

having seen Galveston, Mr. Keller decided to go to that place, explore a bit and return in time to make the race at noon on April 22nd. Arriving in Purcell forty-eight hours before the formal opening of the territory, Mr. Keller was lucky in finding a room in the crowded frontier town, which he shared with two other men. Came the 22nd, The Santa Fe had made up a train in Purcell which was to leave a little before noon in time to reach the Canadian River bridge, the boundry between Old Oklahoma and the Indian Territory, before the noon gun was fired by Captain Richard Covington, in command of the U. S. troops guarding the border, which was the signal for the race to be on. At the sound of the gun, the train packed to the guards with eager men and women moved slowly north toward the site of Oklahoma City. At that time the city consisted of a railroad depot and quarters for a section gang.

Many men dropped off the train along the route to stake claims and at about the site of Noble, a man was seen plowing a furrow around a claim with a yoke of oxen. He was a "Sooner." Arriving at last in Oklahoma City, there was a mad rush of howling, eager people to stake choice lots, Mr. Keller said it looked not unlike a flock of blackbirds driving on a pile of grain.

Mr. Keller immediately staked a lot on Grand Avenue between Robinson and Broadway, and then ran to Fourth and Harvey Streets where he staked two residence lots for himself, two for John Sturgeon and two for Morgan Abernathy.

When asked how he managed to hold his lots, Mr. Keller replied "I had bought a thirty-two Smith and Wesson revolver, and after staking the residence lots I returned to the lot on Grand and sat there, defying all comers to take it. I had my gun in such a position that it could be seen and I had no trouble."

He explained that later a citizens' committee came around and if there was a dispute of ownership the committee would hear the testimony and deliver the lot to the rightful owner, or to the one who had the best argument. While he was staking lots in Oklahoma City, John Sturgeon was driving a stake wagon for the townsite board which was laying out the town of Lexington, and Abernathy, with Bill Hooker, was racing to Guthrie, the capitol, to file for the townsite of Lexington for Abernathy and Keller.

Three weeks later Mr. Keller sold his lot on Grand Avenue for \$350, but remained in the town for two years. With characteristic energy, he entered into the manufacture of bricks--a much needed article, when so many buildings were being erected and with lumber very scarce and high. During these two years, Mr. Keller operated the brick factory. He furnished the brick and contracted for the building of the Baker block, the first brick in Oklahoma City. Many more substantial blocks were either built by Mr. Keller or he furnished the bricks used in the buildings. Mr. Keller bought and sold many lots in Oklahoma City. He once owned the lots where the Biltmore(Oklahoma) Hotel stands. He formed a partnership with W. L. Killebrew, an engineer, who laid out South Oklahoma City in 1889. They sold lots to the Scott Drug Co. and built a brick structure (two-story) on the south side of Main at Harvey and another on the north west corner of Broadway at Main, and they were the contractors for the First Baptist Church at Third and Broadway.

But in 1892, Mr. Keller moved to Lexington, O.T., where he organized the first bank, of which he was a director, building the building that housed it. Here in Lexington, Mr. Keller met his bride-to-be, Miss Jennie Trotter. Miss Trotter was the daughter of Cary Branch Trotter and Nancy Ann Sennard Trotter of Carrellton, Carroll County, Missouri. Miss Trotter was a graduate

of the Carrollton High School in 1892, and came to Lexington to teach at the Stovall School just east of Lexington. Mr. Keller and Miss Trotter were married in 1896 in her home town of Carrollton, Missouri.

In 1897, Mr. Keller was elected Register of Deeds and they moved to Norman. While living in Norman at this time, two children were born, Edgar Trotter Keller and Elizabeth Keller. Edgar died September 25, 1965, and left no children. Elizabeth married Warren L. Felton and they live in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, where he was in the executive department of the Phillips Petroleum Company from which he retired in May 1962. They have two children, a daughter, Elizabeth Jane, and a son, Warren L. Felton, II. Elizabeth Jane married J. Dean Schroeder, Jr., August 14, 1942. They are the parents of five boys and a daughter. Elizabeth Jane's husband died January 2, 1971. She lives in Arvada, Colorado. The son, Warren L. Felton, II, is a thoracic surgeon and lives in Oklahoma City. He and his wife, Judith Ann, have two boys and three girls.

In 1899, when they had moved back to Lexington, Mr. Keller sold his bank stock in Lexington and established a fine line of furniture, a buggy shop and an undertaking establishment. He opened a lumber yard, in Lexington, which he operated for six years, at the same time he was handling the sale of farm implements and machinery.

Mr. Keller had manufactured the brick used in the building on the Main Street block he owned. At one time he owned nearly five hundred city lots. He was also the agent for six leading fire insurance companies which served Lexington and the nearby area.

During his residence in Oklahoma City, Mr. Keller was connected with the organization of an Odd Fellows Lodge, the second one formed in the



Territory. For several years Mr. Keller served as secretary of this lodge. He also helped organize the Lexington Lodge No. 23 IOOF, of which he was past Grand. He was a member of the Grand Lodge of the Territory; a member of the Encampment of the Order. He was a member of the Ancient Order of United Woodmen of the World. He was a member of the Cleveland County 89er Club and was president from 1929 until his death. He always attended the meetings.

Mr. Keller's wife, Mrs. Jen Trotter Keller, was very active in civic and social work. Mrs. Keller went into Red Cross work at Lexington where the first Auxiliary in the county was organized. Later, when the organization was extended to take in the northern part of the county, Mrs. Keller took up the work in Norman. She succeeded Mrs. J. B. Thoburn who had resigned. The position also carried with it that of chairman of women's work in the entire county. During her term of office, Mrs. Keller handled, in loans to needy persons, \$6,500. Before she left the office, \$3,500 had been paid back. Service of various kinds rendered to ex-service men numbered 1,500. This did not include aid given to destitute civilians. But ill health forced Mrs. Keller to give up the wonderful work she had been doing since 1918, and so, in 1921, she resigned and went to Colorado.

A familiar figure at Cleveland County pioneer celebrations for many years, Mr. Keller who lived a long, busy and full life, died July 26, 1942, in the home of his daughter, Mrs. Warren L. Felton, at Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and was buried in the Lexington Cemetery. His wife died January 8, 1943.

The Kellers had saved clippings from the Norman and Lexington newspapers and found this which gives an interesting account of Lexington:

LEXINGTON BUSY ON DAY OF RUN

LEXINGTON- The peaceful little town which today is Lexington was populated quickly after the start of the land run in 1889, because it is just across the

South Canadian River from Purcell, a major starting point for the April 22 race for homesteads.

The area's history dates back, however, to more than 50 years before the run of '89. Lexington was the general site of an early military camp and trading post, established by the Chouteaus after a great tribal council in 1835.

The council between the Five Civilized Tribes and the Plains Indians came in the late summer of 1835, at a place known then as Camp Mason. Terms for tribal peace were laid at the council, and the treaty worked out by some 5,000 Indians present was valid until after the Civil War.

The army officer who sounded the bugle for start of the run from Purcell stood on the river bluff just south of the site of Purcell's Santa Fe depot. Spring rains had deepened the water in the east channel of the South Canadian, and homesteaders who rode horseback across the river had an advantage over others who raced on foot into the chest - deep water.

Purcell, in Indian Territory, was in a prohibition area. Lexington saloons did a land office business with Purcell drinkers, who crossed the river day and night to buy liquor.

Population of Lexington was only 225 in 1895, but climbed to 1,500 in 1900. A majority of the business people were barkeepers and saloon owners. By 1910, Lexington's population had dwindled to a little more than 800.

Lexington survived its trials of territorial days and early statehood. There are 50 business establishments along the main east-west thoroughfare (SH 39), and the population is back up to an estimated 1,500. The bond issue will be paid off in 10 years.

The Lexington Sun, weekly newspaper, is published by H. O. Wilson.

Lexington Public Library opened about 1953. President of the four-man board of trustees for Lexington is Neal Black, decorator and contractor.

The town is getting "quite a few" Oklahoma City residents who have moved here either to escape growing city congestion or to retire.

Baxter Heights Addition was annexed by the town board of trustees in 1961. In the south east part, the addition has six new homes, built by the most part by townspeople seeking better houses. Trustees also annexed a tract north of the school, on the northeast side of town, in 1961.

A nursing home is under construction, near on West Broadway, near old U.S. 77. The brick and frame structure will have accommodations for 55 residents, and will be ready for use this summer.

One bank, First State Bank, stands in the heart of a town which at one time had two banks. Deposits are approximately \$1.8 million.

A new high school building was completed in early 1960.

The town budget is something like \$50,000 annually. Most of the revenue comes from the sale of electricity. Ample city water comes today from two city wells. Only town indebtedness is the unpaid portion of \$25,000 in bonds voted in 1961 for a new sewage disposal plant.



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EDGAR J. KELLER

*Elizabeth Keller Felton*

Edgar J. Keller was born December 23, 1860, in Crothersville, Jackson County, Indiana, the son of John and Margaret James Keller. John Keller was born in Indiana and Margaret Keller was born in Buckley County, Pennsylvania. Edgar J. Keller was reared and educated in Indiana. After he graduated from the Crothersville High School, he taught school for two years. He then went to Louisville, Kentucky, to attend the Bryant and Stratton Commercial College of Louisville. Here he graduated with honors and was awarded a gold medal being judged the best student in a class of 450 students. Immediately after graduation in 1884, he accepted a position as book keeper and cashier for the firm of Thomas James and Company in Louisville, Kentucky, where his uncle, Thomas James, was the proprietor. He continued in this position until the opening of the Indian lands, in 1889 in Oklahoma, when he decided to seek his fortune in the new territory.

His first entry into Oklahoma history occurred in 1889 when he boarded a train in Louisville, Kentucky, bound for the new land of Oklahoma soon to be opened for settlement by the United States government.

In those days what was known as scalpers' offices were maintained. It was the custom for the railroads to sell excursion tickets, round trip, at a reduced rate. Travelers would buy the tickets but upon reaching their destination, would sell the unused half of the ticket to the scalpers who in turn would sell them to persons wishing to travel in that direction, and at a still further reduced rate. It was in this manner that Mr. Keller found himself entrained for Galveston, but running through Purcell. However, never