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The Little Balkans Review, Fall 1981

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The Little Balkans Review

A Southeast Kansas Literary and Graphics Quarterly

Vol. 2, No. 1 Fall 1981

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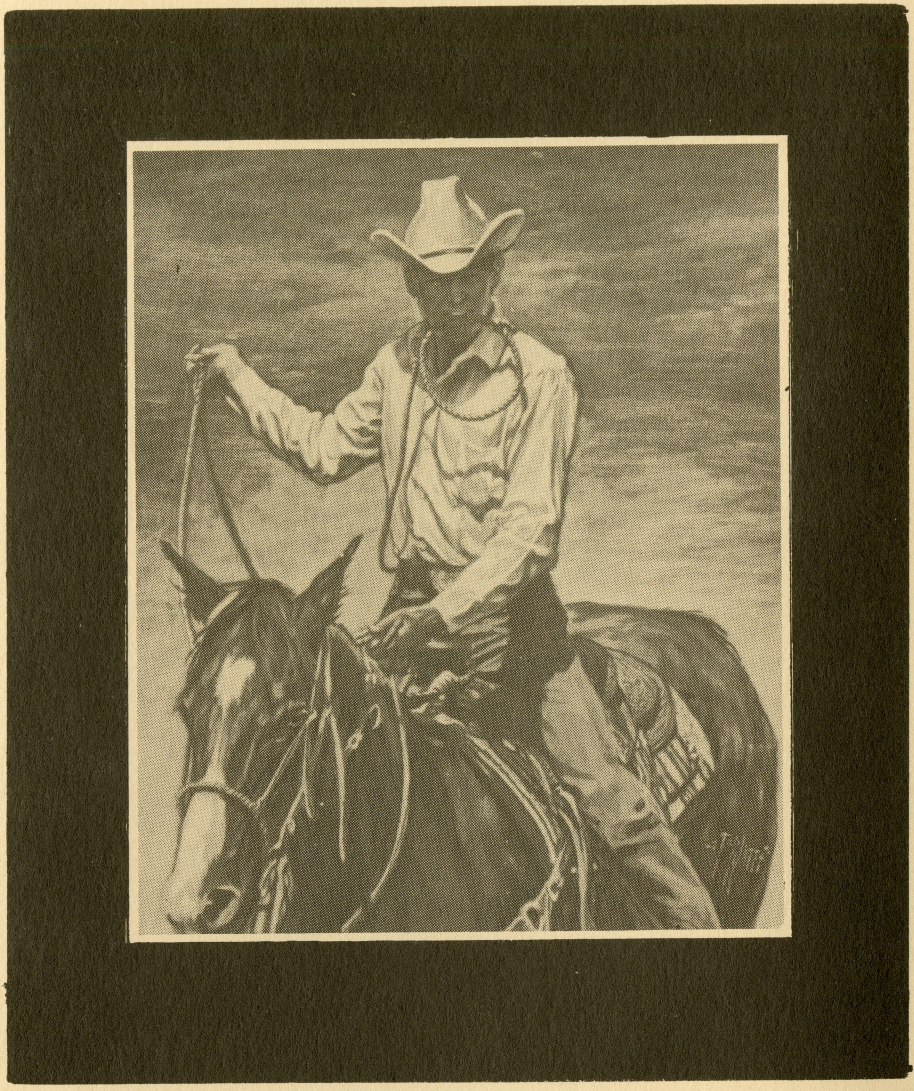
Author
Harold Bell Wright
Pittsburg, Kansas



Calf Roper, 1980

Ted Watts

The

Little Balkans Review

A Southeast Kansas Literary and Graphics Quarterly

Vol. 2, No. 1

Gene DeGruson, Poetry Editor
Shelby Horn, Nonfiction Editor
Steve Robbins, Fiction Editor
Ted Watts, Art and Graphics Editor

All glory comes from daring to begin.--Eugene F. Ware

The Little Balkans Press, Inc.

601 Grandview Heights Terrace

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Fall 1981

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The
Little Balkans Review
A Southeast Kansas Literary and Graphics Quarterly

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Preface

In his autobiography, Harold Bell Wright states that perhaps the five happiest years of his life were those in which he ministered to the First Christian Church of Pittsburg, Kansas. It is therefore not unfitting during this, the one hundredth anniversary of that church, to explore the career of its most famous pastor, eventually a best-selling writer who influenced not only the masses but such distinguished writers as Eudora Welty and F. Scott Fitzgerald—and at least one President of the United States.

Serendipity more than played a role in putting together this issue. First, we discovered that Prof. Joyce Moyers had written her doctoral dissertation on Wright and was willing to do an article for us. Then James Presley burst in one day with the news that he had found an uncollected short story of Wright's, written in Pittsburg some eighty years ago. This led to a delightful telephone conversation with Mrs. Gilbert Sonovox Wright, who graciously consented to our publishing it in this issue. Finally, in going through the five years of the Pittsburg *Daily Headlight,* we found references to the former homes of Wright, two of which we were able to photograph (a third, at 606 N. Pine, was demolished some time ago). Interestingly, the houses were not associated with Wright in the minds of Pittsburg citizens. For many years it was thought that his West Kansas Street home was at 412. When we first ran across *410* in the newspaper, we assumed it to be a typographical error *(oh, how they sneak in).* But the city directory confirmed 410, so that's the one we shot for you.

Also in this issue, Marjorie V. Forbes submits an area episode which occurred in October 1892. It centers around Solon L. Cheney, who came to Kansas in 1877 to establish not only a ranch of two thousand acres (with its own racetrack), but also Empire City (later incorporated into Galena), of which he became treasurer and first mayor. Born in Ohio in 1838 he practiced law in both Kentucky and Pennsylvania before moving to the Sunflower State, where he helped organize the Murphy and Cheney Mining Company. Cheney died on October 18, 1918. Most of his land is now owned by Moore Johnson of Columbus Grain.

In addition to the author of our feature biography, we would like to welcome several other new contributors to our pages: Daniel A. Richard, who explores in his short story an age-old torment of many youths; Robert Day, whose poem serves as a teaser for more to come; D. v. R. Drenner (whose Zauberberg Press we hope to discuss in some

future issue), who shares with us the first poems he has written since 1969, sadly occassioned by the death of his wife this past March; O. B. Campbell, who departs from his usual historical prose to give us verse; Alta Mae (Randall) Bowman, who shares with us some family history; Shirley Stanley Needham, who will reappear soon with more of her haunting poetry; and Dorothy Arlene Bates Kirk, a former student of Margaret E. Haughawout, who skillfully turns from torts and briefs to both light and serious poetry. We hope they will all return, as have the other authors in this issue, with whom we hope you have become familiar friends.

A year ago the first issue of the *LBR* was published, featuring the Columbus days of William Inge, the initial chapter of Zula Bennington Greene's autobiography, and work by outstanding fiction writers, poets, artists, and photographers whose home is (or was) Kansas. To the amazement of some, we're still around, preparing not only another four issues of the magazine, but also getting ready to publish our first books—including what promises to be an excellent biography of the Oklahoma artist featured in our second issue, Charles Banks Wilson, by Charles Cagle, whose "Papa in Fredonia" pleased so many of you in our premiere issue. Also almost ready is the index to our first volume, which will be mailed automatically to subscribers and available for one dollar to others desiring it. Finally, at the beginning of our second year, may we thank you for your continued help and support.

The Editors

Harold Bell Wright:
The Man Who Went Away

by Joyce Kinkead Moyers

For Harold Bell Wright, "Pittsburg days" included several milestones: his first important pastorate, marriage, the birth of two sons, and the beginning of a controversial writing career which was to make him the first American million dollar author. In fact, the nineteen books written during his lifetime sold more than ten million copies and, according to Thurman Wilkins, set "one of the records of popular culture." Three of his novels, **The Winning of Barbara Worth, The Shepherd of the Hills,** and **The Calling of Dan Matthews,** sold more than one million copies each, while two others, **When a Man's a Man** and **The Eyes of the World,** each sold more than 900,000 copies. His writing career extended from his first novel, **That Printer of Udell's,** published in 1903, to his last novel, **The Man Who Went Away,** published in 1942.

When Wright came to Pittsburg, Kansas, in 1898 to serve as minister to the First Christian Church, he found a town in which vice teemed on every hand; saloons and brothels dominated the east side of downtown Broadway, only two blocks away from Wright's church located at Fifth and Pine. During his five years' residency in this southeastern Kansas mining town, he spearheaded a drive to "clean up" the community, and in doing that, he also wrote a sermon-novel which brought fame to Pittsburg in those early days of a new century and which influenced even a future President of the United States: Ronald Reagan noted **That Printer of Udell's** made a lasting impression on him.

Who was this man who became a household word not only in Kansas but across the country? Wright's background is as unpretentious as are his novels.

Born May 4, 1872, on Spring Brook Farm near Rome, New York, although actually in Wright Settlement, Harold Bell Wright was the second

Broadway Looking South, Pittsburg, Kansas, 1898.

of four sons of Alma T. Watson and William A. Wright. Wright relates the story of the first thirty years of his life in his autobiography, **To My Sons.** His father's ancestors came from Essex, England, where a coat of arms had been granted to them on June 20, 1509. Thomas Wright was a deputy to the General Court in England before he and his family settled in Wethersfield, Connecticut, in 1640. His descendant, Ebenezer, graduated from Yale in 1742 and then preached at Stamford, Connecticut. His son, another Ebenezer, settled with his wife and his brother's family after the War of Independence in Oneida County, New York, near the town of Rome, a town still known as Wright Settlement. In 1800 the Wright families—Ebenezer and Grace, and Thomas and Martha—organized the first church in Rome.

The great-grandson of Ebenezer, William A. Wright, the father of Harold, served as a lieutenant in the Civil War. In a letter to G. K. Watson, dated September 24, 1865, this rather dashing officer asked permission from the father to marry Alma Watson, a girl of eighteen. The letter announced that the couple would marry when William returned from the West in a year. After their marriage, the couple resided with Charles E. Wright in South Pass (now Cobden), Illinois, for a short time before moving to their own home in the neighborhood where their first son, William, was born. They returned to Wright Settlement to live with Will's parents on the farm where their second son, Harold, was born in 1872. His middle name, Bell, was taken from his mother's friends, the Bells, who lived on Bell's Hill near South Pass. While Harold was still a baby, the Wrights moved to Whitesboro, a village on the Erie Canal between Rome and Utica. William Wright was a failure at adapting to post-Civil War life. He worked as an itinerant carpenter and became an alcoholic. Whitesboro was only the first in many moves for a family destined for poverty. A third son was born while the Wrights resided in the river town, but he died within two years.

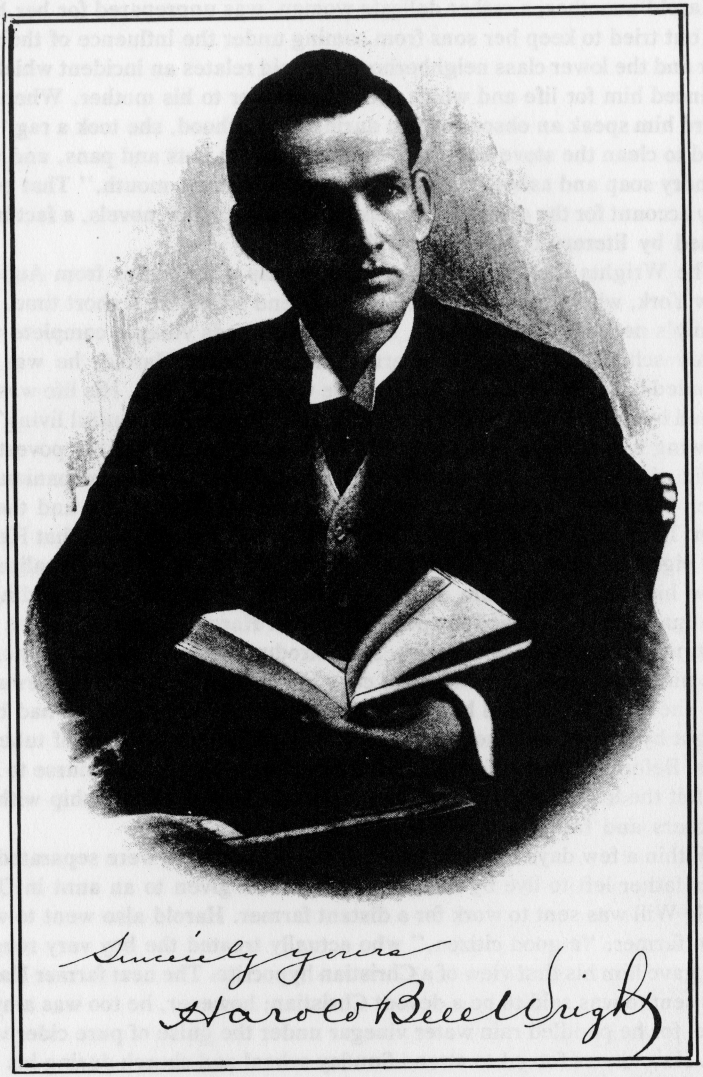
Harold's mother, a rather delicate woman, was unprepared for her hard life but tried to keep her sons from coming under the influence of their father and the lower class neighborhood. Harold relates an incident which influenced him for life and which drew him closer to his mother. When she heard him speak an obscene word during his boyhood, she took a rag "she used to clean the stove and the outside of cooking pots and pans, and with laundry soap and ashes, thoroughly scrubbed out my mouth." That event may account for the absence of realistic language in his novels, a fact mentioned by literary critics with disdain.

The Wrights then moved to a tenant house a few miles from Auburn, New York, where the boys were able to attend school for a short time. The family's next stop was Sennett, a small crossroads village, complete with handy school, church, and tavern. Fortunately for Harold, he was befriended by a wealthy artist and his wife who lived nearby. His life was enriched by this couple who introduced him to "the art of beautiful living" by showing him a world he had never seen before because of his poverty, a world of art and culture. However, he lost that valuable companionship when his family moved to a better house closer to the village and the tavern. There, the fourth son, George, was born. About the time that Harold was eight, he realized that his father was a drunkard, and that realization drew his mother and him closer together in a mutual understanding.

Alma Wright managed to spend time with Harold even though she was continually busy with housework. She introduced Harold to books when he was nine, presenting him with her copy of Longfellow's **Song of Hiawatha;** and she also encouraged him to continue the sketching which he had been taught by the artist. When Harold was eleven, his mother died of tuberculosis. Before her death he became the cook, housekeeper, and nurse to her. He felt the loss of this one companion greatly, for his relationship with his brothers and father was not very strong.

Within a few days after the funeral, the Wright boys were separated, as their father left to live by himself. George was given to an aunt in Ohio, while Will was sent to work for a distant farmer. Harold also went to work for a farmer, "a good citizen," who actually treated the boy very roughly and gave him his first view of a Christian hypocrite. The next farmer Harold was sent to was said to be a devout Christian; however, he too was a hypocrite, for he peddled rain water vinegar under the guise of pure cider vinegar. Harold was forced to attend Sunday school and church during his stay with this family, who were more tolerant in their treatment of him.

An invitation to visit her in Wright's Settlement from his mother's Aunt Mary, called Grandma Smith by his brothers and him, ended Harold's "working out" days. He stayed with her, attending school until she became seriously ill, and he then was sent to his father's brother, Uncle George, who lived near Utica with his wife, Mate, and two daughters. His stay there was short because of his father's sudden increase in salary in his job at Lima, Ohio, a boom oil town. The three brothers were for a time united at



the home of their father's sister, Mary Morrison, who took in boarders at her home in Milan, Ohio. The reunion was short-lived because Will Wright's earnings again were squandered on his alchohol instead of going to his sons' livelihood. Will, Jr., was returned to the farmer to continue work there while Harold was sent to his father in Lima, where he worked in a paint shop until his father deserted him. The boy was forced to take a better paying job in a handle factory, hauling waste wood from the saw on a

wheelbarrow. Because the work was too strenuous for the boy, he found another job driving the delivery wagon for a small grocery store. Although he enjoyed that work and his freedom, he didn't have the necessary clothes for the outside winter work, so he obtained work from a Grand Army of the Republic comrade of his father's in a book and stationery store. Even though his salary—a bed and family leftovers from meals—was pitiful, this position afforded him the opportunity to read after hours and on Sundays. Nick Carter, the **Police Gazette, Faust,** and Shakespeare were among the variety of materials available for him to read.

Despite the vast amount of reading which Harold did during this time, he later found that much of it was harmful. In fact, he remarks, "My boyhood reading was so haphazard, so unguided, so unattended by proper schooling that it was 90 per cent worthless. Much of it was worse than worthless; it was definitely harmful. It fixed in me habits of reading which gave me a crooked literary spine." Wright continually apologizes for his literary ignorance throughout his autobiography, letters, and interviews, once noting that critics asserted that he had "yet to accomplish my first literary effort."

The stationery job lasted only from early winter until spring, when Harold's father wrote for the boy to join him at another boom town, Findlay, Ohio. Harold was sent for to be the cook and housekeeper to his father and four friends who were living cooperatively on the second floor of a saloon,an ideal home for the alcoholics. In the midst of this decadent neighborhood, Harold found a friend in a female hunchback cook employed in a house of prostitution. From her he discovered the harsh reality of prostitutes, alcoholics, and thieves, an experience he did not relish.

Disillusioned, he left his job as housekeeper and cook and worked as magazine subscription agent and furniture polish peddler. Next, he did odd jobs; he was a janitor, carpenter's helper, and roustabout in a boiler works, before joining a gang of young hoodlums. During his stay with these unscrupulous thieves, he decided to learn the painting trade and shortly became an apprentice. His employer discovered that Harold had a particular aptitude for decorating and frescoing and gave him special work.

At eighteen Wright saw Lewis Morrison's presentation of Mephistopheles in the theatre production of **Faust** and found it to be an influential spiritual experience, one that made him question his station in life. Working as a journeyman painter, he was harnessed with supporting his father, his father's friend, and Brother Will, who lived in another decrepit tenement house. Harold's refusal to join the Sons of Veterans because of financial strain created a definite break between father and son. As a result of that break, Harold left the tenement house and boarded with a young couple in a much better section of town where he thought of making his way in the profession of painting.

Promoted to foreman and earning three dollars a day in the early 1890s, Wright began seventh grade studies as an evening pupil under the tutelage of a neighbor who had been a teacher. Assigned essays, Wright found writing infectious, and he began to write essays on his own initiative. However,

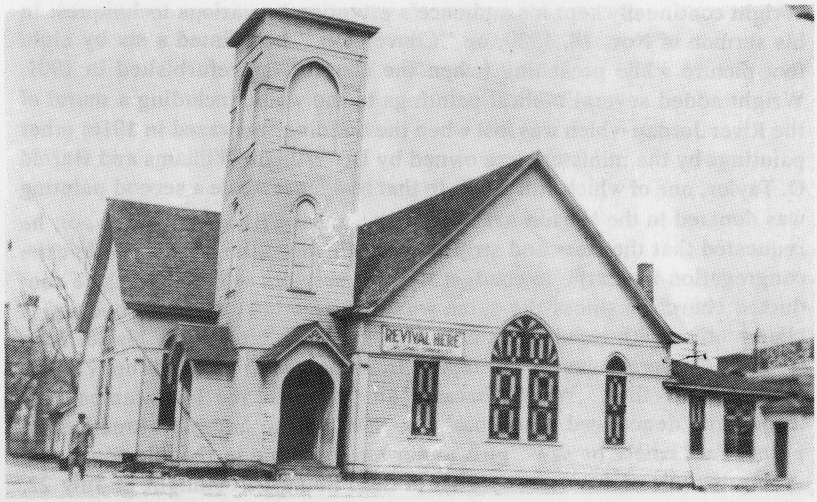
this schooling, too, was to be short-lived as Wright felt inhibited so long as he was near his father. He left Findlay and wandered for several weeks before he stopped in Cleveland. Upon entering the city, Wright experienced two incidents which help illustrate the dichotomous use of characters he later developed in his novels. The first incident occurred when he tried to apply for a job in a shipyard but was rebuffed as a bum and told that he would end up on a rock pile. This same incident was actually used in **That Printer of Udell's**, which a critic decried as unrealistic. Another unemployed man shared his supper with Wright, who had no money left from his trip, and showed him to a charity house where Wright could sleep. The second incident typifies the kind of character Wright believes in.

While at the charity house, Wright met a hobo who convinced him to join him on a free train ride to California. Wright accepted but was caught the following day by the station agent when hopping down from the boxcar. Fortunately for Wright, this man helped him find work on a construction job and a place to board. Wright's entry into this Ohio town ended his drifting days. After the construction job was completed, Wright began painting again and soon established his own business. Wright also established his religious philosophy during this time when he came under the influence of an evangelist from the Church of Christ who advanced the theory that one could be a Christian without any denominational affiliation. Of course, Wright later discovered the fallacy in this logic when he learned that the Church of Christ is also a denomination. Believing that Christianity was "a principle of living, a manner of thinking, a way of behaving, so that one's life should count as a service to all life," Wright became a member of the Christian Church or Disciples of Christ as it is also called.

Befriended by the evangelist who was also a senior student at Hiram College, a school conducted by the Disciples, Wright was convinced to leave his painting business and attend Hiram College's preparatory school. He continued there for two years of study, even writing a book which he later described as "fantastic, impossible, and amateurish." One of his college friends, the son of a millionaire, enjoyed his writing and asked Wright to spend the summer at his home. Wright accepted but later felt the weight of being a parasite on his wealthy friend. He left the house but not before he had come under the influence of the artist, Sir Gilbert Munger, and decided to become a landscape painter. At that point Wright felt that he must rely on himself rather than depending on his friend, and he left Hiram.

Wright's plan was to work and save money for a year and then return to Hiram College without debts. He found work quarrying limestone in Lowellville in the Mahoning Valley. He continued there until midwinter when he accepted a higher paying position as advance agent for entertainers. He soon regretted leaving the countryside quarry for the hypocritical world of entertainment. His health reflected that disappointment when pneumonia caused him to move back to Lowellville. There, he painted pictures as he convalesced, but that occupation was cut short as he was temporarily blinded for several months.

When Wright recovered his sight, he built a canoe and began his river trip to Missouri, where his Uncle Ben and father lived, a five hundred mile trip. Wright found himself in Springfield, Missouri, after an adventurous canoe trip and continued south to his Uncle Ben's home on the James River in the Ozarks, at Newport, Arkansas. There, he again began painting and managed to sell his pictures in the East. He was determined to become an artist. He also attended Congregationalist Church services with his aunt and uncle and was shocked at the ignorant and illiterate preacher; however, Wright's own entry into the ministry was accidental. When Wright attended a revival "meetin'" one night, the regular minister failed to show, and the congregation asked him to speak as he looked like an "educated" man. The congregation liked him so well that they decided to keep him as their minister.



The Christian Church of Pittsburg, Kansas, 1890-1916.

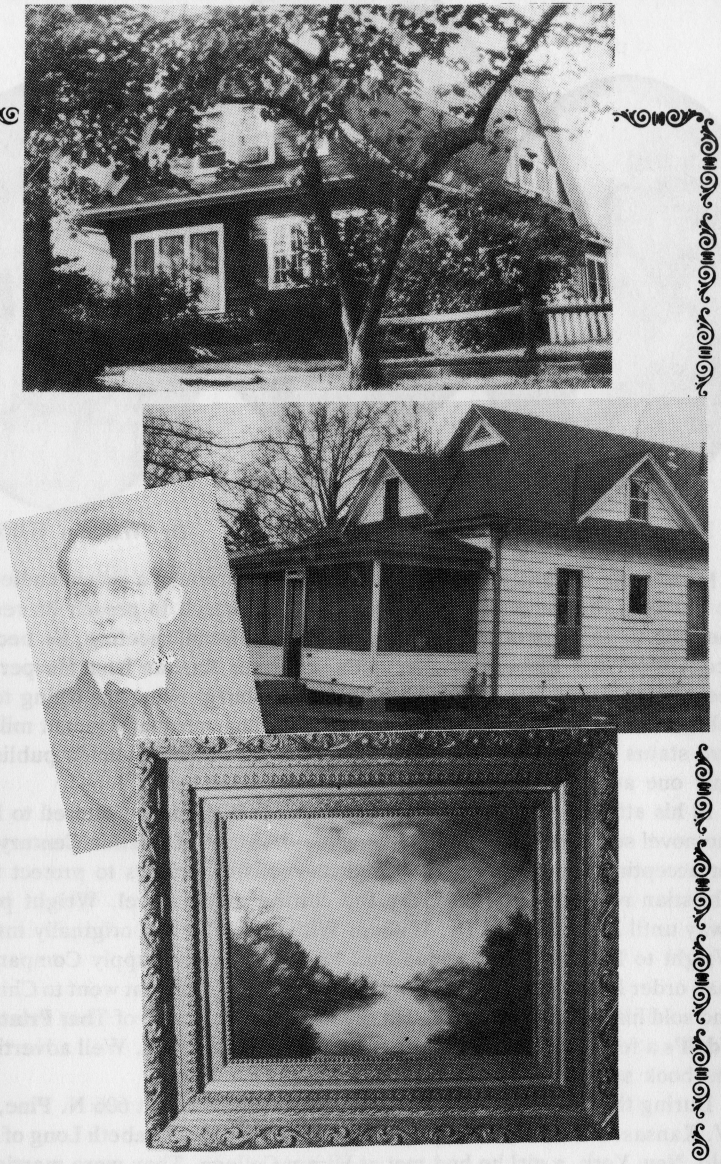
Wright stayed there until spring, even taming the hillbilly hoodlums who tried to break up his church. He set up an adult school meeting once a week to help the people in the community learn to read and write. When summer arrived, he went to Mount Vernon, Missouri, to continue his painting. There, he was asked by John W. Taylor, a resident of Pierce City, to preach at the Christian Church. Taylor and Wright became good friends; in fact, Taylor's son, the late Harold O. Taylor, an editor and reporter for the Pittsburg **Headlight** and later the Pittsburg **Sun,** was named after Wright. The minister made a fifty-mile horseback ride every weekend during that summer of 1897 to preach. With the church's increased attendance, the congregation asked Wright to become their pastor at a salary of eight dollars a

week. Here was the decision to choose between art and the ministry. He chose to preach. He continued to preach at this church (which later became the Harold Bell Wright Library) for two years, after which he was invited to become the minister of a church of the same denomination in Pittsburg, a coal mining and railroad town where saloons, casinos, and houses of prostitution abounded.

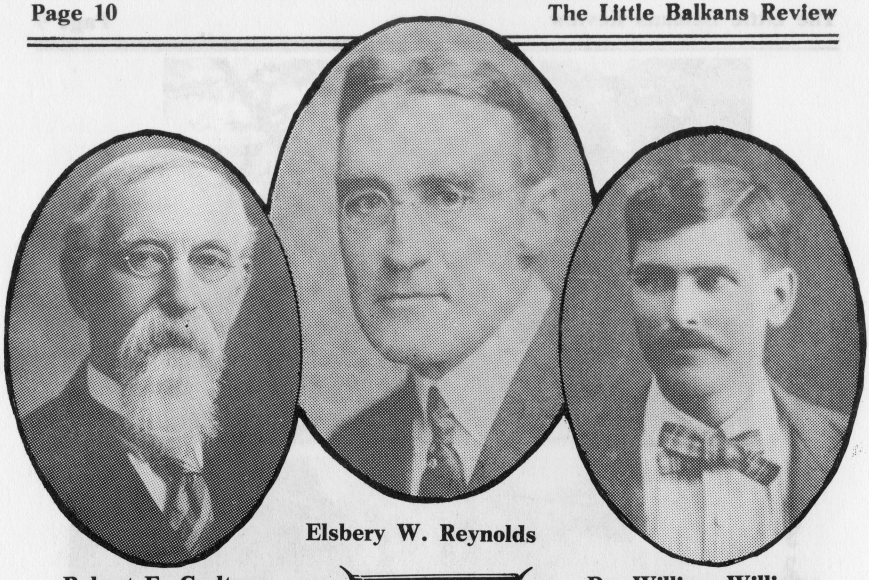
Assuming the pulpit on September 15, 1898, and being ordained for that office on December 8 of the same year by Rev. C. L. Milton of Fort Scott, Wright determined to use "applied Christianity," and in his Pittsburg ministry resolved to meet the spiritual needs of the community rather than its social needs. He abolished the church organizations set up for making money on a "lemonade and ice cream basis" and stressed helping the poor and guiding the young.

Under his leadership, the congregation grew to over eight hundred as Wright continually kept his audience's attention by various techniques: in his sermon of Nov. 28, 1900, on "Conversion," he painted a six by eight foot picture while preaching (when the church was refurbished in 1901, Wright added several biblical paintings to the walls, including a mural of the River Jordan which was lost when the building was razed in 1916; other paintings by the minister were owned by Dr. William Williams and Harold O. Taylor, one of which still hangs in that residence while a second painting was donated to the Nelson Art Gallery in Kansas City a few years ago); he requested that the stars and stripes be flown above the church; he left the congregation in charge to conduct its own services while absent; he conducted church business the same way as any other business, opening a church office with regular business hours; and he often drew his sermons from contemporary newspaper topics. In keeping with his philosophy of the minister as activist, Wright became an officer in the local temperance league and denounced other local sins such as the midway attractions in Forest Park where he saw "girls under ten, drinking in the vile songs and seeing the vile sights" as reported in the Pittsburg **Headlight** of July 22, 1901. To keep young people away from such attractions, Wright instigated a public reading room, an addition to the church in which anyone, "regardless of age, creed, sex, and color," could spend time reading.

Still, Wright was not satisfied with the results of his applied Christianity, so he devised the idea of writing a story depicting the actual conditions and denouncing "churchanity," the attitude of being more concerned with the church than with Christ. Writing late at night and influenced by Charles M. Sheldon's **In His Steps,** a book which asks the question, "What would Jesus do?" in a number of situations, Wright planned to read his finished writing was **That Printer of Udell's,** originally entitled **Practical Christianity.** A book of twenty-nine chapters and 468 pages, the novel attacks the hypocrisy of the church and tells of the rise of Richard Faulkner, a down-on-his-luck youth, who is helped by Uncle Bobbie Wicks (patterned on R.E. Carlton who donated the land for Pittsburg's Christian Church).



The second Pittsburg home of Harold Bell Wright [October 1901-June 1902], 410 W. Kansas [currently owned by Mr. and Mrs. Michael G. Berger]. The third and last Pittsburg home of Harold Bell Wright [June 1902-May 1903], 318 S. Catalpa Avenue [currently owned by Dr. and Mrs. Hugh T. Campbell]. The landscape by HBW was painted as a birth gift for Harold O. Taylor in 1905.



Robert E. Carlton — Elsbery W. Reynolds — Dr. William Williams

Meanwhile Wright's innovations drew the attention of a larger audience, so much so that he was invited to a Chicago church to preach its revival meeting in January of 1902. There, in a coincidental meeting, he became acquainted with Elsbery W. Reynolds, a former Kansan from Harper (his niece, Mrs. Lovita Moore, still resides in Pittsburg), who was trying to establish the Book Supply Company. That meeting eventually meant millionaire status for each man, a unique alliance in which Reynolds published only one author—Wright.

In his attempt to have his novel published, Wright first agreed to have the novel serialized in a church magazine; however, **Christian Century,** after accepting the manuscript, edited its realistic pictures to protect their Christian readers. Frustrated by the cutting of his novel, Wright put it away until his old friend Dr. William Williams, who had originally invited Wright to Pittsburg, suggested that he try the Book Supply Company, a mail order house in Chicago. Funded by the doctor, Wright went to Chicago and sold his book to Reynolds. He received the first copy of **That Printer of Udell's** a few days before his thirty-first birthday in 1903. Well advertised, the book sold 450,000 copies.

During the five years that Wright lived in Pittsburg (at 606 N. Pine, 410 W. Kansas, and 318 S. Catalpa), he married Frances Elizabeth Long of Buffalo, New York, a girl he had met at Hiram College. They were married at her home on July 18, 1899. Their first son, Gilbert Munger, named after the artist, was born in 1901, and Paul William, their second son, was born in 1902. During the summer of 1903, the Wrights spent the summer in the Ozarks, where he recuperated from malaria. That fall Wright accepted a position as minister in a Kansas City church. He remained there from 1903 to 1905, until his bad health once again caused him to retire to the Ozarks.

There he wrote **The Shepherd of the Hills,** which became a best seller. He served as minister in Lebanon, Missouri, from 1905 to 1907.

When told that he might have tuberculosis, Wright moved to Redlands, California, his last, brief pastorate from 1907 to 1908, where he decided that he would give up his church work and write seriously in order to carry his message to a larger audience than he could reach through the pulpit. In 1908, he moved to El Centro, California, in the Imperial Valley, where he wrote **The Calling of Dan Matthews** (1909) and **The Winning of Barbara Worth** (1911), his most successful novel. Wright and Reynolds made an excellent publishing team as they introduced an innovative method of advertising which still persists. Encouraged by the success of his first two books, Wright devoted himself entirely to writing, and Reynolds devoted himself to promoting Wright's novels. **The Calling of Dan Matthews,** the first Wright novel to receive this full-scale promotion from Reynolds, "was backed by an advertising appropriation of $48,000. Though strong book advertising had been fairly common for several years, these figures were nothing less than revolutionary," states Frank Luther Mott in **Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States.** The result of such advertising was that the book sold more than one-half million copies by the end of its first year. The publishing plan included bringing out a new book every other year so that the market would not become glutted. The advertising bills for other novels finally ran up to $100,000, which included a barrage of full-page advertisements in popular magazines and newspapers. The money was not wasted, for Wright's novels were best sellers. People who might have bought just one book a year bought Wright's, and rural mailboxes were stuffed with his books as soon as they were printed.

The Wright-Reynolds success story continued until Reynolds suffered a physical breakdown and sold his Wright copyrights to D. Appleton and Company in 1920. That company published the next seven books, and Harpers published the last three books. The Wright-Reynolds team succeeded in yet another medium, for when Reynolds retired from the book business, he organized a film company expressly for the purpose of producing films based on Wright's stories. He also saw to the dramatization of several of the books for the stage.

At least seventeen movies were made from Wright's stories. Like so many novelists of the era, Wright was lured to Hollywood. His first movie, **The Shepherd of the Hills,** was filmed in 1919, a second time in 1927, and yet again in 1951. **When a Man's a Man** was filmed in 1924 and 1935. Other Wright stories made into movies included **A Son of His Father** (1925), **The Winning of Barbara Worth** (1926), **Lights of Paris** (1928), **The Eyes of the World** (1930), **The Calling of Dan Matthews** (1935), **The Mine with the Iron Door** (1936), **Wild Brian Kent** (1936), **The Californian** (1937), **It Happened out West** (1937), **Secret Valley** (1937), **Western Gold** (1937), and **Massacre River** (1949).

Wright continued to write, amassing a fortune from his book sales and successful films. By the time he finished **The Winning of Barbara Worth,**

Harold Bell Wright

named in honor of his publisher's wife, Ruth Barbara Reynolds, he was quite ill. He recuperated near Tucson, Arizona, where he later built the Cross Anchor Ranch, where he lived for many years. **Their Yesterdays** (1912) and **The Eyes of the World** (1914) were written while he still lived in the Imperial Valley. After finishing this last novel, the Wrights planned to move to the Santa Monica Mountains near Hollywood, California. The family included a third son, Norman Hall, born in 1910. However, before they had a chance to move, Wright was seriously injured in an accident. He related the story of his near death and its effects on his life in a June 1924 article, "Why I Did Not Die," in the **American Magazine.** Wright and a companion were on horseback returning home from El Centro when horses and riders were struck by a speeding automobile. The companion was thrown to the ground unconscious, and his horse's leg was severed. Wright and his horse were carried along a hundred feet of barbed wire by the car. The corner of the convertible's windshield struck Wright's side, and the saddle horn smashed into his abdomen.

Wright recuperated at his Imperial Valley ranch for a few weeks and then moved to his new home. Shortly after that, however, he was told by his doctor that he had active tuberculosis. His plan after hearing the news was to go to the Arizona desert for its healing sunshine and write a novel, the income of which would support his family and in the event of his death educate his three sons. The advance orders for the novel were already immense. Taking with him a helper, he journeyed to the Catalina Mountains near Tucson to set up camp. Before he could do so, though, he caught a cold and was hospitalized for some time. When he returned to his camp, he

found it totally disorganized. He managed to instruct his help to set up the camp, but then the rainy season began, leaving him ill and depressed. He burned the first four chapters of his novel and began anew in February when the sunshine returned. He replaced his incompetent helper with a more knowledgeable Japanese male cook. Convinced of the sun's therapeutic effects, Wright dressed completely in white and worked on his novel at a hooded desk in the sun. By the time he had finished the manuscript of **When a Man's a Man** in April, he was in good health once more and had optimistically planned thirteen more novels. From his lonely recuperation in the desert, Wright suggested to his readers who suffered from illness to find something to think about, whether it be a rattlesnake or the stars. "If you can't find anything to think about except yourself, you ought to die, on general principle—and you probably will."

Relying on an open air desert existence to retain his good health, Wright wrote **The Re-Creation of Brian Kent** in 1919. Wright was a robust man who loved the outdoors and horses. However, Wright's life was to take another turn when he divorced Frances Elizabeth Long in 1920 and married Mrs. Winifred Mary Potter Duncan of Los Angeles on August 5 of that year. The reaction of his former friends in the Ozarks to the divorce is related in an article which bemoans the fact that the Wrights left the Ozarks. If they had remained, the Missouri residents speculated, "Brother and Sister Wright" would probably have stayed together.†

During the 1920s, Wright wrote **Helen of the Old House** (1921), **The Mine with the Iron Door** (1923), **A Son of His Father** (1925), **God and the Groceryman** (1927), and **Long Ago Told** (1929). He was often in Hollywood, as his novels were brought to the screen, and he also wrote screenplays. All three of his sons became involved in the motion picture industry. Paul, who died about 1930, was an actor. Under the pseudonym of John Lebar, Gilbert, the eldest, wrote **The Doubtful Year** (1929), **The Lighted Lantern** (1930), and **The Devil's Highway** (1932), the latter novel written in conjunction with his father. Later he became a screenwriter for the movies. Norman, who was also associated with motion pictures, presently lives in San Clemente, California.

In 1932, the Wrights moved to their Quiet Hills Farm in Escondido, California, where he continued his movie writing career. The thirties brought **Exit** (1930), **Ma Cinderella** (1932), and **To My Sons** (1934). **The Man Who Went Away** was published eight years later, but by that time, as the previous decade had foreshadowed, there was no audience for Wright's type of book. That audience was cynical from a world war, the depression, and the

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†"Grief in the Ozarks over the Divorce of Harold Bell Wright," **Literary Digest,** 21 (August 1920), p. 57. This article contains an inaccurate account of how Wright's first novel was published, attributing his financial backing to an Ozark physician instead of a Pittsburg physician as Wright relates in his autobiography, **To My Sons.**

oncoming Second World War. On May 24, 1944, Wright died of bronchial pneumonia at the age of seventy-two in La Jolla, California. The Escondido farm was sold for $70,000 only a month earlier when he moved to San Diego. Wright finally succumbed to the respiratory problems which had plagued him all of his life, but which, according to the Dallas **News** of May 26, had also "started him on his career as an author who pleased the masses with stories about right triumphant and irritated the critics—who agreed that his work was vapid, shallow, insipid." Wright's ashes are held at Greenwood Memorial Park, San Diego, California, in a book-shaped copper urn imbedded in sand from the Imperial Valley, the setting of his most popular novel.

Why was Wright such a popular novelist during the first two decades of this century? The character of his audience is partly the answer. Although Wright was undoubtedly the most popular of the best-selling authors, other popular writers included Owen Wister (**The Virginian**), John Fox, Jr. (**The Trail of the Lonesome Pine**), Kate Douglas Wiggin (**Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm**), Gene Stratton Porter (**Freckles**), Eleanor H. Porter (**Pollyanna**), Edgar Rice Burroughs (**Tarzan of the Apes**), Zane Grey (**The Riders of the Purple Sage**), Winston Churchill (**Richard Carvel**), and Booth Tarkington (**Seventeen**). The pre-World War I audience, according to Robert E. Spiller in his **Literary History of the United States,**

> had been in the making since the opening years of the century, but in its earlier stages of development it was more notable for increase in size than for improvement in taste.
>
> By 1910 there was in fact a larger public for books than would exist for many years after the First World War, provided that the books were of the sort this earlier public liked and could understand. It liked novels chiefly; it liked them if they were full of sentiment or swordplay, adventures in far places or local color; and if, at the same time, they moved by resolute steps toward an ending that satisfied the Protestant conventions.

Part of this audience's growth was the result of a corresponding growth of secondary and higher education, in addition to adult education.

Mott attributes Wright's success to three factors:

> the timeliness of his sincere comment upon the social problems which were already exciting wide interest, his native skill and understanding in addressing his great middle-class audience, and the powerful advertising campaign put behind his work by a sympathetic friend and publisher.

Even though literary critics did not like his novels (E. Haldeman-Julius of Girard was particularly cutting, calling Wright the great novelist of "Numbskulluria"), Wright struck a chord especially alluring to the lower

An illustration from That Printer of Udell's, Harold Bell Wright's first novel; The Shepherd of the Hills, an H.B.W. best seller, was one of Wright's most popular novels.

and middle classes of the American public, much as Dickens did with the English reading public. In a sense, both were muckrakers—Dickens for child labor laws and Wright for social change in the churches. Wright's time was the era of social gospel and the attempt of the churches to interpret social questions in the light of the teachings of Jesus. The churches were in serious trouble as countless Americans no longer attended, and those who did attend criticized the church for its costliness, showiness, and concern with social functions. As Mott observes:

> One of the most distrubing factors of social and economic unrest at the turn of the century was the changing attitude toward the churches. Proletarian movements, political crusades against the trusts and intrenched wealth in general, muckraking writers in the periodicals, and many other elements labored to arouse the social conscience of the people; but the churches were quiescent.

Critics of the churches included Upton Sinclair, who bitterly attacked those institutions in **The Profits of Religion.** Social Christianity was the subject of Josiah Strong's **Our Country** and Winston Churchill's **The Inside of the Cup.** The social gospel movement became almost ridiculous, as subjects ranged from the question posed in **In His Steps,** "What would Jesus do?"

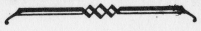
to the Reverend Courtland Myers' **Would Christ Belong to a Labor Union?**

In the end, Wright was more of a preacher than a novelist, a fact he readily admitted. He never concealed the didactic purposes behind his stories. "He is a moralist, a fabulist, a preacher of sermons, a Sayer, and an Utterer," observed Grant Overton in 1923. Believing that America can steer people in the right direction, he provides a picture of the ideal men and women in whom he believes. His novels have, states Fred Lewis Pattee, "a moral basis, a romantic and sentimentalized love interest, and a liberal salting with specialized Nature study." Although not literary in many characteristics, Wright managed to capture background and local color accurately in his books, especially in **The Shepherd of the Hills,** set in the Ozarks which he knew well. Wright simply wrote to illustrate his themes, even to the point in one novel of leaving his characters unnamed. His themes emphasized, as summarized by Thurman Wilkins:

> that true religion should be a part of daily life, not merely a Sunday ritual; that simple country folk living close to nature are morally superior to wealthy urbanites; and that the evils of the American social structure could be corrected by true men and true women who lived according to Christian principles.

Wright is a phenomenon in American fiction. He has some literary merit and a paucity of formal education. But he was successful in part because he was honest and sincere in his writing. His books are worthwhile, even though they are not of the quality of the books of Sinclair Lewis or Hamlin Garland, his contemporaries. Pattee concludes, "Unliterary his work is, undoubtedly, as graded by absolute standards, but it has played its part in the literary education of the great American masses. No history of American literature can avoid him."

Through his novels Wright guided the American reading public into the questions of church, morality, and war. Mrs. Perry tells Carol Kennicott in Sinclair Lewis' **Main Street** that "Harold Bell Wright is a lovely writer, and he teaches such good morals in his novels, and folks say he's made prett' near a million dollars out of 'em." Her evaluation reveals Wright's place in American literature. He provided reassurance to the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant masses, guided the morality of the young, and made money doing it, a true product of the Protestant work ethic. Wright's guidance was to last for only twenty years though, for America's dependence on a moral leader, shaken by the First World War, was shattered by the Second World War. In 1942, when his last novel, **The Man Who Went Away,** was published, Wright was its title character. The cord between the American people and their preacher had been cut completely.



Three Poems

by

William Gibson

Stonewall

High in the back hills, half a day
from any rut of wheel,
a hand is gone. So dank the shade
of hardwoods lay,
a hundred years run wild,

it took me twice to see the law
and signature of wall,
stones put aside, that kept their word
in ice and thaw,
to farm for man and child

where no field is, but foreclosed now
in so unmeant a scrawl
of vines that snake the trees I hit,
no barn, no cow,
no crop but idle bone.

Undone, the fingers feed the climbing
gloom that had a feel
to wed each difference so, and outwit
weather, rhyming
stone and stone and stone.

A Musicbox Clock

days come

but some
spring in me broke
the other year
and cannot make
the tunes

it did
although I tick
and keep the time
lost in the clock
I wound

and wind
and dream us back
where we lay coiled
and all was dark
behind

my lid
and hear it click
its singsong chime
that harps to pluck
our heads

from sleep
to school and work
and light to be
on hearts to break
and now .

days come
I miss the dark
where we lay blind
for when I woke
the beds

were bare
by some mistake
and half my world
was bare of folk
to whom

I take
the tunes I did
no more
and where the clock
and I

converge
although we tick
and tell the time
the tune we make
is our

own dirge

William Gibson

Deposition

In snow
a jump of prints
by four

that stitch
the unwalked wood
and stop,

the scuff
of dainty throe
in which

a hop
of triple claw
is etched,

two tints
let lightly fall
in russet

quill
and grey of rabbit
fluff:

and all
the winter wood
is still

William Gibson

The Failure

by Daniel A. Richard

Carl was intelligent and sensitive, and, for his fifteen years, exceptionally perceptive. Even as he wrote, he was repelled by the macabre aspects of a suicide note. He was conscious of the glass of water on the desk before him, and the bottle of sleeping capsules taken from the medicine cabinet. He was wryly amused that his parents had made the means of demise available and, thereby, were to be participants in their own punishment.

Actually, he was surprising himself. He had never seriously contemplated death by his own hand, although there had been many times when he had wondered vaguely if that might not be the answer to his problem. Now, sitting in his room, the whole house an ominous quiet, since his parents had not yet returned from work, he wondered if he could do what he felt he had to do. The sting of the day's abuse had begun to diminish and the cut on his lip was throbbing less urgently. He wondered if he would back out and say to himself, as he had so many times, "I can take it one more day."

He was finding that simply to phrase the note was more difficult than he had expected. So many thoughts flooded his mind, so many unpleasant memories, it was hard to get them sorted out to make the note say what he felt. He loved his parents, in spite of the misery they had unintentionally inflicted upon him, and didn't want the note to hurt them too much. Yet, they had to know he had suffered.

All he had managed to write so far were the words: *I'm sorry I have to handle it this way. I just can't make you understand. I just can't make anyone understand.*

This wasn't what he wanted. Irritated, he squeezed the paper up in his hand, then tossed it into the wastebasket a few feet from his desk. He *had* to make them understand.

After laying the pen on a new piece of paper, he covered his face with his hands, leaning forward on his elbows. The dark was soothing, yet it brought into his mind, as on a motion-picture screen, fragments of his life. He could see himself, and he could feel the pain.

On the screen he could see a physical education class. The scene had been played out many times. He was in the locker room, reluctantly changing into his gym clothes. He could see the dismal grey lockers, inhale the putrid odor of perspiration, the stink of rancid towels, pungent shorts, stale jock straps. He could feel the cement floor beneath his bare feet, perpetually slick from dirt, sweat, and shower water. He could hear the loud voices and see the excited, energetic movement. The boys around him were primed for combat, eager for it, exploding with energy, shoving, wrestling, poking one another in good humor. For some, he knew, this was the one class of the day in which they could excel. These were the big, the strong, the agile. They *needed* to excel. They *needed* the physical challenge. But, in shocking contrast, Carl saw himself. He was tired. It seemed he was always a little tired. He was slightly stooped, thin, and quiet. He would have preferred to be somewhere reading a good book.

His mind wandered back to the blank paper in front of him. He would have to get the note written soon. It was nearly 4:30, and his parents would be home in about an hour.

He tried a new approach: *Life has gotten to be more than I can stand. I know you think I'm a failure.*

You think I'm a failure. The words reverberated in his mind like a voice from an echo chamber. *Failure.* With that word, the hurt of the day returned—the embarrassment, the rejection, the inadequacy. And the spiritual wound from that day was itself like an echo of all the other days, hundreds of days. *Failure.*

He saw himself in his gym shorts and sneakers, walking dejectedly from the locker room toward the gym floor. The other boys, running, jumping, exuberant, jostled past, some slapping him on the back as they went by. "God," he heard himself say, "I hope the *coach* chooses the teams alphabetically today." But by the time he got to the gym floor, he could see that this was not to be. Randy, who played on the football team, had already been chosen to captain the shirts team. And Tim, a big, red-faced country kid, as much at home on the basketball floor as on a hay wagon, had been picked to lead the skins. Already Randy and Tim had pulled away from the cluster of boys and were confidently shouting out their choices. The chosen ones each bounded forward, to stand by their captains and watch as the other team members were picked.

Carl, balancing first on one foot, then the other, stood at the back of the group, waiting—waiting for it to be over. There were twenty-five boys in the group. Twelve had been chosen. The choices for the first twelve always went fast; usually it was the twelve who were athletes. The choices of the next eight or so went slower. In this group were boys who had at least some physical ability. Carl was, of course, not in either of these groups. As the group of chosen became larger and larger, and the group of unchosen became smaller and smaller, the tension increased. When there were just five boys left unpicked, events could no longer be measured in duration, but only in depth. Though there was not actually much time elapsing, each second was a profound and terrible desecration of dignity. Carl could feel his skin burning. He knew his face was red. He became increasingly conscious of his bare skin and his arms and hands, dangling uselessly at his sides. He crossed his arms in front of his chest, seeking what little retreat that posture offered. He stared at the floor, unable to face the haughty, contemptuous expressions of the chosen. Carl was keenly aware that the last five boys were not being picked; they were merely being accomodated. They were the dregs, the misfits, the strange ones.

To be left standing, as one by one all others were chosen, was a humiliation which eroded his spirit like acid. To be left standing in front of all the other boys—unpicked, not counting, just there.

Failure. His eyes remained fixed on that word. He had not lived a great number of years, nor had a great deal of experience, but he could see that failure was a relative thing. Somehow he had to let the world know that he acknowledged failure—as the world judged success— but that he was, nevertheless, a worthwhile person. In fact, he reasoned bitterly, considering the whole picture, he was equal to those boys who were always chosen. He was able to figure out difficult problems. He was willing to work and to help other people. He had talent in mathematics and language. He could even write a little poetry. But this ability, he realized sadly, would be the last quality to recommend him to the world.

At any rate, the word *failure* did not quite communicate what he felt. Again he crumpled the paper and tossed it into the basket. Picking up the bottle of sleeping capsules and running his finger over the smooth coolness, he wondered if maybe he could just take them and not leave a note. Maybe, he conjectured, his parents would realize, when they were finally forced to think about it, why he had been driven to take his life. But he shook his head. No, they would not realize. His mind fuzzed into a memory of his parents as they watched him try to play Little League baseball.

"Come on, Carl, come on boy! You can do it!" His father's voice was audible above the babble of the crowd. "Hold your bat the way I showed you!"

Carl recalled with anguish how desperately he wanted to please his father. For a moment he relived the sensations which had recurred again and again. "If only, if *only* he'll pitch me an easy one, maybe I can hit it." Blending with his father's voice was the voice of the coach. "Come on, Carl, you can do it." There were, alternately, shouts from various teammates, "Atta boy, Carl! Hit it, Carl!" And from the stand, the voices of doubtful well-wishers, "Carl! Carl!"

He was allowed one swing and a miss. The voices continued, less confidently. He saw himself *trying* to look like a baseball player—rearranging his grip on the bat, kicking dirt, steadying his gaze at the pitcher. Hope was not lost even when he missed the second pitch, but his father's voice fell like a club, "Damn it, Carl, hit that ball!"

He watched the windup, the boy on the mound pretending big-league. It seemed to him time hung in suspension. Silently, he prayed, "God, oh God, please let me hit that ball." There was the pitch. His mind played back, in slow motion, the round, white object floating toward him. It was, it surely was going to be right over the plate, right between his shoulders and his hips, right on the bat. He felt the swing. The bat cutting the air lazily, the ball closer, closer, the bat completing its arc, his whole body straining. Strike!

He heard the boys in the dugout moaning, and faintly, his father shouting, his voice hollow with disappointment, "Next time, Carl." But he did not get a hit next time, or the next time, or ever during the one season he played ball. Yet, every evening there was his father's "Come on, son, let's go toss the old pellet around a little. What do you say, huh? Think we can improve that catching a little? Think we can improve that throwing a little? Think we can improve that running a little?"

Carl closed his eyes and shivered. How unmistakable, always, was the longing in his father's eyes, in his smile, in his hopeless encouragement. Why did he punish himself so? Baseball, football, basketball. It seemed to Carl, as the years crowded in, that there was always a ball in some shape coming at him. And always his father a few yards away, hoping, trying, shaking his head and trying again.

Carl found himself writing: *If only you had known how much I wanted to please you. I wish I could have told you. I wish I could.*

He straightened up, thinking about what he had written, then bent over again, writing with deliberate slowness: *Maybe now I can.*

A shot of pain through the cut in his upper lip reminded him with sudden intensity of the final incident which had driven him to this moment. As he recalled each minute of the time since school let out that afternoon, his body ached with anger and resentment, and he knew that he could never again subject himself to such treatment. The enormity of the incident was magnified in his mind because of what he was sure would be his father's reaction to it. Among the other manly arts his father had tried to teach him was the art of self-defense. His father, an ex-sailor, had had some ring experience in the Navy. Carl had always doubted that he could hit anyone, even if he could pick up some of his father's technique. The manly art of self-defense, he had observed, was more often the manly art of unprovoked aggression.

His recollection of his father's boxing prowess faded into the events of only an hour before. He realized, regretfully, that he should have known better than to wear that cap—a bright red baseball cap, with his name in raised gold letters on the bill. It had been a present from his father, and Carl was fond of it. But he should have realized it would invite scorn from some of the other boys.

When he came out of the building after school, he could see, several yards off, three boys approaching him. Two were about his size; one was larger and heavier, with a cigarette dangling from his mouth.

"Hey," one of the boys taunted, "look at that be-u-ti-ful hat!"

Another boy joined the fun. "My sister had a hat just like that, only it had flowers on it instead of a name."

They all laughed, closer now. The larger one pulled the cigarette from his mouth, flicking it to the ground. Eyeing the cap maliciously, he sneered, "Is that a hat or a Frisbee?" One of the others caught the drift. "Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No-o-o it's a Frisbee!"

Carl felt his face flush; there was intense burning at the tips of his ears. His stomach was churning and his breath coming unevenly. He smiled lamely. Maybe he could talk them away. "Aw, come on, you guys. . . ."

One of the small boys reached toward the bill of the cap and rubbed his fingers over the gold lettering. Then, abruptly, he jerked the cap off of Carl's head and ran, waving it in the air like a victory pennant. "Hey, let's play keepaway!"

Carl began walking toward him. His heart was pounding in his ears. "Lord," he warned himself, "Dad'll kill me if I don't get that cap."

The other small boy had begun running, as if putting himself into position to receive a pass. "Over here, over here!" he called.

The red cap sailed through the air, over Carl's head. "O.K. Come on, you guys. You've had your fun; now give me my cap," Carl pleaded.

"You want your hat?" the receiver mocked; "Here's your hat." He tossed it toward the larger boy, who was standing a few yards to one side. Far into the air it sailed, descending beyond Carl's grasp, into the boy's reaching hand.

Carl turned to face him.

The boy smiled derisively. "You want your hat, kid?"

Carl waited, a few feet away, blood drumming in his head. He could barely keep from crying. Repeatedly the thought raced through his mind. "Oh. if I don't get the cap back . . . if I don't get that cap back. . . ."

"Here's your hat," the boy offered diabolically. He tossed it to the ground in front of Carl, but, as Carl reached down, stepped forward onto it, pressing with all his weight, grinding his foot back and forth.

"Don't!" Carl shrieked, lunging, catching the boy off guard and pushing him back.

Sudden anger clouded the boy's face. "Why you little bastard!" His fist, swinging upward, landed with a sickening thunk on Carl's mouth and sent him sprawling backward onto the dirt.

The salty taste of blood spilled onto Carl's tongue. He looked through tear-dimmed eyes as the boy kicked the shriveled, dirty remains of the cap into his face.

The present returned hazily as Carl saw tears smudging the note before him . He became conscious of the swelling in his lip as he ran the back of his hand over his eyes to clear them and sniffed back the congestion in his nose.

Seeing the words *I wish I could have told you* run together, he grabbed the note, wadding it into his fist. It was like his life, he felt, crushed into an absurd little ball. Defiantly he flung the wad at the wastebasket. It hit the edge and bounced off.

He settled back, looking at the crumpled paper in disbelief. Suddenly, he knew exactly what to say. It was simple, yet profound.

On a fresh sheet, he wrote in big letters, emphatically: *I'm not right for this world.*

The physical pain his body felt, the mental and spiritual pain he had felt most of his life—all of the hundreds of moments of despair now swept upon him like a torrent pushing him down. With resignation, he opened the bottle, then covered one palm with blue capsules. The other hand grasped the glass of water. As he smacked his palm against his lip, dumping the drug into his mouth, he felt the cut begin to bleed again. "It won't matter," he mused.

Setting the glass on the desk and looking around the room, he decided it would be best to lie down on the bed. That seemed an appropriate place for him to end.

In the minutes that followed, he stared up at the ceiling and at the few things in the room he could see without moving—pictures, pennants, momentoes—reminding him of budding moments which never blossomed. Then it became an effort to think, and the room was a blurred merry-go-round, spinning, spinning; he was riding in space, released from the world. It seemed to him that, far away, somewhere in the house, his father was calling, "Carl . . . Carl. . . ." It seemed to him that the door to his room was being opened. His father's voice was floating through a soft, peaceful mist, "A little jogging today, son? A little jogging . . . jogging . . . jogging . . . ?"

The E. Haldeman-Julius Home, Girard, Kansas, 1968. Photograph by Larry Long. [The publisher of the Little Blue Books will be featured in our next issue].

Trading

by Zula Bennington Greene

The great day came when I was allowed to go to Harper all by myself. Harper was our nearest town and our post office, a little place with one small store. Two or three times a week my father would ride a horse across Hogle's Creek to get the mail and buy a few groceries.

I had often gone to Harper with my father, riding behind him on the horse, or in front if he took two children. But now I was going all by myself, like a real lady. My mother's side saddle was put on old Fred, the gentlest of horses; he was led up to the rail fence, and I hopped on, Papa calling out a final instruction, "Now keep his head up, hon, don't let him stop and nibble, and don't fall off in the creek." I rode forth feeling like a young pilot taking off on his first solo flight, though in this early year in the century nobody had ever heard of pilots or solo flights. I rode past Aunt Martha's house, through the timber with its stretch of smooth road, across the creek, which wasn't very deep, arrived, dismounted, and tied Fred to the hitching post.

The store was run by Uncle Johnny and Aunt Cindy Harper, titled by courtesy. It had been run by a Harper since anybody could remember. The Harpers lived all about, descendants of an old pioneer family.

Uncle Johnny greeted me with, "Come here all by yourself?"

Groceries were arranged along one side of the store—sugar, coffee beans, rice, raisins, prunes,—in bulk, to be weighed and sold by the pound. On the other side were bolts of calico and "domestics," straw hats, overalls (pronounced "overhalls"), red bandana handkerchiefs. *Domestics* were muslins, particularly unbleached muslin a yard wide, to be made into sheets with a seam down the middle. Women washed the sheets and spread them on grass for bleaching, but they never attained a real white.

Sugar, coffee, and tobacco were our principal purchases. After I had bought a quarter's worth each of sugar and coffee and a box of soda

and fell into a silence, Uncle Johnny brought out three plugs of Star tobacco and said offhand, "I reckon your Poppy will want some tobacco." His graciousness and tact were worthy of a cultivated gentleman of the world.

Aunt Cindy, plump in a calico Mother Hubbard, sat in a hickory rocking chair made by Hugh Harper in his little shop, and engaged me in a conversation that was question and answer.

"How are your Mommy's chickens doing?"

I said the hawks got two and I had stepped on one.

"Do you have new potatoes yet?"

I said we graveled a few, but they were not very big.

"Is your Aunt Marthy well?"

I said she was out feeding the chickens when I went by.

"You've got some mail," Uncle Johnny said. The post office was in a front corner of the store. "Here's a letter from your Uncle Frank out in Colorado. Reckon he aims to come home? And here's one from your folks in Oklahomy."

He handed the mail through the wooden bars of the post office, along with the *Christian Herald* and *Farm and Fireside,* our two weekly papers. Before I left, Uncle Johnny handed me a striped poke of stick candy, murmuring, "Your Poppy always gets you some candy." I mounted the horse from the stile block and felt grown up and important. I had transacted business and talked woman talk.

Sometimes my mother made the trip to Harper, carrying a basket of eggs, the basket resting on her left thigh, her left arm through the handle. One day a rabbit, startled by the horse, jumped up suddenly. The horse, just as startled, turned suddenly and my mother sailed off backwards, the eggs breaking over her.

Fred stood by, embarrassed and apologetic, while Mamma got on again and rode glumly home, egg dripping from her long skirt. When he was sure she was not hurt, Papa laughed and we all took our cue from him and thought it was very funny. Papa put his arm around Mamma and said she'd have a time getting that egg off her skirt.

For more extensive trading we went to Quincy. *Trading* meant exchanging butter and eggs for what we needed from the store. *Shopping* was a word we did not use. When several dozen eggs had been saved they were packed in a box with hay between layers, the butter was brought from the cave and packed in a crock, and a trip was made to town. Quincy was also the place to which we took our own grain to be ground.

To go to Quincy with my father was a privilege and a pleasure. In a clean, fresh-ironed calico dress and bonnet, my hair in long plaits down my back, I sat with him in the spring seat of the wagon and listened to his talk about the farms we passed.

If we met another wagon we stopped to exchange news about crops and weather and anything that seemed worthy of mention. If the visitors were acquainted they were glad to see each other. If they were not, inquiries were made as to who they were, where they lived, and where they were going, with no offense taken. This was not the Wild West, where it was not only bad manners, but downright foolhardy, to ask a man where he came from. These were lonely farmers hungry for talk, from friend or stranger.

Our first stop in Quincy was at the mill. We drove up beside the high platform. The miller, white with flour, came out, let down a hinged plank to make a bridge to the wagon, and wheeled in our sacks of wheat and corn.

"Reckon it'll be upwards of an hour," he shouted above the roar of the machinery.

Quincy had three general stores—Bert Lord's, Hally Amrine's, and Lige Cagle's—and a millinery store run by Rena Stiltz. Once, when she was changing the trimming of a hat, my mother gave Rena a kind of compliment: "They can say all they want to 'bout Renie, but she sews her trimmings on tight."

Mamma had two hats, a summer hat and a winter hat, which were given a new look each season by a change of trimmings. Women conferred with each other about styles—they were using a good many flowers this year, brims were turning up instead of down—but in the end each woman used her own pleasure in buying new flowers and feathers and ribbons for her hat.

One of Mamma's winter hats had little jet ornaments hanging from under the brim. I remember it for a special reason. Papa and Mamma were sitting on the floor in front of her big rounded-top trunk. They had taken money out of it and were counting it, laying each bill out.

I heard Papa say, "We don't have a hundred dollars," in the same voice he might say he didn't have twine for the wheat harvest.

They put the money back and before she closed the trunk, Mamma opened the hatbox section and brought out her jet-ornamented hat. She set it on her head and Papa looked at it as though seeing it for the first time.

"Great Scott, Mag, them dangling things are going to put your eyes out."

Mamma took the hat off, put it back in the box, and shut the trunk.

They went out of the room and about their work.

We left the mill and drove to the stores, stopping in front of Rena Stiltz's millinery shop, with hats in the window. Papa tied up the horses and took the butter and eggs into Bert Lord's, which was next door. Bert counted out the eggs, weighed the butter, and dumped it into a big jar with other butter. He added up the credit and balanced it against our purchases. In hard times a farmer could "book" groceries against the sale of grain or livestock.

In her list of things she wanted from town, my mother had included calico for a dress, saying, "Zula can help pick it out." As we grew older, Julia and I were allowed to choose the material for our own dresses—she usually chose red and I took blue. Aunt Myrtie Holley once said, "I always buy red and blue calico. They made such nice carpet rags."

We bought cheese and crackers for lunch and ate in the wagon. Papa brushed the crumbs away and said he'd go and see if the grain had been ground. The miller loaded sacks of flour and cornmeal into the wagon. No money was exchanged. He kept a portion of the grain for his pay. At home the flour and meal would be put into two barrels that stood in a corner of the kitchen, covered with a wide clean plank that Mamma used for a work table.

Every fall our parents took us to Bert Lord's and fitted us with shoes and overshoes, at first high button shoes, then high-laced shoes. Both gave troubles. Buttons popped off; the button hook got lost. Tips came off shoelaces; the metal rings came off the holes; the strings broke and had to be tied and in time replaced with heavy twine treated with beeswax.

If he needed to, Papa could buy our shoes without taking us along. He stood us against the wall, laid a small straight stick along the inside of our foot and cut it off at the big toe. It had to slide into a shoe with room to spare.

I remember the pure rapture of getting our first pairs of slippers—low shoes now called oxfords and tan-colored instead of black. Papa put on Julia's and Mamma put on mine and they seemed as excited and pleased as we were.

Adding to the pleasure of my first trip to Harper was bringing home letters. We did not get many letters, mostly letters from Uncle John and Aunt Laura and their family in Oklahoma—Uncle John's letters began, "Dear Brother and Family—I take my pen in hand to answer your most kind and welcome letter. This leaves us all well and hope it finds you all the same." It continued with news of crops and prices and family and ended, "Your Affectionate Brother." The letters were

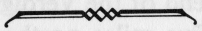
in a fine, shaded Spencerian. Both Uncle John and my father had been school teachers and "wrote a fine hand." Addressing an envelope was called "backing a letter."

The *Christian Herald* and *Farm and Fireside* brought some of the outside world into our home, mostly moral and agricultural. When a Rural Route was started out of Quincy, we took a small daily paper. I read about the education of Helen Keller, the marriage of Alice Roosevelt to Nicholas Longworth—a full page picture of Alice from the cover of the *Christian Herald* was on our wall—the marriage of Princess Ena and King Alphonso of Spain, the shooting of Standford White, the Russian-Japanese war, and the energetic regime of Theodore Roosevelt.

Appeals from the *Christian Herald* to help flood and famine victims on the other side of the world moved Mamma to send dollar bills away in letters, and she contributed regularly to saving the heathen in foreign lands.

The *Christian Herald* printed sermons by Dr. Charles M. Sheldon and Dr. T. DeWitt Talmadge and articles by Helen Keller. Those names became as familiar as the names of neighbors, but at the same time as remote as Ruth and John the Baptist.

Years later when I lived in Topeka, Kansas, I knew Dr. Sheldon quite well and was a member of his Central Congregational Church, though he was no longer its active minister. I met and talked with Helen Keller when she came to Topeka and met a granddaughter of Dr. Talmadge. Something of the old magic came back in the presence of these people I had known in a newspaper when I was a small girl in another state. Could it be possible that I was touching their hands and hearing their voices?



Swat the Fly!

In Kansas we had far too many cases of typhoid fever, far too many deaths from it, and far too many flies....With these in mind, Frank H. Rose, a school teacher in Weir City, Kansas, wrote me that a Boy Scout troop there wanted to help....But important as this was, Mr. Rose's own contribution was even more so, for he had gone to a local hardware store, bought a roll of wire screening, cut it into squares, and tacked these to handles he had begged from the druggist, W. J. Allen. After that the Scouts had left two of these implements in every house in town.

The instrument was the first fly swatter.

From **Frontier Doctor**, by Samuel J. Crumbine, M.D. (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, 1948), p. 160.

Grandfather Was There

by

Alta Mae (Randall) Bowman

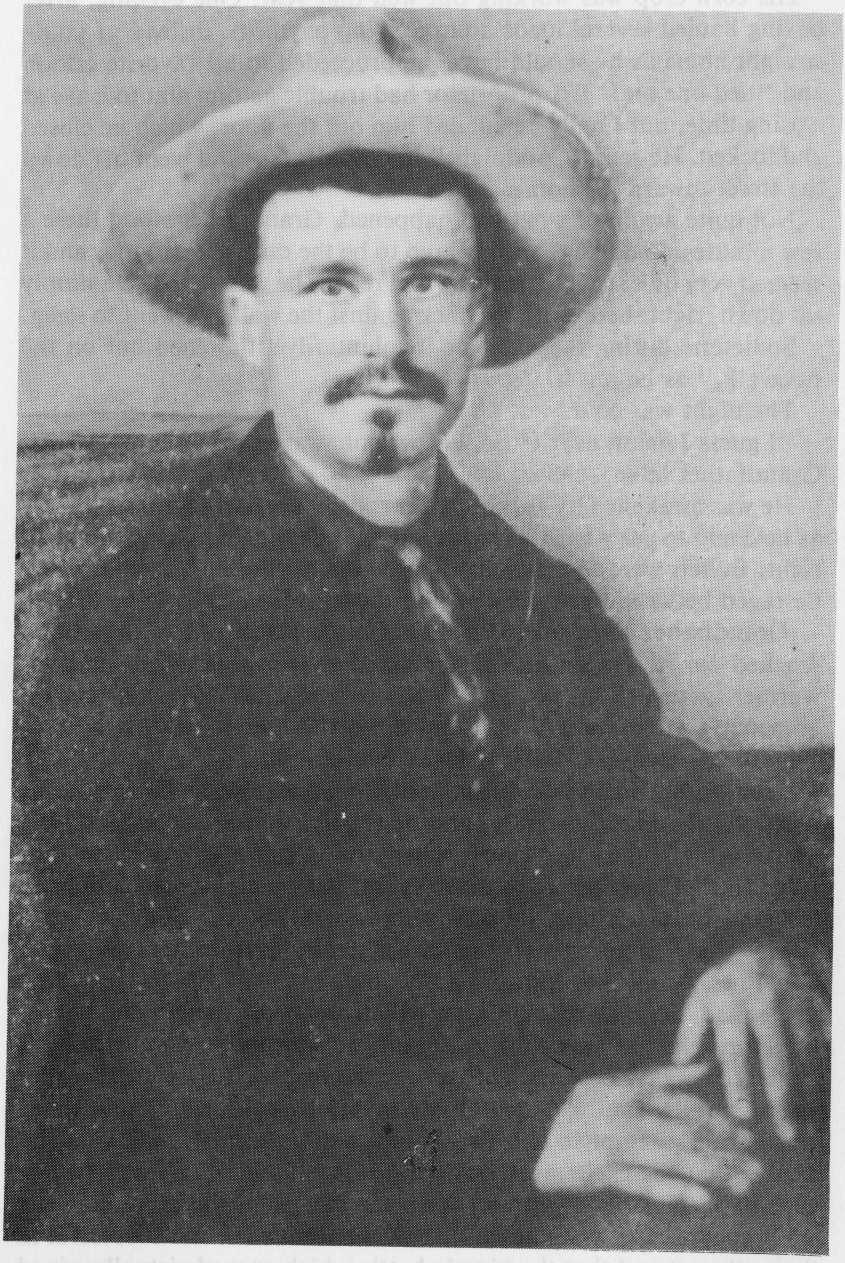
Frank Henderson Randall was born in 1855 in Kansas Territory, the family home being situated on land assigned to his mother as her Indian right. His father was John A. Randall, a native of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. His mother was Eliza (Woo-le-noo-squay) Snead, a Delaware Indian.

Of the six children born to this union, two were born in Unorganized Territory, three were born in Kansas Territory, and the last was born in Kansas. Yet they were all born in the same house! Two of the children died in infancy. Grandfather was one of the remaining four, orphaned by the death of Great-grandfather Randall during the Civil War. At age twelve, he, his brothers and sister, his mother, a stepfather, and two half-sisters were moved into the Cherokee Nation from the Delaware Reserve in Kansas.

Their new home, established for them in the Cherokee Nation, was in the Delaware District, near the location of the small town of Ketchum, Oklahoma. However, Grandfather, as a young married man, chose a site in the bend of the Verdigris River over in Cooweescoowee District, about five miles northeast of the small town of Nowata, in what is now Nowata County, for the home where he would rear his own family.

Since the town of Nowata was unincorporated until early in 1893, Grandfather did business at Coffeyville, Kansas, about twenty miles from his home. He utilized the banking facilities, the elevator for disposing of his grain, and also purchased the bulk of his supplies in Coffeyville from the time of his settlement in the area (about 1878 or 1879). All through the eighties and nineties Grandfather had to transport his wheat and corn to the elevator in Coffeyville.

One of Grandfather's "harvest trips" was at that famous time in October of 1892 when the Daltons attempted to rob the two Coffeyville banks.



Frank Henderson Randall, Sr., 1855-1940

His corn crop was working out well that year. One evening, after having hauled several loads and receiving payment, instead of going straight home as he should have, he proceeded to his favorite saloon and "tied one on." The proprietor had trouble getting him to leave at closing time, but finally persuaded him out the door, which he closed and locked. He said "Goodnight" to Grandfather and went off down the street toward his home.

Not quite aware of what had happened, Grandfather stood there a few minutes. Suddenly, he appeared to be the only one around, and it seemed very quiet to him, making him realize he was sleepy. He simply sat down, right there, with his back against the wall and went to sleep.

Sometime during the night he involuntarily "flattened out on the sidewalk," as he put it.

The night was cold.

"I guess I damn near froze, but was unaware of it until morning," Grandfather later recalled.

He was awakened by gunshots. He rolled over and sat up as quickly as he could to see what was happening. Something was happening, all right! Bullets were flying from all directions as the early morning battle raged between bank robbers and the town's lawmen and citizens.

Grandfather spied his hat a short distance from where he sat and reached for it. He said he remembered thinking he might be a bit warmer with it on his head. His movement, however, caught someone's attention and instantly a bullet whizzed past his head—only inches away—striking the wall behind him.

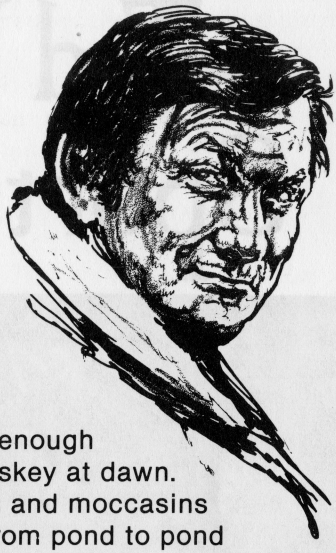
Grandfather hadn't had time, yet, to wonder what he was doing there, but he knew instantly, and definitely, that he *shouldn't* have been. This time he *knew* when he "flattened out on the sidewalk." There, afraid to move again, flat on his stomach and with his chin on his hands, he was within sight of the doors of both banks—they were across the street from each other—and was eyewitness to all that transpired outside.

He had no way of knowing what went on *inside* the banks; therefore, neither have I. If you want to know more, I'm sure there have been many accounts written over the years. It is now eighty-nine years since the Dalton Gang, obsessed with past success, tried the new and daring attempt to rob two banks simultaneously, thinking, no doubt, that the excitement and confusion that would be attached to each happening would detract from the danger of the other.

Of course, it is well known that the Daltons were not successful in their attempt and that the bloody battle which ensued virtually wiped out the Gang.

I just wanted to record the fact that Grandfather was there.

Teal Hunting with Two Old Uncles



September's never cold enough
For duck blinds and whiskey at dawn.
I shoot in summer shirts and moccasins
As green wings hustle from pond to pond
In the yellow morning.

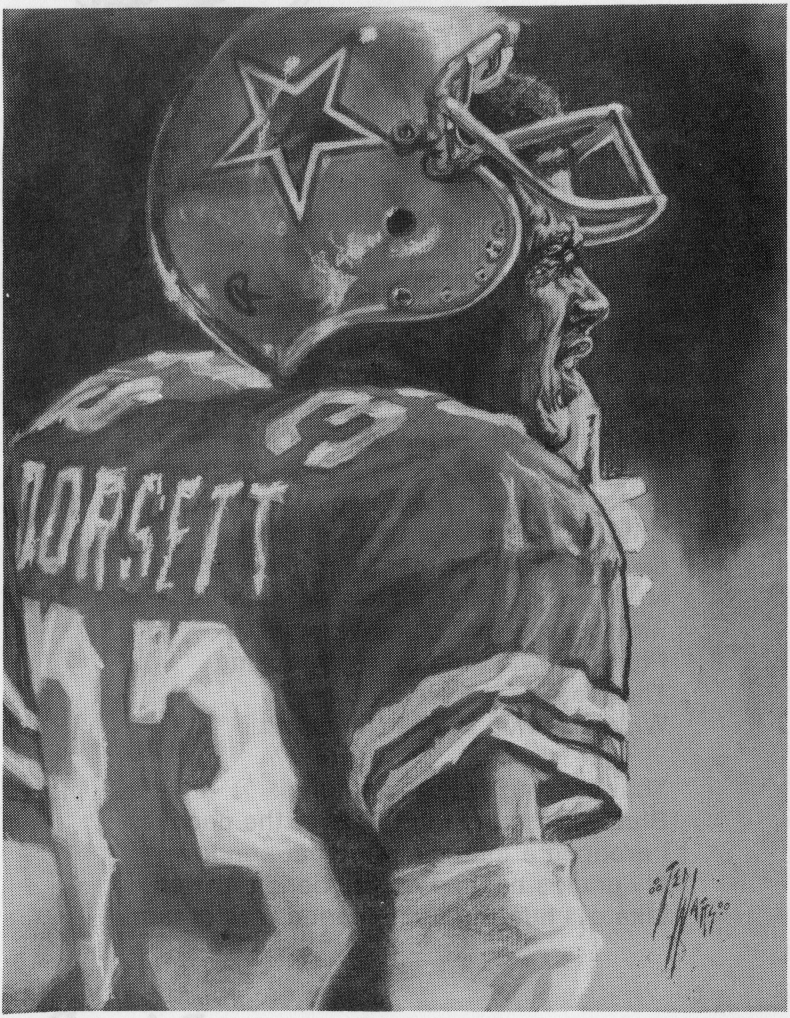
My uncles miss chances, drinking
On the low bench deep in the blind,
Swapping lies about Cheyenne Bottoms
And Snow Geese bigger than the moon.

In the afternoon I work shirtless, laying
Chunks of sod over the blind's roof,
Careful as my mother tiling the kitchen.
Nearby my uncles sit on campstools, killing
Slow wasps that climb sluggishly
From the warming grass, knocking
Them out of the air
With rolled-up *Ducks Unlimited.*

That evening I shot two limits:
Blue wings came in low over the decoys.
I dropped a lone cinnamon at sundown.
My uncles napped on the bench, twitching
Like old hunting dogs loaded with dreams.

Robert Day

Ted Watts: Sports & Art



Tony Dorsett, 1981

Photo by Mike Gullett

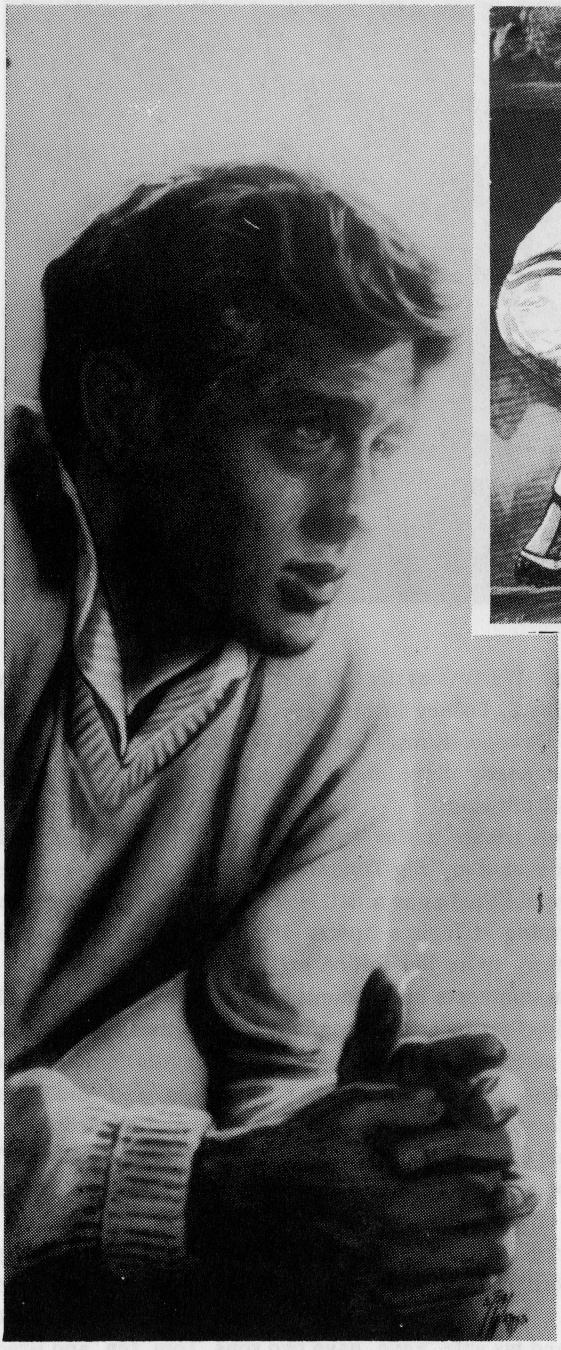
"On college campuses, Watts is easily the best known sports artist in the land...." So said Douglas S. Looney in his June 2, 1980, **Sports Illustrated** "Footloose" profile of Oswego, Kansas, artist Ted Watts who has gained nationwide acclaim for nearly three thousand athletic theme paintings, illustrations, prints, and drawings.

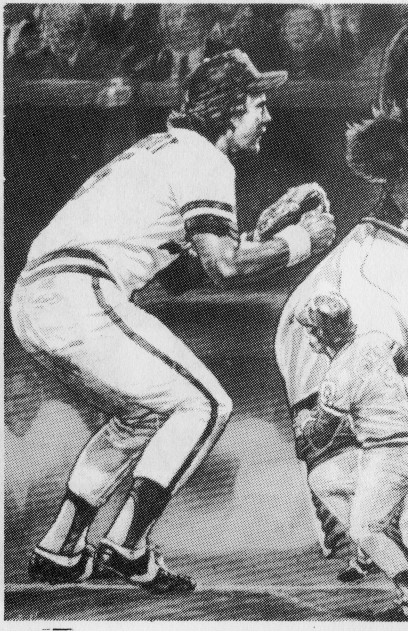
Looney's accolade pays tribute to the "small town artist" who has made good with his graphics devoted to "Big-Time College Sport." A little over ten years ago, Watts was unpublished as an artist. Now, at age 38, he's considered a pioneer for transforming collegiate sports art publicity from glorified cartoons of the midcentury to an illustration art preference in the '80s.

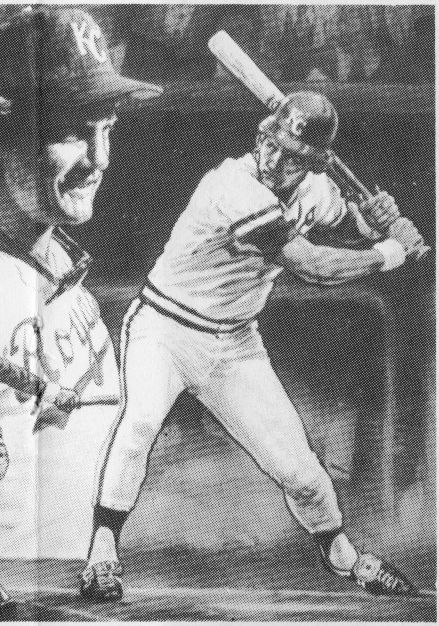
Watts has received assignments and commissions from 132 colleges and universities. Adding to his "sports art" reputation is the permanent display of Hall of Fame portrait series at eight NCAA member institutions, regular assignments from several specialized sport publications and individual commissions from professional sports team, magazines, and advertisers.

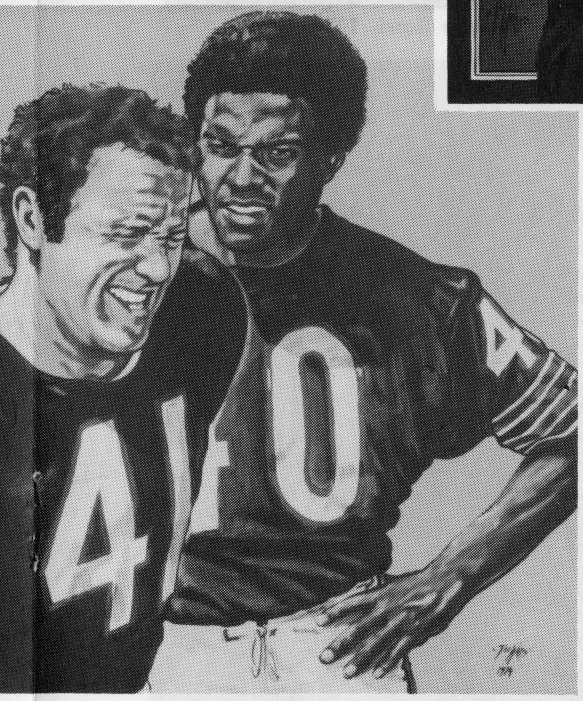
He's been the National Collegiate Athletic Association Publishing Service's regular cover illustrator since 1973. The United States Olympic Committee uses his art.

A native of Anthony, Kansas, Watts is a 1960 Miami (Oklahoma) High School graduate. A Northeastern Oklahoma A & M Junior College track letterman, he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from Pittsburg State University in 1966. He and his wife, Faye, have two sons, Tom, ten, and Brad, six.



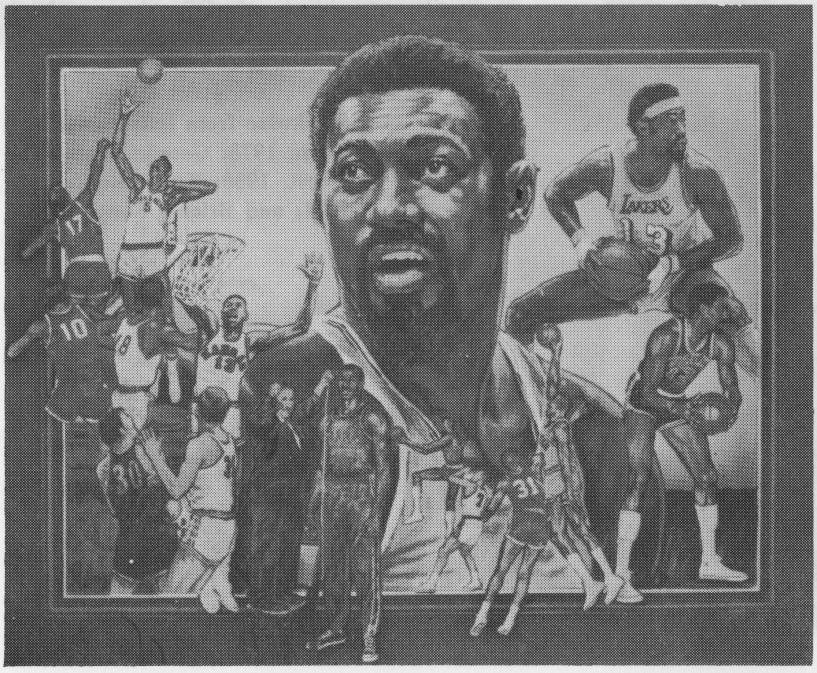






Clockwise from left: James Dean, 1978; George Brett—The Quest, 1980; Knute Rockne, 1981; and Brian's Song, 1974.

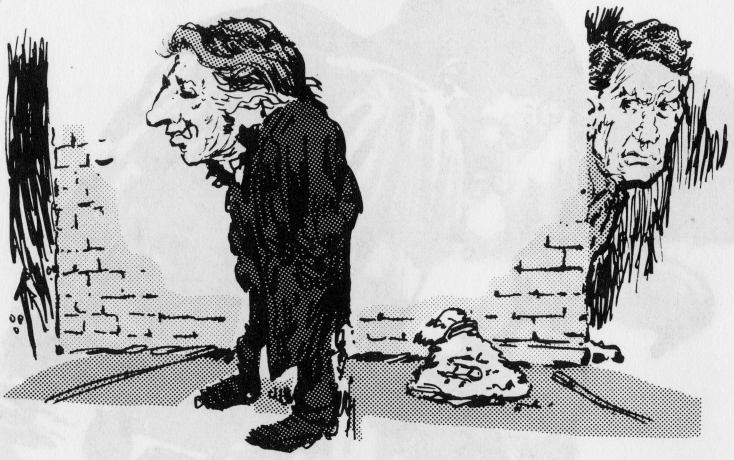
Arkansas vs. Oklahoma — Orange Bowl, 1978



Wilt Chamblerlain Career Montage, 1977

Final Seconds

The Two Brothers: A Lebanese Folktale



Collected by Patty Kuhel from Marie Farris

Once there were two brothers. One worked hard, but the other was lazy and would never work at all.

The one who worked hard had plenty of money, but the lazy brother was always close to starving. Everybody in town just raved and raved because the rich brother just let his lazy brother starve.

Finally the rich, hard-working brother decided that he would give his lazy, good-for-nothing brother some money, but he didn't want his brother to know that the money came from him. So one day when he saw his brother coming down the street, he took a big bag of money and put it in the middle of the street, knowing his brother would stumble over it when he went by. Then the rich brother hid to see what would happen when his lazy brother found the bag of money.

Well, the lazy brother came slowly down the street toward where that bag of money was laying, and the rich brother watched him coming. Just about the time he would be reaching the bag of money, the lazy brother decided to find out what it would be like to be blind. So he shut his eyes and walked right past the money and never found it.

The rich brother said to himself, "If my brother is so blind and stupid that he can't even pick up money out of the street, **let** him starve." And he never tried to do anything for his lazy brother ever again.

Bootlegging Cattle on the Border

by

Marjorie V. Forbes

Some folks tell how Sol Cheney was in a shooting scrape once at the county seat, and drove into town and lay under his spring wagon till the fellow came by and then clipped him one; but undoubtedly that is not the straight of the story. Sol Cheney never waited on any man; he went after him.

Sol's ranch was down on Fly Creek southwest of the county seat, just seven miles from the Indian Territory border and about fifteen miles northwest of Baxter Springs. Sol went in for pigs, purebred Shorthorns, and fancy horses.

He always had a number of men working for him. Running a ranch spread out over several sections required a great deal of help—and constant supervision. During the late 1880s and early 1890s the settlers near the border were plagued by thieves who took choice livestock and made straight for "the Territory," where they were beyond the law. The Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) was a hotbed for all sorts of skullduggery.

One early October afternoon in the 1890s Sol Cheney and three of his hired men were working in the shade of an old oak tree fixing harness. It was a beautiful autumn day. The trees up and down Fly Creek had turned yellow and red and brown. There was a bit of haze in the distance, but the sky was clear and blue and the sun felt warm.

"Too good a day to last," the foreman, Pete Sebastian, had said that morning, shaking his head. "A trouble breeder, if ever I saw one. Something's bound to happen before night."

Then, just after noon, Pete had ridden over to Faulkner, that little town on the new railroad, to ask at the depot about some repairs he had ordered.

Sol was sitting on a wagon tongue stringing red, white, and blue celluloid rings for a bridle: two white, one red, two white, one blue, two white— Glancing up from the colored rings he saw a tiny puff of white dust off to the west. As he watched, the puff of white became a small white cloud rolling and curling against the horizon. Beside him Jim and Al had stopped their work and were watching, too. The cloud of dust was coming closer and now Sol could see a rider—a tiny, dark speck in front of the swirling dust.

Shorty, a young greenhorn, stood up and studied the dust cloud. "What do you suppose that is?" he asked.

Jim Harwood, the blacksmith, picked up another rivet and set it on the harness strap. Tapping it deftly into place he said, "That's Pete." Then he added, "From the way he is riding for home, I reckon that railroad engine must have got off the track at Faulkner and be chasing him down the road."

"Now, Jim," chimed in Al, "You know Sol doesn't like to be reminded of the Minden Nevada. He hasn't had much use for that railroad since the track-layers put the bed out on the prairie instead of through the ranch, here."

"Yep," continued Jim. "Must be the engine and a whole passel of railroad cars right on Pete's tracks."

"Aw pshaw, now," exclaimed Shorty, "that couldn't be! Why, 'taint anywhere near five o'clock yet. Whoever heard of a train being two or three hours early?" Then he added, "The Nine O'clock was just about on time going down. I heard it whistle."

Sol said nothing. But Pete *was* riding like the wind. His horse thundered across the wooden bridge, galloped in at the gate, slid to a stop near the men, and stood quivering and blowing, its hair flecked with lather and showing wet under the saddle girth.

Pete was on the ground in an instant. "They're moving in a trainload of Texas cattle tonight!"

"Texas cattle!"

Sol jumped to his feet.

"The depot agent said he figured you'd want to know," Pete added.

"Unloading Texas cattle? Well, we'll see about that!" said Sol.

"How do you know they are *Texas* cattle?"asked Al.

"I read the shipping orders. They're billed in here from a little town down inside the Indian Territory about sixty miles, but the shipment originated at a place in Texas on the Brazos River. The depot agent always has to be notified when anything's unloaded, and he should

have any billing twenty-four hours in advance, but he didn't get this one until just before noon."

"Where you suppose they're putting these cattle?" asked Jim.

"Don't know for sure. The depot agent said they might be aiming to put the cattle in the Stone Gove pasture—maybe the owners know about it and maybe they don't. That's not too far away from the railroad to drive the cattle. There aren't any houses out that way; perhaps no one around would even know the cattle were there. Of course, there would be tracks."

"Aiming to put Texas cattle in that pasture next to my good Shorthorns!" roared Sol. "Over my dead body!"

"The depot agent figures they might be planning to leave 'em there a few days and then ship 'em to Kansas City. You know how Texas cattle are docked at market. They probably plan to ship 'em out of Faulkner as *Kansas* cattle. That way the price wouldn't be docked. Probably bringing their own drovers."

"We aren't having any Texas cattle unloaded here, bringing in that Texas fever!" said Sol. He reached into the wagon bed for his gun belt and fastened it around him. His hand rested lightly on his gun.

"Come," said Sol. "Al and Shorty, you saddle up three horses out of the corral. Pete and Jim,the three of us will ride out and pass the word around. Jim, you go to Brown's and then north to see the Hamilton brothers, then by Cook's and around to Valentine Newton's. Pete, you go south and get the word to Bests and Trones and everybody in between. I'll go directly to Faulkner and work around there and on the other side of Center Creek."

"Tell the folks," he instructed, "to bring whatever they have, shotguns, rifles, revolvers, axes, corn knives, anything! Meet at the stockyards at dark."

Sol watched Pete and Jim ride off at a brisk trot; then taking the reins of his own horse from Al, he swung up into the saddle. "Al and Shorty," he said, "take care of things here."

"Shore will," said Al.

"Yes," said Shorty.

Sol started, then wheeled his horse around. Should he tell Al to move the Shorthorns? Up close to the east fence? Or into another pasture? But what good would that do? Two hundred head of purebred Shorthorns!

"Well," he repeated, "look after things." Sol turned his horse back into the lane and was off. As he left the fringe of timber along Fly Creek, he pulled his felt hat down to shield his eyes and headed west toward Faulkner.

The soft *clop clop* of the horse's hooves in the dusty road and the startled "bob white" of a quail were the only sounds as he rode along. A light breeze from the southwest ruffled his shirt sleeves and lifted the curls of dust from each track behind him. The bluestem stretched on either side of him as far as he could see, rippling in soft waves of reddish brown. On the level this grass grew two feet tall but in the sloughs it was belly-deep on a horse. This bluestem was sweet and clean. There had never been any creepy-crawly ticks on this grass. By cracky! He didn't intend that there ever would be.

Some twenty years ago when the big herds were headed north, early settlers hadn't known much about Texas fever; they knew, though, that if a herd of Texas cattle were driven along a road and the next day a herd of Kansas cattle followed the same route, every one of the Kansas cattle would sicken and die. Settlers on the Kansas prairies hadn't known about the ticks that carried the fever; some believed that the herds and drovers from Texas had cast some sort of devilish spell on the land as they trailed along.

Strange, too, how these Texas cattle were immune to the fever—but winter a herd in Kansas and by spring, after infecting all the other herds within miles, this Texas herd would lose its immunity and could, in turn, catch the fever from other Texas cattle.

Sol passed two big hay barns; then ahead of him on his right was the east line of the Stone Gove pasture. Sol slowed his horse to a walk and looked for any signs of recent visitors. The owners did not live in the area but came occasionally to look after their affairs. Different ones rented the pasture from time to time. There didn't seem to be anything unusual. Nothing appeared changed since the last cattle had been shipped. Sol studied the barbed wire fence as he rode along. At the far end of the pasture Sol stopped his horse and examined the ground between the road and the wire gate. There were no tracks. The earth had not been disturbed since the last gullywasher when rivulets of water had washed down the ruts leaving gullies filled with ripples of soil. Judging from the rust on the wire, the gate had not been opened for some time.

"Giddap," Sol said to his horse. No, there hadn't been anyone in the pasture. Possibly one of the drovers was already familiar with the location—some cowhand who had worked for an outfit, perhaps several summers ago, some cowhand with an itchy palm.

Ahead of him, to the left, was Faulkner, a small cluster of buildings setting in the sun beside the railroad track—the store, several houses, the depot painted bright yellow, and the stockyards with its loading chute. Just north of the town was the Center Creek schoolhouse.

There was much work to be done before dark. Cheney urged his horse to gallop.

That evening at dusk a quiet group of men milled around the stockyards at Faulkner. Sol saw that practically every man in ten sections around had been alerted, and he noticed with satisfaction they were well armed. The town was quiet,too. No children's voices could be heard; no women or children could be seen. The houses were dark. Everyone was waiting.

"Waiting for what?" Sol wondered.

For the train, of course, But when it came, what would happen? Sol didn't know, but he figured they could handle whatever needed handling.

The men gathered in little groups and talked.

"Why, if a man has a couple of hundred head, the Texas fever will clean him out—ruin him;" said a man named Cowley, "and for those that have only half a dozen, it means losing all they have."

Sol nodded.

"You can't get along without your milk cows," someone else said.

"Kids have to get their milk," said a tall gaunt man. He was holding his shotgun on his arm—ready. Sol knew that he had six small children.

"Folks would well nigh starve in this country without their cattle," spoke up another. "Why, in the wintertime some families have only mush and milk for supper—without milk, what do you have?"

Sol knew that what they were saying was true.

It was dark, now—pitch dark. There wasn't any moon, and no stars were showing. That meant the men wouldn't be able to aim too well.

"It's eight o'clock," someone said.

For awhile the men talked about the Kansas quarantine law and speculated about who would be willing to take the risk of evading it. The breeze had died down and there was a nip in the air. Sol, with his trousers tucked into high leather boots and wearing a vest, was not cold, but some of the men, he noticed, were thinly clad.

Nine o'clock. Usually everyone would be asleep by this time, but Sol knew no one was sleeping tonight. Occasionally he could hear the murmur of voices as the men talked. There was a spirit of determination among the men, but Sol detected a touch of uneasiness in the restless tramping. Off in the country all around, the womenfolk were home alone with the kids. In some of the families there were young boys at home sharing with their mothers the responsibility of looking after things—boys of twelve or thereabouts—but most of these women and boys were not armed because the men had taken the only guns.

Suddenly, a little after nine, there was a shout, "Here she comes!"

There was a breathless hush. Everyone was listening. Yes, Sol could hear the humming of the rails. Then from far in the distance came the roar of the train's locomotive.

"Scatter out, men!" barked Cheney. "Maybe they'll stop at the stockyards, but more than likely they'll stop down on the flat where the wagon trail is—and jump the cattle out of the stock cars. That way, there wouldn't be any bellowing in town to wake anyone."

The men moved into position.

The roar of the locomotive came closer and closer and the train's light came into view far down the track. Louder and louder grew the giant rumbling. Slowly the light changed from a tiny beacon star to a slender pencil of light touching the track.

The train was coming closer and closer, steaming and puffing. There was a monstrous creaking as the wheels slowed; but, oddly enough, no whistle sounded. The engine was wheezing and sneaking its way into Faulkner with its cars of illicit shipment. The train rolled slowly on through town and shuddered to a stop on the flat just to the north. There was the sound of a boxcar door rolling open.

Then Sol Cheney's voice boomed out,**"I'll shoot the first one that comes off that train—be it man or critter!"**

There was a long silence.

Then the door of the boxcar slammed shut. There was a spurt of steam, the heavy train groaned, and the wheels started slowly as the train *backed up* until it was out of sight.

"Oh, ho, Sol!" shouted one of the men. "There goes your freight train like a hound dog with its tail between its legs."

"Yes, but it may come back!" warned someone else.

"Yes," spoke up another, "after a couple of hours. . . or after midnight . . . or toward morning . . . whenever they think we're gone."

The men renewed their vigil.

The next morning Sol could see through the windows of the Center Creek schoolhouse the first gray light of the early dawn. A mist was rising from the field across the road. The night had been chilly.

George Trone was coaxing a little more warmth from the potbellied stove in the middle of the room. Sol looked around at the group. The light and shadows from a lantern hanging from the ceiling emphasized the men's weariness. Some thirty-five or forty—all except those with a wife and small children at home alone—had stayed and watched through the night.

The door opened and in came several men. Since around midnight when the group had taken shelter in the schoolhouse, Sol had directed

the men in relays—several remaining at the stockyards for a half-hour or so, then being relieved by another group.

"Any sign of it?" asked Sol.

"Nope," answered one of the men, "and we've been figuring that maybe it isn't coming back."

"Bootleggers don't like to operate in the daylight," said another.

"Do you suppose they could have unloaded a few miles down the track while we were watching here?" a man asked worriedly. "Maybe we should have sent a patrol down the track as far as the border."

"No, I don't believe they could have unloaded anywhere else," answered someone. "A mile or so south, maybe—except they would know we were watching and would hear the cattle bawling."

Someone added, "That would make four or five miles to drive the cattle and that's too far."

"Cow critters just don't drive too easily—especially these wild ones from Texas," volunteered an old cowhand.

"It isn't likely they've unloaded any place else," agreed Sol. "There isn't any pasture land anywhere close to the railroad after you get a couple of miles south. You run into the river bottoms."

"Maybe we ought to wait a little longer," suggested another.

"No," said the depot agent looking at his watch. "They won't be back, now. The track has to be cleared for the Nine O'clock. The train master has had to hold this track until the freight gets back, or else there'd be a wreck. And if the Nine O'clock were held up, someone on the other end would start asking questions—questions that might be embarrassing to answer."

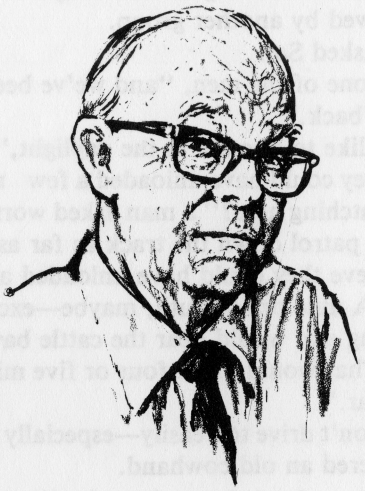
"Yes," said a tall man nodding his head. "Either they hadn't expected any interference and we scared them out—or else they had instructions not to unload if there was any trouble."

"Fellows," said Sol. "I think we can call it a night."

The men grinned and headed for the door, tired but jubilant. The depot agent took down his lantern. George Trone finished tidying up around the stove, closed the schoolhouse door, and fastened it. The men untied their horses.

"That was one bootleg deal that fizzled out," remarked Sol as he mounted his horse.

Sol Cheney, Pete Sebastian, and Jim Harwood headed east toward the ranch. A job born of grim necessity was finished, and as far as Sol Cheney ever knew, that was the only attempt to bootleg cattle by train from Texas, through the Indian Territory, and across the border into Kansas.



I. Martha remembered

I know my love is: she is
in all converging ways, my love.
But, Madame, there is no telling this—
we have no confidante.
So, this wild story of how we loved
will be a second image on the canvas of the brain,
under the sizing where, in all its forms,
your murmuring body is displayed
but hidden by my love.

II.

No sorrow is so bad
as that which quite goes by.
—Malcolm Lowry

When I consider how I could
have suckled at your breasts,
as in the varnish of the night
some insects do for life,
and opened up your body

and all its orifices for seed;
then I shudder at the text
learned well before—
you are not the first to teach.

But I am driven by this art,
and all the colors that are there
within your form, to reconsider time
and paint the scrolls
from which these lessons came;
and find with no surprise
they were conceived
by a thousand others—and so I
will never know your lovely things.

III. Martha discovered.

I would cry at all times,
if tears could be of use,
to wash the scabrous brain,
for you have said:
My heart is not yours:
I cannot share that with you:
You scarify my thoughts,
but they are not for you:
Nothing is for you that once was mine:
No image on my heart is yours:
In Mexico, at whatever city
if I could recall, would not be for you:
You are simply just not within me.
You romantic fool!

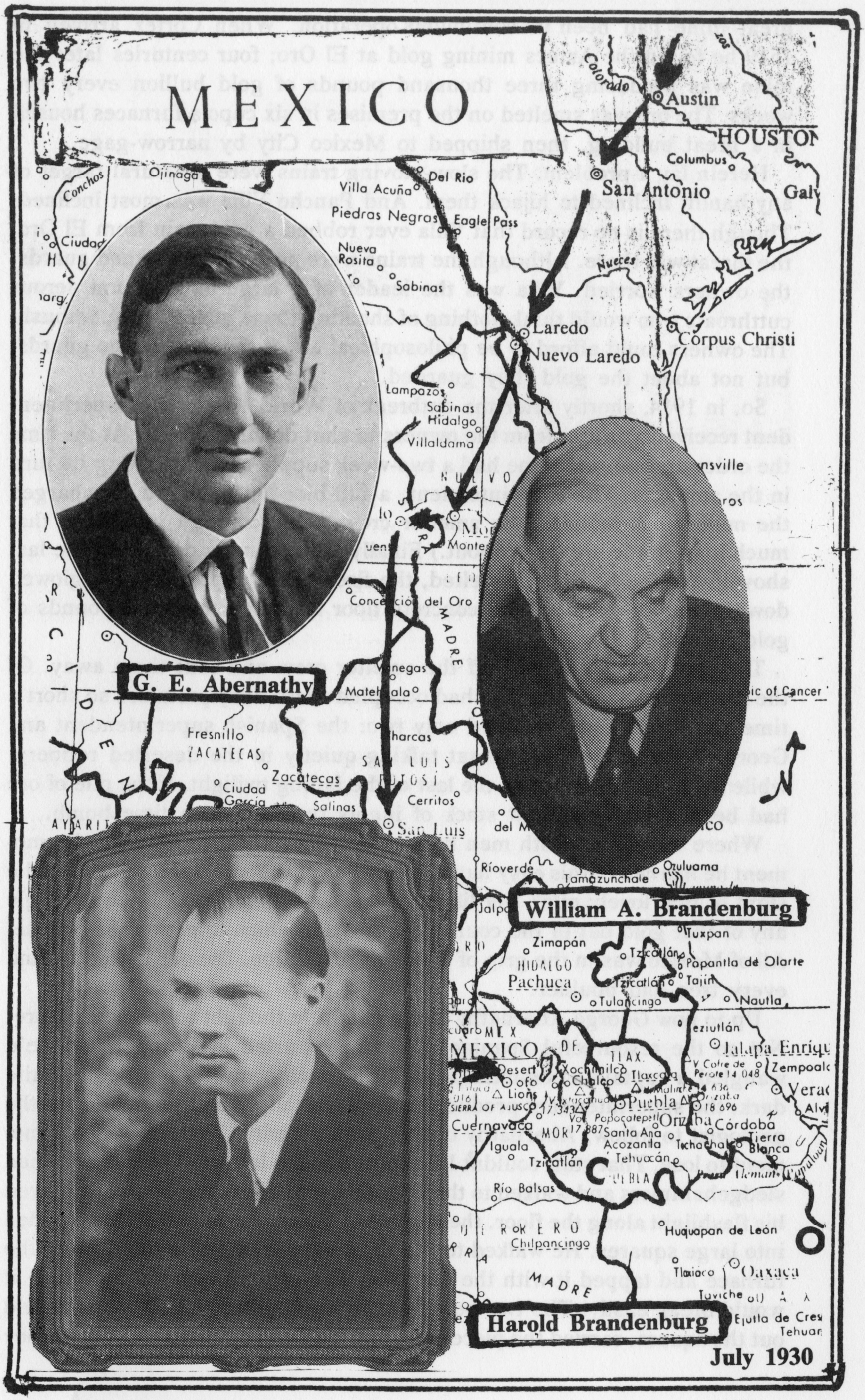
D. von R. Drenner

Harold Brandenburg (known to his friends by the nickname "Bran") began his teaching career in Columbus, Kansas, in 1924, and here he will probably end his days. He is as much a part of Columbus as the bricks in the buildings or the cement of the sidewalks. His life compares with his beloved chemistry, a subject which he taught in the Cherokee County Community High School for many years. If an experiment is laid out correctly, certain results ensue, which are neat, predictable, and never varying. They leave no room for intangibles and no excuse for disaster. In such a well-ordered life, no event occurs which could be described as whimsical, poorly planned, foolish, or frivolous. Right?

Wrong! The year was 1923. Twenty-one-year-old Harold was a junior at the State Manual Training Normal of Pittsburg, where his father, W. A. Brandenburg, was president. Bran was sitting through a session of Geology 14, taught by one George Abernathy, who was droning on about the fine points of gold mining. Suddenly, Abernathy paused. There was a far-away look in his eyes. He lay down his material and faced his drowsy students: "Would you like to hear a true story of buried gold? Three thousand pounds of the stuff, just waiting to be had?" If the geology teacher had exploded a bomb, he could not have commanded more attention. Just then a bell rang, signalling the end of the period.

Geology 14 the following day saw perfect attendance. It would have been a good day for the professor to have delivered one of his most important lectures. (It was hoped he had no such plans. To do so would have invited a worse mutiny than Captain Bligh experienced on the ill-fated **Bounty**.) Abernathy was required to consume the whole period telling every detail of the gold: where it was buried and why. To answer the flood of questions, the teacher went back nine years, when he was employed as a geologist at a place called El Oro ("The Gold").

El Oro, seventy-five miles west of Mexico City, in 1914 contained twenty thousand souls. Of these, more than four thousand worked for a great international cartel. Their occupation? Gold mining! No one knew how long the


MEXICO
G. E. Abernathy
William A. Brandenburg
Harold Brandenburg
July 1930
Austin
HOUSTON
San Antonio
Laredo
Nuevo Laredo
Corpus Christi
Del Rio
Eagle Pass
Piedras Negras
Villa Acuña
Ojinaga
Nueva Rosita
Sabinas
Lampazos
Sabinas Hidalgo
Villaldama
Concepción del Oro
Monclova
Saltillo
Fresnillo
Zacatecas
Ciudad García
Salinas
San Luis Potosí
Cerritos
Río Verde
Tamazunchale
Tuxpan
Zimapán
Tzicatlán
Papantla de Olarte
Pachuca
Tulancingo
Nautla
Jalapa Enríquez
Zempoala
Veracruz
Puebla
Córdoba
Orizaba
Cuernavaca
Santa Ana
Acozantla
Tehuacán
Iguala
Tzicatlán
Río Balsas
Chilpancingo
Huajuapan de León
Tlaxiaco
Oaxaca
Tehuantepec
Nuevo León
Coahuila
Chihuahua
Durango
Sinaloa
Nayarit
Jalisco
Guanajuato
Querétaro
Hidalgo
Tlaxcala
Puebla
Morelos
Guerrero
Oaxaca
Chiapas
Veracruz
Tamaulipas
San Luis Potosí
Zacatecas
Colorado
Nueces
Conchos
Sierra Madre Oriental
Sierra Madre del Sur
Gulf of Mexico
Pacific Ocean

great mine had been in continuous operation. When Cortez arrived in 1519 he found the Aztecs mining gold at El Oro; four centuries later the mine was producing three thousand pounds of gold bullion every two weeks. The ore was smelted on the premises in six cupola furnaces housed in a great building, then shipped to Mexico City by narrow-gage.

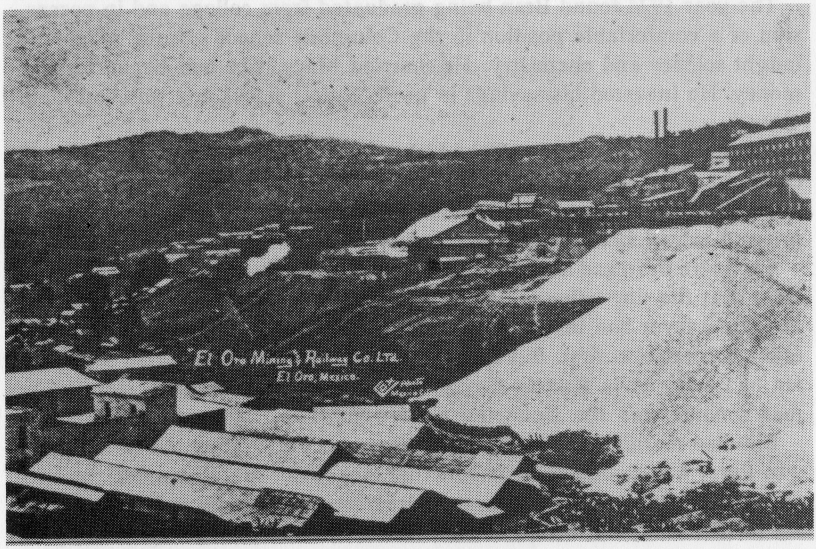
Herein lay a problem. The slow-moving trains were a natural target of any bandit inclined to hijack them. And Pancho Villa was most inclined. Though there is no record that Villa ever robbed a gold train from El Oro, the threat was there. Although the trains were protected by armed guards, the owners worried. Villa was the leader of a large band of murderous cutthroats who would think nothing of shooting those guards from ambush. The owners could afford to be philosophical about the lives of the guards, but not about the gold they guarded.

So, in 1914, shortly after the outbreak of World War I, the superintendent received an order from the owners to shut down the mine. At the time the order arrived, the mine had a two-week supply of ore awaiting its turn in the smelters. The superintendent, a full-blooded Spaniard, discharged the miners but retained the smelter crew. (One couldn't just leave that much high-grade ore lying about.) Finally there came a day when the last shovelful of ore had been smelted, the fires in the cupola furnace glowed down to embers, and on the concrete floor lay three thousand pounds of gold ingots.

. The superintendent paid off the smelter crew and sent them away. Of the four thousand people who had occupied these busy premises so short a time ago, there now remained only two: the Spanish superintendent and George Abernathy. The two sat talking quietly in the deserted refinery, while the ingots gleamed in the last of the fading twilight. If the pile of ore had been a problem, that stack of ingots represented a time bomb.

Where was Villa? Both men knew well enough where he'd be the moment he learned of this easy haul. Did either of them feel temptation at the sight of that lovely pile? Not likely! There was simply no way to smuggle any of that gold out of the country, no matter which direction they chose. All of Mexico was in the grip of a violent revolution. Danger lurked behind every tree and boulder.

Up to now George Abernathy had given little thought to his own future. Not so the resourceful Spaniard. War had started in Europe, and he'd wangled a captain's commission in the French army. When it was quite dark, the superintendent produced a small flashlight and motioned for the geologist to follow. Abernathy obeyed with alacrity. There was not a moment to lose. That stuff couldn't lie exposed much longer. The two obtained sledgehammers and walked to the fifth furnace. There the Spaniard played his flashlight along the floor, the surface of which was not solid, but divided into large squares. He walked to the third square opposite the door of the furnace and tapped it with the hammer. The cement was old and thin; it would break easily. The two now went to work with a will. They smashed out the square, carried the pieces outside. These they scattered where they



El Oro Mining and Railway Co. Ltd., El Oro, Mexico

would not be noticed. Then they shoveled out a large, deep hole the size of the square. In went the gold. They shoveled in dirt till the hole was full. They mixed new concrete, poured it, and leveled it. They gathered up the excess dirt and carried it away, just as they had the broken concrete. To complete the job they scattered debris over the floor. No one would now suspect what lay beneath the third square from the door of the fifth furnace.

They left on foot at sunrise by separate routes, each anxious to put as much distance as possible between himself and that hole full of gold. Abernathy never saw the Spaniard again. He presumed that he found his way out of Mexico and thence to Europe, possibly to lose his life on one of the battlefields of World War I. Abernathy related little about his own escape from Mexico, except that he was thoroughly frightened until he crossed the Texas border hundreds of miles to the north. George and the Spaniard shared a terrible secret.

Secret? Four thousand miners knew the ore was there when they lost their jobs. The smelter crew knew they had refined it and that only two men remained to guard it. But these men had no means to remove it. So—if either of them were recognized and captured, he'd be tortured till he revealed the hiding place in front of the fifth furnace. Then his battered carcass would be abandoned to the buzzards.

Had Abernathy ever planned to go back for the gold? Never. The very thought seemed to frighten him. Not for all the gold in the Aztec mine, though it was known to contain enough ore to sustain a full-scale operation for another ten years.

The year 1924 found Bran being graduated from college and in possession of a comfortable position in the Columbus school system, where he taught science and chemistry. He married Macy Nice and began to save money. He invested his savings in good "safe" stocks and watched them grow.

Two events happened in 1929 which affected Bran and Macy for years to come. Macy presented him with a son and the Crash wiped out their savings. By 1930 the Great Depression had come into full swing, and a hard-pressed school board cut Bran's salary to $1,500 a year.

Summers Bran and his little family spent much time at his father-in-law's farm near the tiny village of Neutral. Enter Brother Bill, now age twenty-two. Gold fever had taken complete possession of Bill. Bran, now twenty-eight, hesitated at first. But Bill was a lad of resources. Car? No problem! He had a friend in Kansas City who owned a new Model A sedan. The man's name was Joe Donnelly, also twenty-two. Occupation? Gambler.

Bill also recruited a Columbus man named Percy Long. (It is not clear why Percy was included. He had neither money nor car to augment the success of the enterprise. Bran remembers Percy as a pleasant fellow, one of his former students, who, like Bill, had heard him tell the "gold story.")

Through all of this frenzy Bran managed to revisit George Abernathy, who still taught Geology 14 at Pittsburg. Abernathy had to repeat the story again and again, till Bran knew every detail. He drew a floor plan of the refinery, marking the third square from the front of the fifth furnace with a big X. Abernathy warned of the difficulties of the undertaking and the near impossibility of removing gold from Mexico. Bran wouldn't listen.

Sunrise, July 16, 1930: a shiny new Model A Ford arrived in front of the farmhouse. The car contained three men in high spirits. Bran shouldered his gear and kissed an indignant Macy goodbye. She followed him all the way to the car, protesting bitterly. It was not a good thing for a man to leave his wife and baby. Mexico was a horrid place, full of disease and danger. But Macy's protests were choked off in a cloud of dust kicked up by the Ford's tires. They were off!

It took twenty-four hours to reach Loredo. The four traveled nonstop, pausing only to buy gas, get a drink of water, and rotate drivers. They were too excited to eat, and sleeping was out of the question. Joe risked his new car without thought of rigors and road conditions. Neither did he consider how much value bandits might place on an American vehicle.

And what would they find in El Oro? (George Abernathy had not kept up with events there since his hasty departure sixteen years earlier.) It was, no doubt, an abandoned ghost town with a crumbling old refinery close by. They'd have the place all to themselves. . . .

At Loredo came the first glimmmerings of trouble. Their plans to push straight on into Mexico were thwarted by stubborn American border guards who hustled them off to the immigration office where they were questioned thoroughly and lectured soundly.

Destination? "Mexico City." Impossible! No roads! Reason for trip? "Vacation." No place for a vacation! Not by car. By rail, yes. Car? No! Length of stay? "Uh—maybe three weeks, maybe six."

"Maybe none!" an officer snapped. "You men check into a hotel and wait."

The quartet had no choice but to obey. They registered at a hotel, washed up, and headed for a restaurant. Upon their return they discovered their luggage had been subjected to a thorough, if clumsy, search. Neatly packed items had been removed and stuffed back in willy-nilly. Twenty-four hours later the officer gave them reluctant permission to enter Mexico, with a stern warning to report to the American consul when they reached Monterrey, 125 miles to the south.

The moment they crossed the border, Mexican authorities had more questions and issued more warnings. They forced Joe to sign a bond as owner of the car. If he sold the car in Mexico, he'd owe the Mexican government $500.

At last they were on their way with a good paved road ahead. Not a soul knew of their departure from Kansas, and to all questions from authorities they held to their story of a vacation in Mexico City—not a word about El Oro. (Years afterward an astonished Bran learned that another car left Columbus on that fateful July morning. Its two occupants kept the Model A in sight all the way to Laredo, only to be turned back at the border. Apparently the authorities took a dim view of the sudden interest in Mexican vacations on the part of zany citizens from a place called Columbus, Kansas. Bran, it seems, had repeated Abernathy's gold story once too often.)

The consul at Monterrey denounced their plans in the strongest terms. There were no roads, not even trails. He admitted to a bare chance if they hired a competent guide. Without a guide, no chance, no chance at all to drive to Mexico City.

Halfway to Saltillo, they saw a broken-down truck at the side of the road. The driver leaped into the middle of the road, waving both arms imperiously. He was a short, stocky, middle-aged Mexican, dressed in nondescript work clothes. In very bad English he let them know his predicament, his need for a ride to Saltillo. His truck belonged to the Highway Department, a "ver' bad truck. All the time break down." His name was Antonio Saurez, and he "not like work on highway."

Bran asked him if he knew the way to Mexico City. "Si, Senor. Have brother Mexico City. Like visit brother. No like drive bad truck." Would Tony guide them to Mexico City? "Si, Senor. Pay ten pesos a day."

And so it was decided. There remained only for Tony to tell his wife about his new position. To his credit, he found a phone in Saltillo and called the Highway Department and told them where to find the "ver' bad truck." Then he directed his new employers to his residence, where he changed into a pair of beautifully hand-tooled leather boots of the most exquisite design. His wife followed him all the way to the car, expressing her outrage in voluble Spanish. Tony, as his new position warranted, claimed the pass-

enger side of the front seat. Bill, Percy, and Bran squeezed into the back seat. Joe drove.

More than two hundred miles to the south lay San Luis Potosi. It took them five days to get there with only Tony protecting them from disaster. The "road" to San Luis Potosi was as nonexistant as the consul at Monterrey had warned. For many miles the only track was the one made by the Model A as it leaped and bounced from rock to boulder, pushing ever southward. When they came upon a trail that led to a tiny, isolated hamlet, Tony's impatient employers commanded him to ask directions. There followed an intricate palaver in Spanish. The local citizens expressed much interest in the car and its occupants, and kept holding up two fingers. It became apparent that the boastful Tony was being interviewed by the inquisitive natives, instead of the other way around. Gringos who owned such a beautiful car must be ver' rich, and ver' important, and Tony surely had friends in high places.

"Why are they holding up two fingers?" Bran wanted to know.

"They say only one other car ever come this way. We make two. Big car called Buick come last year. Buick no good. All time hit big rocks. All time have flat tire. I say Ford more better. Bounce over rocks. No have flat tire."

"Never mind about the Buick. Can they tell you the way to Mexico City?"

"These poeple never hear of Mexico City. They not even know about Mexico. Just this place. All time they live only here."

Bran looked at his watch. It had taken nearly an hour to learn that a Buick with tire trouble was the only other car to make this journey.

Again they headed south. At the next village the scene was repeated. Bran heard so much about the Buick with bad tires in the days that followed that he felt he knew every inch of that car. And the driver? No one seemed to remember much about him. It was the car that had fired the minds of these Mexican villagers, not its owner.

On the fifth day, no thanks to Tony's prowess either as guide or interpreter, they finally reached San Luis Potosí, where they found a modern hotel and good food. They hit mountains and Mexico's rainy season beyond the city. Here there was a road of sorts, but its steepness proved too much for the Ford. Whenever this situation was encountred, the driver remained in the car and everyone else got out into the rain and pushed. Everybody but Tony, that is. Senor Antonio Saurez held the position of guide, not car-pusher. His beautiful boots were his prize possession. He was not about to expose their fine leather to nearly knee-deep water in the road. He stayed in the car with the driver while the other three waded and pushed.

But still another misery began to plague the travelers. On top of the hills the air was cool and exhilarating. Then came a sudden plunge into a hot, airless valley where the temperature was 110°. Then they would encounter the next up-grade with water pouring down the roadway. Again the Ford would stall, and the sweating men waded and pushed.

And so it went. Moreover, Tony's efforts to inquire directions met a further obstacle. When they drove into a village they observed the natives staggering about in a most peculiar manner. Being questioned, they answered with grins and grunts. There was no conversation of any intelligible substance, for it seems the cactus fruit was now ripe, from which was made a very strong wine. "They wait all year till fruit get ripe," Tony explained. "Ever'body much happy. Get much drunk!" From there on there appeared no chance of finding a sober Mexican; yet by some miracle they reached the city of Quérataro.

South of Quérataro they experienced the worst encounter of their trip. Toward nightfall they were accosted by two armed men on horseback. With no chance to outrun these well-mounted horsemen on the rocky terrain, Joe Donnelly had no choice but to stop the car. Tony, usually full of bluster and braggadocio when facing his countrymen, sat shaking in the front seat. "Bad men! Ver' bad men!" he warned his companions. "They like shoot!"

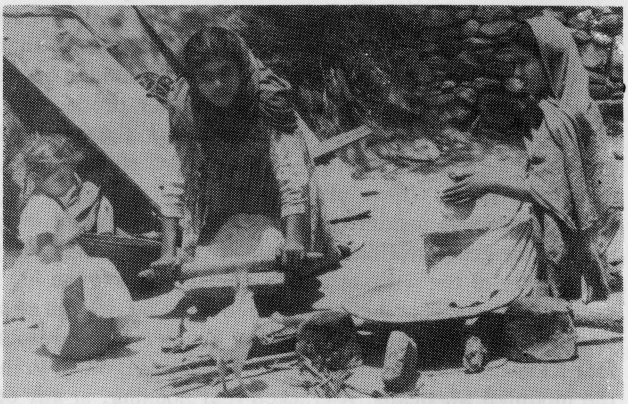
Tony's information gained credence as each of the horsemen put a hand on a gun. It is possible that Tony earned his ten pesos that day. He talked to the two in rapid Spanish, keeping his hands hidden between his knees so they would not shake. Finally, one of the men produced a gourd and gave it to Joe. It was full of the strong cactus wine, the very smell of which sickened him. Joe started to refuse, but Tony interfered: "Joe, Joe, you drink. Ever'body drink. These men shoot."

Joe needed no further urging. He swallowed a few drops, gagged, and passed the gourd to Bill. The gourd went round, and Tony complimented the quality of the wine in rapid Spanish. At last the highwaymen pulled their mounts aside and allowed Joe to drive on. He did so with such enthusiasm that the rear housing struck a boulder with a resounding ping. The four Kansans leaped out to survey the damage, much to the amusement of the mounted Mexicans. A cracked rear housing, or any other breakdown, could spell disaster.

To their immense relief, they discerned no telltale oil leak. They lifted the car free of the boulder and proceeded on their way.

The boulders became larger. When darkness overtook them, they had gained only a mile. Joe stopped the car which now held five thoroughly frightened men. Would the bandits return? The only reason they had escaped with their lives was that the Gringos had nothing the bandits deemed worth stealing. . . . Their thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the window. Bandits! They had returned!

Tony was the first to recover his wits. "Good mans! Good mans! Roll down window." And there, sitting on his horse in the dark, was a big grinning Mexican with a brightly colored sarape over his shoulder. He and Tony conversed quickly, the latter smiling more broadly with each word: "He good mans. He live near. Give food, beds. No sleep car." Now Tony was a man who liked his comforts. Therefore, he became outraged at his companions' lack of enthusiasm. The earlier experiences of the evening



W. A. Brandenburg, Jr.

had impressed on them the value of Joe's car, and how desperate would be their plight if anything happened to it. All were determined to stay together and remain with the car. Sadly, Tony thanked the farmer for his offer of hospitality, then settled down in sullen silence.

Bran volunteered to sleep under the car, the other four remaining inside. He awakened to the sound of rain. The rain itself posed no problem: it was the water which came rushing down the hillside. No matter which way Bran turned, he encountered running water. He spent the rest of the night lying on a narrow rocky ridge between the ruts. The only good thing that happened that night was the coming of day.

Bran remembers the city of Moctezuma, the next town they came upon, as the most picturesque he ever saw. But the men from Kansas had little time for sight-seeing. They were now very close to the old ghost town of El Oro and the buried gold. It was time to tell Tony there would be a slight detour before he could visit his brother in Mexico City.

He took the news calmly enough. If the Gringos wanted to pay him ten pesos a day while they went poking about, it was fine with him. They already owed him seventy pesos. Let them owe more! What a "beeg drunk" he would have when he got to Mexico City.

The Kansans, however, were soon due for a jolt. Joe and Percy may have been uneducated men, but not the Brothers Brandenburg. Simple research—just five minutes with an encyclopedia of recent print would have revealed that El Oro was a populous city of no mean size. Its more affluent citizens sped about in, of all things, American automobiles—primarily the Essex, a product of the Hudson Motor Company. "Why, why, the damn place is as big as—as Pittsburg, Kansas!" Percy remarked.

El Oro, the "ghost town" of their imaginations, was indeed as big as Pittsburg, both in size and population. But there the resemblance ended. It was a city of dried mud, most of the buildings being of yellow adobe. The "abandoned mine" was just outside of town, right where George Abernathy had said it would be. Abandoned? A thick ten-foot high wall surrounded the property on all sides. The astonished Kansans followed a road which led to a large, locked gate, manned by burly uniformed guards.

There was nothing to do but drive back into town and find lodgings. Once in a hotel, the four held a council of war, while the philosophical Tony went to see the sights of the town. If he observed anything unusual in his employers' behavior, he said nothing. Was not every Gringo a little loco?

Bran pulled out the floor plan of the big refinery that George Abernathy had drawn for him and held it up, the **X** on the third square from the fifth furnace clearly visible. "Boys, this map could still be our ace in the hole."

A restless Joe paced up and down the room, while the others waited respectfully. After all, it was Joe who had so generously risked his new car on this rough journey. Also, Joe was the only one with any money left. The other three had not enough among them to pay Tony's wages, which by now came to no small sum. "At this point, I'll listen to anything," Joe said at length. "What have you got in mind?"

"Simply this," Bran told him. "It's obvious that at some time the owners reopened that mine. But only two people knew where that gold was buried."

"So what do we do?"

"We barter. Let's find out how much the mining company will pay us to show them this." He pointed to the X on the map.

Bran phoned the mine office early the next morning. No, the superintendent could not be reached. Yes, Bran could leave a message. During that day and the next, Bran phoned several times. His anxious companions waited, and the gregarious Tony lounged about the streets, making friends, and adding twenty more pesos to the debt he'd collect from the foolish Gringos.

On the evening of the second day, the superintendent finally returned Bran's call. He gave his name as Robinson, and Senor Robinson would see Senor Brandenburg in his office at three o'clock the following afternoon. The guards at the gate would be instructed to admit him at that time.

All night and through the next day excitement mounted. Bran rehearsed his speech over and over again. One slip, and the game was lost. When at last he departed for the mine, he left three anxious men pacing the hotel room. Joe gave Tony a few pesos and he went off happily to drink beer with some of his newfound friends.

Senor Robinson was a friendly sort, but no man's fool. He held a degree in engineering from Stanford University. His presence in Mexico, where he earned much less than he could in the States, he politely declined to explain. He, like many of his countrymen, found it expedient to leave his home soil. A crime? A woman? Bran could only guess. There was no sparring with this sharp-witted man. The issue must be joined immediately: "Mr. Robinson, a large shipment of gold is missing from this mine. If I were able to tell you where it is, how much would your people pay?"

Robinson smiled. "But that's impossible. I have records here that go back many years. Every ounce is accounted for. The smelter crews are even required to strip and change clothes before they leave each day. The clothing they leave behind is searched thoroughly."

Bran shook his head impatiently. "I'm speaking of three thousand pounds of gold bullion! It was hidden here in 1913 by only two men. One of those men is believed dead. I got my information directly from the other."

A flicker showed briefly in the eyes of Robinson. He consulted the records in front of him and frowned. "Senor Brandenburg. I believe you may have cleared up a mystery—"

Bran leaned forward, trying not to betray his excitement. "I came here in 1920," the other continued. "A few months later I got a message from the owners. I was instructed to dig at a certain place where it was believed three thousand pounds of gold were concealed." The speaker paused, his eyes full of sympathy when he observed the crushing effect this news had on his companion. "And that's exactly what I found—three thousand

pounds of solid gold bullion. We dug it out and shipped it. I have the record right here. . . ."

Bran stared dully at the superintendent. There was yet one thin hope.

"Mr. Robinson, my companions and I have come far and risked much. In all fairness, would you draw a map showing exactly where you found that gold?"

"Sure." The other reached for paper and pen. "You see, there are six of these cupola furnaces," and he drew six circles. "The floor is divided into big squares." The pen moved rapidly. "I was instructed to smash out the third square in front of the fifth furnace." The pen made an X and stopped.

Weakly, Bran removed a folded paper from an inside pocket, smoothed it, and laid it on the desk beside the other. The two maps matched in every detail. After a moment, Robinson spoke: "If only you had come before 1920. Maybe you could have made a deal. The owners told me nothing of its history or how they knew it was there, but if they knew before 1920, the chances are they'd have recovered it sooner."

The two men looked at each other, one as puzzled as the other. Bran thought of Geology 14. With how many classes of students had Abernathy shared his secret? Back in 1920 had one of these students tried to deal with the owners and inadvertently tipped his hand? Or had the informer been more canny and exacted a good price for his knowledge? Bran hoped such was the case. For that matter, why hadn't Abernathy himself tried to sell his information? Or had the Spaniard made a final report before he left for France—a report which somehow was overlooked for six years? No one would ever know.

When deep dusk descended on the adobe huts of El Oro, it found four thoroughly chastened young Kansans huddled in their hotel room. Joe's supply of pesos had reached a dangerously low level, while the other three owned scarcely a peso among them. It is a tribute to their characters that none of them became belligerent and that, during the whole of their ordeal, no serious quarrels erupted. Joe had lost much, simply because he had the most to lose. Yet at no time did his generosity wane nor would he have deserted any of his luckless companions, Tony included. Joe was a gambler. Gamblers sometimes lost.

Many adventures occurred before the travellers reached Mexico City. When forced to sell the car for seventy pounds of silver coins, Joe paid their fares on the narrow-gage. The former treasure hunters, who had boarded the train in the late afternoon, reached Mexico City at one in the morning. They found a taxi, checked into a hotel, and fell into bed. Joe's last act before sleep was to pay Tony and discharge him. Twelve days had passed since they had first spied the Mexican beside his disabled truck.

The next day the exhausted Americans slept while Tony set out to find his brother. They would rest a day before deciding about transportation home. The next morning they were awakened early by a tapping on the door. Joe opened it a crack and, to his surprise, there stood Tony. Not the same Tony with whom they had traveled and grown to like so well: this

Tony, with bloodshot eyes and disheveled appearance, stood swaying from one side to the other. He staggered into the room and collapsed into a chair. "Get much happy last night. Me and my brother, we get much drunk." Tony eyed them sheepishly and turned out his pockets. "Joe, I got no pesos. No way go Saltillo."

Joe fought impulses of laughter and anger. He couldn't leave the Mexican stranded; the man had discharged his duties as best he could and on several occasions had exhibited courage. It was possible his quick thinking during the encounter with the gunmen had saved their lives. "All right, Tony. Find out how much a second class railroad ticket costs. I'll give you that much—and no more!"

On his return, Tony wept his gratitude as Joe counted a few more pesos into his hand. He departed as happily as if he had not lost his twelve-days' fortune in one night. No doubt he would be content to return to Saltillo and drive the "ver' bad truck" for the rest of his life.

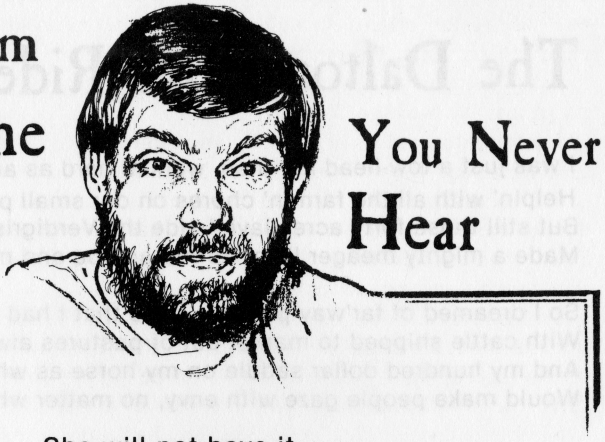
Neither Joe nor Percy, it turned out, had any intention of returning to Kansas. They were young; the world was wide. They took a train to Vera Cruz, where they boarded a ship bound for New York City. Joe, generous to the last, counted out enough pesos to see the Brandenburg brothers safely home.

Bran never saw either of them again. But three years later he got a call from a Mexican official who wanted very much to see Joe. It seemed his government still held a $500 bond on a Model A Ford which had entered Mexico on July 18, 1930, and never came out. Bran truthfully replied that he had no knowledge of Mr. Donnelly's whereabouts. Nor did he ever see Percy Long again. He recalls years later reading his obituary in a newspaper.

The Brandenburg brothers returned to Laredo by train, there boarding a bus for home. Bill returned to his studies as a history major (he was later to become president of Wayne State College), and Bran returned to Columbus to be greeted by Macy and the baby. She was so glad to see him safe and unharmed she forgot her anger.

The round trip had consumed only seventeen days, but $150 of his own money—ten per cent of his annual salary. From then on he worked hard and roamed little, serving the Columbus school system for forty-six continuous years. Nevertheless, Harold Brandenburg still insists he brought treasure out of Mexico: not treasure stolen from an Aztec gold mine or undetected by alert border guards. He has a horde of golden memories which he will gladly share with anyone willing to listen.

This Poem Is One You Never Hear



She will not have it
said, claps her hands
to her red face and
tells you to get the hell
out forever and for good.
You say these words
to the cracked sidewalk:
there is in the each
and everyone the need
to sacrifice big.
You believe it.
The stupid sidewalk grins.

She is never sorry
she never heard the say
of it, the string
of words that is your
life, the life you
have given up to the dirt.
Alone, you rise
into sparkling sunlight
that is golder than gold
and more good than waking
up cold with someone
with dark, damp ears.

R. Stephen Russell

The Dalton Boys Ride By

I was just a tow-head kid then, worked hard as any man,
Helpin' with all the farmin' chores on our small piece of land.
But still those forty acres layin' side the Verdigris
Made a mighty meager livin' for ma and pa and me.

So I dreamed of far'way places—none that I had ever seen—
With cattle shipped to market out of pastures always green,
And my hundred dollar saddle on my horse as white as snow
Would make people gaze with envy, no matter where I'd go.

I well remember that hot day, though it was years ago,
As I was helpin' pa stack hay, from grass I'd had to mow.
There was a special happenin' beneath the cloudless sky—
It was the afternoon I saw the Dalton boys go by.

Pa had known the Dalton family: some were lawmen once, he said;
A rumor, too, had spread around of a price upon their head.
There was Bob and Grat and Emmett and two more who trailed behind
As they rode the narrow, dusty trail along our section line.

They waved a friendly greetin' as they traveled on their way,
So we returned their greetin' as we kept on stackin' hay.
Well, I was just a youngster then, had barely turned fourteen,
And I was mightily impressed by what my eyes had seen.

Bob was sittin' in a saddle like I'd never seen before,
With shinin' silver trimmin's, and I liked the duds he wore.
His horse was black as axle grease and shone like a brand new dime.
How could a man like that, I thought, be linked with a life of crime?

And Grat and Emmett Dalton looked like cowboys should to me;
The open road had called them to a life more fancy-free.
A laughin', happy outfit—not a cloud was in their sky—
So I just stared in wonder as the Dalton boys went by.

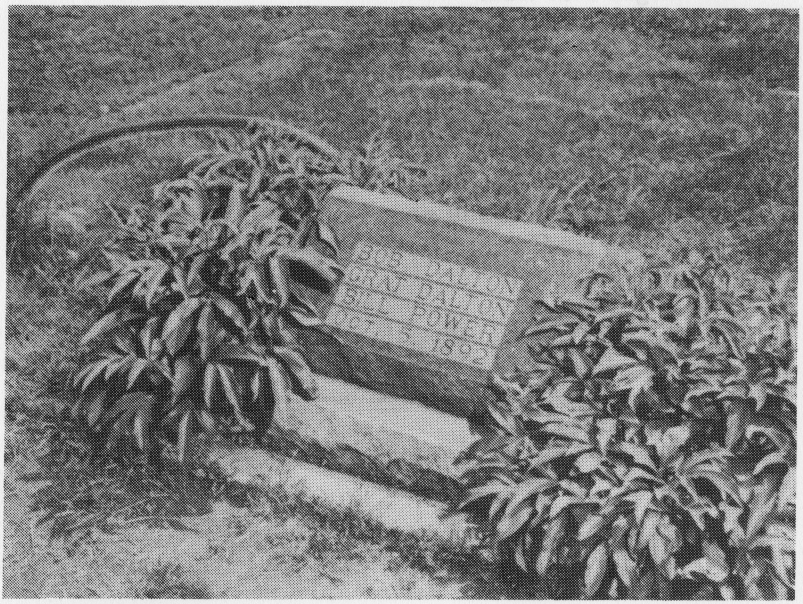
The summer passed and came that day, October '92.
I rode with pa to Coffeyville; he had some jobs to do.
We were in the Perkins Grocery when we heard the rifles crack.
I was headin' for the front door when my pa, he held me back.

"It's at the bank," he whispered. "Don't go out on the street."
And there was much more shootin' then; it all seemed to repeat.
At last some people sauntered by and pa went out to see,
But ordered me to stay behind until he came for me.

I waited and I worried, but no more rifle shots I heard.
Then pa came in the grocery and told us all that had occurred.
Out in the street a wagon passed, moving slowly on its way,
And in it lay the Dalton boys—but no longer were they gay.

Our little forty acres had new meaning then to me.
With pa and ma we'd stick it out there on the Verdigris.
It wasn't like that other day—I'd seen some outlaws die.
I'll not forget that final time the Dalton boys went by.

O.B. Campbell



Fog

He is dead and never can feel pain again.

Yet pain walks by the house tonight
pain walks at the window
Behind the blinds tight pulled
I see how the night is
night that was.

Fog closes all the town
to tree top house top height
fog curls along the curb
catches at
slides slides away.
So far as you see an island three feet round
some woolen stuff and sleeves and fog.

Shirley Stanley Needham

Cheyenne Bottoms, 1980

Few birds will board here
and fish lie flat
like tire-scarred tobacco tins
run over in the sand;

the reeds are broken
and the wind is bruised;
gone for fresh water
are rabbit and raccoon.

Two hunters amble
across the bone-dry Bottoms
picking off a fringe of ducks
from the abandoned autumn.

Barbara Shirk Parish

This Pen

O lover,
I hunt you
with this pen.
I stalk you through lush green
poems.
This pen points
like a .457 Weatherby.
You run away
like one of the last tigers
north of Bombay.
My wall aches
for trophy-you
for the stuffed you
essence of you at last captured
forever;
for the perfect you
now entombed in verse
your nasty wet guts all removed
in favor of nice clean newspaper
your eyes given permanent round
clarity
your skin smoothed of old acne scars
your little birthmark forever dyed
your teasing nails safely curled
your wildness in emerald paths
only a memory
traced by this pen
and your quick, wanton ways
merely a sidelight
to "when I captured her, in Rangoon, in '79. . . ."
O baby, you'll be quite a prize.
O honey, this pen is trigger-itchy.
O lover, this blue ink's almost as black as
your jungle eyes.

Jimmy Aubert

Picking Wild Strawberries

The patch sprawls against a slope
intertwined with other seasons' plants—
sumac stems from last fall,
fresh shoots of sweet william, vervain.
Even the birds cannot find them.

Beneath open mittens of poison ivy
the shaded fruit is pink;
lifted towards the sun
deep scarlet,
sunken seeds flecking the meat.

Up the rise a single turtle
forages in the leaves.

The berries separate whole

with a thuck.

Denise Low

Nobody

Nobody
knows
how
pretty
my music
is
before
it gets
past
my
vocal
cords
and

nobody
could
even guess
how
beautiful
I am
when
there are
no
mirrors
around
and

nobody
is looking.

Dorothy Arlene Bates Kirk

Turn the Radio On. Ferguson's Studio, 1941.

How Jack Hamilton Painted a Portrait

by Harold Bell Wright

Just where a beautiful river settles down into sober middle life and begins its more stately and grown-up march through the marshes to the sea, stands the little village of Norwall.

Like most villages, Norwall had once its golden age of prosperity. House after house had been built to keep company with the first rude cabin now fallen into decay by the river bank. A public square was laid out with a town pump and a watering trough in the center. Three or four brick store houses and a blacksmith shop or two with hitching rails in front appeared. The dwellings grew more and more pretentious, some even aspiring to porches and stone doorsteps and picket fences. A cooper shop, a handle factory, and a tannery caused a boom, and real estate went up with a rush. Sidewalks were next built on the principal streets, and a hotel was established on one corner of the square, and then—then a railroad came winding its way down the valley on the other side of the river, crossing the stream on the great bridge at Jamesborough, four miles below, and Norwall's prosperity was a thing of the past.

The cooper shop, the handle factory, and the tannery, one after the other, moved to the larger town on the railroad. One by one the storekeepers on the square closed their doors to Norwall and followed the tide of prosperity four miles down the river. The familiar legend, "For sale or to rent," was displayed in many windows and door yards; slowly but surely pickets fell from the fences, and the weeds and grass began to grow where the boards in the sidewalks were broken.

Every year the town grew a little sleepier, the houses a little more tumbled down, the trees a little larger. Every year the sun seemed hotter, the shade cooler, the sky bluer, and the whole place more dreamy, romantic, and picturesque.

At last things reached such a stage of picturesqueness that Jack Hamilton looked upon the place with favor, and decided in his artist mind that in Norwall was much good picture material. And with a heart full of

gratitude to the railroad that had so kindly ruined the little town by keeping its noise and dirt across the river, he engaged board at the Widow Grandee's and settled himself for a season's work.

Now the Widow Grandee's was just such a boarding house as one would expect to find in such a place as Norwall. However, with its home-made victuals and its home-made manners, the place suited Jack, and he looked forward to three months at least of good solid work. For, with all his careless happy-go-lucky ways, Jack Hamilton was solid when it came to his work. Fads in art he despised, catchy subjects he abhorred, pictures painted to sell disgusted him, and—being a landscape man—portraits he hated with all his heart. His creed, be it known, was to paint what he saw and to paint it as he saw it.

Jack's fellow-boarders, too, as he met them on the day of his arrival, pleased him. There were only three (and that in itself was good), a maiden lady of some forty summers, who made dresses and trimmed bonnets; a sad faced individual who kept the only store that had not moved to Jamesborough; and a plain uninteresting girl who taught the village school.

The first of the three months passed. Jack was doing well. He received no letters, for only the dealers knew his address. He read no papers, he had no friends in the place, there was no society, nothing to take him from his work, and he was painting as he had never painted before. Then came the change.

Jack was sitting on the veranda one evening after supper smoking and watching the moon as she slowly pushed her way up through the tangled branches of the trees, when the uninteresting girl suddenly appeared in the open doorway.

"Mr. Hamilton, may I speak to you a moment?" she said.

"Sure," replied Jack, without removing his pipe from his mouth or his feet from the veranda rail. "Sure, what can I do for you?"

"Well," began the girl, in a timid, frightened way, as she seated herself on the steps. "You—you are an artist and I wish some advice."

Jack groaned inwardly, and then puffed with sudden energy. "Yes," he said.

"I—I wanted to know something about pictures." She paused.

"Well," said Jack encouragingly. Something in her voice interested him.

"Can I—" she began again. "Could I-I mean—that is—is it possible to get a good portrait in crayon?"

"Depends somewhat on the chap who makes it," replied Jack dryly.

"Of course, I know," she answered in confusion. "But I mean are all crayon portraits alike?"

"Hardly," replied the artist, with a smile which was fortunately lost in the moonlight. And then in pity he talked a few minutes in his lazy, sarcastic way of crayon portrait work, solar prints, air brushes, shams, fakes, and frauds, and then a few exact words as to true art whatever the medium, and then puff, puff, puff, he was wishing she would leave him to enjoy the moonlight.

"Thank you," she said in a strange, unsatisfied way. "You have helped me so much. I just wanted to know. Good night." And she left him.

"Going to make money doing portrait work in crayon for Jimpson & Co. of Chicago," Jack muttered to himself as he refilled his pipe. "So easy—sells like wild fire—genuine hand-painted—one dollar and twenty-five—frame and all—a blooming young artist. Bah!" And he struck a match on the sole of his boot. "If it were worthwhile I'd try to stop her."

The next evening this same interesting art conversation was repeated with variations, of course, and on the following night the uninteresting girl tried again. This was too much for Jack. Moonlight nights would not last always, and he could not afford to waste them in such a reckless manner. He determined to stop the thing.

"Why are you so interested in portrait work?" he asked abruptly, when for the fourth time the subject was broached.

The girl hestitated a moment, and then replied, "I do hope you won't think me foolish, Mr. Hamilton, but I have a father—that is, I did have," her voice broke. "He is dead now, you know. I have only two or three pictures of him. I want so much to get a good portrait. I have tried and tried to have it done in crayon, but they are all so cold and harsh—not a bit like papa." Her voice faltered again. "I am all alone now, and a good picture would be such a comfort to me. I just wanted to know if it were possible to get one." Again she paused, and Jack felt rather than heard her crying softly, and accordingly gave thanks for the kindly shade of the evening.

So this was Jimpson & Co., was it? The man felt rather small and very much a brute, as is proper for a man to feel when even an uninteresting girl sobs in the moonlight. At last he said kindly: "I fear it will be very hard to get a satisfactory picture unless you could catch some artist who knew your father."

"That's just it," she began eagerly, taking the handerchief from her eyes. "Won't you try, Mr. Hamilton? I would pay any price just as fast as I could earn the money. I am sure you could, if you would. I feel somehow that if anyone can make a picture of papa you can, and that this is my only chance. Won't you try?"

She had forgotten her fears. Hamilton was thunderstruck.

"But I never saw your father," he said.

"Oh, I could tell you about him," replied the girl hopefully.

The artist felt faint. "Ye gods!" he muttered to himself. He, whose creed was to paint things as he saw them, a landscape painter at that, asked to do the portrait of a man who had been dead a year, and with whom so far as he knew he had never been in the same state! Words failed him for a spell, and then as kindly as possible he told the girl that what she asked was impossible. And she without a word left him.

Somehow all the next day the girl's voice haunted Jack and her tear-filled eyes, coming constantly between him and his canvas, seemed to reproach him for his cruelty, while beseeching him to grant her request, and yet, "Hang it all," he said to himself, after he had savagely kicked his campstool into the creek, broken a brush in his anger, and lighted a pipe to soothe his feelings, "Hang it!" how could he paint the picture of a man he never saw. And then again he heard her sobbing, "I know you could if you would." Here was faith, indeed.

"After all," he said to himself that evening as he sat alone on the veranda, "perhaps I can at least satisfy her. What harm can it do? No need to sign the thing. Perhaps I can contrive to get up some kind of a likeness and get her so interested that she will see, or imagine she sees, all the graces of her parent on the canvas. By Jove, I wish she was–no, I don't. I'm an ass, a profound, unmitigated ass. Pay me any price, would she? Poor girl, I don't suppose she earns enough to more than pay the widow for what she eats, and that's not much."

"Look here," Jack said the next morning as they were leaving the dining room. "I've been thinking over that portrait business, and it may be that if you will tell me all about your father, I can do it. I don't like to disappoint you, though, so you mustn't expect too much. We may make a fizzle of the thing, you know." The girl's eyes beamed her thanks, while her stammering tongue protested at the hint of failure.

"And the price?" she said. "Will it cost much?"

"Oh, we'll see about that later when we know better what the work will be," Jack replied. "You go now and bring me the pictures you have. Bring them all."

In a few moments she placed in his hands five horrible tintypes and began pointing out the best parts of them. In this the nose was good, in that the eyes were very fair, another had a good brow, and so on until Jack carried the whole batch off to his room, mentally cursing himself for being so many kinds of a fool.

Evening after evening he caused the girl to talk of her father, what he did, how their home looked, what he liked to eat, what stories he told, what books he read, every possible point, filling in the pauses in conversation with talk of

the portrait that was to be, what she must look for in a portrait, the things that made a picture good or bad, atmosphere, harmony, feeling, tone, everything that would tend to mystify the girl and inspire her with his greatness and ability. And he succeeded, we must confess, very well, indeed, for an artist.

At last the game reached such a stage that Jack believed the girl would recognize her father in almost any kind of a daub.

Then he went to work. When the sketch was complete the uninteresting girl was called in to view it. Sure enough, she was delighted; it was so like her father. She could feel his presence; she could almost hear him speak. Was there not something that might be changed? Just a point here and there, perhaps? Well, yes, there was, she believed, one or two things. The nose might be altered a bit—a little larger, please. The beard was not quite right, and could he not fix the hair a little?

"I'll tell you what," said Jack, an inspiration catching him, "when I get ready to finish you shall come and sit beside me and we'll paint it together, you and I. You furnish knowledge of the subject, and I'll furnish knowledge of the medium, a sort of spiritual-mental telegraphy magnito hypnoto business, you understand," he said with a smile. "I think I could work so much better if you were with me." And as he lied so glibly, thoughts of his beloved landscapes flitted across his mind, and as in a dream he heard someone repeating his creed in art: "Paint what you see and paint it as you see it."

"Very well," the girl replied gently; "when shall I come?"

"I'll let you know," said Jack. "Good afternoon." And he bowed her out as one whose favor he coveted.

"Well, I'll be blessed, what would the fellows say? I—Jack Hamilton, artist, painter of landscapes—doing a picture a la hypnotism, and a portrait in the bargain, and the price?" Here his thoughts grew so wild that he hurriedly sought salvation in his pipe, and catching up his hat went for a long tramp up the river, returning just at twilight with a good appetite, a little weary and still very much disgusted with the whole business.

A few days later the uninteresting girl closed her school for the summer vacation and the following afternoon went with Hamilton to finish the portrait. The artist could scarcely control himself, the situation was to him so ridiculous. The intense earnestness of the girl, her confidence in him, her faith in the outcome, and her joy at getting so good a portrait of her dead father, made the matter even more laughable, even though he roundly cursed himself for making light of that which meant so much to her.

"Please sit there right near me," he said, "and remember you are to paint the picture through me. You are to think, think, think of your father; try to see him sitting in the chair" (he placed one in position) "and influence me to paint what you see."

He took up the palette and carefully set it with color, then, selecting his brushes, began to paint. Five, ten, fifteen minutes went by. Neither the artist nor the girl uttered a word. A butterfly came through the open window and went zigzagging about the room. They did not see it, and soon it zigzagged out again. A busy bumble bee paused a moment and then went hurrying on about his business; and a blue jay who spent most of his time in the trees about the house screamed his protest and summoned the world to witness; but the world was too sleepy to listen or too lazy to heed, for the air was full of dreamy, drowsy summer time. Twenty, twenty-five, thirty minutes, and still no word was spoken and no move made except the quick flashes of the brush from canvas to palette and from palette back to canvas again. Fifteen minutes more went by and then—then what had come over him, for Jack saw, or dreamed that he saw, sitting in the chair he had placed in position, the feeble figure of an old man with a kindly beaming face that looked a little like the face upon the canvas. The artist looked away a moment and brushed his hand across his eyes, as when a floating cobweb falls across one's face, and then looked for the figure again. It was still there, and plainer than ever before! Jack shut his eyes hard, and for a moment dropped his head, and then looked again—the old gentleman had not moved a muscle. Then the irresistible feeling came over him that this is what he must paint, and paint he did with flashing eyes and compressed lips, without a thought but that he must reproduce on the canvas the face of him who so strangely sat before him. Faster and faster, in a perfect frenzy, he worked. The butterfly had zigzagged far away over meadow, pasture, and orchard. The bee was gathering his last load of honey from the flowers outside the window. The bluejay had grown tired of screaming and gone home to gossip with his mate about the strange affair, the light began to fade, and at the old hotel the supper bell was ringing. The long summer afternoon was drawing to a close.

Jack suddenly dropped his tools and sank exhausted into his chair. "Oh, that is grand, wonderful!" exclaimed the girl. Jack started. Was she here? He looked for the old man. He was gone. He turned again to the girl. Where had she been? What was she doing here? Ah, yes, he remembered now; he was going to paint a picture of her father. "You had better come another day," he said. "I am not just myself, I fear. We will finish the portrait some other time."

"Oh," she said, "you must not touch it again. You can do no more than that."

"That?" repeated Jack, wondering. "That?"

"Why yes," she said. "That. It is perfect. It is my father just as I always see him in my mind. It is a perfect picture."

And it was, for I knew the old gentleman and have seen the portrait. But don't talk to Jack Hamilton about portrait work, or ask him for his creed in art.

Contributors

JIMMY AUBERT, 201 N. Sycamore, Iola, KS 66749, a program coordinator for an Area Agency on Aging, appeared in **LBR** 1.3 • **ALTA MAE [RANDALL] BOWMAN**, 470 N. Scraper, Vinita, OK 74301, is a regular volunteer at the Vinita Public Library; she is at work on a Randall-Bowman family history • **O.B. CAMPBELL**, P.O. Drawer 437, Vinita, OK 74301, is the author of **Vinita, I..T., Tales They Told, The Story of Vinnie Ream,** and **Mission to the Cherokees**. All are available from the author, except the last, which is out of print • **SAMUEL JAY CRUMBINE** (1862-1954) was born in Venango County, PA, came to Dodge City in 1885 as a frontier doctor, and became one of the State's eminent health officers • **ROBERT DAY**, Writers' Workshop, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52240, has recently published **In My Stead**, a novel available from the Cottonwood Review Press, Box J, Kansas Union, Lawrence, KS 66045, for $5.95 • **DONALD von RUYSDAEL DRENNER**, 503 Highland Road, Coffeyville, KS 67337, is a former librarian, a distinguished poet, and printer • **HAROLD J. DuBOIS**, 605 S. Minnesota, Columbus, KS 66725, has appeared as a poet and short story writer in the first volume of the **LBR** • **MARJORIE V. FORBES**, 600 S. Florida, Columbus, KS 66725, has appeared in earlier issues of the **LBR** as a writer of haiku • **WILLIAM GIBSON**, Stockbridge, MA 01262, is working on a sequel to **The Miracle Worker**, entitled **After the Miracle**, a drama concerning the life of Annie Sullivan • **ZULA BENNINGTON GREENE**, 1205 Mulvane, Topeka, KS 66604, is a columnist for the Topeka **Capital**. Earlier chapters of her autobiography may be found in the first volume of the **LBR** • **MIKE GULLETT**, Panos Manor, Apt. 14, 4411 Spencer St., Las Vegas, NV 89109, is a professional photographer originally from Parsons • **SHELBY PAUL HORN**, 615 Kansas, Oswego, KS 67356, is working on a sculpture for the Kansas Women's Barrel Racing Association as we go to press • **DOROTHY ARLENE BATES KIRK**, 2000 W. 86th Terrace, Leawood, KS 66206, is an Attorney at Law and has published in **Poetry**, the **Kansas City Times, Midwest Quarterly**, and elsewhere • **PATTY FARRIS KUHEL**, 1150 E. 1st, Pittsburg, KS 66762, has just completed the first draft of her master's thesis on the Lebanese immigrants of Southeast Kansas • **LAWRENCE LONG**, 639 Jaccard Place, Joplin, MO 64801, works for Photographic Services at Pittsburg State University • **DENISE LOW**, 1916 Stratford, Lawrence, KS 66044, is the publisher of Robert Day's new book mentioned earlier • **JOYCE KINKEAD MOYERS**, 602 N. Broadway, Apt. 2, Pittsburg, KS 66762, an instructor of English at Pittsburg State University, conducts the Writing Center at the University. She wrote her doctoral dissertation for East Texas State University on Harold Bell Wright • **GLADYS M. MUNDT**, 112 S. Broadway, Pittsburg, KS 66762, wrote the article on Dr. Eva Jessye in the last issue of the **LBR** • **SHIRLEY STANLEY NEEDHAM**, R. 3, Hutchinson, KS 67501, teaches third grade and lives in "a log cabin nestled in twenty-four

acres of native grasses and trees" • **BARBARA SHIRK PARISH**, 4293 Beechcliff Lane, Memphis, TN 38128, appears in the new anthology of Kansas women poets, published by the Cottonwood Review Press • **DANIEL A. RICHARD**, Route 4, Box 329, Neosho, MO 64850, is an English teacher at Crowder College. Although he has published other types of material, this is his first published short story • **R. STEPHEN RUSSELL**, 8709 W. 65th, Apt. 101, Merriam, KS 66202, created the delightful "Places to touch you" in the last issue of the **LBR** • **TED WATTS**, 807 W. 4th, Box 303, Oswego, KS 67356, a nationally known sports artist, is art and graphics editor of the **LBR**. In addition to the centerspread of art, he created the portraits of each of the contributors • **HAROLD BELL WRIGHT** (1872-1944) finished this previously uncollected short story in Pittsburg, Kansas, on October 31, 1900.

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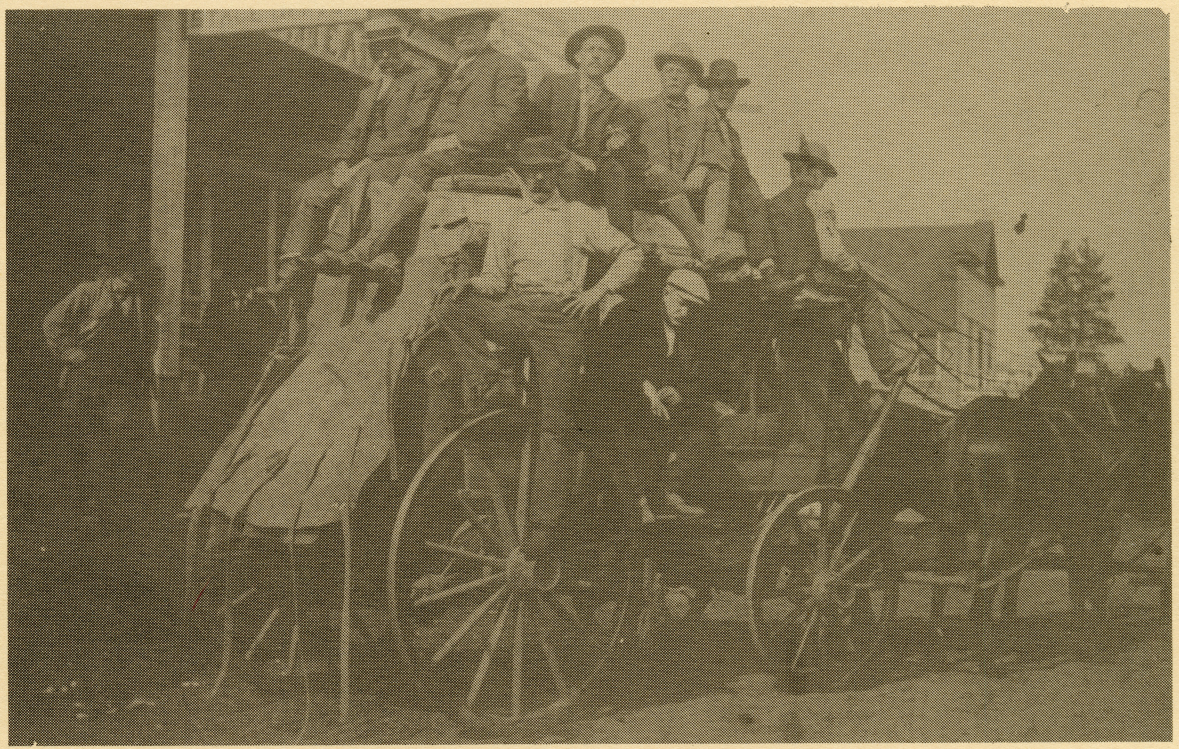

John Nolan of rural Chetopa on the stage at Dodge City, 1890s.

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