

THE MC ELHANEY FAMILY

By Kay McElhaney Steenerson

The McElhaney family had lived in Pennsylvania for over fifty years when the great railroad boom began in 1851.

Joseph McElhaney and his wife, Jane Turner McElhaney, lived and died in Pennsylvania, but their son, James, and his wife, Susannah Gregory McElhaney, took the big step, they followed the railroad west in 1851. This was a natural step since James worked for the railroads. They settled on the Mississippi River at Burlington, Iowa.

James and Susannah McElhaney are the ancestors of the McElhaney families who live in Norman, Oklahoma, today.

James operated a business on the railroad lines. His three sons worked for the railway companies also. Alfred McElhaney was a station master and a telegraph operator. The younger McElhaney son, James David, was a builder on bridges and trestles. The third McElhaney brother, John, left his railroad work and served in the Civil War as a Union soldier. He was captured and as a prisoner of war was sent to the worst prison camp in the south, Andersonville.

James McElhaney, the father of these boys died in Iowa in 1865. This left Susannah McElhaney and the three sons in Iowa.

James David, the son of James and Susannah McElhaney, married Martha Creelman, the red haired daughter of Hugh Creelman, who was born in Ireland in 1824, and migrated to the United States and drifted westward, ending his day in Norman, Oklahoma, where he died in 1912.

Martha McElhaney had a hard life. At the time she married James David he was working on a bridge across the Mississippi River, at Burlington, Iowa. Soon the family moved to Nebraska with the building of the railroad. Here Anna, the first child of James D. and Martha was born in a covered wagon, 1868. The other children were born wherever the railroad needed the father's services. James, born in 1871 in Iowa, Charles born in 1873 in Iowa, Ben, born in 1878 in Kansas.

Finally, in 1882, the James David McElhaney family found a more permanent home when they moved to Boston County, Arkansas. Martha and James David remained in Arkansas until their deaths, Martha died in 1895 and James D. died in 1932.

It was the children of Martha and James D. McElhaney who moved to Oklahoma Territory and established the McElhaney family in Norman.

It was Anna McElhaney, married to Seborne Howery, who made "The Run," on April 22, 1889. The Howerys staked a claim at the northwest edge of Norman. Here they built a home and lived out the rest of their lives.

Anna and Seborne did not have any children of their own but they raised several of Anna's nieces and nephews and sent them to school.

When Norman was in its earliest days, the three McElhaney brothers, James (Jim), Charles and Ben, joined their sister Anna and her husband, Seborne Howery in Norman, Oklahoma Territory. They established their families and found jobs or businesses for themselves. Later a half brother, Harvey, also moved to Norman.

James (Jim) McElhaney married Cora Campbell, they had one daughter, Chloe Johns. Charles McElhaney married Rhoda Jane Rupe. They had three sons: Lawrence, Seborne and Howard. Charles had the first taxi service in Norman. His place of business was on West Main Street across the street south from the Arline Hotel. The taxi was horse drawn and decorated with flags. It helped lead the parades in the early days of Norman. Ben McElhaney married Addie Andrews. She was the daughter of William C. Andrews, Jr., and his wife the former Tobiatha Elizabeth Scott, who was born in Texas and moved to Norman with her parents the John Scotts.

Addie and Ben McElhaney had eight children born to them. One daughter died in infancy. The other children: Lottie, Ben, Jr., Lucille, Ray, Robbie, Deuane, and James D., grew up in Norman and are in business. They have seen their children educated in the Norman schools and in some instances have enjoyed seeing their grandchildren growing up in Norman.