

000000
K581E
20p-2

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE T. B. FERGUSON FAMILY IN OKLAHOMA JOURNALISM

A THESIS

APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

THE T. B. FERGUSON FAMILY IN OKLAHOMA JOURNALISM

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

BY

H. Herfert

Gayette Copeland

BY

Clyde R. King

CLYDE RICHARD KING

Norman, Oklahoma

1949

378.76
OkO
K581t
cop. 2

THE T. B. FERGUSON FAMILY IN OKLAHOMA JOURNALISM

A THESIS

APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

To Dr. Fayette B. ... Director of the School of Journalism, University of Oklahoma, Dr. H. E. Herbert, David Ross Boyd professor of Journalism, and Dr. John R. Wheeler, associate professor of Journalism, the author is deeply indebted. Through their guidance, counsel, and advice, many of the rough spots of this work have been smoothed.

For their voluntary help at a time their attentions were absorbed by numerous other demands, the writer expresses a most sincere appreciation.

BY

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted signature]

GENERAL

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To Dr. Fayette Copeland, director of the School of Journalism, University of Oklahoma; Mr. H. H. Herbert, David Ross Boyd professor of journalism, and Dr. John R. Whitaker, associate professor of journalism, the author is deeply indebted. Through their guidance, counsel, and advice, many of the rough spots of this work have been sanded.

For their valuable help at a time their attentions were absorbed by numerous other demands, the writer expresses a most sincere appreciation.

V. TOM SHARTEL (TRAD) FERGUSON	120
VI. LOONIS BENTON FERGUSON	123
BIBLIOGRAPHY	127

GENEVI

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD . . . her husband and members of the family have	
Chapter the building of Oklahoma and of Sooner journalism:	
I. THOMPSON BENTON FERGUSON . . . future . . . we are no longer here to speak for ourselves, when the corner stone of His Life . . . and passed in review, some kindly one will Name Calling in the Republican editors there must have The Press and T. B. Ferguson's Appointment There was Newspaper Criticism of the Administration Management of the Republican, 1901-1906 At Ferguson's Place in the Fourth Estate . . . has been	
II. ELVA U. SHARTEL FERGUSON . . . 1882 . . . and . . . as 80	
III. WALTER SCOTT FERGUSON . . . 1883 . . . and . . . as 90	
IV. LUCIA CAROLINE LOOMIS FERGUSON . . . received . . . as 108	
V. TOM SHARTEL (TRAD) FERGUSON . . . 1884 . . . Oklahoma 120	
VI. LOOMIS BENTON FERGUSON . . . newspaper in Okla 123	
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . another . . . under the influence of 127	
Fergusons.	

It was through Mrs. Walter Ferguson that recognition of this influence became nationwide. Her son, Benton, has been active in the journalistic endeavors of other states.

For the past nine months, since the writer began research on this family and its unique place in the history of the Sooner state, he has lived through the history of Oklahoma. He came, through study, in a covered wagon with

The Fergusons and settled at Watonga in 1892. The author
moved with them to Guthrie when President Theodore Roosevelt
appointed Thompson B. Ferguson governor of the territory.

FOREWORD

The words of Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson best describe the
role that she, her husband and members of the family have
had in the building of Oklahoma and of Sooner journalism:

Some day in the dim uncertain future when we are
no longer here to speak for ourselves, when the corner
stone shall be opened and passed in review, some kindly
one will say, "What a crowd of pioneer editors there
must have been and what wonders they accomplished.
There were state builders."

At least one member of the Ferguson family has been
active in Oklahoma's fourth estate since 1892, and as many
as five have worked on papers at one time. The Watonga
Republican and the Cherokee Republican received more color
from the family than any other newspapers in Oklahoma; that
is only natural. But nearly every newspaper in Oklahoma
has in one way or another been under the influence of the
Fergusons.

It was through Mrs. Walter Ferguson that recognition
of this influence became nationwide. Her son, Benton, has
been active in the journalistic endeavors of other states.

For the past nine months, since the writer began
research on this family and its unique place in the history
of the Sooner state, he has lived through the history of
Oklahoma. He came, through study, in a covered wagon with

the Fergusons and settled at Watonga in 1892. The author moved with them to Guthrie when President Theodore Roosevelt appointed Thompson B. Ferguson governor of the territory. He has felt with Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson the pain of newspaper criticism, and has rejoiced with them at praise from the press.

Through the pages of old papers, the writer has been a staff member on the Cherokee Republican and has gone on to the Scripps-Howard chain.

Throughout this research the author has been impressed by each member of the Ferguson family. The Fergusons were pioneers; they were journalists; but, most important of all, they were builders of Oklahoma.

Norman, Oklahoma
May 7, 1949

Clyde Richard King

2

attacked by Indians, he received a blow on the shoulder from a war club. He did not fully recover from this wound.¹ Thompson B. Ferguson attended public schools of Chautauque County, Kansas. At the State Normal School at Emporia, he became a preacher of the Methodist Church, then taught school several years.² He

THOMPSON BENTON FERGUSON

¹Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson, November 25, 1903.

His Life

Born near Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa, on March 17, 1857, Thompson B. Ferguson was the son of Abner and Hannah Ferguson. His father was a farmer who boasted of highland Scotch ancestry and was a member of the Maryland branch of the family. When Thompson was one year old, he removed with his family to Emporia, Kansas, where the family resided until 1867, when another move took it to Labette County. From 1870 to 1892 the Fergusons made their home in Chautauque County.

Thompson B. Ferguson's father was a member of Company M, 16th Kansas Volunteers, in the Union army during the Civil War. He was connected with this group at Fort Leavenworth, but the organization was later attached to the 16th Cavalry of Kansas as Company M. The elder Ferguson served during the entire campaign against the Indians in the Yellowstone country and also in battles along Powder River. As a member of the advance guard, which was

attacked by Indians, he received a blow on the shoulder from a war club. He did not fully recover from this wound.¹

Thompson B. Ferguson attended public schools of Chautauqua County, and following a college career at Kansas State Normal School at Emporia, he became a preacher of the Methodist Church, then taught school several years.² He

¹Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson, November 25, 1903.

²Writers on Ferguson's life have given different versions of his early adventures as a Methodist preacher. In his thesis, Territorial Governors, C. C. Parkhurst states that Ferguson "... was a Methodist for a time with regular work in Chautauqua County, Kansas." An article in the Kingfisher Free-Press of December 12, 1901, reported that the editor of the Watonga Republican was a minister of Methodist faith, and Luther B. Hill, author of A History of Oklahoma, wrote that Thompson B. Ferguson was "...not affiliated with any church." Writing in the Daily Oklahoman, April 9, 1922, C. M. Sarchet commented that Ferguson was known "...as a man of Christian character who has been at least a lay Methodist preacher up in Kansas as well as a school teacher."

When the Guthrie Leader was attacking the governor-appointee, December 2, 1901, that publication carried a story about Ferguson. "Years ago his congregation forced him out of the pulpit because he got mad at a bird dog and kicked it to death."

Whether Ferguson preached before entering school or after leaving school is another matter of difference among historians. An article carried in the Oklahoma City Times and reprinted in the Watonga Republican declared that "... he preached frequently in old days in Chautauqua County, Kansas, but he gave up preaching for a newspaper career." His obituary story in the Watonga Republican disclosed that Ferguson had a "short career as a Methodist minister" before going to Chautauqua, Kansas. The Kingfisher Free-Press story, dated December 12, 1901, remarked that the new governor of the Oklahoma Territory left the work of preaching to "attend the Kansas State Normal from which he engaged in school teaching."

was married to Elva U. Shartel at Wauneta, Kansas, June 9, 1885. At this time he was editing the Sedan (Kansas) Republican, a position he held two years.

In 1889 Ferguson made the "run" into Oklahoma from Kansas. On April 22, 1889, he settled on a claim approximately eight miles from the present location of the Huckins Hotel, Oklahoma City. This claim he sold the same year. Two years later the pioneer publisher entered the Sac and Fox country and staked a claim on some town lots in Chandler. His description of his holdings in this town of hills has been called one of the most humorous articles he ever wrote. He referred to this land as his "up-and-down" lots.³

Ferguson's adventure into Oklahoma Territory in April, 1889, is described by his wife in Oklahoma, the Beautiful Land:

When my husband started in a covered wagon early in April, 1889, for the opening of Oklahoma Territory, I was sure that I would never see him again. It seemed fraught with so many dangers, outlaws, Indians, no roads, scarcity of water and in my imagination many other dangers. He was accompanied by two other men of that community in southeastern Kansas. The daily papers had greeted the opening as the opportunity of a lifetime for those who desired land and homes in the "new country." They were to camp out along the way and I spent the day before their departure cooking food to last them as long as possible.

They went through the Osage country headed for the Kickapoo reservation joining the eastern boundary of the land to be opened for settlement. They made camp at a point east of what was later Oklahoma County and on April 22nd made the run on horseback following the

³ Sooner State Press, February 19, 1921, p.1.

Deep Fork Creek. About seven miles from Oklahoma City, my husband staked a claim. Then came days of waiting in line at the Land Office in Guthrie to file upon the land.

Upon his return home we immediately prepared to go to the territory and make settlement upon the claim. With three-year-old Walter we traveled in a covered wagon camping out at night, keeping a close watch over our horses, as horse thieves were plentiful through the unsettled country which we passed. On reaching the claim we made camp under a large tree in this beautiful valley. There were oak trees suitable for building and my husband set about building a log cabin.⁴

A month after the cabin was built, the claim was sold, and the Fergusons returned to Kansas. Mrs. Ferguson says in her book that the offer made for the land was one they could not, for financial reasons, reject. Once again in Sedan, Thompson B. Ferguson edited the newspaper, but he was determined to make a home in the Oklahoma Territory. His ambition was to be realized in April, 1892, when he made the trip to the Cheyenne and Arapaho territory. His family did not go to Watonga until November of that year. A description of their trip is contained in They Carried the Torch:

It was an exciting experience, that of unpacking and setting in motion the small printing outfit from the wagon in which it was hauled overland from Sedan, Kansas. The Washington hand press had been sent by freight to Kingfisher, the nearest railroad point, to be brought to Watonga in the wagon. This process took two days because the road thirty-two miles between these two points was scarcely more than a trail through the sand. An unpainted wooden building, which had been hurriedly erected during the first few weeks of the town's existence and which had been used as a hotel, had been rented for ten dollars per month for a printing office

⁴Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson, "An Eighty-Niner and Ninety-Twoer Speaks," Oklahoma, the Beautiful Land (Oklahoma City, 1943), p. 135.

and also living quarters for the family. The largest room, containing the best light, chosen for an office, and the other three rooms served as a home.

En route to the new location, we had stopped in Wichita, adding a few necessary articles to the equipment, also a bundle of ready prints for the first number of the paper. The type had been left in the cases. Sheets of heavy cardboard were carefully nailed over the top to keep the type from jolting out and becoming mixed. After each case had been made secure, they were stacked one together, then placed in the bottom of the wagon bed. The case racks had been knocked down for economy in packing space. The hand job press was crated and miscellaneous articles of equipment in boxes and bundles were carefully packed into the covered wagon to which was hitched a team of strong, young horses for the long trip across the new territory, from southeastern Kansas. Long it seemed then with no roads across the territory and with horses

A light wagon with bedding and camp equipment was driven by myself. I held a young baby on my lap and a small boy rode by my side. After nightfall we drove into the little new town of Watonga through a muddy street. The town was brilliantly lighted from the open doors of many saloons. Drunken revelry from these places made me shudder and I looked at the sleeping baby on my lap, and at the small boy on the seat by my side, resolving that I would not rear my boys in such a wild place and that I would start back to Kansas the next morning.⁵

The Ferguson family did not turn around the following morning and start back to Kansas. Instead they remained in Watonga and began unloading the printing equipment. Pioneering for Mrs. Ferguson did not end with the family's settling in the new village. On the contrary, the following day she again experienced the taste of locating in a new land:

Early the next morning while cooking breakfast with our camp outfit in the little kitchen, I was startled by a grunt of greeting, and there within a few feet was

⁵ Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch (Kansas City, Missouri, 1937), pp. 34-35.

a blanketed and painted Cheyenne Indian. I gave out a yell that brought my husband from his work in the printing office to my side. The Indian stalked off muttering to himself, "Ugh, white squaw heap 'fraid'." The Indian had heard of the new venture in journalism and was merely making a friendly call and later became one of our best Indian friends.⁶

W. L. Baldrige and Ferguson, co-publishers, ground off the first issue of the Watonga Republican on October 12, 1892. The party policies and goals of the new enterprise were described in a paragraph in this first edition:

We will in business matters endeavor to give our readers a paper which can be read and appreciated by all. In politics the paper will be uncompromisingly and aggressively Republican. We make but one promise and that is that the politics of this paper will never be questioned. We support the Republican party because it is the party of progress, truth and immortal history, the party of bravery, patriotism and justice.⁷

And the policy of the Watonga Republican as a party newspaper never deviated under Tom Ferguson's editorship.

The first issue of the new publication was still on the flat-bottom bed of the old army press when its first subscriber came into the new printing plant in Watonga. He was Evan Lewis, who exchanged a load of vegetables for the paper. The editor expressed his appreciation in these words:

Those cabbages and potatoes were mighty good that night for supper. Others followed, some with cord wood and some with farm truck and through the farmers of Blaine county the paper managed to issue regularly and the Watonga Republican enjoyed a healthy vegetable diet for the first few years.⁸

⁶Ibid., pp. 35-36

⁷Ibid., p. 36

⁸Watonga Republican, August 29, 1907.

Before the Watonga newspaper was six months old, it was brought into a libel suit by a local attorney. The article responsible for the libel case was written by Victor Payne for the Republican. First heard in the court of a Justice Steele, the case was later taken by change of venue to J. M. Rice of Winuview. The article causing the trouble was the following:

WILL THEY ACT? NO

After a long series of howling and gnashing of teeth, and lying unparalleled in the world's history, the saintly reformers have made their report. Grave charges have been made against several of the county officials. Now then, if these investigators have sifted matters, let them act and stop howling. They will do nothing of the kind. They claim that some of the county officials are thieves. As good citizens these investigators should use the law if what they claim is true. They will not do it. They know that their infamous charges against the present county officials have all been without foundation. They are afraid to let the matter be tested in court. They know that their charges would not be sustained and that their contemptible hypocrisy would be exposed. Now you are ready. If you are wrong you will bear the burden of your own folly. Strike while the metal is hot. If you fail to do your duty your folly shall stand recorded in the annals of Blaine county. We again remark that you are afraid to act and will not try to sustain your charges in the court. You will not do it.⁹

For this case John W. Shartel, brother to Mrs. Ferguson and a resident of Oklahoma City, went to the western settlement to act as attorney for his brother-in-law. The case was settled out of court.

Writing about the first libel case in "Looking

⁹Watonga Republican, January 11, 1893.

Backward," Ferguson said that the Republican passed some compliments on the investigating committee and the libel suit was ended. D. J. Martz, editor of the rival Rustler, was then involved in a criminal libel suit brought by Charles C. Shaw. The two editors considered joining to fight the suits, but Martz sent a candy bucket of iced lemonade to the grand jurors with his compliments, and the case against him was dropped.

When Frank McMaster, newspaperman of Oklahoma City, was being prosecuted by Judge Scott, who charged libel, the editor of the Republican wrote in an editorial:

The press all over the territory has but one verdict, that Burford is the best lawyer on the supreme bench and Judge Scott the most extensively hated man in Oklahoma.¹⁰

In the issue which followed, Ferguson continued his verbal lashing of Judge Scott:

Burke and Brown, editors of the Times Journal at Oklahoma City, were last week thrown into jail for contempt of court by Judge Scott. They were released by Probate Judge Stewart and recommitted by Scott. Their sentence was ten days in jail with a fine of two hundred and fifty dollars. Scott made himself odious to the people of Oklahoma by his vindictive retaliation upon his critics. He is a brainless coxcomb -- a bear greased, curly-haired Adonis for whom blind chance delved in the dark alleys of obscurity when she wished to throw him into prominence. He will retire from the bench despised, and will go back into that obscurity from which he so suddenly emerged, if not to be forgotten, to be remembered only with scorn and contempt.¹¹

¹⁰Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 84.

¹¹Ibid., p. 85

Ferguson assumed this contempt of court suit as a blow against the entire press of the territory. His opinion of the matter was published in the Republican of March 21, 1894:

When Judge Scott "pulled" the Times-Journal people for contempt of court recently, Judge Strang made the argument. He took occasion to libel the entire press of Oklahoma. Judge Strang has discovered that he thrust his nose into a bee-hive and the whole swarm is onto him. The press is a dangerous institution to attack, and Judge Strang is wiser now than he used to be. Should he ever run for office in Oklahoma, he will then appreciate the power of the press.¹²

Several months later Judge Scott left Oklahoma to return to his former home in New York.

Again the editor of the Watonga Republican struck verbal blows when Editor Brooks of the El Reno Republican was arrested on a charge of libel:

Editor Brooks, of El Reno Republican, last week was arrested on the charge of criminal libel. He had accused the commissioners of taking bribes in awarding the county printing. It would be a joke on the commissioners should Brooks prove the charges. We presume that he is losing no sleep over the affair. It is customary in this country when some whited sepulcher wants to carry on fraud, and the newspapers expose him, to bring a libel suit. Time always vindicates the newspaper.¹³

In 1893 the editor of the Republican launched open war upon lawlessness and vice in Blaine County. In his columns he accused saloons "of violating the laws and harboring criminals."¹⁴ His campaign was aimed, not at

¹²Watonga Republican, March 21, 1894.

¹³Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 85.

¹⁴Watonga Republican, March 7, 1894.

those "who sell liquor within the provisions of the law, but against any illegal work."¹⁵ He was waging war on the saloons when he received a load of paper from a near settlement. The publisher was unable to pay for the newsprint, and the liquor interests, believing that they might insure themselves against additional attack, made up the money to purchase the paper. Ferguson continued his crusade.¹⁶

While he waged war on vice in the frontier community, Ferguson did not overlook an opportunity to add humor to the columns of his paper by quoting an incident about the editor of the Arapahoe Bee. The happening was mentioned as a part of Ferguson's campaign for more subscriptions:

One of his subscribers gets drunk every little while and in that condition comes into the office and insists on paying a year's subscription. He is already paid up to 1926. We are ardent advocates of intemperance, but would like to introduce this brand of whisky into Watonga. The REPUBLICAN is published in the Dillon building, first door north of Peters' hotel ...¹⁷

As a result of Ferguson's drive against lawlessness and vice in Watonga and Blaine County, the office of the Republican was set on fire one night in February, 1894. The family was sleeping in the rear rooms of the building and did not awaken until the fire had made great headway. The

¹⁵ Watonga Republican, March 7, 1894.

¹⁶ Daily Oklahoman, February 15, 1921.

¹⁷ Watonga Republican, March 27, 1895.

fire almost resulted in the death of the entire group. A young man confessed that he had been paid \$10 and a quart of whisky by a saloon keeper to burn "that damned editor" who was making life unpleasant for saloon keepers. Before the confession was made, the editor scorched D. J. Martz, editor of the rival paper, the Watonga Rustler:

Until the Rustler came out last week no one ever dreamed of connecting the cowardly old ghost with the attempt to burn this office. But when that sheet appeared with its four or five contradictory statements in regard to it, and its apparent desire to direct suspicion from the right channel, the people commenced to think. After the fact was known that the ghost was on the street with some drunken fellows after mid-night, it looks as if there might be a motive for the Rustler's many contradictory statements last week. Of course the cowardly ghoul would not do it himself, but simply judging from the Rustler's manifest anxiety and many conflicting statements it certainly was posted.¹⁸

The Rustler had contained an article which explained that the Republican had become "so distasteful to the citizens of the country that some people from the country set fire to the pusillanimous outfit."¹⁹ Damage from the fire was repaired; "some new materials added and the plucky editor and his wife continued their war upon lawlessness."²⁰ This was the campaign which is credited with drawing Theodore Roosevelt's attention to the red-haired newspaper crusader. At the same time Ferguson was fighting lawlessness, describing frequent murders and

¹⁸Ibid., February 21, 1894.

¹⁹Ibid., February 21, 1894.

²⁰Grace E. Ray, Early Oklahoma Newspapers. (Norman, Oklahoma, 1928), unpublished volume, p. 184.

reporting the many raids of outlaws, he was describing the wonders of the new territory and inviting people to come to the "paradise of the prairies."²¹ As early as 1893 Ferguson's paper contained an article running across the entire top of the page. This story advertised Blaine County and the town of Watonga:

BLAINE COUNTY is unsurpassed in the fertility of her soil by any country in the great west. She has every advantage. Timber, water, and lands that will compare with the best. WATONGA, the county seat, is a town of destiny. Her location is such that gives assurance of at least two railroads at no distance future day. The Baptist Industrial school for both whites and Indians, will be built here this fall. WATONGA is destined to be the great central city of Oklahoma.²²

In following articles about the virtues of the new country Ferguson described Blaine County's "watermelon crops as big whales" and "corn bigger than sawlogs."²³ Of Blaine County Ferguson said:

She is a wonderful creature. Young and beautiful, "wears socks", rides a safety and likes to flirt with some of the counties in Oklahoma proper. She turns up her nose at the World Fair, shakes her petticoats at financial panics and is proud of her natural endowments. She has remarkably modest ways and everybody admires her veracity. Truly she is a wonderful creature. Let the world gaze upon her.²⁴

As late as 1901 Ferguson was still describing the beauties of this "sun-kissed Oklahoma,"²⁵ the "land of the fair God."²⁶

²¹Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p.87.

²²Watonga Republican, July 26, 1893.

²³Ibid., August 9, 1893.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., March 28, 1901.

²⁶Ibid.

Acting as chairman of the first Republican convention held in Blaine County in the fall of 1892, T. B. Ferguson was faced with the problems of naming the county. Factions of the party were deadlocked on Custer and Sheridan. A compromise was brought about by the convention leader, and the county was named in honor of James G. Blaine.²⁷

Ferguson took to pioneering again in 1893 when he made the run into the Cherokee strip and stopped at Pond Creek. He and his family had cut short a visit to Kansas in order to participate in the run. He waited at Caldwell for the opening day and began his run at that point:

Just before noon (September 16, 1893) my husband hitched the team to our covered wagon, loading our camp outfit and prepared everything for the start. I was to drive the team in the run. It was a most thrilling adventure for a young woman and two small children and not without an element of danger.

It was with relief that I found my husband at the end of the trail waiting for me when I reached Round Pond at sundown. He had staked a town lot upon which we camped that night. Water was scarce and we bought a bucket full, paying one dollar for it.²⁸

They remained long enough to erect a small house on lot number 32 in block number 47. The house was later stolen and moved after the family left Round Pond. The lot was sold for ten dollars.

²⁷Marjorie Bennett Everhart, A History of Blaine County, p. 87

²⁸Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, pp. 62-63.

After the Cherokee Strip experience the Ferguson family returned to Watonga, and Thompson B. took over the reins of the Republican again. During his absence the paper had been edited by W. L. Baldrige, who left Watonga later to work for the Sedan (Kansas) Times-Star. At this time the publication was put out with the assistance of only one printer, but the entire family co-operated in its production. By 1895 Ferguson was calling his paper the most quoted local paper in the territory. He wrote that quotations from his paper were found in other publications in Kansas and Missouri as well as Oklahoma. He proudly announced that on the subscription lists of the Republican were the names of Populists, Republicans, Democrats, and Prohibitionists:

Our columns are open for all news items and notices of political meetings will always be given space. It makes no difference -- Rep., Dem., Pop., Prohib., "Silverite," Gold bug" or any other party that wants to publish a notice in this aesthetic journal of commerce and religious weekly can do so by firing into our sanctum.²⁹

In the early days of Watonga and Blaine County, County Treasurer John H. Dillon learned of a plan being formed to rob his safe, which at paying time contained considerable cash. Dillon decided to distribute the money among his friends, so he took approximately \$2,400 to

²⁹Watonga Republican, March 20, 1895.

Ferguson for safekeeping. He remarked that no outlaw would consider looking in a printing plant for money. The Watonga Republican editor kept a trusty 45-75 model '75 Winchester rifle near at hand in the office.³⁰ Before the outlaws' plan was carried out, they were apprehended along Salt Creek. Making the attack were the United States marshal and members of the Anti-Horse Thief Association.

By 1897 the Republican had moved from the Noble Avenue location to a site on Main Street. The new office was a wooden structure fifty feet long which had been used as a feed store. The T. B. Ferguson family continued to live in the rear of the printing plant. The front office was also used to house the fourth-class post office, and Ferguson served as postmaster from 1897 until 1901, when he resigned because he believed that holding a federal position interfered with his activities in politics. The paper was issued on Wednesdays. Each edition contained four 16 x 22 pages, and subscriptions sold for \$1.00.

For a while the Watonga publisher offered a cloth-bound copy of his book, The Jayhawkers, and a year's subscription to the paper for \$2.00. His 415-page book, advertised as "a romance dealing with the social conditions of the early history of Kansas,"³¹ was selling at \$1.25 per cloth-bound volume and 75 cents for the paper-bound

³⁰Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to W.C. Rodeckar, Watonga, October 29, 1903.

³¹Watonga Republican, July 26, 1893.

edition. This book is credited with being the earliest fiction recorded in Oklahoma.³² It was printed by the State Capital Printing Company of Guthrie in 1892.

Ferguson reported in his news columns that Judge Tourgee said the book was "a historical fact dressed up in fiction's finest costumes."³³ Other current publications were offered as subscription companions for the Republican.

While Ferguson was serving as territorial chairman of the Republican party, it became necessary for him to go to the capital at Guthrie in the interests of Dennis T. Flynn's campaign for delegate to congress. While he was away, Ferguson left the management of the Republican in the hands of his wife. He had written articles for the first week or two of his absence, but he found later that sending them weekly was impracticable. So upon the shoulders of Mrs. Ferguson fell the task of writing editorials and managing the newspaper. With misgivings she took over the task:

If the Republican is not quite up to standard these days the people will please understand that during the absence of the senior editor, the work of editing and managing of the paper devolves entirely upon the junior editor who is somewhat of an amateur in editorial writing.³⁴

Later she remarked that the paper did not suffer along the

³²Mary Hays Marable and Elaine Boylan, A Handbook of Oklahoma Writers, (Norman, Oklahoma, 1939), p. 3.

³³Watonga Republican, August 2, 1893.

³⁴Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 104

political and editorial lines and that it lived up to its usual standards.³⁵

After the death of President William McKinley, charges were pressed against Territorial Governor William M. Jenkins, who had been in office only seven months. Theodore Roosevelt, after assuming the presidential duties, called a delegation of Oklahoma citizens to the White House for a consultation regarding the governorship. Among the delegates were Flynn, delegate to Congress; Horace Speed, United States district attorney, and William Grimes, territorial secretary and former newspaperman in Nebraska. Roosevelt wished to appoint Zach Mulhall, Oklahoma rancher and Wild West showman, but he ran into difficulties because Mulhall's residence at the time was St. Louis, where the cattleman was preparing his exposition for the World's Fair. He was, therefore, considered an "outsider," so the chief executive asked for suggestions.³⁶ He rejected several nominations, then asked if there were not one honest man in the entire territory, one who had the nerve and backbone needed to make a successful administrator. The name of the red-haired editor of the Watonga Republican was proposed.

When Ferguson was agreed upon, the President sent a telegram to him at Watonga notifying the newspaperman to

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶C. C. Parkhurst, Territorial Governors (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of Oklahoma, 1926), p. 41.

come to Washington immediately. At the time the telegram arrived, Ferguson was working at the Vanguard office in Hitchcock, a branch publication established in November of that year. Mrs. Ferguson received the message, and, deciding that she wanted her husband to accept the office, she wired Roosevelt that Thompson B. Ferguson would accept the office and that he would leave immediately for the District of Columbia. When the editor himself learned of the action, he refused the nomination. His wife was adamant. He boarded the next train for the nation's capital and returned in a few days with the commission making him the sixth territorial governor of Oklahoma. Only slight mention of his appointment was made in the Republican. A short filler item on page one stated that the senior editor of that paper had received from President Roosevelt a commission which made him governor of the territory. Another short item announced that the Ferguson family was moving to Guthrie.

In connection with his appointment, Ferguson once wrote:

When I visited President Roosevelt in Washington, he told me that I owed my appointment to no man in Oklahoma, that I was under obligation to no politician or any class of politicians; that the appointment had been on his own motion for reasons best known to himself; and that he expected me to keep my administration free from the influence of politicians. This I have attempted to do.³⁷

³⁷Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to A. H. Boles, Perry, July 30, 1903. Republican, December 7, 1905.

When Ferguson, who was 40 years of age at the time, left Watonga for Guthrie to assume the duties of governor, he left a Republican office which had discarded its Washington hand press and had installed a new hand power press, later replaced by a gasoline engine. The Washington press had been carried to Hitchcock, where it was utilized until that publication was abandoned. The Fergusons had built a new home and had moved the post office from the printing plant, thus leaving the entire building for job work and for printing of the Republican. Before leaving for the capital city, Ferguson voiced the rising demand for statehood. On December 4, 1901, the day Congress met, the governor-appointee attached a new motto to his newspaper. "Statehood for Oklahoma now, with Indian Territory as soon as she gets her clothes on," he advocated. As late as 1905 the Republican carried articles discussing Ferguson's appointment. On December 7 of that year, a story was printed to deny the rumor that Bird McGuire, delegate to Congress had been responsible for the appointment of the senior editor. The story states that McGuire knew nothing about the existence of a vacancy until the name of the new governor had been announced. Ferguson, himself, did not know that the vacancy existed until shortly before his appointment was disclosed.³⁸

³⁸Watonga Republican, December 7, 1905.

Ferguson carried to the capital qualifications which make for a good governor. He had lived through the trials of the people he was to serve, and he fully understood their problems. He was patient, but he could be firm. He had already fought every political question in the columns of his newspaper. Through his writing, he had let people know his stands on every contemporary political question. With him went a better acquaintance with Oklahoma affairs and a more profound sympathy with his people than probably any man in the territory at that time possessed.

In his political career, Ferguson had served as a member of Blaine County's first election board, chairman of the Republican territorial committee, and postmaster. From January 16, 1895, until June, 1899, he had served as a director on the first board of the Oklahoma Historical Society. He had been an enthusiastic participant in the meeting of the Republican State League, held in El Reno in June, 1896. He had taken a prominent role in the non-political free homes and statehood meeting in Kingfisher in January, 1897.

Ferguson took the oath of office, administered by Chief Justice J. H. Burford, in the district court room on December 9, 1901. He had expressed a desire against inaugural ceremonies and had asked to be sworn in before

only those persons who wished to attend. Immediately after he had taken the oath, Ferguson went to the chief executive's office to assume his gubernatorial duties.

Ferguson's influence while governor of the territory will be discussed in another section of this chapter.

As Governor Ferguson's term approached an end, it became obvious that he would not be reappointed.³⁹ He was considered one of the most outstanding executives of the Sooner land, but pressure was brought on President Roosevelt in favor of Frank Frantz, one of the president's Rough Rider buddies. The appointment of Frantz was announced January 5, 1906. The notice of this appointment was treated by the Republican with the same lack of heraldry which had accompanied the news item of Ferguson's selection in 1901:

Capt. Frank Frantz, formerly postmaster at Enid, and now Osage Indian agent, has been appointed by President Roosevelt as governor of Oklahoma to succeed Governor Ferguson at the expiration of the latter's term on January 13th next.

Ferguson, who had been named governor on December 1, 1901, had served a month over the regular period of administration, thus giving him the distinction of having served six weeks longer than any other Oklahoma chief executive. Ferguson's reappointment had been advocated by Ethan Allen Hitchcock, secretary of the interior, who declared that under Ferguson's

³⁹C. C. Parkhurst, Territorial Governors, p. 45.

administration the Oklahoma Territory had caused his office little concern.

When Ferguson stepped down from office, he received tempting offers to enter the daily newspaper field; these he rejected and returned to the editor's chair in the Watonga Republican office. And there he remained as a power with his pen in territorial and state affairs for many years.⁴⁰

Shortly after Ferguson returned to Watonga stories were circulated that he was being considered as a candidate for Congress from the second district. To answer these rumors, the editor wrote January 25, 1906:

The amusing stories going the rounds of the Territorial press to the effect that the editor of this paper is a candidate for the nomination for congress....there is more money and more fun in running a newspaper. Let those who want to do so, run for congress, but the newspaper business beats it.⁴¹

In 1907 Ferguson was the Blaine County nominee for congress in the Republican primary. His candidacy was fought in the Democratic papers of the state with cartoons showing the editor as the "Carpetbag Governor of Oklahoma." Stories circulated by the Democratic press also emphasized the carpetbag angle. To answer these charges against the former governor, the Wichita Eagle carried an editorial:

⁴⁰C. C. Parkhurst, Territorial Governors, p. 44.

⁴¹Watonga Republican, January 25, 1906.

The only charge ever preferred against Governor Ferguson was by his own political party friends that he was not enough of a partisan. He was for Oklahoma and her people first and his party next. Thousands of people all over Oklahoma know this, and there is nothing surprising in the reports of some of the second district papers that the Republican nominee for congress will poll a good deal more than his party vote....⁴²

Up to his April 28, 1910, issue of the Republican, Ferguson had denied the rumor that he would enter the race. In that edition of his paper he ran a two-column cut of himself with the statement that he sought the Republican nomination. His candidacy was endorsed by the Blaine County Republican organization with a three-column boxed story on page one. The issue which rolled off the press July 7, 1910, contained two full inside pages discussing Ferguson and the Republican platform. Ferguson did not win the nomination in the primary; he threw his editorial support to J. W. McNeal, Guthrie, who had defeated him.

Elmer Fulton won the campaign for the congressional seat, but the campaign offered the editor an opportunity to discuss in writing the progress of his paper, his party and his country. A double-column editorial on the subject was printed August 29, 1907, to become one of the first two-column articles to appear in the Republican:

The first issue of that paper was on the flat bottom of the old army press when good old honest Evan Lewis came in with a load of vegetables and left a quantity in payment for the first subscription to the paper.

⁴²Ibid ., September 12, 1907.

These cabbages and potatoes were mighty good that night for supper. Others followed, some with cord wood and some with farm truck and through the farmers of Blaine county the paper managed to issue regularly and the Watonga Republican enjoyed a healthy vegetable diet for the first few years. The paper is still the paper of Blaine county and is a long accustomed visitor in many homes. The same family lives off the earnings and up-to-date it has never missed issuing regularly the Watonga Republican under the same editorial head that it did the day of its first issue. It has grown up with the "short grass" country with faith and confidence in the citizenship as much larger asset than any other that it even now possesses.

The Watonga Republican has, year in and year out, protested that Blaine county and western Oklahoma was the real location of the garden of Eden and ever and anon in the past it has hurled flaming phillipics against the board of county commissioners demanding that they "paint the court house." We came here to stay and our location will always be on the corner of Main street and Weigle avenue in the city of Watonga which is about the best place we know of, being possessed, of a desire to be among the good people of the earth.

Step by step we have watched the little village of Watonga grow into a prosperous, thriving city of substantial business houses and beautiful homes. We feel a pardonable pride in it all because so many of the best years of our lives have been spent in watching the growth and adding our mite thereto.

In the April 28, 1910, issue of the Republican, Ferguson announced his candidacy for governor, and his July 7 issue that year contained two full pages devoted to his race and to the platform of the Republican party. He lost the race to Lee Cruce, who appointed him head of the State Election Board.

By 1912 the Republican plant was housed in a new brick building and a linotype had been installed.

Governor Ferguson, as chief executive and as a

Mr. Tom B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 71

newspaperman, held high interest in press organizations in Oklahoma. At the June 25, 1905, meeting of the Oklahoma Territory Press Association, Ferguson was named a delegate to the National Editorial Association convention in Guthrie. For this meeting all editors of the territory served as hosts. When the annual meeting of the Oklahoma Press Association was held in Muskogee, May 24, 1912, Ferguson was called upon to make the response to the welcome addresses, which had been given by Major Perry Miller and Colonel Clarence E. Douglas. The Watonga Republican editor requested that his son, Walter, then editor and publisher of the Cherokee Republican, speak instead. In the session that afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. T. B. Ferguson were given special recognition as pioneer editors of Oklahoma.

Late in 1895 the Watonga Republican editorial page gave mention to the press group's meeting:

When the brethren of the Press Association meet next year, they should avoid the midway plaisance business. Beer and revelry have no place in an editorial meeting. The people expect about as much dignity and sobriety in an editorial association as they do in a conference of ministers. Why not? The Oklahoma press represents the best thought of Oklahoma, and the brethren at their public meetings should maintain the dignity of the profession.⁴³

In 1906 the Republican backed Frank H. Greer, Guthrie editor, for president of the National Editorial Association.

Ferguson was well known as a historian. His series

⁴³Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p.71

of sketches of "Men of the Border" appeared in the Republican in 1920. Among personalities included in these articles were "Davy" Crockett, General W. H. Emory, "Deaf" Smith, Colonel Henry Inman, Colonel John Covington, General George B. McClellan and General Zachary Taylor. These stories were printed on the first page of issues of the Watonga Republican, and on December 30, 1920, Ferguson announced the beginning of a series on "Men of Oklahoma." His death brought to an end this series of historical description in which the writer discussed "from an intimate, personal point of view, many events of early day history."⁴⁴ Sketches of A. J. Seay, George W. Steele, Dennis T. Flynn and David A. Harvey had been completed and had been published in the Republican. The column head for the series appeared in the February 3, 1921, issue over the note that the author was in Oklahoma City for medical treatment.

Ferguson's interest in history was responsible for his column, "Looking Backward," in which he discussed the history of Watonga, Blaine County, and the Republican.

Of Ferguson as a news source and as a historian, C. M. Sarchet, then editor of the Guthrie Daily State Capital, wrote:

It is doubtful if any man who ever occupied the gubernatorial chair who was such a good source of news as Tom Ferguson, and this goes both during territorial days and since statehood. He was the

⁴⁴Daily Oklahoman, April 9, 1922.

constant delight of the press bunch. Ferguson was a historian of considerable repute; his articles on Coronado and the fabled city of Quivira as well as numerous others on the southwest were well written, containing all the human interest that would be imaginable, and he talked about all these things with the correspondents, laying the bars completely down.⁴⁴

On the brink of political recognition and at the peak of his prominence, Ferguson died February 14, 1921, in an Oklahoma City hospital. His death was hastened by grief over the passing of his son, Tom Shartel. The body of the former governor lay in state until February 16, and the legislature was adjourned in his memory. Ferguson was buried in the small cemetery in Watonga. These arrangements were in accord with wishes he had expressed. Funeral services were conducted in the house of representatives chamber. S. P. Freeling, attorney general, paid tribute to the editor, journalist, historian, governor, and author:

Let it be said to the honor and glory of Governor Ferguson that now, at the end of the trail, at the close of his editorial career, his bitterest partisan opponent cannot place his finger upon one untruthful statement nor one unworthy use of the great power, placed in his hands.

No writer has given to the world a better understanding of the explorations of Coronado, the early Spanish explorer who crossed Oklahoma in the sixteenth century looking for the fabled city of Quivira, than has Tom Ferguson. His historical writings of "No Man's Land" and the "Territory of the Cimarron" and articles covering early-days in Cheyenne-Arapaho country were ever accepted as authority. He was ever ready to help the reporter or newspaper correspondent, and his personal knowledge of things that had happened in Oklahoma made his interviews and stories well worth

⁴⁴Daily Oklahoman, April 9, 1922. 1921, p. 1.

⁴⁷Watonga Republican, October 11, 1917.

while. However, he never sought personal publicity.⁴⁵

In tribute to the late publisher of the Watonga Republican, the Sooner State Press quoted the following editorial from the Oklahoma News, Oklahoma City:

The passing of T. B. Ferguson takes from Oklahoma one of the really great characters in her history.

While he was great he was always humble. Power meant to him not something to be personally desired, but only the added weight of responsibility.

He was called from the newspaper office to the governor's chair; he served and he went back to the newspaper office; and never was there the slightest hint of those things that so often characterize the regime of public officials -- political trickery, graft and ostentation.

That is an old saying that a public office is a public trust. Too rarely it is actually that. But with T. B. it was, in every sense of the word.

Probably no chief executive in any state or any nation possessed more completely the confidence of the public than did Governor Ferguson. To him 100 per cent honesty was always attributed, even by those who were his political opponents:

The public schools of this state in the generations that are to come may well select the life of T. B. Ferguson as an example of what a high official should be.

--The Referee, Oklahoma News⁴⁶

Walter Ferguson, editor of the Cherokee Republican at the time, had another tribute to pay his father. He wrote the following:

I am not unknown as the editor of the paper I own but the proudest thing I own is that I am a son of the Watonga Republican.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Sooner State Press, February 19, 1921, p. 1.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁷Watonga Republican, October 11, 1917.

Name Calling in the Republican

The Watonga Republican was established in Blaine County when four members of the Republican party decided that the town's only newspaper, the Watonga Rustler, needed competition. These four men persuaded Thompson B. Ferguson to leave the newspaper office in Sedan, Kansas, to establish a party organ in the pioneer village. They offered to pay the cost of transportation for the establishment of the publication. The Rustler had originally been established as a Republican paper, but it had weakened in its cause and had turned to the support of Democratic and Populist candidates.⁴⁸ Established by D. W. Martz, the Rustler grew under the editorship of Dennis J. Martz.

With the Republican founded as a competitor to the Rustler, it was only natural that Martz and Ferguson should take opposite points of view on every question that was treated in their newspapers. And to bolster this rivalry, both editors resorted to calling each other names and to making colorful insinuations.

One of the first of these degradations appeared in the August 16, 1893, issue of the Republican. In this article the editor described a speech which had been made by Martz:

⁴⁸Carolyn Thomas Foreman, Oklahoma Imprints, (Norman, Oklahoma, 1936), p. 49.

D. J. Martz hailed this as a golden opportunity to "spread himself." Martz proceeded to exhibit his genius as an oratorical curiosity. No sooner had he "popped up" than he began to carve some scallops on the balmy air. He reared, plunged, snorted, thrust his paws into the atmosphere, stamped wildly about, "slobbered" all over himself and in diverse ways made a magnificent jackass out of himself. He finally retired on his tin ear and sat down all over himself.

The following month, Ferguson suggested to his rival, "Why don't you try soaking your head in swill?"⁴⁹

Throughout the verbal bout which followed, the editor of the Rustler referred to the Republican as the "boodle sheet," and Ferguson revealed his contempt for his rival with his reference to that publication as "the Kunnel's Hoss Bill." Ferguson once reported that no person had ever made as much progress in Blaine County as had the editor of the Rustler. "He came here upon the invitation of one person (himself) and leaves with the unanimous consent of the entire community" he wrote when Martz took part in the Cherokee strip opening.⁵⁰ Of this event, the red-haired editor also wrote:

Poor old Martz. He is no good. His genius is not appreciated. Everybody will unite in welcoming the day of his departure, and everybody will wish him "God-speed" in the strip. We wish him no ill. We hope that should he have the opportunity to do so he will establish at Perry or anywhere else outside of Blaine county and not repeat his folly.⁵¹

⁴⁹Watonga Republican, September 20, 1893.

⁵⁰Ibid., September 27, 1893.

⁵¹Ibid., October 4, 1893.

Readers of the Republican were kept informed of the progress made by "Blaine county's worst enemy"⁵² in his activities in the opening of the Cherokee country:

...the delectable individual who, for a year past, has edited the Watonga Rustler and been a thorn in the sides of the people of that county and a drawback to the county in every conceivable way, has left that city and located in a claim near Perry.⁵³

It was with a note of joy that the Republican reported that Martz's claim near Perry had been contested on the ground of soonerism. Such an art was called in "keeping with the 'make-up' of the 'critter'," and such would probably take him "where he belongs -- in the pen" :⁵⁴

The poor, sickening, disgusting, crazy, perjured, ghoulst ghost of what once might have been a cheap imitation of a man, known to the people of Blaine county as the editor (?) of the ill-reputed Watonga Rustler, last week opened its den long enough to emit some more of its nauseating odor and imposed its lunacy upon a public which had long since repudiated it in disgust. This creature called Dennis J. Martz is really an object of charity, however, rather than censure. No difference how low, contemptible or mean a human being may be he is still an object of human pity. When Dennis J. came to this town, he had friends, for no one knew him then. Now he is seldom seen on the streets, and when he is, he wears a look of despair that might form a fitting model for an artist to sketch the features of Prometheus in hell. The erratic Dennis is staggering under the burden of his own misdeeds. Those who once believed him to be sincere have at last discovered his true character and have repudiated him. He now stands along without a business and without friends -- a living testimony to the declaration that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.⁵⁵

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., November 8, 1893.

⁵⁴Ibid., October 4, 1893.

⁵⁵Ibid., November 8, 1893.

One week the Republican failed to volley wrathful words at Martz, but in the following edition Ferguson dug deep into his bag of adjectives to make up for lost time. He did not skin the "poor old smirking, sniffing, squealing jackal" one week in order to let the "mangey, scrawny hide grow on before taking it off again. Run to the wall -- u-r-rh -- rip 'em up. R-r-rh!":⁵⁶

The diatribe continued:

The poor old repudiated hypocrite, Dennis J. Martz, is thrown into spasm everytime the REPUBLICAN is mentioned. If the old imbecile possessed a brain the word "Republican" would be imprinted upon it. He talks of nothing else when awake and it causes a festive nightmare to come coursing across his dreams. Poor old Don. The people soon discovered that he has neither ability, honesty nor decency, and his miserable excuse of a newspaper (?) is left like a sick skunk, writhing, wiggling and dying from the excess of its own odor.⁵⁷

The Rustler editor wrote that the Republican was run by coyotes, which threw in the sponge when they were against the wall.⁵⁸ But the Republican replied in kind:

Poor old insane Martz. We do not notice him because we consider him worthy of notice, but simply to see the animal squirm. Every time we touch him up that little pegging awl head sinks ten degrees below the shoulders. There is nothing visible above the shoulders but the hat.⁵⁹

The animal calling developed into rumor-printing in both of the publications. The Rustler editor, an article in

⁵⁶Ibid., December 20, 1893.

⁵⁷Ibid., November 22, 1893.

⁵⁸Ibid., December 13, 1893.

⁵⁹Ibid., November 22, 1893.

the Republican states, was found "to be dishonest and an all-around deadbeat."⁶⁰ He was found by one of the business men and presented with "a bill long since due, and the old spook beat him out of a large per cent of it".⁶¹ The paper went on:

This paper from the first exposed the dirty designs of old Martz and his satellites and they went down to their proper level writhing under the scathing rebuke administered at the polls by an aroused public. Beaten, exposed, disgraced, jeered at by the public, and unable to fight their battles they aided with all their feeble powers in a libel suit against the editors of this paper. In the presence of lawyer Steen (supposing him to be with him) they discussed plans to pack the courthouse with fallen spirits of their own ilk and get a grand jury that they could control, as some of the jurors were not present on the morning of the first day of the district court. Failing as usual, they have continued to nurse their disappointment, but conspicuously, NOT IN IT. Most of them have left the country and the remnant will soon follow. Other communities will lose by their advent but what is their loss is our gain.⁶²

In the following issue of the Republican, Ferguson still predicted the end of the Rustler. He accused Martz of being a "poor old yap of a ... ghost which still whines piteously and delusively imagines itself to be a leader."⁶³ "The frisky old colt don't know when to stop. All over the country the people's party folks are disgusted with the imbecility of old Don."⁶⁴

⁶⁰Ibid., December 20, 1893.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., January 10, 1894.

⁶³Ibid., January 31, 1894.

⁶⁴Ibid.

After a few years the Rustler suspended publication, and its editor established a mercantile business with his sons and operated a law practice on the side. It was the same Dennis Martz who delivered the welcome address upon the return of Governor Ferguson to the newspaper office in Watonga following his term as governor.

Memories of the word battles Ferguson had fought with the editor of the Rustler were recalled by the Republican editor on the seventh anniversary of his own publication. For the October 12, 1899, issue Ferguson wrote:

An inventory of our citizens reveals the fact that they are not numerous. But few of the actors in the drama of those days face the audience to-day. Many have departed, and of those who are left, but few are in public life. There have been great changes since that time. We must not forget to mention our former friend and adversary, Dennis Martz. One who is not familiar with the past can scarcely realize that the now industrious, commercial citizen who day after day leads the firm of D. J. Martz & Sons along the highway of prosperity, under the McKinley regime, was once the wild-eyed Dennis, who in days gone by, with lance (Rustler) in rest like Cervante's famous knight errant, was accustomed to plunge recklessly and headlong into causing them to fly before him like chaff before the autumnal wind. But 'twas ever thus. Things change. "O tempore!" "O mores!"

The editor of the Rustler was also well equipped to aim words at Ferguson. On the six-weeks anniversary of the Republican, Martz had this to say about the chief rival publication in Blaine County:

Six weeks ago there came as an exchange to our

office a sheet about the size, shape and make of the carpet bag sheet published in the post-office, called the Sedan (Kansas) Republican, edited by the Watonga carpet-bagger, Ferguson. His contemporaries state that he was compelled to vamoose from Sedan, Kansas, on account of his dishonest tactics towards the People's Party and Democrats of that place.⁶⁵

Ferguson did not limit his barbs to the editor of the Rustler. He found enough sharp words to kindle a feud with the publishers of the Watonga Herald, first printed as the Blaine County Herald. A. E. Newman, owner of the Herald, was called "Wavy Hair" by his Republican rival, and his publication was a "pop" produced by the "slimy, smoky, hide-and-seek Newman."⁶⁶

One week Ferguson noted that:

Last week's Herald was just as it used to be -- loaded to the muzzle with grammatical errors. We suggest the teachers of Blaine county secure a copy of last week's Herald to use in their school work as examples of false syntax and bad grammar generally.⁶⁷

This subtle remark was typical of those which characterized Ferguson's attack on contemporary rivals of an opposing political party. And, as he had done in reference to the Rustler, Thompson B. Ferguson accused those in charge of printing and editing the Herald of being the cause of a "nauseating 'odor'" to every citizen of Blaine County who is familiar with the state of things....⁶⁸ On one occasion Ferguson accused the Herald staff of having "taken

⁶⁵Ibid., October 26, 1892.

⁶⁶Ibid., June 10, 1896.

⁶⁷Ibid., June 17, 1896.

⁶⁸Ibid., May 15, 1895.

an over dose of morphine last week consequently its wild crazy rantings. In fact the sheet was drunk."⁶⁹

In the two following issues in August, 1895, the Republican contained approximately five full columns in which "Morphine Billy" and "Uniformity Al" were held "Under the Spotlight." In this column, Ferguson attacked the "sweet scented animal" and the "teacher without an education."⁷⁰ He predicted this to be the last hour of desperation for the ill-famed sheet. On August 28 of that year, the Republican announced that Ed Ingram had left his job at the printing office of the Herald because he "was tired of working and taking promises for pay, consequently concluded not to stay here any longer."⁷¹

When the Herald ran a suggestion to "advertise in a paper that the women and children are permitted to read," the Republican publisher found an opportunity to quote the advice and thus use it to the Republican's advantage:

This is good advice, but it cuts the Herald out. Only a short time ago, the ladies of Watonga were lighting the fires with the said sheet not allowing the boys to read it on account of its obscene language.⁷²

The January 11, 1906, issue of the Republican contained an article headed "OBEYS HIS MASTERS" in which

⁶⁹Ibid., July 31, 1895.

⁷⁰Ibid., August 7, 1895.

⁷¹Ibid., August 28, 1895.

⁷²Ibid., December 4, 1895.

the writer remarked that it was not the usual thing for the editor to resent a personal attack, "especially when such an irresponsible, amateur and juggler of 'words without meaning' as Golobie of the Guthrie State Register is the subject." Throughout the administration up to the time that a change in the governorship had been announced, the State Register was "filled with all manner of false statements and misrepresentations in an effort to prejudice the public against the retiring governor."⁷³ These attacks in the State Register brought on the article Ferguson wrote. The governor stated in the story that in 1902 when he was chairman of the Republican territorial committee, he was requested to select a man to be in charge of headquarters in Guthrie. This was a job that paid approximately \$15 per week, and Golobie was one of the applicants:

He said that he was "all in." "Broke." Said it meant much to him, as he was up against the ragged edge of fortune and perambulating under an evil star. He was a newspaper man -- something which appealed to the chairman -- and he was given the place.⁷⁴

Later, Golobie took over duties as editor of the Register, and for a time he was friendly toward the administration and supported it ardently. He had asked for territorial printing, but had been told that these jobs could not go to papers outside the Republican party:

⁷³Ibid., January 11, 1906.

⁷⁴Ibid.

But then it is not Golobie that his article deals with so much as those whose creature he is, and, as his masters, dictate his slanderous elusions, while they hide behind the mask of expediency and cry for harmony, while at the same time they influence such weaklings as Golobie to attack Republicans and shift the responsibility upon them. They should either select a more creditable avenue of communication, or should come out in statements duly accredited to themselves and not bushwhack, hoping to conceal themselves behind the editor, although they inspire every word which he writes upon politics.⁷⁵

The attempt to destroy the Republican office in February, 1894, offered the editor of that publication a chance to assault his chief rival with more insults. Martz had written that the fire had been brought about because "the Watonga Republican is getting so distasteful to the people that some people from the country set fire to the pusillanimous outfit."⁷⁶ To answer this, Ferguson wrote:

Until the Rustler came out last week no one ever dreamed of connecting the cowardly old ghost with the attempt to burn this office. But when that sheet appeared with its four or five contradictory statements in regard to it, and its apparent desire to direct suspicion from the right channel, the people commenced to think. After the fact was known that the ghost was on the street with some drunken fellows after mid-night, it looks as if there might be a motive for the Rustler's many contradictory statements last week. Of course the cowardly ghouel would not do it himself, but simply judging from the Rustler's manifest anxiety and many conflicting statements it certainly was posted.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., February 21, 1894.

⁷⁷Ibid.

Ferguson stated that such a disaster which might have resulted in the destruction of his family as well as of the business establishment would give Martz a chance to gloat. He was "too ignorant to sustain his cause in controversy; too cowardly to do anything openly."⁷⁸

Although other newspapers were not as bold in their attacks upon the editor of the Republican, they did, however, nevertheless, give forth with verbal punches. The Rustler and Blaine County Herald were the chief targets of Ferguson's barbs, but their replies were not so poisonous nor so sharp.

The Rustler accused Ferguson of setting his own news office on fire and then denying the action. Upon this matter Martz advised "Shut up you 'tater' thief you smell like coal oil and your face looks like a dusty horse blanket."⁷⁹

When the news that Ferguson had been named president of the Territorial League was released, the editor of the Rustler commented that the "Republican party is going to dogs when it can find no better man . . . than T. B. Ferguson."⁸⁰ In several issues which followed this announcement, the Rustler ran pictures of a donkey labeled

⁷⁸Ibid., February 21, 1894.

⁷⁹Watonga Rustler, February 23, 1894.

⁸⁰Watonga Republican, August 16, 1899.

⁸¹Watonga Republican, August 16, 1899.

"T. B. Ferguson, Our Republican Candidate for Legislature."⁸¹ The donkey supported a large quill over one ear. In the July 24, 1894, issue a three-column drawing of a donkey was titled: "The Tattooed Ass. T. B. Ferguson Candidate for the Legislature." Stripes in the zebra-like donkey were "labeled boodle," "theft," "false claims," "court house potatoes," "office burning," and "lying and perjury."

Attacks were not limited to publications within Blaine County. Of the Kay County Sun, Blackwell, Ferguson wrote:

The Kay County Sun of Blackwell last week issued the dirtiest, foulest, most cowardly, most contemptible, would be venomous, yet most harmless article ever emanated from a press in Oklahoma. This article was written in an attempt to answer some of the Republican papers that have been criticizing the treasonable utterance of Edward Atkinson, Biljen Bryan and the other traitors who are going over the land trying to create a sentiment of treason. Of course the Sun is not to blame. It is more to be pitied, for what it does not know yet thinks that it does. The Sun belongs to that class of sniveling, cringing, crawly "me-to-Pete" papers which was never accused of envolving an idea, or publish a sentence which it did not borrow from its masters.⁸²

Just before Ferguson left Watonga to become governor of the territory, he was the subject of an editorial in the Shawnee Herald, edited by Charles Franklin Barrett. As he did often under such circumstances, Ferguson quoted the article, then proceeded to add his own comments and to tear down arguments included in the original;

⁸²Watonga Republican, August 16, 1899.

Tom Ferguson, of the Watonga Republican, has "the makins" of a really capable Republican editor in him if he could get away from his provincial short-grass environments and allow his pugnacious egotism a chance to shrivel. Even a red-headed man cannot expect to carry a chip on each shoulder and put in half his time 'looking backward' and expect to escape criticism in Oklahoma. -- Shawnee Herald

Bless your life, Brudder Barrett, we never object to being criticized. Not a bit of it. It is a free country. Our "pugnacious egotism" is never hurt when a two by four self-constituted quill pusher wants to fire his guns for the fun there is in it. Any amateur can criticize. That is easy. Even the editor of the Herald, who, of course, has no egotism in his anatomy, can criticize. Look here, Barrett, it all goes except that "short grass" business. The tallest grass in Oklahoma is found in Blaine county.

Chahlee Barrett, of the Shawnee Herald, says that the scribe of this religious weekly is a possessor of red-headed pugnaciousness and carries a chip on his shoulder inviting some one to brush it off. Chahlee is mistaken. The scribe of this journal of commerce will run at any time to avoid a newspaper entanglement. Only stops to mix when he cannot get away. Chahlee has some good traits as a quill driver, but has a weakness for jabbing his proboscis in where it has no business.⁸³

The Press and T. B. Ferguson's Appointment

The dismissal of William Jenkins and the appointment of Ferguson as governor of Oklahoma Territory brought a volley of press comments, some favorable and some insulting to the Watonga editor.

Under a four-column banner and carrying the Guthrie dateline, the Daily Oklahoman ran the following news story on page one:

⁸³Ibid., November 21, 1901

The news of the appointment of Tom Ferguson as governor of Oklahoma was received here tonight with dismay, then disgust followed by indignation. It was a shock both to business men and representatives of both parties who knew Thomas Ferguson. Then came the determination to raise heaven and earth in an effort to avert this disgrace to Oklahoma. A meeting of prominent Republicans and business men was held and a plan of concerted action arranged which will result in the president receiving many telegrams protesting against the appointment of Ferguson and requesting that Mr. Roosevelt await the arrival of the uncouth gentleman at Washington and take inventory of his caliber before final and decisive action. It is believed that when the president sees Ferguson and finds that he is not only rough and uncouth, but does not even know how to make a respectable appearance in society and is both illiterate and impolite, he will shortly cancel the appointment.⁸⁴

Other editors commented upon Ferguson's dislike for dress suits, and the fact that he often appeared "in an old blue shirt common to the farming class."⁸⁵ On its editorial page the same issue in which the above news story was run, the Daily Oklahoman declared that at least Jenkins had "the appearance."⁸⁶ The writer predicted that the Watonga editor's administration would prove to be a comic opera for which democracy should get reserved seats.⁸⁷

Chief leader in the opposition to the appointment of Ferguson as governor was the Guthrie Leader. Prior to the announcement that the president had made the appointment, the Leader ran the following editorial:

⁸⁴Daily Oklahoman, December 1, 1901, p.1

⁸⁵C. C. Parkhurst, Territorial Governors, p. 45

⁸⁶Daily Oklahoman, December 1, 1901.

⁸⁷Ibid.

Tom Ferguson would be a sweet-scented monstrosity in the executive office. Ferguson's bowels are in his head and he thinks with his kidneys. He is a stranger to the niceties of life and his table manners have driven strong men to drink. Ferguson is a political parasite and a slaughter house accident who receives credit for writing and doing those things which are done by a woman. If Roosevelt is unable to do any better than Ferguson, the tripe misfit, for God's sakes let Jenkins and the sanitarium graft continue.⁸⁸

The Blackwell News regarded the fact that Ferguson's name was among those being considered for the gubernatorial post as "the only startling feature about the contemplated gubernatorial change."⁸⁹ That publication predicted that, if the Watonga newspaperman received the appointment, it would mean another fight before he had time to warm his office chair.⁹⁰ Calling the Watonga editor "obnoxious to every Democrat in Oklahoma and to a majority of Republicans," because of his views on social equality for Negroes and because of his efforts to remove the law calling for separate schools, the News declared that he was "not broad-minded enough to be governor of Oklahoma and that he would be used by a certain faction of his party to the detriment of other factions."⁹¹

From the Enid Wave came the following editorial comment upon speculation that the appointment would go to Ferguson:

⁸⁸Guthrie Leader, November 30, 1901.

⁸⁹Daily Oklahoman, December 1, 1901.

⁹⁰Guthrie Leader, November 30, 1901.

⁹¹Ibid.

The contemplation of the possible appointment of that red-headed nigger man, Tom Ferguson, to the governorship of Oklahoma, is horrible within itself. If the president should happen to make such a terrible mistake, the entire population of Oklahoma territory should form in one grand "Coxie army" and march to Washington and demand statehood to take effect not later than next Tuesday. Ferguson is not even fitted for the position of sexton for a negro cemetery.⁹²

Members of the editorial staff of the Guthrie Daily Leader looked upon Ferguson's appointment with mixed amusement and amazement:

That Ferguson is a brazen clown no one who knows him will deny. He is parsimonious and harrow intellectually and morally, and possesses none of the common elements of manhood, hence, he is an easy tool in the hands of Flynn.⁹³

These staff members believed that Ferguson had sent the historical sketches and reminiscences of Watonga, called "Looking Backward," to Roosevelt "to call the attention of the president to Ferguson as being a h--l of a politician."⁹⁴ They accused the Watonga resident of being a hot tempered man who "rattled around like liver pills in a band box. Years ago his congregation forced him out of the pulpit because he got mad at a bird dog and kicked it to death."⁹⁵ The Leader found time to condemn the Watonga Republican as being a "butter-be-daubed

⁹²Guthrie Leader, November 30, 1901.

⁹³Guthrie Daily Leader, December 2, 1901, p. 1.

⁹⁴Ibid., December 3, 1901.

⁹⁵Ibid.

abortion with patent insides."⁹⁶ Clippings from exchanges were reprinted in a column "Fergaflynn Comments" which appeared in the December 5, 1901, issue.

The Leader ran an editorial on December 5 with the following comment:

The report that "Guv" Ferguson eats soup with a pickle fork is a mistake. He soaks it up in bread and eats it with his fingers.

An editorial writer of the Kingfisher Times asked on his editorial page who would run "that Washington hand press now since brother Tom has been called to Guthrie?"⁹⁷

Writers for the Enid Wave predicted that the Democratic press of the territory would butcher Ferguson's political ambitions, that it would "knock Ferguson so low in less than six months that a yellow cur dog will not know him."⁹⁸ The Wave continued:

Nearly all the governors of Oklahoma have been gentlemen to say the least, but a man who would call Ferguson a gentleman don't know the full meaning of that word.⁹⁹

Approval of Ferguson's appointment was echoed by other editors in volume to match the volley voiced against the man from the short-grass country.

The Carmen Headlight looked upon the appointment as the government's recognition of the press:

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Guthrie Leader, December 5, 1901.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid. Oklahoma State Capital, December 15, 1901.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

There is now hope for Oklahoma; the government has recognized the press by appointing a newspaper man governor. Flynn is also a newspaper man, but was elevated by the people. The people of Oklahoma are with the press and the press of Oklahoma deserves their support.¹⁰⁰

The Pawnee Dispatch predicted an administration of the "super-strenuous type":

A combination of the policies of a rough rider and an Oklahoma editor ought to result in a red hot Territorial government.¹⁰¹

The editor of the Wakita Herald expressed his hope that the Watonga editor would retain the rigid practice he exercised in the preaching in his paper.

The Democratic Pawnee Herald expected to oppose and criticize most acts of the new governor, but it welcomed Ferguson with these lines:

It has a good deal of respect for the office of governor and a good deal more respect for the red-headed editor of a short grass country weekly, that at forty years of age can make the president of this glorious union think he is big enough for governor, and we'll gamble a little that when he gets in all h--l will never make him confess to anything, or catch him "looking backward" with regret because he got caught with the goods on him.¹⁰²

The Hunter Enterprise called Ferguson an editor of one of the "brightest, cleanest and most ably edited papers of the Territory."¹⁰³ The Pond Creek Vidette believed that the new officeholder would prove to be the best governor Oklahoma ever had. The Events of Enid had assured its

¹⁰⁰Oklahoma State Capital, December 15, 1901.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

readers that Ferguson's administration would be a successful one:

The new governor has had the experience that makes him know the needs of the homesteaders of the territory. He will realize the necessity of keeping down the tax payments. Governor Ferguson, by his college training and intellectual life, will know the needs of the schools of the territory. He will now be in close touch with the great commercial interests of Guthrie, Oklahoma City, and other towns and will see what the needs of all the people are for the betterment of and up building of Oklahoma.¹⁰⁴

To the Norman Democrat-Topic the combination of red-hair and Kansas heritage could mean but one thing, a strenuous administration.¹⁰⁵ In this editorial, the Blackwell Times-Record bade adieu to editor Ferguson and extended a welcome to Governor Ferguson:

He will make a splendid governor; just such a governor as we would expect every good Oklahoman to be; he will be zealous for Oklahoma and her interests; he will be an indefatigable worker and will have both eyes and ears open at all times. He is capable, honest to the core and a man who hates deceit and trickery as does the man who named him.¹⁰⁶

The Norman Transcript designated Ferguson the "Cincinnatus of Oklahoma":

Cincinnatus was an honest old gentleman to whom the people of the republic of Rome turned when everything seemed dark and gloomy, when scandals in office life in the republic became unberable, and when they needed a man at the head of affairs. He was a rugged, honest incorruptible man, "the

¹⁰⁴Ibid., December 3, 1901.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., December 8, 1901.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., December 8, 1901.

noblest Roman of them all," and brought the republic back from out the slough of despond. That is the sort of man Tom Ferguson will prove to be. 107

Ferguson's appointment was announced in winter, so the Kingfisher Free Press had no lavish bouquets to throw. That publication did express the belief that the new executive was honest and that he had plenty of ability to be governor of the territory. The paper credited him with having plenty of horse sense and with being "pretty stubborn, self-willed, aggressive."108

"No better man could have been selected" was the sentiment expressed in the editorial columns of the Guthrie State Capital:

A convincing orator -- one who talks well and sensibly on all subjects; the author of "The Jay-hawkers," and several other publications of a literary and patriotic character; a man of common sense and plenty of it; one with strictest moral life and commercial integrity -- he combines the essentials of a successful and popular governor.

. . . his Watonga Republican has always been a strong paper -- one of the ablest in Oklahoma. It has had opinions and a unique way of expressing them. He has had influence not only with his paper, but personally, taking part in about everything for the advancement of his town and county. He made a model postmaster, and an appreciated and valuable citizen.109

When Ferguson's term of office ended and his successor was installed, the press comments upon the

107Ibid.

108Ibid.

109Ibid., December 3, 1901.

administration offered an interesting study. Two of his principal opponents at the beginning of his term expressed appreciation for a healthy administration.

A brief note in the editorial column of the Guthrie Leader took a reverse stand from that expressed four years earlier: "Governor Ferguson retires from office bearing the good will of the people in general".¹¹⁰ The following day an editorial article in the Daily Oklahoman expressed the same sentiments.

Governor Ferguson, the retiring executive, gave the Territory a very creditable and, in most ways, satisfactory administration. He worked faithfully and intelligently toward the general development and the enforcement of the laws whose execution were placed in his hands. His retirement is perhaps more forced than voluntary, but it can scarcely be charged to any official shortcomings in the light of the record and the president's penchant for rewarding his rough riders.¹¹¹

Along these same lines the Oklahoma State Capital ran the following editorial:

Governor Ferguson can feel assured from the many testimonials he has had by many of the people personally and through the public press that his administration was everything that the people desire. He stands much higher with the people than he did when he came to Guthrie and he has brought this about by his own deeds for the public in this high office.¹¹²

Newspaper Criticism of the Administration

Quite naturally Ferguson, like other public

¹¹⁰Guthrie Leader, January 15, 1906.

¹¹¹Daily Oklahoman, January 16, 1906.

¹¹²Oklahoma State Capital, January 16, 1906.

officials, came in for criticism in the press while he was chief executive of the territory. In 1904 the Guthrie State Capital objected that Ferguson's report to the Secretary of the Interior would do a grave injustice to the capital city. Parts of the forthcoming report, supposed to have been reprinted from the Kansas City Times-Journal, were said to give Oklahoma City a larger population by 700 persons than any city in the territory.¹¹³ After a great deal of discussion by contemporary newspapermen of both Guthrie and Oklahoma City, Ferguson announced that population figures of both cities would be omitted from his annual report.

Other objections came from pressmen concerning the Oklahoma exhibit at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. Ferguson wrote E. A. Marchant, secretary of the Oklahoma commission at the fair, that he was pleased with the display:

Of course there are a few journals that would complain if our booths were filled to overflowing with the very best products obtainable.¹¹⁴

Some complaints had been concerned with the amount of fruit put on display, and others had objected to the quality of goods on show. By August 15, Ferguson reported that the press seemed satisfied with the Oklahoma building

¹¹³Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to E. E. Brown, Oklahoma City, August 12, 1904.

¹¹⁴Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to E. A. Marchant, St. Louis, Missouri, August 15, 1904.

and that criticism had leveled off.

A story about the Norman Sanitarium appeared in a Kansas paper followed a short time later by a discussion of the Oklahoma delegation's dissatisfaction with treatment at the fair. Governor Ferguson denounced the paper for these stories:

It has been very embarrassing to the citizens of Oklahoma to have their institutions and their people misrepresented by papers published outside of the territory and it is still more embarrassing to have outside papers publish articles which would indicate that Oklahomans left St. Louis howling like a band of Indians.¹¹⁵

Ferguson's objection was aimed at the Kansas City Journal in particular.

Concerning an article by Everett Purcell, Enid, the chief executive of the territory once wrote:

I do not like its tone. There seems to be implied in it an idea that Mr. Houston might be retained in the School Land office unless a fight should be made by the newspapers and politicians. I wish to state in this connection that if every newspaper and every politician in the territory were to demand Mr. Houston's removal and I believed him not guilty of the charges, he would be retained. On the other hand, if every newspaper and every politician in Oklahoma should demand that Mr. Houston be retained, and I believed him guilty, he would have to go. Nothing that the politicians or nothing that the newspapers could say could have any effect upon this matter. Of course, however, it is a free subject and naturally open to discussion for all.¹¹⁶

Other verbal lashings were delivered by the administrator.

To the Events editor on another occasion, Ferguson wrote:

¹¹⁵Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to E.F. Heister, Kansas City, Kansas, May 7, 1903.

¹¹⁶Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Everett Purcell, Enid, June 26, 1903.

Your paper censures the administration for not dismissing Houston summarily, while a large number of the republican papers and politicians of the Territory think that he has been dealt with too harshly.

I wish to state in conclusion that I do not care what you or anyone else think about the matter, do not care what your paper has to say. You are talking and writing on a subject about which you know but little, and you evidently manifest a desire to overdraw or mistate the facts.¹¹⁷

Concerning criticism along the same affair, which resulted in the resignation of J. J. Houston from the office of school lands, Ferguson addressed Emory D. Brownlee, Kingfisher:

It is the duty of every republican paper to criticize when there is ground to criticize the administration of its own party, but is hardly consistent for a so-called republican paper to criticize simply because it has been disappointed in carrying a point.¹¹⁸

Ferguson, who had asked Houston to resign, believed that little would have been said about the affair had it not been for the "Populist paper at Enid taking the matter up and trying to misrepresent the facts as they actually existed."¹¹⁹ He had reference to Purcell's paper. In another note to Brownlee, Ferguson remarked that Purcell's publication was damaging the Republican party. He believed that Purcell's attack on the secretary of the territory was "severe and without justification."¹²⁰

¹¹⁷Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Everett Purcell, Enid, July 17, 1903.

¹¹⁸Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Emory D. Brownlee, Kingfisher, July 17, 1903.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Emory D. Brownlee, Kingfisher, January 21, 1904.

On July 26, 1903, L. G. Niblack, manager of the Guthrie Leader, who called his publication the "Leading Democratic Paper in the State," objected that papers of the opposite party from Ferguson's were being discriminated against:

For several months past, The Leader has been discriminated against in the matter of NEWS emanating from the various departments of the territorial administration. I have never been able to ascertain the real cause of this. News is not necessarily politics, and it seems to me the public is entitled to know "what is going on."

Today, however, I was much surprised to learn through a member of the staff that "the policy of this administration is to give all the news to Republican papers and to ignore the Democratic press." This quoted statement was made to Mr. Keyes, of THE LEADER, by Mr. R. W. Baxter, auditor and ex-officio superintendent.

I cannot conceive of a greater injustice than this, and firmly believing that Mr. Baxter does not speak for the administration in this matter prompts me to address you. Being a newspaper man yourself you are conversant with "the grind of the press," and fully appreciate the fact that a paper's news and editorial departments are as different as fact and opinion. Moreover, THE LEADER has always been courteous and liberal in its treatment of matter coming from the departments.¹²¹

Ferguson replied to the charge by Niblack one day later. He stated that it had not been the policy of his administration "to discriminate against any paper, even should it be opposed to the administration politically."¹²²

¹²¹Letter from L. G. Niblack, Guthrie, to Thompson B. Ferguson, June 26, 1903.

¹²²Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson, to L. G. Niblack, Guthrie, June 27, 1903.

Keyes had informed the governor that a member of the territorial administration had stated that news items "were reserved first for republican papers and the democratic papers would have to wait until they could secure the news through other avenues."¹²³ Ferguson, upon learning the name of the staff member, objected through notes to his actions and later discussed the matter with him personally. It was Ferguson's wish that "in all matters of official news all papers are to be treated alike":¹²⁴

Be assured that it is not the policy of the administration to discriminate in favor of, or against, any paper. I firmly believe that the official acts of an administration belong to the public, to republicans, democrats and populists alike, and should reach the people through the various political parties. I feel that it would be ingratitude on my part to withhold from any democratic papers any official news. These papers have very kindly printed my proclamations and other administrative matter, and it would be of bad faith for me to withhold from them any news items which would be of interest to the public.¹²⁵

Management of the Republican, 1901-1906

Affairs of state did not keep Governor Ferguson from remaining in close contact with his own publication and the Republican office at Watonga. Harrison Brown and

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to L. G. Niblack, Guthrie, June 27, 1903.

¹²⁵Ibid.

W. C. Rodecker were left in charge of the plant and the front shop, and Mrs. Ferguson frequently visited the newspaper office. Governor Ferguson held tight reins over the management of his newspaper throughout his tenure of office. Proof of this is found in the numerous letters he wrote to Rodecker and Brown concerning publication affairs.

In looking over the Republican this week, I notice that there are a number of items included as news matters for which we can hardly give room at this time. For instance matters relative to charitable institutions which are always submitted to papers with the request that they be published and various other things submitted for publication which are neither pay locals or news items. I would suggest that you have Mr. Rodecker go over the forms and take out everything in the way of legal matter which has run the required time, cautioning him against allowing dead matter to remain in the paper. Also will suggest that the space which we have left for local news be devoted to that line of work entirely, and that he shut off all communications from the outside which are not news items, or rather are presented by people in the way of charity. Of course those things should be given a reasonable amount of space during the year in the newspaper, but on account of our crowded columns, local work, etc., we cannot spare the room for them at this time.

Several citizens of Watonga during the past month have suggested that the local work is not up to the usual standard. Now do not misunderstand me to be making a complaint. I know that individually you have not time to leave your work and look after this matter, nor would I ask you to do it and I realize that Mr. Rodecker is compelled to spend more time in the office than he should spend there. He should have more time to devote to local work and to soliciting patronage, both advertising and job work. I am finding no fault with the paper. I know he is doing the very best that he can, but it is my impression that he is having to spend too much time in the office, and I would suggest that you take the matter up with the boys and give them to understand that all of the body type must be put in by them. That they are expected, also, to run the press in

disposing of job work. With the amount of matter that we are running in the paper each week they can easily do this and not work very hard either. One printer can put up all the body type that we are running at this time.

We are perfectly satisfied with the manner in which the paper has been run, both as to business on your part and the part of Mr. Rodecker, and have no fault to find with the work of the boys. When they are given to realize, however, that they are expected to do the office work with the exception of setting the type for the job work then they can easily do it and will be willing to do it.¹²⁶

That same day, the Governor wrote Rodecker that although every newspaper was expected to publish a "certain amount of matter each year for Sweet Charity's sake"¹²⁷ even that could meet a limit and be overdone:

I think that we have done our share of the work during the past, and would suggest that the notices of religious conventions and other things which do not strictly interest our people, be left out for the present.

. . . As you realize we have considerable competition, there being several newspapers in our town, and we cannot afford to lose patronage that this paper has built up during the past ten years.¹²⁸

Competition of the Republican was kept under the finger of Ferguson while he was in Guthrie, and he was able to direct his paper's affairs to the best advantage. In 1902, a former employer of Ferguson's and onetime staff member of the Watonga Republican joined with A. L. McRill to establish the Watonga Dispatch, a weekly Republican

¹²⁶Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Harrison Brown, Watonga, July 18, 1902.

¹²⁷Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to W. C. Rodecker, Watonga, July 18, 1902.

¹²⁸Ibid.

newspaper which was issued Thursdays. He was W. L. Baldridge. Thompson wrote of him:

... we gave him a position on the paper as local editor, but discovered that he was not only working against the interests of the paper, but that he was also advocating socialism of the extremest order, even more radical than taught by the "Appeal to Reason." We could not retain him as local editor on account of many things that he seemed to be doing against the paper, and also on account of his politics, but retained him in the office at the same wages, to do mechanical work. . . . I write you this that you may understand the situation. Mr. Baldridge is as pronounced a socialist as Bruce Morley.¹²⁹

Of the new newspaper, Brown expressed grave concern to the editor in Guthrie. Ferguson believed that the Republican had nothing to fear from Dispatch:

They will make a strenuous effort to do all they can in the way of misrepresentations, but it will avail nothing as the republicans of the county know their motives and know their stand politically. They cannot possibly remain in the county more than a year.¹³⁰

The air of unconcern and confidence was changed by December when Ferguson wrote that he had been notified that a general impression prevailed throughout Blaine County that a large portion of the printing for 1903 had been promised to the Dispatch.¹³¹ At this time Ferguson was nearing the end of his first year as chief executive of the territory,

¹²⁹Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to J. H. Campbell, Watonga, May 9, 1902.

¹³⁰Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Harrison Brown, Watonga, August 11, 1902.

¹³¹Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to P. F. Taylor, Watonga, December 19, 1902.

so he returned to Watonga to revise the subscription list of the paper, to drop some exchanges that were of no service to the Republican staff and to cut off "a number of subscribers living in other states who are somewhat slow with their remittances."¹³² Earlier the governor had sent Mrs. Ferguson to Watonga to enable Rodecker to take a vacation. He put Rodecker in charge of the paper as business manager, replacing Harrison Brown. Boasts of Baldrige that he had been promised the county printing reached the governor's office in Guthrie, so while Ferguson was in Blaine County, he checked up on the contract. He wrote:

Mr. Koch told me that under no circumstances would he favor the Dispatch on account of its having bolted the republican ticket during the last campaign, and on account of the fact that it was a new paper and not entitled to any support from the party. He told Tyler the same thing. I saw Tyler when I was in Watonga last and he told me that Mr. Koch assured him that he would under no circumstances favor the Dispatch. I had a talk with Mr. Tyler in regard to this matter. I think that he wants something, as you say, for the Freeman.¹³³ That is all right. I have nothing to say about the distribution of the patronage with the other papers. The Commissioners can use their pleasure so far as that is concerned, but it would be an outrage upon the party to favor the Dispatch, especially after it made an open fight on the ticket and as I have been informed, offered to support the entire opposition party for fifty dollars. The Republican, of course, I think should be made the

¹³²Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to W. C. Rodecker, Watonga, December 19, 1902.

¹³³The Oklahoma Freeman was published in Watonga by J. H. Roberts in 1902-03.

official organ. If the commissioners wish to divide the job work, I have nothing to say in that matter. I think that the general sentiment of the republicans is that the Watonga Republican should have at least the work that it now has which includes the official work that comes to the official organ and the tax lists in that Commissioners' district. In fact the Republican and the Bulletin are the only two papers in the country that are prepared to do very much of the job work. The Okeene Eagle has the facilities for doing job work, but they do not understand the art of doing it.¹³⁴

In the early part of January, 1903, Ferguson played an important role in the matter of Blaine County printing contracts. Although he was in Guthrie at the time, Ferguson endeavored to deal with the situation with his pen. Ferguson had heard that Democrats in the area, fired by the Herald, were working for a misunderstanding between the two Republican commissioners, Smith and Koch, on the board. The third council member, Delphaine, expressed his desires to award the contract for county printing to the lowest bidder. By causing a breach between Koch and Smith, the Democrats wished to bring Smith to work with Delphaine. In explaining this situation to John H. Dillon, Geary, Ferguson wrote:

Last year when the printing of the ballots came up the democratic county clerk, member of the election board, said that 'To the victors belong the spoils.' The same thing holds good now. The republicans have a majority on the board which was selected to act as

¹³⁴Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to John H. Dillon, Geary, December 19, 1902.

business agents for the county.¹³⁵

Ferguson requested Dillon to see Smith and to impress upon him the necessity of working with Koch in the matter. The governor believed that the attempt to bring trouble between Koch and Smith was led by the Herald and the Dispatch. Ferguson also wrote P. F. Tyler, Watonga, that it might be well for him to see Smith and to discuss the problem with him. The Governor declared that it "Behooves him as a republican to stay with the other republican members of the board."¹³⁶ He suggested a conference between Tyler, Smith, Koch and Seymour Foose. To J. E. Thompson, Bridgeport, Ferguson wrote the same things, asking Thompson to visit Smith for the purpose of explaining the importance of maintaining the well-being of the Republican party. Ferguson informed Foose that the Herald and the Dispatch had induced Smith to fall out with Koch and to go to work with Delphaine in the county printing matter:

Last fall when the ballots were printed, the democratic county clerk said that "To the victors belong the spoils" and that a republican paper should not even be given an opportunity to bid on the ballots. He was right in that proposition. They had a majority on the board and the patronage should have been given to that paper. Now that the republicans have a majority on the board of

¹³⁵Ibid., January 27, 1902

¹³⁶Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to P. F. Tyler, Watonga, January 27, 1903.

commissioners, the same rule holds good. The patronage should go to the republican papers. What was good under a democratic election board holds good under a republican board of commissioners.¹³⁷

On the following day, January 28, 1903, the editor of the Watonga Republican wrote Commissioner Phil Koch warning him of the plans for the breach between commissioners:

Whatever disposition of the printing you make will be satisfactory to me. As I have always told you, I feel that the Republican is entitled to be the official paper of the county as long as we have a republican board, as it was there working for the county, working for the town, and working for the party before the other papers which are now running were in existence. Yet I merely ask for what is right, do not ask that the other papers be discriminated against in our favor . . .

Governor Ferguson remained a fair-minded man in his concern over newspapers. He wrote to John N. Dillon, Geary, his fear concerning discrimination against the Bulletin.

Dated February 4, 1903, part of his letter follows:

I do not want anything done that would discriminate against the Bulletin, as I understand that it is to be run strictly as a republican paper since the change took place. As you know, I was never especially friendly to it from a political standpoint as long as Waterman was controlling its editorial policy, as I did not think that he had a disposition to assist the party in any way with his paper.

I do not want, as before stated, the Bulletin discriminated against, want it to have everything that is fair and right, do not ask anything for may own paper that is unreasonable or that would be an injustice to the other republican papers. As you know, the Dispatch should not be considered when the award of the county printing is made, as

¹³⁷Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Seymour Foose, Watonga, January 27, 1903.

it has and will continue to make war upon the party and the republican organization of that county.

Apparently the Dispatch did not get the county printing, for on February 16, 1903, Ferguson wrote to Dillon that he had just learned of plans by the staff of that paper to sell the publication. In this message the governor expressed determination to "let them starve out, rather than to have the republicans buy them out." He considered the folding up of the Dispatch to be "only a question of time." Blaine County Republicans did not agree with their chief executive. They entered business dealings with staff members of the paper and when Governor Ferguson learned that a transaction had been arranged he wrote the following in April, 1903:

In regard to the Dispatch will say that it was immaterial to me whether the paper was bought or not. I thought that about the best way would have been to let it starve out, which was inevitable. However, a number of republicans at Watonga and throughout the county thought that it had done the party considerable injury, and they seemed anxious to get it out of the way and took the initiative in making the deal. Of course, as they have made this step, we will take it off their hands.¹³⁸

At this time plans were being considered by Ferguson regarding the running of a daily. He had asked Harrison Brown to study figures of the Dispatch for one week to determine the advisability of continuing the daily publication. The physical plant of that paper, which came

¹³⁸Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to W. C. Rodecker, Watonga, April 28, 1903.

into Ferguson's hands when the purchase was made, included a Vaughn hand cylinder press, Army news press, Golding job press, proof press, and the cases of type and other small machinery and material. It was Ferguson's personal belief that Watonga was too small to support a daily newspaper, yet he instructed Rodecker to publish the new acquisition until the governor's official party returned from an official visit to the St. Louis World's Fair. With orders to keep the publication rolling off the presses daily until his return, Ferguson also requested that the former Democratic newspaper carry the Republican city ticket at the head of its columns. The taking over of the Dispatch did not cause Ferguson to neglect the Watonga Republican. He wrote his desires concerning the political make-up of the Republican:

. . . in this week's Republican I would like to have you give each candidate a good write-up. Say nothing detrimental to the candidates on the citizen's ticket, but give the republican nominees good support in this week's issue.¹³⁹

Acquisition of the Dispatch by Ferguson brought sharp criticism from the Enid Eagle. The clipping of this story was mailed to the governor by Everett Purcell, who received a full account of the purchase written by Ferguson himself:

The Watonga Dispatch started at that place about a year ago, declaring its intention to take

¹³⁹Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to W. C. Rodecker, Watonga, April 28, 1903.

the field and often boasted it would drive the Republican out of business. After the wrangle in the convention and a part of the republicans bolted the county nominations, the Dispatch fought a portion of the ticket during the entire campaign, but finding that they had lost out, a representative of the Dispatch came to me last week and wanted to compromise, wanted to stop the fight, said that if the county patronage (the republicans having elected a majority of the county commissioners) could be divided that the Dispatch would stop fighting. In short they wanted the Republicans of Blaine County to buy them off by giving them a part of the republican patronage which they had not earned. That was all there was to it. I told the gentleman who came to me that I had no compromise to make, and felt disposed to fight it out along that line. I have never humiliated myself so much as to compromise with an enemy, or to try to buy him off. The Eagle discussed something about which it was absolutely ignorant. It would have its readers believe that there is a faction in Blaine County when there is none.

I have just learned recently that the republicans in Blaine County have purchased the Dispatch. They discussed that matter with me last week. I told them that I had no concessions to make, they could do as they liked. If they wanted to purchase the Dispatch and to consolidate it with the Republican or rather let the Republican "swallow" it; they could do so, but that I did not wish to buy an enemy of the party in order to stop its fighting.¹⁴⁰

This letter to Purcell was not for publication, but was written to the Enid newspaperman to give him the background information regarding the transaction.

The distance between Guthrie and Watonga did not keep Ferguson from remaining in close contact with the physical plant of the Republican. Upon learning of the

¹⁴⁰Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Everett Purcell, Enid, April 28, 1903.

transfer of the Hitchcock Vanguard from Eckert to Ballard in March, 1903, the governor instructed Harrison Brown to take charge of the Gordon job press in the Vanguard office. This press belonged to the Watonga Republican but was being used by Eckert. Since Ballard was not an experienced printer, Ferguson did not desire to let him use the press. A press in the hands of an inexperienced printer was susceptible to damage, the Watonga editor declared.¹⁴¹ During that same month he instructed Rodecker to write for material about new types. He called for a list of improvements at the plant that Rodecker deemed necessary. He suggested that the manager get a local correspondent to conduct a subscription drive.

Ferguson's knowledge of printing and his interest in the matter are indicated by his research into presses of the time:

Having carefully studied the various presses that are now upon the market and handled by the supply houses doing business in Oklahoma, I have reached the conclusion that the new Cotteral is the best, considering strength of press, rapidity, and the easy manner of its action upon the type. We can get a six column Cotteral of the Oklahoma City people on very good terms and I am of the opinion that it would be the best press that we can purchase. Will take the matter up after my return from St. Louis.¹⁴²

Articles which were printed in the Republican were

¹⁴¹Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Harrison Brown, Watonga, March 4, 1903.

¹⁴²Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to W. C. Rodecker, Watonga, April 28, 1903.

not ignored by Ferguson during his administration. He often wrote stories for the paper, and frequently requested that copies be sent to him for proofing before they were run. At other times he suggested possible stories to be used in the publication. If, for any reason, he objected to the use of a certain article, he wrote Rodecker his complaints. One such rebuke was the following:

The Republican this week contains one article which I regret very much was inserted, the one under the head line "One school house over which the flag will fly."

I notice that the article is starred and was a communication but at the same time it most assuredly would antagonize the administration with the legislature. It would only be natural for the members of the legislature to think this article emanated from me. Of course I knew nothing about it until I saw it in print. I have been getting along on the very best of terms with the legislature.

. . . I regret exceedingly that this article should have appeared in our paper.¹⁴³

To James F. Edwards, Ponce, Puerto Rico, Ferguson wrote that he would like very much for him to send some articles about Puerto Rico for publication in the Republican. These, the editor believed, would be widely read among the subscribers in southern Kansas, among those who would be acquainted with Edwards. The Republican's subscription list in that part of Kansas was impressive.

At the time he requested the nameplate of the Watonga

¹⁴³Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to W. C. Rodecker, Watonga, February 21, 1903.

Daily Dispatch be changed to Daily Republican, Ferguson announced that he was sending an article to be used with the first issue under the new name. Business in Blaine County forced Ferguson to discontinue publication of the daily. He stated that had he and Mrs. Ferguson been living at Watonga he believed they could have made a go of the paper. He announced that he planned to resume publication when he retired from office, but". . . it could not be done where we had to pay for all our help, both on the outside and in the office."144

When the Guthrie National Bank closed in April, 1904, Ferguson had discussed plans with Rodecker concerning the immediate purchase of a new press. The failure of the bank with approximately \$1,200 in the Ferguson account brought a change in plans. The governor wrote his manager that he did not feel able to buy new equipment after his financial loss.

Ferguson's Place in the Fourth Estate

Ferguson's relations with his fellow fourth estate brothers were not all colored with barbed remarks and verbal blows. Although these literary bouts between the editors of various newspapers stand out as characteristic of the period, Ferguson did get along very well with his newspaper contemporaries.

144Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to W. L. Baldrige, Watonga, August 10, 1903.

A new editor to the field of journalism was welcomed with an editorial in the Watonga Republican:

The Observer, by E. E. Brown, the champion of the "young democracy," reached our exchange table last week. The Observer is a bright vigorous paper, with horridly bad politics. We judge Brown, the editor, to be an able young man who has probably gone wrong politically and become a Democrat. People do that way sometimes. We wish the Observer success financially, and all kinds of calamities politically.¹⁴⁵

In welcoming Edgar M. Sweet, Meeker, to the fourth estate, Ferguson wrote that "the press is the greatest of all agencies in building up a commonwealth. I consider that Oklahoma's greatness is in a large measure due to the ability and energy displayed by her public press."¹⁴⁶

Shortly after he took over administrative affairs in Guthrie, Ferguson wrote his brother-in-law, John W. Shartel, Oklahoma City attorney, requesting him to examine an article printed by the Daily Oklahoman and to offer his advice as to bringing a libel suit against the publishers of that newspaper. Ferguson called the article a "scurrilous, slanderous article" which charged that he had "entered into a deal with Ex-Attorney-General Strang and the present attorney general, J. C. Robberts," through which people interested in townsites were to be robbed. The article stated that "a certain per cent of the blood money is to go

¹⁴⁵Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p.106.

¹⁴⁶Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Edgar M. Sweet, Meeker, September 21, 1903.

to Attorney-General Strang, Attorney-Robberts" and the governor.¹⁴⁷ The chief executive of the territory called the accusation "wholly false, wholly unwarranted"¹⁴⁸ and one which the publisher knew was false at the time he published it. On the same day Ferguson wrote his attorney, April 12, 1902, he requested Judge Warren Brown, Lawton, to write a letter to the attorney in Oklahoma City who was reported to have given "out that libelous article to the Oklahoman",¹⁴⁹ notifying him "that in all probability his services will be needed in court". The red-headed newspaper editor intended to leave no stone unturned to right the wrong which had been made against citizens who were interested in townsites in the territory. He believed that the article had been written for malicious purposes, and he intended to carry out a libel suit against the Oklahoman.

Several days later, the governor wrote that he would give the "Oklahoman an opportunity to prove its charges in court".¹⁵⁰

It is needless to add that the charges are false and libelous, and that the writer of the Oklahoman knew that he was publishing a deliberate falsehood when the article went to his paper.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to John W. Shartel, Oklahoma City, April 12, 1902.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Judge Warren Brown, Lawton, April 16, 1902.

¹⁵⁰Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to M.L. Turner, Oklahoma City, April 18, 1902.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

Ferguson had initiated steps in a libel suit, but he dropped the case when the Oklahoman printed a retraction of the article.

Governor Ferguson realized the power of the press, and he tried to keep amiable relations between himself and the editors of his territory. Ferguson was a newspaperman; he was a member of the Republican party as well, so he was always happy to welcome an additional Republican editor to the land. When a Republican publication was installed at Alva, Ferguson was overjoyed. He expressed his thoughts to Dennis Flynn;

. . . I suggested to Judge Museller this morning that he at least divide the land office patronage with it. The Alva Courier, published by Ross at that place, is simply anti-organization, is not a friend of yours, and, as you may remember it passed a high compliment on governor Barnes' attack on the organization.

It hardly pays to feed an enemy simply to make him strong enough to continue the fight. I believe if you will drop a hint of this kind to Judge Museller, that he would give the new paper the patronage of the land office, at least a reasonable portion of it.¹⁵²

It was during this period that the publication of final proof notices from land offices brought prosperity to western newspapers. Among them was Ferguson's Republican, which contained eighty-four such notices in its January 24, 1901, issue. These notices were published for six issues at a fee totaling approximately eight dollars each.

¹⁵²Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Dennis T. Flynn, Washington, D.C., June 10, 1902.

For this reason newspaper editors clamored for such advertisements. They appealed to the governor for use of his influence on county judges throughout the territory.

Omer K. Benedict, Hobart Republican editor, complained to the governor that his paper was not getting all the final proof notices to which it was entitled. This editor wrote that a large number of small publications within the county were receiving the notices. He enlisted the governor's aid in seeing that this form of revenue went to the Hobart Republican. Ferguson described this situation in a message to Thomas Reid, El Reno:

It is very important that we have a good republican paper in Kiowa County. . . . Mr. Benedict's paper is established and it should have all the support that can possibly be given it from the republican administration.¹⁵³

This message from the governor was designed to "call attention" to the situation. Reid assured the chief executive that he would "put forth every effort to sustain the News-Republican" at Hobart.¹⁵⁴

Ferguson was willing to direct as much business toward the Republican press as possible, but he also believed that these papers had a duty and a responsibility that went hand-in-hand with governmental printing. His idea on this

¹⁵³Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Thomas Reid, El Reno, November 23, 1903.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., November 30, 1903.

subject was discussed in a letter to W. L. Baldrige
February 29, 1904;

Machine politics and corrupt government go hand in hand. It seems to me that the republican papers of the Territory should take this matter up and educate the people along this line, and firmly but in a dignified manner protest against anything that has a tendency towards machine politics.

Yet in another message Ferguson stated that the newspaperman who criticizes the action of a governor in certain respects "would imitate the executive if placed in his position."¹⁵⁵

While the governor did not force certain government-all agencies to place their official notices or job work with particular newspapers in the territory, he did let them know his desires and did not hesitate to tell them what he would do in similar circumstances. He continually repeated his belief that it was a folly to feed the enemy press and make it powerful enough to continue a fight. In a note to Professor T. W. Conway, Alva, July 11, 1902, Ferguson wrote:

By the way, Professor, with whom have you made the contract for printing the catalogues this year? It should not be given to any of those papers that put in the time last year fighting the Board of Regents. It is immaterial to me where it goes, but above all it should not go to the Alva Pioneer. Before this matter is over it may be that some of those fellows will find that they were last winter handling a sword that had two edges.

¹⁵⁵Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to M. L. Turner, Oklahoma City, March 31, 1904.

The clerk of the district court at Watonga received a letter from the governor of the territory. Dated March 12, 1903, the message revealed that Ferguson was concerned over a deputy's giving printing to the Dispatch, a paper which had fought the Republican ticket of Blaine County since its first issue:

While I believe that the Watonga Republican is entitled to the patronage, yet if it should go elsewhere I think that it should go to some republican paper in the county. It seems to me that it is a bad policy to feed papers which simply live to fight the party. I know that you would not for a moment allow patronage to be given to a paper of that kind, and probably in giving it to Mr. Moore never took into consideration the attitude of the paper towards the party in the county.

When the Guthrie Capital printed a long statement forecasting policies of the territorial grain inspector and of the governor, the chief executive grew angry. The write-up was the result of an interview between the reporter and J. B. Thoburn, an interview which had been granted with the "understanding that nothing should be published."¹⁵⁶ The same writer of this prediction had stated in another article that John Holt, applicant for bookkeeper in the school land office, had received the appointment. Holt had been working on leases in the land office on a temporary basis. These stories about his

¹⁵⁶Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Frank H. Greer, Guthrie, January 8, 1904.

permanent appointment drew sharp criticism from Governor Ferguson, who wrote Frank Greer about the matter:

Your correspondent is simply anxious to get a 'scoop' on some one, and in order to do so he says many ridiculous things in regard to what the administration is presumed to do. Of course people who understand the ways of the newspaper, pay no attention to these things, but the masses of the people believe that coming from a republican newspaper there must be something in them.

It has reached this point with me -- that I am afraid to even give your correspondent a news item for fear that he will distort it and try to utilize it in a way of a 'scoop' or in the way of a forecast of some policy of the office. There are many things of a news character that could be given out, but I am afraid to give him any on this account, and I thought it best to call your attention to it. It has been my policy all along, and I have instructed the other officers, to consider the Capital first in these matters, but I cannot do this until there is some understanding that it will be given as straight news matter, and that your correspondent will not try to forecast a policy or place the various officers in the attitude of doing many ridiculous things which have never been thought of.¹⁵⁷

As a Republican and as a newspaperman, Governor Ferguson was consulted frequently by members of the fourth-estate in a period when the politics of a paper could mean money in the treasury or it could mean a financial struggle. Ferguson answered a letter from R. W. Hemphill, editor of the Custer County Clarion, concerning competition with the Arapahoe Bee. The governor desired that the two papers consolidate in some manner:

I have seen the condition of things in Oklahoma

¹⁵⁷Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Frank H. Greer, Guthrie, January 8, 1904.

from the beginning, and never yet have I known two republican papers to succeed in a country town. The "survival of the fittest" of course holds good, but while the war for supremacy is going on the party is the sufferer.¹⁵⁸

Throughout his administration Governor Ferguson maintained an interest in the welfare of the newspapers in general. Protecting the newspaper as a medium of advertising, he wrote Professor Richard Thatcher, Edmond, in 1902:

I know that there is no kind of advertisement as effective as the advertisement made through the columns of a newspaper.¹⁵⁹

Ferguson's attitude toward the appointment of newspapermen was expressed in a letter he wrote to Benedict, the Hobart editor:

. . . if I were to make any recommendations for any town in the Territory I would recommend the newspaperman every time. I believe they are entitled to it, believing that it is a good policy to do so and to maintain and build up a good Republican paper wherever it is possible to do so.¹⁶⁰

The governor believed this, but he was not willing to appoint a newspaperman who did not have the qualifications necessary to carry out the duties of the position for which the recommendation was made. Writing to T. B. Wright, Lawton, who had applied for an appointment, Ferguson said:

. . . while I very much sympathize with

¹⁵⁸Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to R. W. T. Hemphill, Arapahoe, January 13, 1904.

¹⁵⁹Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Professor Richard Thatcher, Edmond, November 28, 1902.

¹⁶⁰Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Omer K. Benedict, Hobart, November 6, 1903.

newspaper men, and am always glad when they get positions, yet in this case, I cannot help you.

Upon learning that E. E. Brown, newspaperman of Oklahoma City, had filed application for appointment as postmaster at that place, Ferguson wrote to Dennis T. Flynn, delegate to congress, in the interests of Brown's appointment:

Mr. Brown has had a long struggle in Oklahoma City with his newspaper, fighting against great odds, struggling to maintain a republican paper as well as to maintain the principles of the party whose cause he advocates. A post office is a pretty good thing to have in connection with a printing office, and I heartily recommend Mr. Brown for appointment as post master.¹⁶¹

Files of Ferguson's letters written while he was governor show that he frequently recommended the appointment of newspapermen to various offices. Typical of these is the letter written in 1902 in favor of Thomas P. Fry for the position of clerk of the United States court. Fry was editor of the Sapulpa News. The governor wrote:

Having known Mr. Fry for several years and knowing him to be a man in every way capable to fill the position to which he aspires, I give him my unqualified endorsement.¹⁶²

These appointments and recommendations were not limited to those members of the fourth estate who edited or published newspapers advocating Republican policies. On June 9, 1902, Governor Ferguson appointed Otto Bekemeyer,

¹⁶¹Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Dennis T. Flynn, Washington, D.C., November 28, 1902.

¹⁶²Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson addressed "To Whom it May Concern," June 27, 1902.

"a staunch democratic newspaperman in the Territory"¹⁶³ as a member of the redistricting board. Appointments and recommendations brought complaints to the office of the governor. Discussing these "kicks and kickers" with Flynn, Ferguson wrote that he had been in political scraps in the newspaper business so long that it was difficult for him to remain quiet and not strike in return:

I presume the dignity of the office prevents a governor from following the Mosaic dispensation -- "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth;" yet I will say that it is very embarrassing to be placed in that position. That is one reason why I never had an inclination to hold a public office. I like the newspaper field where one is at liberty to do as he can and say what he pleases.¹⁶⁴

While he was chief executive of the territory, the editor of the Watonga Republican also took an interest in recommending newspapermen to other editors and publishers throughout the territory. In the interest of a job for a teacher at Wentworth Military Academy who desired to enter the newspaper field, Ferguson wrote Victor Murdock, Wichita, Kansas, concerning a position for the man on the Wichita Eagle:

It is not often that men are presumed to make recommendations in the business affairs of others, but as a certain license is said to exist between newspaper men, we take the liberty to make a recommendation to fill the vacancy on the Eagle

¹⁶³Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Paul Nesbitt, Watonga, June 9, 1902.

¹⁶⁴Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Dennis T. Flynn, Washington, D.C., June 23, 1902.

which we understand will exist at Guthrie in the not distant future.

It is reported here that Mr. Boyle will go to Washington and that his connection with the Eagle as correspondent will terminate, for a time at least. If you make a selection from Oklahoma to fill that vacancy, we hope that Capt. Barnhart, who is now identified with the Territory, will be considered among the applicants. Capt. Barnhart is a young man of splendid ability, having for three years past been a teacher in English in the Wentworth Military Academy at Lexington, Mo. He has a desire to enter the field of journalism and, as we believe, possesses the requisite newspaper instincts to make him a useful man in his chosen field. He gave up the teacher's profession to identify himself with newspaper work, and as he seems to be very enthusiastic and anxious to identify himself with Oklahoma journalism, in our judgment, he would make a success and be a useful worker for the Eagle throughout the Territory.¹⁶⁵

As a member of the Republican central committee for ten years, Ferguson had learned the inside of politics, and he had a deep understanding for the inner workings of government. He knew that "much depends upon the press in promoting an active public sentiment"¹⁶⁶ in any proposal. Speaking specifically of lobbying, Governor Ferguson wrote the following:

The newspapers of the country are the directors of public sentiment and if they will take this matter up they can make 'boodling' and wrong-doing in public affairs practically an impossibility.¹⁶⁷

Ferguson paid keen attention to the attitudes of the press during his administration. The number of clippings

¹⁶⁵Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Victor Murdock, Wichita, Kansas, June 18, 1903.

¹⁶⁶Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Lew Headley, editor of the Ponca City Courier, January 5, 1904.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

coming into his office was large, yet he sent letters of appreciation for those which expressed comment favorable to the governor personally or on the way in which he directed affairs of state:

The newspapers have done more toward building Oklahoma and making her what she is today than has been accomplished by any other agency.¹⁶⁸

Remembrances of his own battle against sin and vice in Watonga and Blaine County probably prompted Governor Ferguson to write W. L. Baldrige, member of the Arapahoe Bee staff, in commendation for that publication's stand against lawlessness and immorality:

While it is often alleged that a newspaperman hurts himself by fighting for what is right and fighting against intemperance and violations of the law, yet in the long run he always wins.¹⁶⁹

As the end of his administration approached and rumors began to infiltrate the press that Ferguson would not be reappointed, Ferguson began to look forward to returning to his Watonga newspaper. His letters at the end of his term show this attitude. To one man who expressed a desire to re-enter the journalistic field in the territory, the sixth territorial executive wrote:

I do not think that any man who has once been in the newspaper work and thoroughly initiated can ever be satisfied in any other line of work.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Mrs. Anna LaRue Brooks, Shattuck, September 4, 1905.

¹⁶⁹Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to W. L. Baldrige, Arapahoe Bee, October 29, 1903.

¹⁷⁰Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to H. Buckingham, Lawton, September 2, 1905.

to Knox County, Missouri, where he was superintendent of schools. A member of the Republican party, he was in the Union army during the Civil War.

CHAPTER II

ELVA U. SHARTEL FERGUSON

Pioneering along with her husband was Elva U. Shartel Ferguson, who became noteworthy as an author, newspaperwoman, mother, politician, and club woman. Selected in May, 1946, as the outstanding Oklahoma mother by the American Mothers Committee of the Golden Rule Foundation, New York, Mrs. Ferguson was the mother of five children, only two of whom survived infancy. Besides helping her husband establish the newspaper at Watonga, Mrs. Ferguson acted as assistant editor and reporter on the publication. She took time off from her cooking for the family, managing the household affairs, and sewing to set type and feed the hand press which ground out the first issues of the Watonga Republican. For 37 years she was active in the journalistic field in the state, not only in her work on the Republican, and in the writing of newspaper and magazine features, but also in penning a book, They Carried the Torch, story of Oklahoma's pioneer newspapermen.

Born April 6, 1869, at Novelty, Missouri, Elva Shartel was the daughter of David E. and Mary Jane Wiley Shartel. Her father was a native of Pennsylvania who moved

to Knox County, Missouri, where he was superintendent of schools. A member of the Republican party, he was in the Union army during the Civil War.

Elva Shartel Ferguson received her education in the public schools of Novelty.

Mrs. Edith Johnson, Daily Oklahoman columnist, paid tribute to Mrs. Ferguson in the introduction to They Carried the Torch:

Not only did she drive into the territory in a wagon, a baby on her lap and a small boy at her side -- no true pioneer arrived in a Pullman car -- not only did she struggle with primitive living conditions, and all of the physical discomforts encountered by early settlers, but she pioneered in the newspaper field. If a newspaperwoman was regarded 20 years later by her editor as a necessary evil, a reporter even in an emergency he hated to send out into the rain, what must have been the attitude of the newspaper fraternity when Mrs. Ferguson set about helping her husband edit and publish the Watonga Republican, established in October, 1892, one of the first journals in Western Oklahoma.

Mrs. Ferguson has achieved immortality in Oklahoma, as a pioneer newspaper woman, as the wife of one of Oklahoma's first governors and great citizens, as the mother of a soldier who gave his life in the Great War and of another son, brilliant writer, editor, speaker, business man and banker, Walter Ferguson, who passed away a year ago (1936). She has achieved national and international fame, likewise in the character of Sabra Cravat, the heroine of Edna Ferber's great novel of pioneer Oklahoma, "Cimarron." We read of her on printed pages. We have seen her re-created on the screen. If the rest of the world does not know her as we know her it does know her as the picturesque Sabra. If, with all of her gentle, womanly charm, one word better than all others describes Mrs. Ferguson, it is "stalwart." Small in stature, yet stalwart she was, a young wife and mother, coming into a country in the day of muddy streets and a saloon on every corner. Stalwart in the role of her husband's mate and partner; in her

who eagerness at all times to stand shoulder to shoulder with him for what they believed to be right. Stalwart she still stands in loss and sorrow, her husband and her sons having preceded her, traveling to that bourne from which they may not return. And then, they may.¹

For her While her husband was away from the office of the Watonga Republican in the line of political duties in 1900, Mrs. Ferguson wrote editorials, set type, and managed the publication. On the first of these occasions, Mrs. Gathrie Ferguson apologized for the contents of the paper with the explanation that the Republican was in the hands of the junior editor. She later stated that, in her own viewpoint, the paper did not suffer in its editorial columns. When Ferguson left for the conference with President Roosevelt concerning the appointment as governor, he left the management of the paper to his wife. She wrote another apology similar to the one she had written earlier:

If the REPUBLICAN is not quite up to the standard this week, please remember that it is in the hands of the junior editor and the "devil."²

It was Mrs. Ferguson who wired the president of the United States that her husband would accept the appointment as governor of Oklahoma Territory, and it was she who made him don a dress suit when affairs of state called for formal attire. It was Mrs. Ferguson who took over the governor's office when her husband was ill, and it was she

¹Edith Johnson, introduction to They Carried the Torch, pp. 9, 12-13.

²Watonga Republican, December 5, 1901.

who answered letters those several days. "Governor Ferguson, being unable to attend to the duties of his office today, has instructed me to write . . ." she wrote for her husband and signed her own name to these letters.³

Governor Ferguson had a great deal of faith in his wife's ability at management. Evidence of this is found in the files of his letters written while he was in Guthrie. Typical of these is the note written to Harrison Brown, Watonga, November 7, 1902:

. . . tell Mr. Rodecker that we can arrange for him to take a rest for a time and Mrs. Ferguson can make arrangements to stay awhile and edit the paper.⁴

Again in 1904 she took over publication of the Republican to enable the manager to visit the St. Louis World's Fair.

During the four years that her husband was at the head of territorial government, Mrs. Ferguson wrote state capital notes and news about political affairs for the Republican. When Ferguson's term expired and the couple left Guthrie to live again in Watonga, the former first lady devoted her time to the newspaper and to writing feature articles for magazines.

Mrs. Ferguson took over her husband's duties in the Watonga post office when he resigned because duties in the office interfered with his political activities. When

³Letter by Elva U. Ferguson, June 30, 1902.

⁴Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Harrison Brown, Watonga, November 7, 1902.

Ferguson received his appointment as governor, Mrs. Ferguson resigned her postal position, but when the couple returned to Watonga in 1906 she assumed her duties as post-mistress and served in this capacity during President Taft's administration.

Mrs. Ferguson had taken over practically all duties in running the Republican when her husband's health began to fail early in 1921. Upon the death of Ferguson, the former first lady took over complete control of the publication.

In February, 1921, following the death of the former governor, Mrs. Ferguson wrote:

Many inquiries have come to me since the death of my husband, Ex-Governor Ferguson, in regard to the future of this paper. I will continue the publication and work of the paper to the best of my ability and endeavor to print as readable a paper as heretofore. The Republican will continue to work for the best interests of Watonga and Blaine County, always ready to boost for the best and condemn the wrong in public affairs.

. . . The conduct of the paper is not new to me and I shall personally manage and edit the Watonga Republican.⁵

In 1930 she sold the paper to Gould Moore and Charles O. Frye of Sallisaw. At the time the transaction was completed, the Republican was the oldest paper in Oklahoma under the same management since its establishment. Concerning her work on the paper, Mrs. Ferguson noted:

⁵Ken Martin, A Brief History of the Watonga Republican (Unpublished term paper, School of Journalism, University of Oklahoma, 1949)

I feel a great deal of satisfaction in the part the paper has had in helping to build a state from raw material. Also from a financial standpoint our country weekly has been a success, and I always have believed it was because we gave it our close personal attention in a business way and kept it absolutely free from debt. It never had a mortgage upon it and never will while I own it.⁶

The names of Mr. and Mrs. T. B. Ferguson as publishers of the Republican were first listed that way in the issue dated September 13, 1900. Prior to that time Mr. Ferguson had been listed as the sole owner and publisher. From 1900 on, Mrs. Ferguson's activities on the Republican staff increased in importance. In 1914 she became the editor of a society page which was filled with social notes and local items. This page contained a banner head, "Local News, Personals, Social Organizations and Observations." In June of that year Mrs. Ferguson added a signed column, "Just Remarks," to her page and listed her phone number.

When Ferguson's name was listed as one of those men being considered for appointment to the governorship of Oklahoma Territory, the Watonga editor drew some sharp criticism. Along with his name in these items was that of his wife. The Guthrie Leader stated that the editor was getting credit for writing and editing the paper which was actually put out by a woman.⁷ In the story about the

⁶Sooner State Press, April 21, 1923, p.1.

⁷Guthrie Leader, November 30, 1901.

inauguration of Ferguson as governor, the Oklahoma State Capital carried the following note about the new first lady: Ferguson once wrote:

Mrs. Ferguson, as assistant editor of the Republican, is also looked upon as a member of the "press gang" and she was also sought out yesterday by the newspaper men. She is just the woman to make an able helpmate to such a man as Tom Ferguson in the governor's chair. Intelligent, capable, businesslike, yet womanly to the last degree and accomplished in all things, she will become a strong favorite among the ladies of the capital city and of the territory.⁸

Mrs. Ferguson did not limit her activities to those concerned with motherhood and with the publishing business. She was a political power in Republican circles as was her husband. In 1924 she was named delegate from the sixth Oklahoma district to the Republican national convention held in Cleveland, Ohio. Mrs. Ferguson was chairman of the state delegation to this assembly. Two years later she represented Oklahoma at the Sesquicentennial in Philadelphia, where she held a position on the executive committee. When the Alfred E. Smith and Herbert C. Hoover factions divided the Republican forces in Oklahoma, Mrs. Ferguson served as vice chairman of the Republican party in the state, a position she held from 1928 to 1932. From political headquarters in Oklahoma City, Mrs. Ferguson helped manage the campaign of Hoover. During her absence

⁸Oklahoma State Capital, December 10, 1901.

from the Republican office, Mrs. Ferguson left Dora Shartel in charge of the publication. Of Dora Shartel, Mrs. Ferguson once wrote:

She was the most accurate compositor we ever had in the office, setting up by hand galley after galley without a mistake, unless the word secretary appeared in the copy. She never could learn to spell that word correctly and I doubt if she ever has yet.⁹

Mrs. Ferguson was a member of Theta Sigma Phi, journalistic fraternity for women, the Watonga Chamber of Commerce, and the Order of Eastern Star. She was representative of the Watonga Culture Club at the first annual meeting of Oklahoma Women's Federated Clubs in Norman. From 1928 until her death, Mrs. Ferguson was listed as Who's Who in America. She took an active part in the Oklahoma Historical Society. In 1933 the Oklahoma Memorial Association named her to the state's Hall of Fame.

The present owner of the Watonga Republican, Gerald Curtin, says that Mrs. Ferguson "sensed the little things in the community -- which are really the big things."¹⁰

After Mrs. Ferguson sold the Watonga Republican, she devoted her time to writing feature articles. She wrote a series of articles entitled "The Story of Oklahoma Pioneer Newspapers" which appeared in the Sunday editions

⁹Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 97.

¹⁰Ken Martin, A Brief History of The Watonga Republican, p. 35.

of the Daily Oklahoman in September, October, November, and December, 1932. Her book, They Carried the Torch, issued in 1937 by Burton Publishing Company, Kansas City, Missouri, was based on the series which appeared in the Daily Oklahoman. With illustrations drawn by her grandson, Benton Ferguson, this story of Oklahoma's pioneer newspapers was dedicated to the memory of her son, Walter Ferguson, who died in 1936.

Regarded by many as "the first lady of Oklahoma newspaperdom,"¹¹ Mrs. Ferguson acted as technical adviser for the pioneer print shop scenes in RKO's motion picture, Cimarron, taken from the novel by Edna Ferber, which was based on Mrs. Ferguson's life.

When asked whether she would advise a modern girl to enter the profession to which she had devoted her entire life, Mrs. Ferguson replied:

Yes, it is to my mind the profession, especially suitable for women, and time has proven that sex is no barrier here. I should say that a sense of humor and the ability to see both sides of any proposition are of the utmost importance for her success. I found these two things valuable and they helped me over many rough spots during my years as editor of my own newspaper. There is no kind of work so thrilling -- something different each day. Opportunities for advancements are many, new worlds to conquer. New stars in the heavens for the ambitious girl.

. . . I know of no other state in the Union where such a large number of newspapers are published by

¹¹Mary Hays Marable and Elaine Boylan, A Handbook of Oklahoma Writers, p. 157.

women as is our Oklahoma, and I hope that, as the time passes, more women will operate papers of their own. There is a satisfaction in it that I can not describe. Fourteen years ago I was faced with two alternatives, selling at a sacrifice the paper which I had assisted my husband in building up, or to go on with it alone. . . . I have never ceased to be thankful that I did not take their (my closest relatives' and friends') advice and that I decided to go on.¹²

A bright future for Oklahoma journalism was foreseen by Mrs. Ferguson. Her ideas on this subject were written in 1935, in these words:

Oklahoma, within the past few years, has produced many newspaper men and women of distinction. Many who are making good on the country paper, which is after all a training school for larger fields. Scores of writers with talent started in that school and many are still doing the work of the country newspaper, for instance, William Allen White of Kansas, a national character. Many I might add, news writers and authors, are coming into their own in Oklahoma.¹³

At the age of 77 years, Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson died December 18, 1947, at the Watonga Hospital following an illness of approximately six weeks. Funeral services were held at the Methodist Church, Watonga.

¹²Sooner State Press, December 13, 1935.

¹³Ibid.

which to print the forthcoming issue of the Republican,
and that he could not use the contribution.

"Cool off a little, sit down and meditate, leave
out the wisecracks and write as if you were

talking to the people." WALTER SCOTT FERGUSON was advised. He

In Walter Scott Ferguson, son of Thompson B. and
Elva U. Shartel Ferguson, Oklahoma had a notable second-
generation journalist. Born March 28, 1886, in Wauneta,
Kansas, he came with his parents in a covered wagon to
Watonga. His youth was spent in the out-of-doors Blaine
County and in the printing office of the Watonga Republican,
where he gained his first newspaper experience and where
the love of printer's ink and newsprint was instilled in
him. Here he "inked the rollers, swept the shop floor,
carried in wood and water, built fires, pried the forms
and pumped the press until he acquired the technique"¹ of
a publisher. Then he began to write articles for the paper.

This story is told about his first piece of copy:
that he handed a story to his father, watched the gentleman
read it, then walk over to the stove, where he deposited
the sheets on the fire.

"How come?" questioned the boy. His father is
reported to have answered that he had no asbestos paper on

¹Colonel Clarence B. Douglas, "Walter Ferguson
Blazed the Trail of Good Will, Yet He Never Forgot Smell of
Printer's Ink," Daily Oklahoman, March 15, 1936.

which to print the forthcoming issue of the Republican, and that he could not use the contribution.

Walter "Cool off a little, sit down and meditate, leave out the wisecracks and come back, write as if you were talking to the person," Thompson B. Ferguson advised. He suggested that the aspiring journalist pretend that the person to whom he wrote the material was larger than himself, and "if I printed that stuff, I would have to get a new boy to take your place."²

After he was graduated from Wentworth Military Academy, Lexington, Missouri, Walter Ferguson received an appointment to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis by Delegate Bird S. McGuire. Ferguson did not accept the appointment, but went to work regularly on the Guthrie Daily Capital, a publication on which he had been employed during his summer vacation in 1902. While working on this publication he dispatched copy to the Watonga Republican. Instructions for the publishing of this copy were written by the governor to Rodecker, then managing editor of the Watonga paper. Governor Ferguson granted the managing editor permission to edit Walter's articles when it seemed necessary:

He sometimes takes a notion to write some one up, and uses a little more vigor than discretion, and in all such cases use your own judgment as to

²Ibid.

whether or not it should find its way into the paper.³

The masthead of the Republican of 1904 listed Walter as associate editor, and since he was doing most of the editorial work on that publication, his articles were signed with his initials, W.S.F. Concerning Walter's work as correspondent for the several papers at this time, Thompson B. Ferguson wrote Clyde H. Knox, Sedan, Kansas:

It is true that Walter has been corresponding for several papers, and among them one or two democratic papers. I know nothing about what he sends out and pay no attention to his work, as it is a matter between the editor of the paper and himself. No effort has ever been made by Mr. McGuire or any other republican to have this correspondence stopped. . . . when Walter commenced corresponding for certain papers they (correspondents) evidently thought that he was a little too alert in getting the news, and inaugurated a move to compel him to stop work as correspondent. Some of them submitted this matter to me, and I told them that it was a free country and that anyone had a right to correspond for a newspaper, provided its editor wanted his services.⁴

Walter left the Guthrie paper and returned to school, going to the University of Oklahoma, Norman, where he was initiated in Kappa Alpha, national social fraternity, the first man to be initiated into a Greek-letter organization in Oklahoma.⁵ While still in school, he did a considerable volume of space-rate writing. He organized what he called the first news bureau at the university and represented

³Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to W.C. Rodecker, Watonga, September 12, 1903.

⁴Letter from Thompson B. Ferguson to Clyde H. Knox, Sedan, Kansas, August 1, 1904.

⁵Charles F. Barrett, Oklahoma After 50 Years (The Historical Record Association, Oklahoma City, 1941), p. 550.

several newspapers through this unit. He did not receive a degree from the university, however, but entered the newspaper field again.

While his father was in the governor's chair, Walter Ferguson established a political column, "Over the Teacups," which appeared in the Shawnee Herald, owned and edited by Charles F. Barrett. He described his work thus:

. . . my column in the Shawnee paper carried a lot of gossip and personality sketches. Barrett was immensely impressed and featured me in the paper far beyond my deserts. I thought it was my literary ability, but this underlying fact was that my father was governor at this time, and it gave a little more significance to the gossip than otherwise. In those days a scoop meant something, and I was frequently able to pull off something in the Shawnee Herald that the Oklahoma City and Guthrie papers did not get. I was accused of getting my political gossip 'over the teacups' by some other correspondents who were furnishing alibis to their managing editors. Barrett, whom I regard as one of the most capable newspapermen ever operating in Oklahoma, seized the opportunity and placed a stereotyped heading over my column, "Over the Teacups." It gave me some very wide notoriety, as I was both tender in years and experience when I accumulated this early fame.⁶

When Walter Ferguson left the University of Oklahoma to go to work on the Guthrie Daily Leader, he obtained a significant position:

. . . the most important and most interesting thing in a newspaper way that has ever fallen to the lot of any reporter within the state. The constitutional convention was assembling in the old Capital, the new state was being born, the new

⁶Sooner State Press, April 21, 1934, p. 3.

leaders were being created, and the Guthrie Daily Leader was the official paper of the convention. Leslie Niblack, with whom all of my work had always been in direct competition on the old Guthrie Capital, asked me if I would take over the job of reporting.⁷

Ferguson took the assignment with enthusiasm. He attended the majority of the committee meetings and did not miss a session of the convention itself. During the convention he corresponded for the Associated Press:⁸

However, my efforts were pretty much confined to the Guthrie Leader, and I have seen that paper go to press in the afternoon with from five to eight columns of stuff I had written. Nowadays a reporter who gets half a column in a 'tight' paper is doing a good job, but I worked for the love of the thing, and have always appreciated the opportunity that Niblack gave me to get identified and acquainted with the new state.⁹

Following the adjournment of the constitutional convention, Ferguson returned to work for the Guthrie Capital, which sent him throughout the Oklahoma and Indian territories as correspondent. In this capacity he witnessed the union of the two separate bar associations, the two press associations, the two educational groups, and the two medical associations. He wrote:

I attended most of the statehood conventions and practically all of the political conventions. Greer always gave me a free hand, and seemed to prefer the kind of work I preferred to do -- personalities.¹⁰

With his stories of conventions and meetings,

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

Ferguson usually submitted several columns of personality sketches about the men who were taking the lead in these activities and about those who promised to come to the foreground in the new state. He always presented the human-interest angle in his articles. During the last six months of the first legislature of Oklahoma, Ferguson was reading clerk and served at night as telegraph editor of the Guthrie Capital, which he called "the most colorful publication ever produced in Oklahoma."¹¹ While clerk of the legislature, Ferguson, with Sam Applegar, secretary to William H. Murray, then speaker of the house, organized a mythical military army called "The Chickasaw Squirrel Rifles" in the Crazy Snake War. Ferguson's clever report, in which he listed 3,500 commissioned officers and no privates, was a take-off on the army.

At various times Ferguson worked on the El Reno American and was later offered work on the Daily Oklahoman, directed at that time by Roy Stafford. Of his work on the El Reno paper, the Kansas City Journal carried the following editorial, which was reprinted in the Watonga Republican, November 7, 1907:

Walter Ferguson, son of Ex-Governor, like the boy who went to college and secured a job in a restaurant stirring dough, is making considerable "stir" at El Reno in his new position as managing editor of the El Reno American. Since taking charge of the paper he has located the headquarters

¹¹Ibid.

of the Oklahoma national guard and the state capital at Fort Reno and has placed Bill Murray in the role of declaring that he will forfeit the charters of all the banks in the Chickasaw nation if they don't open immediately, and has announced that John Golobie has promised not to impair the Guthrie banks by removing his funds from them when they open.

Back pay for fifteen weeks of work on the Guthrie Capital was due Ferguson when he left that publication in September, 1908, to marry Lucia Caroline Loomis and to purchase the Cherokee Republican. His first issue of that paper came out September 25, 1908, and for ten years he and his wife supervised publication of the Republican. They bought the plant from Ed Southwick and his brother-in-law, a Mr. Newman. The policy and goals of the newspaper were announced in the first issue to carry the name of Walter Ferguson as editor. In this issue, Ferguson wrote:

After looking over several newspaper propositions in the different parts of the state the present owner of the REPUBLICAN located in Cherokee because this part of the state looked the most prosperous, the county is the best and the town the liveliest in any part of Oklahoma.

It is the intention to make the paper an apostle to preach the greatness of Cherokee and Alfalfa county and we want no better praise than to have our friends say that we are on the firing line all the time boosting the town and county.

Politically the paper will have the "old time religion" and go on the theory that the very worst that the Republican party could possibly do will be better than the best that the Democratic party has done or will do in this state. The friends of the paper will always know where the paper stands without coming to consult the management. We will always be found supporting the Republican ticket and advocating the real doctrine. We will not go so far as to say that we would support a "yaller dog" on

that ticket so the statement is useless.¹² In keeping with the ideal set forth in his declaration, Walter Ferguson stated in his first issue the need of Cherokee to increase its population to five thousand persons. In this article he expressed his desire that Cherokee be recognized as "the best town in Oklahoma west of the main line of the Rock Island."¹³ In the political field, Walter Ferguson followed his father's steps. He was named delegate to the Republican state convention in 1919 as representative from Alfalfa County. While editing the paper at Cherokee, Ferguson held the job of postmaster. When his father announced his candidacy for governor of the state in 1910, Walter ran a three-column cut of the ex-governor under a four-column, two line head which read, "Governor Ferguson Making Winning Campaign Has Established Big Lead Since State Convention."¹⁴ An article on an inside page told of Tom Ferguson's record as territorial executive and of his life history. Other stories with the picture of Ferguson were carried in the Cherokee Republican throughout the campaign.

Walter Ferguson's interest in history resembled that of his father and mother. In the spring of 1910 the

¹²Cherokee Republican, September 25, 1908, p. 1.

¹³Ibid., October 9, 1908.

¹⁴Ibid., July 1, 1910.

Cherokee Republican ran a series of reminiscences of early days of the Chickasaw Nation, and on July 14, 1911, that publication contained the reprint of an article by Walter Ferguson entitled "In the Public Eye of Oklahoma -- Col. Jack Love." This feature was originally printed in Sturm's Magazine and was a combination historical feature and personality sketch in which the author predicted that the next governor of Oklahoma would be Jack Love. Features on President David Ross Boyd of the University of Oklahoma, and of place names of Oklahoma were run on the editorial page of the April 12, 1912, edition. An earlier issue contained a feature by Fred S. Barde, Guthrie, discussing the Great Salt Plains. Ferguson's own article on duck hunting on the salt plains, located three miles east of Cherokee, was printed in the Republican. Additional research by Ferguson along this line was treated in a brochure written with Clee O. Doggett and privately printed. The title of the pamphlet is History of the Great Salt Plains.

One journalistic endeavor of Walter Ferguson which brought him a great reputation in the southwest and which brought to his paper statewide circulation was his "Bug-scuffle Bugle," a paper within the Cherokee Republican. In this portion of the newspaper the writer "punctured the more prominent egos of the reigning Oklahoma citizenry into their own."

15 Letter from Benton Ferguson, March 10, 1949.
 16 Cherokee Republican, June 15, 1914. Ibid.
 17 Ibid., June 20, 1914.

of that time."¹⁵ Bearing a Bugscuffle, Bolivia, S.A., dateline, the first copy of this subtle sheet appeared in March 20, 1914, although it bore the volume number 23 and edition number 23. Later issues all carried this same volume and edition number.

By February, 1913, the Cherokee Republican had become the official paper of Alfalfa County.

While his wife was advocating women's rights in her signed column, Walter Ferguson attacked the theory on his editorial page. His editorial, "The Feminist Movement," appeared in the June 19, 1914, issue:

The hand that once rocked the cradle is now industriously engaged in rocking the boat and the gentler sex is sternly demanding admission to the caucus of consideration.¹⁶

He termed the crusade on the part of women as "not the out-breaking of a long suppressed wrong but the sudden seizing of a long overlooked chance." He wrote:

Suffrage has very little to do with the movement, being as it were the handiest carriage of the agitation. Recognition and consideration are the key notes of the proposition. Mother wants to be a deposit instead of an overdraft, an asset instead of a liability and a bearer of the flag instead of a bearer of the young. She wants to be a wave instead of a ripple, a gust rather than a zephyr, and wants her lord to take into account her chat as well as her charms.¹⁷

The following week Mrs. Ferguson's weekly column contained the following remark:

It has been a long slow process, but it now seems from the trend of events that women will soon come into their own.¹⁸

¹⁵Letter from Benton Ferguson, March 10, 1949.
¹⁶Cherokee Republican, June 18, 1914. ¹⁷Ibid.
¹⁸Ibid., June 26, 1914.

She announced that women "had great hopes for the future."¹⁹

Walter Ferguson became a candidate for the state senate in 1916. The neighboring press responded to his candidacy in various ways as it had done when the senior Ferguson was a leading territorial political figure. The Dacoma Enterprise was most violent in its attack on the editor of the Cherokee Republican. The Enterprise ran the contents of a postcard, signed by John Fields of Oklahoma City, which stated that if the people of the two counties in the senatorial district knew what type of man Ferguson was "they would lock their houses up when he is in that part of the country."²⁰ The writer stated that "the shingles on the statehouse would not be safe with such men in the legislature."²¹ On another occasion during the campaign, the Enterprise ran an editorial attacking Ferguson:

Walt Ferguson of Cherokee, he of tea cup and militia fame, is a candidate for state senator from Alfalfa county. Those who know old Tom and his son Walt are wondering who they are fixing to knife. Neither one of the Ferguson's were ever known to stand by their friends, they are selfish, they are for the Ferguson family first, last and all the time. It would be a disgrace to have Alfalfa county represented by a man like Walt Ferguson.²²

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., July 14, 1916.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., June 23, 1916.

On the other side of the political race, the Fairview Republican believed that as editor of a newspaper Walter Ferguson had sufficient experience to make him "well versed with the needs of this section of the state."²³ The editor of the Fairview Enterprise predicted that Ferguson would make an "able and efficient representative in the Senate."²⁴ "That there is not a man in the district more familiar with legislative work"²⁵ was the opinion expressed in the editorial columns of the Byron Promoter. The Oklahoma Hornet, Waukomis, wanted to see Ferguson elected to the position, and the Okeene Leader, Amorita Herald, and Jet Visitor supported him in his race.

Ferguson won the election and was named a member of the Senate committees on appropriations, public buildings, public printing, and prohibition and served as chairman of the fish and game committee. As a member of the appropriations group, Walter Ferguson introduced a bill in 1917 calling for the sum of \$5,000 to be used to purchase the Frederick Samuel Barde collection of manuscripts, letters, clippings and pictures. The bill passed, and the data on early history of the state, which had been assembled by the "dean of Oklahoma journalists," became

²³Ibid., July 14, 1916.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

the property of Oklahoma.²⁶

When the Cherokee Republican celebrated its tenth anniversary under the editorship of Walter Ferguson, that publication boasted 12 pages per issue with a circulation of 1,750. On January 31, 1919, the Fergusons announced the sale of the Republican to S. G. Timmons, former publisher of the Aline Chronoscope, and Ursel Finch, former publisher of the Jet Visitor. Commenting on the sale of the Cherokee paper, the Daily Oklahoman ran the following editorial:

The sale of the Cherokee Republican, it is sincerely to be hoped, will not remove its former editor and publisher, Walter Ferguson, from Oklahoma newspaperdom. If it should the profession will suffer a serious loss, and so will the state.

There will be little dissent from the statement that in many respects, Walter Ferguson is Oklahoma's most gifted writer. With the easy, flowing grace of Addison, touched here and there with the pungency of Defoe, Ferguson can transform a trite event into a piece de resistance.

. . . But if Walter Ferguson were merely an entertaining writer his departure would not be assessed a loss. He is far more than a writer. He is an able, high-minded, conscientious and constructive editor. This fact is evidenced in the consistent fairness of his paper. It was finely recorded in the test of the war.²⁷

During the first World War a government agency appealed for a limitation in the price of wheat. Alfalfa County, chiefly agricultural in nature, was alarmed at such

²⁶Mary Hays Marable and Elaine Boylan, A Handbook of Oklahoma Writers, p. 138.

²⁷Watonga Republican, February 13, 1919.

a move and when the Cherokee Republican editorially supported the action there was widespread indignation among the citizens of the area. Hundreds canceled their subscriptions to the paper, but the Fergusons were not disturbed. They hit the patriotic theme by stressing the measure and made the farmers feel "the thrill that comes from sacrifice for a righteous cause."²⁸

Sale of the Cherokee Republican came shortly after the death of Trad Ferguson. Mr. and Mrs. Walter Ferguson sold their publication with the intention of moving to Watonga to assume management of the Republican there. That year, however, the Walter Ferguson family moved to Oklahoma City, where Mr. Ferguson was editor of the Employer, official organ of Oklahoma Employers' Association. He was mentioned by the Oklahoma News in May, 1919, as a possible candidate for United States senator.²⁹ In Oklahoma City Ferguson established an advertising agency and developed a magazine service for newspapers. He left the fourth estate to enter the banking profession. In 1924 he became vice president of the First National Bank and a director of the Federal Reserve Bank, Oklahoma City. In August, 1935, Ferguson was named vice president of the Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association in Tulsa, but he resigned in January of the following year.

²⁸E. E. Kirkpatrick and Frank G. Walling, "Walter Ferguson, 1886-1936", Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XVIII, 1940, p. 96. ²⁹University and Editor, May 24, 1919

Associate Ferguson turned the third floor of his Tulsa home into a museum of rare mementoes of the southwest which includes historical manuscripts, documents, Indian relics, firearms, news clippings and other items of historical value. The walls and ceiling of this attic room are covered with hundreds of photographs of people who played an important role in the formation of the state of Oklahoma. One group contains the faces of almost every publisher and editor from whose presses rolled the daily and weekly happenings in Oklahoma history.³⁰ Walter Ferguson served for a time as director in the Beaver, Meade and Englewood railroad and as inspector of rifle practice of the Oklahoma National Guard.

An active part was played by Walter Ferguson in the press associations and organizations while he was a member of the publishing brotherhood. In the Watonga Republican of February 18, 1904, he stated in his "Editorial Eruptions" that the publication was "enthusiastically in favor of the organization of the proposed Blaine County editorial association"³¹ and that the staff of the Republican would do everything within its power to work for its establishment. At the annual meeting of the Oklahoma Press

³⁰E. E. Kirkpatrick and Frank G. Walling, "Walter Ferguson, 1886-1936," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XVIII, 1940, p. 96.

³¹Watonga Republican, February 18, 1904.

Association in 1913, Walter was appointed chairman of the committee on resolutions. On his committee were William B. Anthony, E. W. Julian, George H. Evans and Ed T. Fray. In 1914 he served on the committee on resolutions and memorials. The first "gridiron" produced by the Oklahoma Press Association in McAlester in 1920 was written by Ferguson, J. W. Kayser, George B. "Deke" Parker, Walter M. Harrison, William R. Martineau and U. S. Russell. At the annual meeting of the association in Muskogee, May 24, 1912, when former Governor Ferguson was called upon to respond to the welcome address, the former territorial executive asked that his son, Walter, make the talk in his stead.

Ferguson died in Washington, D. C., March 8, 1936, as the result of a heart attack which followed an illness of influenza. His body was accompanied to Tulsa by Mr. and Mrs. George B. Parker. Parker, editor-in-chief of the Scripps-Howard newspapers, was a close friend and former classmate of Ferguson. Surviving Ferguson were his wife, Lucia Loomis Ferguson, and three children, Benton, Ferguson, Thomas B. Ferguson and Ruth Ferguson.

Following Walter Ferguson's death, the tribute paid him by E. E. Kirkpatrick and Frank G. Walling was reprinted in Chronicles of Oklahoma:

All who have read Walter Ferguson's serious writing have had no doubt of his moral courage, but less is known of his physical stamina.

Walter Ferguson had much to do with the making of the reputations that were established in the convention and his unpublicized influence is reflected in much of the state's organic law. The real leaders, the men of ability respected and loved and eagerly sought his council. The four-flushers feared him. He was death to "stuffed shirts," for the only thing Walter Ferguson ever hated was pretense.

His humor often had a deflating effect, and many a man who became a leader was stronger and more sincere because a flash of Ferguson wit gave him a good look at himself.

Walter Ferguson was as much a part of Oklahoma as her broad, sweeping plains and native hills. He was not only a part of its colorful history, but out of the very soul of him, dyed that color with some of its richest hues. He played his part in the pioneer's barehanded fight with nature in the raw. Where and while he worked and played, from infancy to manhood, all races and all cultures met and managed and fused. He helped to make and mould a new and distinct social structure and was, himself, its peculiar progeny.³²

Walter Ferguson was one of the pioneers who came to Oklahoma in a covered wagon. Since his father was a newspaperman and he himself early became engaged in that profession, Walter Ferguson had a chance to observe the fourth estate from its very beginning to the time he left journalism to enter banking. With this backbround, he once wrote his recollections of Oklahoma pressmen:

Looking back over the field I am naturally impressed with the vast gulf that exists between the newspaper publications of my day and today. At that time it was all vigorous personality, and the editors had something to say on the editorial page. The most delightful

³²E. E. Kirkpatrick and Frank G. Walling, "Walter Ferguson, 1886-1936," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XVIII, 1940, p. 99.

days I have ever known were those when I carried a mail sack full of country exchanges home on Sunday afternoon, and thus got a cross section of Oklahoma. I always looked eagerly for the Enid Events to get the views of Everett Purcell. I looked forward all week for Ed Gray's contribution from Pawnee. I was never disappointed in Rube Geer's brilliant page from Tishomingo. Dave Marum's efforts from Woodward fascinated me beyond words. Of course my father's vigorous Watonga Republican was the prime feature. I looked forward to getting the El Reno paper and seeing some poetic thing from Pete Duffy. Buck Campbell's Waukomis Hornet was a dessert. John Golobie's Guthrie Register was heavy, mythical, weird and oriental, but it never failed to thrill. J. J. Burke's Norman Transcript was the dignified message from the education center of Oklahoma. Bob Kidd over at Poteau nearly burned the wrapper off each issue. The finest newspaper I have ever known was produced by Jack Newland at Frederick.

The best products were not confined entirely to the county seats, and larger towns. In my own county, the Jet Visitor, issued by Urshel Finch, was a sparkling publication that really belonged to the Oklahoma hall of fame. Grant Harris at Wakita reflected the real spirit of the Cherokee strip. Far out in the Panhandle, Warren Zimmerman produced a powerful newspaper at Guymon. Maude Thomas was always interesting with her fund of historical information about old Beaver county. My buddy and pal, Earl Croxton, was producing a splendid country newspaper in an adjoining county. Roy Johnson, in that democratic citadel, Ardmore, was in some manner able to produce every week one of the most interesting contributions to Oklahoma newspaperdom. I have ever known, the Ardmore Statesman. Bill Hinds, who died recently, was running a daily editorial column at Hugo, the like of which has never been duplicated for humor and brilliance. Gene Kerr was producing a splendid human document every afternoon in Muskogee, and Tams Bixby dominated eastern Oklahoma journalism with his Muskogee Phoenix.

I had more respect and admiration for, and studied the methods of John Hinkle of Stillwater closer than any man in Oklahoma journalism. Of course the greatest of all Oklahoma journalists, to me, was Clarence B. Douglas.³³

CHAPTER IV

LUCIA CAROLINE LOOMIS FERGUSON

I have in mind one woman in particular, a former university girl who did her first newspaper work as a bride on her husband's country paper. She started by writing a weekly column of humorous pertinent truths, concerning affairs which were of peculiar interest to their women of reading. From this small beginning she went on in the space of a few years to a column daily in more than 20 of the largest papers in the land. And again, let me say, that her sense of humor was one of her best assets in her successful career.¹

That was the way Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson described her daughter-in-law in a radio talk concerning the opportunities afforded women in the field of journalism.

Dr. Enos Osborne Loomis and his wife, Lena Arbogast Loomis, left a medical practice in Indiana and settled at Boggy Depot, Indian territory, where they hoped to find the romance and adventure that stories about the west promised. It was here that Lucia Loomis was born March, 1887, in a village which had been built around Fort Boggy immediately following the war between the states. At that time the community had a population of approximately 75

¹Interview of Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson by Suzanne Arnote over WNAD, December 5, 1935, and printed in Sooner State Press, December 7, 1935, p.4.

persons and was in the old Choctaw Nation, governed entirely by tribal laws and customs.

Lucia Loomis received her education at a convent in Denison, Texas, and at Hardin College, Mexico, Missouri. She went to the University of Oklahoma in 1904, and while a student in Norman became acquainted with Walter Ferguson, son of the territorial governor at the time.

Rooming near the place where Lucia Loomis found a place to live were George B. Parker and Ferguson. Lucia and her dearest friend, Adelaide Loomis, began dating the two men, Adelaide always going with Ferguson and Lucia being escorted by George B. Parker. On one occasion it was decided to shift dates. Somehow, the reshift never occurred.²

While a student at the university, Lucia Loomis met another person who was to influence her life. He was Dr. Vernon L. Parrington, Pulitzer prize winner who is credited with being the first to discover Lucia's writing ability. Lucia was a pharmacy student who planned to become her father's assistant in the drug store he had purchased upon his removal to Wapanucka, Oklahoma.

Miss Loomis became a charter member of Kappa Alpha Theta, first college sorority in Oklahoma.

Shortly after Walter Ferguson purchased the Cherokee Republican, Lucia Loomis became his bride.

²Elizabeth Stubler, "Lucia Lays it on the Line," Scene magazine, May, 1947, p. 18-19.

When I look back on those days, I can't decide whether to laugh or cry. We were so young, and so poor, but nothing ever stopped Walter for long. My father paid off the mortgage on the paper -- I believe it was the tremendous sum of \$700.³

One of the biggest thrills in their lives, as members of the fourth estate, Mrs. Ferguson has declared, occurred shortly after they had acquired the new Alfalfa county publication when they attended the Oklahoma Press Association convention held in Bartlesville. A \$50 prize was offered the visiting editor who wrote the best article about the guest city. Since the Fergusons had borrowed \$25 to make the trip, they were overjoyed when they learned that the story Walter penned was declared winner.⁴

Until she entered the Cherokee Republican office the first time, Mrs. Lucia Ferguson had never been inside a newspaper office.⁵ Preoccupation of her husband with politics and hunting and fishing left the weekly paper in her hands. It became necessary for her to solicit advertisements for the paper, to address papers in long-hand, to write local items, society stories, and political interviews, and to see that the paper came off the press. Through these articles she wrote for the Republican, Mrs. Ferguson became the women's voice of her county. It was

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

she who developed an idea which more than tripled the circulation of the newspaper.

I was strong for women's rights, something you just don't discuss in Alfalfa county. It was a big issue in the east, and in England women were going to jail for expressing their opinions. People just laughed when you mentioned giving a woman the vote, and I didn't like it one bit.

Walter was just as much for women's rights as I was, and one night at home he suggested that we start a private debate in the paper. I'd present one side of the argument in a column, and he would answer it on the editorial page.

It was the first time in Oklahoma, and possibly in the Southwest that two policies had been expressed in one paper. People couldn't wait to read our 'arguments!' We'd sit in the kitchen at night going over ideas, and Walter would give me a lot of pointers on what I could say. All over the state people were feeling sorry for him.⁶

Women in the county were accustomed to remaining at home, so the ideas that the editor's wife expressed were revolutionary, especially when she stepped into politics by disagreeing with her husband's ideas on a state measure. Mrs. Ferguson disagreed with her husband in his own newspaper.

As long as she wrote for the Cherokee Republican, Mrs. Ferguson was given free rein as to style and ideas. Her first column appeared in this publication July 12, 1912, but there was no by-line under the heading, "Woman's Column." This feature contained sketches of wives of

⁶Ibid.

senators, advice to girl graduates of 1912, discussions of school teachers and of women and homes. Her first signed story had appeared under a two-column heading "The Editorial Trip" in which she described a visit to Muskogee to attend the press meeting. It was not until December 12, 1913, that Mrs. Ferguson's by-line appeared under her column heading. Prior to that time, since December 27, 1912, her initials, Mrs. W. S. F., had been used with the feature title.

One of Mrs. Ferguson's first articles to discuss the rights of women came out in the column printed September 15, 1912, under the heading "Everybody but Thomas A. Edison Says This is the Age of Women." When her column was first written over her initials, Mrs. Ferguson discussed the suffragettes who were trying to reach the New York governor for a conference. A new art head appeared over the "Woman's Column" January 14, 1915. On this date Mrs. Ferguson championed women's rights in the following:

There are still a few old-fashioned, thick skulled men who contend that women should be contented with their lot as it was fifty years ago; that they can not help the country with their vote, nor the community with their meddling. These men, and they are growing scarce in number every day, feel, imagine and think they know, that women were made to keep the home and leave all other things alone, and when the opportunity offers they are in the habit of talking long and loudly on the subjects of the new woman as she appears to them with all her fateful influence in the world. But these same men hardly ever stop to think that women are responsible for a great many of the public blessings which they enjoy. Cherokee and every other small town, stands as a shining example

of this fact.⁷

On the issue of July 7, 1916, Mrs. Ferguson's column appeared as usual, although the following story by Walter Ferguson was printed in a boxed article on Page 1:

On January 31, 1913, GIRL AT OUR HOUSE

An event worthy of note on page one, next to pure reading matter, occurred at the Cherokee Republican home Thursday morning when a baby girl arrived, diverting the attention of the Sob Editor from the delinquencies of male creation to the gentler art of caring for a line of descendents. As is always the case in newspaper families the baby made her arrival on press day. Aside from the fact that she is deprived of her weekly prerogative of thumping the typewriter and disrupting standpat ideas about woman's place on the globe, the Sob Editor is getting along nicely. The event was an entire success.⁸

The following issue of the Cherokee Republican went to press without the comments of Mrs. Ferguson, but in the issue of August 11, 1916, she wrote:

Since neglecting the journalistic sobs to attend to those of the littlest Ferguson, we have been assured many times that the country at large is getting along nicely without our advice and assistance but strange to say, our informants were always of the male sex, therefore we took the matter with a grain of salt.⁹

The author of "Woman's Column" explained in one of her articles that she was independent in politics, "although we confess a decided leaning toward Republicans."¹⁰

⁷ Cherokee Republican, February 11, 1916.

⁸ Ibid., July 7, 1916.

⁹ Ibid., August 18, 1916.

¹⁰ Ibid., July 7, 1916.

While Mrs. Ferguson was conducting her campaign for women's rights, she did not neglect her crusade for local measures. A former president of the Cherokee Study Club, she worked for better entertainment facilities in Cherokee. On January 31, 1913, she discussed the lack of entertainment in Alfalfa County for the young girls of the community.

Every girl in Alfalfa county will too soon be a woman and it is every woman's duty to make that radiant day of girlhood last as long and shine as bright through the coming years as possible so that when all our girls of now become the grandmothers of the future they can look to today with happy thoughts, forgetting all the sorrows they have had and keeping as the jewel spot in their memory the brightness of their girlhood days in Alfalfa county.¹¹

On April 17, 1914, she wrote:

In this town we lack entirely one single thing which will furnish home amusements for the young who have grown too far to play like little children.

Before, the women of Cherokee, and the men also if they desire to help, lies an opportunity, which, if grasped now, will lead to magnificent results, and if neglected will eventually bring on disaster. . . . It is the question of providing wholesome amusement for the young of this community.¹²

Mrs. Ferguson's first advice-to-the-lovelorn articles appeared in the late 1917 and early 1918 issues of the Republican.

In the same issue in which the Fergusons announced the sale of the Cherokee Republican, an article was reprinted

¹¹Cherokee Republican, January 31, 1913.

¹²Ibid., April 17, 1914.

from the Capron Hustler. This article accused Mrs. Ferguson of being "POSSESSOR OF JUST ABOUT ALL THE BRAINS THERE IS IN THAT FAMILY" and stated that she was "writer of most of the good things that appear in that paper."¹³

In 1919 when the Republican was sold and the Walter Ferguson family moved to Oklahoma City, where he was engaged as public relations director for the First National Bank, Mrs. Ferguson believed that her writing days were coming to an end. She was mistaken. In September, 1920, the Watonga Republican announced that a weekly column by Mrs. Walter Ferguson would be printed. The same art head which had appeared in the Cherokee paper was used.

At dinner one night in Oklahoma City, George B. Parker, the old college chum who had become editor of the Oklahoma News, Scripps-Howard publication, asked Mrs. Ferguson to do several stories for him. He asked for articles similar to those she produced for the Republican.¹⁴ Lowell Mellett, editor of the Scripps-Howard Alliance, became interested in the works of Mrs. Ferguson. Soon she was writing daily columns for that group of papers.

Since the family moved to Tulsa, Mrs. Ferguson has continued to supply the newspaper alliance with copy.

She does all her writing at home. Neither a crusader nor a sob-sister type of author, Mrs. Ferguson

¹³Ibid., January 31, 1919.

¹⁴Elizabeth Stubler (op.cit.), p. 19.

writes to promote ideas and causes in which she is interested:

"I've long been a champion of the poor mother-in-law," Mrs. Ferguson laughs. "She has been berated for so many years that now many a girl goes into marriage with the firm conviction that she can't get along with her husband's mother. And it's becoming more of a problem, now that the housing shortage is forcing many young couples to live with their in-laws."

Readers continue to hit the ceiling when Mrs. Ferguson injects an occasional column on one of her favorite bones of contention, "the cult of dog ownership."

"American people are strange" she shakes her head. "One thing you dare not criticize is a dog. You can say what you please about a woman's child, her husband, church or country -- but say something about her dog, and you're a social pariah without a heart."¹⁵

An article about dogs in the New York World-Telegram caused quite a furore and brought the editor numerous letters from wrathful readers and dog lovers. Other subjects which were treated often are liquor and prohibition repeal.

Her column, "A Woman's Viewpoint," which appears in 19 newspapers, is noted for its chatty, down-to-earth character. This feature is carried in the New York World-Telegram, Pittsburgh Press, Cleveland Press, San Francisco News, Denver Rocky Mountain News, Houston Press, Fort Worth Press, Birmingham Post, Memphis Press-Scimitar, Tulsa Tribune, Cincinnati Post, Indianapolis Times, Columbus Citizen, Knoxville News-Sentinel, Memphis Commercial Appeal, Washington News, El Paso Herald-Post, Evansville Press and

¹⁵Ibid.

and Albuquerque Tribune.

Articles containing lovelorn are written by Mrs. Ferguson for the Tulsa Tribune under her maiden name.

When Mrs. Ferguson's columns were introduced to the Tulsa Tribune readers, William P. Steven, managing editor of that publication, received a letter from Walter Morrow of the Rocky Mountain News which stated in part:

I think her daily feature is the best balanced and human daily article produced anywhere by anyone.¹⁶

On the same occasion, Edward J. Meeman, Memphis Press-Scimitar, wrote:

I have used Mrs. Ferguson's column in the Memphis Press-Scimitar for many years. I regard it as the sanest of all columns now being printed in American newspapers. It is brief without being thin; it is original without being odd; it is clean without being prudish; it is feminist without being anti-masculine; it is personal without being egotistic; it is old-fashioned without being outmoded.¹⁷

In a contest sponsored by the Memphis paper to discover the favorite column of its readers, the prize-winning letter was written by Mrs. Bertha Quillen. She wrote:

After my husband's tragic death I felt there was nothing to live for. I was drinking the cup of despair to the dregs when Mrs. Ferguson's "Inventory" appeared. She made me conscious of my cowardice; gave me a more wholesome attitude on my life.

Why shouldn't she be my favorite writer? She drops

¹⁶Advertising supplement to Tulsa Tribune, August, 1938.

¹⁷Ibid.

in every evening and breaks bread with me mentally, leaving me refreshed. She rekindles a spark of hope that I may be of service to humanity and grow old gracefully.¹⁸

In the Oklahoma Press Association Mrs. Ferguson served as vice president in 1914-1915.

Listed in Who's Who in America, Mrs. Ferguson is a member of the League of American Penwomen, American Association of University Women, Young Women's Christian Association, and Theta Sigma Phi, professional and honorary fraternity for women in journalism.

Mrs. Ferguson is the mother of three children: Loomis Benton, Ruth Alva, and Thomas Bruce. Benton was born in Watonga in 1909; Ruth Alva in Cherokee in 1916, and Thomas Bruce in Oklahoma City in 1923.

In 1944 Mrs. Walter Ferguson was one of eight alumni of the University of Oklahoma named to Phi Beta Kappa, national honor society. She was the only woman elected to the University of Oklahoma Association board when she was selected as a member of that group.

Columns by Mrs. Ferguson have been carried by Scripps-Howard papers since 1930. In the year it was established, "A Woman's Viewpoint" was printed in thirty-five Scripps-Howard papers and in six publications in the James E. Scripps group.¹⁹

¹⁹Sooner State Press, October 11, 1930, p. 1.

Upon interviewing Mrs. Ferguson in 1932, Lucia Giddens, writer for the Birmingham (Alabama) Post, declared that the columnist "is the voice of American women seeking expression of their rights, through her daily column."²⁰

So great was the success of her column that she was soon engaged to write for all Scripps-Howard newspapers -- where it is read daily by thousands of men and women throughout the country. With the new freedom for which she used to campaign won, Mrs. Ferguson has turned her attention to the manner in which woman has adapted herself to the new conditions and to the problems involved in the association of men and women.²¹

In 1937 Mrs. Ferguson was named to the Oklahoma Memorial Associations's Hall of Fame.

Trad's name first appeared in the Watonga Republican as an official member of the staff in the issue of December 15, 1906, when the masthead designated him "Assistant Local Editor." On August 8, 1908, he was given his first by-line on a story headed "Baseball." In this article the young writer discussed a forthcoming game between the Hydro

²⁰Sooner Magazine, July, 1932.

²¹Lucia Giddens, "What Is Good Motherhood?", Sooner Magazine, July 1932, p. 370.

showed a strong similarity to the style used by his father. That same year he wrote a column about baseball and basketball in Blaine County. The first column appeared in the January 8 edition of the Watonga Republican. The next column appeared

CHAPTER V

under a boxed title TOM SHARTEL FERGUSON and was the

first of many. The baby who rode from Kansas to Watonga on the lap of Mrs. Tom B. Ferguson also grew up under the spell of the Watonga Republican and its printing office. Born May 3, 1891, in Sedan, Kansas, his early life was spent in living quarters in the same building with the Republican plant. The smell of printer's ink and of freshly opened newsprint was a part of his early environment, so Tom S. Ferguson, better known by his nickname of "Trad" or as Tom, Jr., followed in the footsteps of his parents and his elder brother. He entered the newspaper profession when he reached maturity.

Trad's name first appeared in the Watonga Republican as an official member of the staff in the issue of December 13, 1906, when the masthead designated him "Assistant Local Editor." On August 8, 1908, he was given his first by-line on a story headed "Baseball." In this article the young writer discussed a forthcoming game between the Hydro and Watonga teams.

Features in the historical round-up vein were written by Trad for the newspaper in 1910, and these

showed a strong similarity to the style used by his father.¹ That same year he wrote a column about baseball and basketball in Blaine County. The first column appeared in the January 8 edition with a by-line. The next column appeared under a boxed standing head, "DOPE by Trad" and was the first sports column to be printed in the Republican. It usually contained eight to twelve inches of news about the local teams.

In 1911, while Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson were listed as publishers, Trad Ferguson was named in the masthead as editor of the Republican. Again, in the July 4, 1912, issue, Trad is listed as local editor.

On August 10, 1918, Tom S. Ferguson was married to Miss Bertha Holcomb of Anadarko.

Before World War I, Trad Ferguson worked on the Daily Oklahoman, Wichita (Kansas) Eagle and McAlester News-Capital, with which he was associated when war was declared. His rising importance in Oklahoma newspaperdom is suggested in a paragraph from the McAlester News-Capital, reprinted on February 28, 1918, in the Watonga Republican:

" . . . and he gives promise of making such a reputation that Senator Walter Ferguson will be better known as his brother than as the 'Sage of the Salt Plains.'"²

For the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of the Republican Trad sent articles from Post Field, Fort Sill,

¹Ken Martin, A Short History of the Watonga Republican, p. 22.

²Watonga Republican, February 28, 1918, p.1.

Oklahoma, where he was stationed with the 202nd Aero Squadron.³ For this special issue he wrote:

Twenty five years is a long time for one paper to be under the same management, but such is the case with this paper. It stands today as a splendid monument to the grit of my father and mother in their struggling work of overcoming the hardships of pioneering in a new land.⁴

Just after being commissioned a second lieutenant, Tom Ferguson became ill with pneumonia and was sent to the army hospital at Post Field, where he died three weeks later. From his early childhood until his death, January 19, 1919, Trad Ferguson was closely connected with newspaper work and with publishing in Oklahoma.

Grief over Tom Shartel Ferguson's passing is believed to have hastened the death of his father.⁵

³Ibid., January 23, 1919.

⁴Ibid., October 11, 1917.

⁵Sooner State Press, February 19, 1921, p. 2.

CHAPTER VI

LOOMIS BENTON FERGUSON

The third-generation member of the Ferguson family to play a part in journalistic activities in Oklahoma, as well as in other states, is Loomis Benton, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter S. Ferguson and grandson of Governor and Mrs. Thompson Benton Ferguson. He was born November 2, 1909, in Watonga, Oklahoma, while his parents were owners of the Cherokee Republican. In high school Benton Ferguson's newspaper interests and family background first came to light when he was business manager of his high school paper. He attended Washington and Lee University in 1926 and 1927, and then entered the University of Oklahoma.

While a student in Norman, Benton Ferguson served as president of Alpha Delta Sigma, national advertising fraternity, in 1930 and 1931. He was advertising manager of the Oklahoma Daily, student newspaper, in 1928 and 1930, and was business manager the following year. He served as associate editor of the Whirlwind, student humor magazine in 1928 and 1931, and was humor editor of the Sooner yearbook in 1929, 1930, and 1931. A member of the

publication board during the 1929-1930 school year, he was also a member of the varsity basketball squad and a member of Kappa Alpha, national social fraternity. He wrote articles and drew cartoons for the Sooner Magazine, alumni publication of the University of Oklahoma.¹

Benton Ferguson received a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1931. He married Carole Maxine Brown of Tulsa on July 15, 1933.

From 1931 until 1933, Ferguson was associated with the Birmingham (Alabama) Post as advertising salesman. He left this job to accept a similar one on the Fort Worth (Texas) Press. He worked on the Press as advertising salesman and political cartoonist, but frequently wrote feature articles for that publication. One of these articles, which was printed in a column next to his mother's columns in that Scripps-Howard publication, was reprinted in part in Time magazine. Discussing how a son feels about a columnist-mother, Ferguson wrote:

She owes me \$10,000, at least, for acting as a guinea pig for her column for the past 15 years. First I got the brunt of her theories on how to raise children; next, I was the wild younger generation; then I was a youth caught in the clutches of a depression; then I was a young married man, and now that I'm a father, I suppose the cycle will start all over again.²

¹Alumni files, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

²Time magazine, August 30, 1937, p.37.

In this satirical article discussing the career of Mrs. Ferguson, her eldest son declared, "But she has one great redeeming feature, and that one is her oldest and boldest son."³

In 1939 Benton Ferguson became vice president of the Texas State Network, newly organized by Elliott Roosevelt. In this position he also worked as promotion manager. He served as account executive and member of the creative staff of Campbell-Mithun, Inc., an advertising agency of Minneapolis, Minnesota, for nineteen months, beginning in 1940. Before he left the agency in 1947 he had risen to the position of vice president.

Returning to his native state in 1947, Ferguson assumed the vice-presidency of Erwin, Wasey and Company, advertising agency in Oklahoma City. He remained with this agency, later known as Erwin, Wasey of the South, until 1948, when he joined George Knox and Associates, an Oklahoma City advertising agency. This connection continued until April, 1949, when he was appointed advertising director of the Fort Worth Press.

Frequent articles have been written by Benton Ferguson, self-styled "brainiest, handsomest male Ferguson."⁴

³Ibid.

⁴Elizabeth Stubler (op. cit) page 44

⁵Letter from Benton Ferguson, March 10, 1949.

Illustrations for They Carried the Torch, the book by his grandmother, were drawn by Benton.

In discussing the Ferguson family's place in Oklahoma journalism, Benton Ferguson once said:

The "third" generation -- that's me, and I'm afraid that as far as newspapering is concerned, I've had little or no influence. I took the advertising rather than the journalistic route, thus becoming the first heretic in the family, as far as newspapering was concerned.⁵

Boren, Lyle H., and Boren, Dale. Who Is Who in Oklahoma. Guthrie, Oklahoma: The Co-operative Publishing Co., 1935.

Bushanan, James S., and Dale, Edward Everett. A History of Oklahoma. New York: How, Peterson and Co., 1935.

Dale, Edward Everett, and Wardell, Morris L. History of Oklahoma. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948.

Farber, Edna. Sherron. New York: Doubleday, Boren and Co., Inc., 1935.

Ferguson, Mrs. Tom B. They Carried the Torch. Kansas City, Missouri: Burton Publishing Co., 1937.

Foreman, Carolyn Thomas. Oklahoma Imprints, a History of Printing in Oklahoma Before Statehood. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935.

Foreman, Grant. A History of Oklahoma. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942.

Hill, Luther B. A History of the State of Oklahoma. vol. 3. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1903.

Hines, Gordon. alfalfa Bill, an Intimate Biography. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Press, 1932.

James, Marquis. The Cherokee Strip. New York: The Viking Press, 1945.

Marsalis, Mary Eaves, and Boylan, Elaine. A Handbook of Okla-

⁵Letter from Benton Ferguson, March 10, 1949.

Marquis, Albert Nelson, editor. Who's Who in America.
Vol. 15, 1928-1929, Vol. 16, 1930-1931, Vol. 17,
1932-1933. Chicago: The A. N. Marquis Co., 1928,
1930, 1932.

Morris, Lerona Rossmond. Oklahoma, Yesterday, Today and
Tomorrow. Co-operative
Publishing Co., 1930.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Murray, William H. Memories of Governor Murray and True
- Barrett, Charles F. Oklahoma After Fifty Years. Vol. 2.
Oklahoma City: Historical Record Association, 1941.
- Beckett, A. L. Know Your Oklahoma. Oklahoma City: Harlow
Publishing Co., 1930
- Boren, Lyle H., and Boren, Dale. Who Is Who in Oklahoma.
Guthrie, Oklahoma: The Co-operative Publishing
Co., 1935.
- Sharpe, John Windsor, compiler. History of the Oklahoma
- Buchanan, James S., and Dale, Edward Everett. A History of
Oklahoma. New York: Row, Peterson and Co., 1936
- Dale, Edward Everett, and Wardell, Morris L. History of
Oklahoma. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948.
- Ferber, Edna. Cimarron. New York: Doubleday, Doran and
Co., Inc., 1930.
- Ferguson, Mrs. Tom B. They Carried the Torch. Kansas City,
Missouri: Burton Publishing Co., 1937.
- Foreman, Carolyn Thomas. Oklahoma Imprints, a History of
Printing in Oklahoma Before Statehood. Norman:
University of Oklahoma Press, 1936.
- Foreman, Grant. A History of Oklahoma. Norman: University
of Oklahoma Press, 1942.
- Hill, Luther B. A History of the State of Oklahoma. vol. 2.
Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1908.
- Hines, Gordon. Alfalfa Bill, an Intimate Biography. Okla-
homa City: Oklahoma Press, 1932.
- James, Marquis. The Cherokee Strip. New York: The Viking
Press, 1945.
- Marable, Mary Hays, and Boylan, Elaine. A Handbook of Okla-
homa Writers. Norman: University of Oklahoma
Press, 1939.

- Marquis, Albert Nelson, editor. Who's Who in America. Vol. 15, 1928-1929, Vol. 16, 1930-1931. Vol. 17, 1932-1933. Chicago: The A. N. Marquis Co., 1928, 1930, 1932.
- Morris, Lerona Rosamond. Oklahoma, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. Guthrie, Oklahoma: Co-operative Publishing Co., 1930.
- Murray, William H. Memoirs of Governor Murray and True History of Oklahoma. Vols. 2 and 3. Boston: Meador Publishing Co., 1945.
- Oklahoma, The Beautiful Land. Oklahoma City: Times-Journal Publishing Co., 1943.
- Ray, Grace Ernestine. Early Oklahoma Newspapers. Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1928.
- Sharpe, John Windsor, compiler. History of the Oklahoma Press and the Oklahoma Press Association. Dedicated at the Silver Jubilee Convention of Oklahoma Press Association at Woodward, Oklahoma, June 6 and 7, 1930. History by J. B. Thoburn, state historian. (Oklahoma City) Oklahoma Press Association. (1930)
- Stewart, Dora Ann. Government and Development of Oklahoma Territory. Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Co., 1923.
- Thoburn, Joseph B., and Holcomb, Issac M. A History of Oklahoma. San Francisco: Doub and Co., 1908.
- Thoburn, Joseph, and Wright, Muriel H. Oklahoma, a History of the State and Its People. Vol. 3. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1929.
- Tindall, John H. N. Makers of Oklahoma. Guthrie, Oklahoma: The State Capital Co., 1905.
- Wright, Muriel H. The State of Oklahoma. Oklahoma City: Webb Publishing Co., 1929-30.
- Writer's Program, Oklahoma. Oklahoma: a Guide to the Sooner State. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941.
- Wyatt, Frank S., and Rainey, George. History of Oklahoma. Oklahoma City: Webb Publishing Co., 1919.

Articles

- "Calling the Roll of Sooner Classes," Sooner Magazine XIX (August, 1947), 12.
- Douglas, Clarence B. "Walter Ferguson Blazed Trail of Good Will, Yet He Never Forgot Smell of Printer's Ink," Daily Oklahoman. March 15, 1936.
- Ferguson, Walter. "A Tribute to Charles F. Colcord," Chronicles of Oklahoma. XIV (March, 1935), 9.
- Giddens, Lucia. "What Is Good Motherhood?" An Interview with Mrs. Walter Ferguson. Reprinted from Birmingham (Alabama) Post. Sooner Magazine. IV. (July, 1932), 362, 370.
- Gould, Charles N. "The Oklahoma Mineral Exhibit at the St. Louis World's Fair," Chronicles of Oklahoma. VI (June, 1928), 150.
- "Hall of Fame, 1929-1945," Chronicles of Oklahoma. XXIII (Autumn, 1945), 212, 214.
- Kirkpatrick, E. E., and Walling, Frank G. "Walter Ferguson, 1886-1936," Chronicles of Oklahoma. XVIII (March, 1940), 93-99.
- Meserve, John Bartlett. "The Governors of Oklahoma Territory," Chronicles of Oklahoma. XX (September, 1942), 225-226.
- Russell, U.S. "Press Pioneers," magazine section, Tulsa (Oklahoma) Daily World, May 30, 1948.
- Sarchet, C. M. "Roosevelt's Search for Honest Man Ended When He Found Ferguson," Daily Oklahoman. April 19, 1922.
- "Sooners in Who's Who," Sooner Magazine. V (February, 1933), 142-143.
- "Son's Report." Time. XXX (August 30, 1937), 37.
- Stubler, Elizabeth. "Lucia Lays It on the Line," Scene, Magazine of the South and West I (May, 1947), 18-20, 44.

Watonga (Oklahoma Territory) Herald. Practically complete files from January, 1895, to December, 1898.

Newspapers

- Cherokee (Oklahoma) Republican. Practically complete files from September, 1908, to February, 1919.
- Daily Oklahoman, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. December 1, 1901. January 16, 1906. July 16, 1906. February 13, 1919. February 15, 1921. April 9, 1922. September 18, 1932. September 25, 1932. October 2, 1932. October 16, 1932. October 30, 1932. November 13, 1932. November 20, 1932. November 27, 1932. March 24, 1933. March 15, 1936.
- Guthrie (Oklahoma) Leader. December 5, 1901. November 30, 1901.
- Kingfisher (Oklahoma) Free-Press. December 5, 1901. December 12, 1901.
- Oklahoma City (Oklahoma) Advertiser. April 11, 1946.
- Oklahoma State Capital, Guthrie, Oklahoma. December 1, 1901. December 2, 1901. December 3, 1901. December 10, 1901. December 15, 1901. January 16, 1906. January 17, 1906.
- Pawhuska (Oklahoma) News. March 12, 1937.
- Sooner State Press, Norman, Oklahoma. February 19, 1921. July 8, 1922. April 21, 1923. March 1, 1930. March 8, 1930. October 11, 1930. December 24, 1932. June 10, 1933. October 7, 1933. April 21, 1934. October 6, 1934. December 7, 1935. March 14, 1936. April 24, 1937. April 15, 1939. November 28, 1939. February 7, 1942. April 8, 1944. December 20, 1947. March 8, 1948. June 26, 1948. October 2, 1948. March 12, 1949.
- Tulsa (Oklahoma) Daily World. Section 4. March 17, 1929. December 11, 1935.
- Tulsa (Oklahoma) Tribune. April 10, 1938. August 21, 1938. August 23, 1938. Advertising supplement for August, 1938.
- University and Editor, Norman, Oklahoma. November 27, 1916. February 8, 1919. May 24, 1919.
- Watonga (Oklahoma Territory) Herald. Practically complete files from January, 1895, to December, 1896.

Watonga (Oklahoma) Republican. Practically complete files from October, 1892, to February, 1930.

Watonga (Oklahoma Territory) Rustler. Practically complete files from June, 1893, to December, 1895.

Unpublished Material

Bridges, Cora Belle. The Struggle of Oklahoma for Statehood. Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of History, University of Oklahoma. 1932.

Everhart, Marjorie Bennett. A History of Blaine County. Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of History, University of Oklahoma, 1929.

Martin, Ken. A Brief History of the Watonga Republican. Unpublished term paper, School of Journalism, University of Oklahoma, 1949. ✓

Parkhurst, C. C. Territorial Governors. Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of History, University of Oklahoma, 1926. ✓

Alumni record files, University of Oklahoma, Norman, on members of the Ferguson family.

Personal letters of Governor Thompson B. Ferguson, 1901-1906. Phillips Collection, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman, Oklahoma.

Personal letter from Benton Ferguson, March 10, 1949.

This volume is the property of the University, but the literary rights of the author are a separate property and must be respected. Passages must not be copied or closely paraphrased without the previous written consent of the author. If the reader obtains any assistance from this volume, he must give proper credit in his own work.

A library which borrows this thesis for use by its patrons is expected to secure the signature of each user.

This thesis by _____ has been used by the following persons, whose signatures attest their acceptance of the above restrictions.

NAME AND ADDRESS

DATE