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Editor:
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Ad Sales & Creation:
Debbie Hines
Debbie Mitchell

Research:
Renetta Tottress
Debbie Hines
Sherry Smith
Debbie Mitchell
Paula Dawes

Assemble:
Doug Stone
Lenee Adams
Renetta Tottress
Cassandra Chuculate
Stephanie Baker
Stacy McKeever

Community Links
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Cheese, OK. 74018
789-2862 or 789- 5900
Fax: 789-5918



Johnny Ray was born in Chouteau on March 1, 1957. He is a graduate of Chouteau High School. He attended college at the University of Arkansas and was All-Southwest Conference two consecutive years, helping the Razorbacks to a second-place finish in the College World Series in 1979.

In 1979 Johnny was the 12th round amateur draft pick of baseball's Houston Astros.

The Pittsburgh Pirates acquired Johnny along with pitcher Randy Niemann and outfielder Kevin Houston. Ray was not only a slick fielder but also a solid hitter. In his rookie season of 1982, he played in all 162 games for the Pirates, hit .281 and was The Sporting News National League Rookie of the Year.

Still modest about his accomplishments, today Ray claims this early success came as a surprise even to himself. "It was nothing that I expected," said Ray. "You are just glad to get to the big leagues and to be able to start and play every day. That's all I was really worried about. I didn't really expect all of the accolades."

(Continued on next page)

While the Pirates were sliding in the standings after winning the 1979 World Series, such familiar names as Stargell, Dave Parker and Kent Tekulve were still there to provide guidance to the rookie.

"It was good for me," said Ray of the veteran leadership. "They taught me a lot about the game and a lot about things outside of baseball."

"It was good to be around those individuals. They talked to me a lot, especially 'Pops' [Stargell], and just filled me in about life. They knew how to play and they taught me how to play the game. Just showing up every day to compete and play is one thing I really learned from them."

"I was from a small community and to come up to Pittsburgh and these major cities, they taught me a lot about how to handle myself."

By 1984 the Pirates had sunk to the bottom of the NL East standings, a position they would occupy for the next three seasons. Despite the poor play of the team, Ray hit over .300 during both the 1984 and 1986 seasons, and combined with teammate Tony Pena to offer Pittsburgh fans a ray of hope.

"The 'Family' atmosphere was starting to get broken up and the veteran guys were getting a little older," said Ray. "They were looking for some fresh blood. Tony Pena and I were coming up at the time and we were just enthusiastic about playing."

Despite his own success, Ray says it was never easy to handle the constant losing. "It was tough," he said. "Your objective at that time is to win. That's the only thing you really think about."

"It was very frustrating. They were breaking up the 'Family' at the time [Pena and I] were really getting established, and it was tough because the guys were getting older and they had to bring in new blood. Tony and I were the only two recognizable names at the time and we just had to fight through it and just play."

After appearing in 123 games for the Pirates in 1987, Ray was traded to the California Angels. He would play three more seasons with California and earn his lone All-Star selection in 1988, but it was his time in Pittsburgh that he cherishes to this day.



Johnny Ray baseball card

Photos and article about Johnny were found on the web site www.mlb.com. Ed Eagle, who is the site reporter for pittsburghpirates.com, wrote the article. ▶



Pirates Photo

Johnny Ray led the Pirates in hits four times during his seven seasons in Pittsburgh and committed only 118 errors in 1,227 Major League games at second base. He also appeared in 40 games as an outfielder and eight as a designated hitter.

Ray retired in 1990 with a .290 batting average over 10 big league seasons. He appeared in over 150 games during seven of those campaigns and remains most proud of his durability.

"Longevity, consistency, staying healthy and coming out to play every day -- I think all everyday players strive to be that way," said Ray. "The only thing I didn't get to do was play in a World Series and I think a lot of players can relate to that."

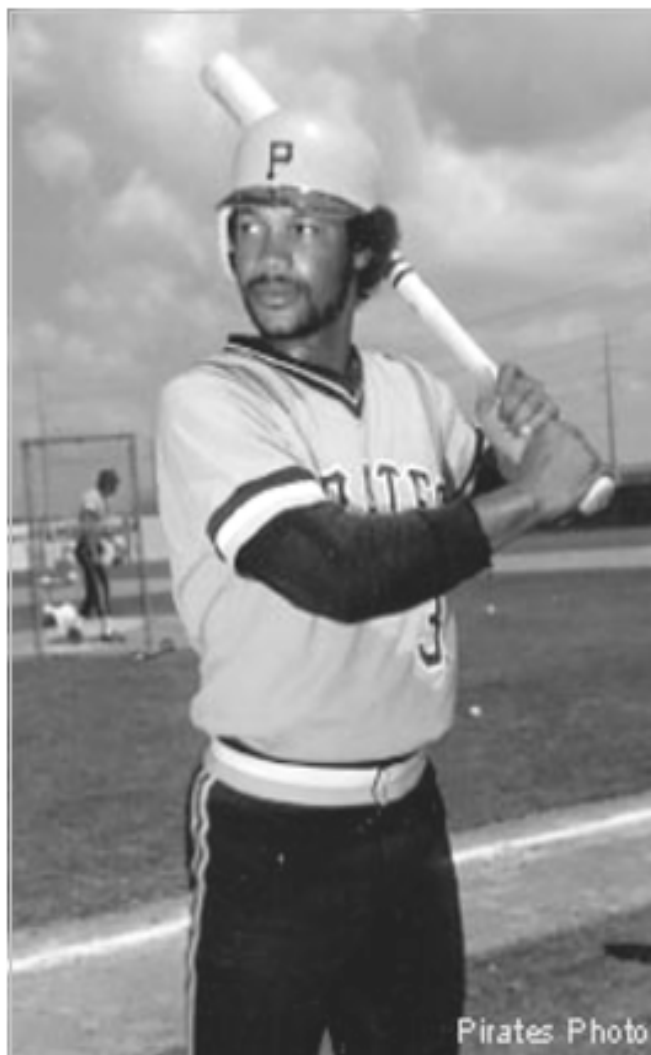
"But I just went out there every day and tried to compete and be consistent. That's one thing I pride myself on."

Johnny had opportunities to go into coaching after retirement, but was never really interested. "That's a case where it's not how much you know, but who you know. Besides, I wanted to spend time with my family. When you're playing you're away from your family more than people realized. Children grow up fast enough, and I didn't want to miss any more of that. Besides, the travel gets old after a while."

In 2003 Johnny was asked if he ever thought about how much money he would be making if he were playing today. He said, "I came along 10 or 11 years too early. Today, you have .230 hitters who are making \$2 million. When I was playing, guys like Ryne Sandberg were only getting a million a year. Think what they'd be making. I'm a former player and I believe in guys getting what they can, but when they are paying \$25 million for one guy ... it's crazy."

Today, Ray resides in his hometown of Chouteau, with his wife Tammy and children Johnny, Jr. and Jasmine. No longer worried about stealing bases or turning the double play, he now revels in the life of a dad.

"I'm just basically relaxing and enjoying my retired life with my family," said Ray. "I'm just watching my family grow and enjoying life."





Street scene of early Chouteau
Chouteau History

Chouteau is located in the old Cooveescoowee District of the Cherokee Nation, in south Mayes County. Known as Pryor's Creek, becoming a post office on August 19, 1869. At that time the postmaster was Rufus N. Denton. Later, in 1871, when the railroad crossed Indian Territory, the post office was moved a few miles south of its original location and the name changed to Chouteau. The postmaster then was Edwin Archer.

Mrs. Sallie Freeman Mayes has a copy of a letter written November 27, 1912 from the Post Office Department in Washington, D. C. appointing Leland C. Freeman as a rural mail carrier for Route 2 out of the Chouteau Post Office. Watts Bledsoe was carrier for Route 1. Both men had signed up subscribers for rural mail service. Mr. Freeman's route was 21.5 miles long and his annual salary was \$990.

An important thoroughfare was the Texas Road, which passed to the east of Chouteau. Mr. Valentine Gray, who was Mrs. Alma Crockett's stepfather, lived on the Texas Road, raising hogs and selling pork to the travelers. His house was about two miles north of the present Grand River Bridge where it crosses Highway 33. Later his home was known as the Sixkiller Place. When the railroad came, The Trail lost its importance.

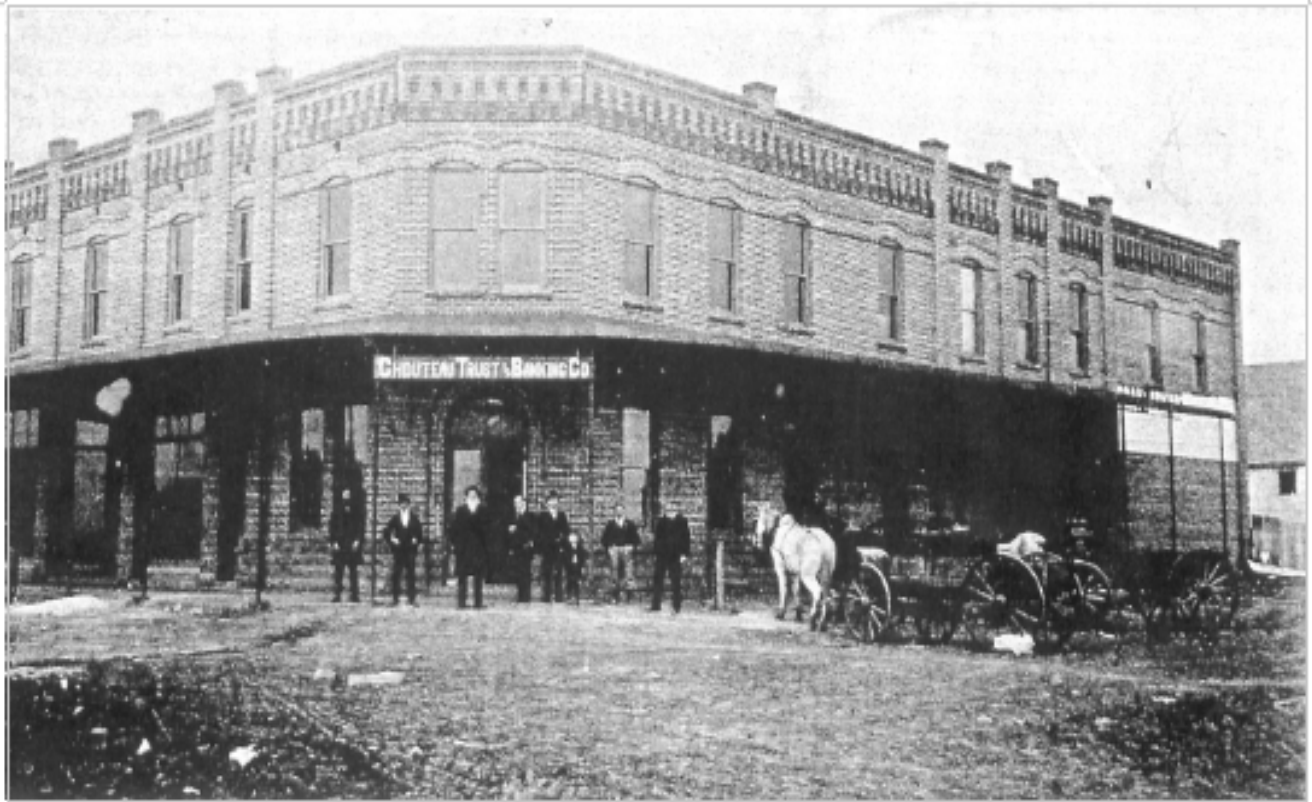
In 1871, the Missouri, Kansas, Texas Railroad was crossing Indian Territory and had reached Pryor's Creek (Chouteau). At one point, Chouteau was the terminus. Generally, the railroad followed the route of the Texas Road. The first depot burned in 1920 but was rebuilt the following year. When the railroad began to lose business, the depot was shut down. It stayed vacant for several years and in 1974 it was announced that the old depot would, have to go.

The Chamber of Commerce, the Jaycees, and the City Council worked to save the old landmark. They had planned to move it to the City Park but the asking price was too high to consider bids and Mr. Marshall Franks was the high bidder. It sits on his property SE of town and can be seen at points along 33-69 Highway.

Chouteau Trust and Banking Co. This was the first bank to be organized in Chouteau, probably about the time of statehood for Oklahoma. According to a 1911 edition of the Chouteau Herald, C. Hayden was the president of the bank and M.E. Adkins was the vice-president. The cashier was Mr. W. R. Samuel. The old bank building still stands on the corner south of the post office.

Farmers and Merchants Bank was organized in 1908 with a capital stock of \$25,000. It had a surplus of \$3800 and individual deposits, which totaled \$75,000. The bank building is still standing on Main Street across from the Public Service building. Today it houses a day nursery.

After the Depression, Chouteau no longer had any banks. In June 1966 a group of businessmen began to lay the groundwork for a bank to be located at Chouteau. After much opposition, their efforts finally succeeded and on March 26, 1968 a charter was granted for a state bank to be established here. Today the Bank of Commerce is located just west of the old Farmers and Merchants building on Main Street.



A Telephone system was installed in Chouteau in the spring of 1908 before the town was incorporated. A stock company had been formed and shares were sold at \$25 each. About 25 citizens of the town bought one or two shares but with doubt about the success of the venture.

The real estate firm of Hennigh and Crockett furnished the balance of the money required for installation of the service. The firm later bought the outstanding shares and operated the system until it was sold to Mr. Jess King. After some time, a system was set up at Inola, linking the two towns with telephone service. After some time, a system was set up at Inola, linking the two towns with telephone service.

The Chouteau Commercial newspaper was established in 1904 and published weekly by H. M. Butler. An ad appearing in a 1905 copy of Chouteau Commercial Appeal announced that Hayden Mercantile Company was holding a "Great Spring Sale", enabling you to buy new dress goods of soiesette, mohair luster, poplins, percales, and gingham. To every lady visiting the store on that day, a nice book of needles and to every man a cake of the celebrated Glycerin Tar Soap free of charge.

The Chouteau Herald began publication on March 16, 1906 and was edited by A. M. Havermale. In December 1906, Havermale was succeeded by James Grady Butler of Pryor Creek. In 1908 the paper was sold to Hennigh and Crockett Real Estate. It continued as a partnership until 1914 when Crockett bought Hennigh's share. It continued in operation with hired help or by being leased to others.

Hazel Crockett Bonecutter operated it for about a year until David Crockett took charge. He continued as operator throughout his high school years, it was when he went away to college; it was leased to W. R. Harper. After college, David resumed operation. Later he expanded the business by purchasing the Adair Citizen. In 1941 Dick Elam bought the Herald and the Citizen and consolidated them with the Pryor Democrat. The publications were moved to Pryor and combined into one paper, the Pryor Daily Times.

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The Chouteau Grain Elevator established its business in Chouteau in the year 1907. According to an old copy of the Chouteau Herald, it was a very profitable business. Mayes County was well suited to the growing of corn, wheat, oats, cotton, timothy, clover, alfalfa, and cowpeas. The paper stated that cowpeas had made six tons of hay and fifty bushels of seed per acre. It continued by saying that "You can always have a good market for your grain here." The elevator was destroyed by fire on November 19, 1956. It was rebuilt much more modern than before.

Chouteau was incorporated on April 19, 1909. C. Hayden, M. E. Adkins, W. E. Grant, W. D. Joiner, and 53 others signed the petition asking for incorporation.

County Commissioners signing the incorporation papers were Dr. W. C. Bryant of Chouteau, R. E. Delozier of Adair, and L. C. Harrison, County Clerk of Pryor.

The first chairman of the town board was T. L. Snodgrass and the first town Clerk was H. A. Bettis. The first Justice of the peace was W. E. Grant. Dr. Bryant was the first county commissioner to be elected after statehood.

Today a Board of Trustees governs Chouteau and the Board elects the Mayor. The town is divided into 5 wards.

By January 4, 1910, Ordinance 18 granted a franchise for gas to serve Chouteau. On December 16, 1910, Ordinance 24 was passed governing the size of pipe and the piping of gas into the homes.

Gas was to be furnished free of charge to the city for lights and heat in the City Hall and for streetlights, not to exceed 8 lights. The lights were to be extinguished when not needed. A \$5.00 deposit was required of each consumer. Today the town of Chouteau buys gas from Oklahoma Natural and in turn sells it to the citizens.

The franchise granting the Public Service Company permission to serve Chouteau was approved April 20, 1926. The company moved its offices from Pryor to Chouteau in 1952. Keith McDonald was district manager at that time.

The Chouteau office serves customers as far west as the Verdigris River, 4 or 5 miles beyond Locust Grove on the east, south to Brushy Creek, and north of Highway 20 from 3 to 6 miles, excluding Pryor.



Chouteau Depot

The sewer system was made possible by a sizeable sum of money from the estate of the late W. A. Graham of Pryor. The system began in 1957 and was completed in 1958. What the money from the estate failed to cover, the city voted bonds to make up the difference.

In 1955 Chouteau businessmen decided to organize a fire department. Since funds were not available to establish it, an 11-year old farm truck with a 1944 motor was fixed up with a water tank, fire fighting equipment, and a group of volunteers to fight fire. The total cost was \$4100. The first fire chief was W. E. "Red" Capehart. He had 10 volunteer firefighters.



In 1914 Joe C. Lindsey and Will A. Crockett were delegates to a meeting in Siloam Springs, Arkansas to see what could be done about a road from Tulsa to Siloam Springs. In order to get to their destination, the two men traveled by way of Wagoner and Sallisaw. Crockett had drawn to scale a map showing the lay of the country between the two cities. He had outlined how a road could be built from east to west, passing through Kansas, Leach, Rose, Locust Grove, Chouteau, Inola, and on to Tulsa. At first, the chairman of the meeting refused to consider the plan, saying a road could not be put through that hilly country and would have to be built farther north through Pryor and Claremore.

After much discussion, it was agreed that the map would be studied carefully, and the two men were allowed to present their plans to the meeting.

The meeting, originally set for 1:30, was delayed until 2:00 when the delegate from Tulsa arrived. E. E. Guthrie had left Tulsa at 6:00 a.m. and had traveled over the northern route by way of Pryor.

After a general discussion, the route plan was unanimously adopted, especially after the experience the Tulsa delegate had in reaching Siloam Springs. The highway was to be named the White River Trail.

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There were no public funds available so businessmen along the route contributed money and work to get it graded, marked, and opened for use.



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In 1911 the name of the highway was changed to Highway 11. It wasn't easy keeping Highway 11 open and association was formed to see that it was not declared a dead issue. Crockett was elected president of the association and C.A. Border of Tulsa was secretary-treasurer.

In 1929 the name was changed from Highway 11 to "Arrowhead Route" Today it is known as State Highway 33, stretching across Oklahoma, and one of the most heavily traveled highways in the state. His family has preserved the original map drawn by Mr. Crockett.

In 1952 a group of businessmen and citizens met to discuss the need for an organization to promote the commercial, industrial, and cultural interests of Chouteau and its trade area.

From the efforts of this meeting the Chouteau Chamber of Commerce was founded and a set of by-laws drawn up. Officials elected at that time were: President - J. H. Brown, Sec - Treas—H. J. Patterson, and an executive board of six members.

The Gray and Adkins Mercantile Co. began business in 1896 with a capital of \$9,000. In the year 1900 they put in a three-stand cotton gin with a capacity of 30 bales per day. This was the first gin to be put this far north.

Farmers began to grow cotton and the crop became very profitable in this part of the state. In the season of 1911 the firm handled \$57,000 worth of cotton. Other cotton gins were here and many residents of Chouteau can recall skating on the ice of some of these gin ponds.

There was a livery stable where the Guy Williams house now stands and just north of that Arch Devers had a blacksmith shop. His shop was behind Dr. Bryant's office, which faced Main Street. South of the old Farmers and Merchants Bank building was another livery stable operated by John Bendure.



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Chouteau, being a cattle town, built a fence around its limits to keep the cattle out. Gates were conveniently located and parents escorted their children safely to and from town. Many early citizens lived in tents outside the town and they also built fences to keep the cattle out. Many beautiful homes took the places of the tents.

J.L. Baugh and G. D. Bonecutter were real estate dealers in Chouteau. One of their ads in the Chouteau Herald listed 140 acres "all in cultivation except 18 acres under fence, two tenant houses. Grand River bottom land, 4 miles from town, \$8,000." Baugh was a Cherokee Indian, having been born and raised here, and Bonecutter had come from the state of Kansas to Chouteau.

From the Chouteau Herald, 1911: "To sell or trade for land, a Brush automobile in good condition. Perry Lumber Company."

In the same paper this article by Clay Robbins: "In 1884 I left Illinois, came west to grow up with the country. From 1884 to 1905 I worked as a cowhand for other people and I saw some pretty rough times. At that time the country was all open and nothing to break the north wind except a few barbed wire fences. In 1905 I went to work for myself, taking a lease from Abe Keys and family. I am glad to say that I live in Mayes County."

About 1875 the government set land for the Chouteau Cemetery aside from public property belonging to the Cherokees.

Chouteau lost several of the older buildings in 1985, when a fire destroyed a full block in the downtown business district.

The information used for this article was found in the Mayes County History book. We encourage readers to visit the Pryor Library and go through this book, as it has a lot more details about early Chouteau. The library also has issues of several early day Chouteau newspapers on microfiche.



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Chouteau Now

Under the direction of Mayor Jerry Floyd and the Board of Trustees, the city of Chouteau has flourished. The Board members are: Brenda Cunningham, Kathy Wittie, Tonya Yoder, and Tina Croft. Gloria Berrett is City Clerk, City Treasurer is Willa Tripp, Court Clerk is Potia Van Horn, and Cherry Dry is Deputy Court Clerk. Other city officials are: Street Supervisor – Keith Harris, Building Inspector – James Dunn, CEMD – Zack Jackson.

Chouteau is on the verge of major development with plans for housing additions and expansion of the business district along Highway 69, which runs through the main part of town. Many improvements and upgrades have been made in the city due to grants and donations from the private sector. A new fire station was built at no cost to the City.

Chouteau has 17 volunteer fire fighters who are fully trained as First Responders. The Fire Chief is Ted Key. The department is run with a \$100,000 annual budget. They have three 1,500 GPM pumper trucks, two tanker trucks, two grass rigs, and a new Rescue Unit.

The Chouteau Police Department consists of Police Chief Gary Shrum and seven fulltime officers, one part time officer, and four reserve officers who are Cleet Certified. Many of the officers are little league baseball and football coaches.

K-9 officers and the School Resource Officer do presentations on drug education, school safety, problem solving techniques, and drivers education. They visit many schools throughout Maves County.

The population of Chouteau is approximately 1,947.



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SECTION 8 HOUSING VOUCHERS ACCEPTED



Hometown Heroes

We dedicate this issue of Hometown Oklahoma to everyone in Chouteau who served our country. To those currently serving, and those who served and returned home, we say a special "Thank You!" To the families of those who didn't make it home, we extend our heartfelt sympathy.

The following information was found on KJUL TV's web site at www.kjul.com. Click on Hometown Heroes. Families have submitted pictures and information about those currently serving our country. They urge anyone having family deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan to submit their information. They have created a special link to do so. We proudly present some from Mayes and Rogers Counties.



This tribute to Kyle Brinlee of Pryor, who died May 11, 2004, was submitted by his aunt, Melissa Davidson-Yount



S P C Steven Ruben, of Pryor was one of the 17 injured in an attack with a mortar shell. Steven is a soldier from the Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 1st Armored Division. He is a graduate of Thunderbird Youth Academy in Pryor.



Cody Smith of Pryor is a grenadier (M16 and Grenade Launcher) with the 27th Cav Infantry. He is stationed outside Baghdad.



Andrew Wangsgard of Inola is stationed in Iraq. His twin brother Brad Wangsgard is stationed in South Korea. They both went to Thunderbird.

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Education in Chouteau, Then and Now

R. W. Lindsey built the first school building in Chouteau in 1880. He was an early settler, and having several children, was interested in establishing a school. The school was free for Cherokee Indian children and white children could attend by paying a monthly tuition of \$1.00. The school was one room building located on Block 21 of the original town. The building was used for school and church meetings.

By 1890, this building was too small and a new two-story building was built by a company formed by several businessmen. They were W.R. Samuel, M.E. Adkins, V. Gray, C. Hayden, and others. This building was used for school, theater, public hall and lodges.

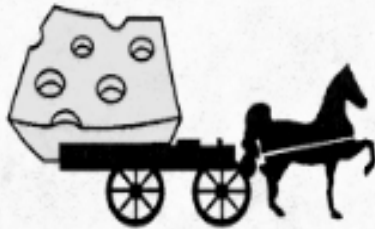
In 1908, bonds were voted and a stone and brick building was built on the present school site. When the school opened September 1, 1908, there were three classrooms and offices on the second floor, three classrooms on the first floor, two classrooms, a boiler room, and two storage rooms in the basement. This building was used until 1939, when it was torn down and a new, one story building of stone was built with ten classrooms and offices. It is used as the southeast wing of the present school. Fire destroyed the roof and interior of this building in February of 1942. School was held in three churches until the building was completed.

Jess Grinder was superintendent when this building was opened in September of 1942. The enrollment was about 400, with an average attendance of about 300, as the population fluctuated because of the Powder Plant employees changing jobs. In 1942, the Chouteau School District was valued at \$375,300 and the value of the School Plant was \$36,000.

Since then, the school has been improved, with new buildings and modern restrooms, a water system, a cafeteria, a gymnasium, Home Economics and Band buildings. The Chouteau School System is one of the best in Mayes County and has grown in value over the years.

Today over 1,100 students attend the Chouteau Mazie school district. The Chouteau Early Childhood Development Center is now under construction. It will contain a center room constructed of solid concrete, which will serve as a tornado shelter for all of the students.

Tom Turner has been the superintendent of the Chouteau Mazie School District for 3 years. He has been in education for 34 years. Stan White is the high school principal, Charles Arnall is the middle school principal, Dennis Stutzman is Mazie Elementary principal, and Steve Boone is Chouteau Elementary principal.



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HISTORY OF THE AMISH & MENNONITE FAITH AND PIONEER FAMILIES LIVING IN THE CHOUTEAU AREA

The Amish and Mennonite families bought land in Mayes County in 1910. Mr. Albert Hochstetler and Sam J. Chupp was one of the first pioneer families to purchase ground in this area.

We had the pleasure of visiting with Mr. Melvin Yoder and his wife Edna. They provided us with interesting information about the Amish life style. We also purchased a book at the Amish Questions and one at the Amish Cheese House, which gave us answers to our many questions. We thought our readers might enjoy getting more information about the decaded and enriching lifestyle lead by the Amish and Mennonite.

To start with Amish and Mennonite beginnings date back to 1525 from a group of persecuted radical Christians nick named Anabaptists. All Amish and Mennonite groups are Christian fellowships; emphases on life style and peace have distinguished most of the group throughout the centuries. The differences among the various Amish and Mennonite groups through the years have almost been ones of practice rather than basic Christian doctrine.

Amish groups tend to be more cautions on technology and involvement with the larger world than most Mennonites. Old Order Amish drive horse – drawn carriages, dress “plain”, refrain from the use of electricity, emphasize occupations close to the farm and the home and forbid higher education. Mennonites embrace education and technology as opportunities.

The best-known leader of the Mennonites was Menno Simons, a Catholic priest from the Netherlands, who joined the movement in 1536. His moderate leadership and prolific writings did so much to unify the scattered Anabaptists that they soon were nick named “Mennonites”.

In 1693, a young Swiss Mennonite elder who felt the church was losing its purity broke with his brethren and found and formed a new Christian fellowship. His name was Jacob Amman and his followers were nicknamed “Amish”. All Mennonite and Amish groups are devoted to the Christian faith and life.

In an age of scare resources decaying environments, dying family structure, extreme loneliness, and disdain for commitments, the Older Order way of life may offer as much fulfillment, meaning, and security as the highly touted “progress” of Western civilization.

For the Amish and Mennonites who believe that how one lives reflects one’s faith, clothing is simply another expression of their deepest convictions. They didn’t set out to look odd; they purposed instead to practice humility, simplicity, nonconformity, and modesty. These people have failed many times in up holding their ideals, yet they have been able to sustain remarkable consistency for centuries.

Old Order Amish and conservative Mennonite parents want their children to learn the basics. The Amish child knows less about science and technology but more about soil, animal and plant care and basic skills like carpentry, masonry and food preservation. The Amish child is bilingual.

The Amish and Mennonites have been known as some of the world’s best farmers. This resulted from a thorough search for good land and their unusual skills at tilling God’s earth. They believe in sharing with others from their gardens and their earnings. Amish and Mennonites are traditionally great feasters! Food is not a part of our people’s faith. People of the land eat from the land. If one’s garden is bountiful, so is one’s table. And so menus reflect the seasons, the soil, and the climate.

The stress on the Christian virtues of perfection and humility has been both one of the greatest assets and one of the weaknesses of the Mennonites and Amish.

To go back to the early settlers of Mayes County, the land agents would give free trips by train to explore this land. The first Amish were mostly from Ohio. This area was prairie land with very few trees except along the rivers and large creeks. The section lines were laid off but every few fences and poor roads. Water for cattle was hard to find in dry weather. In 1966, rural water lines were put in and improved the community.

According to the records, the first Amish men that bought land were Albert Hochstetler and a man by the name of Sam J. Chupp. Rudy Yoder bought 80 acres in 1910 then sold it to J.J. Troyer who moved from Kansas. The farms were located two miles north of Chouteau.

Eli Hochstetler (the only minister at Chouteau at that time) moved here from Ohio in 1910 with his seven children.

Bill Detweiler married here in Oklahoma and raised his family. Bill lived to be the Oldest Amish resident of Mayes County. He passed away on Jan. 4, 2004 at the age of 90 years and 6 months. He was a likeable man with a good sense of humor.

The R.B. Detweiler (Rudy) place was sold to two of the R.B. Detweiler great grandchildren. The original barn that was built before 1920 is still there in good condition. It is oldest barn in the Amish community.

Noah D. Yoder moved here from Sugar creek, Ohio in 1912. He has the most descendants living in Chouteau area. He had eight children, all of whom lived in Chouteau except Ida and Edna.

Mary Ann Yoder married John Chupp from Haven, Kansas. He was the son of John and Lydia (Miller) Chupp. Sarah Yoder married Henry Kroeker who was of the Russian Mennonite faith, but joined the Amish. John Henry married Mary Chupp, daughter of Meno and Barbara (Bontrager) Chupp.

Melvin N. Yoder married Edna Miller, whose family moved to Chouteau from Reno County, Kansas in 1937. Melvin is ordained three times. First a deacon, then minister, then Bishop in the south church at age 67.

Ben Troyer's family moved to the area around 1935. They moved by horse and teams from Sumner County, Kansas.

Noah Yoder and Rudy Detweiler owned a case steam engine and thrashing machine. They were known as "Road Masters". Many of the roads were not graded very well; so 12 horses hitched to the grader graded them. There would be one man on the grader to guide the grader in and out of ditches.

Bishop Crist M Miller is the oldest member in the Amish settlement. He was born February 9, 1913. He is up and going slowly but is still able to go to church.

In Mayes County there are four Amish districts they have 91 households, 39 are Yoders, and 52 are with other last names. They have 50 young folks, 78 school children, 46 under school age, and 6 out of school, but not yet sixteen, for a total of 351 people.

The Amish and Mennonite population makes up a large portion of Chouteau area. We are grateful for their kindness in allowing us to write this article explaining their beliefs, and for their support by purchasing advertisement.

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The Grand River Dam Authority is organized to benefit the customers and citizens of Oklahoma. As a self-supporting state agency, revenues from the sale of electricity instead of taxes fund GRDA. At the same time, customer rates are maintained at some of the lowest levels in the country, because GRDA is a not for profit utility. GRDA produces wholesale electricity for cities, electric cooperatives, and industries across a 24 county service area in Oklahoma.

GRDA generates the majority of its electricity at the Coal Fired Complex (CFC) where the mission is to produce reliable, round the clock power for customers. Consisting of Units 1 and 2, the CFC is located three miles east of Chouteau on a 1,245-acre site. This site represents the southern boundary of the MidAmerica Industrial Park, which is the center of GRDA's industrial load.

Meeting rigid government environmental standards is a top priority of the CFC. The facility is equipped with extensive pollution control equipment, including electrostatic precipitators to collect ash and a sulfur dioxide scrubber on Unit 2.

Ash collected from coal combustion is recycled for beneficial purposes, such as making concrete. After impurities are removed, combustion gases are released through the CFC chimneys, which reach over 500 feet above ground. The chimneys are continuously monitored to make sure environmental standards are met and emissions are minimized.

The CFC site also serves as an informal wildlife sanctuary. The facility's cooling ponds provide food and rest for thousands of migratory waterfowl. Deer and other wildlife can also be seen on the CFC acreage. No hunting is allowed on the site.

The heart of the CFC is the control room, located adjacent to the turbine generator floor. As the operational center, it is home to state of the art computer technology, which helps ensure that every aspect of plant operations achieves maximum efficiency, reliability and ultimately, lower costs for GRDA customers.



Aerial view of the Coal Fired Complex



Another view of the complex

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The CFC is fueled by coal from mines in Wyoming's Powder River Basin. This enormous coal deposit and low cost energy reserve has enough low sulfur coal to fuel the nation for several hundred years. It takes 150 hours for the coal trains to make the round trip from Wyoming to Chouteau, then back. They keep a 60-day supply of coal stockpiled. 135 rail cars of coal are burned each day.

GRDA produced its first megawatts of electricity over 60 years ago, when it harnessed the waters of the Grand River at the Pensacola Dam near Langley, Oklahoma. In the years that followed, it would again take advantage of the power of water at the Robert S. Kerr Dam and the Salina Pumped Storage Project. When the CFC began operations in the early 1980s, Oklahoma's most reliable and lowest cost energy generation system was completed.

To ensure the power gets to the customer quickly and efficiently, GRDA's facilities are linked by a state of the art Energy Control Center. They also maintain over 1,800 miles of high voltage transmission lines.

Power production is the mission of the CFC, but the facility also helps power the economy of Oklahoma. The abundance of GRDA's low cost electricity has been an incentive for businesses to locate to Oklahoma, especially to MidAmerica Industrial Park.

GRDA has a workforce of about 450 employees, 215 of which are stationed at the CFC.

We would like to thank Justin Alberty, GRDA's Public Information Representative for the information and pictures used in this article, and for the tour of the CFC facility.

Learn more about GRDA by checking out the web site at www.grda.com

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New Lawmaker Has 'Sherrer' Energy

Ben Sherrer is a rare breed. The 36-year-old Chouteau man elected to replace Larry Rice in the Oklahoma legislature is one of those rare individuals who almost seems too good to be true. And while Sherrer's image is that of a bright, young, successful attorney, the hard-working Christian man has had his shares of trials and tribulations.

From the tragic childhood death of his only sibling, to a collegiate struggle with his studies, Sherrer has always found a way to take life's struggles and turn them into a learning experience for those around him. The election for the District 8 seat in the Oklahoma House of Representatives was no different.

Sherrer, who everyone considered a long shot when he announced his candidacy, outworked his four opponents and ended up in the state spotlight when the final votes were tallied.



Born in Anchorage, Alaska where his father was stationed in the U.S. Army, Sherrer moved to his parents' home state of Oklahoma when he was three. His parents were childhood sweethearts and wanted to get back to the Sooner State to be close to their family and to raise their two sons, Robert Benjamin, named for his father and Cordell Vincent, named for a men's dormitory at Oklahoma State University where his parents both graduated.

As a young man, he would travel with his parents back to their hometown in Pushmataha County to help his uncle, Gary, campaign for the District 19 seat in the state legislature. Twenty-five years later, during his own campaign for the state legislature, Ben would point to that early exposure to state politics as an important factor in his decision to enter the government sector.



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Sherrer's adolescent years weren't much different than other young Oklahoma teen, until a tragic farm accident claimed the life of his 13-year-old younger brother. Himself only 16, Ben was playing high school football and had asked his brother to perform the evening chores while he suited up for the Inola Longhorns. During the routine feeding of a show calf, something went terribly wrong and Cordell was dragged to his death. His father, Bob, found his lifeless body when he got home from work.

"It was devastating," said Sherrer. "Terrible. Like nothing you can ever imagine." In the days and weeks and months following the accident, Sherrer's parents immersed themselves in their faith, finding a nearly impossible way to thank God for the short time they had with their son.

"I would hear them praying and couldn't understand how they could thank God for anything," said Sherrer, who found himself burning with anger. "It infuriated me. I would just sit there and grind my teeth." It wasn't until well into his college days at Oklahoma State that Sherrer would come to grips with his anger and let it go, knowing that his brother's death was somehow part of God's master plan.

While attending Oklahoma State University, the former All-District linebacker walked on to Coach Pat Jones' football team, earning a spot on the squad in the infamous 0-10-1 season - an experience Sherrer said taught him the importance of humility. "It was an experience I'll never forget," he said. "Of course, I don't think anyone else will forget it either. It was a great lesson in not quitting even when times are rough."

In Stillwater, Sherrer struggled with his grades and though he would end up graduating with a business degree in organizational administration, he had to take a fifth year of college to improve his grade point average enough to get him into law school.

During that fifth year of college, he met Margo, a dark-haired beauty from Texas who had the brains to match her charming personality. They went to an OU/OSU wrestling match at Gallagher Iba Arena on their first date, followed by a trip to The Tumbleweed, Stillwater's honky-tonk hideaway.

Dreaming of becoming a lawyer someday and practicing family law in a small town somewhere in northeast Oklahoma, Sherrer enrolled in law school at Oklahoma City University, much to the surprise of the dean of the law school who told him he wasn't "lawyer material." It took him four years of night classes to finish, but Sherrer graduated and ended up in the top third of his class.

Spotting a help wanted ad in the Oklahoma Bar Journal, he went to work for Randy Elliott in March of 1997, and found himself back in Green Country, living just a few miles from his parents home in Tiawah.

Ben is active member of the community, serving Pryor and Chouteau as city attorney and volunteering his time to serve on the five-member Mayes County Public Facilities Authority, which is overseeing the construction of the new Mayes County Courthouse. He also is a member of the Pryor Rotary Club.

Two-and-a-half years ago, a well respected member of the Mayes County legal community summoned Ben to his office and suggested he consider a run for the state legislature. Ironically, Sherrer had already been talking with Margo about the idea, but had nearly talked himself out of it.

"I was apolitical," said Sherrer. "I knew who Larry Rice was and I knew term limits would eventually force him from office, but I knew little more than that." Like clockwork, Sherrer said the same gentleman who originally proposed the idea kept asking him about it every few months. In January 2004, he made his decision public with an announcement in The Paper.

By springtime, three other Democratic candidates would emerge as challengers including a young political activist with deep ties to party officials statewide, a Tulsa firefighter who grew up in Pryor and lived in Inola and a Pryor businessman whose family had been involved in county politics for decades.

From the beginning, Sherrer felt like he had what it took to "go the distance," but when a so-called independent poll emerged in June showing him at the back of the heat, he began to have his doubts that he could pull it off. "I knew if I worked hard enough I could do it, but I had my concerns," he said.

By the time the poll surfaced, Sherrer had already received several thousand dollars in donations and felt like there was "no way of backing out." "I had too many people believing in me. We had already had fundraiser in Inola and a pie supper in Chouteau.

There were regular people placing stock in me and giving me their hard-earned money." Sherrer describes the entire process as very humbling. "The whole idea of someone else believing in you is a pretty amazing feeling," he said. By the time the election process was completed, Sherrer had raised more than \$60,000 -- most of which came from "regular folks" who live inside the district.

During the campaign, there were several times that Sherrer said he would come home from a long day at the office and not feel like going door-to-door. But each time, someone in his supportive family would speak up to offer encouragement, even four-year-old Bennett. On one especially trying night this summer, Sherrer said he came home, took off his suit coat and sat down at the kitchen table. In walked Bennett. "Dad, we have to work together to win this election," he said. "Let's go." And they went.

In the last few weeks leading up to the primary election, Sherrer said he felt the tide beginning to turn. After two successful public forums and three consecutive Saturdays of door-to-door canvassing, Sherrer began to believe in himself again.

With a surprise endorsement from The Paper on the day before the primary, Sherrer went to the polls on Election Day feeling unbeatable. At day's end, he finished a distant second and found himself in a runoff against Pryor's Bob Chambers.

After a string of positive turns of events including the endorsement from two of his former opponents, Sherrer was determined to outwork his opponent and in the end, he did, not only picking up the Democratic nomination in August, but streaking away with the November general election as well.

In the end, Sherrer is most pleased with the fact he remained the same throughout the campaign. "I never tried to be someone I wasn't," he said. "I'm proud of that fact. I think I'm the same person today that I was in January when I walked up those wooden steps at The Paper to announce my candidacy. I didn't try to make myself out to be somebody important.

Sherrer lives in a recently remodeled Victorian home in Chouteau with his wife, Margo, a Certified Public Accountant, and their two sons, four-year-old Bennett and two-year-old Samuel. An active member of the First Baptist Church of Inola, Sherrer still has strong ties to Rogers County, where his parents still live.

The information used here was found in an article in the Pryor newspaper 'The Paper' and from www.bensherrer.com.



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H.L. Burton

Mr. Burton retired to the Chouteau area from Tulsa. He operated a bait shop in Chouteau. He was so impressed with his adopted "hometown" that he made a very generous donation to the Chouteau Mazie School System. He purchased equipment and funded projects to the total of approximately \$250,000.

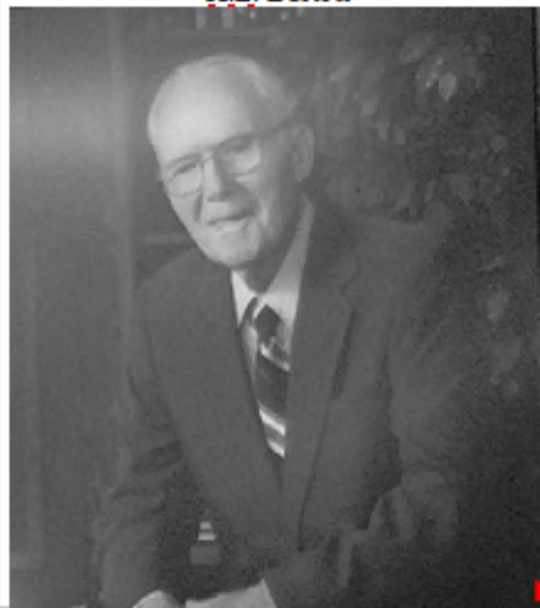
His contributions paid for the purchase of computers for the high school business and computer labs, and computers for the high school, middle school, and elementary school. A computer and buzzer system was bought for the high school Quiz Bowl.

Projects added for outdoor activities were a basketball court, walking track, a volleyball court, and playground equipment. A tennis court, complete with fence and lighting was added. The construction of a new high school baseball field; complete with fence, lighting, and concession stand with press box and restrooms was also funded by Mr. Burton's donations. New stage curtains and library shelving was purchased for Mazie Elementary School.

The generosity of people like Mr. Burton renews our pride in the people of the part of Oklahoma we call HOME!

We would like to thank Brenda Caldwell and Mr. Abbott for providing us with the information used here, and for allowing us to take pictures.

H.L. Burton



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Monument at the entrance of the Chouteau Cemetery