we nearly starved all the time. We was skin and bones and feet all bloody when we got to the Fort.

We came here to Four Mile Branch to where the Negroes was all settling down, and pretty soon Mammy died.

I married Oliver Wilson on January second, 1878. He used to belong to Mr. DeWitt Wilson of Tahlequah, and I think the old people used to live down at Wilson Rock because my husband used to know all about that place and the place where I was

borned. Old Mister DeWitt Wilson give me a pear tree the next year after I was married, and it is still out in my yard and bears every year.

I was married in a white and black checkedy calico apron that I washed for Mr. Tim Walker's mother Lizzie all day for, over close to Ft. Gibson, and I was sure a happy woman when I married that day. Him and me both got our land on our Cherokee freedman blood and I have lived to bury my husband and two great grandchildren so far.

"I bless God about Abraham Lincoln. I remember when my mammy sold pictures of him in Fort Smith for a Jew. If he give me my freedom I know he is in Heaven now."

Cherokee freedwoman
Sarah Wilson, 1930s

I bless God about Abraham

Lincoln. I remember when my mammy sold pictures of him in Fort Smith for a Jew. If he give me my freedom I know he is in Heaven now.

I heard a lot about Jefferson Davis in my life. During the War we hear the Negroes singing the soldier song about had Jeff Davis to a apple tree, and old Master tell about the time he know Jeff Davis. Old Master say Jeff Davis was just a dragoon soldier out of Fort Gibson, when he bring his family out here from Tennessee, and while they was on the road from Fort Smith to where they settled young Jeff Davis and some more dragoon

soldiers rid up and talked to him a long time. He say my grandmammy had a bundle on her head, and Jeff Davis say, "Where you going, Aunty?" and she was tired and mad and she said, "I don't know, to Hell I reckon," and all the white soldiers laughed at her and made her that much madder.

I joined the Four Mile Branch church in 1879 and Sam Solomon was a Creek Negro and the first preacher I ever heard preach. Everybody ought to be in the church and ready for that better home on the other side.

All the old slaves I know are dead excepting two, and I will be going pretty soon I reckon, but I'm glad I lived to see the day the Negroes got the right treatment if they work good and behave themselves right. They don't have to have no pass to walk abroad no more, and they can all read and write now, but it's a tarnation shame some of them go and read the wrong kind of things anyways.

SOURCES

George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Series One*, Vol. 7, Oklahoma and Mississippi Narratives; (Greenwood Publishing Company, Westport, Connecticut, 1972), 344-353.

The Library of Congress > American Memory Recordings may be heard on the website of the Library of Congress, *Voices from the Days of Slavery, American Memory*: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/>

R. Earl Farnsworth

A Biography of Earl Farnsworth

A Daughter Remembers

By Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

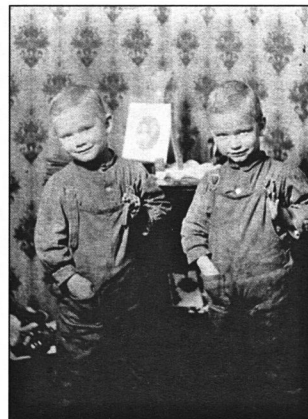
Without a doubt, the distinctive, highly legible signature at the top of the page resides on thousands of certificates and diplomas throughout Fort Smith and the surrounding area. Who was this man who is so well remembered by our local citizens? The answer depends on who responds because Earl Farnsworth wore many hats in our community and was a man of varied talents and interests. I will attempt to answer this question as best I can.

Readers will remember my father, R. Earl Farnsworth, as a successful Fort Smith educator for forty-three years. Starting as a printing teacher at Fort Smith Junior High (now Darby) he next became the school's dean of boys and later principal during the 1930s and '40s. In 1949, he was appointed principal of Fort Smith's only high school, now named Northside High School. He remained in that position for twenty-four years. At that time Fort Smith High School was one of the largest high schools in the state.



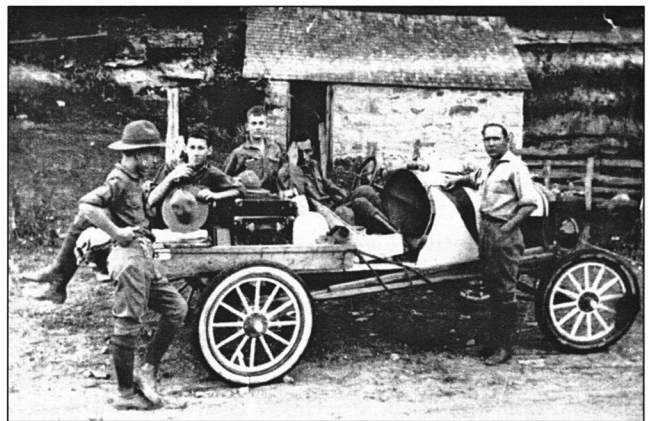
Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson
R. EARL FARNSWORTH, principal of Fort Smith High School, 1949-73, is shown in the 1950s.

How shall I tell the story of my father and how his life was intertwined with Fort Smith in the mid-twentieth century? When asked to write this memoir, I accepted the challenge immediately, but was quickly bogged down by the enormity of the challenge. My father truly fit the description of a Renaissance man, a man of a thousand interests and innumerable talents. How did this happen? What influences caused him to be so hard-working and conscientious, so curious about



Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

(LEFT) Little boys in Douglass, Kansas. The boys were always expected to be helpful at home. In their overalls, Earl, left, and Merle seem to have finished their chores. **(RIGHT)** The four Farnsworth children, Earl, Dorothy, Lula, and Merle.



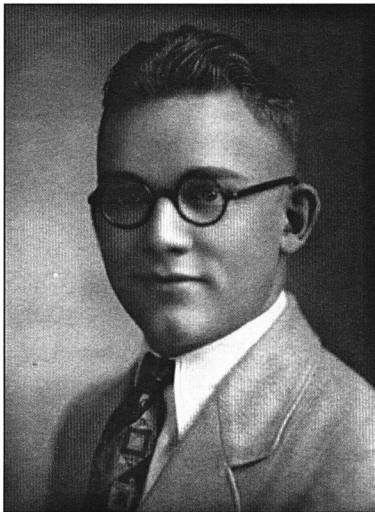
Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

EARL FARNSWORTH, standing in center back, enjoys his first big adventure away from home with his Douglass Boy Scout troop. He was probably in his teens.

the world, and so dedicated to the young people of Fort Smith and the citizens of his chosen home city?

Earl and his twin brother, Merle, were born November 26, 1907, in Douglass, Kansas, a small town of about 800 residents in the southeastern part of the state. The twins had an older sister, Lula, and later, a

younger sister, Dorothy. Their father and mother grew up in Kansas and probably were schoolmates. The family worshiped regularly at the First Christian Church of Douglass. Earl's deep Christian faith was the core of his entire life, impacting every facet of his personal and public life. His father worked at various jobs, including one



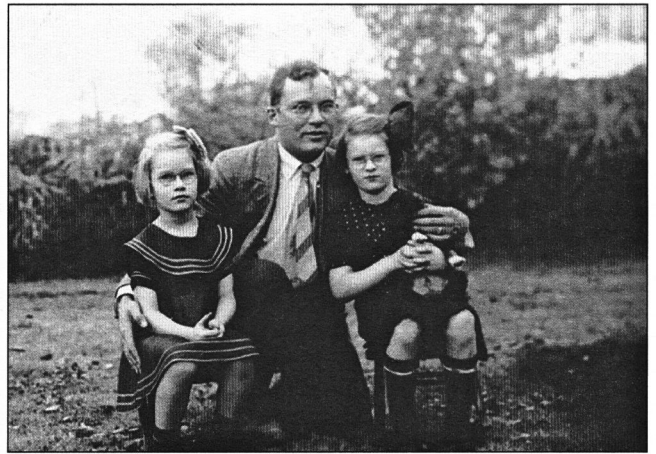
Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson
EARL FARNSWORTH as a high school graduate.

with the local water district and later as a carpenter. I remember when my family bought our vintage 1890s home on North Fourteenth Street; it still had fixtures for gas lights and minimal electricity. My grandfather came from Kansas and spent weeks totally rewiring our new home. He was a dear, gentle soul, very different from his wife, my grandmother.

Earl's mother was unique for her day in some of her attitudes toward child raising—especially her twin boys. A very dominant personality, my grandmother felt, "Boys need to know how to take care of themselves and be useful." As a consequence, Earl and Merle were taught not only the usual skills common for boys of their day, but also what we would call household skills. Both boys used those skills to advantage all their lives. They became excellent cooks and loved to cook for large groups. Just ask the Boy Scouts...just ask their home churches and school faculties. Both boys proved to be musically talented. Merle learned to play the piano and later the organ, then accompanied my father, who loved to sing and had a beautiful tenor voice.

Merle learned to crochet and made many beautiful crocheted items, including large bedspreads. Earl loved knitting and continued to knit all his life. During World War II, he knitted sweaters for the soldiers that were distributed through the Red Cross. I remember when my mother got her first electric Singer sewing machine. Daddy was fascinated and taught himself to sew. He soon made a slipcover for our large couch, which of course, we called a divan. "Don't buy it if you can make it yourself," was a way of life in the homes of both brothers. As a child I accepted the fact that my father's hands were always busy with some task, often creating something. Grandmother said, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop," and we all took it to heart.

While still a young school boy, Earl was hired to



Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

(ABOVE) Daddy Earl with daughters Rosemary and Patricia in the 1930s before brother Justin's birth in 1938.

(BELOW) Earl and Mildred Farnsworth at their home on North Fourteenth Street in the 1940s.



work for the local newspaper, *The Douglass Tribune*. This proved to be a job he loved and which set him on his future career path. "I never intended to teach," he once said. "I thought I would be a newspaper editor."

When the brothers graduated from Douglass High School, they enrolled in Kansas State Teachers College in Pittsburg, Kansas. They worked hard at many jobs to earn their way through college. Because they knew how to take care of themselves, they rented the basement of a large home. They became totally self-sufficient, preparing their own meals. This was often supplemented by boxes of food from home arriving by train. Because of Earl's interest in the newspaper world, he majored in industrial arts with an emphasis on printing. Merle's passion was languages; he ultimately became head of the language department at Tahlequah State College in Oklahoma.

After graduation in 1929, Earl married his college sweetheart, Mildred Mendenhall of Greensburg, Indiana. He accepted his first teaching job as printing teacher at Fort Smith Junior High in 1930. Mildred was also a teacher, with a degree in French. Fort Smith became



Courtesy photo

FORT SMITH JUNIOR HIGH TEACHERS AND STAFF MEMBERS are shown in the 1940s. From left are Edna Grigsby, Wilma Jimerson, Nora Speer, Evelyn Holt, Elly McCauley, unidentified, Hazel Presson, Helen Garner, Edna Earle Massey, Hazel Evitts, Newell Word, Fru Ella Carolan, Paul Eddy, Earl Farnsworth, Clifton Clark, Coly Clark, and Lucy McGraw Holt.

their home for the rest of their lives. Their first child was daughter Patricia, born in 1931. Less than a year later, I arrived in 1932. Much-wanted son, Justin Earl, was born in 1938.

Growing up in the Farnsworth household, I knew that my father was greatly respected and loved by many in our community. But while still a child I was not especially aware of my dad's professional life, which grew in influence locally as well as in the state. He was also well respected nationally. Through the years he held numerous offices in educational groups. He received the first honorary life membership ever awarded by the Arkansas Secondary School Principals Association. He was named administrator of the year by the High School Press Association and was the recipient of many other awards. I remember the excitement in our family when Daddy was the recipient of the Exchange Club's Book of Golden Deeds award in 1947. He was the fourth to receive this award presented to recognize dedicated volunteers, and it is still given annually. I treasure the little golden book he received that night, and enjoy wearing it on a gold chain.

My father never neglected his own continuing education, receiving a master's degree at the University

of Missouri in 1937. Other graduate studies were completed later at the University of Arkansas and Fresno State College in California. I was aware as a child when overhearing my parents talking together that he occasionally received job offers from large school districts in other states. This would have naturally involved a move for our family, but I don't think he was ever seriously tempted. His heart was in Fort Smith, and remained that way until his death in 1981.

Being a teacher in Fort Smith in the 1930s meant receiving a salary for only nine months of the year. Years later, I was old enough to remember the excitement when the school board was finally able to pay their teachers year round. Mother told me a story about the Fort Smith schools running out of money to pay the teachers one spring in the early 1930s... Depression days. Perhaps the biggest shock to me was that the teachers did not walk out; they stayed and taught. When asked how our family survived, she said that they used their small savings. Fortunately, milk was only five cents a quart, and she said they immediately planted a big garden. It was a remarkable era. No wonder teaching was such a respected career in those days...a noble profession.



Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF at Fort Smith Junior High in the 1940s: from left, Newell Word, dean of girls, Earl Farnsworth, principal, and Paul Eddy, dean of boys.

To supplement our family's income my father and his friend at junior high, Coach Buck Wells, started a successful summer program for children called "Stay at Home Camp." It was held in the junior high gymnasium and swimming pool. Boys came for the morning activities; girls had a similar program in the afternoon. We three Farnsworth kids helped at Stay at Home Camp for many summers. Activities for the campers included games, singing, wood crafts under the guidance of Duval Elementary teacher Miss Vera Heard, and swimming lessons with Coach Wells. How the kids loved using Miss Heard's power saws! The sessions ended with story time. My sister and I usually read the story aloud to the little girls while they sprawled on the gym floor, happy and exhausted from their afternoon of fun.

Patricia, Justin and I would probably tell you that our father was a loving but firm disciplinarian. By his example, we knew what his expectations were for us. To disappoint him would have been unthinkable. Our home was always full of friends, pets, laughter, music, and creative activities of every imaginable kind. Perhaps his greatest gift to his children is what I call "a world view," something not too common in Arkansas in the 1930s and '40s. We children knew we were free to choose a life anywhere in the world, and we did. Patricia married and lived on the East Coast. I married a Californian and settled in Fresno. Justin spread his wings and spent most of his adult life in Europe. But the close Farnsworth family tie was never broken and remains strong among the three siblings to this day.

That closeness is not surprising because, fortunately, my father liked to write letters. He had always written a letter to his parents every week. As his three children moved away from Fort Smith, Daddy began a practice that continued the rest of his life. My last letter from him is dated the day before his death. Every Sunday afternoon he returned to his office and wrote what we always called "the family letter." It was sent not only to the three of us



Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

YOUNG FARNSWORTH CHILDREN at home, from left, Rosemary, Patricia, and Justin.



Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

EACH DAY AT FORT SMITH JUNIOR HIGH started with an inspirational morning meditation, written by Mr. Farnsworth and then read on the public address system. This tradition continued also at Fort Smith Senior High until Farnsworth's retirement in 1973.

but also to his immediate family, many relatives and close friends. The letter contained news of Mother, his dog, Nicky, what had happened at school and church, what was blooming in his garden that week, some comments on local and world events, and always questions to us about our lives. We were expected to occasionally respond, of course. He passed on news that he had received from family, and so I heard about Justin and Patricia, and they knew what I was doing, too. Again, what a gift he was giving to us, which I just took for granted at the time. Originally the letters were multiple carbon copies, but the advent of 1950s high-tech brought ditto machine copies from Daddy. Every Thursday in Fresno, I received my smeary purple family letter, and I was gravely disappointed if it arrived a day late.

There are two aspects of Earl Farnsworth's long teaching career that seem to be especially remembered by his former students. Early in his tenure as principal of Fort Smith Junior High, he started beginning each school day with what he called the morning meditation. Using

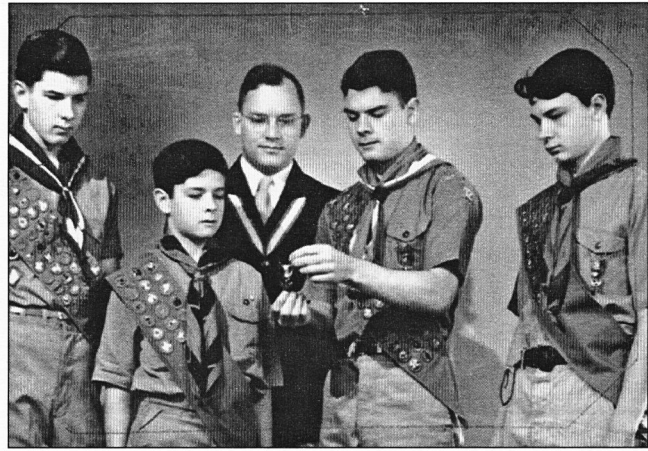


Photos courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

(TOP LEFT) Earl Farnsworth's Boy Scout Troop 12 was sponsored by Central Presbyterian Church. Earl is in the back row, left, beside the pastor, Reverend Elbert Hefner.

(ABOVE RIGHT) This group of area Boy Scouts is ready for a camping trip at New Mexico's Philmont Scout Ranch. "Skipper" Farnsworth, who sometimes drove the bus, for many years took groups of Scouts for a grand adventure. In the first row are, from left, Harvey Beard, Jimmy Dowell, Dwight Sample, Crawford Greene, Loyd Rainer, and L.M.R. "Mac" Rodgers. In the back row are Harold Ford, Bernard Stein, Raymond Sayers, Dick Adkinson, Earl Farnsworth, John Baugh, and Paul Gean.

(LEFT) All Eagle Scouts, Troop 12's legendary Woods brothers present youngest brother Danny his Eagle Award on February 6, 1942. Scout Master Earl Farnsworth looks on with pride. From left are Pendleton, Dan, Farnsworth, Powell, and Gaines.



the public address system that was in every classroom, he took a few minutes to speak to the students and faculty. The meditation was not a sermon, but there were certainly Christian overtones and values expressed. He spoke of current events in the nation, city, and school, always pointing out ethical values worth attaining. Sometimes there was poetry, sometimes a quote from a respected author, or perhaps a paraphrased quote from scripture. It was, even then, a highly unusual thing to do in a public school. But that one thing seems to be what is most remembered. My father would be very pleased to know that. He estimated that he wrote and presented about 3,800 meditations during his teaching career.

The other aspect of his years at Northside mentioned with both respect and appreciation is how he shepherded the high school through the difficult days of integration in Arkansas. He managed to bring the school into compliance with the Civil Rights Act, and the school was integrated peacefully. His talents as a mediator and peacemaker were probably never needed so extensively as during that period in 1966 and 1967. Watching the six o'clock TV news in California, I feared for many months that I would see my father on the screen dealing with a terrible racial incident of some sort. Fortunately, that never happened because of

his skillful leadership.

I should go no further in this account of my father's life without mentioning his love of Boy Scouting. He was first a Scout as a young boy in Kansas. According to longtime Fort Smith resident, Hugh "Blackie" Hammersly, he and a friend were responsible for convincing their new, young, printing teacher at junior high to come to Central Presbyterian Church. They wanted him to take over the leadership of their Boy Scout Troop 12. And so he did, and another very important aspect of my father's life began. I cannot remember when he was not totally involved in scouting, even before he had a son of his own. Troop 12 boys were in and out of our house all of my life. I loved attending their Court of Honor ceremonies held in a real courtroom downtown. I loved the Eagle Scout award ceremonies and was so proud later when my father was presented with Scouting's highest honor, the Silver Beaver Award. Membership in Troop 12 became a coveted experience.

The Boy Scout Camp at Rudy, Arkansas, was the camp used by the Westark Council in the years my father led Troop 12. Daddy loved that camp and was responsible for many of the gradual improvements to the site. He directed camps there for many years, and we were free to use the

Camp Rudy facility for our family, as well as for Mother's Girl Scout troop. Only once do I recall that he directed another camp, and that was in Louisiana on Caddo Lake, a very large Boy Scout camp. Our family went along, living in a tiny rented house in nearby Mooringsport. I'll never forget how hot it was that summer. Many evenings we were invited to witness the Scouts' activities and got to see our father initiated into Scouting's Order of the Arrow, an impressive ceremony on the lake.

In later years the Phillips Oil family donated a huge tract of land in New Mexico to the Boys Scouts of America. My father took bus loads of area scouts for several weeks of camping at Philmont Scout Ranch, continuing that tradition for many years. The Scouts rode horseback, hiked the high mountains, cooked their own meals, and learned to be self-sufficient in the wild. Many men in Fort Smith recall those challenging adventure trips with fondness and amazement. This was Boy Scouting at its best.

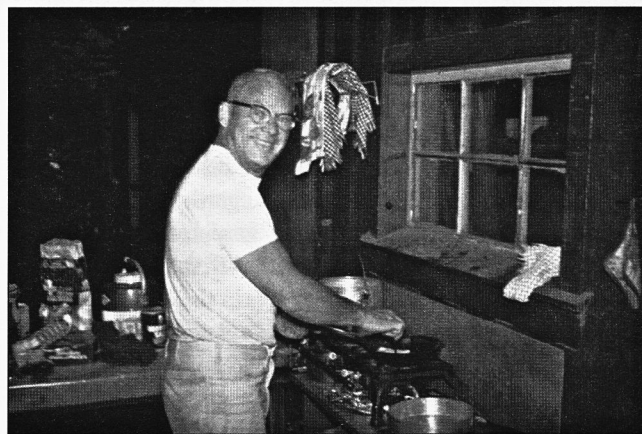
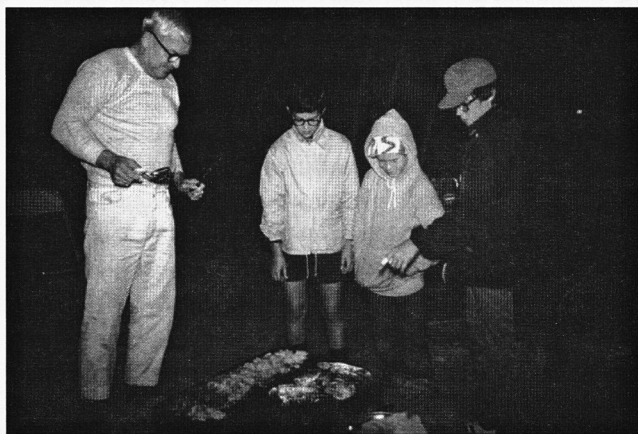
It was during these scouting years that Mr. Farnsworth acquired his favorite nickname, "Skipper." By the time I was in high school, that affectionate term was in common use and continued until his death. All his grandchildren and sons-in-law called him Skipper. He was never called Grandpa, he was Skipper, and the most entertaining, creative grandfather any child could ever hope to have. My parents spent long summer vacations with us in California, and my children benefited from his many interests. We visited every California mission. He cooked amazing Dutch oven meals as we camped in the Sierras. It seemed almost every summer he had a new craft project that we all joined in. Skipper was also a voracious reader, from poetry and nonfiction to all the latest fiction best sellers. We subscribed to the *Saturday Evening Post*, his very favorite magazine. From the Norman Rockwell cover to the Horatio Hornblower stories inside, he read it all. When he read aloud to us, he was captivating. I recall being almost hysterical with laughter when he read aloud *Wanda*

Hickey's Night of Golden Memories by Jean Shepherd.

The list of his varied interests was extensive. He taught us how to decorate Christmas balls and fragile blown eggs with sparkles and jewels provided by friends and faculty. He made prize-winning latch-hook rugs; he painted with oils, and the grandchildren painted river rocks; he taught himself calligraphy and made us beautiful stationery with our initials; he taught his Boy Scouts to carve clever neckerchief slides and to do Indian beadwork. Our evening campfires were a joy to all as he taught the nearby campers wonderful songs with many verses...and many hand movements. We sang everything from "Let me Call you Sweetheart" to the crazy song about the billboard. He knew campfire games, tricks, and endless numbers of funny skits. Our Fresno friends loved him as we did, and he became the Skipper of their families, too. Everyone wanted to camp with us in the mountains or the beach to be with Skipper. And through all of these good times, what was he doing? Why, taking photographs, of course.

Photography became one of his lifelong consuming interests while he was principal at junior high school. He began taking 35 millimeter slides, first in black and white, and later in color. His interesting life was recorded with his camera until his death. For several years in the 1940s, we had a small darkroom in part of our kitchen, where he spent hours developing and printing his own photos. This interest was always incorporated with our family's love of travel, whether on a driving trip to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast or on our longest family trip when I was in high school. We traveled through the West, enjoying the Grand Canyon, Carlsbad Caverns, and many other national parks. We then drove all the way into Mexico to Monterrey. On that trip of several weeks, I recall eating in a restaurant only a couple of times. My father cooked for us on a tiny Bunsen burner sometimes along the roadside. And all the time, he was taking pictures.

Following my parents' retirement, trips to Europe and beautiful sites in Canada and the United States were



Photos courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

(LEFT) Summer meant camping vacations with daughter Rosemary's family and California friends. Skipper cooks breakfast with the morning catch of the day. (RIGHT) Skipper's camping meals were legendary wherever he traveled. He often produced amazing foods from his collection of Dutch ovens.



Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

AFTER RETIREMENT, *Earl Farnsworth sometimes was invited to preach the sermon at Presbyterian churches without a minister.*

documented by his wonderful photographs. His slide-show presentations became a popular program offered to clubs and groups in Fort Smith and the surrounding area. Ultimately, he donated more than 2,000 colored slides to the visual aids department of Fort Smith's Northside High School library.

Earlier in this narrative, I mentioned my father's deep Christian faith and how his faith impacted every facet of his life. When he and mother married, he began attending the Presbyterian Church with her and came to love and embrace the church's theology. During his lifetime he held almost every position in the church—Sunday school teacher of an adult class until his death, deacon, elder, choir member, and during the 1950s, he was even our choir director. He was also active in the National Presbyterian Church USA and was a delegate to the church general assembly many times. He was certainly at home in our church kitchen and frequently prepared meals for congregational dinners and the Men's Group Breakfast. The most surprising aspect of his involvement with his church came after his retirement. My father became a lay preacher and filled the pulpit in small churches in the area that were without a regular pastor. He truly loved sharing his faith with others, but most importantly, he lived it.

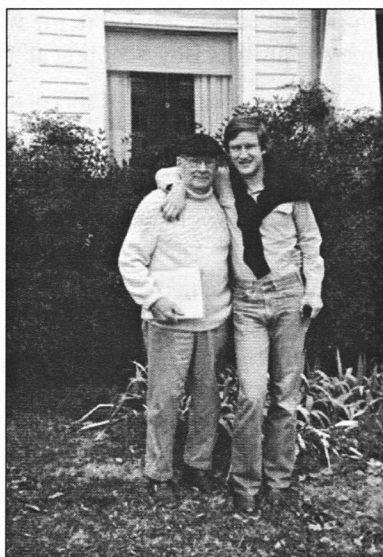
Fort Smith residents of all denominations will remember the Central Presbyterian Church annual Rose Festival, at which time he often sang the familiar "I Come to the Garden Alone." Yes, roses were his favorite flower and were the centerpiece of his home garden. Every Sunday, he took a bouquet from his garden for his adult class to enjoy then sent it home with different church members afterward. His membership in the local Rose Society brought him great pleasure, and again this was especially true after his retirement.

Flowers were not the only thing growing in Daddy's garden. We enjoyed his homegrown vegetables throughout every summer. Before lunch in the summer, (we called it dinner) one of us children would be sent to the garden to pick some lettuce. This, of course, would turn into



Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

ON A TRAIN IN GERMANY, *Earl and Mildred Farnsworth enjoy their first trip to Europe.*



Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

EARL AND SON JUSTIN *in the 1970s. Justin lived and worked in Europe for more than twenty years.*

delicious wilted lettuce salad. He may have had the first World War II Victory Garden in Fort Smith. As the need grew he gardened empty plots in other people's yards, increasing the yield, always to share with others.

As 1973 approached, Skipper began to make plans for retirement... travel would be an important part of the plan. A few years earlier my parents

had purchased an Airstream trailer and thoroughly enjoyed vacationing in it. Later it was replaced by a motor home, and whatever vehicle he was driving became the lead of a family convoy, as my family and Patricia's family traveled together throughout the West. Often accompanying Skipper and Mildred on their driving trips would be young Aron Tallent of Fort Smith, who became like a second son to my parents during his high school and college years. Aron loved to drive, and my father loved to navigate and take pictures. It was a fortuitous combination for everyone. Later, Aron's wife, Beverly, fit right into our family group, providing us with a younger brother and sister.

My brother, Justin, was living in Europe by this time, first in the Netherlands, then in Germany, and later in Paris for more than twenty years. On my parents' first visit to Germany to visit Justin, Skipper indulged a lifelong dream and bought himself a sports car, a little red MG. Was I surprised? You bet I was, but also very happy that

he was finally doing something special for himself. What fun he and my mother had in that little car.

Skipper's highly visible role in Fort Smith did not go unnoticed in the city. When he announced his retirement would be in July 1973, the city fathers took notice. Earl Farnsworth Week was declared by proclamation of Mayor Jack Freeze. The week of May 13-20, 1973, was a week of celebrations in his honor,

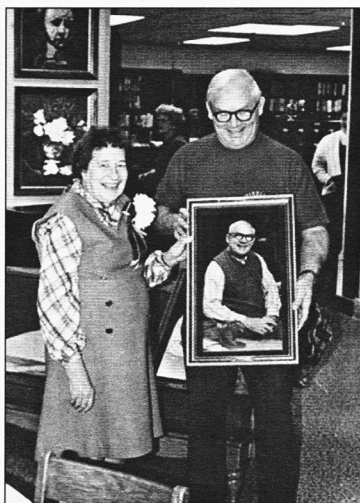
including banquets, a concert, the announcement of a Earl Farnsworth college scholarship in his name, radio and TV interviews, and a full-page article with photographs in the *Fort Smith Times Record*. It was an honor richly deserved.

Tragedy struck the Farnsworth family in the late 1970s when Skipper experienced his first heart attack. While he was recuperating in the hospital, his twin brother, Merle, and wife Lucille were killed in a head-on collision outside of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where they lived. They were on their way to Fort Smith to visit my father. His deep faith sustained him through those dark days.

As Daddy recovered, he resumed doing some substitute teaching in Fort Smith schools and loved it. He was in such demand he could have taught each day of the week. He taught every grade, including kindergarten. Substitute teaching kept him busy and in touch with the schools, as well as provided the funds he stashed away for travel.

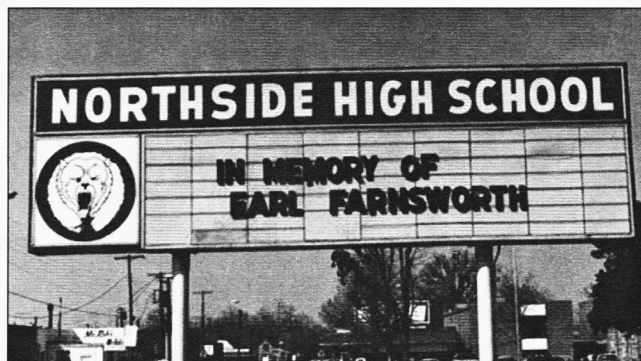
Earl Farnsworth stayed active, busy, and involved with family and friends until the last day of his life. Because my mother had macular degeneration, she had been legally blind since the 1970s. On Tuesday morning, February 10, 1981, Skipper was up early as usual. He fixed my mother's breakfast and prepared and delivered breakfast to a frail elderly neighbor. Next he drove to a local rest home, which he did every Tuesday morning. He visited with the residents, then led them in an enjoyable morning of group singing. Returning home, he fixed lunch for himself and Mildred, walked toward his living room to enjoy a little nap, and died instantly of a heart attack. He was only seventy-three. How appropriate that this man who devoted his life to others was doing what he loved to the very last instant of his life.

Following the funeral services, I brought my mother to stay with my family in Fresno, where she lived until



Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

FORT SMITH HIGH SCHOOL faculty presented their retiring principal with a large photo of himself in his office "where the door was always open."



Courtesy of Rosemary Farnsworth Erickson

A SIGN AT NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL honors Earl Farnsworth after his death in 1981.

March 1987. Earl and Mildred are buried side by side in Roselawn Cemetery in Fort Smith; their matching grave markers are of rose marble. Mother's stone has a treble clef to recognize her deep love of music, while Daddy's stone has his name engraved in his familiar script...R .Earl Farnsworth...with a single rose beside it.

About Earl Farnsworth's Adult Children

Patricia Farnsworth married Dewey Lee Yoder from Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, in 1953. They met at the University of Arkansas, where track star, Lee, was a U.S. team member in the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, Finland, where he ran the 400 meter hurdles there. Both were teachers in Pennsylvania until their retirements. At that time they moved to the Outer Banks of North Carolina and live in Kill Devil Hills. They are avid bird watchers and have traveled all over the United States, as well as to every other continent to view birds in their natural habitat. The Yoders have three married daughters, three granddaughters and one grandson.

Rosemary Farnsworth married her Army sweetheart, Leland Erickson of California, a week after earning a degree from the University of Arkansas. After returning to Fresno, California, Lee completed his degree in mechanical engineering at Fresno State while Rosemary taught first grade. They have a son in Colorado, also an engineer, and a daughter in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Four grandsons and two granddaughters complete the Erickson family. Now retired, Rosemary's three careers included teaching, five years as editor of an Armenian English Language newspaper, and thirteen creative years running her own craft business.

Justin Farnsworth earned an electrical engineering degree at the University of Arkansas. Working for Litton Industries, he helped design an inertial navigation system used to navigate commercial airplanes. Based in Paris, France, he was head of Litton's European Aero Products Division for many years. Justin spent twenty-nine years in Europe, mainly in Paris. He has one daughter and two granddaughters in France. Now happily retired, Justin is a gentleman farmer near Conway, Arkansas.

John Heskitt Wright

Mayor of Fort Smith, 1917

By William Ryan Hargis

Since the first Fort Smith mayoral election in 1841, more than twenty mayors have served in the office for one year or less. In the early years of Fort Smith, this was a common occurrence, but since 1886, John Heskitt Wright is the only man elected to the office to have the abashing distinction of serving such a short term.¹ In a time when the political climate was as hot as ever in Fort Smith, Wright's detractors were after him as soon as his name was mentioned as a possible mayoral candidate, and they did not give up until he was forced out of public office. Although it took him only a little more than a decade in Fort Smith to reach the mayor's office, it also took him less than six months to be ousted. Nevertheless, Wright made a positive impact on the city during his short term, and he continued to live and work in Fort Smith until his death in 1951.

J. H. Wright (as he became known) was born to Dr. John W. Wright on March 12, 1870, in Coshocton, Ohio. There are few known details of Wright's life before he arrived in Fort Smith. The details that are known about Wright are that his first job as a boy was working as a telegraph operator in Ohio, and by 1900, Wright had began to work in the field that would bring him to Fort Smith, the railroad business.² Wright began his railroad career in the 1890s in Wellston, Ohio, as a train dispatcher. Large coal beds were discovered in Wellston in the late nineteenth century and, very much like the region around Fort Smith during the same era, the area became a logical place for railroads to be built. Possibly seeing the correlation between the two areas and finding an opportunity to move up a few rungs on the career ladder, J. H. Wright moved to Fort Smith and was at the helm of a local railroad company by 1904.³

J. H. Wright's first job in Arkansas came by way of the Arkansas Central Railroad. There had been two Arkansas Central Railroads in the state, both started in the late nineteenth century. The first Arkansas Central was incorporated in 1871, and ran from Helena to Clarendon. This railroad was reorganized as the Arkansas Midland in 1874, and later acquired by Jay Gould's St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and Southern in 1901, just a few months before J. H. Wright left Ohio for Fort Smith.

The Arkansas Central Railroad for which Wright worked was incorporated in 1897 by Charles C. Godman of Chicago and Joseph H. Larimer of Peru, Indiana. These men started the company with the intent to build

a road from Fort Smith to Paris, and later on to Little Rock. Similar to the railroad that Wright worked for in Ohio, the Arkansas Central was created with the coal mines of the area in mind.⁴

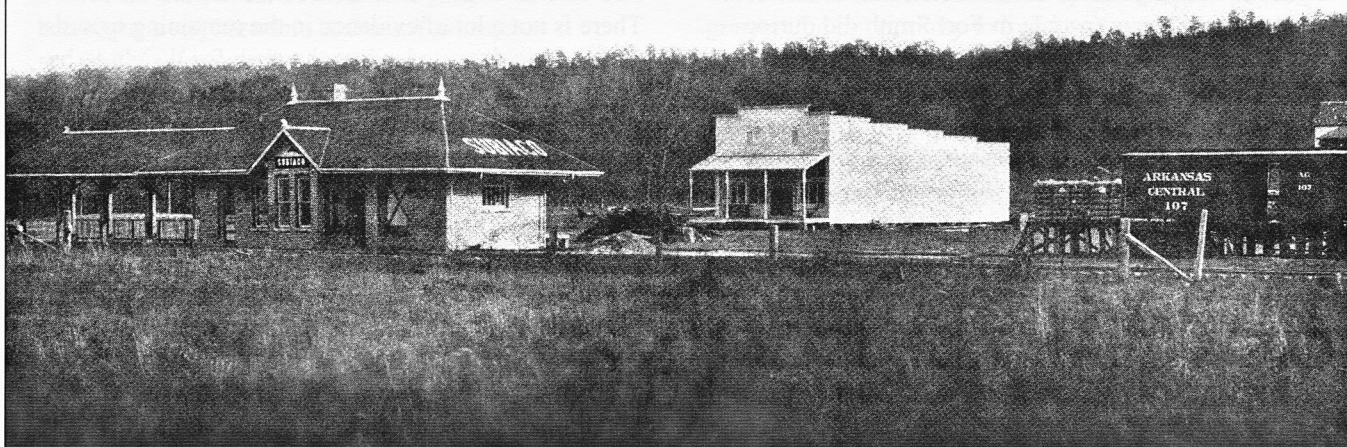
Before J. H. Wright became the president of the Arkansas Central, the railroad had a few hardships and shake-ups. In 1898, the Arkansas Central went into receivership and was reorganized. When the dust settled, Jay Gould owned 98.9 percent of the Arkansas Central. Nonetheless, the railroad's economic issues were virtually



Image from the *Southwest American*
J. H. WRIGHT

cured, and the road continued to be built toward Paris, reaching the coal fields in 1900. In 1904, when J. H. Wright became the new president and treasurer of the Arkansas Central, things were running smoothly and expansion was on the horizon.⁵

Wright's first real impact on western Arkansas was felt in 1908. About fifty miles east of Fort Smith sat the small Catholic abbey of Subiaco. When J. H. Wright arrived in Fort Smith, there was no town or rail transportation around Subiaco Abbey. With the original charter of the Arkansas Central Railroad, the rails stopped in Paris, five miles short of reaching the Order of St. Benedict. In 1908, this transportation issue came to an end. Wright, along with three other men, formed the Subiaco Traction Company with plans of putting new rails from Paris to Subiaco. Originally, tracks were being laid through the small town of Spielerville, but the group had to change its plans and thus sited a new town,



Courtesy of A Place Called Subiaco

THE NEW TOWN OF SUBIACO, ARKANSAS, is shown in 1909.

Subiaco. The new road formally opened on June 30, 1909. These two railroads worked on the same line but remained independent companies. During the ceremony, it was zealously predicted that the railroad would soon become the Atlantic, Subiaco, and Pacific Railroad and International Navigation Company. The Subiaco Traction Company was then renamed Paris, Subiaco, and Eastern Railroad. Two weeks later it was again renamed Fort Smith, Subiaco, and Eastern Railroad.⁶

Wright continued as president and treasurer of the Arkansas Central and also became the treasurer of the Fort Smith, Subiaco, and Eastern in 1911. He eventually resigned his position with the Arkansas Central to become president of the Fort Smith, Subiaco, and Eastern, a title that he held until he was elected mayor of Fort Smith.⁷ Just a few years after J. H. Wright left the business, the railroad was sold to the American Construction Company and was renamed the Fort Smith, Subiaco, and Rock Island. Trains continued to run along this line until 1949. The track now exists only as a memory.⁸

J. H. Wright's first contributions to the area were made in the railroad business, and that period of his life seemed to run quite smoothly. Unfortunately for Wright, his political career was not as smooth. To understand the political climate of Fort Smith in 1910s, one would have to understand how Fort Smith residents received their information. There was no local radio or television news like we have today. The first local radio broadcaster was not licensed until 1922, and the first local television

station was not broadcasting until 1953.⁹ The news of the day was projected from the local newspapers: the *Fort Smith Times Record* and the *Southwest American*.

Fort Smith residents had the option to receive the *Southwest American* in the morning or the *Times Record* in the evening. These two papers were bitter rivals, and it was customary to find snarky jabs about the opposing paper on the front page of both newspapers. As the mayoral election of 1917 heated up, the newspapers took sides, publicly declaring allegiance to their candidate of choice. The *Times Record* supported Fagan Bourland and the *Southwest American* favored John H. Wright.¹⁰ The papers reported not only the facts about the candidates, but also their opinions and any rumors that the writers may have heard.

The most damning of the rumors that followed Wright around was about his poll tax. To be a legal voter or candidate for political office in Fort Smith during this era, one must have paid his poll tax between the first Monday in January and the Saturday preceding the first Monday in July of the previous year.¹¹ In this case, it would have been January 3 to July 1, 1916. The *Times Record* claimed that Wright did not pay his poll tax in time, but the *Southwest American* wrote that Wright had already taken care of the tax. Since both of these papers had already pledged their allegiance to their candidates of choice, neither of these claims should have been surprising to the reader.

To answer the question of whether J. H. Wright paid

his poll taxes was a matter of perspective, which gave both newspapers the chance to claim their side of the story was correct. In fact, according to a signed affidavit, Wright had received a tax receipt on April 10, 1916, well within the time limit to be an eligible voter and a candidate for mayor. But according to the delinquent tax collector, Clarence Owensby, Wright's taxes were not paid until November 4, 1916, five months after the deadline.¹² It turns out that everyone was right. J. H. Wright's assistant gave the tax collector a blank check to pay his taxes, as many people in Fort Smith did during this time; the check was signed and dated on April 6, 1916. At this point, Wright did not think twice about it and went on with his life. Apparently, the blank check was not properly filled in and cashed, and it seemed as if Wright did not attempt to pay his taxes. In November, he was approached by the deputy sheriff about his delinquent taxes, and Wright immediately paid his taxes again at this point to clear up any confusion.

The problem was that even though the taxpayer and the tax collector both admitted that the taxes were paid on time, the tax receipt shows that they were paid in November, well past the deadline for voters and candidates to pay. What seems clear, and what both newspapers would have agreed upon, is that Wright had the money and the intent to pay his poll taxes on time and that he paid the taxes whenever he was approached about the issue.¹³ This issue not only caused doubt among the voters of Fort Smith, but also became a dark cloud of uncertainty that followed Wright through the entire campaign and the first part of his short term as mayor.

J. H. Wright was elected mayor on April 3, 1917. His opponent, a familiar opponent of almost anyone who campaigned for the mayor's spot in Fort Smith during the first half of the twentieth century, was Fagan Bourland. Bourland, who had already been mayor twice before 1917, competed in seven different mayoral campaigns, winning five of them and losing only to Henry C. Read in 1913 and Wright in 1917. With the final tally, Wright won the election by receiving 1,208 of the 2,309 total votes. Even with the poll tax question still in the air, Wright managed to beat Bourland and take the mayor's set.

J. H. Wright was not the typical railroad man turned politician. While labor strikes were becoming more common around the area, Wright was not a puppet of the big businessmen of Fort Smith.

During the election Wright shunned business interests in favor of the average citizen. He stood against the Fort Smith Light and Traction Company, which seemed to have a lot of political influence in the city, and he ran on the ticket of the people. When elected, the newspapers boasted a "New Deal" in Fort Smith and wrote about a "Clean Sweep in City Hall." Citizens of Fort Smith fully expected Wright to make the city function better

for the people rather than the business interests. A "Clean Sweep," Fort Smith residents most certainly saw; the mayor (Henry C. Read), along with all of the city commissioners—Henry Kuper Jr., Frank Singleton, T. J. Hays, and Wallace Bruce—were gone after the election.¹⁴ A new administration was in place and the people had spoken, but that did not mean that everyone was happy.

The detractors who said that newly elected Mayor Wright was not fit even to be a candidate for mayor also tried to remove him from office behind the scenes. There is not a lot of evidence in the remaining records that shows who was leading the push for Wright to be removed from office, but it is clear that there was such a push. The newspapers moved on to other, more important business, like the war in Europe and the growing war fever in the United States, after the city election was over. The first time that the papers even mentioned the lingering question of whether Mayor Wright was legally elected was almost two months after the election when a letter written by Arkansas Attorney General John D. Arbuckle to H. C. Mechem described his take on the poll tax ordeal:

I have carefully considered your brief on this question and this accounts for my delay in answering you sooner. I have taken time to weigh the matter carefully and after due consideration...I have decided that it is not a case where such a writ should properly issue.¹⁵

The poll tax issue was officially dead. J. H. Wright's foes had put all of their effort in defeating him with the poll tax; in the end, the citizens of Fort Smith did not buy into the claims and the state of Arkansas cleared his name of the allegations with the letter from Arbuckle. Mayor Wright was able to concentrate on the city rather than his political opponents for a few months anyway.

When Wright was in office, he used his political influence to affect the city. During his term as mayor, the decision of building a bridge at the end of Garrison Avenue was being settled. The toll bridge that spanned the Arkansas River into Oklahoma was seen as a barrier to economic progress in the city, but the issue was still up for debate, as some people thought that building a free bridge at the west end of Garrison Avenue was not a good idea. Nonetheless, with support from Mayor Wright and after an eleventh-hour attempt by the Frisco and Iron Mountain Railroad to rent out the Gould Bridge to Fort Smith in lieu of building a new bridge, the vote for the Garrison Avenue bridge passed by almost 70 percent of the vote, as only 430 of a total of almost 1,500 Fort Smith residents voted against the bridge.¹⁶

Wright also worked to crack down on the crime and immoral behavior in the city. Two months after the election, the *Southwest American* reported that the Wright administration "has cleaned up all burglaries...and

has made Fort Smith uncomfortable for automobile thieves.”¹⁷ The papers mentioned on many occasions that Wright had cleaned up the bootlegging in Fort Smith. Shortly after Wright was elected, the city government hired a detective to investigate actions in the area. F. M. Murphy was the man who came into town to do the work. Detective Murphy said of the city and administration:

The law enforcement of Fort Smith is going to make bootlegging a very hazardous business. Your mayor and chief of police are going to enforce the law. I have had abundant opportunity to measure both officials and they are the type who will do it... In leaving I want to repeat that I think mighty well of Fort Smith. In every respect it impresses me as a city which goes after what it undertakes, with the vigor which wins.¹⁸

Murphy stayed only a few weeks, but the pressure was on the bootleggers throughout Wright’s term. While most people were happy to see that the laws being enforced, there was still a group of people who did not enjoy the new city government being a moral compass for the city as a whole. Nonetheless, Wright set the standard for his administration when he was elected, and he continued to impose a moral authority among the people throughout his term.

Another one of his publicized moral offerings was the banning of a movie called “Twilight Sleep,” released in 1915, with the purpose of demonstrating a new childbirth technique that was billed as a painless alternative to the normally painful procedure of childbirth. The film was about thirty minutes long and usually had a lecturer present who further explained the procedure.¹⁹ It seems clear that it was not meant to be entertaining, but to be a commercial disguised as an educational exhibition. This movie had been heavily advertised in Fort Smith, and hundreds of women arrived on opening day to watch the film. As the movie was set to begin, the mayor had the chief of police turn the audience away. Wright stated that his reasoning for shutting down the movie was that he had “a strong conviction that so sacred and private a life experience as the birth of children should not be publicly paraded for profit or allowed to be exploited in gratification of morbid curiosity.”²⁰ Whether Wright made the correct decision to ban the film is debatable, but to his credit, he did receive a public endorsement from the Sebastian County Medical Society for the way he handled the situation.²¹ The issue of what movies to show at the playhouse is a local issue and has little economic relevance to the city, especially from a historic perspective. A different local issue that could have had a major economic influence on Fort Smith, establishing a military base, was one that Mayor Wright was willing to travel across the country

to lobby for the city of Fort Smith.

Camp Chaffee was not constructed until 1941, but long before Chaffee, there was a push to get a military instillation in the area. On May 17, 1917, the U.S. War Department announced plans to build thirty-three training camps across the nation (twelve in the Southeastern Department). These camps were expected to house 32,000 men each.²² The leaders of Fort Smith wasted no time to begin the campaign to be selected as one of the twelve cities in the Southeast Department that would be granted the opportunity to build a camp. Ten days prior to the official announcement, the city commissioners discussed applying for one of the camps. Two locations were mentioned: a hill between Greenwood and Jenny Lind, and a plot of land owned by the Fort Smith School District on Grand Avenue.²³ The committee in charge of this matter decided that the best method of actions would be to go straight to the man in charge, Major General Leonard Wood.²⁴ J. H. Wright, along with Ray Gill, secretary of the Fort Smith Business Men’s Club, arrived at Leonard Wood’s headquarters on May 25, 1917, to seek an interview with him.²⁵

Major General Leonard Wood was stationed at Charleston, South Carolina. Prior to this assignment, Wood had quite an accomplished career. Leonard Wood graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1883. He used his medical expertise to enter the U.S. Army, and in 1898, he had earned the Medal of Honor. After serving as President William McKinley’s personal physician, Wood was given command of the Rough Riders, also known as the First Volunteer Cavalry. (Theodore Roosevelt was his second in command.) Following the Spanish-American War, Wood was the military governor of Cuba and later the chief of staff of the Army. When General Wood crossed paths with Mayor Wright, he was the commander of the War Department of the East.²⁶

J. H. Wright’s mission was quite difficult: arrive unannounced at General Wood’s office, secure an interview, and convince him that Fort Smith, Arkansas, was a desirable place for a camp in the Southeastern Department. Although General Wood was very busy with war preparations, Mayor Wright and Mr. Gill managed to get an appointment on May 25, 1917.

When they arrived they realized that their idea was not an original one. Hundreds of people from across the nation had traveled to Charleston—and to General Wood’s doorstep in particular—to secure a camp in their own cities. Even with Wright’s presence and the city’s push to convince the War Department that Fort Smith was a good location, the army determined that the city was too far west for a camp in the Southeastern Department.²⁷ The region had to wait another twenty-three years before they finally secured a military camp.

Ironically, J. H. Wright managed to be in the mix when the camp did arrive in the area. Wright was the



Image from the *Southwest American*
THE SOUTHWESTERN
BELL telephone girls at the
 picket line on September 19,
 1917.

superintendent of the Camp Chaffee Transit Company in 1942. The Camp Chaffee Transit Company was started in 1940 by another prominent Fort Smith man, Robert A. Young Jr. He later started a different small business in Fort Smith called Arkansas Motor Freight, now Arkansas Best Corporation. By 2002, his small creation had revenue exceeding \$1.4 billion.²⁸

Everything seemed to be going smooth for Wright five months into his mayoral career. Unfortunately, things took a turn for the worse in September 1917. A strike at the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company tested Wright's promise to stand up for the people while still protecting himself. In an era when labor strikes were rampant, SWB telephone girls decided to unionize and they almost immediately went on strike.

The strike centered on a couple of telephone girls who were fired two weeks after the union was formed. The union decided to go on strike to support them, and the operators walked out on September 19, 1917. C. A. Vedder, manager of Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, refused to recognize the union and would not participate in collective bargaining. He told reporters that he would negotiate with his employees on an individual basis.²⁹ Due to the strike, telephone service was temporarily shut down in the city as Vedder tried to bring in strikebreakers to take over the operator positions.

The real trouble started when the picketing began. There were a few instances of alleged damages to telephone company property and alleged harassment of telephone employees. Mayor Wright and the chief of police, James Hernandez, were accused of ignoring the complaints of the telephone company. Since Wright

campaigns on the ticket of the people, this reaction seems to be what would be expected of him as long as he was breaking no laws. The problem for Wright and Hernandez was that some citizens thought the city leaders had broken some laws. They both were promptly indicted for nonfeasance, the failure to perform a task in which they were both obliged by law to do.³⁰

The telephone strike was similar to the war that was just ending: it was long and drawn-out, and very little ground was being gained by either side. No real progress was made until all of the unions in Fort Smith came together to strike as a single unit. On December 8, the city of Fort Smith practically shut down; thirty-four labor unions with more than 1,100 members went on a general strike. The list of trades affected by this general strike was a long one: cigar makers, laundry workers, painters, printers, plumbers, barbers, bakers, railroad laborers, street car employees, motion picture operators, musicians, and more.³¹ Not having telephone service was a problem, but not having any services in the city could be disaster if not settled quickly. This general strike was the final and deciding blow. On December 17, only nine days after the citywide strike started, the telephone company put all its original employees back to work, and a federal mediator was given the task to settle the disputes.³² Unfortunately for Wright, he was not still in office to see the strike settled; he had been ousted from office four months earlier on October 12.

J. H. Wright's departure from office was not directly attributed to the telephone strike. It was after the strike began that the indictments surfaced. The

business interests of the city were not Mayor Wright's biggest supporters, but the original indictment that led to his removal was attributed to the mayoral campaign. It could be assumed that the indictments might never have happened if he had handled the strike differently. It ultimately was an illegal campaign promise that led to Wright's dismissal.

On October 6, 1917, an indictment was returned by a grand jury of the circuit court. In a twist of fate (or maybe a little hometown politics), the foreman of the grand jury was none other than John W. Howell, the man J. H. Wright had defeated in the primary election for mayor only a few months prior. The defense attorney for Wright, Webb Covington, said during the trial that instead of the state against J. H. Wright, it should be "a bunch of disgruntled politicians against J. H. Wright." Covington was not shy about giving his opinion in the courtroom and was charged with contempt of court twice during the trial for letting the judge know exactly how he felt about the proceedings.³³

The accusation was that J. H. Wright promised two local men, Jim Burke and Barney Dunn, that he would support John H. Vaughn for city attorney if he was elected as the mayor. This was a misdemeanor and the punishment was a fine and removal from office.³⁴ On October 12, the verdict was in; Wright was fined fifty dollars and removed from his position as mayor of Fort Smith.³⁵ Six days later, Wright was found guilty of nonfeasance. This charge sprang out of the operators strike. The prosecution said that Wright bore responsibility for the cutting of the gas lines, electric lines, and water lines that were blamed on the striking operators since Wright did not disperse the crowd and even spoke in favor of the picketers. The jury brought in a guilty verdict of nonfeasance. Since he was already out of office, this was nothing more than a slap on the wrist and a small fine.³⁶

J. H. Wright did not go away without a fight. Wright was on the ballot for the new mayoral election, and he filed appeals to the Arkansas Supreme Court to regain his position. On November 13, 1917, the primary election was held with only two names on the ballot: J. H. Wright and Arch Monro. Although Wright received more votes in this election than he did when he won the mayor's office earlier in the year, Monro won this election with 200 more votes. This election was important for Fort Smith, not only because it elected a new mayor, but also because this was the first time in Fort Smith history that women were allowed to vote in primary elections.³⁷ One may wonder how many of these women, who had their first chance to express their opinion at the polls, remembered the *Twilight Sleep* debacle where hundreds of women arrived to view the film only to

be turned away by Wright's last-minute orders. With failure in this election, Wright's political career in Fort Smith was finished.

Though he was not originally from Fort Smith, Wright never left the city after his mayoral career was finished. And even though he had been in the railroad business at the time that he entered political office, he never returned to that field. When Wright left office, the U.S. government had taken control of the nation's railroads, so he chose to go a different, but closely related route; Wright decided to go into the coal business. Unfortunately, as he entered the coal business, oil and gas fields were beginning to be discovered. The transition from coal-burning energy to diesel and gas energy took place during this time, and being a coal agent was not an easy job. One local coal company estimated that 75 percent of the steam business was lost to diesel and gas during this period.³⁸ Nonetheless, throughout the 1910s and into the 1930s, J. H. Wright was the treasurer and secretary of the Haskell Coal and Mining Company and a district manager and general agent for the Security Coal Company, which became the Security Fuel Company as the energy transition took place.³⁹

Wright left the energy business in the mid-1930s and began working for the state of Arkansas. Other than a short stint as the superintendent with the Fort Chaffee Transit Company in 1942, J. H. Wright spent the rest of his career working for the Arkansas State Revenue Department and the state highway department. Wright retired in the late 1940s and lived the rest of his days with his wife, daughter, and son-in-law in Fort Smith.⁴⁰ At eighty-one years of age, J. H. Wright died on July 30, 1951, forty-nine years after arriving in Fort Smith.⁴¹

J. H. Wright was mayor for a very short time of the half-century he spent in Fort Smith, but he worked hard for most of those years to make Fort Smith a better place in which to live and work. As a railroad president, he influenced the formation of Subiaco and the first railroad tracks that made the city more accessible. As a mayor, he helped get the Garrison Avenue bridge built, laid the foundation for Fort Smith to later have a fort in the area, and put his political career on the line to fight for the citizens rather than the big business interests. Although his mayoral term was shorter than most, the boy from Ohio helped make Fort Smith a better place to live for the average citizen.

Endnotes

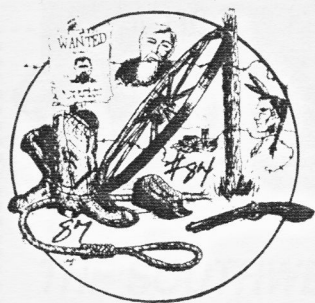
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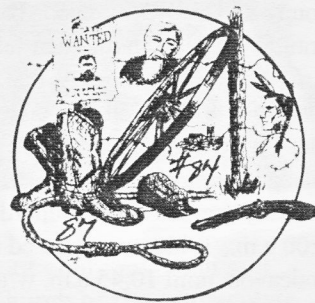
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Hangin' Times in Fort Smith



By Jerry Akins

'Murdered The Fiddler'

A Dance in Cache Bottom Terminates in the Death of Irvin Richardson

On Monday night last, in Cache Creek bottom, about 25 miles from here, in the Choctaw Nation, a negro dance was in progress, and during the night, while the festivities were at their height, a shot startled the dancers, and their fiddler, a negro named Irvin Richardson, fell from his chair dead, a Winchester ball having passed through his body. George Tobler was the only man outside the house when the shot was fired, and as he and Richardson had quarreled about a dusky damsel Monday morning, suspicion at once fell upon him and he was arrested. It is alleged that while the dance was going on Tobler slipped out, secured a Winchester that another negro had left outside on a bed, and shot Richardson through a crack in the house, notwithstanding no one saw him fire the fatal shot. Tobler was lodged in the U. S. Jail Wednesday evening by Indian Policeman Ed Bowman.

— *Fort Smith Elevator*, May 3, 1889

The murder occurred on Monday night, April 29, 1889. On April 30, the sheriff of Skullyville County sent a letter to Marshal John Carroll telling him of the killing and arrest and saying, "I wish you would send and get this man at once as this jail is not secure." Tobler arrived at Fort Smith next day, May 1, 1889, and was lodged in the jail until his trial in September.

The prosecution's case was based entirely on circumstantial evidence, but it must have been very convincing. Tobler submitted two applications for witnesses, listing a total of eight witnesses who would testify, variously, that Richmond (the newspapers give the name as Richardson, but all existing court documents say Richmond) had been witness against two other men, who had then made threats against the deceased, and that two men were seen passing the Dansby house going in the direction of the dance, and after the shooting the same two men were seen passing in the other direction. He also claimed that the witnesses had examined the tracks of horses or mules leading to the house where the killing took place and measured the distance from the house to where two horses had been tied. All of his eight requested witnesses plus five more, thirteen in all,

appeared but apparently did not testify as he had hoped, or at least did not convince the jury. On the back of the True Bill are listed all of the thirteen names of witnesses and adjacent to that, this note: "We the jury find the defendant, George Tobler, guilty of murder as charged in the within indictment. J. P. Stewart, For. 9/19/89"

Tobler was one of the nine men sentenced in October 1889 to hang on January 16, 1890, but he and Charley Bullard were respited to January 30, and on Saturday, January 25, Bullard's sentence was commuted to life in prison. On that same day U. S. District Marshal Yoes was notified that the president "declined to further interfere" in Tobler's case. Tobler's execution was the second time executions had been done on a day other than Friday and the second time executions occurred in January 1890, making that the first month to have executions twice in one month.

Tobler had declined the services of any minister, but on Sunday, January 26, he was visited by Rev. Lutz. By that time his attitude had changed and he asked the reverend to call again, which he thereafter did daily.

On the night before the execution, Tobler occupied the same cell as Charley Bullard, whose sentence had been

commuted to life in prison. Tobler kept up a conversation until about 11:00 p.m., then fell asleep until about 6:00 a.m. the next morning. At 8:30 a.m. Jailor Pape brought the usual suit of clothing, underclothing, and white shirt that was issued to condemned men. Tobler asked for and was given a white necktie. He then went to his cell and casually dressed while Bullard swept out the cell. About 9:00 a.m., Tobler was dressed and engaged in religious endeavors until 10:45 a.m. when the death warrant was read. He then lit a cigar and went to meet the guard, who placed handcuffs on him, and "walked forth to die, cool, stoical and with no outward appearance of emotion. On the scaffold asservices were going on, he weakened for a moment or so, but soon braced up and when he stepped on the trap he looked as cool and defiant as usual." (*Elevator*, January 31, 1890) He had nothing to say as final preparations were made. At 11:05 a.m. the trap dropped, his neck was broken and death was instantaneous. He had left a letter with Rev. Lutz proclaiming his innocence, although on the day before the execution, he had told Bullard of dreaming of the man he had killed.

On the same page of the *Elevator* that described the execution of Tobler, another column described the capture and death of Jim Starr, husband of the late Belle Starr. Starr had been brought in badly wounded on Tuesday, January 21, 1890. Some years before, Starr had been charged with horse stealing and had been in Fort Smith to answer that charge when he was notified of Belle's murder. He had gone home to her funeral, where he arrested and brought in her accused killer, Watson. After that he had jumped the \$150 bail posted by Deputy J. H. Mershon and had been on the scout ever since. He had been apprehended near Ardmore, Oklahoma, by two lawmen and was seriously wounded in the capture.

A reporter who knew Starr interviewed him in the jail hospital the two days before his death. Starr claimed that the deputies had ambushed him and he had run only after he was wounded, and that they had shot his horse three times, killing it. Starr said that he was preparing to come in voluntarily, but when asked why he had jumped bail in the first place, he replied, "Oh, I don't know." The reporter had interviewed Starr on Saturday and went back on Sunday when it was determined that he would not live. Jailor Pape informed Starr that he was not expected to live and asked if there was anything else he would like to tell them. Starr said he would talk only to Deputy Mershon. When informed that Mershon was in Texas and would not return before he died, Starr said that he did not have much to say to him anyway. Jim Starr, a.k.a. Jim July, died later that Sunday, January 26, 1890, and was buried in the potter's field at the city cemetery the next day.

Sources

National Archives
The Fort Smith Elevator

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1910 Newspapers

THE SOUTHWEST AMERICAN

July-December 1910

by Wincie Hendricks

Abstracted from microfilm
in the Fort Smith Public Library.

Editor's note: Most spelling, punctuation and grammar
appear as printed in *The Southwest American*.

July 2, 1910

SUNNYSIDE PEACHES

Sunnyside peaches, while they last, will be delivered in town at 75 cents per bushel, or, if you will call at the orchard, you can get them for 50 cents per bushel. They are the finest ever raised on the place and Fort Smith is now getting the pick instead of the culls as heretofore.

Telephone your order to Sunnyside or George Sengel's office or mail a postal card. Orders filled as received.

Hurry as they will not last long.

July 7, 1910

FUNERAL OF THE LATE MRS. JULIA KENNEY

Mrs. Julia Kenney died yesterday morning at the family residence, No. 204 South Thirteenth street, after an illness of two months induced by the grip.

Mrs. Kenney was the relict of the late Thomas Kenney, a well-known contractor, and who died in Fort Smith about nine years ago. She was seventy-six years old, and had resided in this city since 1871.

She is survived by three sons, Leo, Dan and Mark Kenney, and two daughters, Miss Lillie Kenney and Mrs. John B. McBride.

Mrs. Kenney had hosts of friends in Fort Smith, and she was in rugged health up to the time that she

became ill. She was a devout church woman and an active member of the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

The funeral will be held at 3:30 this afternoon from the family home and services will be conducted in the church by Rev. Dr. P. Horan. The interment will be in the Catholic cemetery.

July 10, 1910

DEATH OF MRS. BONNEVILLE; A GRACIOUS LOVABLE WOMAN

She Was One of Fort Smith's

Best Known Citizens----

Her Charities Were Many and Private----

Funeral to be Held

Monday Afternoon.

Mrs. Sue Bonneville, of 318 North Seventh street, succumbed at 8:35 o'clock last night, to an inflammatory complication which had confined her to her bed for several weeks. Her condition became so alarming a few days ago that her physicians decided upon a consultation and summoned an eminent specialist from St. Louis.

The consultation verified the diagnosis of the local attending physicians.

Mrs. Bonneville was one of the most prominent and wealthy women of this city. Her property interests are es-quarters of a million dollars. She was born May 1846. Her father, Anton Neis, was one of the pioneers of Fort Smith, having settle here when it was a village. In her girlhood, Mrs. Bonneville was one of the belles of the city and a favorite in social circles. She was born at Fort Washington, Indian Territory.

In 1871 she married General Benj. L. E. Bonneville, of the Federal army, who was one of the most famous pioneers of the west. His great friend, Washington Irving, took so great an interest in the General that he wrote his biography which is one of the most interesting offerings of that writer. While in the west he met General LaFayette and John Jacob Astor, who were his staunch friends.

Gen. Bonneville had known the young and beautiful Sue Neis from her infancy, having served

with her father in the Mexican war. The wedding which united the couple occurred in the year 1871, the Rev. Lawrence Smyth officiating.

General Bonneville has a history that is most interesting. In 1866 he was given the title of brigadier general by General Grant under the administration of Abraham Lincoln. He served in the Civil War, also saw service in the Mexican war. He was a Frenchman by birth and died in 1878 living to the age of 83 years.

In the death of Mrs. Bonneville, Fort Smith loses one of the most charitable and lovable persons ever known. To those who were in need and want, Mrs. Bonneville was ever ready with an open heart to give help and her gifts were unostentatious. Her life was as her death, quiet and peaceful.

The deceased is survived by Abbie Neis, a brother, Mrs. Lue Robinson, a sister, John Emrich, nephew, Mrs. Chas. Jewitt, niece and George Sengel, a cousin, Abbie Neil and Bonneville Neis, of Detroit, Mich., nephews.

The funeral will take place from the Church of Immaculate Conception at 4 o'clock Monday.

August 2, 1910

VISITS THE TOWN HE FOUNDED YEARS AGO *Southwest American Special.*

ALMA, Ark., August 1.---Col. M. F. Locke, the founder of the town of Alma, is here, the guest of his cousin, L. B. Byars. Col. Locke is 86 years of age and has had a remarkable career. He was a soldier in the Mexican and Civil wars and served as colonel in the Confederate army.

He was a speaker of the House of Representatives in Texas more than 50 years ago, commissioner of mines and manufacturers and agriculture in Arkansas for four years.

He is now residing in El Paso, Texas, for the benefit of the health of his wife and daughter, although his permanent home is in Little Rock. He is much impressed with this section of the state, particularly with Alma.

August 9, 1910

ANNIVERSARY OF WILSON'S CREEK BATTLE Gray Haired Soldier Recalls Battle of Wilson's Creek, The Anniversary

of Which is Tomorrow— Many Slain on Both Sides in Memorable Conflict.

Just forty-nine years ago tomorrow occurred the bloody battle of Wilson's Creek, Mo. On August 10, 1860, said Henry Kuper, Fr., first duty sergeant on that memorable occasion, who talked to a *Southwest American* representative about the battle yesterday the State Militia left this city for the northern boundary of the state.

On reaching the Missouri line the Militia voted on whether to continue into Missouri territory. The cause for hesitation was the fact that the militia had no real authority to venture over the boundary of the state. However, it was voted to proceed and General Pierce of Benton county told the boys he would go with them.

"For three days," said Mr. Kuper, "we were on a constant lookout for the Federal forces believing that a fight was imminent. Finally we got to the place that we called Oak Hill and which the Northerners knew as Wilson's Creek. When we arrived there our commissary wagons were away behind. For that reason we went foraging and brought in some roasting ears which we parched in the ash.

"On the ninth of August, the day of the battle, we got orders to march to Springfield. However before we set out the orders were countermanded because of a rain which came up. Owing to the fact that the pickets who had been on guard were withdrawn when we were ordered to proceed to Springfield and were then not stationed out again the Federal troops were able to surprise us when we were at breakfast on the morning of the tenth.

"Then we got orders to fall in and our regiment was ordered to support Woodruff's battery from Little Rock. For a time we laid in a ravine and the bullets flew over us. General Price had charge of the Missouri troops at that time and we were held in reserve.

"As Price's troops were forced to give way owing to the fact that only a part of them were armed we were ordered to the front and were soon surrounded by the enemy. We received the command to 'load and fire at will.' We were in the brush and could not see the Federals. We fired where we saw the smoke.

"Lyons was in command of the Federal forces. When he was killed they ceased firing. The Federals retreated and never stopped until they reached Raleigh.

"Next we got orders to bury the dead. The work lasted until far into the night. In our company alone in which there were only 75 men at the beginning of the battle there were 25 killed and wounded. A great number were killed on both sides. It was estimated

that there were about 15,000 men on each side when the battle began.

September 3, 1910

**PERSONAL TAX BOOK HAS
FIGURES WHICH ARE
VERY INTERESTING**

The personal tax book for Fort Smith has been completed by Assessor Martin and Deputy Henry Kuper, showing an increase in the number of polls of about 200. The number of colored polls shows a decrease of 72.

The total assessed valuation of personal property in the Fort Smith district is given as \$4,116,917. The polls listed in the city are 5,385 white, and 916 colored.

The personal assessment for the city as given on the books is: horses, 938, valued at \$37,995; cattle, 763, \$10,815; mules, 127, \$6,623; sheep, 38, \$80; hogs, 45, \$170; vehicles, 800, \$37,155; watches, \$1,118, \$16,880; pianos, 622, \$42,340; merchandise, \$966,065; banks, \$780,000, manufactured articles, \$125, Money and investments, \$97,745; bonds and stocks, \$12,760, other articles \$1,903,230.

September 24, 1910

**CHARGED WITH TAKING \$70
FROM OKLAHOMAN**

Eva Morris, an inmate of the Pearl Starr resort, was arrested yesterday by Constable Goss and lodged in the county jail on the charge of robbing E. Lockett, a farmer of near Sallisaw, of \$70. The girl claims that Lockett gave her the money.

October 22, 1910

'POSSUM HUNT LOTS OF SPORT

It was a jolly party that journeyed out to the "sticks" and enjoyed a real old-fashioned possum hunt. Some of the party claims to have caught three of that tribe but others said that no less than seven were caught napping and made victims. However, be it the former or latter, the people who composed the jolly crowd assert they had the time of their lives. They were in the vicinity of Senator George Sengel's Sunnyside farm and that accounts for the various stories told of the hunt. Those composing the party

were the Misses Anna Goss, Mabel Thomas, Kate Leftwich, Mrs. Kate Fink, Mrs. Vay and Messrs. Arthur Bacher, Cecil Hopp, Albert Rosenstiel and Morris Leon.

November 8, 1910

**FREE BRIDGE PLANS----
TO START STRUCTURE
Fort Smith and Van Buren Bridge
Commissioners Meet with Engineer
and Contractors-----
Material to be on the
Ground in Fifteen Days**

Before this time next year, citizens of both Van Buren and Fort Smith will be greeting one another as they cross the iron bridge which is to span the Arkansas river beyond Electric Park.

The commissioners have established permanent headquarters for themselves, the engineer and the board of appraisers in the offices over the office of the Lyman Real Estate Co. on North Sixth street.

At the meeting held yesterday the contractors, Kahmann & McMurray of Kansas City, were represented by Mr. McMurray.

The commissioners' civil engineer, J. L. Harrington, was also present.

The board authorized the contractors to proceed at once with the work of construction, and Mr. McMurray says that his firm will have material on the ground within fifteen days.

It will be necessary to build a tramway to the center of the river in order to carry material for use in building the center pier and then work towards the shore on each side of the river

As announced in Sunday's *Southwest American*, the commissioners appointed John Ayres, George W. Moss and Henry Kuper, Jr., appraisers of the land in the bridge improvement district.

The appraisers have a large amount of work to do, and it involves an equalization of the assessments so that each property owner will bear his just share of the taxes.

The commissioners are very enthusiastic over the present situation of the bridge project. They do not now see any serious handicap confronting them in carrying out this very important public improvement.

When the bridge is open for traffic Van Buren and Fort Smith will be the host in welcoming thousands of visitors from Western Arkansas who will be invited to participate in the celebrating of the accomplishment of the work of building this free public highway.

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 - * - a portrait of the person(s) named is on page indicated.
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 - "- - -" - for nickname or special emphasis.
 - (-) - dash between page numbers indicates the name of the person, place, etc. is carried throughout the story.
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