



THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN

The State Newspaper Since 1906

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

MONDAY, MAY 24, 1993

FLOODS SIMILAR To 1906 Storm That Sank Train

By Ellie Sutter
Staff Writer

"Waters of Raging River Engulf Many Souls When Train Crashes Through Weakened Bridge. Ten or 12 Lives Lost in Awful Railway Disaster on Rock Island Near Dover," screamed headlines of *The Oklahoman* on Wednesday, Sept. 19, 1906.

The engine, No. 614, as well as baggage, mail, smoker cars and a day coach filled with women and children bound from Dallas to Chicago plunged into the turbulent Cimarron River after a month of unseasonably heavy rain.

Only three chair cars, two Pullman sleeper cars and a circus advertising car did not go into the river. The wreck occurred about 9 a.m. on Sunday, Sept. 16.

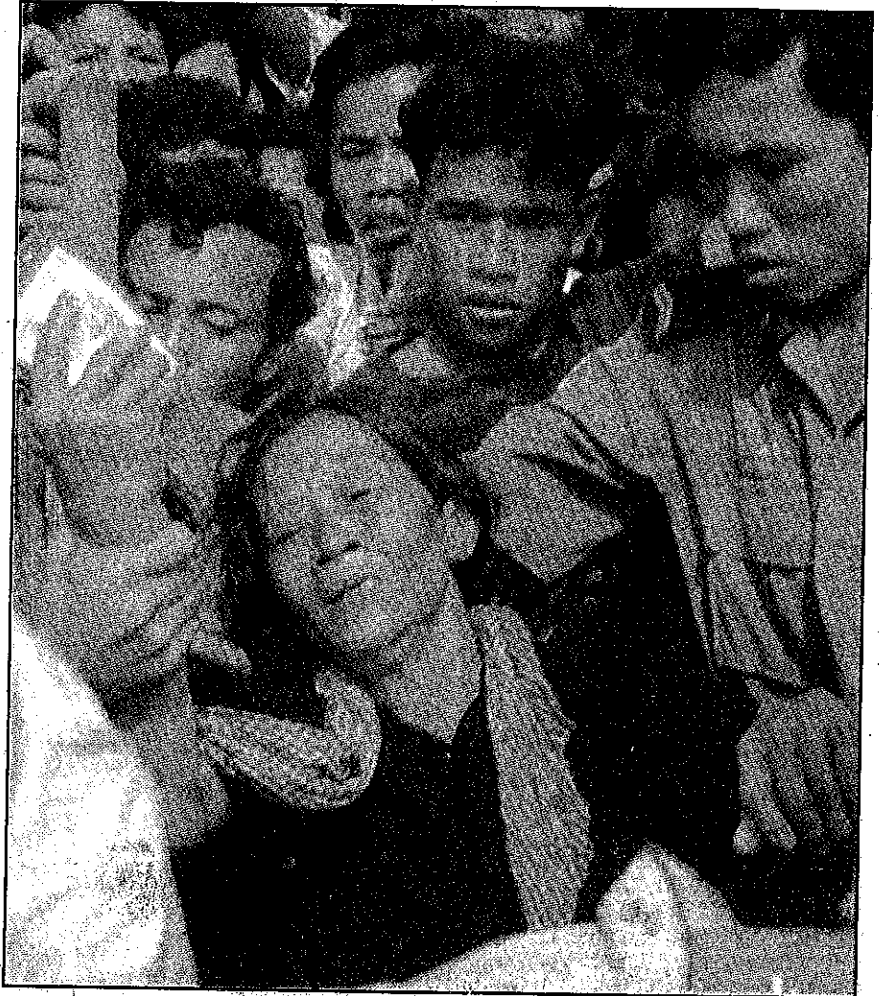
The engine is still there, at the bottom of the Cimarron River, and people who live around Kingfisher still talk about the train wreck, particularly when the Cimarron floods.

The coach came to rest against the south bank of the river and many residents remember using it for a diving board when they were young and swam in the river.

In 1963, Enid road contractor Jim Cummins tried to raise the locomotive but was thwarted. The Rock Island Railroad filed a restraining order against him, maintaining that removal of the engine might result in damage to a pier of the railroad bridge because the engine, buried under 9 feet of sand, was resting against one of the concrete piers.

The engine's whistle reportedly was removed in 1940
See TRAIN, Page 5

Eager to Vote



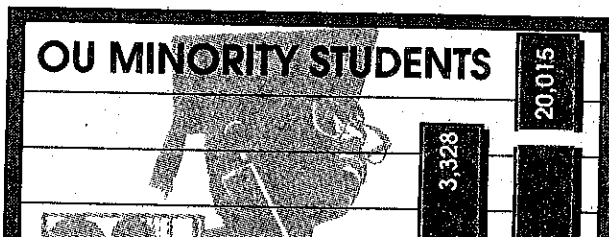
A woman is caught in the crush at a polling site at Siem Reap, Cambodia, as voters turn out in droves Sunday for the country's first multiparty elections in 21 years. Khmer Rouge guerrillas' efforts to disrupt the vote failed in the face of overwhelming turnout. On the first day of the weeklong vote, one-third of the eligible voters cast ballots. Story, Page 3.

OU Leads in Minority Recruiting

By Jim Killackey
Staff Writer

NORMAN — Being No. 1 in the Big Eight conference is usually associated with athletics at the University of Oklahoma.

But concentrated re-



showed OU with 1,230 black students, 933 Indian students, 703 Asians, and 462 Hispanics.

Now, OU is taking another step to address the needs of minorities and women.

can-American studies and Native American studies programs in particular would attract a diverse undergraduate ethnic and racial student population, and demonstrate the university's appreciation of



This photo shot after the train wreck shows people standing on a day coach that rests against the south bank of the Cimarron River.

— 1906 Photo by Rice and Hennessey of Kingfisher

Train

From Page 1

and is said to have been installed on the Kingfisher power plant, where until 14 years ago, it blew at 8 a.m., noon and 5 p.m. each day.

Plant Superintendent Terry Stewart said the whistle has been on the power plant for 35 or 40 years but now is mute. The air lines leading to it have been disconnected, he said.

Miraculously, only four people died as a result of the 1906 wreck. Three were killed in the crash or drowned in the river, and a 3-year-old child died the following day of pneumonia. Sixteen people were injured.

The recent flooding in central Oklahoma, which claimed five lives, is reminiscent of that other flood 87 years ago.

This year, nearly 10 inches of rain fell in less than two weeks. The Cimarron River near Guthrie crested at 10 feet on May 10 and again Friday as rain continued to fall in the river's drainage basin.

News reports from 1906 noted 9 inches of rain fell in August and another 2 inches on Sept. 11 and 12.

The forecast for Sept. 16 and 17, 1906, predicted: "Oklahoma and Indian Territory — fair Sunday; showers Monday."

The Wednesday, Sept. 19, issue of the newspaper told of the wreck and subsequent issues related more grisly details.

Kingfisher Sheriff J.P. Love was in the smoker car when it went off the track.

Under the headline, "Sheriff Love Has Remarkable Escape," he told his story:

"Just as the car was turning on its side I fought my way to the rear and forced my body through the door. The water was then

over my head. When I came to the surface I was swept downstream by the heavy current. Just as I had given up all hope and was in the last stages of exhaustion I touched the bottom and drew myself upon the bank."

Another Kingfisher man, R.G. Nichelson, also escaped the smoker car and swam to shore.

Several people were reported missing and territorial Gov. Frank Frantz ordered troops to guard the Cimarron River banks and watch for floating bodies.

J.F. Wright of Denver was found alive, seven miles downriver from the accident, clinging to a piece of wreckage.

A man identified only as Balmer, a government employee from Lawrence, Kan., also was rescued 13 miles downstream. Frank Cullen, member of a four-man advertising crew for the Forepaugh-Sell Circus, was dragged from the muddy waters by a farmer.

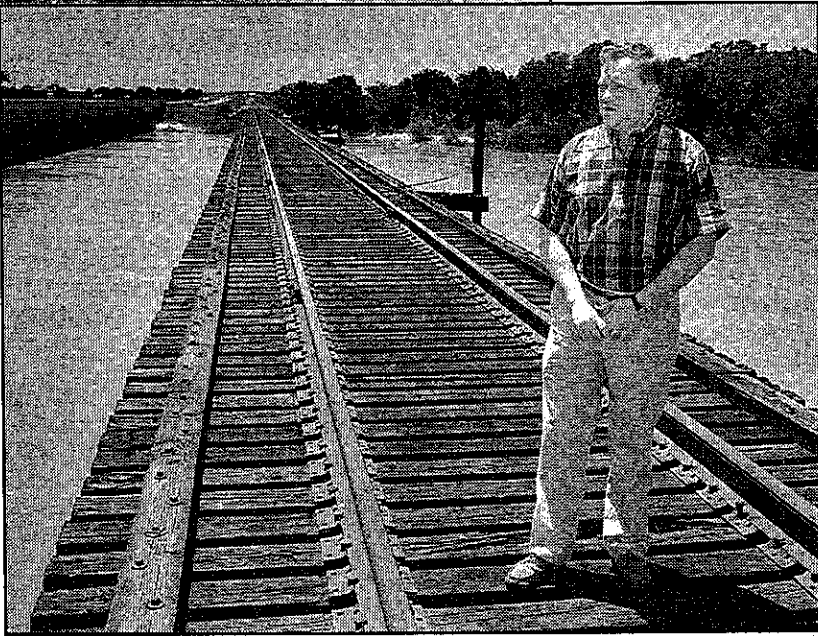
"My escape is little short of miraculous. As I cannot swim, I held onto a piece of wreckage until a man pulled me out," he said.

Another member of the circus crew, Hank Littlefield, drowned.

Harmon E. Sells, 3, of Payne, Ohio, died the next day of acute pneumonia.

One report states that 10 days after the wreck, the body of the mail clerk, Frank Gammel, was found in a brush pile two miles from the scene of the wreck. He was identified by his mail clerk's badge on the lapel of his coat. A conflicting report noted that Gammel's body was found Sept. 21 in the submerged mail car.

The body of W.L. Douglas, a porter, was found two months lat-



— Staff Photo by Paul B. Southerland

Glen McIntyre, with the Chisholm Trail Museum, looks at the U.S. 81 highway bridge while standing on the railroad bridge over the Cimarron River. The engine of a wrecked train is believed to lie west of the railroad bridge about 100 yards from the south bank of the river.

Second Wreck Lost Amid Dover Reports

By Ellie Sutter
Staff Writer

The Rock Island train wreck at the Cimarron River bridge near Dover on Sept. 16, 1906, was not the only train wreck caused by floodwaters that week.

Almost unnoticed on the front page of the Sept. 19 issue of *The Oklahoman* which reported on the Dover wreck, was a short story headlined: "Two Are Killed When Frisco Freight Plunges Into River"

The story said engineer Paul Palmer and the fireman named Quinn were both dead and the brakeman was missing. This wreck occurred Sept. 18 on the North Canadian River bridge about 35 miles west of Dover.

This is the first paragraph of a report of Palmer's ordeal: "Enid, Okla. Sept. 19 —

Plunged headlong into the raging Cimarron river, carried down twenty feet to the bottom in the cab of his locomotive, swimming and floating on driftwood for thirteen miles during a night of awful darkness, with the rain falling in torrents, with no light except that which the lightning flashes gave; sucked into a whirlpool and tossed about until life was almost extinct; landing on an island in the Cimarron river, his only companion a ground hog; given up for dead, and the body of another man, supposed to be his, prepared for burial, and rescued from his perilous situation only after a boat had been built for that purpose, was the experience last week of Engineer Paul Palmer, of the Frisco railroad, who resides in this city."

er when a couple, walking along the river downstream from the wreck, noticed a body protruding from the sand, noted a report in an undated newspaper clipping in Kingfisher's Chisholm Trail Museum.

Repairs were made quickly to the Cimarron River bridge and Rock Island trains

were expected to begin using it by the evening of Sept. 20.

Within a few days, the railroad was enjoined from running passenger trains over the quickly rebuilt bridge and that a train crew had been arrested for doing so.

Sheriff Love posted deputies at both sides of the river with or-

ders to arrest "every train crew or railroad official who attempts to run trains on which passengers were carried over the bridge."

On Oct. 2, the paper reported a bill would be introduced into the territorial Legislature "to compel every train to stop and blow the whistle before crossing a river bridge."

Heavy Rains Inundate Some Roads

The Associated Press

Heavy rains caused flash flooding in central Oklahoma on Sunday, but no damage or

Officials said tree branches littered parts of State Highway 9 in eastern Cleveland County and water covered

sued for several counties in central and southern Oklahoma after storms dumping heavy rain developed along

of Oklahoma, including the Oklahoma City area, calls for scattered thunderstorms this afternoon with highs rising into the 70s and 80s. Thur-

drowned in the river and a 3-year-old child died the following day of pneumonia. Sixteen people were injured.

The recent flooding in central Oklahoma, which claimed five lives, is reminiscent of that other flood 87 years ago.

This year, nearly 10 inches of rain fell in less than two weeks. The Cimarron River near Guthrie crested at 10 feet on May 10 and again Friday as rain continued to fall in the river's drainage basin.

News reports from 1906 noted 9 inches of rain fell in August and another 2 inches on Sept. 11 and 12.

The forecast for Sept. 16 and 17, 1906, predicted: "Oklahoma and Indian Territory — fair Sunday; showers Monday." The

Wednesday, Sept. 19, issue of the newspaper told of the wreck and subsequent issues related more grisly details.

Kingfisher Sheriff J.P. Love was in the smoker car when it went off the track.

Under the headline, "Sheriff Love Has Remarkable Escape," he told his story:

"Just as the car was turning on its side I fought my way to the rear and forced my body through the door. The water was then

for floating bodies. J.F. Wright of Denver was found alive, seven miles downriver from the accident, clinging to a piece of wreckage.

A man identified only as Balmer, a government employee from Lawrence, Kan., also was rescued 13 miles downstream. Frank Cullen, member of a four-man advertising crew for the Forepaugh-Sell Circus, was dragged from the muddy waters by a farmer.

"My escape is little short of miraculous. As I cannot swim, I held onto a piece of wreckage until a man pulled me out," he said.

Another member of the circus crew, Hank Littlefield, drowned.

Harmon E. Sells, 3, of Payne, Ohio, died the next day of acute pneumonia.

One report states that 10 days after the wreck, the body of the mail clerk, Frank Gammel, was found in a brush pile two miles from the scene of the wreck. He was identified by his mail clerk's badge on the lapel of his coat. A conflicting report noted that Gammel's body was found Sept. 21 in the submerged mail car.

The body of W.L. Douglas, a porter, was found two months lat-

Second Wreck Lost Amid Dover Reports

By Ellie Sutter
Staff Writer

The Rock Island train wreck at the Cimarron River bridge near Dover on Sept. 16, 1906, was not the only train wreck caused by floodwaters that week.

Almost unnoticed on the front page of the Sept. 19 issue of *The Oklahoman* which reported on the Dover wreck, was a short story headlined: "Two Are Killed When Frisco Freight Plunges Into River."

The story said engineer Paul Palmer and the fireman named Quinn were both dead and the brakeman was missing. This wreck occurred Sept. 18 on the North Canadian River bridge about 35 miles west of Dover.

This is the first paragraph of a report of Palmer's ordeal:

"Enid, Okla. Sept. 19 —

Plunged headlong into the raging Cimarron river, carried down twenty feet to the bottom in the cab of his locomotive, swimming and floating on driftwood for thirteen miles during a night of awful darkness, with the rain falling in torrents, with no light except that which the lightning flashes gave; sucked into a whirlpool and tossed about until life was almost extinct; landing on an island in the Cimarron river, his only companion a ground hog; given up for dead, and the body of another man, supposed to be his, prepared for burial, and rescued from his perilous situation only after a boat had been built for that purpose, was the experience last week of Engineer Paul Palmer, of the Frisco railroad, who resides in this city."

er when a couple, walking along the river downstream from the wreck, noticed a body protruding from the sand, noted a report in an undated newspaper clipping in Kingfisher's Chisholm Trail Museum.

Repairs were made quickly to the Cimarron River bridge and Rock Island trains

were expected to begin using it by the evening of Sept. 20.

Within a few days, the railroad was enjoined from running passenger trains over the quickly rebuilt bridge and that a train crew had been arrested for doing so.

Sheriff Love posted deputies at both sides of the river with or-

ders to arrest "every train crew or railroad official who attempts to run trains on which passengers were carried over the bridge."

On Oct. 2, the paper reported a bill would be introduced into the territorial Legislature "to compel every train to stop and blow the whistle before crossing a river bridge."

Heavy Rains Inundate Some Roads

The Associated Press

Heavy rains caused flash flooding in central Oklahoma on Sunday, but no damage or injuries were reported, authorities said.

There were reports of water covering some roads after strong thunderstorms dumped more than 4 inches of rain on Cleveland and McClain counties late Saturday and early Sunday.

By midmorning Sunday, Capt. Esau Green with the McClain County sheriff's office, said "Everything appears to be leveling off."

Officials said tree branches littered parts of State Highway 9 in eastern Cleveland County and water covered roads in northern sections of the county.

Police in Purcell and Noble also reported street flooding.

Farther south in Jefferson County, the sheriff's office reported floodwater approaching some houses, but no evacuations or road closings were ordered, a dispatcher said.

The floodwater also inundated U.S. 81 near Ryan.

A flash-flood watch was is-

sued for several counties in central and southern Oklahoma after storms dumping heavy rain developed alongside a cold front and an upper-level low pressure system.

The system moved slowly eastward through the state Sunday.

Forecasters said light winds kept the possibility of severe thunderstorms and tornadoes low, but they also slowed down the front and contributed to the heavy rains.

Today's forecast for much

of Oklahoma, including the Oklahoma City area, calls for scattered thunderstorms this afternoon with highs rising into the 70s and 80s. Thunderstorms also are possible after midnight. The lows should be in the 50s and 60s.

Skies are expected to be partly to mostly cloudy Tuesday with a chance of thunderstorms. Highs are expected in the 70s and 80s.

Tuesday's skies are to begin clearing and temperatures should be cooler Tuesday night with lows in the 50s.