

# The Donley County Leader

Historical News of the Pioneers of the "Green Belt" of the Panhandle of Texas

A supplement to The Clarendon Enterprise.

Volume 62

\*\*\*PIONEER EDITION\*\*\*

CLARENDON, DONLEY COUNTY, TEXAS, JULY 1, 2010

\*\*\*A Common Paper For Common People\*\*\*

## TWO HORRIBLE MURDERS IN ONE NIGHT!

### G.R. Miller, an Ex-Convict, Murders Floyd Autrey of Fort Worth and an Unknown Man and Attempts to Kill Two Others.

#### ROBBERY HIS ONLY MOTIVE

One of the most cold blooded double murders ever perpetrated in the Panhandle was done early Saturday morning by an ex-convict, G.R. Miller, of near Acme, Tex., when he killed two men on a north bound freight train for the purpose of robbery, when there could have been no hope of obtaining more than a very small amount of money.

First, three men entered a box car at Childress in the train being sent north. A few cars ahead of this two other young men, unaware of the first three, also entered a box car to ride to Amarillo. The first train crew knew of anything being wrong was when the train reached Giles, 20 miles south of Clarendon and 40 miles north of Childress, where the train stopped for water and where Fred Garrett, a young man of North Ft. Worth, approached the crew and told them his companion, a cousin, had been murdered and he himself had a narrow escape. It developed that Garrett and his cousin, Floyd Autrey, also of Ft. Worth, were riding in the empty freight car with the door open, and at Memphis a third man climbed into the car and entered into conversation with them, nothing seeming unusual with the man, only he said he was broke and asked Garrett and Autrey if they had anything to satisfy the trainman with. They told him they had a little money and could see that he got through to Amarillo. They lighted and smoked cigarettes and Garrett seated himself in the car door.

Just as the train was entering Giles eight miles from Memphis, the stranger without warning or provocation opened fire on them. At the first shot, Garrett looked around to see Autrey fall and the murderer turning upon him. He made a leap from the car door just as the second shot was fired, the ball and flame burning the side of his neck. He caught onto the train a few car lengths back, riding on to the tank, where he told the crew of what had happened. The assassin was seen to jump from the car and make off down the creek. When they reached the car, Autrey was found on the floor with a terrible wound in the back of the head from which the blood poured and he was unconscious. There was no doctor or officer at Giles, so the train was brought to Clarendon, with Garrett in charge of his wounded cousin Autrey.

On reaching here, the wounded man, still breathing but unconscious, was taken into the depot office and City Marshal Phillips and a doctor were called, the latter pronouncing the wound fatal. About daylight, Sheriff Patman was called and he notified officers down the road of the crime and to lookout for the criminal, which Garrett described, the sheriff himself going south on the first train. Early Saturday morning, a man walked into Rowe from the south and went to a boarding car and asked for breakfast. He suited the description so completely that Deputy Gammon at that place arrested him and with Sheriff Patman brought him up to Clarendon on the ten o'clock train and placed him in jail. Garrett was then taken to the jail and identified him fully. In the meantime, Autrey had been taken to the hotel, where he died before ten o'clock.

While all this was going on, another chapter was unfolding, bringing to light a heinous murder just before this one. Further up the road, the train crew found another car, blood-bespattered, in which there was a man's hat and necktie. Word was telegraphed along down the line to look out for evidences of another crime. In response to this a section crew found a dead man on a drift pile under Red River bridge near Estelline, twelve miles south of Memphis, hatless

and without a necktie, with his pockets turned and two bullet holes through him. Also during the day, a man, worn out and weary with a bullet wound in the lobe of his ear, walked into Childress and told officers that one of the two men with whom he had been riding north had shot him and thrown him from the train. Miller then killed the first victim, rifled his pockets of fifty cents and a metal trade check and threw him out as they crossed Red River.

Unawares to Clarendon people, Sheriff Patman took Miller to Claude Saturday night and placed him in jail, as there was some pretty bitter talk here against him. Sunday the man first assaulted who walked back to Childress was brought back to Estelline, where he identified the dead man there as one of the two to leave Childress in the car with him. He was then taken on to Claude, where he readily identified Miller as the man he had put off the train twice after leaving Childress.

The makes the proof against Miller complete, together with the fact that they deputy relieved him of a long barreled Smith & Wesson 5 shot pistol with four chambers empty and showing they were freshly fired. The evidence was so strong in fact that Miller finally broke down and confessed, saying he was broke and killed them for what money they might have. He also, upon being charged with being an ex-convict by Sheriff Patman, acknowledged that he had served a two-year term for forgery in Hardeman county. He is evidently a hardened criminal, his past punishment in no wise changing his evil intentions. He told the officers that he had worked some since his release from the pen in December, but had lost his wages gambling and he set in to stake himself by robbery, that he did not mean to kill these men, but wanted to hurt them bad enough so that he could easily get their money. He had besides the pistol and its load, one piece of dynamite fuse and cap, and a letter to a city firm, written supposedly by himself, ordering a wig, false whiskers, etc., to be sent to Dalhart, showing that he was starting out on a career of dark deeds.

He is about 5½ feet tall, 33 years old, light or medium complexion, wide between the eyes, eyes light blue or almost gray and droop at the outside corners, weight about 110 pounds, wide between the ears, and is a constant cigarette smoker. He says his mother is a widow and lives near Acme, Tex.

Fifty cents and the metal trade check was the only fruit of these crimes. Autrey and Garrett had a few dollars, but the latter jumped from the car and escaped and Autrey's money was in a hip pocket of an under pair of pants where Miller did not find it.

Garrett stated that with his cousin they left Ft. Worth Friday and came to Childress on the passenger train. After being there a while, they concluded to go to Amarillo on a freight. Their home was in North Ft. Worth, moving there a few months ago from Smithfield. Autrey was 19 years old and a Woodman. Fred Garrett is 20 years old and his conduct and appearance shows that he is no hobo. The body of Floyd Autrey was prepared for burial and shipped to Smithfield in Tarrant county, in charge of Garrett and J.L. Davis of Clarendon, one of our local Woodmen.

The family of the dead boy boarded the train at Ft. Worth and went on to Smithfield where they were met by over 100 Woodmen and hundreds of other people who attended the services and burial. Mr. Davis returned yesterday and says the mother and family took the death very hard and the whole affair was impressive and affecting.

Such a crime certainly deserves the fullest penalty the law provides.

The Clarendon Chronicle  
Wednesday, March 24, 1909



G.R. Miller - The Murderer.

LEADER ARCHIVE PHOTO



District Judge J.N. Browning - Sentences Miller to hang by the neck until dead. Browning had previously been the Lt. Governor of Texas and was the first Worshipful Master of the Clarendon Masonic Lodge.

LEADER ARCHIVE PHOTO



Donley County Sheriff J.T. Patman - Executed the verdict of 12 jurors and the decree of the District Judge "by pulling the lever that sprung the trap which sent the soul of G.R. Miller before the bar of a just and merciful God."

LEADER ARCHIVE PHOTO

### MILLER TO HANG FRIDAY, JUNE 3

#### Browning Passes His First Death Sentence As Judge - First Death Sentence In Donley

As per the guess of the News last Wednesday in announcing that the death sentence would be pronounced upon G.R. Miller on Monday at two o'clock in the afternoon and that the date would likely be June 3 and so it is.

Soon after dinner, crowds began to gather at the Courthouse to witness the pronouncement of death sentence upon G.R. Miller, convicted of the murder of Floyd Autrey in a box car of the Denver Railway near Giles in this county, March 14th, 1909.

At two o'clock the Courtroom was packed to suffocation. Judge Browning called for order and issued a warning to the crowd that demonstrations of any kind would not be permitted. Then the Judge ordered Sheriff Patman to go to the jail and bring the prisoner before the bar of the court. Promptly at 2:30, Sheriff Patman leading, entered through a door of the jury room at the rear of the judge's stand came the prisoner closely followed by deputy sheriffs G.W. Bugbee and W.W. Gammon and Constable Frank A. White and Sheriff Reeves of Gray county. The prisoner was seated in front of the Judge's stand and besides Rev. J.J. Stanton, who has been ministering to him spiritually for some time. Judge Browning ordered the pris-

oner to stand up and brother Stanton stood beside him and the Judge began his pronouncement, reciting the charge, indictment, Jury verdict, argument for new trial, appeal to our highest criminal court which affirmed the verdict of the jury, and the argument of his counsel for a new hearing in that court and its refusal which exhausted all legal resources and that now there remains nothing else but to legally carry out the verdict of the jury.

The Judge then asked the prisoner if he had anything to say why sentence should not be pronounced upon him. Miller standing erect and in a firm voice said, "WELL, I'VE ONLY THIS MUCH TO SAY. THAT I HAVE ACCOMPLISHED MY PURPOSE. I HAVE SACRIFICED MY OWN LIFE, BUT I HAVE SAVED THE REST."

Judge Browning then said substantially as follows, addressing the prisoner, that this was a solemn occasion. That this was a very solemn duty that he was called upon to perform; one that he had hoped he might never be called upon to perform, but that the law was and must be supreme.

"You are a young man and it is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2.

### THE MURDERER CONFESSES

#### Miller Says He Did Not Intend To Kill.

The Banner-Stockman was not able to get the full facts in the case of the horrible tragedies that shocked our city last Saturday. But the murderer has confessed the deed and in his own words we give below the history of two of the most shocking murders in the history of the county.

...

Following is a synopsis of Miller's statement:

I got on the train at Childress and two men got on after it was in motion. I do not know where they were going, neither do I know their names, but we rode on in the car together to Estelline, Texas, and just after we left Estelline I asked the two men if they had "put up" to the train crew, and they said "no" but that they did not want the train crew to find them. We had not gone far before I did the shooting. I did not want to kill the men "Plum" dead, I only wanted to wound them so I could get their money. I shot at one of them and he jumped out of the car door and as he jumped I shot the second time at him and then turned and fired at the other one, but only fired one shot at the last one. I went through his pockets and got all his money as I thought, which was fifty cents in money and a merchandise check amounting to fifty cents and then pushed him out of the door. I came on to Memphis, Texas, in the same car and then got off and changed to another car and found two other men in that car. One of them told me he had a little money. The other man said that he did not have any at all and my only object was to get the money one of them had and I did not want to hurt the man who did not have any money but wanted to scare him away. I did not shoot the other man with the intention of killing him. I only wanted to wound him so I could get his money. I shot him and then went through his pockets but did not find anything. I got off the train and went down in the canyon and sat down until after the train left and then walked up to Rowe where I was arrested.

The Banner-Stockman  
Friday, March 26, 1909

### Somebody's Boy

God knows best, he was somebody's love,  
Somebody's heart enshrined him there;  
Somebody wafted his name above;  
Night and morn on the wings of prayer.

A few years ago he lay in the cradle.  
Rocked by a mother with loving care,  
Singing sweet songs of earnest endeavor,  
With dreams of the future all bright & fair.

A few years hence he laying in the prison,  
Away from the mother so true & brave,  
Waiting the time for the doors to open,  
To be led to death and a felon's grave.

Draw the mantle of charity round you,  
In your peaceful life of joy,  
Gather your loved ones near to you,  
He was also "Somebody's Boy."

-Written by One who was not there.  
The Clarendon News  
June 4, 1910

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gets the paper for a year in  
Donley County.  
Call 874-2259.

**THE DONLEY COUNTY LEADER**

*Established 1929*

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 A.D. ESTLACK & G.W. ESTLACK • PAST PUBLISHERS  
 MARGARET ESTLACK & RUBY DELL ESTLACK • PAST SOCIETY EDITORS  
 ROGER ALLEN ESTLACK • PUBLISHER & EDITOR  
 ASHLEE ESTLACK • CONTRIBUTING EDITOR  
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History: The Donley County Leader was founded on March 12, 1929, by J.C. Estlack and was published weekly by the Estlack Family until November 28, 1974. It was then purchased by THE CLARENDON PRESS, which continued the LEADER for a short time as a Sunday paper before suspending its publication. The LEADER volume number was carried on the PRESS' masthead thru 1976. The LEADER was revived on March 14, 1996, and merged with THE CLARENDON NEWS in the creation of THE CLARENDON ENTERPRISE. In July of that year, The LEADER's annual Pioneer Edition was launched to reflect on the pioneer news and history of Donley County and the Texas Panhandle.

**Editorial Comments – 1910**

By A.M. Beville

Without going into extensible details of the events of the day, we give as much of the facts as is the duty of a newspaper to its readers without in any way pandering to the curiosity of those whose minds could be unduly influenced by recital of sensational and spectacular happenings

...

While we exceedingly regret that it was necessary to have a legal execution in our county, yet the law is and must be supreme and like all who suffer the law's penalties, it was the result of his own actions. The word of God says, "Be sure your sin will find you out," and "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

We were not of the great throng that crowded about the gallows to witness the end of the unfortunate criminal who paid for his crime with his life upon the gallows – "Oh, what a death of shame!"

We draw the mantle of forgetfulness about the horrors of the gallows. In fact, we could have published columns of details if we had so desired, but we preferred not to do so.

We invite all our readers to read the poem in another place which beautifully tells that he like all we is "somebody's boy."

Oh, how every heart should bleed for the old mother and sister in another Texas County. Think of his mother with her strong mother love who loves on through wrong-doing and who clings to her child even to the gallows.

May this event have the warning effect upon others that the makers of our laws hoped and believed that it would

...

As usual about great events, many sensational reports gained circulation and were repeated by people who should have known that there unreasonable precluded the truthfulness.

...

The startlingness of the event seemed to rather agitate many minds and made them susceptible to the belief and further circulation of many weird and unreasonable stories.

It is to be hoped that with education, enlightenment and civilization of this generation that some other method of dealing with capital crimes will be evolved if for no other reason than that those who are so wrought up by such events may be spared.

If capital punishment is necessary, let the felon be transported to the state penitentiary, say, and there be executed using the electric current or the most approved humane method.

*The Clarendon News, June 4 & June 8, 1910*

**Editorial Comments – 2010**

By Roger A. Estlack

One hundred years after the execution of G.R. Miller, the event continues to stir people in Clarendon. But regrettably, time has removed from the minds of many people the shocking acts that led to that unfortunate occasion. People correctly remember the hanging for its place in history as the last such act in the Panhandle and the only one in Donley County, but that bit of trivia has too often been used as a point of twisted civic pride and even as a method of promoting our community.

Even as recently as this spring our Chamber of Commerce hosted a tourism workshop for several area towns... and decorated the invitations with the drawing of a hangman's noose. T-shirts are also worn with the phrase "Hang with the Best" or "I hung out in Clarendon" and accompanied by either a noose or even the picture of Miller standing on the gallows.

The purpose of this annual edition of the Leader is to remind us all of the facts of this dark chapter in this history of Clarendon and Donley County. G.R. Miller was a convicted criminal. He murdered two men – one in Donley County – and nearly killed two others for the sum total of one dollar. His execution here was justice as prescribed by law; and while the event did draw a large crowd, the community leaders of the time – and certainly the founders of our town – would be horrified to think that some would try to make this Clarendon's claim to fame.

There were plenty of other things that happened in 1910 – the Methodist Church and the Adair Hospital were both constructed and opened that year, for example; and Clarendon's history is full of worthwhile endeavours and many firsts for our region in every field from religion to journalism to education and more. As one pioneer put it, "Everything good got its start at Clarendon."

But this event – the death of a criminal necessitated by the murders of two innocents – is what has sometimes been held up as one of the seminal events in our town's history. Shame on us. This was not a proud event; it was simply a necessary thing. There is nothing wrong with capital punishment when it is carried out lawfully and justly, but it should never be used for promotional purposes.

From this time forth let us restrain ourselves from using the images of the noose and the man upon the gallows for anything other than historical purposes. We now also call on the Chamber of Commerce to round up any T-shirts that remain for sale with these images and implore them to destroy those garments. Surely, surely we can do better.

The articles and images we print here this week are to remind us of what really happened and are not published to excite people's curiosity. One hundred years ago, the "Somebody's Boy" poem was printed on page one... and the article detailing the execution of Miller was on page two. This week, we reprint that poem in its original location... and push the details of his death to page three. Our focus this week – as the focus of our community memory should be – is not on what happened to Miller but rather on who he was and the terrible acts he committed.

**Miller To Hang:** CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

sad to see one as young as you taken from this life before his allotted time, and it is also sad to think of the other young life that went out before it should by the course of nature and at your hands. The law says that the day of your executing shall not be under thirty days after the passing of the sentence. I would not make it less if I could. This is given that you have proper time for reflection and preparation, and I trust that you may properly reflect and prepare for your final end, the time for which I now set for Friday, June 3rd, 1910. This was exactly at 2:18 p.m. You are now remanded to the custody of the Sheriff of Donley county until the day set for your execution, and the Sheriff of Donley county is hereby commanded on this day, between the hour of eleven o'clock in the forenoon and before sunset, to legally execute you by hanging you by the neck until you are dead. You may now be seated."

Miller said, in a clear voice, "Thank you, Judge," and took

**Attention Stock Men!!!**

Judge Dubbs of Wheeler County at the insistence of many stock men has issued a call for stock men to meet at Mobeetie on the 23rd, of July, to consider measures for preventing the promiscuous driving or herding of infected cattle through their herds or ranches, the firing of prairies &c.

These are all important matters; let all interested take notice and be present.

*The Clarendon News July 1, 1880*

his seat. Sheriff Patman, who was at the rear all the time, bade him arise and with the prisoner and attendants, returned to the jail, where Miller was placed in the cell to himself and the death watch was placed over him for day and night until his execution.

...

Nothing now but executive clemency can save the prisoner and that is not at all likely as Miller pleaded guilty.

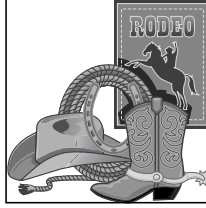
This will be the first legal hanging ever in Donley county.

*The Clarendon News April 27, 1910*

**It's Rodeo Time!**

We look forward to seeing you at the Saints' Roost Celebration and Ranch Rodeo.

**Don Stone Signs**



**Have a Bang of a Time...**  
 at the Saints' Roost Celebration and Rodeo. We'll see you there!

**JERRY D. COURTNEY**  
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**Get Ready 4 A Good Time!**

Bring your whole family out to the Annual Saints' Roost Celebration and Ranch Rodeo.

**Stop By Barney's Marine**  
 For all your lake supplies  
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**RODEO DAYS**

We hope to see you at all the Saints' Roost Celebration activities including the Ranch Rodeo at the Rodeo Grounds.

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**CELEBRATE Freedom**

Take the day off & enjoy.

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**Our Heritage Lives On**

With the restoration of the historic 1890 Donley County Courthouse, we join our fellow citizens in commemorating the Pioneer Spirit that brought civilization to the Texas Panhandle.

As the elected officials of Donley County, we welcome visitors to the 133rd annual Saints' Roost Celebration.

Have a safe and happy Fourth.

- Jack Hall, Judge
- Wanda Smith, Treasurer
- Fay Vargas, Clerk
- Linda Crump, Tax Assessor/Collector
- Connie Havens, Justice of the Peace
- Ann Kennedy, Justice of the Peace
- Butch Blackburn, Sheriff
- Landon Lambert, County Attorney
- Stuart Messer, District Judge
- Mark White, Commissioner Pct. 1
- Don Hall, Commissioner Pct. 2
- Andy Wheatly, Commissioner Pct. 3
- Bob Trout, Commissioner Pct. 4

Our offices will be closed Monday, July 5



# THE FULL STORY OF THE MILLER HANGING.

## His Criminal History and His Possible Insanity

By Jean Stavenhagen,  
Donley County Historical  
Commission Chair  
June 2010

The sounds of hammers driving nails and saws slicing into planks ring out across the hills north of Clarendon in the early morning of May 31st, 1910. The field is vacant except for a tall platform taking shape from the labor of many workmen busily doing their job of building a gallows over fifteen feet high under the supervision of J.T. Patman, Sheriff of Donley County. When completed, the gallows will await the execution of G.R. Miller, the man convicted of murder on a train traveling through Donley County.

In 1906, Miller was a tall, dark, good-looking, thirty-year-old man who had become a small time thief searching for wealth without work. When money was scarce, he worked as a farm laborer in Quanah and a miner in the gypsum bed in Acme. He decided it would be easy to expand his road to riches by changing the amount of a check given to him by a Mrs. Waldrop for picking cotton. He was arrested and charged with forgery however there was some concern about his mental state. The doctors who examined Miller while he was in jail were convinced that he was, "... of unsound mind," and after his trial the jury felt, "There is little doubt as to the man being crazy..." A petition for his pardon was signed by all the members of the jury that convicted him. The pardon was denied and Miller arrived at the State Prison in Huntsville January 16, 1907, to serve his two-year sentence.

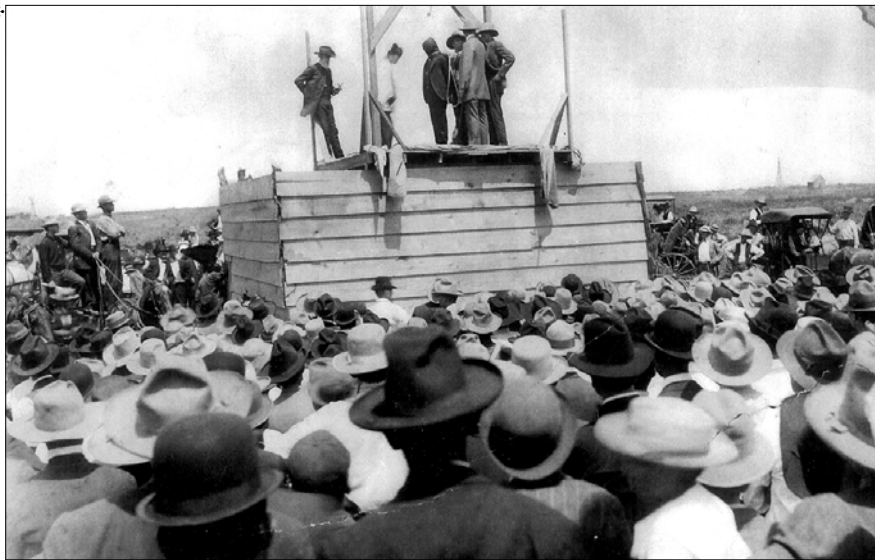
The state prison system at that time operated under the belief that hard work and severe discipline bring about reform but Miller did not respond well to that logic. He refused to accept authority and according to prison records was labeled by the prison physicians as being, "...excessively out of control," and given twenty licks for punishment.

Miller arrived back in Quanah, a convict with a criminal record and the victim of a harsh prison system. Four months later he began a violent crime spree by committing almost identical crimes as he traveled in freight train boxcars through Hall and Donley Counties. In the late afternoon of March 19, 1909 Miller stole dynamite from the gypsum plant in Acme and blew up the dugout home of Nick Althizer as a decoy for robbing the paymaster's office. He was not successful in his robbery attempt and left Acme after he stole a .38 caliber revolver from a relative.

In Childress Miller found a north-bound freight train with a boxcar occupied by two men. Believing they had money, he pulled his gun and started shooting before they reached Estelline. He killed one of the men, but the other one jumped off the train and escaped with a wound to one of his ears. The man began his way back to Childress in the dark to notify authorities while Miller searched the dead man for money. He found fifty cents and then callously pushed the body out of the car as it crossed over Red River.

When the train stopped in Memphis, Miller found a different boxcar with two young men inside. One was playing a harmonica and the other was rolling a cigarette. They told Miller they were Floyd Autrey and Fred Garrett, cousins from Fort Worth and on their way to Amarillo. Autrey told Miller he had enough money to pay their way if caught stealing a ride and the conversation continued as all three of them lit cigarettes by the same match.

The train pulled out of Memphis, but before they reached Giles, Miller decided he would take what money they had and began shooting. Using the glow of his cigarette, Miller



The crowd closes in as the noose is prepared for the neck of G.R. Miller on the morning of June 3, 1910. The scene a few moments before this of Miller, with his hands bound behind his back, has been printed many times, but this is possibly the first publication of this particular photo, which shows the hood over Miller's head. On the gallows is Rev. J.H. Stanton, Father Erasmus, Miller, and Sheriff J.T. Patman flanked by two men who may be V.R. Lane, Dep. Bugbee, or Dep. Gammon.

LEADER ARCHIVE PHOTO BY H. MULKEY.

shot Autrey in the head. Garrett jumped from the car as a bullet grazed his cheek. Miller searched the severely wounded Autrey, but found no money. Fearing more gunfire from the car, Garrett ran alongside the slow-moving train and got the attention of the engineer who stopped at Giles. Garrett told him about the gunman who shot Autrey, and they both hurried back to the car and found the young man alone and unconscious with part of his head blown away. Deputy Gammon in Hedley was notified and given a description of the suspected killer. By that time, the body of the man Miller pushed from the train had been found by two cowboys and reported to officials in Estelline. In a frenzy of phone calls lawmen from Childress to Clarendon were alerted of the shootings and given a description of the suspect.

Miller had jumped off the train when it stopped in Giles and found a place to hide for the rest of the night. On Saturday morning, he walked to Rowe and begged breakfast from a cook's car that fed the railroad work crew. The cook was suspicious that the stranger was the killer on the loose and summoned Deputy Gammon from Hedley who arrived and took Miller into custody relieving him of his gun which had one bullet left.

Autrey and Garrett were taken to Clarendon and they were met at the depot by the railroad physician who took Autrey to a nearby hotel where he died a short time later. He was wearing two pairs of pants and seven dollars was found in the inside pockets. Miller was escorted to Clarendon by Donley County Sheriff Patman and Deputy Gammon. News of the double murders had spread like a prairie wildfire. A large dangerous crowd met them at the depot and whispers of a lynching prompted the sheriff to quickly take Miller to the jail. At the inquest, Garrett identified Miller as the assassin and testified that, "Autrey came to his death by a pistol shot wound inflicted by G.R. Miller." Sheriff Patman arrested Miller and found in his pocket a letter ordering a wig, mustache, goatee and whiskers from a place in Boston. The sheriff locked him in the county jail but later that night he and his deputy secretly moved Miller to the jail in Claude to calm the lynching crowd.

The next day, the Childress sheriff brought the first man who had escaped from Miller's bullets to Claude. He identified Miller as the man who had killed his companion. After intense questioning, Miller signed a confession, admitting both shootings on the train. Referring to the first murder he said, "I did not intend to kill the men 'plum' dead. I only wanted to wound them so I could get their money." Of Autrey's murder Miller stated, "... I only wanted to wound him so I shot him and

then went thru his pockets but did not find anything."

On April 16th, Miller was taken to the jail in Memphis by Sheriff Burson and Deputy King to await trial for the murder committed on the train as it passed through Hall County. The grand jury indicted Miller on May 24th. A week later the district court met and out of the sixty-five summoned, chose a jury. The case was ready for trial shortly after noon and began with Miller's relatives, his mother Jane Miller, his sister and brother-in-law Dora and Tom Everson, all testifying that Miller's actions and mental condition were not unusual prior to the killings. He showed no emotion until he was moved to tears when his elderly mother took the stand and became so nervous she had to go to the witness room. The Sheriff testified that while he was in jail, Miller had tried to smuggle out a letter to a woman in Dalhart. He was asking her to get a diamond point drill and steel saw and get them to him some way as he would hang if he did not get out.

The trial continued the next day, June 1st. At 3:0'clock the jury announced their verdict. G.R. Miller was found guilty of murder in the first degree and given ninety-nine years or life in prison. The defendant was taken to Huntsville the next day to await trial for the murder of Floyd Autrey.

The District Court met in Clarendon to impanel a jury on October 18, 1909 with District Judge J.N. Browning presiding. Only nine men appeared from the ones who were summoned. The judge ordered three of the recently chosen petit jurors to appear and qualify. R.H. Jones, F.A. Killian and Levi Angel were empanelled by Sheriff Patman with nine other jurors. After a short deliberation, the Grand Jury indicted G.R. Miller for the capital murder of Floyd Autrey.

On October 23rd the jury for the trial was chosen from seventy-two people who were summoned with many being excused for their belief in Miller's guilt. The jurors were chosen from the farmers, ranchers and merchants of Donley County and consisted of: R.A. Callahan, W.T. McFarland, J.A. Barnett, W.A. Womack, Joe Penland, J.S. Spradlin, W.D. Dishroone, D.R. Skinner, G.D. Greaves and C. Risley. The court appointed lawyers for Miller were A.T. Cole and A.L. Journey, who immediately filed a motion to quash the indictment because the Grand Jury was chosen illegally but the motion was denied by Judge Browning.

Miller was brought back to Clarendon from Huntsville and the trial began on November 1st in a courthouse packed with people. When the indictment was read, Miller pleaded guilty without emotion or hesitation. After all the evidence was heard and the court determined that

G.R. Miller was sane, the case was sent to the jury. Within an hour, the verdict was given. "... guilty of murder in the first degree ... and punishment by death."

Miller's lawyer proceeded to file a motion to the State Court of Criminal Appeals for the jury's judgment to be revised. The motion was denied because of Miller's guilty plea. On April 25, 1910, Miller appeared in the crowded courtroom where Judge Browning pronounced sentence. "The defendant shall be hanged by the neck until dead ... on Friday, June 3, 1910 at any time after eleven o'clock A.M. and before sunset." He was returned to the jail to await execution.

In the weeks that followed, Miller became a contributor to the local newspaper from his cell. First he sent an invitation asking everyone to meet him at the gallows so he could tell them he forgave them. Then he began to write poetry and sent a long ballad to the editor about his life of crime. Another poem, written about prison life, was especially poignant and captured the sympathy of his readers, "... What is life without liberty / I oft times have said / With a poor troubled mind / It is always in dread."

As the time drew near for the execution, the town began to prepare itself for an onslaught of curiosity seekers. As soon as the gallows were built, a crowd began to gather in the open field where it stood. Every train brought people to Clarendon and many arrived in wagons, buggies, on horseback and even on foot. The streets filled with people selling fried meats, breads and pies. People carried picnic lunches and extra bedding as the mood became boisterous and rowdy.

On the night before the hanging, campfires dotted the landscape as hundreds of people camped out near the scaffold. At the jail, Father Erasmus, priest of the Catholic Church, and Rev. J.H. Stanton of the Methodist Church, were ministering to the condemned man one last time in his cell. Three days before, the priest had baptized Miller into the Catholic Church. Mrs. Patman, the sheriff's wife, was making the black hood that would cover the head of the prisoner, a job she had been putting off for days. Extra lawmen were called in and spent the night nervously watching over the town.

At promptly 11 o'clock the next morning, June 3rd, 1910, Miller was brought through the crowd to the waiting gallows in a covered buggy escorted by lawmen, ministers and physicians. Sheriff Patman ascended the stairs to the scaffold followed by Miller, deputies Bugbee and Gammon, V.R. Lane, Father Erasmus dressed in his official robes and Rev. Stanton, who held a small cross in his hands.

Miller faced the huge crowd and read a statement thanking those who had helped him and forgiving those who were pun-

ishing him. He ended his statement by saying, "I humbly and sincerely ask forgiveness for the scandal and bad example I have given by my past wicked life and I hope that none will follow my example." He looked around at the vast crowd and his voice wavered slightly as he said, "Goodbye children and be good children." Miller then turned to Sheriff Patman and heartily shook his hand, thanked him and said he was ready.

The article that later appeared in The Clarendon News gave a detailed account of the last few minutes of the

hanging: Father Erasmus placed the black cap over Miller's face while the sheriff and deputies pinioned his hands and feet. "At a given signal curtains were drawn and the crowd saw no more. ...all then stepped back to the edge of the platform and Sheriff Patman at 11:06 pulled the lever. The trap worked perfectly and the body shot straight downward six feet and the physicians and witnesses below say that death came without a struggle, the physicians pronounced him dead 13 minutes later and 16 minutes later the body was cut down and turned over to the undertaker." Miller's body was wrapped in a robe and taken away in a horse-drawn hearse, his feet hanging out of the wagon. The gallows were torn down as soon as possible but not before the crowd had torn out pieces of rope and wood for souvenirs.

Services were held the next day in the Catholic Church and Miller was buried in an unmarked grave in the small Catholic Cemetery south of Clarendon. Most of the town took no pleasure in dealing with criminal events that had been thrust upon them and feared notoriety would harm their growth as a town that promoted religion and education.

But the unlikely happening became an important part of Clarendon's history as the first and last public execution in Donley County and the last legal hanging in the Panhandle.

Executions by hanging were terminated in 1923 when the State of Texas ordered all executions to be carried out by the state, in Huntsville, by means of the electric chair.

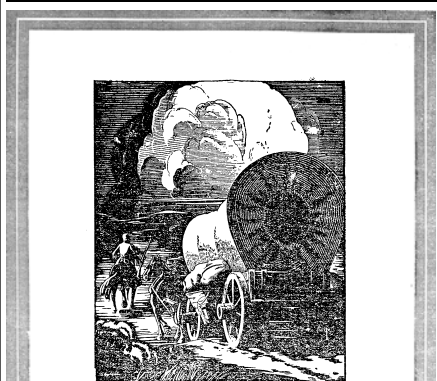
**"IT IS OVER.  
THE LAW IS SUPREME."**



As we celebrate Independence Day, we celebrate freedom, equality and justice. We cherish these values and work hard to promote them each day in our work.

We wish all of our customers and neighbors a happy and safe Fourth of July.

**Joe T. Lovell Real Estate**  
Office 806-874-9318 • www.joetlovellrealestate.com



## As One Pioneer to Another

The Founder of the Donley County Leader arrived at Tascosa in 1888. All of his life, except his school days, had been spent in the Panhandle and great Southwest. He believed in her history, the stability of her people as the most progressive and persevering in existence. Every member of the Leader staff is a product of the Southwest. We hope you appreciate our efforts to present to you, unbiased, the news each week.

THE LEADER STAFF

**THE DONLEY COUNTY LEADER**

# Methodist Church est'd here in 1888

Mr. and Mrs. P.A. Buntin are entertaining Rev. Isaac K. Mills now of Stamford, Texas.

The Clarendon Methodist Church was organized by Rev. Mills back in 1888, and Mr. and Mrs. Buntin were the first members enrolled in the newly organized church.

When the editor came here Dec. 5, 1889, Brother Mills had just been returned for a second year and had started a subscription list to build a church house. About March 1890, work was started and the first service was held in the building first Sunday in May and a Sunday School was organized in the afternoon.

Of the original first members Mr. and Mrs. P.A. Buntin and Mrs. E.L. Caraway are the only ones whose names still appear on the rolls. Mr. and Mrs. J.H. Roberts who now hold their membership at Lelia Lake and Mrs. M.A. Goodnight who now holds her membership at her home place, were of the original first members as was Judge Browning now of Amarillo. As we now remember it the names of A.M. Beville and wife were 19 and 20 of the members who were then here, some others had been enrolled but had gone away.

When Brother Mills looks on and in the magnificent church and its furnishings and hears that the membership rolls now contains some seven hundred names, he sees the multiplied fruits of his early and hard labors.

After his many years of service Brother Mills has retired from the active ranks.

While there are not many of the original church members now here yet there are a goodly number of old time residents who know and will rejoice to see again Brother Mills. His face to them and his to theirs will call up many memories of the past.

We would like for all the membership of the church especially to meet and know Brother Mills, the man who organized the church here, and let everyone join in the Clarendon welcome to this noble good man.

We trust that his stay in Clarendon will be like a child's play joy.

*Clarendon News & Times*  
November 9, 1910

## First Bale at Lelia

Lelia Lake received their first bale of cotton for the season last Tuesday. It was raised by W.A. Bullard and sold to J.J. Palmer for eleven and one-half cents and there was a premium of \$16.25 paid.

It has been conservatively estimated that between 1500 and 2000 bales of cotton will be ginned at Lelia Lake this year and buyers there will be prepared to pay the very highest market price for all cotton ginned there or that may be brought there from anywhere and then they propose to sell all the different lines of merchandise just as cheap as can be had in any other market.

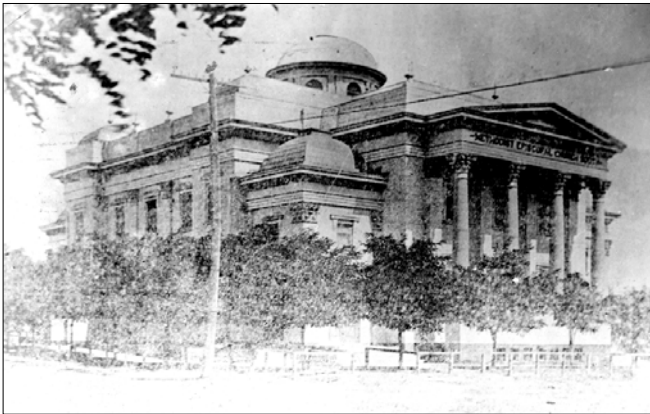
That is the spirit that builds towns.

*The Clarendon News & Times*  
September 23, 1911

## Cotton Seed Selling for \$44 Ton in Childress

Cotton seed buyers in Childress were paying \$44 per ton for the seed on the market this morning. This is an increase of \$8 per ton within the past ten days. The prediction is being made that seed will reach a higher figure within a few days.

*The Clarendon News*  
October 25, 1923



Clarendon's Methodist Episcopal Church, South - today known as the First United Methodist Church - was organized here in 1888. The present sanctuary, shown here with its original roof and dome, was constructed in 1910 at a cost of \$40,000 and was the birthsite of the present day Central and Northwest Texas Conferences.

LEADER ARCHIVE PHOTO

## Northwest Texas Conference Meets

The first session of the New Northwest Texas Conference opened in the new Methodist church in Clarendon on Wednesday morning at nine o'clock by Bishop James Atkins of Waynesville, N.C. The members gathered early at the church and the greetings and fellowship of the co-workers as they came up from their various fields of labor and told of the conflicts and victories of the past year's work was an event of great moment to them and will continue during the entire session. On assembling the great congregation sang with zeal the grand old conference hymn "And are we yet alive and see each others face." Bishop Atkins read and commented from the tenth chapter of the St. Luke's gospel and led a devout consecrated prayer. His admonitions to the ministers touching the matter of the organization of the new Conference...

The affairs of the Conference was timely and it is hoped to bear fruit to the extent that none of the troubles of which he spoke will ever be in this Conference. Rev. John M. Bares of Georgetown and who for so many years has been the secretary of the Conference before the division was present and at the request of the Bishop called the Presiding Elder S.A. Barnes of Abilene read the list of standing special committees as nominated by the presiding elders and they were elected by the Conference.

R.E. Goodrich of Stamford and A.L. Moore of Vernon was nominated for secretary. It was a pretty race, Goodrich received 51 and Moore 52 votes. The

secretary appointed his first assistant brother Goodrich and Ben Hardy, J.B. McCarley and A.W. Hollis as assistants. Rev. R.M. Morris of Clarendon was elected Conference postmaster, Rev. O.P. Kiker of Clarendon editor of the Conference Journal. L.G. Hawkins of Vernon and G.A.F. Parker of Hereford were nominated of Conference teller. Parker was elected.

Then came the address of welcome by Hon. T. H. Peebles on behalf of the church and city to the Conference. To those who have heard Mr. Peebles and who did not on this occasion, have reason to know what they missed. Those who did hear it declare it one of the best speeches they ever heard upon such an occasion and has received much comment from our visitors.

Then came the adjournment of the first days session of the first session of the New Northwest Texas Conference.

*The Clarendon News & Times*  
November 12, 1910

## Hospital Location In The South Part of City

The active directors of the Adair Hospital on yesterday gave out the location which is on a three acre plot of land on the high point between the homes of T.L. Benedict and the old Dr. W.M. Wooten place.

This is a beautiful site. The plans as drawn by architect E. Wallington were on exhibition yesterday and are much more elaborate than we had supposed. Work will begin soon.

*The Clarendon News*  
February 2, 1910

## Coming to Clarendon

A great many gentlemen have been out to see for themselves, before moving their families here, and so far, all have been well pleased, and several are now preparing their families to come.

*The Clarendon News,*  
June 1, 1878

## We have just opened

a barrel of Sour Krout, a keg of Dill Pickles and will receive today a shipment of shelled Pecans, Walnuts, and Almonds. Have also just unloaded a car of Arbetrator Flour, the very best soft wheat flour from Missouri, also a car of the celebrated Belle of Wichita flour. You will not want to be disappointed in your biscuits and cakes, hence better buy your flour from us.

**E.M. OZIER...**  
THE GROCERYMAN  
*The Clarendon News & Times*  
November 9, 1910

Read Tomorrow's History Today  
In The Pages Of The Clarendon Enterprise.

Happy Independence Day!

Family, food, and fun. These are the main ingredients for a perfect holiday!  
We hope you enjoy it and celebrate it safely.



Red River Inn



## Lady Liberty Symbol of Freedom



Presented to America as a gift from the French people, the Statue of Liberty has stood on Liberty Island welcoming immigrants to America. She has long been a symbol of America and the freedom her people enjoy.

Let us take time to celebrate our freedom and pray for those in other countries who not share our independence.

**Clarendon Insurance Agency**

# Old Glory



Symbol of Freedom  
Glory  
Honor

We salute the flag and everything that it represents, including all those lives lost protecting it and the freedom we have today.

Join us in celebrating our nation's independence and giving thanks for having the right to do so.

## City of Howardwick Officials

Del Essary, Mayor

Gene Rogers, Mayor Pro-Tem

Board of Aldermen Members:  
Tanis McMorries, Norm Hagood  
Johnny Hubbard & Tim Gallagher

Howardwick Volunteer Fire Dept.

and all City Employees

Happy Independence Day!

Come Eat A Steak  
At J.D. Steakout



## Freedom

Join us in celebrating our freedom this Independence Day by praying for those who are serving our country in the U.S. and abroad. Pray for them and their families for a safe return and peace everywhere.

God Bless America!



# New Electric High Line Fulfills Local Man's Dream

"This high line that is coming into Clarendon was one of my dreams for Clarendon years ago," says A.L. Chase, former manager of Clarendon Light & Power Company.

Every big accomplishment in the world, whether it be in the field of art or commerce, has behind it a dream, an ambition, perhaps years old, perhaps centuries old. The men who had charge of the lighting system years ago, when there were not one hundred consumers in the town and when the equipment would not permit of the best service, planned and worked toward the time when Clarendon should have the very high type of service that the high line is going to afford.

In 1902, the local electric light plant was operated by George Washington, former citizen of this place. When Mr. Washington took charge of the plant, he hoped that by running a cotton gin in connection with the plant and by pumping water for the city water works that the plant could be made to pay. But cotton had just been introduced into the County and there was a small amount to be ginned, and the revenue from the waterworks was small. The business failed for want of patronage, and Mr. Washington sold to C.J. Spittal, an Englishman who lived here. Spittal tried to make the business pay on the same basis, but the cotton gin failed and it became evident that completely new equipment was necessary. Spittal sold to a company known as the Clarendon Water, Light & Power Company in 1903. W.L. Chase and A.L. Chase were general managers for the Company of the plants here and at Amarillo, but neither of them lived here at that time. In 1904, W.C. Stewart came here from Cleburne to be superintendent of the Clarendon light plant and water works, the water works having been bought

by the company.

He tells an amusing story of his first night in Clarendon. When he stepped off the train, he heard the engines of the plant puffing and chugging away in a distressing manner. Handing his bags to a hotel porter, he set out in the direction of the noise. When he was in sight of the plant, a desperate looking man in the door called to him, "I sure am glad to see you!" Without further salutation and without asking Mr. Stewart his name or where he came from, he took him through the plant and showed him how to manage the various engines. When they arrived at the back door to the building, Mr. Spittal merely said, "I'll see you at nine in the morning. Goodnight."

Mr. Stewart was left to his own devices and ran the engines all night. That was Clarendon's first time to have all night service. It was only when he finally reached the hotel at ten the next morning that he learned that the plant shut down at eleven p.m. and came on at five a.m. That was also the last time for several years that Clarendon had all night service.

Mr. Stewart was superintendent two years and superintendent and manager for one year. Harry Gleason followed him in the place. Then the plant went into the hands of receivers for a time. The water works were also sold to James Trent and Frank Collinson and became independent. W.L. Chase and A.L. Chase and their associates bought the electric light plant in 1911 and gave it the name of Clarendon Light & Power Company. A.L. Chase then moved here from Cleburne and became manager. T.S. Kemp, who had been superintendent under the receivership management, continued as engineer for the new company.

Mr. Chase says that when

he came here and took charge, there was almost no plant at all. The plant had only one steam engine of 75 horse power and a generator of 60 kilowatts. There were then only 85 consumers. In 1911 and '12, the plant was entirely rebuilt and new oil engines were installed. Street lights were installed in 1913. When Clarendon Light & Power Company was sold in 1915 to the Texas Gas & Electric Company, Mr. Chase had built it up until the plant had engines of 150 horse power and a generator of 100 kilowatts. The number of consumers had grown from the 85 in 1911 to 450. Mr. Chase continued as local manager for the Texas Gas & Electric until June of 1917.

During the financial crisis following the war, the company failed and went back into the hands of receivers. It was under receivership management for two years and was then sold to the Texas Central Power Company. During the time of the management of receivers, the plant had several managers, the outstanding ones being T.S. Kemp and Cyrus Cope.

New equipment had been added during the time the receivers controlled the plant, and the Texas Central Power Company added still more and improved the service. Among the improvements made was the white way street lighting system which was installed in 1921 and in that same year \$20,000 of new equipment was added. Monty Garrison, who had been with the company as line man since 1920, was made manager in 1923, and Cyrus Cope was made superintendent of the plant.

Since 1921, the service has improved and the cost of service has been reduced at different times. The Texas Central Power Company sold the Clarendon branch to Mid-Western Utilities

Company. The last named company is now doing what other companies and managers would have done under more favorable conditions, and are running a high line from Childress to Clarendon. Clarendon will in a short time receive power from the big plant at Childress, which is 2,200 horse power. The local plant with 375 horse power will be completely overhauled and will be kept for emergency use only. Childress, Kirkland, Esteline, Memphis, Hedley, and Lelia Lake will also receive power and lights from the high line.

Mr. Garrison says that everything is being done to improve the service; that no expense and no care is being spared in making the service the most efficient possible.

*The Clarendon News  
December 17, 1925*

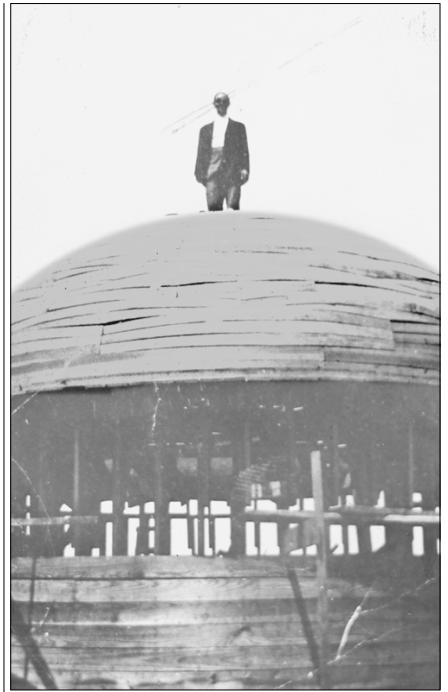
## An Ordinance Making it Unlawful to Maintain an Open Privy Within the corporate limits of the City of Clarendon.

Be it ordained by the City Council of the city of Clarendon Texas: That, from and after this date, it shall be unlawful for any owner, lease or tenant of any premises within the corporate limits of the City of Clarendon to keep or maintain an open privy, that is to say a privy built upon the surface of the ground.

Any person offending against the provisions of this ordinance shall be fined in any sum not less than five nor more than one hundred dollars.

Passed and approved under the suspension of the rules this the third day of May 1911.

**C.W. Bennett, Mayor**  
**W.T. Hayter, City Sec'y.**  
*The Clarendon News  
May 28, 1910*



An unidentified man stands atop the dome of the Clarendon's Methodist Church during its construction in 1910. The dome, though beautiful, was a source of leaks. The height of the dome was shortened at one point and then removed completely in 1950.

SAINTS' ROOST MUSEUM PHOTO

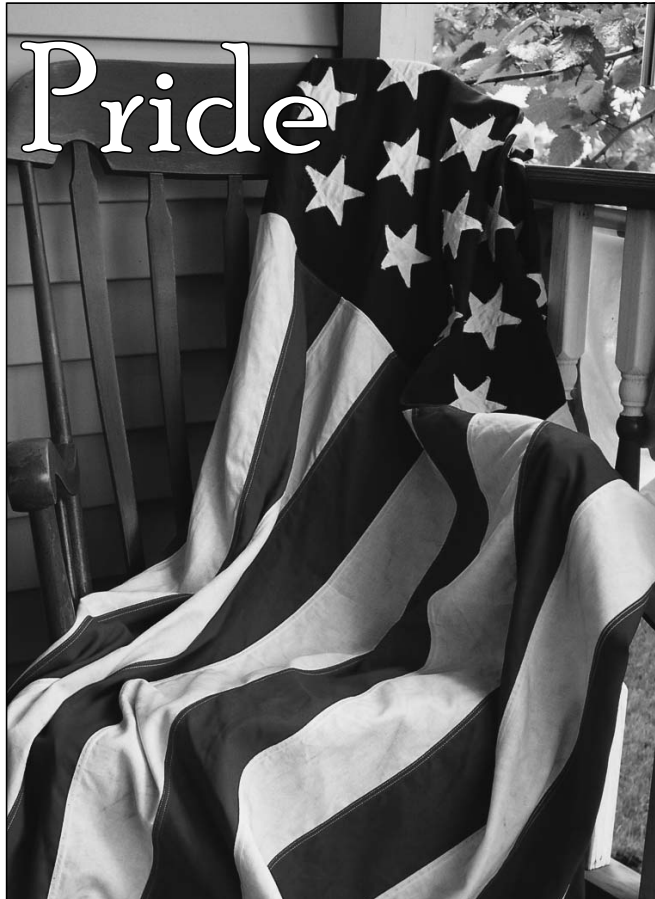
## Round Up Your Family

Join us in celebrating the Fourth of July by attending the Saints' Roost Celebration and Ranch Rodeo.



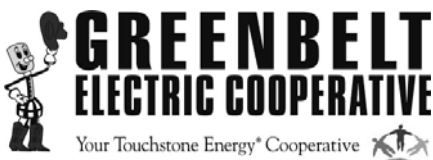
Have a safe and happy Fourth!

**White's**  
Feed & Seed



Join us in showing our pride for America by flying your flag this weekend.

Happy Independence Day!



# Clarendon WELCOMES

All Pioneers and Visitors

As the oldest thriving town in the Panhandle, Clarendon has constantly been building upwards since 1878. Together we will continue to grow in the future and enjoy many July Fourth celebrations yet to come.

We extend a hospitable welcome to all guests of the City during the 133rd annual Saints' Roost Celebration.



Clarendon City Hall, 2010.

This message brought to you by the  
**CITY OF CLARENDON**

### Lelia Lake Burglars Caught Last Friday

Last Thursday evening the store of Howard & Son in Lelia Lake was broken open and some three hundred dollars worth of merchandise of various sorts was taken from the stock of goods. The loot contained silks of vari-

ous sorts for the most part, ladies hosiery, clothing of all sorts, some cigarettes, and a considerable piece of meat.

Deputy Sheriff Barnett was called immediately and got on the trail of the missing merchandise. The meat led the proprietors of the store to think a Mexican might have made the haul. Accordingly, the surrounding Mexicans were searched and one of the men who were

rounded up started to run away. He was caught and implicated one other of the same group. They were forced to reveal the whereabouts of the missing merchandise and practically all of the stolen goods were returned to the rightful owners.

The thieves are now in the county jail in Clarendon awaiting trial.

*The Clarendon News, Dec. 10, 1925*

### Local Climate Good For The Health

Our Autumn weather is hard to beat, men are out all day and night coatless and exposed, and yet comfortable. It's a perfect inspiration to breathe such clear pure air. It is length of days to men in health, and better than medicine for invalids.

*The Clarendon News November 3, 1882*

# BOOT SCOOTIN' SAVINGS

### Come check out great savings on namebrand boots just in time for the Rodeo!

Visit us in store or online at [www.CornellsCountryStore.com](http://www.CornellsCountryStore.com)



...So Much More Than A Feed Store.  
806-874-6773  
903 E 2nd in Clarendon



# Henson's July 4th Must Haves



### Show You're Proud

Check out our Cutting-Up collection of patriotic tees for the Fourth of July or just remembering and celebrating our freedom all summer long. Plus don't forget our selection of new styles!

\$46

### Stay Cool

With these great products from Bodycool.

Check out the Neck Buddy, Cool Cap & Cool Floppy Hat that are proven to keep your body cooler while looking stylish!



Regular \$15.99  
Regular \$13.99  
Sale \$9.99  
Sale \$12.99



### Look Cool

With Dorffman Pacific hats you can beat the heat with the new look in cowboy hats. We have several styles to choose from starting as low as \$17!

Don't Forget to take care of your hands with *Outdoor Hands Skin Therapy Cream* and be safe with *Fire Gone*, the fire extinguisher in an aerosol can!

# Big Sidewalk Sale

Friday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. • Turtle Race 1:30 p.m.  
Live Music broadcast by KLSR 105.3 FM

*To all who fought for her, died for her, and protect her today, we thank you.*



# Happy Independence Day!



Member FDIC

