

Albert Rennie, a White Bead Hill attorney, drew up the townsite plat for Noble and possessed the site on the day of the run. Courtesy John Womack.

Construction was proceeding rapidly on Main Street in Lexington when this picture was taken on May 21, 1889. Courtesy McClain County Historical Society.

NOBLE

Noble, the county's third largest town, could be termed the town that was never meant to be. When the Santa Fe Railroad built its tracks through future Cleveland County, it designated Walker, a site two miles below the present location of Noble, as a future townsite.

However, Albert Rennie, a White Bead attorney, had other ideas. When he first came to Indian Territory from Canada in 1883, he worked as a cowboy for his brother, James Rennie, in the Chickasaw Nation. Albert Rennie rode over the high ridge east of the Canadian River many times, and he thought the spot would be ideal for the location of a town. Before the run, he drew up a townsite plat and convinced the railroad authorities to choose his location for a town instead of theirs. He named the town Noble in honor of Secretary of Interior John Noble, who helped open the land to settlement.

On the day of the run, Rennie possessed the 160-acre townsite along with several other businessmen. The group had great plans for Noble, anticipating it would become the future county seat. But they defeated their own purpose by keeping such tight control on the townsite and maintaining the price of lots so high that many prospective businessmen moved on to Norman.

Before the opening, the area was part of a vast cattle range, the center of which was the Montford B. Johnson ranch across the Canadian River. The earliest known settler was Charley Campbell, who farmed the rich bottom lands near the river.

After the opening, Noble thrived as a business center with a general merchandise store, two cotton gins, and a grain elevator.

Business increased in 1898 when C. E. Garee built a new suspension toll bridge over the Canadian River. On opening day, August 13, several hundred people gathered on the Chickasaw side to celebrate the occasion, and everyone crossed over the bridge free of charge.

During Noble's first year, W. J. Reid, 18, the depot agent, received word that the Comanches were on the warpath. He advised all men to have their firearms in readiness. When he gave the word, they were to get the women and children to the depot. Later, news came that U. S. soldiers had corralled the Indians and the citizens sighed in relief.

Noble's first school was a subscription school, which





opened in 1890 and lasted only a few months. Miss Mary Anne Klinglesmith taught the first class and Miss Carr Wilson the second one.

In 1891, members of the town established the Noble Academy, taught by Professor E. D. McCredy, and constructed a one-room building on the future site of the Noble grade school. Unable to obtain clear title to the land, the group moved the school building to the northeast side of town and added two classrooms. The school progressed rapidly, boarding as many as 150 students from the Indian Territory and Texas. But the town could not accommodate so many new people and some students had to live in half-dugouts. The school closed in 1895, forced out by its high tuition and lower costs at the state university in Norman.

Noble built a one-room public school in 1897, which was expanded in 1899, but operating funds proved scarce. One year, board members had only enough money to provide for a six month term. For a while, it looked as if the public school would have to close for good but the citizens were prevailed upon to make monthly payments into the school fund and the school kept going.

Noble's first high school was built in 1911. The school system received a big boost in attendance in 1948 when the state legislature eliminated the majority of rural schools in the area.

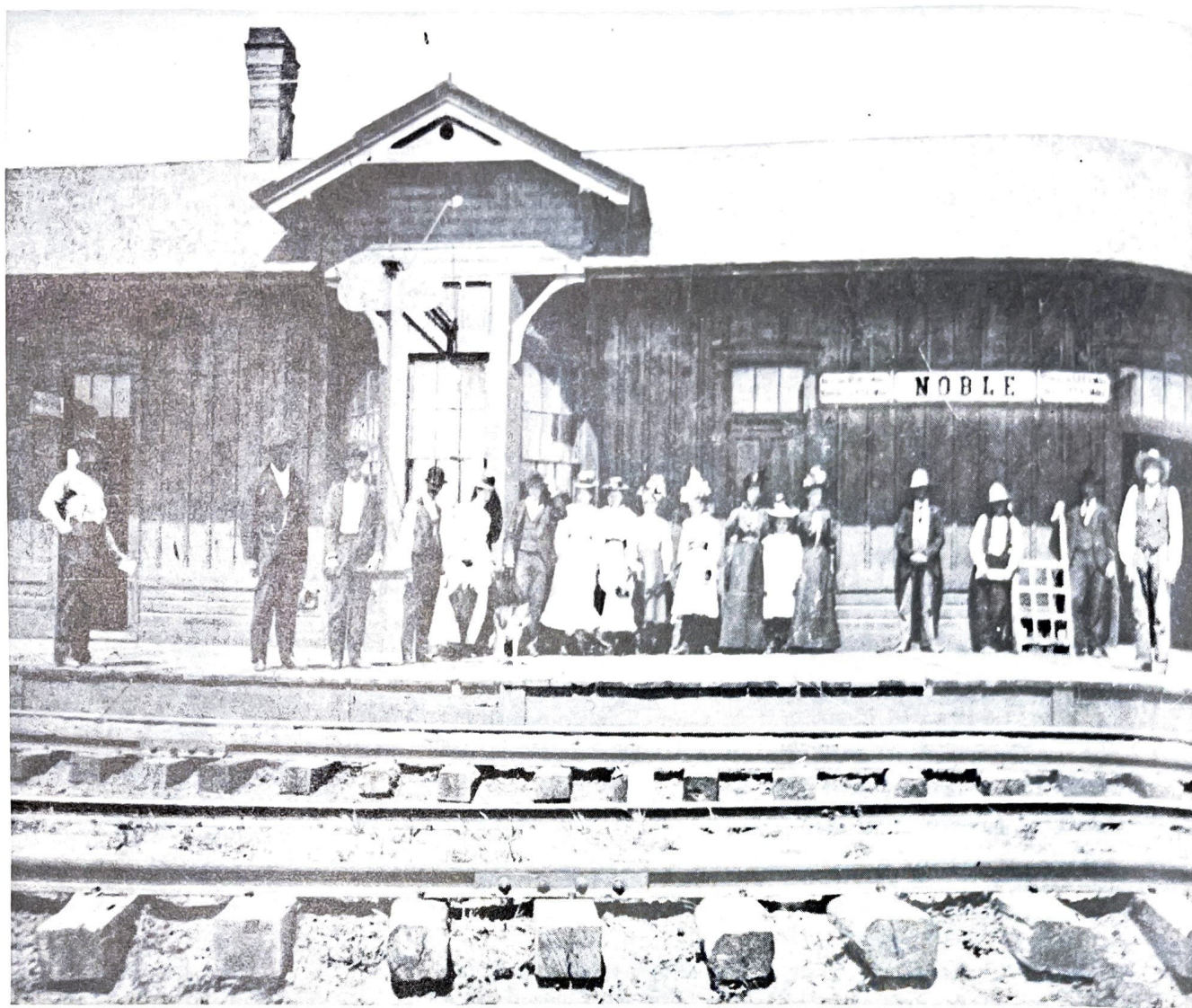
The Noble School District suddenly encompassed 143 square miles, extending as far as Little Axe and creating tremendous transportation and space problems. The present high school was built in 1970.

The Noble Methodist Church organized on April 22, 1890,

The Noble Academy was established in 1891 and drew students from the Twin Territories and Texas. The school closed in 1895, forced out by the lower tuition at the state university in Norman. This picture was taken during the school's last year. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

Charles Edwin Garee was one of Noble's earliest businessmen. He built the first bridge over the Canadian River in 1898 and established the Noble Nursery in 1899. He is shown here with his wife Elva in the fall of 1897. Courtesy Mrs. Harry Dean.





The Santa Fe Railroad completed this depot at Noble in August 1889. The last passenger train stopped here in 1944 and the depot was moved away. This photograph was taken in 1897. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

with eight members. In August that same year, the First Baptist Church also organized with eight members, followed by the Church of Christ and Presbyterian Church.

Noble had little fire protection during its first years. On February 22, 1905, fire destroyed half of the business buildings on one side of the street. A year later, the opposite side of the street burned. Eventually, the town organized a volunteer fire department. A city marshal and night watchman kept peace within the town during those early days.

Sidewalks were among the town's first improvements, followed by the installation of a telephone system. Central office was located in the back room of the Noble bank. Water mains were laid in 1912, then electricity came to town, and after that came paved streets and natural gas.

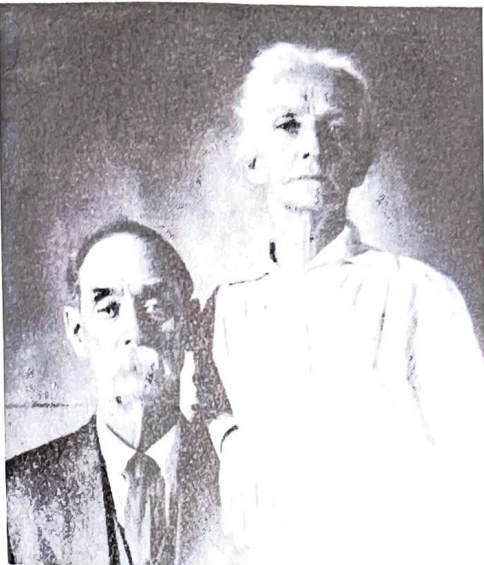
Noble Nursery was among the earliest businesses in Noble, providing day work for many people. Francis Albert Garee came to Noble in 1895 with his parents. He had a great love for nature and in the fall of 1899, he planted a few grape cuttings and some peach seeds. From these, he gradually developed a variety of fruit trees which he grafted onto the seedlings. Later, he added other trees and shrubs. He shipped his stock all over Oklahoma, and outside the state, too. Noble Nursery existed until 1970 when it was sold to Brockhaus Nursery which is still in operation.

The Noble First Methodist Church was organized on April 22, 1890, with eight members. This picture was taken in 1900. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.



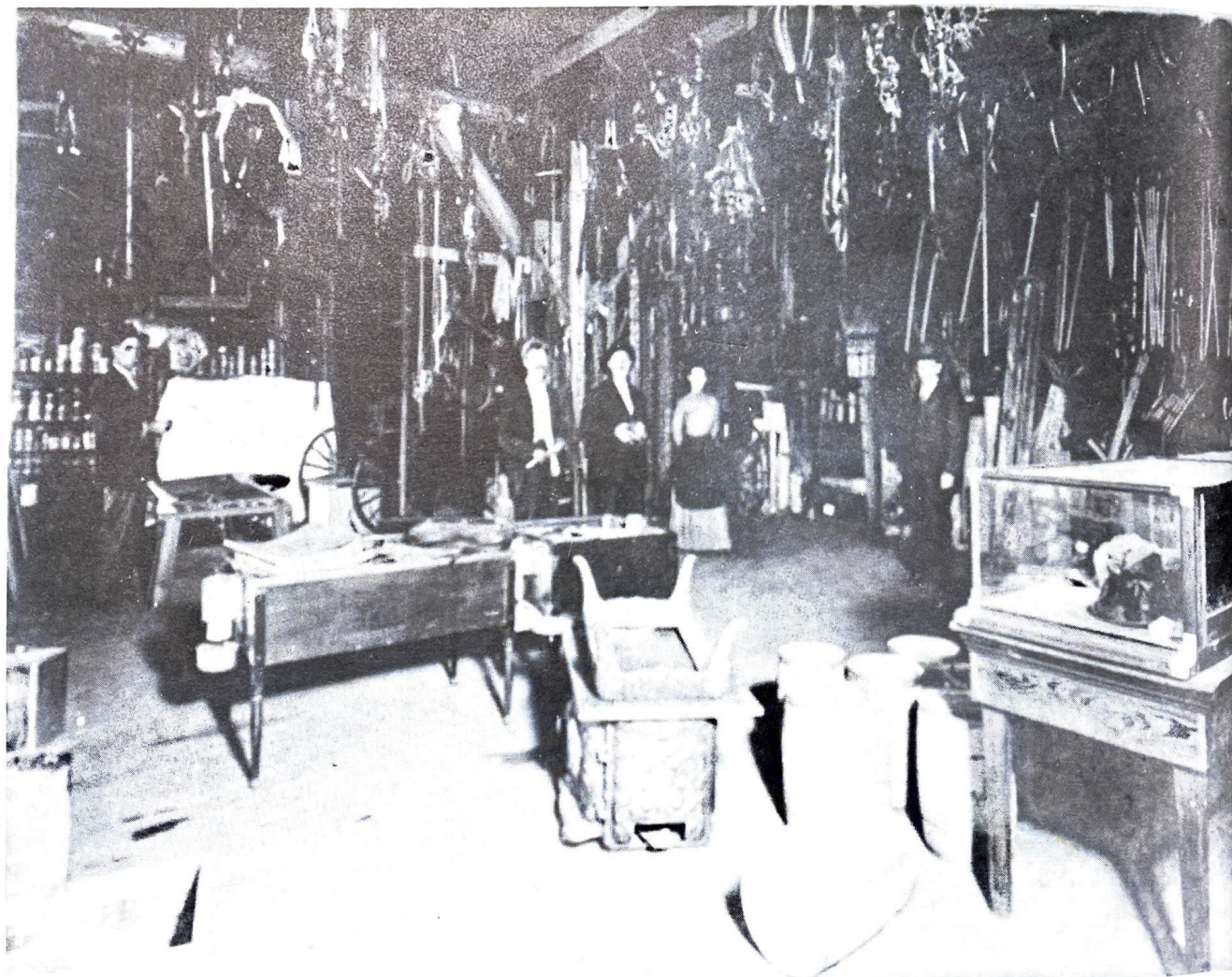
Noble built a one-room schoolhouse in 1897. These high school students were photographed in 1898. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.





Gus Leslie of Noble helped keep the peace as a Cleveland County deputy sheriff. With him in this picture is his wife Louisa. Courtesy Gus Leslie.

Ike Graham's Hardware Store was located on Main Street in Noble. The woman in the picture is "Okie" Graham. Courtesy Gus Leslie.



For a time, a distillery operated a mile and a half northwest of Noble. The facility closed with the coming of statehood and prohibition. The remnants of the old still and bonded warehouse remained for a long time as a landmark.

Other early businesses included Bob Stogner's barbershop, Flitner Hardware, Stufflebean's Store, Smith Hardware Store, and W. J. Scott's brickyard. For a time, a saloon operated on the east side of Main Street, but was voted out in 1899. A later saloon, which opened in one of the new rock buildings on Main Street, failed for lack of business.

For a few years, Noble served as a major shipping point for cattle from both sides of the Canadian River. Then the suspension bridge washed out in 1904. About the same time the communities of Blanchard and Washington began to develop, and there was no longer any need for the farmers and ranchers in the Chickasaw Nation to cross the river to trade in Noble.

The last passenger train stopped in Noble in 1944. The depot, which had been built at the time of the run, was moved away.

The town went quietly about its business until the mid-1970s when it experienced a building boom. Today, the population of Noble stands at approximately 5,000 people.

The town's largest employer is Award Design Medals Inc. which produces hydrastone and bonded porcelain figurines. Established in 1973, the company maintains a workforce of 230 people, plus another 150 cottage workers who paint the figurines.



Noble's first hotel was located just south of the present city hall. Dr. and Mable Ward lived here, and in 1915, Dr. Ward, a drug addict, murdered his wife. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

Noble School was located on Fourth Street between Chestnut Avenue and Cherry Avenue. The school was built in 1910. All twelve grades attended here. Courtesy Gus Leslie.

The First State Bank, shown on the left below, was located on the west side of Main Street in Noble. On the right is the Farmers State Bank. Courtesy Gus Leslie.

