

## HENRY CLARK AND HIS FAMILY

*By Paul Eugene Clark*

Henry Clark, his wife Carolina, and their seven children moved from Arkansas to Cleveland County, Oklahoma Territory in 1891. They settled on a farm a few miles south of the town of Lexington.

Henry Clark was born in Ohio in 1835. Very little is known of his early life, nor is there any information about his wife, Caroline, nor when they were married. Henry was living in Ohio when he enlisted in the Union Army at the start of the Civil War. He served in the Union Army until the war ended. During an engagement with Confederate soldiers, Henry Clark had a thumb shot off. For this permanent injury Henry received a small pension from the Federal government for the rest of his life.

After the Civil War, Henry returned to Ohio, where he and Caroline lived until they moved to Arkansas. This couple had seven children born to them: Francis, William Harrison, George, Henry, Charles, Fred and a daughter, Lila.

While the children were young, Henry and Caroline moved the family to Arkansas. Here Henry settled on a farm and built a sawmill. The proceeds from the sawmill and the produce from the farm, as well as the Federal pension made it possible for the Clark family to save some money as well as to provide for the six boys and their sister, Lila.

When the Clark family left Arkansas in 1891 and moved to the new Oklahoma Territory, Henry bought a farm south of Lexington, Cleveland County, Oklahoma Territory. The land was situated on a bend on the east bank of the South Canadian River. This looked like an ideal place to farm, the land was fertile river bottom soil, the native growth was lush and green and the farm was near a town which provided a market for farm products and a school for the children. The Clark family settled down to farming and improving the land.

Not very long after the Clarks had established their home and put in a crop, the South Canadian River flooded. Henry, like all of the residents near by, watched the "rise" come gushing down the river bed. The flood waters carried dead animals, trees and other debris. Henry gained much popularity with his new neighbors, when he roped and pulled to shore a barrel of whiskey which was floating down the river. The barrel of whiskey had been washed away from a Purcell saloon located on a sand bar in the river. Of course the whiskey had a slight flavor of river water due to its trip down the river. Later the owner of the whiskey sued to recover the whole barrel of whiskey.

Due to the numerous washouts caused by the floods in the Canadian River, the west bank of the river, below Purcell, was being cut away. In order to protect its railroad tracks and depot in Purcell the Santa Fe Railroad Company built dykes in the river to cause the channel of the river to shift eastward, thus causing the flood waters to wash away half of Henry Clark's farm, besides allowing the flood waters to ruin many other acres of land when the next flood occurred, because the land was covered with muddy water and its sandy deposits. The farm was now worthless.

Henry sued the Santa Fe Railroad Company for causing the destruction of his farm. The case was in the Federal courts for fifteen years before the court finally settled in favor of the Santa Fe Company

Henry Clark moved to Norman, Cleveland County, Oklahoma Territory, and bought a farm at the north edge of Norman. In later days, Hardie Field, the football field for Norman High School, was located on what had been the Clark farm. Also Robinson Street borders the old Clark farm.

Henry Clark died in 1914, at the age of 79. He was the last of the Clark family to be taken to the cemetery in a horse drawn hearse.

There are many descendants of Henry and Caroline Clark living in Cleveland County today. This article deals with the descendants through their second son, William Harrison, and his wife, Nora Bertrand Clark.

Nora Bertrand Clark was one of three daughters of Lawrence and Mary Bertrand, who moved to the Oklahoma Territory in 1893. Lawrence Bertrand was of French descent, his ancestors had fled to America from France after the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte. They had settled in the middle west. Thus in 1893 Lawrence and his wife, Mary Bertrand, and their three daughters, Nora, Lucy and Laura, were living in St. Marys, Kansas. Here they joined a seven wagon train of neighbors moving to settle on the Pottawatomie Citizens Band Allotments in the southeast part of Cleveland County, Oklahoma Territory. The Bertrands were adopted citizens of the Pottawatomie Tribe.