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Malcolm Baxter Fulkerson, October 21, 1849-July 27, 1929

Boadicea Brown Fulkerson, October 8, 1858-March 1, 1932

Pioneer residents of Norman, Oklahoma

*The Rev. CAROL GOVER
Fulkerson*

Malcolm Baxter Fulkerson was born October 21, 1849, at Paradise, Kentucky, on the Green River. His father, Phillip B. Fulkerson (January 8, 1818 - March 27, 1870), operated a ferry boat on the Green River, in the area still known as Fulkerson's Ferry, and operated a general store at the crossing. His mother was Louisa L. Young (September 20, 1811 - December 21, 1886).

During the War between the States, Malcolm, at age twelve, was enlisted and trained in the "Home Guard," as the community was threatened by both Confederate and Yankee forces.

After finishing the local grammar school, he and his brother, William, were sent to Hartford Academy at Hartford, Kentucky, where William prepared for the Baptist ministry and Malcolm became a schoolmaster. After a number of years of teaching, at age thirty (December 23, 1879) he married his former pupil, Boadicea Brown (October 8, 1858 - March 1, 1932), daughter of Adam W. Brown (May 31, 1829 - September 27, 1910) and Mary Dennis Brown (January 11, 1829 - December 12, 1897) of Rockport, Kentucky. Children born in Kentucky were:

Elbert B.	1880	1899
Nora	October 9, 1882	December 4, 1887
Roscoe	March 21, 1884	December 2, 1887
Lillian	April 1, 1886	February 20, 1930
Grover Cleveland	January 24, 1888	August 24, 1917
Carl	1889	1889

Children born in Norman, Oklahoma, were:

Boise Brown	August 6, 1892	April 5, 1964
Hazel	December 30, 1894	August 3, 1932
Irvin	July 29, 1898	January 25, 1935

As the Fulkerson family increased, making a living by school teaching in their beloved Green River Valley became increasingly difficult. Mr. Fulkerson tried moonlighting by working in the coal mines but, after a few weeks, came out with a solemn vow that neither he nor any of his offspring would ever submit again to such exploitation.

Always an active member of the Baptist Church, he became even more active in social reforms--the organization of cooperatives, work for the prohibition of the sale of alcoholic beverages, consolidation of schools, etc. His pro-labor views kept him a life-long supporter of the Democratic Party. He named his son Grover Cleveland and, soon after coming to Cleveland County, ran for the Territorial Legislature as a Democratic candidate.

During the summer of 1889, Mr. Fulkerson came to Oklahoma Territory to seek a homesite. He bought city lots in Oklahoma City, Norman and Ardmore. Because of his interest in education, he decided to settle in Norman, as it was expected to become the site for the Territorial University.

He bought a sizeable lot at the corner of University Boulevard Tonhawa Street. Here he drilled a water well, built a small house(which is still standing) and returned to Kentucky to bring Boadicea, the children and the household goods out by train. Just as the family was prepared to leave for Oklahoma a child was born, but it lived only a few days. Almost the final act was to bury the infant, Carl, alongside Nora and Roscoe.

They arrived in November. In her later years, Boadicea recounted the

fears which she felt at leaving the Old South for Oklahoma Territory. She remembered that on her arrival there was not one tree within the townsite. Being accustomed to the hills and lush countryside of the Green River country, she was appalled by the harsh, brown, windswept plains. However, she missed most the help of her Negro mammy, Sarah, who had cared for her and her children. Sarah's descendants still work for the family in Beaver's Bend, Kentucky. Mrs. Fulkerson was a typical pioneer woman; immense strength, both physical and moral, underlined the continuing physical beauty and personal charm of a Southern lady.

Water was so scarce that Mr. Fulkerson was able to set up a business of selling water--five cents a barrel, delivered. This he continued for several years until enough private wells could be dug. He also attempted farming on leased land north of town. He was one of the founders of the Norman Building and Loan Association (now the Norman Savings and Loan); he served as Deacon in the First Baptist Church; and he was elected to the Norman City Commission in 1892.

Around 1900 Mr. Fulkerson bought a one-hundred-and-sixty-acre farm at Denver, in the Little River bottom, nine miles east of Norman. He said he bought it because it reminded him of Kentucky. This was to remain the "home place" until it was taken into Lake Thunderbird in the 1960's. Only ten acres remain in the hands of the Fulkerson heirs.

At the turn of the century, Denver was a village of two or three general stores, two cotton gins, a sawmill, an elementary school, the I.O.O.F. Lodge, a Baptist Church (now the Olivet Baptist Church, between Alameda and Robinson on 60th Street), a drug store, hardware store, several residences including a resident physician, and a graveyard. Remnants of this village remained up

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until the floods of 1930 washed it away and droughts and depression drove most of the inhabitants to California.

The Fulkerson farm was much like other Oklahoma farms--sixty or so acres of good bottom land, one hundred acres of hill pasture and woodland, an orchard, a garden, wild plums and grapes, pecan trees, and chickens, pigs, cows, horses, mules, bees, goats, dogs. Cotton and alfalfa were the chief crops. Repeated flooding, whenever Little River was "out," was frustrating and sometimes disastrous. Mr. Fulkerson set up a sorghum mill high on the hill, which in the summertime occupied the entire clan in making sorghum molasses, of which we were all justifiably proud. On the very crest of the hill there still remains a clearing which served as the croquet court--a sort of required recreational activity for all the family.

The Fulkerson family came to America in the seventeenth century. They are of North German origin; the name at one time was spelled Volkerson, meaning "son of the people," and was changed to Fulkerson about 1728. Teutonic family traditions, mellowed by generations in the Middle South, continued during the lifetime of Malcolm Baxter. Grandfather Fulkerson was always undisputed head of the clan. Although he became exceedingly deaf in later years, he never lost the control nor the respect of his children. He never showed signs of senility and continued leading the family in daily Bible readings, hymn singing and evening prayer until his last days. On Sundays the Denver Baptist Church was well-nigh filled with Fulkersons. Malcolm was the Deacon and he insisted on retaining a circuit-riding preacher of provincial fervency and notoriously little ability. As he could hear not a word of the sermons he was quite satisfied with the preacher's performance, but the rest of the congregation was

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embarrassed and annoyed. No amount of persuasion would get grandfather to agree to the man's removal--so we sat through it from week to week.

Lillian was the first to marry. On February 17, 1907, she was married in a country wedding at home to June Burrage, an industrious young man of German extraction. Mr. Burrage had a promising career as foreman of Steve Hutchins' farms in the Little River bottom. Mr. Hutchins was the mayor of Norman and a man of considerable resources. He lived in the large stone house across from King Hall (an Episcopalian Girl's Dormitory) at Asp and Duffy. His home later became the first Pi Beta Phi House. After the birth of a young son, Francis, and while expecting a second child, Junius William, Mr. Burrage was killed in a hunting accident.

A few years later, Lillian was married to Steven Hutchins in a quiet ceremony in the home of Dr. and Mrs. McLaughlin on State Drive at Central State Hospital. As Steve Hutchins had a son older than his bride, there was something to talk about in the county for a while. However, Lillian and Steve were very happy together.

Sometime after Lillian's first marriage, Boadicea inherited a sum of money from her people in Kentucky. Malcolm insisted (perhaps motivated by fear of tuberculosis) on buying land in southwest Texas. He moved the family there but maintained the home place at Denver. For several years Mrs. Fulkerson ran a typical western hotel or boarding house in Fort Stockton, Texas. These must have been good years, as they provided much of the content for reminiscing later. Gradually all the children came back to Norman. After several years, around 1917, he and Mrs. Fulkerson also returned and lived the remainder of their years at Denver.

Grover Cleveland Fulkerson was married to Mamie Smalley January 1,

1911. Three children were born of this marriage: Boise Clifford, Geneva (Mrs. Leroy Howard), and an infant who died. At age twenty-nine (August 24, 1917) while working as a sheriff's deputy, Grover was shot and killed while guarding the South Canadian Bridge. A syndicate of bootleggers with Chicago connections was attempting to operate in the county. A Mr. Charles Holden was tried for murder. He was defended by the criminal lawyer, Moorman Pruitt, of Pauls Valley (who lost only three or four of the over three hundred criminal cases he defended.) Mr. Holden was convicted but given a sentence of only four years.

About this time the "Night Riders" had so intimidated the local justices that in some communities hired killers and other criminals were going about unchecked. Decent citizens feared for their lives in Ada, Purcell and other Oklahoma towns. Vigilante groups formed--in Ada a hanging of four accused murderers took place; in Norman the Ku Klux Klan reappeared and can be given some credit for helping to drive out the organized crime that had begun to plague the area.

Boise, a reluctant teenager, went to West Texas with his parents. After a few years, at the age of twenty-two, he returned to Norman with a deep Texas tan, wearing a white suit and Panama hat. He went immediately to the house of his brother, Grover, on Acres and Ponca (across from the present Central Junior High School). As luck would have it, his arrival was noted by the teen-age girl next door, Miss Willie Reynolds. She ingeniously, and almost immediately, went to the Fulkerson house "to borrow a cup of sugar."

They had to "run off," as Sam Reynolds had planned another match for his oldest daughter. On May 15, 1916, they were married in the home

Janie Thomas, 414 West Bufaula, by the Rev. "Old Uncle Joe" Linton, a Free Methodist minister (brother to Mrs. Smalley). He was the operator of the Grand Central Hotel, and the possessor of a fine Van Dyke beard. The young couple hurried out of town in a hired buggy on a honeymoon to Denver before Sam Reynolds could hear about it.

Boise served for many years on the Norman Fire Department and retired as Chief in 1941. He also worked for the Norman Transcript, the University of Oklahoma and the First National Bank. Three children were born of this marriage: Eunice Jane (Armstrong), April 20, 1917; Fred Grover, January 28, 1919; and Fern Louise (Selvidge), November 27, 1923.

On October 1, 1914, Hazel was married to David V. Philips, son of the Rev. Mr. Phillips, who was a veteran Presbyterian missionary and Professor of Spanish at O.U. David had attended Oklahoma A & M College at Stillwater. He qualified for a civil service appointment and served as mail carrier for Route 4 for many years. The "post office" was in the basement room of their home at Denver. He originally drove his route in a horse-drawn mailcart, being gone most of the day, reading and enjoying the scenery while the well-trained horse stopped at each rural box. Hazel died of emergency appendectomy, August 3, 1932. She was survived by five children: Glenn, Rhetta, Margaret, Raymond and Benjamin.

Irvin grew up in West Texas. He spoke "Mexican," learned from his Mexican playmates. He married Miss Beulah Cable April 10, 1921. The children born of this union were Mamie Nadean (Jemison) and Mildred (Wilkie). He farmed the home place after Malcolm's death and also Lillian's farm after her death. He died of pneumonia January 25, 1935, at the age of thirty-five.

On July 27, 1929, at the age of eighty-one, Malcolm Baxter Fulkerson spent the hot summer day trimming the great mulberry hedge which surrounded his farm. At evening, as was his custom, he went to the swimming hole on Little River, dived into the cool water and died of a heart attack.

Two months later the stock market in New York City was to fall and the great and terrible years of depression, and the war soon would begin. But Malcolm was not to experience these sobering trials. His lifetime spanned the Civil War, the Spanish War, World War I--tumultuous years but essentially a time of expansion, progress and hope for the American Dream. Malcolm was fascinated by the implications of all the new gadgets--automobiles, aeroplanes--and he purchased the first battery set radio in the valley. He often speculated on the marvelous new world that was in the making for his descendants. As a pioneer he accepted hardship and deprivation, but he was richer in hope and faith than those of us who have inherited the promised land.

Prepared for the
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