

Forensic Genealogy Online

A PHOTOGRAPH CAN provide an interesting window into an ancestor's life. All too often, however, the ancestor has left no information about a picture, so it is up to us to deduce its story.

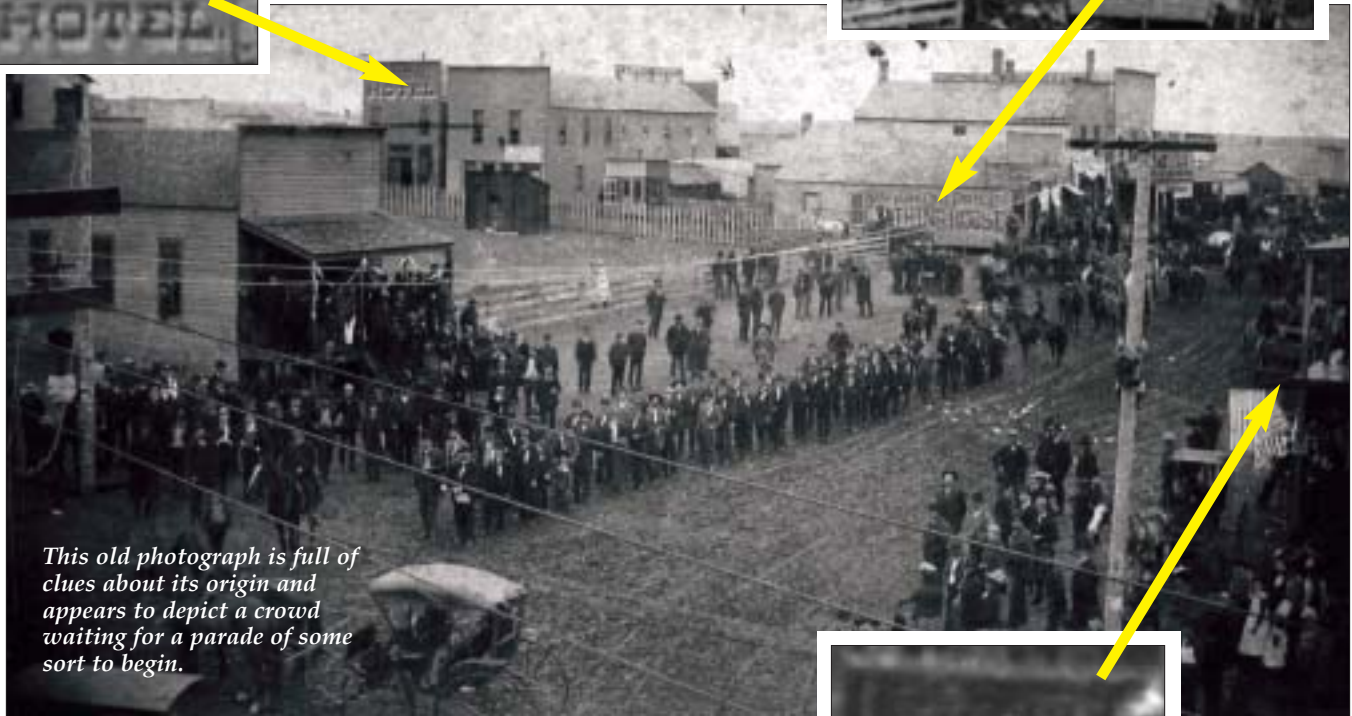
The photograph shown below was submitted by Linda Williams, one of our regular visitors to the weekly photo contests we host at www.forensicgenealogy.info. The picture is rich in detail and full of clues about its origin. It depicts an event in a small town around the

ture. The writing on our photograph offers a number of tantalizing clues. There are several buildings that can be identified: The New York One Price Clothing House, the Capitol Hotel and a wholesale and retail grocery. A high-resolution scan of the far right of the photograph reveals a sign reading "stationery". There is also writing on the back of the photograph that provides a specific location for the photographer's studio: *Mitchell and DeGroff's Pioneer Photograph Studio, Harrison*

website says that on 2 March 1889, two days before he left office, President Grover Cleveland signed the Springer Amendment to the Indian Appropriations Bill, opening the Unassigned Lands of the Indian Territory to permanent settlement. The new president, Benjamin Harrison, set the date and the time for the Land Run as noon, 22 April 1889.



It depicts an event in a small town around the



This old photograph is full of clues about its origin and appears to depict a crowd waiting for a parade of some sort to begin.

turn of the 20th century. It seems the crowd in the picture is waiting for a parade to begin. There are flags flying and two columns of men lined up in the middle of the street ready to start the march, each with a ribbon on his vest. Yet Linda did not know why it was among her great-grandmother's papers nor what role, if any, her great-grandmother's family played in the event.

A good first step in analyzing a photograph is to note any writing that appears in or on the pic-

Ave., Guthrie, Ind. Ter.

Searching Google on the keywords *Guthrie* and *history* yields numerous websites describing Guthrie as a key town in the Oklahoma Land Run that occurred on 22 April 1889. Guthrie was soon to become the Oklahoma Territorial capital, and later, the first state capital.

For example, the website www.sandplum.com/guthrie/landrun.htm offers a historical background on the Land Run compiled by the Oklahoma Historical Society. The



The land was available to homesteaders on a

first come, first served basis. Landseekers were allowed to enter the district at that time, find a claim, and file at the US Land Office in Guthrie or Kingfisher, approximately 30 miles to the west. These were the only locations designated under the Indians Appropriations Act. Later in 1889 an additional Land Office was established in Oklahoma City.

An estimated 50,000 to 75,000 people participated in the Land Run, entering the territory on noon of that day by foot, in covered wagons, on horseback, and by train. They joined a significant number who had illegally entered the territory earlier to get the best claims. These early arrivals were called "sooners". The population of Guthrie before the run consisted of soldiers, deputy marshals, government officials and railroad personnel; by nightfall, it had swelled to 10,000 to 15,000 people living in tents or shacks. The earliest date the photo could have been taken was 22 April 1889, although the appearance of the town with streets and businesses implies that it was taken somewhat later.

Among the websites listed by Google were several that had photographs of early Guthrie. A picture on www.treasurenet.com/images/americanwest/westok.html taken in 1893 from E. Harrison Avenue at 1st Street shows many brick and stone buildings. The structures in our photo are not as sophisticated, indicating that the picture was probably taken earlier. Further supporting this earlier date, the website <http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~tammie/hotels/hotels.htm> reports that the Capitol Hotel (seen to the left in the main photo, previous page) burned down 15 April 1893. We now know the photo was taken between 22 April 1889 and 15 April 1893.

Another website, <http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~tammie/logan.htm> offers several early Guthrie city directories that list some of the businesses in the picture. The 1890 directory includes the Capitol Hotel and Cohen and Strauss' New York Clothing House. The empty lot in the middle of the picture can be identified as part of the government acre and the crowded building to the left as the US Government Land Office.

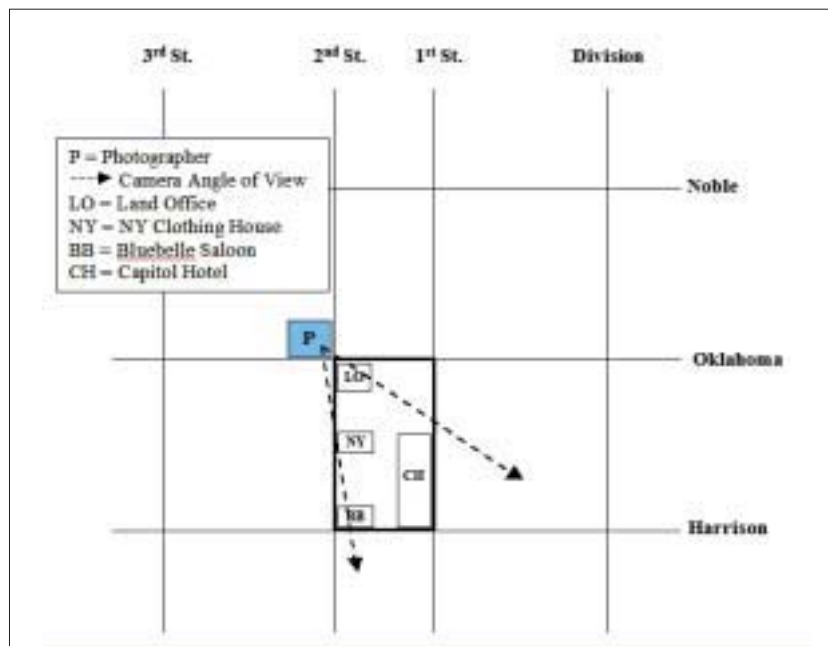
The locations given for these establishments allow us to draw a preliminary sketch of the layout of the town, shown right. The government acre was the rectangle bounded by 1st and 2nd Streets on the east and west, respectively, and Oklahoma and Harrison Avenues on the north and south. The US Land Office was located at the northwest corner of the government acre and the Capitol Hotel on the southeast corner. The 1890 directory lists the NY Clothing House as being on the southwest corner. But according to

other directories and city maps, the clothing store was located on the east side of 2nd Street between Oklahoma and Harrison and the Bluebelle Saloon was located at the southwest corner of the government acre, several buildings to the south of the clothing store.

A modern map of downtown Guthrie² found on www.mapquest.com shows that the town still has the same layout today. Combining the information provided by the map with the identification of the various businesses in the picture using the city directories, we can say that the picture was taken from the location of the Commercial Bank on the northwest corner of Oklahoma Avenue and 2nd Street.³ The photographer was facing south-southeast.

Amazon, www.amazon.com, is a valuable research tool for identifying books on just about any topic. A search

A modern map of downtown Guthrie shows that the town still has the same layout today.



on Amazon for books on Guthrie produced *Birth of Guthrie: Oklahoma's Run of 1889 and Life in Guthrie in 1889 and the 1890s*, by Lloyd H. McGuire, Jr.⁴

A search on Google produced contact information for the author on www.sandplum.com/guthrie/more.htm. McGuire has researched Guthrie for many years, and proved to be very generous in sharing his wealth of knowledge about the town.

The August 1889 city directory found in McGuire's book provides the names of the businesses with the lowest street numbers along 2nd Street just south of Oklahoma Avenue. The street

A preliminary sketch of the layout of the town of Guthrie as it existed in or around 1889.



Mitchell and deGroff photographers were listed in the 1889 Guthrie directory as one of the earliest photography studios in town.

numbers are all even, reflecting the fact that there were no establishments located across the street in the vacant area included in the government acre. (There were other businesses on the east side of 2nd Street between Oklahoma and Harrison Avenues, but they cannot be matched with the photo because they are listed in the directory without street numbers. These include Hamilton, Rowan, and Co. stationers that might account for the sign to the far right of the photo.)

The website www.sandplum.com/guthrie/hm03.htm offers a clue that our mystery photo was taken before the end of 1890 when the DeFord building was constructed at the original location of the NY Clothing Store. The wall of the DeFord building that would have been facing the camera is described as “featuring contrasting-colored arched windows with worked wooden fans above corbelled brick, with a small turret marking the south”. It is clear that the DeFord building had not yet been built, so that we can narrow the date of the photo to between 22 April 1889 when the Land Run occurred, and sometime in late 1890, before the NY One Price Clothing Store’s frame building was torn down.

Last Name	First Name	Business	No.	Street
Way	John F.	lawyer	2	S. 2 nd
Thomas	J. D.	books & shoes	4	S. 2 nd
Lindsay, Putman & Widmar		lawyers	4	S. 2 nd
Thomas	W. D.	books	4 1/2	S. 2 nd
Lutz	N.	baker & confection	8	S. 2 nd
Todd	H. D.	lawyer	8	S. 2 nd
Hickman & McCashe		real estate	8	S. 2 nd
Shannon & Churchill		cigars & tobacco	8	S. 2 nd
Lusk & Lusk		lawyers	8	S. 2 nd
Hilley, Carothers & Ricker		lawyers	10	S. 2 nd
Wiles & Kane		lawyers	10	S. 2 nd
Parkie	C. C.	books & stationery	12	S. 2 nd
Joy & Smith		cigars & tobacco	18	S. 2 nd
Pye	James	mercantile table	26	S. 2 nd
Rhodes & Co.		cigars & tobacco	26	S. 2 nd
Day, Deane & Co.		real estate	28	S. 2 nd
Arrell, Sams & Co.		real estate	28	S. 2 nd

Listings for S 2nd Street in the 1889 Guthrie City Directory.⁵

Indian Territory. This could indicate that the photo was taken before 2 May 1890, when the settlers received word that the “Unassigned Lands” had been organized into the Oklahoma Territory. But it is also possible that the photographers had surplus card stock that was printed before this date that they continued

using. Unfortunately, this clue does not help us to narrow down the date of the picture any further.

According to McGuire, Guthrie was originally laid out in 300 ft x 300 ft squares, with the location of the US Land Office at the southwest corner of the intersection of Oklahoma and Division. However, it was soon realized that the Land Office was not easily visible to settlers arriving at the train depot, so the office was moved 500 feet to the west, to the southeast corner of Oklahoma Avenue and 2nd Street, moving 2nd Street 100 feet eastward and causing all blocks between 1st and 2nd Streets to be shortened to 200 ft. Although the area bounded by Oklahoma and Harrison Avenues, and 1st and 2nd Streets, became known as the “government acre”, it was 200 ft. x 300 ft., much larger than an acre (207.8 ft x 207.8 ft). The north half of the “government acre” was an open space known as “Hell’s Half Acre”.

Guthrie was a very progressive new city that developed rapidly during its first few months. Wooden frame structures went up within a few days after the run.⁶ Guthrie’s first brick building, housing the McNeal Bank, was erected between May and August 1889 on the northwest corner of 1st Street and Oklahoma Avenue. The Commercial Bank, the second brick structure in Guthrie, was completed in October 1889 on the northeast corner of 2nd Street and Oklahoma Avenue. The bank was relocated to this brick structure from an earlier wooden frame building across the street on the northwest corner of the intersection.⁷

McGuire’s book has 180 photographs of Guthrie including 88 “then-and-now” photos. He contracted with Guthrie photographer Bob Bozarth for use of early day “then” pictures from Bozarth’s collection, and for Bozarth to photograph the modern-day “now” pictures in matching locations.

Two of the early-day pictures might have been taken at the same event as the one in the picture we are investigating. The first photograph apparently shows the same parade a few moments after our picture was taken, with many people standing in the same places. The book also provides a picture of the Reeves Bros. Casino taken from a different location further down 2nd Street facing northeast. The writing in the corner of this casino picture states that it

was taken on 4 July 1889. If we can show that the mystery picture and its twin feature the same parade as the casino picture, and if we can verify that the date on the casino picture is correct, we will have a date for our photo.

According to McGuire's book,⁹ there were four known parades held in Guthrie between the date of the Land Run in April 1889 and early-to-mid 1890, when the NY Clothing House frame structure was torn down. These were Decoration Day in May 1889 (now known as Memorial Day), 4 July 1889, 22 April 1890, the first anniversary of the run, and 4 July 1890. While the organization of the Oklahoma Territory would also have been cause for celebration, none was held. On 22 April 1890, Guthrie's first anniversary, its citizens awaited a rider from the telegraph office at the train depot to bring word that Congress had made the "Unorganized Territory" into an "Organized Territory", thus creating the Oklahoma Territory with Guthrie as its capital. But no word came until 2 May. Because it was not certain when the news would arrive, the town could not have held a parade on this date, eliminating it as a possible occasion for the picture.¹⁰

The rapid construction of the town during its first few months provides a valuable timeline against which we can compare our three pictures to determine a date. Between May 1889 and July 1889 many new buildings were constructed. By July 1890, there was an enormous difference in the appearance of the town compared to its early days. If the same buildings (and only the same buildings) appear in the three photos, we can be reasonably certain that they were all taken at the same parade.

The views of the town offered by the two matching photographs and the Reeves Bros. Casino photograph partially overlap, so that many of the buildings along the east side of 2nd Avenue between Oklahoma and Harrison Avenues are visible in all of them. In the Reeves Bros. Casino photograph, the US Land Office, located on the northwest corner of the government acre, appears to the center right, the first building north of the gap on the opposite side of 2nd Street. In the mystery picture and its twin, both the US Land Office and the government acre are across the street from the photographer. These two photos show buildings of three different heights on the other side of the govern-

ment acre along 2nd Street, the smallest one identified as the New York Clothing House and the tallest one with the "Wholesale and Retail Groceries" sign across the top. All three of these buildings (and no others) also appear in the

Looking north along 2nd Street past the Reeves Brothers Casino, on left, and toward US Land Office at the end of the block. Can we confirm the date in the lower right corner, "July 4th, 1889", is correct? Can we prove this is a picture of the same parade?



Was this photo taken moments after our "mystery" photo? Judging by the similarities, it's safe to assume it was.

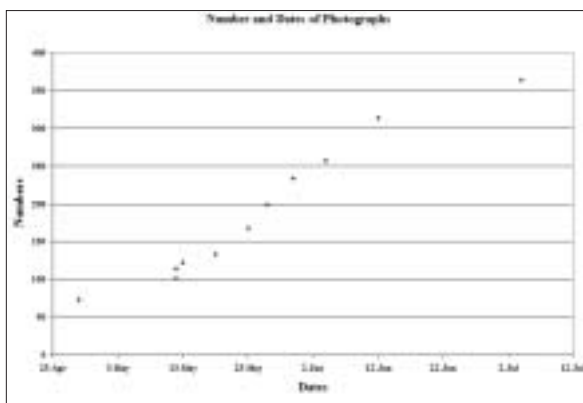


casino photograph. Because the three photographs show the same number and arrangement of buildings (and many of the same paraders and spectators), it's reasonable to say that they were taken on the same date and depict the same parade. Now the task is to determine if the parade was the one held on 4 July 1889.

Confirming the date on the Reeves Bros.' casino picture as 4 July 1889 would probably be easier if more of the town were visible in the mystery picture or its twin. The brick Commercial Bank building was completed in October 1889 on the northeast corner of Oklahoma Avenue and 2nd Street.¹¹ Being able to observe the stage of construction of the bank building could have given us an approximate date when the photo was taken, but the corner is just out of view to the left of the photograph. Also in

Guthrie was a very progressive new city that developed rapidly during its first few months

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The graph above plots the numbers on the photographs versus their dates. By tracking the numbers, we can show that the number on the Reeves Bros.' photo is consistent with the 4 July 1889 date.

1889, the Merchants Bank was established on the southwest corner of the intersection across Oklahoma Street from the photographer. However, it is not visible either. The two-story porch-like structure seen to the far right of our

picture is not a building in the process of being constructed, it is probably a viewing stand for the parade. The Merchants Bank building was already completed by 4 July 1889 and did not have a second story porch.

There is still a clue we have not used. Some of the photographs in McGuire's book have numbers written on them along with the dates they

with the 4 July 1889 date.

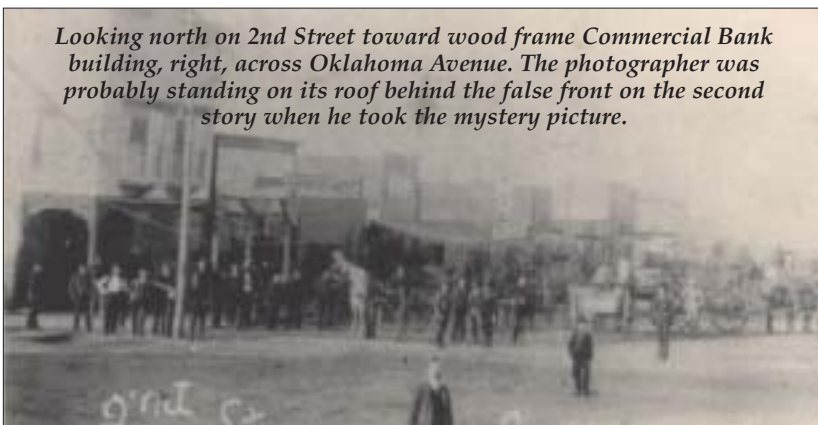
The graph, left, plots the numbers on the photographs versus their dates. It's clear that the date and number on the casino picture, July 4, #364, fit in well with those of the others. The photographer seems to have taken a large number of photographs in the first few weeks after the Land Run, but as the town settled in, the number seems to have tapered off along with the initial excitement. Even so, if the casino photograph had been taken at either of the parades in 1890, the number recorded on it would presumably have been much higher.

One last bit of interesting information that McGuire's book's photographs provide is the location of the photographer when he took the picture. The building listed on the northwest corner of Oklahoma and 2nd was the wooden building that housed the Commercial Bank before the bank moved late in 1889 into its more permanent location across the street. The photographer must have taken the picture from the roof of this building. He was high above the street, on a level with the tops of the telephone poles, higher than the second stories of other structures.

Although our analysis of Linda's photograph has not produced any personal information about her family, it has given her an interesting link to an important and colorful chapter in American history. According to what Linda knows about her family, her great-grandmother's brother lived in Oklahoma in the 1890s. Her great-grandmother must have received the picture from him as a souvenir of the first 4th of July parade held in Guthrie in 1889. An interesting topic for further research would be to investigate the possibility that Linda's great-great-uncle was one of the settlers who participated in the Oklahoma Land Run of 1889.

The authors would like to thank Linda Williams for allowing us to publish the analysis of her family photograph. The authors would also like to thank Lloyd H. McGuire, Jr. for his generous assistance with this article. Mr. McGuire's book can be purchased at www.amazon.com and at shops and museums in Guthrie and Oklahoma City. Mr. McGuire can be contacted via e-mail at m8725r@aol.com.

For more information or to contact Dr. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Yeiser, please visit their website at www.forensicgenealogy.info.



Looking north on 2nd Street toward wood frame Commercial Bank building, right, across Oklahoma Avenue. The photographer was probably standing on its roof behind the false front on the second story when he took the mystery picture.

were taken. Since they are all written in the same handwriting, they were probably all taken by the same photographer. Presumably these numbers represent the order in which the pictures were taken. By tracking the numbers on the photographs as a function of their dates, we can see if the number on the Reeves Bros.' picture is consistent

REFERENCES:

- Lloyd H. McGuire, Jr., telephone conversation.
- www.mapquest.com
- Lloyd H. McGuire, Jr. *The Birth of Guthrie, Oklahoma's Run of 1889 and Life in Guthrie in 1889 and the 1890s*, 2nd edition (2000), ISBN 0967102316, p. 123 and 127.
- www.amazon.com
- Ref. 3, p. 280.
- Lloyd H. McGuire, Jr., telephone conversation.
- Ref. 3, p. 194.
- This and the subsequent photograph are used with the permission of Lloyd H. McGuire Jr. See Ref. 3, p. 126 and 128.
- Ref. 3, p. 208.
- Lloyd H. McGuire, Jr., telephone conversation.
- Ref. 3, p. 194.