Bidding for the University
Pioneer Editor Recalls Political Battles to Secure O. U.

By J. J. Burke, Veteran Newspaper Editor

No, that is very pretty in theory, but, as an eminent statesman recently on the hustings as candidate for high office would remark, it is "apology" in practice. Members of congress and of state legislatures are elected by their several and individual constituents to get everything possible for their districts and "while you're getting, get a plenty," as the old lady in "The Hoo- sier Schoolmaster" remarked. If he did not, it is certain his constituents would remember his shortcomings when he came up for re-election.

"Combinations" are the order of the day in these legislative assemblies, and always will be. Why, even in the present Oklahoma legislature, we've noticed a combination of Republicans and Democrats to carry forward their pet schemes—the Democrats to force the impeachment of their governor, with the Republicans for their support of the impeachment program, promised support for certain of their pet measures.

The writer of this article, Mr. J. J. Burke, is one of the builders of this university. He was one of the first owners of the Oklahoma City Times. Later, he became editor and owner of the Norman Transcript. He watched the university grow from its inception as a small college and preparatory school to a university twenty-fifth in enrollment in the United States.

And so it was in the first legislature of the territory of Oklahoma. The ambitions of every community clashed with the ambitions of other communities and it was only by combinations that anything could be secured.

Guthrie desired to retain the capital. Oklahoma City wanted the capital located at that point. Kingfisher was also out for the same thing. Other cities wanted the university, the penitentiary, the A. and M. college, or anything they could get. Therefore, as soon as it was known who had been elected to the council (or senate) and to the lower house, the politicians began their manipulations and combinations.

Oklahoma City had elected James L. Brown, J. W. Howard, and L. G. Pittman to the council, with Moses Neal, C. G. Jones, S. D. Pack, D. W. Peery, and H. G. Trosper to the lower house. Cleveland county had elected Mort L. Bixler to the council and T. R. Waggoner, W. C. Adair, and J. M. Stovall to the house. Stillwater was represented by George W. Gardenhire in the council and S. W. Clark, I. N. Terrill, and James L. Mathews in the house. These formed the nucleus of a combination that could and did (with the help of some others outside those three counties) sweep everything before it. The support of the El Reno delegation to the combination was obtained by making A. N. Daniels, member from Canadian, speaker of the house, and that of the Kingfisher delegation by promising that if Oklahoma City could not get the capital, the support of the combination would be thrown to Kingfisher for that plum. Thus the pins were set for the location of the capital at Oklahoma City, the university at Norman, and A. and M. college at Stillwater.

Among the first bills introduced was the measure locating the capital at Oklahoma City. Guthrie fought hard and endeavored to form a combination of its own to retain the capital at that point, but the first combination was too strong for it and the Oklahoma City bill passed in both houses by a good majority. Guthrie took Oklahoma City up into a high mountain and offered it anything and everything if it would give up its aspirations for the capital; offering to join with them and locate both the university and A. and M. college at Oklahoma City, but the Oklahoma City group stood firm, declaring it was the capital or nothing. Some of the Oklahoma City members were somewhat inclined to take the offer, but Henry Overholser, who was the Master Mind of the Oklahoma City group and their organized leader, said emphatically: "No; we've made the agreement with the Payne and Cleveland county delegations to locate the A. and M. college at Stillwater and the university at Norman in return for their support of our bill, and we will
Bidding for the University
(Continued from page 264)
not betray them. Rather will we go down in defeat." Henry was a dead game sport.

The Oklahoma City capital bill was passed, only to meet with a veto from Governor Steele, and the combination could not rally sufficient votes to pass it over the veto. The university bill was introduced by Senator Bixler in the council and Representative Waggoner in the house and passed almost unanimously in both houses. The combination then passed the Kingfisher capital bill, only to be vetoed by the governor. However, he signed both the university and A. and M. measures. Thus Norman and Stillwater were the only two members of the combination that got anything out of it, although in the shuffle, Edmond did secure the state normal college.

The provisions of the bill locating the university at Norman was that forty acres within half a mile of the center of the city was to be given as a campus, and that Cleveland county was to vote $10,000 in bonds to assist in erecting the first building. The provisions for the A. and M. college were practically the same. There was considerable rivalry between the east side and west side of Norman for the location, but so many claims joining the city were contested that it was difficult to pick out a suitable forty acres that could be deeded. Finally the regents decided upon forty acres in the southwest part of town belonging to S. M. Moore, being in section 31, township 9, range 2 west. As I remember it, part of this land was donated by Mr. Moore and the citizens of Norman raised some $2,000 to pay for the balance. At that time the land was completely raw prairie, with very few houses south of Main street. Shortly after the site had been secured, T. R. Waggoner and D. L. Larsh each laid out additions to the town of Norman adjoining the university site, with the lots thereon selling quite rapidly, but at prices that would appear ridiculous in this day and age.

Quite an intensive campaign was necessary to carry the $10,000 bond proposition, but it was finally successful by a good majority. There were 1,288 votes cast, of which there was 341 majority for the bonds. However, the bill locating the university at Norman required that the bonds should sell at par, and as the credit of Oklahoma and Oklahoma municipalities in the money centers was at that time considerably below par the citizens of Norman had to make up a deficiency of something like $2,000 before the provisions could be complied with.

This was in May, 1891, more than two years after the opening of the country, and some six months after the university had been located here. In the meanwhile the first board of regents had been appointed and had begun to function. This board was composed of J. M. Cannon of El Reno, Albert Taggert of Stillwater, L. G. Pittman of Oklahoma City, E. C. Trittof Kingfisher, and A. F. Pentecost of Guthrie. Later Albert Taggert resigned and John R. Clark of the same county (Payne) was appointed in his place. On March 29, 1892, this board let the contract for the main building of the university, C. H. Hollcraft of Topeka, Kansas, being the lowest and best bidder. His bid was $15,739-$11,000 to be paid in cash and the balance in territorial warrants. The Norman Transcript of April 2, 1892, goes into ecstasies over the letting and says:

"The building is to be three stories high with a basement the entire length of the building and will work at once. This will be by long odds the largest public structure in all Oklahoma and we will soon see it going skyward.

"Reflect for a moment," it says, "what $15,739 in one building alone will mean for Norman and then add to this the hundreds of dollars that will be spent in Norman for homes as a result. Please take a few links out of the length of your face and be happy."

And then on Thursday, April 13 of that year, work was actually begun, survey made and foundation excavation commenced. As I remember this building stood just west of what is now the chemistry building. When completed it was really a very handsome building-I used to think a prettier building than any we now have on the campus, but that may be just my idea. Certainly it could not have been a more handsome building than many we now have. But, all the same, it was a fine building.

But all sorts of trials and tribulations seemed to accompany the erection of the building. There was trouble with the contractors, trouble with the finances, trouble with dissensions concerning the material to be used, trouble with the workers, and delays innumerable arranging these troubles so that it was not until September 6, 1893, that the building was ready for occupancy, and the people of Norman and the students made a gala day of that occasion.
what a heart-breaking task it was to bring the public to a realization of what the university stood for and had to offer, and how important it was that the young people of the territory secure a university education.

Geology, Oklahoma's Leviathan  
(Continued from page 254)

survey organizations attracted a number of the earlier graduates in geology and furnished an excellent post graduate school which enabled such men as R. H. Wood, E. Z. Carpenter, L. E. Trout, J. B. Newby, Frank Buttram, Frank Herald, John Herald, R. A. Conkling, Fritz Aurin, C. T. Kirk, B. C. Belt, E. DeGolyer, and a host of others to assume prominent places in the profession of petroleum geology a few years later.

In 1918 the legislature recognized the growing importance of geology and appropriated money for a building to house the department of geology and the Oklahoma Geological survey. This building was outgrown before it was occupied since the number of major students in geology increased with the growing importance of Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas as oil producing states.

For the past two years registration in the beginning courses in geology has been limited to the number the department could handle in the two laboratories available for these classes. The school of geology has a threefold duty to the university as a whole and to the citizens of the state. First the training of young men and women who will aid in the discovery and development not only of oil and gas, but of coal, lead, zine, salt, cement, building stones, water resources and in fact all of the valuable earth materials with which Oklahoma is so richly endowed.

The value of the mineral resources of Oklahoma each year is practically equivalent to the value of all the farm products of the state. In 1928 the value of farm products was $541,236,000 and the value of mineral products totalled $491,400,000. Should not a reasonable amount be provided to train the young citizens of the state to maintain and develop this source of income?

Another function of the school of geology is to further the knowledge of the science through research work carried on by faculty and graduate students. Certain types of research work can be carried on only at universities where adequate laboratory equipment is available.

A third duty is to the large number of young people who do not expect to follow the profession of geology but desire an understanding of the subject to fit them to live in a state which ranks second among the states of the union in mineral wealth.

Instruction is given in a total of sixty courses by the following men:

Dr. V. E. Monnett, director of school of geology and of school of geological engineering, instructor in structural and petroleum geology; Dr. C. E. Decker, head of sub-department of paleontology, instructor in macro-paleontology; Dr. S. Weidman, professor of geology, instructor in petrography; Dr. A. J. Williams, professor of geology, instructor in physiography and general geology; Dr. G. E. Anderson, professor of geology, instructor in sedimentation and economic geology.

Dr. F. A. Melton, associate professor of geology, instructor in stratigraphy; Dr. C. A. Merritt, assistant professor of geology, instructor in mineralogy and petrology; O. F. Evans, assistant professor of geology, instructor in meteorology; C. J. Bollinger, head of the sub-department of geography and instructor in geography; C. W. Thornthwaite, assistant professor of geology, instructor in geography; H. A. Ireland, instructor in general geology; D. T. Cornwall, instructor in general geology; and R. W. Harris, instructor in micro-paleontology.

The legislature is being asked to provide for geology, geological engineering, and petroleum engineering as follows: a $250,000 geological engineering and petroleum engineering building to contain laboratories and class rooms for the technical courses of each subject; a $100,000 addition to the present geology building to take care of the needs in general geology, geography, meteorology, and the more elementary courses.

At the present rate of growth these buildings will be barely sufficient to meet the actual requirements of those students who wish instruction in these subjects. Many other state universities already are devoting more than this amount of space to geology alone.

Jewelry played a magnificent role in the lives of the romantic ancients of Europe. They decked themselves and their steeds with beautiful ornaments and stones.

Altho we have donned the short skirts of the time and no longer blush at using a slang word, we do not find it advisable to abandon the ancient custom of wearing rings and pins.

Thus jewelry continues to play the magnificent role of old.

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