

SELDON E. BOYD FAMILY

By Louise Boyd James

Seldon E. Boyd came to Norman in 1906 leaving Ohio, the place of his birth (1872) and the location of his family dating back to 1820 when his grandfather, Robert Boyd, had arrived from Ireland. Seldon was the son of Sam and Elizabeth Boyd. He had married Etta L. Norman in 1893, and had farmed and run a coal mine in Ohio.

The decision to come to Oklahoma had taken careful thought, Seldon had become interested in the possibility after meeting some men who had literature about Oklahoma; the warmer, and hopefully healthier climate was especially appealing. He decided to see for himself this new land, and in September, 1906, he and his brother Clyde came by train to Broken Arrow to visit an Ohio neighbor living now in this area. They found the land and people a little wild and wooly for their liking, and decided to go on to see Norman. Norman was selected because it was his wife's maiden name, and he had noticed the name on a map of Oklahoma he had seen earlier.

Seldon's own name became a source of immediate interest to Norman residents. He was asked repeatedly, "How are you related to David Ross Boyd, the President of the University of Oklahoma? Did you know that he is from Ohio, too?" Seldon was not aware of any relatives in Oklahoma but he decided to find out if indeed Dr. Boyd was related. He arrived early one Sunday morning at the newly completed President's home. Dr. Boyd was having breakfast, but asked Seldon to wait. The first thing Dr. Boyd asked, after Seldon explained his purpose for coming, was: "What's your Father's name?" They quickly determined that Dr. Boyd and Sam had played together as small children, and that they were distantly related as their grandfathers had been cousins.

Seldon returned to Ohio determined to move his family to Oklahoma. They returned in early winter, arriving by train in Norman on December 8, 1906. Accompanying him was his wife, Etta, his son, Clarence (12 years), and his daughter, Alta (18 months). Also coming to help the family get settled were his own parents.

Seldon decided to purchase a farm southeast of Norman known as the Bishop Place. This was against his father's wishes as the original plan had been to live in Oklahoma a year before putting down roots, but a low purchase price was too tempting. The Bishop Place had two faults which lowered the price. The farm was cut by the Santa Fe tracks, and the house was a three room shack, but Seldon believed the good soil and a flourishing peach orchard outweighed these drawbacks.

The family moved to the Bishop farm on January 1, 1907. The house was located by Bishop Springs, the source of Norman's water for a brief period following the opening run in 1889. Water from the spring had sold for 5¢ a barrel until wells were dug in town and on other farms. The family was barely moved, when on January 6th another son, Opha Samuel, joined them.

The first years in Oklahoma saw the family depending on a cotton

crop and the peach orchard for a living. Cotton was the cash crop of the day, and all local farmers planted it. In 1907 cotton sold for 10¢ a pound, or about \$50 a bale, which was considered a good price.

The family made another move on the farm three years later when a new house was constructed east of the railroad tracks. The joy of a new home and the excitement of the Oklahoma adventure were short lived for Seldon, because on December 26, 1913, he died from pneumonia, leaving Etta to face Oklahoma life alone with her small children.

Etta chose to stay in Oklahoma, at first because of the legal complications of selling the farm with minor children involved. Later she found the neighbors and Oklahoma friends so helpful, that she considered this was her home instead of Ohio where her family was.

Following Seldon's death, the family turned more and more to the dairy business for a livelihood. The peach orchard proved an undependable crop due to the weather, and cotton also became less of a money crop. In January, 1918, the first regular sale and delivery of milk was made to the Sooner Shop, a restaurant at Boyd and Asp, run by a Mrs. Snell. This small beginning eventually developed into a family business with a regular milk route and home deliveries. In fact Alta and Opha even delivered milk on their way to school. Milk was later delivered twice daily, as few homes had really good methods to keep milk sweet for very long and the cooling at home depended on a block of ice.

On November 1, 1939, the milk delivery ended and the family began selling milk at the farm with the customer coming to buy the milk. This was the family business for over twenty years, and the Boyd Dairy sign on the big gray barn, the herd of registered black and white Holstein cattle, the twin silos, and the red brick milk house, soon became a sight known to all Norman residents. All three children and their own families established homes on the farm, and thus it remained until September 14, 1961, when the dairy herd was sold at auction, and the Boyd Dairy ceased to exist. That following October, Etta Norman Boyd died.

The three children of Seldon and Etta continue to live in the Norman area. Clarence and his wife, Mabel (Peters) Boyd, have a home in Noble; Alta and her husband, Houston Roane, live east of Norman; Opha and his wife, Lois (Rogers) Boyd, continue to live on the farm, even though much of it has now been developed into homes, apartments, and shopping centers.

The grandchildren of Seldon and Etta grew up on the farm and were involved in the operation of the dairy. They are now scattered throughout the United States from New Jersey, to Illinois, to Minnesota, and Colorado, with only one living in Oklahoma.

While the great-grandchildren are growing up outside of Oklahoma, all have been brought up to believe that Norman, Oklahoma, is just a little bit better than heaven.