



1894 DIARY OF REV. H.P. WILSON

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Presbyterian Board of Home Missions Minister

Enid, Pond Creek and Jefferson, O.T.

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Church lore of the First Presbyterian Church of Enid remembers Rev. Wilson as a Presbyterian preacher that had staked a claim southeast of Enid and “preached in the open air with a goods box for a pulpit” while waiting to file his claim. His goods box pulpit is now permanently displayed in the west foyer of the Church. He led Presbyterian services from September 24, 1893 (one week after the land run) until the spring of 1894 “when he left to prove up his claim”.

Rev. Wilson is also remembered as presiding over the formal chartering of the Enid church on January 28, 1894. These brief but significant references were the only history found on Rev. Wilson in church archives. Rev. Wilson’s name reappeared in 1991 in a conversation I had with Bill Humphrey. He had purchased a box of “collectibles” in an estate auction and discovered the *1894 Diary of H. P. Wilson, Presbyterian Minister, Enid, O.T.* Knowing that our church was chartered in January 1894, I jumped at the chance to see the diary.

I had spent very little time with the diary before I realized that history had not given Rev. Wilson, and other early day church organizers, the credit they were due. The struggles they encountered in forming a new church a few months after the land run were indeed “historic”. With Bill Humphrey’s permission, I commenced the project of



Enid three days after the Land Run: Viewed from East of downtown.

Special Points of Interest

- ? **About Rev. Wilson**
- ? **Founding of Enid’s Presbyterian Church.**
- ? **Highlights of 1894**
- ? **Enid Railroad War.**

transcribing and annotating the Wilson diary in the spring of 1992. Eighteen months later I finished the project with a much better understanding of our Church's history and early day life in the Cherokee Strip.

ABOUT REV. WILSON



Rev. H. P. Wilson

Very little is known about Rev. Wilson before the Land Run. The little data that I have been able to piece together revealed that he was born Hugh Porter Wilson on August 26, 1893 at Canfield, Ohio. He enlisted as a Private in Company E of the Ohio Calvary in 1861, being discharged at the end of the Civil War in 1865. Rev. Wilson graduated from Princeton College (1871) and Allegheny Theological Seminary (1874). He was ordained by the Presbytery of Ma-honing in April of 1874 and served the following pastorates: Homeworth, Ohio (1874), Mt Ayr, 1876-82, Axtell, Kansas, 1882-88, Clifton, Kansas 1888-90, Effingham, Kansas, 1890-1893. He married Thelia Hyde in September of 1873 (at age 34). They had six children, Chalmers (born in 1874), followed, in order, by Homer, Curtis, Oliver, Dudley and Alice.

The Reverend and Mrs. Wilson were living in Effingham, Kansas prior to the Cherokee Strip Land Run. He appears to have served as a Board of Home Missions preacher for some time.

Rev. Wilson and his son, Chalmers, made the Land Run both staking claims in Flynn Township in southeastern Garfield County. Rev. Wilson's claim was in the NW Quarter of Section 14, Township 20, Range 5 (3 miles S and 1½ miles W of Douglas) and Chalmers was in the SW Quarter of the same section. Chalmers would lose his claim in a claim dispute. Wilson appears to have left his family in Effingham until a home could be constructed on the claim. Mrs. Wilson joined him in March of 1894.

THE BEGINNINGS OF PRESBYTERIANISM IN ENID

On Sunday, September 17, the day after the land run, Presbyterians participated in Union services held in the Public Square, Enid and Rev. Wilson and Rev. G. V. Albertson participated in these services. In an article appearing in the November 1927 issue of the Enid Presbyterian, charter member Thomas P. Hopley recounts his memories of Rev. Wilson and the early Enid church.

“He was a missionary of the Home Missionary Society of the great Presbyterian Church and early newspaperman, and his salary was paid for over a year by the Home Missionary Society.

After several Sundays, the different denominations separated into groups with the object of organizing for denominational work. The first meeting held by the Presbyterians were at Ms. Livingston's schoolhouse tent on N. Independence. Also at Rakestraw Hall, at SE corner of Square. Meetings were held at the Oxford Building on the West side of the Square, South of Broadway, also at vacant rooms on West side North of Broadway. The second story of Cook building on the North side of West Randolph and also a public school building on Lot 3, Block 17 on the South Side of East Broadway in the 500 block.

A union Sunday School Christmas Tree was held in Fuqua Hall, third story, at First Christmas of Enid.”

This was the backdrop for Rev. Wilson's first diary entry on January 1, 1894:

Monday, January 1, 1894: *A bright pleasant morning. Got half fare permit on the Burlington. Got letter from Sister Mary telling of their visit to Dublin. Aunt Jane 94 years old. Mr. Emerson and I tried to raise some money on subscription. Money very close. Got 85 cents from Edwards. Department Commander unexpectedly came to Enid this ever and we gather up comrades and organize Post-GAR. I was elected Chaplin again. Tea and turkey at Hopleys.*

ANNOTATION

Reference to his sister's recent trip to Dublin indicates that Wilson's family may have recently immigrated to America: first or second generation.

Emerson was to become a charter member in the Enid Church and he together with other parishioners would go with Wilson to make calls regarding pledge of funds to purchase a lot for the Presbyterian Church.

The reference to the "GAR" is to the Grand Army of the Republic, a union soldiers veterans organization that was active in Enid for many years.

"Hopley" was Thomas Hopley who was a newspaper editor who would later become quite controversial. Later in January he would become one of the charter members of the church.



Enid under construction November 1893. the Streets had not yet been leveled

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1894

The various denominations worked closely together in the early days and congregations often held union services and shared facilities. It was common for Wilson to attend the Baptist service in the morning and a Methodist meeting in the evening after holding a Presbyterian service at 3:00 p.m. The Baptist congregation formally organized their church on January 7, 1894, with Wilson in attendance:

*Sunday, January 7, 1894: A lovely day. Went to M.E. Church - asked **Bro. Brian** to announce our serve in the p.m. I went to Baptist service. They had **Rev. Dyke** with them. They organized their church. 10 by letter. Some on promise of getting their letters. I think 20 in all. Our service was in P.M. S.S. at 2. Service at 3. Over 60 attend S.S. near 100 I think at service. Text "Only Believe". Pleasant service. Eve attend M.E. Church.*

Wilson was supported financially in his efforts by regular receipt from New York City (Home Mission Board) and from the local plate offering which usually amounted to a couple of dollars a week. He also received "goods boxes" from eastern church supporters with supplies and materials. During the winter and early spring, Wilson's primary effort was to locate those of the Presbyterian denomination and organize them into a congregation. He canvassed the townsite block by block with other church people to locate members. He also put a high priority on locating and pur-

chasing a town lot so a church building could be erected. To him this was an important step in insuring the permanency of the Presbyterian denomination in Enid. A desirable lot was located in early January. It was located across the street north of the present day News and Eagle Building at the corner of Broadway and Washington. Through pledges from townspeople and a \$120 loan from the Bank of Enid, financing was secured. All that was now required was the formal organization of the Presbyterians so legal title could be held. The congregation was formally organized on January 28, 1894 and title to the lot secured on January 29. The original lot proved to be inadequate and later sold. Wilson recorded the historic organization of the First Presbyterian Church of Enid with the following journal entry:

Sunday, January 28, 1894: A full day and eventful. Attended church at 11 M.E. at 2 our own Sunday School at 3 preached from Ephesians 3 "Might - Be Known in the Church" and last v. "Unto Him be Glory in the Church". Afterwards

*organized the First Presbyterian Church of Enid with 21 members. 19 by letters two by profession. Elected **Brother Stackhouse** as Elder for 3 years and ordained him. Elected **Brother Knott** and **Emerson** who have been ruling Elders **Knott** for 2 and **Emerson** for one year. Installed them. Elected 6 Trustees. The Lord bless and prosper this church. **Homer** came about 6:00 p.m. We attended church at M.E. Lodged at **Emersons**.*

Even after the Presbyterians formally organized they continued to participate in "union" services with other denominations. The following entry is from, February 4, the week after formal organization.

*Sunday, February 4, 1894: Lodging at **Warreck** and **Miller's** house on E St. where I have lodged for one month. Attended Baptist service in morning. Offer prayer. At 2:00 p.m. attended our Sunday School. At 3:00 preach text "And the Word of God Mightily Grew and Prevailed a Great Stir" Acts. Eve. We continue our Union meetings. **Brother Cook** preached. A good meeting but no special movement. Tonight lodged with **Brother Cook**.*

In January, Wilson also constructed a house on his claim. His weekly schedule during January took him back and forth from his claim during the week and to Enid on weekends. In March, his family arrived from Kansas and work on the claim continued through the spring.

In May, a curious set of diary entries reveal some dissension among the congregation concerning Wilson's aggressive fund raising to build a new church on the recently acquired lot. Cash was very scarce in the early days and the church trustees had voted not to raise money "for a while". Despite this directive. Wilson and church leader, Thomas Hopley, continued to campaign (5/10). Rev. Hamilton, a territorial church leader from Chickasha, then comes to Enid for meetings with members and a church "committee" (5/12). Wilson then shifts much of his attention to developing the Presbyterian congregation in Pond Creek which he had organized on May 6th. The last reference to Rev. Wilson found in the Session minutes of the Enid church was May 13th. The next Session meeting was in July with the Rev. S. W. Griffin, Wilson's replacement, presiding.

The reason for Wilson's abrupt departure from Enid may never be known. His aggressive fund raising may have been the reason, but there are also journal references indicating that the congregation was not able to live up to its promise of financial support of Wilson. The diary does, however, disprove the historical reason given for his departure, "to prove up his claim". Wilson's duties in Enid had not interfered with proving up his claim and he quickly moved on to another position in Pond Creek while maintaining residence on his claim in southeast Garfield County. Perhaps the historical account given for Wilson's departure was a polite way of saying "it just didn't work out".

Many of the events recorded in Wilson's journal match up with other sources that recorded in history of Enid in 1894. I have often seen a reference in an article to an event that supposedly occurred in 1894 and I would immediately turn in the diary to that date to see if they paralleled. Most often they did. County elections; Senator Flynn campaigning through the Cherokee Strip; School Board elections and an early day professional prize fight featuring the Dakota Kid.

THE ENID RAILROAD WAR

No event was more important to Enid's early history than the Enid Railroad War which occurred in the summer of 1894. Tension had been high between the Rock Island Railroad and Enid settlers since the day of the land run. The Railroad preferred the North Enid town-South Enid townsite. In its road refused

site where it had a depot over the government selected attempt to influence the settlement of North Enid the rail-to stop at South Enid. A similar controversy had arisen in "L" County (later known as Grant County) where the railroad depot was located at a sight other than the official government townsite. The controversy between the railroad and both communities heightened in the summer of 1894. During the summer of 1894, Wilson was commuting regularly between his homestead south of Enid and Pond Creek where he was trying to establish a new Presbyterian church. Several of his journal entries chronicled the various episodes that he encountered. On the evening of July 12th, South Enid held a town meeting on the courthouse lawn at which Edmond Frantz, who had been sent to Washington to negotiate a railroad depot for South Enid, reported that all lawful and peaceable methods to secure a depot for Enid had failed. He ended his address to the town folk with a statement that the "Rock Island owned the United States Senate". The town meeting adjourned in an atmosphere of anger and the next morning a trestle near Waukomis was burned and a trestle was cut near Enid causing a fourteen car train to derail south of Enid. Similar incidents occurred during the week in "L" County to the north. Wilson had gone to Pond Creek on Wednesday afternoon, July 11th, and reported in his Friday journal that "someone put dynamite to the road between the two towns". Wilson returned to his homestead through Enid on Tuesday, July 17th and recorded the following journal entry:



After the train wreck south of Enid it was reported that the local Christian Endeavor Group went down to the scene of the accident and victoriously sang "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow".

Enid Town's people view Train Wreck south of Enid during the Enid Railroad War Summer of 1894.

Tuesday, July 17, 1894: Came home saw the wreck and the bridges that were burned by people who are incensed and angry against the Company for not giving them depot at the new towns along the R.R. The wreck south one mile of South Enid is a dreadful one - 13 cars. Wheat dumped 3 car load of cattle. We got to Waukomis at 11:00 a.m. took dinner at **Mr. Brooks** on time. Road to **Mr. Attiberries** with him and his wife. Walked home from there two miles. Home at 9:00 p.m.

Concern over future acts of violence caused the US Congress to take appropriate actions and by late summer the Enid Railroad War was ended when the Rock Island was required to locate a depot station at South Enid.

During the remainder of 1894, Wilson developed the congregation of Pond Creek and worked on his claim southeast of Enid. There are many interesting journal entries which give us a good look at life in those early days. There are several references to a Dr. Love and his daughter Nellie. Wilson's son, Chalmers, would often help Dr. Love with his cows and in the fall of 1894 he took Nellie to the train station to catch a train to Quincy, Illinois where she sent to school. In my research of the family, I discovered that Chalmers later married Nellie Love and their daughter, Virginia Wilson, would become a teacher in Enid and long time member of the Presbyterian Church until her death in 1990.

The diary records that Wilson was active in every facet of early day life in Enid. On January 1st he presided over the organizational meeting of the local G.A.R. chapter (Grand Army of the Republic), during the year he was also involved in the formation of the Temperance organization, the Republican Party and early Territorial meetings of Presbytery. Wilson was also appointed Clerk of the School District in rural Garfield County where his claim was located. Wilson's 1894 diary ended with the following entry:

Monday, December 31, 1894: Last Day of the year. Bright sunshine and thaw some. But the snow not all gone. Melt just a little, wind quite cool. Got the use of Mrs. Stackhouse's stove for our oyster dinner and supper tomorrow. Pay balance on Ma's shoes to Mr. Harrison (See December 26) \$1.25. Oliver went to Enid to get more "asthma cure" for him. Came back on the 8:21. He used 60 cents. We closed up the record of the year with prayer. The Lord bless the year to us and take all of the praise.

POST SCRIPT

After spending nearly a year studying Rev. Wilson's life in 1894, I was naturally curious as to what happened to him afterwards. Researching this point was slow, there were several references in county records through the years to T. H. Wilson (Thelia) and references to Chalmers, but I found nothing about Rev. Wilson. My research came to an abrupt end when a friend provided me copies of Virginia Wilson's D.A.R. papers. These records revealed that Rev. Wilson died October 13, 1895, the very next year, in Jefferson, O.T., at the age of 55. He was buried in Effingham, Kansas. I have tried to find a newspaper article that would give details of the cause of death, but to date, I have found nothing.

Much of our local history has been developed by the recollections of participants written many years after the event. It is rare that we have available person's first-hand accounts written contemporaneously with the event. Diaries such as Rev. Wilson's are an important piece of the recorded history of our community. I hope that Wilson's diary transcript is read and studied by future generations of students and historians and that they will experience the same awe and amazement at the accomplishments of the early day Cherokee Strip Pioneers that I experienced. Copies of the full transcript with annotations can be found in the Marquis James Room at the Enid Public Library, and in the libraries of the Museum of the Cherokee Strip, the First Presbyterian church in Enid and the Oklahoma Historical Society.

About the Author: Gary Brown is a native of Enid and has been involved in numerous local history organizations over the last 20 years. He has recently established enidhistory.com to promote the preservation of Enid's history.