Learning to Earn

A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma

20th Anniversary Edition

by Danney Goble

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Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education
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By Danney Goble

For Grant Nathaniel Goble
...a born reader

Introduction

About the 2023 Edition

This edition celebrates the 20th anniversary of the first edition of *Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma*. The complete text of the first edition appears in this edition, as well as an updated timeline (chronology) at the end.

Oklahomans are fortunate that Danney Goble wrote this book. Goble as a teacher was said to make Oklahoma history and politics come alive to his students. In fact, he was recognized with several teaching awards. Believing that many Oklahomans had an inferiority complex about their state, Goble worked to help them become better acquainted with their state's history within the larger sweep of twentieth century events. Goble authored several books, including *Little Giant: The Life and Times of Speaker Carl Albert*—which won the Oklahoma Book Award and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. His book, *A Matter of Black and White: The Autobiography of Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher*, was named the outstanding book in political science by the National Conference of Black Political Scientists. He also collaborated with W. David Baird in writing *The Story of Oklahoma*, a high school textbook named the 1994 Book of the Year by the Oklahoma Historical Society, and with Charles Robert Goins on the award-winning *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*. Goble also authored *Progressive Oklahoma: The Making of a New Kind of State*.

Danney Goble, who passed away in 2007, was described as a "down-to-earth academic," and his text proves the accuracy of that description. Readers of *Learning to Earn* will come away not only with an appreciation of the "hidden history" of Oklahoma's career and technical education system—the history that happens between the major milestones—but with a greater understanding

of the arc of the nation's history as well. When I revisit Goble's writing, I encounter again the many wonderful turns-of-phrase he used, as well as his concise writing style. The wealth of detail in his writing, made evident in the long list of citations at the end of the book, is further evidence of the author's love of history at all levels. It is as if he could not resist unearthing more small gems about our shared history—the "corners and crannies of history" as he called them—and sharing them with us. Another feature of the book I appreciate more and more is its honesty. This honesty is evident at the very start—in the Preface to the book—in which Goble admits what he is and is not. The result is a very engaging book that can be appreciated both as great history and as good writing.

Learning to Earn is the kind of book that reminds all of us that we play key roles in the lives of others. It can also inspire us to record and to share what we love about Oklahoma's still-unfolding "CareerTech Story."

Craig Maile
Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education
June 2023

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Preface

Prior to this work, there have been two published histories of vocational education in Oklahoma. Carl Tyson, when he was with the history department at Oklahoma State University, produced the first in 1975. It is a short work—not even a hundred pages—and its approach and tone are decidedly academic. The result is a solid work. Sad to say, both words—solid as well as work—rather fairly describe it.

Seven years later, Roy P. Stewart published the second. It is a very different kind of book, written in a very different style. For years, Stewart had been known for his "Country Boy" column in the *Daily Oklahoman*, and he also had been involved with vocational agriculture most of his life. Once the executive secretary of Oklahoma's Future Farmers of America, Stewart had contributed no small amount to the history that he was writing; and his close associates and friends had added even more. The resulting book has all of the strengths made possible by that intimate personal involvement—and all of the weaknesses, too.

Although each of these very different predecessors has made my writing of this new book much easier, it has always been my intention that this one be quite different from either of those. Like Carl Tyson, I am a certified scholar, even a card-carrying one—at least if a doctoral diploma is accepted as a membership card into the guild of professional scholars. At the same time, however, I have had absolutely no desire to produce a scholarly work so that other scholars might read it, hoping that other scholars might call it solid. This book has a different purpose, it seeks a different audience, and it assumes a different tone.

Neither is this book a reminiscence of things I have witnessed or of friends I cherish. I have never worn an FFA jacket, never shown livestock, never enrolled in a vocational course of any kind. With just a few exceptions, I have never met—never once

laid eyes upon—the individuals who will figure so prominently in the pages that follow. Danney Goble is no Roy Stewart, and Danney Goble has had neither the intent nor the ability to recreate what Roy Stewart has already done. Instead, I only wanted to put my scholarly training and literary abilities to the tasks of learning and telling a story that is meaningful to people more interested in the story than in either the scholarship or its characters. Above all, that means to those whose story this is—to the people associated with the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

That was some time and one name change ago. Oklahoma had a Department of Vocational and Technical Education when Sarah Mussett convinced Roy Peters, Chuck Hopkins, Leo Presley, and others that the agency's history needed to be written and that it needed to be written by Danney Goble. Now that it is written, only Sarah Mussett remains with the (renamed) agency; the others have retired or resigned in the intervening years. As for me, those years have added to my share of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune—and to my supply of very good fortune, too.

High among the lucky breaks has been the forbearance that I have received from others. What we all expected to see done in one year has taken more than four years to complete. For that there is no excuse. What there is, is gratitude for the others' patience. They have waited too long to have this history—and it is likely small consolation to realize that, by waiting, their reward will be to get another three years' worth of history out of the deal.

As an historian, my rewards have been far greater. For one thing, I have had the time to explore corners and crannies of history long ago forgotten, if ever known to exist at all. Old archival records, obscure manuscript collections, unread graduate theses—all of these can hold countless nuggets of information and insight that can be uncovered only with patient and painstaking work. It takes time to collect all those little gems, and it takes much more time to assemble and polish them into a graceful narrative. To a writer, the rewards can be found on every page that follows. Every item of fact, every element of analysis, every turn of phrase is a consequence of my having had that time.

But they are not consequences of time alone. Innumerable gems were uncovered in the research, but their discovery required that mountains of materials first had to be explored and overturned, and the ratio of treasure to trash was never very high. Stacy Marie Kidd can testify to that since it was she who mapped out most of the larger mountains and did the preliminary digging. As for the analyses and writing, neither would be as clear or as articulate but for the editorial judgments of LaDonna Sullivan. I have worked with her in one way or another for twelve years now, and I concede that there must be something that LaDonna Sullivan does not do better than almost anyone I have ever known. Do not ask me just what that is, though: I still have not found it, not in her professional qualities, not in her personal virtues either. She is a pearl of great price.

Once the manuscript was finished, several employees at the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education took time to read it, look for inconsistencies, critique it, choose pictures, and suggest that I add a timeline to increase the history's use for reference purposes. In this phase, I am indebted to both past and present employees but especially appreciate the painstaking efforts of Sarah Mussett, Ron Wilkerson, and Carol Hiner. Gail Pearson was involved in the early editing stages. Gloria Koch and Kathryn Anderson accepted the final chores of formatting and proofreading. Suzi Kucko designed the cover and photo layout, and the staff at the ODCTE print plant expedited its printing so the book could be available at Summer Conference.

If reading this history teaches others just a fraction of what its writing has taught me, they will be the richer for it indeed. I began knowing little; I ended in absolute awe. In between is my growing appreciation for the history of vocational education in Oklahoma, especially for what that history means to Oklahoma. Too long identified with disasters both man-made and natural, Oklahoma is usually not regarded as much of a model for anything particularly worthwhile, football being for some the possible exception, for others the final proof. Here is something different. Here is the story of one thing that Oklahoma does well, does better than most Oklahomans know, maybe as well as can be

imagined. And unlike football, no one can question its value; and unlike football, it has never had a stretch of bad years either. It was good to learn that, important to know that, and exciting to tell that. Those are among my rewards as I complete this book.

The greatest of rewards came to me during this project. It owed nothing at all to the assignment, but it had a lot to do with its delay. His name is Grant Nathaniel Goble. He was born on May 14, 2001. He someday will understand why his father put his name on this book's dedication page. He may even think it important. His father already does.

So does his mother, Jane Spake Goble. Of course, when this project began she was not his mother, but she did collect and organize nearly all of the bibliography that made this book possible. So, in that sense, she helped conceive it even before she conceived Grant. The truth is that she also ended up bearing some of the pains of its delivery, too. Grant may someday think that important. His father already does.

Danney Goble
Norman, Oklahoma

Learning to Earn

Prologue

Wellsprings of Reform

It took a lot to impress John Runkle. Most of the ten million others who visited Philadelphia's great Centennial Exposition of 1876 were awed with its demonstrations of agricultural abundance, industrial might, and manufacturing genius. But not him. President of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dr. John D. Runkle already had seen it all. In fact, he and his faculty had contributed to much of it.

His indifference ended, however, when he passed through the exhibition's Machinery Hall, where he paused before a few cases. Presented by one of the fifty-eight foreign countries represented in Philadelphia, they showed the work of Victor Della Vos, director of Moscow's Imperial Technical School. Their contents stopped him abruptly, and what those contents portended impressed him permanently. In fact, John Runkle was overwhelmed. Reflecting on the event many years later, the premier historian of American schooling would write that "American education was never the same thereafter."[1]

Such weighty words seem out of proportion to the cases' commonplace contents. Untrained eyes would have seen no more than a few plain drawings, some basic models, and a scattering of simple tools. But Runkle's were not untrained eyes, and they beheld the fruits of genius. Spread before him were exercises that integrated mathematics, engineering, and physics and matched them perfectly with a set of graduated manual skills. The combination, Runkle sensed immediately, held "the philosophical key to all industrial education."[2]

That conviction, not the cases' contents, guaranteed that things were "never the same thereafter." When John Runkle came across the work of Victor Della Vos at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition—then and there appeared one of the wellsprings of what became America's remarkable system of vocational training.

There would be other sources, too. Like this one, none would follow smooth, unbroken courses. Instead, they would twist and turn, separate and converge, the flow sometimes uncertain and often murky. Still, they eventually changed America and all of its states. Understanding vocational education's impact upon this state—Oklahoma—begins with tracing those streams to their origins.

The power of Runkle's original insight lay in its promise to mend what many feared had been permanently and fatally torn asunder: the fabric of American education. According to this view, industry, factories, and cities already had pierced and slashed through the early republic's close-knit weaving of mental schooling with manual training. Once separated, the two had become steadily more distant then steadily more hostile. Each moved into its own world, each world somehow worse than the other. Worker drones marched mindlessly into factories deadened by over-specialized routine. Children marched just as mindlessly through schools just as deadened by their obsession with impractical academic drills.

That is why Dr. Runkle saw so much in those Russian cases. He saw more than a few practical tools matched to a handful of intellectual exercises. He beheld a way to restore what had been ripped apart. Schools could reunite the manual with the mental. Once reformed, America's schools might become the leaven for a reformed society. Better schools would equip Americans to make better livings, better lives, and a better America.

Runkle may have had the original inspiration, but Calvin M. Woodward first developed an entire philosophy for vocational schooling and first put that philosophy in practice. The Harvard-educated Woodward joined the faculty of Saint Louis's Washington University in 1865. Fourteen years later, he opened America's first Manual Training School on the campus. A three-year secondary school attached to the university, it divided its

curriculum equally between academic and manual training and taught both the same way—as arts to be mastered by every student. With it as a model, similar schools, some publicly funded, others entirely private, appeared over the next decade. By 1890, no fewer than thirty-six cities scattered among fifteen states and the District of Columbia maintained such institutions.[3]

It was a good beginning, but it turned out to be not much more than a beginning. From the first, the manual training envisioned by Runkle and implemented by Woodward had faced stiff resistance. In surprisingly little time, the resistors overcame the reformers. Their method was as simple as it was decisive: they merely exchanged the latter's original, idealistic vision for a new one all their own, this one purely pragmatic. The difference had permanent consequences for American vocational education.

Much of the initial reaction had come from two old enemies, each resisting anything that might benefit the other. Because many of the earliest training schools were founded and funded by local businesses, workers feared that employer-run schools might destroy labor's tradition of apprenticeship training. That is why they resented the trade schools' potential to arm bosses with weapons in an ongoing struggle. Especially distrustful were the followers of unions that joined together in 1886 as the American Federation of Labor (the AF of L). They were both ill-tempered about it and well-placed to kill it. A typical labor spokesman so detested the very principle that he had to describe it with the worst word that he knew for the worst thing there was. "Trade schools," he bellowed, "have been nothing more nor less than the breeding schools for *scabs*!"[4]

For once, management agreed with labor's conclusion, if not with labor's reasoning. Employers regarded any public dollars spent to train workers—particularly to train *immigrant* workers—to be tax dollars wasted. Those foreigners were already doing their jobs well enough, and if that ever changed for the worse, the bosses could just change the foreigners: one country's refuse might be better than another's after all. Publicly funded vocational training might or might not improve their workers' skills; even if it did, the result would less likely fuel their efficiency than fire their discontent.

Like laboring people with their unions, employers had their own organizations ready to amplify their individual voices. The most powerful were the United States Chambers of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). Leaders and others active in both considered manual training wasteful at least and dangerous at worst. At best, employers' tax dollars would be educating employees to make their work worth more. Who knew but that the working stiffs might decide that they were worth more too, not merely in the marketplace but in the voting booth as well?[5]

At least as important as the hostility of business and labor was that arising from another occupational group. Even before the creation of the AF of L and the NAM, the 1870 appearance of the National Education Association (NEA) had been a harbinger of hymns soon to be offered by others to their most selfish interests. Judging themselves trained professionals with finely honed talents and specially acquired skills (not to mention with some pretty inflated notions of self-worth), many educators chalked up the whole idea of manual training to the folly of fools and the impudence of dilettantes. It was worse than wrong; it was a threat. "The schools we have to conduct are to train boys and girls in those directions that are common to everybody," one thundered at an early NEA convention, "and one of the things that the boys and girls ought to learn in schools is how to get information from books.... [The saw] is a thing that does not belong to the school at all. It belongs outside and ought to be attended to outside."[6]

Such professional jealousies never reversed the stream of reform, but they surely did divert it. Reform expected to reach all students in all schools, reform intended to change everything it touched and to touch everything—those currents of reform trickled away swiftly and disappeared entirely. The words might stay the same ("manual training" remained in use, although others preferred new titles like "industrial arts"), but the message was altogether different.

Vocational training would impart specific skills to specific students for specific trades. Independent of the general curriculum—that is to say outside the academic curriculum—it targeted only those fated to work with their hands. Moreover, it was the sign of their fate and cause of it, too.

At the same time, it affirmed the professional educators' claims of a special expertise. In fact, it secured those claims by purging the public schools of all but the purely academic. Because such training would be publicly funded, it also would serve the interests of both business and labor, even as it protected each from the designs of the other. Altogether, it was a remarkable reformulation, remarkable mostly because of its example of the way organized interest groups once managed to define—and to control—reform, American style.

No one familiar with late-nineteenth-century American history will find much too surprising there. The rise of occupational interests and the spread of their professional values long have been identified as the key driving force in that era. Successful reform movements were especially likely to bear their imprint.[7] The fate of the original manual training impulse is but one reflection of that general rule. In exactly the same measure that vocational education was a reform, its wellsprings lay in the ambitions and pretensions of laboring stiffs, company bosses, and school teachers.

As vocational training developed, two other interest groups added to its flow. As with workers, businessmen, and educators, those in each group originally expected reform to bear their self-likeness. Although beginning separately, however, each became a tributary of the other, and the two together contributed forcefully to the distinctive form of American vocational schooling.

Until the late 1800s, housework was regarded by some as a chore, by others as a curse, by hardly anyone as a science. That began to change in 1872, when Iowa State College first offered regular classes in housekeeping. Of course, only women students could take these pioneering classes, but the number of courses spread rapidly, steadily became more complex, and eventually began to pick up a man here or there. By 1900, the catalogues of thirty colleges listed courses in everything from cooking and sewing to "management of help" and "domestic chemistry," whatever that was. Like Iowa State, nearly all of these schools were land-grant colleges, so called because they were beneficiaries of the first Morrill Act's grant of public land, which had permitted each state to endow a college devoted to "agriculture and mechanical

arts." The sum of such classes was something that thought itself fully as important as, but completely independent of, both agricultural and mechanical arts. Some called it "home economics," others "domestic science." By any name, all insisted that it was a formal discipline, one every bit as respectable as any other species of economics or any other branch of science.[8]

Disciplines create disciples, and this one was no different. Between 1899 and 1908, postulates gathered for annual conferences at Boston or in New York State. There they draped upon their discipline all the intellectual trappings of a formal science. Like chemistry or biology, home economics was so complex and so abstract that it had to be approached as a series of related subjects, each with its own technical language, each with its own specialized curriculum, all with their own lofty standards for professional stature. At the final conference, they achieved the *sine qua non* of professional status by launching the American Home Economics Association. Perhaps as important was a step taken earlier, in 1903, when home economists had resolved that their discipline was already so vital to America that it had to be taught as a vocational science.[9]

Nurseries of home economists, the land-grant colleges were farmers' pastures, fields, and more. As with housekeepers, almost no one thought of farmers as professionals for most of the nineteenth century, not even the farmers themselves. Although it is true that agricultural organizations cropped up here and there like perennial weeds, most were no more hardy. State and local agrarian clubs usually degenerated into fraternal lodges; national ones generally wandered off in search of political causes. In neither case did anyone suspect that farming constituted a distinct profession, one that both needed and deserved special training and schooling.

In 1887, when the Hatch Act authorized and funded agricultural experiment stations for every state and linked them with the land-grant colleges, that began to change. The first sign was typical: the appearance, within weeks, of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations. It thereupon proved its worth by successfully lobbying Congress for a second Morrill Act. This one accelerated change by committing

Washington to annual appropriations for land-grant colleges. The A&M schools thus became missions of almost religious zeal. Their "agronomists"—itself a term both new and revealing—enchanted entire flocks of believers. Called to redemption and baptized in scientific knowledge, the converts came forth as disciples, no longer simple farmers but born-again "agriculturalists," something else that was new under the sun. If the faithful had a church, it was the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union. Founded in 1902, the so-called Farmers' Union announced the central tenant of its gospel with a constitution that included chapter and verse affirming the call to educate "the agricultural class in scientific farming."[10]

In the twentieth century's first decade, similar demands echoed from union hiring halls, from corporate board rooms, from teachers' colleges, and from assemblies of domestic science. The American Federation of Labor, the United States Chambers of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers had found rare common ground in calling for publicly supported manual training, at least as each of them defined it. Leaders of the National Education Association were actively lobbying for the same—more, in fact, since officials of the American Home Economics Association had thrown in with them to add domestic science to the mix. The Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations weighed in with voices that matched the accents of every state.

Drawing upon and adding to all of these was a remarkable and diverse coalition that called itself the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education (NSPIE). Founded in 1906, it lived up to that exalted if cumbersome title while inundating every state with floods of expert studies, professional recommendations, and unyielding pressure.

The results were unmistakable. According to the NSPIE, twenty-nine of the then forty-six states were offering some form of vocational schooling in 1910. Eighteen taught home economics in their classrooms, eleven others offered agricultural training. Although the forms of instruction and the types of state aid varied, nearly all of these represented recently won and roundly applauded victories. In fact, twenty-five of the twenty-nine had begun

their programs within the previous ten years.[11]

For all of its success, the movement for vocational training was just about to take a decided—and a decisive—change. At the very crest of the drive for state-sponsored vocational training, precisely when total, nationwide triumph was in sight, the NSPIE and others suddenly shifted their target. Rather than complete reform on a state-by-state basis, the reformers zeroed in on the federal government.

Since at least 1906, Congress had considered bills providing support in one form or another for vocational schooling of one kind or another. None had gone very far, and no one had particularly cared, not even the NSPIE. Then, in 1912, the national society made Charles A. Prosser its full-time secretary and opened an office near Capitol Hill. From that moment on, Congress, not state legislatures, dictated the timing and the form of American vocational education.

The timing proved to be remarkably quick. By a resolution of January 20, 1914, Congress created a Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education. Its nine members (all appointed by President Woodrow Wilson) were to give lawmakers their recommendations by June 1 of that year. A conclusive clue to what they would be came as soon as Wilson announced the commission's membership. Four were members of Congress: Senators Carroll Page of Vermont and Hoke Smith of Georgia, Representatives Dudley Hughes, also of Georgia, and Simeon Fess of Ohio. Each was a known champion of federally mandated and federally financed vocational training. The other five commission members were private citizens—but not just any private citizens. President Wilson selected Charles Prosser to be the commission's chairman. All four of his other choices were NSPIE members, two of them having to leave its managing board to accept the assignment.[12]

Although the commission presented its detailed report on time, the press of more important questions delayed congressional decision. World War I erupted in August 1914. Afterwards, debate over America's response consumed the congress, but the mix of war and delay probably made the eventual settlement inevitable. When the committees took up their bills, the country was moving inexorably toward war. Vocational education thereby became

something of a "preparedness" issue. That assured its passage just as soon as the committees could lay their bills before the respective chambers, early in 1917, just weeks before Congress took up and passed a declaration of war. Senator Hoke Smith and Representative Dudley Hughes had headed the law-drafting committees, and it was they who walked a bill through to final passage and law: the Smith-Hughes Act.

Still unanswered though is the question "why?" If the states were so rapidly creating vocational systems, why had the reformers even bothered to approach the federal government? Public schooling heretofore had been considered the prerogative of state and local governments. The Hatch and the two Morrill acts (and others) had respected that wall; they affected only higher education.

What was different now? Was the difference inherent to some special needs of vocational education? Did the difference lie somewhere else, perhaps in the one option that there was to it? What were the states doing with vocational schooling anyway? Why did these reformers, like so many others, suddenly turn their backs on state capitals and lift their faces—as well as their hands—to Washington?

One way to understand that choice is to examine the alternative that it replaced. And the best way to do that is to consider one state in some detail. Oklahoma is that state.

Notes

1. Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 25.

2. Runkle quoted ibid.

3. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

4. Quoted ibid., italics added, p. 36. Defined by the dictionary as "one who works for less than union wages or on non-union terms," the term "scab" meant far more to most of those who (like this man) used it. A famous definition attributed to Jack London begins:

After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad and the vampire, he had some awful substance left with which to make a

SCAB. A SCAB is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a water-logged brain and a combination backbone made of jelly and glue. Where others have hearts, he carries a tumor of rotten principles.

The definition grows worse from there. For these two, see *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Lexington, Mass: Merriam-Webster, 1960), p. 766; and *Songs of the Workers to Fan the Flames of Discontent*, 34th ed. (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1973), p. 23.

5. Ibid., pp. 36-37; David Nasaw, *Schooled to Order: A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 124.

6. Albert P. Marble, quoted in Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, p. 30.

7. Probably the most influential statement of this view is in Robert H. Wiebe, T*he Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967). A more specialized argument, especially important for understanding educational reform is Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976).

8. Roy W. Roberts, *Vocational and Practical Arts Education: History, Development, and Principles*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 79-80.

9. Ibid., pp. 80-81.

10. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, p. 46; quotation from Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, pp. 126-27.

11. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

12. "National Aid for Vocational Education," *School and Society* (May 8, 1915), 649-57.

1

Punctuated Equilibrium

Oklahoma was one of the twenty-nine states offering vocational training years before the Smith-Hughes Act created a federal system. In a sense, vocational education was in Oklahoma even when there was no Oklahoma—more accurately, when there was no Oklahoma on the map.

When no one had yet used that name, many had heard of Indian Territory, and they had understood why it was called that. Nearly all of its inhabitants were Indians, usually an Indian from what some called the Five Civilized Tribes. The "civilized" part said a lot about the five; they had been so swiftly, easily, and thoroughly acculturated that they were almost like white people. Of course, that also said a lot about what it took to get white people to call Indians civilized; they had to be like white people. Whatever else they were saying though, white people said that the Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw were the Five Civilized Tribes.

Not that it had done them any good. White Americans resolved to drive them far across the Mississippi, a thousand miles or so from their homes, and that is what happened—with maybe a third of the driven dying in the process. The Indians (those that survived, anyway) got the promise of money to come and the promise that theirs would always be an Indian territory. They also got some schools, usually run by white people, where Indian children could learn their letters and acquire some practical skills. Of course, the letters turned out to be for white people's words and the skills turned out to be what white people called practical: Indian boys learned to plow, plant, and pick; Indian girls learned to cook, sew, and clean.[1]

After 1865, other Indians joined the Five Tribes, but most people (including many from the five) called these Indians anything but civilized. This time it was the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, Apache—tribes native to the southern Great Plains and the arid Southwest—that were driven into Oklahoma, where they were expected to become like white people, too. Survivors among them got some more promises and some more schools, some of these run by tender-hearted missionaries, some by mean-spirited soldiers. Their children thereupon suffered what the children of the already-civilized Indians had endured previously. Their sons fell victim to barbers; put on denim jeans and canvas shirts; and picked up plows, saws, and hammers. Clad in fresh calico, their daughters learned all there was to know about the virtues of needles, washboards, brooms, and dustpans.[2]

This is what passed for vocational education in early Oklahoma, and that was not much. Physically, it consisted of some scattered log cabins in Oklahoma's eastern hills and a few raw-timbered buildings on its western prairies. Intellectually, they were less schools than prisons. They amounted to forced-labor camps, their inmates the children of the dispossessed.

That lasted until 1889, when the dispossessed got dispossessed again. In 1889, Congress "opened" the first Indian lands to settlers—as if Indians (even *civilized* Indians) could never settle anywhere. Eighteen eighty-nine: that was two years after Congress had passed the Hatch Act, thirteen years after Dr. Runkle had had his epiphany, twenty-nine years after Abraham Lincoln had signed the first Morrill Act. Until then, Oklahoma might have been in modern America, but Oklahoma hardly was of it.

That is why Oklahoma is so important. It remained a land of frontiers and forts when America became a nation of factories and farms. In Oklahoma, one can see what came to be—and what might have become, too. Oklahoma represented different possibilities, conceived from different needs, born with different values, nurtured for different purposes.

Oklahomans got off to a late start, but not for nothing were they called Sooners. They rushed to make up for lost time. Within a year of the first land opening, their brand-new legislature handed them their first agricultural and mechanical school. At the

time, they still had not settled on where the capital ought to be, but the lawmakers knew what was important: It was important to have an Oklahoma A&M College and to have it in Stillwater. It was just the second good thing ever to happen there. The first had been when one of its own had been elected Speaker of that brand-new house of representatives. Good things do tend to come in pairs—especially in politics.[3]

The college was new and most of its professors were new, too. Oklahoma A&M's original faculty drew heavily upon the recent graduates of America's other A&M schools. One, John Fields, had lasting importance.

Fields only recently had taken a chemistry degree from Pennsylvania's land-grant college when he arrived in Stillwater in 1896. He did double duty there, teaching both chemistry and physics, and he doubled up again to take on the job of chief chemist for the experiment station. In every calling, John Fields found himself a pulpit from which he preached tirelessly the gospel of scientific agriculture.

His was not the only message, not even the only one coming out of the A&M college. Henry Glazier was a professor there, too, but he liked to call himself colonel. The rank was not even honorary—not quite honorable either. Colonel Glazier had been no colonel, maybe not even a buck private. What he had been was an auctioneer and fruit farmer from over in Orlando. At least he had been until he jumped into higher education. It had been quite a leap; Professor Glazier had never attended any college himself. The absence hardly left him without intellectual weapons though. Glazier had taken lessons not from books but from experience; and he boasted of a whole arsenal of learned points, most of them stunningly dull. One was the colonel's counsel that farmers hang horseshoes from their fruit trees. The horseshoes put iron in the trees.[4]

The apostles of scientific agriculture were obviously up against some strange heretics in early Oklahoma. Some Oklahoma farmers did adorn their trees with horseshoes, and men like John Fields had their work cut out for them. It was one thing to get rid of Colonel Glazier—it took four years just to accomplish that—but the real missionary work remained in the fields. It had to start

with clearing off centuries of accumulated brush, folklore, superstition, and nonsense.

That job amounted to cleaning the Augean stables. Nearly everything that came out of the little campus at Stillwater met furious resistance from the likes of Henry Glazier, folks whose only education had been of the hard-knocks variety. Even reformers as driven as John Fields began to lose hope of ever changing them. Fields, for one, started to put his own hopes in the young people. They were not yet beyond redemption. In fact, their entire generation might still be reborn and raised for the science and vocation of agriculture. The way to do that was, in Fields's words, to "first catch the youngster and... get him interested in what he should be interested in."[5]

The best place to catch a youngster was in school. Every reformer knew that. Every reformer also knew how to snag one (or all): pass a law.

John Fields and others of reform mind drafted just such a statute and aggressively pushed it upon the territorial legislature. The lawmakers passed it in 1905. That law—it might as well have been called the Fields Act—decreed that every public school in Oklahoma Territory would teach agriculture and teach it both as a science and as a vocation.

Warmly received by some, the new law outraged others, and the most outraged of all were school teachers. They fought it in the legislature but lost when the lawmakers sided with the reformers, but that turned out to be just the first round. There was a second, and they won that round—and the fight—on a technical knockout. The law just passed lost all meaning when the teachers beat its essential companion. The latter intended to prepare them to do what the other had mandated by adding agricultural study to their professional training. As it turned out, the teachers got off from teaching the science of agriculture with the plea of ignorance.

A victory celebration would have been premature. Within months, Oklahoma voters elected 112 men (only men could vote; only men could run) and authorized them to meet in Guthrie in 1906. Their purpose was to write a new constitution for a new state. More than seventy had won their races with the backing of

the Farmers' Union and Federation of Labor, and they were ready to follow just about anyone with any idea about anything that belonged in a constitution, and no one had more ideas about more things than their choice as the convention's president. He was a some-time lawyer, some-time farmer, and full-time politician who liked to think himself a constitutional scholar. His name was William Henry David Murray.[6]

Murray already had legions of admirers, and they already called him "Alfalfa Bill," supposedly some kind of tribute to his alledged endorsement of the crop. Detractors—and there were many of those, too—preferred to call him "Cockleburr Bill," that label a certain commentary on their regard for his farming abilities. By either name, Murray was determined to mold a constitution to fit a new state—a new kind of state, in fact. To that end, he and his lieutenants lay before the convention nearly every possible theory on nearly every aspect of governance. Not every notion or nostrum made it to the the final constitution, but enough did to take up 50,000 words.

One relatively small and straightforward set of those words comprised a full section of the general article on education:

> The Legislature shall provide for the teaching of the elements of agriculture, horticulture, stock feeding, and domestic science in the common schools of the State. (Article 13, section 7)

That is how Oklahoma entered the union bearing the longest constitution yet fashioned by human hands, a constitution that also made Oklahoma the only state to offer vocational training from the instant of its statehood—not to mention the only state that ever did that by constitutional mandate. With Murray serving as Speaker of the house, the state's first legislature thereupon added something else: the very statute once successfully blocked by territorial teachers:

> After July 1, 1909, no person shall teach... in the public schools receiving aid from this State, who has not passed a satisfactory examination in the elements of Agriculture and allied branches.[7]

Teachers grumbled, but they adjusted their plans, and many

planned to go to Stillwater. Alone of the state colleges (there soon were ten, and more were on the way), Oklahoma A&M College was the only one ready to educate the educators, at least to educate them "in the elements of Agriculture and allied branches." Moreover, the lawmakers had seen to it that only the A&M college had something called a "Chair of Agriculture for the Schools." Established and funded by the First Legislature, it also had been assigned to there by law. The same law also declared that the chair's occupant was "to direct and advise in all matters relating to the teaching of agriculture and allied subjects in the common schools."

Probably not more than a dozen of the lawmakers who lined up behind those words had the faintest sense of what they meant, but that was no matter. Professor John Fields did know. Professor T.M. Jeffords, the first to hold the chair, knew, too. With help from Fields and others, Jeffords prepared model curricula, printed and distributed creative teaching strategies, and hosted scores of teacher-training institutes.[8]

The remainder of the state's educational leaders were no less energetic—but much less effective. E.D. Cameron, Oklahoma's first superintendent of public instruction, prophesied with near-ecstacy that "the time is not too far distant when education in Agriculture will be offered in every good elementary school in the United States."[9] For the time at hand, though, Superintendent Cameron had little to contribute beyond his energy and his prophecy. He had run across some textbooks that looked good: *Agriculture for Beginners* and *Principles of Agriculture*. Otherwise, he could only recommend that unprepared teachers contact a "Prof. B. Youngblood," some plant man who "may be addressed at Pauls Valley, Okla." As for "domestic science"—well, there was Conn's *Story of Germ Life,* Prudden's *Dust and Its Dangers*, and Lemcke's classic: *How to Live Well on Twenty-Five Cents a Day*.[10]

Although the state's constitution had explicitly required technical education in only its elementary agricultural and domestic forms, quite a few communities developed on their own what was still called manual training. No one knows for sure, but H.F. Rusch was likely to have pioneered it for the state.

Rusch was formally trained by the Kansas State Normal School

to teach the industrial arts. In 1903, he went directly from its campus at Emporia to the Jones Academy, near Hartshorne, in the Choctaw Nation. Founded in 1892 as a private boarding school, the academy had recently introduced manual along with agricultural and domestic training. All, of course, were kept quite separate from the academic curriculum. Rusch taught classes crowded with students who learned by doing, literally. They built their own workshop, tables, and benches and, on top of that, maintained every school building as well.

In 1905, Rusch moved to Oklahoma City, where he took on the first manual training program offered by an Oklahoma public school. It was just a year old, and that first year had been a rough one, in no small part because the principal had packed the manual classes with the school's worst misfits. Backed by Edgar Vaught, Oklahoma City's superintendent of schools, Rusch swiftly turned the program into the envy of students, parents, and teachers. The last were particularly delighted because Rusch and his kids were kept away from "regular" students; they met in the basement.[11]

Even before statehood, schools in Lawton, Comanche, and Ardmore had joined Oklahoma City with successful manual training programs. Muskogee's Superintendent Charles W. Briles added that city to the list in 1908. Eight years later (but still a full year before the Smith-Hughes Act) some ninety Oklahoma schools were offering manual training. Two were preparatory schools, one at Tonkawa, the other at Claremore. As secondary schools they were exceptional, partly for their purpose, mostly because they were funded entirely by the state. They also were proof that where Oklahoma put its money, there its heart was, too. Both included as part of their college preparatory curriculum full complements of vocational courses in all of their forms. The Claremore school's president captured the reason perfectly. Preparation, S. M. Barrett declared, ought to mean more than merely preparing students for college. It also ought to "prepare students for life..., to educate for labor as well as for leisure."[12]

Education "for labor" also characterized Oklahoma's unique secondary schools of agriculture and mechanics. Not satisfied to have one A&M college, the First Legislature also established

A&M schools "of the secondary grade," being sure that each of the state's five judicial districts landed one. As an added expression of political acumen all but one (Panhandle State Agriculture School, at Goodwell), took the name of a person important to educational politics: Cameron (E.D. Cameron, the superintendent of public instruction) at Lawton; Connors (J.P. Connors, president of the state board of agriculture) at Warner; Connell (J.H. Connell, president of Oklahoma A&M College) at Helena; Haskell (Governor Charles Haskell) at Broken Arrow; and Murray (he of constitutional, legislative, and alfalfa fame) at Tishomingo.[13]

On top of that, Oklahoma's six normal schools (two-year institutions designed to train teachers) required at least three 12-week courses in either home economics or industrial arts. Both the University of Oklahoma, at Norman, and Oklahoma A&M College made identical demands of their own education students. Like it or not, future teachers were going to be qualified vocational instructors as well; they might as well accept it.

The sum of all these things seemed to add up to quite a record, one particularly impressive for a state so new, with resources so slender. Too much should not be made of it though. No one kept any figures to measure just how much of what kind of technical education actually got into classrooms—not to mention to know how well it was taught if it did get there. One is left to wonder, then, how much of what was being said was accurately descriptive and how much was pure publicity. Was it not suspicious that R.H. Wilson, Cameron's immediate successor as superintendent of public instruction, looked closely at the record of vocational education in the common schools and confessed it to be "superficial and desultory?" His explanation was even more unsettling: "School directors and patrons did not take kindly to the introduction of the subjects into the common school curriculum."[14] Attitudes like that had held vocational training at bay in the past, and apparently very little had changed.

The heart of the problem lay deeper. However much or well vocational training was being taught, it was not being taught at all to people who were not going to school. That excluded practically every adult in Oklahoma. Since 40 percent of Oklahoma's children were not enrolled in any school anywhere at any time,

two out of every five Oklahomans of school age were also excluded. Among those were nearly all who should have been in high schools. The reason was simple enough: Not even sixty out of Oklahoma's nearly six *thousand* school districts even had a high school.

In the rest of the school systems, students' education ended with the eighth grade, if it went that far. And what if it did? For kids in the rural districts—and 93 percent of Oklahoma's children lived in rural districts—the odds were one-in-three that their teacher held only a "third grade" certificate. In other words, the teacher's only preparation was eight years spent in that or another equally backward school.[15]

Not even the sum of these faults equaled the bill of indictment that some reformers were pressing. That was because those reformers were indicting vocational programming everywhere, not just in Oklahoma.

Everywhere, vocational schooling had to battle professional academicians, and the academicians usually won. Nowhere was there a uniform curriculum, governed by a uniform set of rules. Nowhere was there agreement on even the most basic questions. For instance, was it manual training or was it industrial arts? Whichever, what was it to do anyway? Should it be teaching general techniques suitable for many crafts or should it be instilling the specific skills demanded for specific jobs? Who knew? The answer was everyone, which really meant no one.

That was the problem. The national system was neither national nor a system. It was a crazy-quilt—except that this quilt's many pieces were not even joined. State governments had neither the power nor the means to change that. The federal government had both the authority and the ability, though. So, it had the obligation, too. The federal government had to act.

Herein lay the real importance of the Smith-Hughes Act. Everything changed when President Wilson signed that law, on February 23, 1917. At that instant, the evolution of vocational education became an example of what biologists call punctuated equilibrium. Everywhere, not just in Oklahoma, the entire ecology of American vocational training changed, not slowly but immedi-

ately, not subtly but entirely. Only the fit survived—more accurately, the survivors were those that managed to fit themselves to the new environment.

Washington would help fund and manage vocational schooling in all of its forms: agriculture, manual training, and home economics. In exact proportion to their share of the total rural population, the states would divide continuing appropriations scheduled to reach $7 million annually between 1918 and 1926. Three million of those dollars would cover up to half of the salaries for teachers and other necessary costs in vocational agriculture (vo ag, for short). Another $3 million would be distributed according to a state's proportion of total urban population. Most of it, too, would pay half of salaries and other expenses in trades and industries. Quickly and universally nicknamed T&I, this was the name that Washington had decided to use, and so it was. Another decision—made the same way with the same effect—was to teach it as a set of very technical, job-specific skills. Any money for home economics (home ec) came out of each state's share of that same $3 million. In this one case, Washington granted the states some discretion. Each could divide its share of T&I funds as it saw fit, just as long as no state gave home economics more than a fifth. Finally, the states would share another $1 million to prepare teachers in all three fields. Any one state's portion would equal its percentage of the total population, both rural and urban. Each federal dollar had to be matched with at least one dollar of state money, too.

The money was important in its own right—$7 million was big money at the time—but its greatest significance was that it served as a hook. States that accepted the money accepted thereby a common architecture drawn up by reformers and framed by federal law. Approving the federal commitment of money entailed committing their own dollars (and those of their local districts, too) on a one-to-one matching basis. It was their dollars, but it was Washington's game; and to get, they first had to give.

The first thing states had to give were detailed plans, each to cover ten years and all fitted to the same rigid mold of how it would spend the money. In fact, Washington officials had developed the format, and the same officials had to accept the plan.

The states thereby gave Washington the right to approve, reject, or revise how they were going to spend the money.

That meant that they had to give up vocational schooling for nearly all of their school children and for most of their adults, too. Smith-Hughes agreed to fund only training that was "of less than college grade" and that only for people fifteen or older. Among school children, that pretty much wiped out everyone except the high school students. In Oklahoma, there were very few left. Because Washington also insisted that T&I training be confined to those already working in or preparing to enter certain, technical occupations, there were not many grownups left in either.[16]

This is how the Smith-Hughes Act gave money, but all of it with—as they say—strings attached. The strings may have been more important than the dollars because they permitted Washington to weave together a comprehensive and uniform system of American vocational education. Thereafter, vocational training in the United States was what Washington wanted, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

Oklahoma took the money. Every other state did, too, but not as swiftly and not as eagerly. On March 24, 1917, four weeks and a day after the president had signed the Smith-Hughes Act, Oklahoma officially accepted its terms. In approving House Bill 213, the legislature and governor pledged "the good faith of the state... to meet all conditions necessary" to put Oklahoma in line with the new federal law. Oklahoma thereby made Washington's vision of organization, purpose, design, and oversight Oklahoma's vision, too.

Organization was first. As the law commanded it to do, Oklahoma created a State Board of Vocational Education, consisting of five members and made part of the State Department of Education. Four were ex officio spots, taken by people because of their other positions: R.H. Wilson, superintendent of public instruction; Frank M. Gault, head of the agricultural board; Stratton D. Brooks, president of the state university; and J.W. Cantwell, president of the A&M college. The fifth member, appointed by Governor Robert L. Williams, served as the board's director. That was S.M. Barrett, the one so passionate in his advocacy of education "for labor as well as for leisure" when president of the preparatory

school at Claremore. Barrett's unchanging convictions made him a good choice; the governor's obligations made him the perfect one. Because the governor had just vetoed its appropriations, the Claremore school was shutting down and Williams owed Barrett a job. Refashioned as Oklahoma Military Academy, the school reopened a year later. Barrett returned to run it, and Charles Briles replaced him as director of the State Board of Vocational Education.

With the exception of Barrett, the board members already had full plates—and separate agendas—from their primary jobs. That made little difference, however, since their immediate responsibility was to design a plan to pull in some federal money. The task needed little time and almost no creativity. At their first meeting, board members decided that the easiest thing to do was just to ask what to do. Barrett, Wilson, and Cantwell went to Washington, met the authorities, and dutifully recorded what they were told. After some minor adjustments negotiated by mail, federal officials formally accepted the same plan that they informally had dictated. That was in November of 1917. Subject to any number of statutory amendments thereafter and modified by countless administrative modifications over years to come, Oklahoma's vocational system thereby assumed lasting form.

The plan's hiring qualifications and job descriptions starkly illuminated the very different ways of this new vocational order. Consider this: Very few of Oklahoma's teachers, no matter how experienced or able, could have met those standards or would have agreed to those expectations.

To teach vocational agriculture, one first had to have graduated "from a four years' course in agriculture in a standard A&M College" and also to have had "at least two years' actual experience in practical agriculture." Once hired, the teacher would have to work "for the full year," including summer months spent "supervising agricultural projects of his students in Vocational Agriculture." (Note the assumption of gender there.)

Home economics required similar preparation. Teachers had to have graduated "from a four years' Home Economics Course in a standard A&M College," with at least a tenth of their credit-hours earned in "professional training in the teaching of Home Econom-

ics." As with vo-ag, home ec teachers also had to demonstrate practical experience, specifically to have worked "in some Home Economics vocation for at least two years." And, yes, *she* must do that; but, no, she did not necessarily have to work year-round.

T&I presented a problem. Because not even the "standard A&M" schools (i.e., the land-grant colleges) offered the appropriate degrees, it was unrealistic to expect its teachers to be college graduates. Thus, qualifications for "Instructors in Trades" were at best ambiguous:

> (1) Mastery of the trade. (2) Graduation from at least an elementary school, but graduation from a high school preferred. (3) Good health. (4) Good personality and ability to deal with people. (5) Maturity in age.

Because Washington had demanded it, Oklahoma's plan also spelled out qualifications for three administrators, one to supervise each form of instruction. Prerequisites were essentially those of teachers, with two notable exceptions. The T&I supervisor would have to "furnish proof of having had ample experience with actual Trades and Industries, as the case may be." No one knew what that last phrase meant, except that it disguised the ambiguous behind the cryptic. Crystal clear was the condition added in home economics: The supervisor "must have been actually at work in housewifery." The reasoning was pretty plain, too: Home economics was for producing housewives.

The plan's closing section revealed the board's assumptions about just where and how vocational training would be offered. It better reflected Washington's wishes than Oklahoma's experiences. Predictably, this was most obvious in Trades and Industries. Admitting that "very little has been done in Oklahoma... in the line of Trades Schools," the board let itself hope that somebody someplace might come up with something. Until then, the best guess was that most T&I instruction would be offered as part-time or evening classes. Home economics and vocational agriculture would offer part-time and evening programs, too; but most of their instruction would take place in the public schools.

Given the circumstances, that meant that there would be little instruction to offer. Because Smith-Hughes limited vocational

education to students fifteen and older, none but the handful of districts that maintained high schools could possibly participate; and not many of them were likely to take the opportunity. This was because any district that chose to participate thereby obligated itself to a considerable financial commitment. Smith-Hughes money was available to reimburse what amounted to half of a teacher's pay; but the participating district had to pay the other half out-of-pocket. There was also the expense of plant and equipment; a district had to bear that alone.

A district could calculate the latter price to the penny. Washington had demanded details; Oklahomans did as told. If an Oklahoma school intended to offer vocational agriculture to as few as twelve students, it first had to buy everything from twelve tin spoons (that was twenty-five cents' worth) to twenty ears of Bloody Butcher corn (those cost fifty cents.) The cents added up to dollars, and the pennies and dollars slowly piled up until they reached exactly $206.41. The price of a home economics program was just as precise but even greater. If a school wanted to teach as few as six students, it first had to supply a completely stocked "home kitchen." The school had to buy a stove (that was $50 right there), six brooms of corn bristles, six dustpans made of tin, and so on. The sum was $343.50.[17]

Nothing Oklahomans had considered vocational training had been so expensive. But, then, no Oklahoma teacher had needed such credentials. For that matter, almost no one could remember ever having seen even one former vocational student who would have been eligible for even one future course; those kids had been too young for this program. All of these differences were just some of the differences that the Smith-Hughes law made in Oklahoma.

One net effect was apparent when the state board totaled the figures for its first year's efforts: The many differences had affected few individuals. Only fourteen schools had presented home economics, and they had taught just over four hundred girls. As it happened, four of those schools were state-supported secondary agricultural schools, and a fifth was Oklahoma A&M College's preparatory department. Only the high schools of Cushing, Chandler, Muskogee, Claremore, McAlester, Madill, and Guthrie had offered classes—two in separate schools, one black, one white.

Similarly, only two hundred seventy-six boys had studied vocational agriculture, and most of those had done so in one of six preparatory or secondary agricultural schools rather than in the few high schools offering instruction. The most striking number of all was zero. Zero was the total number that trades and industries had prepared either for trade or for industry. It had enrolled 318 young men, but each was an army draftee, training to fight in the world war. Of course, no women had been drafted (or had enlisted either), which accounted for the total number of women trained by T&I. That was another zero.

Those numbers told a lot of the story but not all the story. In some instances, the most important part of the story was that there was no story to tell for that first year. For one, there had been no supervisor of home economics instruction until the school year's end; it took that long just to find a suitable candidate. The board still had not found one for T&I's programs. Afterwards, at least three men turned the job down, and the only man who did take it quit it. As it worked out, there would be no one solidly in place until school year 1922-23.

It also turned out that the hiring of a T&I supervisor may have been the year's one bright spot. Many darker ones arose because the previous legislature had adjourned without having appropriated a nickel for vocational schooling. (The legislature and Governor James B.A. Robertson had been feuding, and the vocational program had been caught in the crossfire.) Every aspect suffered, none more than home economics. Things darkened further as home ec ran completely out of money, except for a small, dwindling account reserved exclusively to promote the program. The darkest moment came when home economics spent the last of those dollars to promote classes it could not offer, taught by teachers it could not pay.[18]

There were bright spots, quite a few in fact. One of the brightest was the training of teachers. Before the Smith-Hughes Act, Oklahoma had educated all of its educators unevenly, unsystematically, and poorly. Oklahoma might have been especially bad at training vocational teachers except for one thing: It had given them no special training at all. This was cause enough for the academicians' derision.

The state's share from the first year's federal appropriations to train vocational teachers was not large (just over $9,000) but neither was it insignificant—on the contrary. The mere fact that the money existed made vocational schooling a very special category of education, seemingly of such singular national importance that only vocational teaching deserved the nation's investment. Because Smith-Hughes money had to be matched with special state appropriations, too, the effects were multiplied. Vocational training really was special.

Teacher-training funds benefitted others as well. Washington sent the money; the state added more and passed it on; it then went to the colleges training the teachers. Oklahoma A&M College ended up with most of the money because that school did most of the training.

That ought to have been expected. Historically, the A&M colleges had been nurseries for the vocational movement, both nationally and in Oklahoma. The initials "A" and "M" made them natural mentors to those hoping to teach agricultural and mechanical subjects. In the early years, the university and the woman's college, at Chickasha, managed to get some money by training teachers for home economics, but even that field was dominated by the A&M school.

In those days of racially segregated schooling, the "Colored Agricultural and Normal University," located at Langston and best known by the town's name, also received funds to train black educators to teach black students in black schools. This was all due to America's insistence upon "separate but equal" education, a phrase so formulaic that it might as well have been a single word: separate-but-equal.

This was nothing more than a fantasy invented by white people, affirmed by white courts, and endured by black people. It was so delusional and so insidious that even its slightest resemblance to fact became astonishing. Oklahoma's distribution of its first teacher-training funds was one of those rare instances. Blacks comprised about a tenth of the state's early population, and Langston received a tenth of what white schools received.[19]

It turned out to be as short-lived as it was remarkable. Year by year thereafter, the balance kept tipping, never in Langston's fa-

vor. By 1930, the board was paying Langston less than 5 percent of the federal funds available for training. The rest went to Oklahoma A&M. By then, however, even that lopsided division was the very epitome of equity, at least it was when compared to the board's partition of the state money Oklahoma used as a matching contribution. In 1930, the state paid the (white) school at Stillwater more than eleven hundred of its own tax dollars to train (white) vocational teachers. In 1930, Oklahoma also paid state tax dollars to the (black) school at Langston to train (black) vocational teachers. It paid Langston exactly $4.63, separately of course. This was separate-but-equal. Separate-but-equal was a lie.

Of course, this was unique neither to Oklahoma nor to vocational schooling. Oklahoma was one of seventeen states that either required or permitted this ugly nonsense in all aspects of its public instruction, and the malacious-handed distribution of vocational funds was merely one of its many forms. The injustice said nothing at all about vocational schooling or about its appeal relative to any other type of schooling.

Salaries very much did affect its appeal. A majority of the vocational teachers worked under (and were paid for) a twelve-month contract. This was the case for all of the agriculture teachers and for many in other fields, too. Hardly any other public school teachers drew such pay. In fact, few districts could afford a school session—or a salary schedule—of even nine months. For all of these reasons, in every teacher's pay envelope there was an explanation of how vocational education came to draw such skilled teachers.

Some were incredibly well qualified. Consider the case of W.S. Johnson. Johnson taught vocational agriculture in Claremore and had since the program started its second year, in the fall of 1918. Before then, Johnson had spent twenty years running a successful farming business, and he had taught school during that time as well. Of course, this was after he had received his own diploma. He earned it at Yale, and the diploma was a Ph.D.

Johnson's case was extraordinary, but it was not altogether incomparable. In the same year that Johnson went to Claremore, T&I hired nineteen part-time teachers to work with coal miners in southeastern Oklahoma. None were required to be college grad-

uates, but most were anyway. Their degrees were in engineering, chemistry, or mathematics.[20]

No wonder the state board grew steadily more sure of itself and of its responsibilities. A sign of that was the increased numbers and professionalization of its executive staff. Charles W. Briles settled into his ninth year as director in 1927. Scott J. McGinnis had a firm hand on T&I education by then. After several changes (at least one occasioned by the supervisor's marriage), Kate S. North headed home economics. As for vocational agriculture, that program had grown so large that it required four full-time administrators. E.B. Nelms was its supervisor; Ross Floyd was his assistant. Two district supervisors—J.B. Perky and C.L. Bunyard—oversaw programs from district offices located in Woodward and Collinsville respectively.[21]

For the first dozen years, vocational education's governing board was essentially a political medley. Two of its five members were whomever the voters most recently had elected state superintendent of public instruction or president of the state board of agriculture. Two others were whoever happened to occupy the presidencies of the A&M college and the state university. In all four cases, there was usually considerable turnover and always divided purposes. It might have been possible to design a board of less stability and consistency; it would not have been easy though.

Oklahoma was ready for reorganization when reorganization came in 1929. One section of a statute enacted that year dissolved the old vocational education board and assigned its functions to a new agency created by the remainder of that law. That was the State Board of Education, comprised of seven members: the elected superintendent of public instruction and six others appointed by the governor. The law stipulated that the superintendent of public instruction would chair the board and also direct its vocational education division.

The reorganization came none too early. America's decade of the twenties had been a decade of change so swift and so profound that it amounted to a national transformation. No state offered a better example than did Oklahoma.

In Seminole, Lawton, and McAlester; in Ponca City, Purcell,

and Ardmore; in Enid, Woodward, and Lawton—in city after city and in town after town, new money just seemed to pour in. New residents came, and new public buildings arose. None were more impressive than the new school buildings, particularly their high school buildings. Many resembled monuments, and that was altogether appropriate. The reason was that they were monuments, monuments to progress.

Progress assumed other physical forms, not necessarily as imposing but not less important either. One was the school bus. School buses took students to schools, and they brought schools to town. Because of buses, Oklahoma was able to consolidate any number of its underfunded, sparsely populated rural districts. Buses delivered enough students to fill a high school. Buses put almost every boy and girl within reasonable distance of some Oklahoma high school. Every year, more and more students stepped off those buses; passed through new, majestic doors; and stepped into vocational classrooms.

The program kept changing, too. To see how much, compare Oklahoma's first set of ten-year plans with those it released in 1927. It took no fewer than seventy-nine pages (more than five times the number used in the original plans) just to outline what vocational education had become and was going to be in Oklahoma.

Included were entire lists of what the state had come to expect of its teachers in every field. The original, admittedly high standard that teachers of agriculture and home economics had to be college graduates had metamorphosed into a catalog. It identified exactly what Oklahoma demanded, field-by-field, college-by-college, and semester-by-semester. If they intended to teach agriculture upon graduating from Oklahoma A&M, for example, they needed to complete eight courses in the spring of their senior year alone. They had some choice on one: selection from a (short) list of seminars on agricultural education. Otherwise, they were directed to schedule "Extension Organization and Methods," "School Administration," "Cooperative Marketing," "Domestic Engineering," "Poultry Feeding," "Incubation and Breeding," and something called "Visual Instruments in Technical Agriculture." In home economics there was no choice at all. There, a senior's

schedule consisted of these eight classes (and no others): "Child Training," "House Administration," "Home Nursing," "The Psychology of Adolescence," "Field Work in Nutrition," "Demonstration Methods," "Educational Sociology," and "Student Teaching."

It was still impractical to expect that T&I instructors hold college degrees; there were no degrees, as such. Nonetheless, T&I teachers had to present more than the vague credentials from the 1917 plan. Things like a "good personality and ability to deal with people" were not enough—not ten years later. Anyone who wanted to teach in trades and industries first had to document the successful completion of formal study on specified subjects. That particular list included "The Philosophy of Vocational Education," "Trade and Job Analysis," "Shop Organization and Management," and "Methods of Teaching, Including Practice Teaching, Observation, and Criticism."[22] Of course, it never hurt to have a good personality, too; but otherwise, Oklahoma A&M taught just such classes.

Once hired, a vocational education teacher—whether teaching vocational agriculture, home economics, or in T&I—taught in any one of three basic forms. Most did in all three ways. Every field regularly scheduled both day and evening courses, usually through a participating public school. There were also part-time classes in each area; almost all of these were independent of the school system. Experience demonstrated that the relative proportions best for each depended on who was being taught what.

Trade and industrial education came to rely principally upon evening programs. Most were developed in close association with employers, and most of the students were employees there to improve their skills and productivity. The state prescribed a complete curriculum for each. For example, evening classes in auto mechanics had to include seventy lessons, each at least two hours long. The lessons covered everything from engines and carburetors to springs and axles.[23]

Many had assumed that day courses would predominate in home economics. It never happened. The state was willing to spend the maximum one-fifth of its T&I allocations on home economics, but that was never enough. Few local districts put up much money either. The net result was that the state's day-school

enrollments never reached even 450 for a single year of the first decade. Instead, home economics generally consisted of part-time courses that housewives took in their free time—if they had the free time to take them. Most lasted six weeks or so, and only women (usually married women) sixteen and older were eligible. Especially popular were courses on either cooking (one lesson was "Simple and Attractive Service of Meals") or childcare (which instructed women on "Freedom and Receding Authority: The Place of the Adolescent in the Home.")[24]

Day courses dominated vocational agriculture. Quite a few older, practicing farmers took one or more evening courses, and more took part-time courses. All along, though, it was the young, future farmers that provided vocational agriculture its natural constituency; and there was a good chance that they were learning modern, scientific practices in a participating public school. High school students received as much as four years' instruction in the classroom and in supervised practice on their parents' (or someone else's) farms. On an average day, they spent three hours or more with as many as five vocational agriculture teachers per school.[25]

The simplest measures of growth over the first decade just compared numbers. Trades and industries taught 318 in 1917, each of them drafted into the military. Ten years later, 6,639 went through its programs, not one of them in military uniform. In 1917, 276 young men—most of them students in the state's secondary A&M schools—learned to be better farmers. A decade later, 4,125 farmers and high school boys learned with Smith-Hughes money. Given the miserly sums available to it, home economics was the most remarkable of all. More than 24,000 of Oklahoma's women and girls took one or more home economics classes in 1927. That was sixty times the figure in ten years past. In fact, it was more than twice the total taught in agriculture and in T&I combined in 1927.[26]

There are better ways to tell this story than by numbers, though. From time to time, one gets what amounts to a quick glimpse of a snapshot, an unposed picture of vocational education in its earliest years. J.W. Bridges, then the state's supervisor for agricultural education, unintendingly left us one, attached to

a routine report on the last quarter of 1921. It was an account, supplied by one agricultural teacher, of what he had been up to lately.

This unidentified teacher reported that he had started his boys on five poultry, two cotton, one hog, one kaffir corn, and three potato projects. Two kids already had taken first prizes at the county poultry show; two others had won either second- or third-place ribbons. As group projects, his class had built two concrete poultry houses and had furnished them with nests, roosts, and dropping boards. Four students had built their own oat spreaders, too.

The teacher had founded a boys club (with a charter class of fifteen), and his boys had been treating the entire community to programs and plays. He also had advised some of the farmers as they had organized their first township fair. He would be helping again in the fall because he expected to manage the event. He had cleaned up the school grounds and had designed a landscape scheme. Soon he would be laying out gravel walkways, putting in flower beds, and planting the first trees.

His own classroom had all new furnishings: tables, bookcases, and filing boxes he had built himself. He had stocked the room with timely agricultural bulletins, and he had been able to decorate it with quite a few photographs and other items. He said these gave the room "a very agricultural appearance."

Altogether, that was not bad, not bad at all. In fact, it was downright staggering: This was the teacher's summary of what he had done *in his first semester on the job*.[27]

Director Briles included a similar account in his own report that quarter. Down in Haileyville, a little town in the middle of Oklahoma's still-active coal mining district, T&I had put on a three-week conference for mining foremen. Five companies sent all of their foremen and kept them on the payroll while there. Along with new methods for supervision and management, the men learned what and how to teach those who worked under them. The conference left behind a continuing project, one in which local schools taught basic mathematics and science for miners while the newly trained foremen applied those academic principles to practical mining problems. The Rock Island Coal

Company already had established a permanent training department based on that very model, and nearly every coal company in McAlester and Hartshorne were hoping to host similar conferences next year.[28]

At about the same time, Mattie Posey reported that the home economics students she taught at Cloudchief were finishing their study of "the care and feeding of chickens." She quickly added that they already had studied "more vital problems concerning the care of children." The latter was a favored topic for nearly every home economics class.

Other subjects depended on purely local circumstances. Some were even so personal as to amount to selfishness. Pearl Hampton's report managed to work in a strong hint of what an example of that might be. When her girls were "studying breakfasts and child care," the local school superintendent had "offered us his house" to practice their homemaking skills. "As soon as we have a little more food," she added, "we will cook breakfast for him."[29]

The reorganized vocational board accepted a new responsibility in 1927, when it added vocational rehabilitation to its duties. Hoping to haul in some newly available federal matching funds, Governor Robertson had given the original board the assignment in 1920, but it had been another victim of the continuing war between the executive and legislative branches. Vocational rehabilitation was itself rehabilitated only in 1927, when the lawmakers finally appropriated enough money to match the federal offer. Rehabilitative training remained a responsibility of the state board for another ten years, when it became the division of vocational rehabilitation under the department of education.

Civilian vocational rehabilitation—the full, official title—joined agriculture, home economics, and trade and industrial education to become a fourth department. The program began with arrangements made with the State Industrial Commission (the agency that administered Oklahoma's workmen's compensation program) and others: the state superintendent of public instruction, county school superintendents, and several of the state's social agencies. These referred possible "rehabilitation cases" to the department; the state board promised to train any and all that proved to be both disabled permanently and vocationally handicapped. The

only exceptions besides the very old, the homebound, and the mentally infirm were imprisoned criminals. If need be, it would be offered one-on-one, too. The ultimate goal was to put each person in a specific, lasting job.[30]

The notion that Oklahoma (or any state) could put every one of its "rehabilitation cases" in a permanent job was, to put it gently, rather optimistic. What is remarkable, though, is how close Oklahoma did come to that impossible goal. Nothing approaching all those who needed and qualified for training got it. Nonetheless, those who did get it did benefit from it. More than that, their fellow citizens benefitted as well. One of its administrators (a regional director named Voyle Spurlock) assembled and reported the evidence for his 1936 graduate thesis.

Through the preceding year, 1935, the state had trained 887 people (627 men and 260 women) for work. As the board had promised, it had prepared each for a "specific job," chosen from 116 different occupations. It was a spectacular array. Twenty-one men had been trained as accountants, twelve as lawyers, three as ministers, and seventy-seven as teachers. Seventy-three women also had entered teaching; sixty-six had become stenographers. More exotic careers awaited the vulcanizer, short-story writer, and noodle maker—one male in each case.[31]

The expense of their training had been nearly as individualized. It had cost the board $345.35 to train the short-story writer but only $75 to prepare another to make noodles. On the average, it had spent just over $150 to train each man, just under $125 for each woman. Through 1935, Oklahoma had spent $404,449 altogether on vocational rehabilitation, of which $192,433 had come from the state, the remainder from federal and local sources.[32]

What had that money bought? To a remarkable degree, it was exactly what the state board had promised its trainees: lasting employment. In 1935, nearly 80 percent of its former clients were at work in the jobs for which they had been trained. With jobs of any kind at a premium during one of the worst years of the Great Depression, the figure may have been better than the employment rate for the general population. Annual wages averaged $1,310. Hardly impressive by later standards, it compared favorably to

what others earned at the time. The difference in regard to these particular wage-earners was impressive though: Just eight of every one hundred clients had been earning anything at all when they had entered the program; the other ninety-two had been totally dependent on private or public charity.[33]

The money that Oklahoma spent on vocational rehabilitation was an investment, a very cost-effective, long-term investment at that, and Voyle Spurlock calculated the returns. He started with every dollar the state spent on rehabilitation through 1935. Opposite that he set the continuing returns: the income that the rehabilitated would earn, not just in one year but over many; and the charity dollars the public would save, not once but permanently.

Of course, the future figures had to be projections arising from certain assumptions; and these premises were explicit, reasonable, and conservative. What would they earn if even half of the rehabilitated remained employed? What would private and public sources have to spend if only a fourth of those were still on charity rolls instead? With those assumptions, Spurlock made his calculations and reached this conclusion: Some $400,000 spent through 1935 would yield right at $9.8 million over the next twenty years. That equaled a return of 2,434 percent.[34]

In 1926, as the original authorizations of the Smith-Hughes Act expired, Congress passed a one-year continuing appropriation, the first in a series that carried through 1929. In the latter year, the George-Reed Act went back and amended the original law. The principal change involved the size and division of the federal contribution. Starting with the base reached under Smith-Hughes ($7 million), it added $500,000 for the next year and authorized that another half-million be added annually through 1934. More telling was its apportionment: agriculture and home economics would share equally half of all new money.

Here was proof that home economics had proven its worth since 1917, although it ought not pass unnoticed that woman's suffrage had been achieved since 1917, too. For whatever reason, the George-Reed Act declared that home economics was equal to agriculture and made it independent of trades and industries as well. It said something, too, that the states were to share their

new home economics money in proportion to their shares of the nation's rural population. It testified to the countryside's enthusiasm for home economics, not to mention to the political power still commanded by rural America.

The George-Reed formula for the distribution of home economics money used the same equation that the Smith-Hughes Act had applied to all vocational funds—the determining factor was each state's proportion of urban and rural populations. The precise numbers came from the United States Bureau of the Census, which meant that the definitions of rural and urban were the census bureau's definitions as well. The urban population included everyone living in communities of 2,500 or more; rural meant every resident of a smaller community.

The new law changed the formula, at least as it applied to agricultural funds. The change was to replace *rural* populations with the census bureau's figures for the *farming* populations. Occupation, not residence, defined the latter: it meant those engaged in producing crops and/or livestock. The difference favored those states with rural populations more likely to be farmers and less likely to be a bunch of small-town doctors, dentists, shopkeepers, store clerks, school teachers, bank tellers, and handymen. In that respect at least, Oklahoma was a favored state.[35]

The George-Reed Act's additions to the $7 million base reached $2.5 million in 1934, the same year that the statute expired. The money flow continued, however, when Congress replaced the elapsed law with the George-Ellzey Act. The new measure added another half-million to bring the federal enlargement to $3 million for agricultural and home economics training in 1935. The formulas introduced under the George-Reed Act continued to determine each state's maximum sums. Although the law permitted no increase afterwards, it did maintain the same levels through 1936 and 1937.[36]

The expiration of the George-Ellzey law at the end of 1937 had no ill-effect on vocational funding. On the contrary, that was when the George-Deen Act significantly changed both the level and the form of federal spending. The law rolled all of the previous amounts into a permanent authorization of $12 million annually for vocational education and divided the money equally among

home economics, agriculture, and trades and industries. Rural populations established the distribution of home economics funds and farming population, the division of agriculture's dollars. For the first time, though, T&I monies went to states in proportion to their share of the nation's non-farming population—every person except those raising crops or tending livestock. The difference made little difference in Oklahoma.

New to the George-Deen law was money ($1.2 million per year) to supplement teachers' salaries for another form of vocational training, distributive education. It was generally called DE, and it usually meant retail and wholesale selling. DE received another $1 million annually to train teachers. States divided both according to their shares of the national population.[37]

Here was another instance of Oklahoma's being ahead of its time—just not very far ahead. Since 1929, Tulsa's public schools had cooperated with local merchants to combine students' study in the classroom with work in the merchants' stores. By the time the George-Deen law went into effect, the schools of Bristow, Oklahoma City, Shawnee, Ponca City, and Tonkawa had the same arrangements. No others did, however, and no two programs were necessarily alike. The new statute's principal contributions were to encourage new programs and to impose uniform standards upon the existing ones.

The standards were those written into federal law. Local districts that chose to participate had to offer "retail selling classes" during the junior and senior years. They also had to assure that students would be "regularly employed in a store, for a minimum of fifteen hours a week, where they come in direct contact with the consumer." Adults "already employed in a distributive occupation" were eligible for evening classes outside of the public schools. Taught by DE specialists, these were short, intensive supplements to the participants' regular jobs.[38]

It was in the latter form that federally funded DE had its initial impact. Only two school districts joined the existing ones with day programs in the first year, and total enrollment failed to reach 150. Two years later, during the 1939-1940 school year, there still were only 11 schools running day programs, and the

combined enrollment was 262. Eighteen evening courses taught nearly six-and-a-half times as many students—1,679. The evening classes were the chief reason that one in every five students in the T&I division that year were DE students.[39]

The decade's turn caught trades and industries at a good point. For one thing, the daytime schools that the original board had hoped might someday show up had materialized; twenty-seven communities maintained day programs in 1940. Twenty-one of these enrolled white students only; and they ranged from the big cities, Oklahoma City and Tulsa, to smaller sites, like Bowlegs and Webb City. Black students attended what were called "colored programs" in five districts with sizable African-American populations: Ada, Muskogee, Sand Springs, Sapulpa, and Shawnee. Langston's preparatory department provided a sixth location.

For white and "colored" alike, T&I's programs filled most of a school year with daily three-hour sessions. Students of both races thereby received the pre-apprentice training required for eighteen different trades.[40] This satisfied the equal piece of the separate-but-equal claim—in theory, not in dollars. Under its constitution, Oklahoma maintained a dual system of school finance, with separate tax bases, separate tax rates, and separate school funds, all varying from county to county. Inequity was more than inevitable; it was inherent, and its consequences were inescapable. The system was separate-but-equal; the dollars were just separate.

Other provisions of the state's constitution and statutes were at play here, too; and they played rough, especially rough in demanding the strictest segregation in every aspect of schooling. Not one student of either race could sit in one classroom with even one student from the other race. Not one teacher of either race could instruct even one student of the other. Beyond that, each community ran its vocational programs as it saw fit, as long as it was separate-but-equal.

Consider what that meant in Tulsa. Tulsa's white schools trained Tulsa's white boys for professions that white Tulsans believed appropriate for white men: among them, banking, metallurgy, and commercial art. Tulsa's black schools trained Tul-

sa's black girls for the one thing that white Tulsans imagined for black women: "household maid service." Thus it was that Booker T. Washington High School came to have and run a laundry and how its young women came to wash and iron the clothes of respected white families—the kind of families that might know someone on the local school board.[41]

Sad to say, most Oklahomans seemed to regard these things as natural, perhaps not altogether fair but not at all shameful either. As incredible as it seems, the Tulsa school board even publicized its program across the nation as an example of creativity that others might wish to duplicate.

What should have received publicity were the many ways in which the state's entire system met so many more commendable expectations. Trades and industries did what the times demanded, both of wage earners and of itself.

The 1920s were among the best of times, especially in the oil industry. Established pools, some known around the world, yielded undiminished rivers of oil. New fields, each more astonishing than the one before, erupted, seemingly every year. Millions of barrels of Oklahoma crude oil flowed through thousands of miles of Oklahoma pipelines to hundreds of Oklahoma processing plants, their products sold to uncounted customers everywhere. Oklahoma's T&I programs thrived alongside all of this. Its courses, especially its part-time, evening courses, covered every phase of a vigorous industry. Production, transportation, processing, and marketing—the oil industry needed it all and T&I taught it all.

Of course, the 1930s were not good times, not for oil, not for T&I, not for anybody or anything. Oil prices collapsed, the oil industry imploded, and T&I cut back its oil-related programs. So-called "general continuation classes" filled many of their places. These sent high school students out into industry for occupational training or made it possible for those already working to return to school and complete their degrees. The general continuation classes lasted past the decade's end, even after the oil industry recovered, oil-related jobs resurfaced, and T&I renewed its response.

Special conferences and short courses ran in good times and in bad. Not least of the beneficiaries was Oklahoma A&M. The Stillwater school always dominated the training of T&I's teachers, and it cut itself in on a big piece of on-campus vocational training, too. In a single school year at the decade's close (1939-1940), Oklahoma A&M held forty short courses just for firefighters. Ten more brought municipal police officers to the campus that year. Incidentally, the only other Oklahoma college to host any short courses at the time was Langston, which held exactly one that year. It was a short course for custodians.[42]

Depending on how one looked at it, the George-Reed Act of 1929, coinciding with the Great Depression, came at just the right time or at just the wrong one. The arrival of the two simultaneously meant that things both got better and got worse. Consider the George-Reed Act's principal beneficiary: home economics.

George-Reed money permitted the state to encourage day school programs for the first time in years. Nonetheless, local districts had to match those funds and had to have enough girls in school to justify the costs. Neither had been especially easy before; the depression made them harder still. A few systems overcame the challenges, but very few. Starting in 1930, when George-Reed first became available for new programs, Oklahoma started adding them—at a pace that would put home economics in every school in just 272 years.

Better times and another shot of federal money under 1935's George-Ellzey Act accelerated things. During the decade's second half, high school departments increased 20 times as rapidly as during the first half, an average of 35 being added each year. As the thirties closed, 568 of Oklahoma's 874 high schools maintained a full home economics curriculum; another 171 offered at least 2 years of classes. Federal funds supplemented the salaries of 200 day-school teachers. Of those, most (152) also taught part-time and evening classes, thereby serving adult women and the girls who had left school. With day programs finally heading the ranks, total enrollments reached 16,877 during the 1939-1940 school year.[43]

Vocational agriculture reflected even more directly the Great Depression's effects. Oklahoma's farm economy had been weak

during the otherwise prosperous twenties, and the collapse of commodity prices thereafter made bad conditions worse and worse conditions intolerable. Even the weather joined what seemed to be a conspiracy to ruin Oklahoma's farmers. Record-setting droughts, particularly after 1935, turned farm lands to deserts and farmers' hopes to despair.

An early effect was to drive vocational training out of many high schools. In the school year 1929-1930, 104 high schools had offered vocational agriculture classes. Nearly half of those (46) were out of business two years later.[44] The "colored" programs in Oklahoma's "separate schools" had all but disappeared. Precipitous declines in tax revenue and a steady out-migration closed every one of the early black departments except those at Boley and Luther.[45]

Even Oklahoma's best placed white programs had trouble. Ironically, one source was a new and well-intended federal program: the United States Soil Conservation Service (SCS). The irony was doubled because the SCS sailed a course first plotted by Oklahoma's vocational educators.

Years before Washington's New Dealers got around to conservation, nearly every agriculture teacher in Oklahoma taught it—practiced it, too. In 1930 alone, 95 teachers trained almost 3,000 boys and nearly as many adults in conservation techniques. Putting theory into practice, the teachers and their students also terraced 1,135 farms and planted 66,326 acres in nitrogen-restoring legumes that year.[46] Here was why Washington looked to vocational agriculture to staff the SCS.

Vocational educators saw much to attract them. Higher salaries probably headed the list, with less demanding duties running a close second. One who made the jump later recalled that thirty or more of his colleagues all did the same thing, on the same day, in fact. The date was July 1, 1935—one day after their teaching contracts expired.[47]

It was a setback for the state's vocational program but a temporary one. The school year began a few weeks later, with 123 high schools enrolling 4,827 boys in agriculture classes. The fall-off from the previous year was only 11 schools and involved just 104 boys.[48] Any ground lost was quickly regained. By 1938, schools

with agriculture programs more than doubled 1934's total; the number of students nearly doubled as well. Every district that needed a teacher had one, and agriculture's teachers were not Washington's leftovers either. Each one held a college diploma; 23 had master's degrees. One hundred seventeen were finishing their own graduate work, and every single one completed some form of continuing education that year.[49]

Agriculture teachers had to work year-round, spending their summers supervising students' individual projects. How much time did they spend doing what? During the last two years of the 1930s, Oklahoma's teachers spent one-and-a-quarter million hours directing twenty-three thousand student projects. With what effects? The students earned better than $650,000. The teachers earned their pay.[50]

Part-time and evening courses increased appreciably in the 1930s despite the depression, maybe because of it. The depression drove many boys out of school but not out of vocational agriculture. It only redirected many into the part-time programs. Fewer than eighty youngsters had been enrolled in seven of these programs in school year 1929-1930. Ten years later, almost eight hundred were in nearly fifty programs. Another seven thousand or so adults took evening courses that year, each one bettering himself by learning better farming.[51]

One reason for the growth was that farmers had to learn more about a lot more. This was especially true after 1933, when President Franklin Roosevelt's administration launched its New Deal for American Agriculture. That year's creation of an Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) was the first in a spawn of programs, regulations, and so-called alphabet agencies. One sign of their importance was that Oklahoma's evening-class enrollments jumped more than 150 percent within the year. The great bulk of new enrollments were in "Farm Management and the AAA," "Soil Improvement and the AAA," and "Cooperation with the AAA," and the like.

For all these reasons, vocational agriculture represented one of the few bright spots in the otherwise dismal story of depression-era farming. Not even the most creative of the new federal programs had anything like its beneficial effects.[52] Pretense and

hope aside, the truth was that the AAA could not restore rural prosperity any more than the SCS could keep the wind from blowing. Through the decade, farm prices kept low, dust kept blowing, and agriculture teachers kept making a difference.

Their work enjoyed an unmistakable status in the state's overall vocational system, a standing out of all proportion to its raw numbers, though. Into the mid-1930s, enrollments in agricultural training barely reached those in the T&I division and were but a fraction of those in home economics. Not until the 1936-1938 biennium did the balance shift. It took that long for agriculture's enrollments to catch and pass home economics—by a margin of 54. (The totals were 19,100 in vocational agriculture, 19,046 in home economics. T&I enrolled 12,011 at the time.) Agriculture secured its lead only in the decade's closing biennium, when nearly 25,000 students enrolled in its classes, compared to just under 17,000 in home economics and 16,000 in T&I's courses.

All along, however, students enrolled was one story; dollars spent was a quite different one. No other division spent even half as much as vocational agriculture. In the 1932-1934 biennium, for example, agriculture accounted for 27 percent of all vocational enrollments but 62 percent of vocational spending. With nearly twice as many students, home economics spent only a third as many dollars. T&I got the leftovers. Time and the adjustment of federal formulas later favored home economics and T&I, but they never added up to equality. As late as 1938-1940, vocational agriculture still spent nearly twice as much as home economics and two-and-a-half times as much as trades and industries.[53]

Simple arithmetic explained a lot of that. From 1917 onward, federal laws distributed national vocational appropriations according to each state's mix of residence or occupation. However Congress might tweak the equations, the demographic fact remained that rural, agrarian Oklahoma always got more for agricultural training than for anything else.

More important was how Oklahomans chose to spend their own tax money. Total funding for each division was the sum of federal dollars added to the number of dollars appropriated by the state plus the amount that local school districts chose to spend. Over the years, there was a rough equity in state funds from divi-

sion to division. The difference was always that superintendents and school boards were more willing to spend their local dollars on agricultural than on any other form of training. It was their choice, and their choice was clear.

Neither superintendents nor school board members ever explained why. Like much else (the inequitable assignment of funds to black programs comes to mind), it must have seemed so natural that it needed no explanation.

If so, that owed much to Oklahoma's bucolic heritage. Nearly every Sooner had grown up on or near a farm—including the ones who ended up occupying superintendents' offices or sitting on school boards. Because farming was permanently in their blood, it also was prominent in their budgets. Moreover, nearly all of those decision-makers were male. Their notion of a solid farm life centered on the field, not the kitchen. Finally, they all answered to constituents who demanded that their hard-earned tax dollars yield visible and valuable fruits, and vocational agriculture had a supervisor who knew how to cultivate and how to present his division's fruits. His name was J.B. Perky.

In 1931, Perky moved from a district supervisor stationed at Woodward to become supervisor of vocational agriculture over the entire state. Through the remainder of that decisive decade, J.B. Perky built his division until it towered above all others, a division big enough to fill his own, formidable shadow. There are numbers for its size, but its substance was no less imposing. After 1940, both numbers and substance grew until they might as well have defined the state's entire system.

Vocational education in Oklahoma has never been the same since.

Notes

1. For an example of such education in one of the tribes, see James D. Morrison, *Schools for the Choctaws* (Durant: Choctaw Bilingual Education Program, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, 1977).

2. A general overview is in Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900*

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976). A revealing eyewitness account is available in John H. Seger, *Early Days Among the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians*, Stanley Vestal ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934).

3. Dan W. Peery, "Speech on Territorial Capital Removal," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 2 (September 1924): 319-24.

4. Donald M. Green, *A History of the Oklahoma State University Division of Agriculture*, Centennial Histories Series (Stillwater: Oklahoma State University, 1990), p. 37-38.

5. Quoted ibid., pp. 56-57.

6. For the full background of Oklahoma's constitutional convention, emphasizing its reform agenda, see Danney Goble, *Progressive Oklahoma: The Making of a New Kind of State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980).

7. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Second Biennial Report* (Guthrie, 1908).

8. Green, *A History of the Oklahoma State University Division of Agriculture*, pp. 57-58.

9. *Second Biennial Report,* p. 87.

10. Ibid., pp. 88, 90, 92.

11. Marion E. Franklin, "A History of Industrial Education in Oklahoma up to 1950," (Unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1952), pp. 31-35.

12. Quoted in Carl Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma* (Stillwater: State Department of Vocational and Technical Education, n.d.), p. 8.

13. In 1915, the legislature abolished the schools at Helena and Broken Arrow, ostensibly in a cost-cutting move. Many noted, however, that each happened to carry the name of a person recently fallen from public favor: Connell had been dismissed; Haskell had been indicted and tried after leaving office. (He escaped prison only on a technicality.) The Tishomingo school was also slated for closure but was saved when Murray, then serving as a United States congressman, won federal appropriations to build new dormitories on the campus.

14. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Fifth Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Oklahoma City: Warden Company, 1914), p. 17.

15. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Fourth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Oklahoma City, n.p., 1914), pp. 229, 231; State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Sixth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Oklahoma City: n.p., 1916), p. 20.

16. Roberts, *Vocational and Practical Arts Education*, pp. 131-32.

17. Oklahoma State Board of Vocational Education, *Vocational Education Plans, Bulletin No. 1*, pp. 6-15.

18. Ruth Hudgens Remund, "Vocational Home Economics Education in Oklahoma" (Master of Science thesis, Oklahoma A&M College, 1923), pp. 23-24.

19. "Minutes of the State Board of Vocational Education, February 15, 1918."

20. "Minutes of the State Board of Vocational Education, March 11, 1919."

21. Oklahoma State Board for Vocational Education, *Oklahoma State Plans for Vocational Education*, 1927-1932, n.p.

22. Ibid., pp. 25, 67-68, 46.

23. Ibid., pp. 29-30, 33.

24. Ibid., pp. 52, 60-61.

25. Ibid., pp. 11-14.

26. Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma*, p. 12.

27. "Minutes of the Called Meeting of the State Board for Vocational Education, February 7, 1922."

28. Ibid.

29. Ruth Hudgens Remund, "Vocational Home Economics Education in Oklahoma," p. 26.

30. Oklahoma State Board for Vocational Education, *Oklahoma State Plans for Vocational Education*, 1927-1932, n.p.

31. Spurlock, "Economic Aspects of Vocational Rehabilitation" (Unpublished Master of Science thesis, Oklahoma A&M College, 1936), pp. 4, 6-8.

32. Ibid., pp. 6-8, 23.

33. Ibid., pp. 15, 11.

34. Ibid., passim, especially p. 37.

35. Roberts, *Vocational and Practical Arts Education*, pp. 133-34.

36. Ibid., p. 134.

37. Ibid., pp. 134-35.

38. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Seventeenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Fourteenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Education* (1938), p. 191.

39. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Fifteenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Education* (1940), p. 165.

40. Ibid., p. 167.

41. Danney Goble, *Tulsa! Biography of the American City* (Tulsa: Council Oak Books, 1997), p. 143.

42. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent for Public Instruction*, pp. 172-173.

43. Ibid., p. 154.

44. John Henry Murray, "Factors Influencing Discontinuance of Vocational Agriculture in Oklahoma High Schools" (Unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma A&M College, 1932), p. 19.

45. Samuel E. Fuhr, "Adult Education Programs in Negro Departments of Vocational Agriculture in Oklahoma," (Unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma A&M College, 1952), p. 15.

46. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Tenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Education* (1930), p. 91.

47. Roy P. Stewart, *Programs for People: Oklahoma Vocational Education* (Oklahoma City: Western Heritage Books for the State Department of Vocational Education, 1982), pp. 24-25.

48. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Thirteenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Education* (1936), p. 154.

49. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (1940), p. 40; State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Seventeenth Biennial Report of the State Superinten-*

dent of Public Instruction and the Fourteenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Education (1938), pp. 167-68.

50. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (1940), p. 145. The report contains no figure for black students' work.

51. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (1930), p. 8; *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction* (1940), p. 145.

52. In fact, there is considerable evidence that several of the New Deal's farm programs were counter-productive, producing more harm than good. Historians note that the AAA's scheme to drive up farm prices by forcing landowners to reduce their plantings did little for commodity prices but did drive tens of thousands of tenants off the land. Some also claim that the Soil Conservation Service actually retarded conservation efforts begun earlier, often under the direction of Oklahoma's vocational agriculture teachers. For these views, see Walter J. Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973); and M. Paul Bonnifield, *The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt, and Depression* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979).

53. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (1934), pp. 125, 135, 140; *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (1940), pp. 140, 154, 165.

2

A Giant Shadow

State Superintendent John Vaughan had a problem, a big one. State law put him in charge of vocational education in Oklahoma; and, even if he had no special training or experience in the field, he knew more than a little about both education and politics. He had not particularly wanted to add overseeing the state's vocational system to his many other responsibilities, but the legislature had given that job to him and the new State Board of Education, and he was going to do his duty. Already, he had mastered the applicable federal statutes and regulations and gotten a handle on the ever more intricate details of the state's administrative procedures.

Those details aside, John Vaughan was a skilled politician and an accomplished administrator. He was wise enough and experienced enough to know that no superintendent could ever allow a subordinate to usurp the boss's authority. That was his problem. E.B. Nelms, state supervisor of vocational agriculture, was doing just that.

The two had butted heads repeatedly, but the situation became intolerable once a delegation from Hillsdale visited his office. Hillsdale was a little farming community in Garfield County, and its school superintendent and a few farmers from the school board had asked to see him. More bewildered than angry, they told Superintendent Vaughan that they had been hearing some mighty good things about vocational agriculture and they really wanted it for their own boys. They explained that they had read up on the federal laws and state plans to find out just what they had to do to get it. As far as they could tell, they had done every-

thing asked of them. They had bought all of the mandatory equipment. They had set aside classroom space and found some land for a practice farm. They had even found, recruited, and hired a teacher. A farm boy himself, he had just graduated from the college over in Stillwater. That done, all of Hillsdale was behind the program, they said. In fact, the town was awfully excited about it.

That, they told Superintendent Vaughan, was the problem. What were they going to tell their neighbors and the kids' parents? They had just come from Mr. Nelms' office, and Oklahoma's supervisor of vocational agriculture had turned them down. He had dismissed them out-of-hand, declaring that he would not release a cent of vocational money for their program. Fair enough to admit that Hillsdale had met every requirement of statute and administrative rules, he had not been considerate enough to offer as much as an explanation. All they had gotten, they said, was Nelms' icy proclamation that he would never permit vocational agriculture in their community. For that matter, he had vowed that the same thing went for every other school district in all of Garfield County.

For the moment, Vaughan told his visitors, there was nothing he could do for them or for Hillsdale's children; they would have to wait. There was, however, something that he could do about E.B. Nelms; and he did that at once. State Superintendent of Public Instruction John Vaughan summoned an emergency meeting of the Oklahoma State Board of Public Education. Its single order of business was the future of a Mr. E.B. Nelms as Oklahoma's state supervisor of vocational agriculture.

It was a long and grueling meeting, its atmosphere hardly improved by the fierce heat of Oklahoma in late June. The board's members heard the Hillsdale story—and quite a few other things that Superintendent Vaughan was ready to get off his chest. They heard that E.B. Nelms had openly and stubbornly disregarded both federal laws and state policies by insisting that local districts hire only those teachers that he personally endorsed and pay them only what he specifically allowed. They heard that he had forbidden his assistant supervisor and both of the two district supervisors to make any decision, to negotiate any agreement, to visit any school—in effect, they were forbidden to do any-

thing—without Nelms' personal and prior approval. They heard that Nelms had followed Vaughan's recent public announcement of important new policies with the flat declaration that he would never implement them. What made that particular insubordination worse, intolerable even, was the fact that Nelms had done it in front of Vaughan's audience and done it while his boss was still in the room. They heard that his arrogant treatment of local 4-H leaders and those who worked with the A&M school's Extension Service had driven them to deliver an ultimatum: They would never again cooperate in anything if it involved E.B. Nelms.[1]

The State Board of Education heard enough. The wheels of bureaucracy grind slowly and (so the public must believe) without friction, thus it would take a while, but Nelms was on his way out. As it happened, nothing so became E.B. Nelms' life in vocational education as did his leaving it. That was because his leaving permitted J.B. Perky to replace his old boss and become Oklahoma's supervisor of vocational agriculture. Nothing so became the life of vocational education in Oklahoma as did J.B. Perky's leading it.

James Barney Perky was the name his parents gave him when he was born in Cleburne, Texas, on September 6, 1901. His parents, William Alexander and Nannie Easterwood Perky, were farming folk, the kind who believed that children thrived on a good diet of work and responsibility. The fare must have agreed with this one. Perky's sister later claimed that when he was only four years old he already was so much bigger than the kids his own age that their folks had to put him in the men's class of their local Sunday School.[2]

That had to have been overstated, but there was no denying that the boy's share of the family's work was usually man-sized. Spring's arrival in north-central Texas signaled the time for him to hitch the team and plow the dried-out ground. As the summer's sun beat down on the flat plains, the youngster chopped and hoed long rows of cotton. When the heat finally broke, fall had arrived and, with it, the time to pick the crop. Winter was a season for rest, but no one in that family got much rest before spring returned and, with it, the reopening of the cycle of work and seasons. The boy's only year-round recreation came from

swimming or fishing in the nearby Brazos River. He picked up occasional spending money delivering the *Cleburne Morning News*.[3]

Wanting more, Perky's family left Texas and the farm to come to Oklahoma, where they settled in Oklahoma City in time for the boy to graduate with Central High School's Class of 1918. The next year found him at the University of Wisconsin. Because it was both the state's flagship university as well as Wisconsin's designated A&M school, the university provided an abundance, even then remarkable, in American higher education. Perky's share of that richness included a place on the university's rowing team, a degree in vocational agriculture, and a young co-ed from Elkhorn, Wisconsin. Her name was Mary Wiswell when they met in an English class. It was Mary Perky after they graduated in 1923.[4]

The newlyweds left the rolling, lush campus at Madison, Wisconsin, that year and headed for the treeless prairie of El Reno, Oklahoma. Mary Perky got a job teaching English at the high school where her husband was the new ag teacher. The latter thus began a remarkable forty-three-year career in vocational education. At the time, few would have predicted as much. Singularly unimpressed by the kid's crisp, bright Wisconsin diploma, one grizzled veteran teacher looked over the new-hire and pronounced him to be "as green as a cabbage head."[5]

At least he was noticed, not that it was hard to do so. By then Perky had reached his full adult height of six feet, eight inches, and his weight approached a mature and firm two hundred and fifty pounds. Built like a giant, he also had the force, the impact, and the presence of a giant, maybe even a giant twice his size. It was little wonder, then, that the old-timer at El Reno soon amended his original judgment. Jim Perky just seemed as green as cabbage, he decided. The truth was the kid was as strong as mustard. The convert thereby became one of many who met him that first year and never thereafter forgot the young ag teacher who seemed to fill the room with his body and charge the atmosphere with his ideas.[6]

After three years at El Reno, Perky took out for a part of the state better fitted to his size. Virtually unmarred by tree or hill, the land of Oklahoma's panhandle stretched between horizons so

distant that a man had to crane his neck just to see them. Soaring above was a sky so wide, so open, so blue, that it might have been the dome of heaven itself.

As always, it was not long before the country's few farmers and ranchers came to know this young man who had come to teach their boys to farm. Standing, he literally towered head and shoulders above any crowd. Seated, he was no less impressive, particularly if he was seated in the driver's seat of his big Buick, particularly when car and driver were tearing across field and range behind a pack of howling dogs. It was Perky's (if not necessarily his neighbors') favorite sport. Trailing great plumes of dirt and dust, Perky's wide sedan bounced along behind flying Russian wolfhounds. Across America's substitute for steppes, dogs, man, and car pursued coyotes, Oklahoma's stand-in for wolves. Every so often they even caught one or two. Too few to have a noticeable economic benefit for stockmen victimized by the wily carnivores, it was enough to justify the sport to Perky. It also helped offset some of the costs he had to pay after his wayward hounds had killed the neighbors' dogs or farmers' chickens.[7]

That was pleasure, not work. His job was teaching agriculture, and he made that both work and pleasure. Guymon and Hooker were the two schools that hired him, one after the other; but Perky's candle burned too brightly to be hidden beneath such small baskets. It was not long before farmers and ranchers in adjoining Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas were as taken with Perky's talents and enthusiasm as were those in Oklahoma's panhandle. All across what residents of five states called the "High Plains," Perky found folks as ready to go forward as he was anxious to take them there.

One way was to mix teaching and advising with a little friendly competition. Such was the logic behind Perky's introduction of agriculture judging contests. In no time, teams from Oklahoma and every surrounding state were pouring into the town of Goodwell and onto the campus of Panhandle A&M. Everybody had to learn a lot just to compete. Win or lose, they could use what they learned to improve their own farming back home.

Everybody had fun; for some it was about the only fun they could count on. Everybody benefitted, perhaps no one more than

J.B. Perky. Wherever those competitors came from, they came to Perky's domain. If they were there for many reasons, the reasons all traced to Perky's initiative. While they were there, they got to know and respect this big man with the big ideas. This Perky fellow, folks started saying, was sure to go places.[8]

He did in almost no time, relocating to Woodward in 1927. As measured by the standards of far western Oklahoma, it was not very far geographically, just a hundred miles or so. Professionally, though, it put him at a whole new level. Just ten years after the Smith-Hughes Act's adoption, Oklahoma's vocational education board figured that the agricultural program was already too large and too complex for any one man to run. As the board and Superintendent John Vaughan figured things, it would take at least four. Nelms would remain state supervisor. Ross Floyd would work out of Oklahoma City as his assistant. C.L. Bunyard would overlook eastern Oklahoma from a district office in Collinsville. That was why J.B. Perky was in Woodward: to oversee vocational agriculture across Oklahoma's western half.

As it turned out, Vaughan's and his board's mathematical computations were more realistic than was Nelms' managerial intuition. E.B. Nelms did believe that one man could run the whole program—and that he was that man. To him, an assistant was a mere errand boy, and the two district directors were not even that. The way he figured it, if those underlings needed something to do, they could scheme against each other for their boss's favor.[9]

He figured wrong. It was Nelms, of course, who lost the favor of his own boss. After a decent interval of time, Nelms was gone, and J.B. Perky ended up in the job. Once there, he hit the ground pretty much like he used to pursue the panhandle's coyotes—running.

First there was a reorganization of top personnel. Ross Floyd moved up along with Perky to become the new supervisor's chief assistant. Bonnie Nicholson assumed Floyd's duties and others, too, under the title of local supervisor. Depending upon how one counted, three began doing the work that the state board had assumed would take four and Nelms had reserved for one.

The fact was that they were doing much more than that. More

important than the administrative reshuffling was the thorough reassessment and reorganization that Perky undertook for Oklahoma's entire program of vocational agriculture.

Heretofore, the state's vision for vocational education—agriculture very much included—had been something of a miniature model of federal expectations. More, Oklahoma's purposes and methods had been virtually identical to those of every other state. No one ought to have been surprised. Washington paid the fiddlers, each state heard the same tune, and every state's vocational agriculture danced to the same melody. Maybe Jim Perky could not change the tune, but he could add some original steps and fresh moves that choreographed a distinctive, Oklahoma-style of agricultural schooling.

He called it the "cross-section plan." The name was neither descriptive nor creative, but its elements were striking and innovative. It gave Oklahoma a new and integrated statewide program that managed to be both uniform and diverse and both simple and complex. One program, it assumed many forms. Every form would be different precisely because every form would be the same: each matched its particular, local circumstances.

In fact, the Perky program began with figuring out just what made those local circumstances so particular. By his reckoning, Oklahoma contained sixteen identifiable farming areas. They varied by natural features (principally climate, topography, and soil) as well as by social factors (marketing arrangements, price trends, and the like). Depending on the circumstances, one community might be producing cash grains and raising livestock. Another might rely on cotton, poultry, and dairy production. With poor soil and isolated farms, another area could hope for no more than self-sufficiency, a few garden plots scattered on land otherwise fit only as open range for free-roaming hogs and cattle.

Under Perky's new orders, the job of every man (they were all men) who taught vocational agriculture thereafter started with surveying his community's farms. Pieced together, the surveys built a comprehensive picture of the area each served. Once they knew those local conditions, the teachers had to address them with suitable multi-year and multi-level projects. Every element of every project had to serve two purposes, one every bit the equal of

the other, and a vocational teacher's job was to accomplish both. The first was to offer vocational training that made boys better farmers, better in every way. The second was to make boys better men, better citizens, better able to serve their communities and state.[10] Jim Perky's job was to see that his teachers had the training and the tools to make both happen.

In quick order, both parties—the agriculture teachers and their new state supervisor—were hard at work. Before Perky had finished his first year in the new position, one hundred fifty agriculture teachers completed more than three thousand farm surveys. In cooperation with Oklahoma A&M, he had arranged for seventy-seven teachers to take a special course on program planning at the Stillwater campus. Many more had been at one or more of twenty regional conferences, maybe even one of three statewide conferences—all coordinated by Perky and taught by the A&M school's best faculty. Practically every one of Perky's teachers had written out new course plans, sent them to the vocational agriculture specialists in Stillwater, and received back individualized suggestions on content and organization.

To strengthen and standardize plans, practices, and performances, Perky also had ordered and distributed a new, eighty-five-page bulletin. Put in every teacher's hands during 1931, Perky's first year, it was only the seventh bulletin that the state board had ever produced for any vocational education program. This one set a standard never before seen but often thereafter repeated. J.B. Perky was a man of both grand vision and exacting detail, and both would be unmistakable in everything released under his name.

Vocational Agriculture in Public Schools of Oklahoma made evident Perky's expectations with the cross-section plan. In fact, its first twenty-eight pages of text presented a detailed model of the plan as it applied to a specific area in central Oklahoma. Following pages offered more general guidance. One section instructed Perky's teachers on how to make a farm survey (the most efficient way was to complete the included forms). Another contained such detailed information as the best time to instruct boys in the science of selecting laying hens (March of their first year).

Teachers who had dealt with this new supervisor were espe-

cially likely to take his closing advice to keep current in the field by doing some auxiliary reading. If they knew Jim Perky, they knew that this counsel was more a command. Why else would he "recommend," by author, title, and publisher, no fewer than forty-seven books and seventeen federal bulletins? Was it mere concern for a few overachievers that caused Perky to cite specific sections from specific texts for specific lessons? No, there were too many examples for an idle afterthought. After all, the bulletin prescribed a complete four-year curriculum, year by year, course by course, lesson by lesson.

That was quite a tool kit, but the teachers had quite a job to do. And one must not forget that they were to do that job in evening classes, part-time classes, and day-unit classes as well as in their regular high school courses. Remember too that they also were to supplement the classroom work with closely supervised individual projects.[11]

Oklahoma's agriculture teachers did the job, did it well, and did it enthusiastically. Figures from the previous chapter—every year's showing of more dollars spent on more teachers with more training to design more programs to serve more people—record and measure each of those facts. But mere numbers do not explain them.

J.B. Perky was the explanation. His leadership was the cause. Here was a leader able to size up men and situations, a leader ready to act on his judgment. Here was a leader who insisted that the people around him be leaders, too. This was a leader able to inspire others to imagine and motivate others to achieve, in that way, realizing his own vision and extending his own accomplishments.

For all of these reasons, it was Jim Perky who first identified, recruited, hired, and promoted what became an entire generation of the top leaders of vocational education in Oklahoma. Some he recruited in the 1930s; others he brought on board later. Some left their mark on vocational agriculture; others made theirs on the entire vocational system. All led alongside Perky; some would keep on leading years after him. Thirty, forty, even fifty years after Perky had become supervisor of vocational agriculture, men he first hired to teach farm boys were still guiding Oklahoma's voca-

tional education system.[12]

Right from the beginning, one could see why. Perky hired only the best people, and he knew the best place to get them. Every spring from 1931 on, Perky was in Stillwater, inspecting that year's crop of graduates. Oklahoma A&M had always dominated the state's vocational training, not just in agriculture but in every field. A land-grant man himself, Perky would naturally begin there. As it happened, he usually looked nowhere else. That was partly because the teaching crop began improving greatly at just about the same time that Perky began hiring. The cause of that improvement was another reason for Perky to be there. That cause was Henry Garland Bennett.

Like Perky, Bennett had been born out-of-state (Arkansas in Bennett's case) and had come to Oklahoma to build his career. Both had done so, in fact, when they were fresh out of college, both when they were just twenty-two. For Bennett, that was in 1908, when he took over the school system (such as it was) of tiny Boswell. A year later, he was in charge of schools for all of Choctaw County. Ten years after that, he was president of a college, Southeastern State Teachers College, in Durant.

In less than a decade, Bennett gave the school a national reputation for its summer teachers' institutes. He also had multiplied the school's regular enrollment by 500 percent. He had achieved both (and much more, too) despite the fact that Henry Bennett was usually a student himself. He finished a master's degree at the University of Oklahoma in 1924, the same year that he published a highly regarded text in arithmetic. Two years later, he had a doctorate from Columbia University and was ready for a bigger job. That came in 1928, when he took over Oklahoma A&M College. Henry Bennett began at once to make that job bigger still.[13]

It had the potential. The presidency of the state's principal land grant college reached well beyond one campus in one town. It also touched upon the federal Extension Service under the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That put it into every one of Oklahoma's seventy-seven counties, potentially right up to every farmer's fence and into every homemaker's kitchen. Should something like a big depression come along, there might be even more federal

programs. They would need technical experts, and the government would do whatever it took to get them. Washington might even want to put those programs where those experts already were, right on Henry Bennett's campus at Stillwater, Oklahoma.

That aside, the college was already in the middle of state politics. Of course, every publicly funded school had to be immersed in state politics, but this one was potentially more. With the right guidance, Oklahoma A&M could be a fulcrum, the point upon which politics turned. After all, its president needed the state's money; but then the state's politicians also needed the people's votes—including the votes of all those Extension agents, farmers, homemakers, parents, and A&M alumni out there. Throw into the mix some personal factors—be sure to include a president who was thoroughly charismatic, singularly cagey, and utterly autocratic—and it might be that the politicians would need the votes exactly as much as the college needed the money. That would balance things nicely. In less mechanical terms, it got down to this: Put Henry Bennett in the A&M presidency and one had the makings of real political power.

Henry Bennett had that power, and J.B. Perky knew it. The first was willing to share it with the right kind of man. The second was the right kind of man, and he was ready for his share. Together, each thereby got more power still.

The two were natural allies. They worked the same fields; they had the same interests. The college was the vocational system's major supplier, and the system was the major employer of graduates from entire departments. Every penny of teacher training monies (except the few begrudgingly spent on black training at Langston) went to Oklahoma A&M. Nearly every agriculture teacher was an A&M graduate. Representatives of both were all across the state, often in the same communities, often providing complementary service, usually for the same folks.

Besides, Henry Bennett and Jim Perky were just alike in many respects, one being that each wanted only the most able men alongside. They were side-by-side on that—and on much else, too.

In short order, they were almost literally side-by-side. Since 1917 and the creation of Oklahoma's vocational system, every one of its departments operated out of Oklahoma City. That

was nothing special. The state's capital, Oklahoma City was the headquarters for every state agency. At least it was until 1932, Perky's second year on the job, Bennett's fourth in his. Nineteen thirty-two was the year in which Jim Perky moved his department and some administrative staff from Oklahoma's capital to Henry Bennett's campus.

At first, Bennett and Perky scattered offices to fill available spaces in Old Central, Gardiner Hall, and the Shops Building. By 1938, Bennett had enough capital funds to pull them together in a new frame building on Monroe Street. Perky's office went there, not far from Bennett's office in Whitehurst Hall.[14]

It was a move of great political acumen, and it foretold even more politicking ahead. For both men, such political intuition and calculation was natural. Bennett was a politician at least as much as he was an educator, more so, many said. Perky may have looked like a big old farm boy, but inside that six-eight body beat the heart and worked the mind of a born politician. The first fired his passions; the second sharpened his reasoning. Both served well every program that he ever administered.

That was true even of his earliest big one: the cross- section plan of 1931. Its very first step was Perky's order that his teachers survey every farm in every community served by vocational agriculture. The information permitted each teacher to tailor plans for each community, but Perky also wanted the data for himself, for his own reason. It gave him tools to promote vocational agriculture in every community of Oklahoma. It was, he judged, "of vital significance in acquainting local school officials with the breadth of the program."[15]

School people were hardly the only ones that Perky meant to nurture. Wherever there was vocational agriculture, there he staked his political ground. He intended to till every square inch of it, and he just about did. He deliberately and carefully cultivated a network of political connections that reached across the whole of Oklahoma. It extended to every civic group—every chamber of commerce, every Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions club—in every village and hamlet. It embraced every town's elected officials, its bankers, editors, and publishers, too. It encompassed the state's insurance and public utility companies, railway lines, and ag-

ricultural cooperatives. It included Oklahoma's rural colleges and professional groups, its metropolitan newspapers and radio stations as well. It stretched beyond Oklahoma's borders to reach any national body potentially interested in agricultural schooling and possibly able to help it. Some were obvious—the United States Department of Agriculture, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Grange. Others were not so obvious, not until one thought about it. Sears & Roebuck and Montgomery Ward were two like that: were not most of their customers farmers? Jim Perky worked them from the beginning.[16]

People who worked with Perky marveled at his political connections. They long talked about that, just like they later talked about his "Perkyisms," his special ways of saying things. A favorite one was "what one vocational teacher could do, all could do."[17] A corollary was that every vocational teacher in every district ought to do there what their boss did everywhere. That was not a saying; it was the standard.

Perky's notion of a good agriculture teacher only began with what happened in the classroom. By his standard, effective teaching had to reach outward until it encompassed the political as much as the pedagogical. One person remembered it this way: Perky judged that a teacher was doing his job if he could, should the need arise, be elected his town's mayor, president of any civic club, head of the local chamber of commerce, or Sunday School superintendent for any church. Anything less was not enough.[18]

A teacher politically inept was not doing his job at all. Nearly a half-century after it happened, people still talked about the poor fellow who had failed to invite his state legislator to the annual parent-son banquet. Worse, the snubbed lawmaker wielded statewide power from his seat on the House Appropriations Committee. The instructor had ignored that fact, if he even knew it. Perky knew it—and he knew the potential damage done by the teacher's lapse. It was like a bunch of people, Perky said, all trying to cross a wide river in the same boat. "When you looked back to the stern," he finished, "you saw a fellow with a brace and bit boring a hole." That was a Perkyism. That particular one—and the story of its origins—stayed around as a reminder that every teacher

needed to be politically savvy and politically involved. "One team, one goal" was the Perkyism for that.[19]

People often heard that one. They saw it even more often, almost always, in fact. Rarely, though, did it appear as clearly and as thoroughly as in the one activity probably closest to Perky's heart: the Future Farmers of America. FFA, people called it, and it was so identified with him that many folks just assumed that Jim Perky had conceived and birthed it. That was not quite true, but it was true that the FFA was Perky's baby.

It, or something like it, was an inevitable by-product of the Smith-Hughes Act. The law's requirement of individual projects done outside the classroom gave agriculture students much in common with the young people that the Extension Service was busy herding into local and state 4-H clubs. Vocational students came to 4-H like cattle at feeding time. Every year, more and more vocational students took their enthusiasm, their training, and their projects to 4-H. Many clubs thereby became less allies of than appendages to the vocational system. The tendency was greatest where the host communities were the most committed and most supportive and where the vocational programs were the largest and most active. It happened, in other words, where the Extension Service had the most to lose and the least to offer.

Tensions mounted on both sides, until the 4-H people all but banned the vocational agriculture students, especially if they wanted to work on individual projects. Shunned if not excluded, those students came up with their own alternatives. The first were purely local and entirely independent. There were "Corn Clubs," and there were "Cotton Clubs." Sometimes, there was even a "Corn and Cotton Club." There were quite a few "Aggie Clubs" but not nearly as many "Smith-Hughes Pig Clubs."

By 1924, there were enough clubs operating under enough names that their members met together during the Oklahoma State Fair in Oklahoma City. No unified organization came out of that meeting. More important, though, was the fact that no one but vocational students went into it; it was closed to everyone else, to 4-H people in particular. That happened again at the next year's fair, but the third year's was different. That year was 1926, the occasion was the Oklahoma State Fair, and the organization

born then and there made one of many clubs under many names.

Its own name—the Farm Boys' Country Life Achievement Club—was a mouthful. The ceremonious name also belied the club's informality, for the Farm Boys' Country Life Achievement Club was not one club but several. These shared only two things: a common (if somewhat awkward) name and a common (if quite deserved) antagonism toward the 4-H system.

The latter quality long remained, but the former barely made it through the year. In May 1927, a few boys and their teachers used the occasion of the A&M school's annual interscholastic conference to gather in Stillwater, where they chartered the Future Farmers of Oklahoma (FFO). Fifteen chapters—essentially those already organized as achievement clubs—comprised the original body. Five more schools came in within a year, each added as a new chapter.[20]

The name Future Farmers of Oklahoma had much to commend it. It was simple, it was concise, and it was descriptive. It was hardly unique, but that was its best quality of all. Several states already had clubs under similar names, the first being the Future Farmers of Virginia. Delegates from many of these existing state organizations assembled in Kansas City in November 1928. They had come for the American Royal Livestock Show, and they stayed to establish the Future Farmers of America.

Oklahomans had been present at Kansas City but only as observers. Liking what they had seen, they returned to Oklahoma, revivalists seeking converts. They gathered many. In less than two months' time, the FFO remade itself into the Oklahoma branch of the Future Farmers of America. Oklahoma was the seventh state to join; twenty-eight more signed on within the year. By June 1931, there were forty-six participating states, and FFA's active national membership totaled about 55,000 boys.[21]

FFA was another of its educational programs that Oklahoma reserved for whites only, but Oklahoma was not alone in that. In every southern state, the races were systematically separated by law, by custom, by economics, by intimidation, or by all four. (Northern and western states generally had to get by without the first.) If Oklahoma merited any special attention, it was only because Oklahoma was one of the first states that encouraged

its black kids at all. In fact, it was one of the first five to offer as much as a segregated statewide farm club for its segregated agriculture students. Later, Oklahoma's club became one of the fifteen charter members of the New Farmers of America (NFA), when it appeared in 1935.

Any credit fell to Oklahoma's black educators and farm boys. D.C. Jones, who worked at Langston training African-American agriculture teachers, had been instrumental in creating one of the country's earliest student organizations. When it began in 1927 with 13 chapters and 403 members, he called it the New Farmers of Oklahoma (NFO). It was this NFO that earned Oklahoma charter member status in the new NFA eight years later. Because Oklahoma's club always had been among the most active, the NFO was a reason for there even being a New Farmers of America.[22]

In another sense, the reason for both—directly for the NFO, indirectly for the NFA—was the same: the attitude of white Oklahomans. These were Jim Crow clubs, eloquent proof that separate-but-equal was all the first, none of the second.

A notable silence made that same point and made it even more persuasively. Beginning with the FFA's first appearance in Oklahoma, the state's supervisor of vocational agriculture proudly described the organization in unchanging words. "The Future Farmers of America," Jim Perky explained in his official reports, "is a national organization for white farm boys." A whole series of numbers—big numbers, impressive numbers, increasing numbers—usually followed. All reflected pride, but all reflected something else as well. The same two words usually accompanied each number, saying that so many "white boys" did this, so many "white boys" did that. What they did not say was that there were any other kind of boys or that those boys had done anything at all. The silence said that black boys and their achievements did not even count.[23]

Since much the same was true for most of the country, Oklahoma deserved no special condemnation. Oklahoma's FFA was special, however. Its special quality lay not in its unfairness to those it kept out but in FFA's importance to those it took in. The latter was Jim Perky's pride, understandably so. His personal devotion

and his extraordinary drive made Oklahoma's FFA as special as it was, and that was special indeed.

It was special in its scope. From the beginning, almost every one of the state's vocational agriculture departments hurried to organize its own FFA chapter. By national rules, individual participation was strictly voluntary; a boy had to choose to join, and he had to pay dues. Those circumstances were nothing compared to the energy and enterprise of Oklahoma's vocational leaders. In no time at all, nearly every eligible Sooner student was a member, and an active and involved member at that. That is why if an American boy was in the early FFA the chances were one-in-eight that the boy lived in Oklahoma.[24]

Once established, the momentum only swelled. In just a few years, to be involved in vocational agriculture in Oklahoma was to be committed to FFA. By 1938, exactly ten years after FFA's founding, every Oklahoma school that offered vocational agriculture maintained an FFA presence. Every Oklahoman who taught vocational agriculture advised an FFA chapter. Of the 7,476 Oklahoma students enrolled in agriculture, an incredible 7,444 (99.57 percent) were also dues-paying participants in the FFA.[25]

FFA's Oklahoma success was partly indebted to what made it so successful everywhere. Because the Federal Board for Vocational Education considered FFA to be "integral" to American vocational training, it tied it directly to federally-funded programs. The board officially declared FFA to be a "device for supplementing, motivating, and vitalizing" vocational agriculture and insisted that every agriculture department in every state support its "spirit of industry, cooperation, and achievement."[26] No state could ignore such goals, if only because no state could do without federal vocational funds. Few states, however, matched Oklahoma's heartfelt commitment to them.

None could compare to Oklahoma for something else, the something that made its FFA program so very special: the fun of competing in agriculture contests. "Cooperation," "achievement," "industry"—they were all good things, worthwhile things, admirable things. But they were hardly fun things, entertaining things, or exciting things. On the panhandle's lonely plains, Jim Perky already had demonstrated how to make cooperation fun and

achievement entertaining. He had shown that the friendly competition of agriculture contests could excite his students' industry. The boys' families and communities had gotten pretty excited, too.

Leaders in other states never learned that. Many state FFA organizations limited their boys' participation in competitive activities; some actively discouraged it. The method was to limit time for preparing and competing. The effect was to limit opportunities for learning, maybe even reasons to learn.

Not in Oklahoma. Oklahoma boys went to county and state fairs neither to gawk nor to roughhouse. They were there to compete—and not all of that competition was entirely friendly either. They entered nearly every contest open to them in nearly every state of the region. They took their best livestock, their best products, their best skills, and their most competitive instincts to every appropriate national meet. They perfected their own contests (founding the National Land, Pasture, and Range Judging Contest and building the world's largest junior livestock show were examples) to invite boys from all over to come to Oklahoma and take them on.[27]

Because everyone knew that Oklahoma's standard was high indeed, only the boldest rose to that challenge. The state's boys were renowned not merely as competitors but as winners. In fact, they sometimes won so much that the rules had to be changed to keep them from competing at all.

Texas pride suffered when the University of Texas fell to the University of Oklahoma at the annual football war held in Dallas for the State Fair of Texas, but there was nothing the arrogant Texans could do about that. They had to do something, though, when Oklahoma's farm boys kept sweeping the fair's junior livestock competition. What they did was close it to everyone but Texas exhibitors. In the identical ill-mannered spirit—if you can't beat 'em, ban 'em—the Texans applied the same rule in Fort Worth for the Southwest American Livestock Exposition. Tired of being clobbered by Oklahomans, they limited junior competition to their own boys and made Oklahoma's youngsters go up against adults in the open show. Oklahoma kids did pretty well there, too.[28]

Not even its members' cases of trophies, boxes of ribbons, and thousands of prize dollars measured fully FFA's value. Recall that Perky charged vocational agriculture with two missions and considered both equally valuable. FFA served both and served them equally well. Its philosophy—Perky called it "learning by doing"—improved young men as farmers. No less, its self-governing and democratic structure made them more effective citizens, too.

It was relatively easy to measure the first mission, and many did. Perky's biennial reports always recorded faithfully and precisely the value of FFA members' current holdings. It was exactly $600,845.07 in school year 1939-1940, for example. He always accounted, too, for every fraction of an acre they farmed and every penny their projects earned them (52,726 3/4 acres and $644,254.99, in 1939-1940).[29] A short library shelf would eventually be necessary to hold formal academic studies that confirmed the long-range economic value of FFA training.[30]

No less did an FFA boy improve as a citizen. That contribution is less easily weighed and measured, however. One historian's method is as good as any; he tracked down men who had spent decades with the program.[31] Charles Hogan, a veteran teacher whose livestock judging team had claimed a state championship in 1938, recalled what became of his boys on that team: Wayne Miller headed Oklahoma State University's technical branch at Okmulgee; Bill Coe was a professor of animal science at the University of Tennessee; Allen Heidebrecht had earned a doctorate and used it to direct research for a major corporation. Another interviewee, Houston Adams, estimated that 90 percent of the FFA boys that he had known in Okarche in the early 1950s still farmed in Kingfisher County a quarter-century later. He considered it more important, though, that a full generation of the county's officials and most active citizens had come out of FFA, either Okarche's chapter or one of the county's seven others.[32]

Oklahoma's FFA stood out in the national organization and even more so in the state's overall vocational system. It was generally decades before the trades and industries division sponsored any student organizations at all.[33] Home economics had its own youth program much earlier. In fact, it began about the same way and about the same time as did FFA. There, however, most simi-

larities ended.

In both cases, strictly local clubs were the first to appear. In the case of home economics, Homemaking Circles and Student Homemakers were among the more popular names. Some addressed high school girls, others enrolled older adults, still others served junior high students. At least one—the club that Mary Russell founded in 1926 at Chickasha's Oklahoma College for Women—affiliated with the American Home Economics Association and consisted chiefly of college students and their professors. These local clubs, in all their diversity, combined to become the Future Homemakers of Oklahoma (FHO). The year was 1937, exactly ten years after the Future Farmers of Oklahoma had formed, nine since the Oklahomans had joined the national FFA.[34]

The homemakers never caught up because they never had a chance. FFA had a natural base of high school students. In home economics, high school girls were but a fraction of total enrollment. The typical home economics student was out-of-school and married, a young woman busy caring for an infant and struggling to maintain a household on few resources. She lacked time, energy, or money to spend on some club. A stable corps of highly driven teachers, many hand-picked for their jobs, gave FFA a natural cadre of sponsors and advisors. Impossible obligations, miserly budgets, and turnover rates running between 40 and 50 percent every year gave home economics a teaching force ill-prepared for new assignments and unlikely to take them on.

The results were striking in their differences. Every vocational agriculture department maintained an active FFA chapter; it was part of each teacher's job. In home economics, it was a source of pride when FHO finally made its way into two of every five home economics departments. Practically every agriculture student who could joined FFA, whereas barely half of the eligible home economics students bothered with FHO. FFA projects brought every facet of agriculture education into tight focus and earned FFA clubs national renown; FHO projects were usually uncoordinated and uncelebrated—this one to make Christmas toys for needy families, that one to cook and serve a school banquet, another to perform a student-written play.[35]

Not least of FFA's advantages relative to FHO lay in the former's

leadership, specifically in its state supervisor. FFA was not alone in that regard. As noted earlier, J.B. Perky led a vocational agriculture division that outpaced every other aspect of Oklahoma's vocational system. It may, then, have been natural that he came to lead the system, himself. That happened officially on June 6, 1941, when J.B. Perky became Oklahoma's director of vocational education.

However natural, his appointment required sophisticated political maneuvering and considerable political skill. To begin with, the vocational system had no director as such under the organization established by law in 1929. The superintendent of public instruction merely added that assignment to his other duties. To create a separate directorship was to reorganize the entire system. To reorganize the system was to repeal one law and enact another. To exchange statutes was to have the acceptance of the system's existing leader (the elected superintendent of public instruction), the agreement of its governing body (the gubernatorially appointed State Board of Education), the support of the leadership and the votes of a majority in both the state house and senate, and the signature of Governor Leon Phillips. To get all of that was to have the skills and connections of a master politician—someone, say, like J.B. Perky, maybe with Henry Bennett's help.

It all did happen. A new law in April 1941 reorganized Oklahoma's entire department of education, but it continued to assign the State Board of Education the dual identity of being Oklahoma's State Board for Vocational Education as well. As the vocational board, it was charged by law to fill two new positions: an executive officer for itself as well as a director for vocational education. It did, both at once. J.B. Perky became simultaneously executive officer of the state vocational board and director of vocational education for Oklahoma. He also held on to his job of state supervisor of vocational agriculture.[36]

Therein lay yet another political problem. Oklahoma's existing seven-year plan for vocational education, necessary for the state to receive federal money, designated the superintendent of public instruction head of the system and made supervisor of vocational agriculture a distinctly separate position. For Perky to play both

roles, Washington would have to permit Oklahoma to amend its official plan and accept its putting one man in two top positions. Federal authorities rarely had permitted the first and never had allowed the second.[37] This one time, they did both.

Washington made Oklahoma a special case, at least partly because its top people already knew that J.B. Perky was special himself. They had known it for at least a year, at the very latest since June 1940. That was when Britain had evacuated Dunkirk, Hitler had occupied Paris, and J.B. Perky had gone to Washington.

The Nazi conquest of continental Europe left England fighting alone and America urgently preparing its own defense. That was why U.S. Commissioner of Education John Studebaker brought the country's most respected vocational schoolmen to the capital. His call went out to just thirteen states, Oklahoma by far the smallest. Of the men he beckoned, only Perky worked in vocational agriculture. None of that mattered. America needed its very top experts, and Commissioner Studebaker knew that J.B. Perky was one of its very best.

Perky and the others made their report on June 8. The good news was that vocational training already was preparing a half-million people for the most vital defense jobs. Better was their plan for an entirely new vocational program, one designed to expand that to 1.25 million people within a year. The problem was the cost. It would take the then-staggering sum of $15 million just to get the new program started, incalculable millions more to keep it going. Even the first figure was three million greater than the George-Deen Act granted the nation's entire vocational system, and it had taken decades to reach that level. Not this time. Congress voted the full $15 million on June 23, fifteen days later.[38] The program was up and running eight days after that.

That was nothing compared to what was to come, especially after some eighteen months, when America joined the Second World War. The war changed everything it touched, and it touched everything there was. Vocational education felt it all over the country, and the imprint was permanent.

The war placed unprecedented demands on a system already strained. Oklahoma still suffered from the catastrophe of the

1930s, when depression, drought, and dust had conspired to exile nearly a fifth of its people. Because federal vocational money went to states in exact proportion to their populations, Oklahoma slipped correspondingly. Perky took over the system just as federal support began to drop. Six months later, it fell to him to guide that wounded system through its greatest challenge ever.

Home economics took an especially hard hit. Because the federal formula sent fewer dollars to the division, entire programs disappeared. State support fell even more, no doubt reflecting the little worth accorded home economics education. The entire division would have closed completely in 1943 had not Governor Robert S. Kerr filled out the legislature's appropriations with money from his special contingency fund. Otherwise, Oklahoma would not have qualified for any federal home economics program at all. As it was, nobody was willing to spend even a dollar to reimburse local districts for teachers' salaries. Dozens of schools shut down departments; others saved theirs only by slashing pay. Turnover, always high, rose even higher. Morale, never high, fell even lower.[39]

Even vocational agriculture suffered. Oklahoma put considerable money there, but the reduction of federal funds still meant that the state could not fully reimburse what local districts normally paid agriculture teachers. The best Perky could do was to prorate what was available so that every district could pay a fixed percentage of existing salaries. The practice continued through the war, the only difference being that the percentage kept slipping. Between 1941 and 1943, the rate was 87 percent of previous salaries. It dropped to 82 percent in school year 1943-1944, to 79.5 percent the next year. The war's surprisingly sudden end, in August 1945, came too late to help: the ratio stood at 62 percent for 1945-1946.[40]

Many of the state's very best agriculture teachers would have been happy to get even that. Instead, they received soldiers' wages (almost nothing) for what soldiers risked in the service (almost everything). It was December 1942 before the federal selective service board declared agriculture teachers critical to the war effort and exempted them from conscription. By then, the draft

already had claimed just over a third of Perky's best teachers. Half or more of the remainder voluntarily left between 1943 and 1945. Some enlisted; others took better paying civilian jobs. So great was the exodus that Perky had to relax his famously high standards for agriculture teachers just to keep many departments open.[41]

Much of what remained of vocational agriculture shifted its focus, sometimes assuming new names to fit new times. Shops built to teach boys about farm machinery became centers to overhaul worn-out equipment and train auto mechanics, sheet metal workers, and electricians for defense jobs. That was the essence of the so-called Rural War Production Training Program. There was also a Food War Production Training Program. This particular form of "training" added food processing, canning, and preservation to what vocational agriculture had been teaching for years.[42]

Predictably enough, the trades and industries division felt most directly and most powerfully the war's effects. For the most part, T&I's existing programs escaped the worst financial and manpower shortages that hit home economics and vocational agriculture and went on without noticeable change.[43] What did change was the addition of a new program: the Vocational Training for War Production Workers Program. Here was no new name for some old activity. It was what Perky and a few others had conceived and what Congress had launched during the anxious summer of 1940. Administered through the trades and industries division, it was funded altogether separately from the rest of the vocational system. Its one purpose was to prepare workers for occupations and industries furiously producing for war.

It did that, and it did it abundantly. For the air war alone, it turned out workers skilled in aircraft assembly, aircraft engine manufacturing, aircraft engine maintenance, aircraft mechanics, aircraft sheet metal work—even something called "aircraft, other." For those and other jobs, it trained 120,505 Oklahomans in the four years and ten months of its existence.[44] That was almost six times the number schooled in all other T&I programs combined between 1941 and 1945. In fact, it was more than T&I theretofore

had trained in all of its programs over all of its history, going back to 1917.

The effects went far beyond Oklahoma and 120,505 Oklahomans. Eventually they extended to millions in North Africa, Normandy, and Nuernberg. They reached millions more in Tarawa, Truk, and Tokyo. Less exotic and less famed sites felt their own consequences, felt them earlier and felt them decisively. Tulsa was one.

During the First World War, Tulsans had taken to calling their city the "Oil Capital of the World," and it probably had been. At the eve of the next war, they still had the title but not much else. The Great Depression, not oil, lorded over Tulsa; and it reigned as an angry, demanding god. To appease its wrath, the city offered up sacrifices—half of its oil-production workers, two-fifths of the pipeline employees, a third of its refining personnel. Sacrifices did little good. Tulsa still knelt in humble submission as late as 1940.

War delivered Tulsa. The city got to its feet and took off running. Stagnant for a decade, Tulsa's population jumped by a third in four years. Unemployment disappeared. Manufacturing jobs nearly quadrupled. Per capita income multiplied by five. Retail sales tripled. Tulsa was in flush times again.

Few of these blessings flowed from oil, however. The principal source lay in Tulsa's northeastern corner, but only since 1942. There and then Douglas Aircraft had built a huge plant that proceeded to turn out B-24 "Liberators," three-a-day or better, 3,138 bombers all told. Working full shifts around the clock for thirty months, Douglas employees outfitted 4,000 other military planes. They also produced, packed, and shipped 20,000 tons of parts. Douglas got the contracts, Germany and Japan took the blows, and 15,000 new Tulsans got fat paychecks every month.[45]

The great majority of Douglas workers likely came to Tulsa after stops in Sapulpa, Drumright, Cushing, Stillwater, or Muskogee. These were among forty-one towns with new vocational centers that took in everything from unemployed roustabouts to displaced housewives and turned out war workers skilled in everything from aircraft assembly to aircraft engine manufacturing. Whatever "aircraft, other" was, some probably learned that and got good jobs, too. As for Tulsa, only two American cities—Long

Beach, California, and Wichita, Kansas—prospered more in World War II.[46]

That is of the American cities that had existed before the war. In 1940, not much but exhausted farms and a lonely Deep Rock gas station lay just east of Oklahoma City. Five years later, the farms were gone, their frame structures bulldozed, their fields leveled and paved for a military supply depot (Tinker Field) and an adjoining Douglas plant. Vocational training helped supply fifteen thousand war production workers for Tinker, another twenty-three thousand for Douglas. The Deep Rock station was no more. Its old driveway had become the entrance to a brand-new city, Midwest City.[47]

The resurrection of one city, the genesis of another, the deliverance from depression, the cornucopia of industrial abundance and military might—these amounted to no more than a fraction of what Oklahomans owed their vocational system. The debt was not Oklahomans' alone, however. Free people the world over shared some of it, too. Born in desperate moments, the War Production Workers Program gave vocational education its finest hour.

Strange to say, the system's leaders let that hour pass uncelebrated. In fact, they barely acknowledged that there was such a program. Their reports for the state board of vocational education included the War Production Workers Program as "necessarily an emergency measure" assigned to the trades and industries division. Officials matter-of-factly recorded the number of its trainees, displayed the sites of its facilities, and listed the occupations that were subject to its training. That was all. It took about a half-page—just four paragraphs or so—to tell it.[48]

Maybe that was telling. It clearly was peculiar, perhaps even singular. Statutory law required that every state agency head prepare official reports. Bureaucratic imperatives encouraged them to use the occasion to showcase and strengthen their programs. No one knew that more than J.B. Perky, and no one did it better either.

Heads of every vocational division[49] used their wartime reports to demonstrate every program's complexity and importance, particularly its importance to the war effort. As state supervisor of vocational agriculture, Perky always set the standard with his

reports. Perky's 1944 report devoted sixteen pages to the achievements of vocational agriculture. His 1946 report added fourteen more.

Perky filled six pages just with the FFA's contributions. FFA boys (all 7,096 of them) bought $567,117.56 worth of War Stamps and Bonds in the first biennium, another $1,044,944.92 in the second. FFA members repaired 15,310 tools and hatched 214,013 chicks in 1943-1944. They sprayed 159,195 animals and 2,703 buildings with DDT in 1946. FFA boys applied 829,003 tons of limestone and 2,348 tons of phosphates on 3,693 farms in fiscal year 1945-1946. At the war's end, 7,422 Oklahoma Future Farmers had gone into the armed forces, and 551 had not returned. One was Forrest Barker, an army major and former state FFA president.[50]

Those reports were stunning performances. Perky's torrents of data may have confused some, but they convinced everyone. The FFA—all of vocational agriculture—deserved every dollar that the public had given it, and would do even better with even more next year. Demonstrating, documenting, and detailing that his division had done its job, Supervisor Perky was doing his own job, too.

No one had that job for the War Production Workers Program. Director Perky's final report reduced its story to a few simple, banal lines. That was nothing compared to the space—to the pride, perhaps to the priority—that Supervisor Perky reserved for vocational agriculture.

There had to have been reasons. Maybe it was because the War Production Workers Program was an emergency addition to a continuing program. Maybe because its funding was separate or because its status was temporary. Maybe because it had no permanent supervisor of its own. Maybe because its contributions were simply self-evident.

Whatever the cause, there was a consequence, although at first it was so small to be barely visible. Still, it was there. The external environment of vocational education was changing much faster than was its internal vision, a vision still focused on traditional programs for traditional students. It looked to an America not of military pilots and bombardiers or of engineers and technicians, but of farmers and rural homemakers, of carpenters and small-

town sales clerks. It was more the America that had entered the war than the America that emerged from it.

Federal authorities did little to change that. Congress more than doubled annual appropriations for vocational education with the George-Barden Act of 1946. More importantly, Congress also reformulated the distribution of federal money. Previously, it had divided $12 million annually, spreading equal sums among agriculture, home economics, and trade and industrial education. Congress made this new grab bag much bigger, and it invited vocational agriculture to put its hand in first. It would get $10 million per year, home economics and trade and industries only $8 million apiece. Another $2.5 million guaranteed that distributive education would not leave completely empty-handed.[51]

The revised federal formula helped assure agriculture training its primacy in Oklahoma. There was more that nearly guaranteed it. The ratio of a state's rural to its urban population fixed its particular share of the money distributed nationally to each division. Relative to other states, heavily rural Oklahoma thereby got a bigger slice of vocational agriculture's already bigger pie. In the same way, other Oklahoma divisions had to diet on smaller slices of smaller pies.

By the mid-1950s, federal funds amounted only to about 16 percent of what Oklahoma spent altogether on vocational education. The state legislature chipped in slightly more, 18 percent. The big money—66 percent—came from local school boards. Not for nothing had Perky built a statewide political network, and not for nothing had he insisted that his agriculture teachers do the same wherever they were. This was where it paid off handsomely.

Under the federal formula, Washington sent Oklahoma's home economics and trade and industrial education divisions about half of what it awarded agriculture. That was evenhanded compared to the decisions made in Oklahoma City and hundreds of local communities. Those choices reflected less some impersonal mathematical formula than old-fashioned personal politics; and that was the difference that made the difference.

The state granted neither home economics nor trades and industries even a third of what it bestowed on agriculture. In local districts, home economics was lucky to get sixty-six cents to ag-

riculture's dollar. That was good; trade and industrial education did not get even half of that.

The sum of all of these dollars and cents made for an interesting distribution. Enrollments in every vocational division climbed through the early 1950s, especially in agriculture, which contracted with the Veterans Administration to provide returning servicemen on-the-farm training. Even with that boost, agriculture still accounted for just 36 percent of all vocational students. That favored 36 percent, however, were beneficiaries of 53 percent of all vocational spending. Only trades and industries did better. It got 21 percent of the money, but it had just 10 percent of the enrollments. Home economics was the one shortchanged, glaringly so. Serving 53 percent of all vocational students, home economics had to make do with just 25 percent of vocational money. Distributive education got the leftovers, 1 percent of the money for 1 percent of the students.[52]

This lopsided distribution was nothing new. It represented only marginal changes since the 1930s, when each division's share of the money had resembled no better its share of the students.[53]

What was new was Oklahoma. More accurately, it was becoming new. The Second World War had put change in motion, and the momentum carried over into the fifties and beyond. Few then could have sensed it—only the perspective of time made it evident—but the 1950s may have been the hinge upon which the state's entire history turned.

For one thing, that was when Oklahoma reversed its long slide in population. The 1930 census counted 2,396,040 residents, and the census bureau figured that another 5,000 should be added for 1931. If so, 1931 would have set the state's highwater mark for some time. Over the next 14 years, Oklahoma lost 370,000 of its people. The trend continued from one census to another, until the 1960 count finally showed a slight gain—just 95,000—over the preceding decade. Baby boomers and their younger siblings accounted for all of that. It took their huge numbers to offset the 218,553 Oklahomans who moved out-of-state between 1950 and 1960.[54]

A great portion of the exiles were farmers. In fact, the number of farmers who quietly disappeared in the 1950s was greater

than those who had so famously fled in the 1930s. Some blamed Republican farm policies for that; others pointed to searing droughts. The most obvious explanation was the simplest. Commodity prices were lousy in 1950, and they dropped another eleven percent in the next seven years, precisely the seven years in which most of the out-migration occurred.[55]

Those who stuck it out often divided up their departing neighbors' land and sunk money into hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers, expensive machinery, and extensive irrigation. The increase in their yields outpaced the decline in their prices, but the race was close: average farm net income increased just 14 percent over the decade.

That was a pretty thin margin of improvement, especially thin considering that nearly everyone else in Oklahoma was doing a lot better—on the average five times better. The 14 percent increase in agricultural income was the lowest for any sector of the state's economy. It contrasted sharply with the rise of personal income for manufacturing workers (103 percent), even more with the improvement for government employees (131 percent). Pulled strongly by gains there, Oklahomans' average personal income climbed 69 percent between 1950 and 1960.[56]

Was it any wonder that so many Oklahomans were leaving the farm, some heading for California or Texas, more for Oklahoma City or Tulsa? That was another thing that made the 1950s so pivotal. At the decade's beginning, Oklahoma's population was something of a balanced teeter-totter, its urban 51 percent of the population on one end, the rural 49 percent on the other. The next ten years permanently ended the balance. When the fifties ended, 63 percent of Oklahoma's people lived in cities, and the proportion never again would be even that small.[57]

Born and raised on the farm, Oklahoma moved to town in the fifties. Maybe the best way to see the difference is to forget all those shifting percentages and look at a handful of typical Oklahomans. Start with fifty of them in 1930. On the average, twenty-one live on farms. Let one generation pass, then take fifty of their grown children. Three live on farms.[58]

Few at the time could judge how rapidly their state was changing. Much less could they know which changes might be perma-

nent, less still could they foresee their consequences. Only the flowing currents of future time would deliver that knowledge. In the 1950s, all they could see was time's flow backward, its pouring into the past, and that was impressive enough.

Stand with them at a moment in time. Make it the first day of October 1957.

Oklahomans are busy that October celebrating their state's "semi-centennial," the fiftieth anniversary of Oklahoma's statehood. "Arrows to Atoms" is the official slogan. A few think the slogan pretentious, even silly; they smirk that Oklahomans did nothing with arrows in 1907, just like Oklahomans do nothing with atoms in 1957. Most, though, take it to be pretty descriptive. Oklahoma has come a long way in its first half-century, and almost everyone knows somebody—usually many—who have seen every bit of it in their own lifetimes.

Nineteen fifty-seven also happens to be the fortieth anniversary of the Smith-Hughes Act, and Oklahoma's vocational people have to be impressed with what they see if they look back forty years. In 1917, a handful of pioneers boldly promised Washington that they could put together a comprehensive vocational system almost overnight. They pledged they could design everything Washington expected of vocational agriculture, home economics, and trade and industrial training. They were certain that their local districts would find and hire enough teachers, nearly all of them college graduates, for every subject. They guaranteed that Oklahoma's schools would buy tin spoons, ears of Bloody Butcher corn, stoves, brooms and dust pans—all so teachers not yet hired could instruct boys and girls not yet enrolled in subjects not yet taught. And they kept every promise.

Forty years since, J.B. Perky and others are heirs to their legacy. They have nurtured and they now maintain a state system far greater than those pioneers' most daring promises, perhaps greater even than their most ambitious dreams.

October 1957: Perky and his staff look forward to relocating soon to Stillwater's West Sixth Street. President Henry Bennett had the National Youth Administration build a brick structure there back in the 1930s, and the college has offered it for vocational education's use. Remodeling is underway, and the college

promises that everything will be ready next year, in 1958. Some vocational offices will leave the campus, but in every other sense the move can only bring vocational education even closer to Oklahoma State University, the new name that Oklahoma A&M College had taken just five months earlier, in May 1957.

Seventeen years after Washington asked Jim Perky to help prepare the country for war, he stands tall in the very first rank of America's most respected and influential educators. His stature comes not from his great height but from his great service: member of the National Advisory Council for the Future Farmers of America Foundation, powerful spokesman for the American Vocational Association, past president of the Association of State Directors of Vocational Education, and (most recently) one of seven picked by the U.S. Commissioner of Education to review all of American vocational training.

At home, Perky is without question the master of his program, without equal as an educator, without peer as a politician. Some say that Oklahoma's vocational system is really Jim Perky writ large. If they are right, it translates into a very large system, maybe a giant one. After all, J.B. Perky is a giant man. He casts a giant shadow.

All of that we can see if we stand with them on the first day of October 1957. What we cannot see from there is that on the fourth day of October 1957, the Soviet Union will hurl 184 pounds of metal and wire and glass and plastic into space and set it spinning about the globe.

If we could see that, we would know that this thing the Russians call Sputnik will shake American vocational education more than anything since 1876, when the Russians had shown us Victor Della Vos's models at the Centennial Exposition of 1876.

Notes

1. "Minutes of an Emergency Meeting of the Oklahoma State Board of Education, June 22, 1928," in Oklahoma State Archives, Oklahoma State Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Hereafter cited as "Minutes... with date."

2. Roy P. Stewart, "This is Your Life, James Barney Perky," unpublished ms. in General Files, Research Library, State Depart-

ment of Vocational and Technical Education, Stillwater, Oklahoma, pp. 2, 4. Hereafter cited as SDVTE.

3. "The J.B. Perky Flashbacks," unpublished ms. in General Files, SDVTE.

4. Stewart, "This is Your Life," pp. 5-6.

5. "Perky Flashbacks," p. 1.

6. Stewart, "This is Your Life," pp. 6-7; Roy P. Stewart, *Programs for People: Oklahoma Vocational Education* (Oklahoma City: Western Heritage Books for the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, 1982), p. 108.

7. Carl Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma* (Stillwater: Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, n.d.), pp. 21-22.

8. Stewart, "This is Your Life," p. 8.

9. Stewart, *Programs for People*, p. 112.

10. J.B. Perky, "Oklahoma and the Place of Vocational Agriculture in the Development of Individuals for Farming," undated (but 1945) typescript, Edmon Low Library, Oklahoma State University, pp. 7-8.

11. *Vocational Agriculture in Public Schools of Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City: State Board of Education, Vocational Education Division, 1931).

12. The most conspicuous of them was Francis Tuttle, Perky's successor, but Tuttle was not alone. With him were Byrle Killian, Ralph Dreessen, Arch Alexander, Larry Hansen, Bill Stevenson—every one of these (and more) originally recruited by, hired by, and trained by Jim Perky.

13. *Oklahoma Biographical Dictionary* (Saint Cloud Shores, Michigan: Somerset Publishers, n.d.), pp. 13-17.

14. J. Lewie Sanderson, "Vocational Technical Education Buildings," unpublished ms., SDVTE, p. 1.

15. Perky, "Oklahoma and the Place of Vocational Agriculture," p. 8.

16. Ibid.

17. Stewart, *Programs for People,* p. 115.

18. Ibid., p. 114.

19. Ibid., p. 76.

20. Ibid., pp. 41-42; Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Tech-*

nical Education in Oklahoma, pp. 57-58.

21. *Vocational Agriculture in Public Schools of Oklahoma*, p. 79.

22. Stewart, *Programs for People,* pp. 52-54.

23. The description of the FFA and the formulas measuring its success are unchanging items in the biennial reports prepared by Perky and released by the state superintendent of public instruction and state board of education from 1932 through 1940. Starting with the 1942 report, similar statements and statistics were no longer restricted by the adjective "white." The difference, however, was merely the removal of the word. Whites were still the only ones included and the only ones counted. It was 1956 before the FFA admitted African Americans and included their contributions in its reports.

24. *Vocational Agriculture in Public Schools of Oklahoma*, p. 78.

25. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Fifteenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Education* (1940), p. 145. All figures are only for white schools, white teachers, and white students.

26. *Vocational Agriculture in Public Schools of Oklahoma*, pp. 77-78.

27. Stewart, *Programs for People*, pp. 111-112.

28. Ibid., pp. 48-49. Oklahoma's success at the Dallas fair was particularly unbearable (to the Texans, that is) because many of the biggest winners came from Norman, where the Sooners played their home games and Frank Foreman directed the local FFA chapter.

29. *Eighteenth Biennial Report* (1940), p. 145.

30. Patience equal to Job's might be necessary to read and digest these studies. Any up to the challenge should start with these: Merle Asa Brattin, "A Study of Former Students of Vocational Agriculture in Four Central Oklahoma High Schools," unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma A&M College, 1942; Merrell Dayne Dilks, "An Evaluation of Activities of the County FFA Association as Benefitting Lincoln County FFA Members," unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1958; Lawrence Ray Foster, "A Study of Former Students of Vocational Agriculture of Hinton High School," unpublished master's thesis,

Oklahoma A&M College, 1955; Ronald Edward Hill, "The Present Occupational Status and Trends of Oklahoma High School Vocational Agriculture Graduates over the Past Five Years, Classes 1959-63," unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1964; Olen Desmond Joyner, "A Study of Former Students of Vocational Agriculture in Mountain View High School," unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma A&M College, 1954; and Neil Lefors, "A Study of 322 Former Vocational Agriculture Pupils Relative to Marks Received, Supervised Farm Training and Leadership: Present Occupation and Income Received," unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma A&M College, 1952.

31. The historian was Roy P. Stewart, who was not only an accomplished writer but also the second to serve as executive secretary of Oklahoma's FFA program.

32. Stewart, *Programs for People*, pp. 112, 114. In fact, few better embodied FFA's long-term contributions than did Houston Adams. President of the National Bank of Tulsa, he was respected both in the Oil Capital and statewide for his many civic contributions. His success in each capacity owed much to his own FFA experience.

33. The exception was DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America), which dated statewide to 1943 and formed nationally in 1947. Otherwise, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA), and Oklahoma Health Occupations Student Organization (OHOSO) appeared much later: the first two in 1965, the third in 1974.

34. Stewart, *Programs for People*, p. 56; Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma*, p. 59. FHO affiliated with the Future Homemakers of America (FHA) at the latter's founding, in 1944. In both cases, the Oklahoma chapters were segregated, whites in Future Homemakers, blacks in New Homemakers clubs.

35. The qualities that distinguished students and teachers of home economics from those in vocational agriculture can be discerned in (among other places) *The Eighteenth Biennial Report* (1940), pp. 154-157. Descriptions of typical club programs, favorably highlighting those given here, come from the observations available in Nettie Hurd Hastings, "A Study of Vocational Home-

making Education in Ten Selected Oklahoma Schools," unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma A&M College, 1948, p. 39.

36. State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Twentieth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Seventeenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Education* (1944), p. 141. To complete the reorganization, Perky retained Bonnie Nicholson as his assistant supervisor and named three district supervisors: W.R. Felton, S.M. Crosnoe, and Roy Craig. W.E. Lemons was executive secretary of FFA. The home economics and trades and industries divisions added similar secondary positions.

37. As discussed above, p. 33, Oklahoma was initially unable to find a suitable supervisor of trades and industries, forcing state director Charles W. Briles to assume that role in 1918. Washington permitted that arrangement most reluctantly and did so only with the express insistence that it be a temporary response to a unique emergency situation.

38. U. S. Office of Education press release dated June 8, 1940, and "Proposals to Expand the Program of Training for National Defense through Schools and Colleges, July 27, 1940;" both in subject series, box 19, file folder 105C, Elmer Thomas Collection, Carl Albert Center Congressional Archives, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

39. *Twentieth Biennial Report* (1944), pp. 168, 173.

40. *Nineteenth Biennial Report* (1942), p. 92; *Twentieth Biennial Report* (1944), pp. 142-43; State of Oklahoma, Department of Public Instruction, *Twenty-first Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Eighteenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Education* (1946), p. 77.

41. William McKinley Russell, "A Study of the Initial Effects on Schools of World War II," unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma A&M College, 1943, pp. 5-6, 9. By the war's midpoint, new teachers had to complete just 80 percent of the training required in the pre-war years. Source: *Twentieth Biennial Report* (1944), p. 146.

42. *Nineteenth Biennial Report* (1942), pp. 86-87; *Twentieth Biennial Report* (1944), pp. 142-43.

43. A telling exception was a part-time program preparing

apprentices for certain trades. It was suspended in late 1943 for the lack of trainees. The program had accepted only men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, and there were none available. They were either in the army or preparing for induction. See *Twentieth Biennial Report* (1944), p. 161.

44. *Twenty-first Biennial Report* (1946), p. 96.

45. Danney Goble, *Tulsa! A Biography of the American City* (Tulsa: Council Oak Books, 1997), pp. 140, 170, 181.

46. Ibid., p. 196; *Twentieth Biennial Report* (1944), p. 164.

47. W. David Baird and Danney Goble, *The Story of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), p. 402.

48. *Twentieth Biennial Report* (1944), p. 163; *Twenty-first Biennial Report* (1946), p. 96. Excepting for different numbers, the four sketchy paragraphs are identical in both reports.

49. During the war, distributive education became an independent division.

50. *Twentieth Biennial Report* (1944), pp. 141-156, 163; *Twenty-first Biennial Report* (1946), pp. 76-87, 96.

51. T.J. Chester Swanson, comp., *Development of Federal Legislation for Vocational Education* (Chicago: American Technical Society, n.d.), pp. 90-93.

52. State of Oklahoma, State Board of Education, *Twenty-fourth Biennial Report of the Oklahoma Department of Education* (1952), pp. 73, 75, 101, 118, 128.

53. See above, pp. 48-50, for distributions of students and dollars during the depression decade. There was one notable difference, however. Earlier, the state's contributions had been almost evenly balanced rather than so tilted in agriculture's favor.

54. Gerald M. Lage, Ronald L. Moomaw, and Larkin Warner, *A Profile of Oklahoma Economic Development, 1950-1975* (Oklahoma City: Frontiers of Science Foundation, 1977), pp. 20, 21, 25.

55. Ibid., p. 51.

56. Ibid., p. 39.

57. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

58. In 1930, 42.6 percent of the state's population lived on farms. In 1969, it was 6.2 percent. Source: Ibid., p. 53.

3

Out of the Shadows

Despite that Russian contraption, 1957 was a year for Oklahomans to celebrate. In this semi-centennial of statehood, it was easy to find something to celebrate—especially if there was something to sell, especially if it was something as seen on TV. It was not even all that hard to find something to think about, too—although being seen on TV was of no particular advantage there.

For such a young state, Oklahoma already carried a heavy burden from its past. Yes, the state was fifty years old. Yes, its people had been born and raised on the farm. Yes, they had moved to town. Yes, these and a lot of other things had happened—but a lot of other things had not happened and maybe never would.

Politically, Oklahomans might as well have stayed put. In a sense, they had; just look at their legislature. House and senate district boundaries offered a good likeness of where the pioneers had lived back in 1907, but their grandchildren lived someplace else a half-century later. No difference: lawmakers never had seen fit to alter their boroughs as populations had changed. Pioneers died and babies were born. Families came and families went. Some districts blossomed. Some withered. None changed. Any legislature patched together from such pieces had to be mismatched for anything except the past. Perhaps that explained why so many citizens considered themselves blessed to have their elected representatives meet for no more than ninety days, and those just every other year. That way, no one suffered too much embarrassment most of the time.

Oklahomans long ago had given up being embarrassed by their governors' capacity to entertain, astonish, and outrage. The fact was they had pretty much come to expect it, and governors gen-

erally lived down to those expectations. They fussed and feuded. They postured and posed. They bragged and battled. In fact, governors did just about everything but govern—but that was not altogether their fault. The state constitution said that the governor was head of the executive branch, but it must have been joking: The same constitution also sapped his authority by grafting onto that branch so much that the so-called chief executive became something else altogether—chief clerk, maybe. Determined to scatter authority as widely as possible and to conceal power in every nook and cranny, the constitution had set out to guarantee that no executive would ever govern Oklahoma too poorly. It succeeded to the extent that no one was likely to govern Oklahoma very well either.

If nothing else, the constitutional status of nearly two dozen independently elected state officials (one of them the third assistant mining inspector) made sure of that. Overall, this hydra-headed monster turned effective public administration into a matter of luck, and Oklahoma's luck had not been all that good. Secondary officers were pretty good about standing shoulder-to-shoulder if they needed to resist some trouble-making governor or the occasional do-gooder. Most of the time, though, they were more likely to have one hand reaching for a fellow officer's throat, while the other went for his (agency's) pocket. The result was a public spectacle that pretended to be political democracy. Public mismanagement is what it was—if it could be said to be management at all.

State government abounded with examples. It seemed that there was no stopping the multiplication of state agencies, boards, and commissions—the so-called ABCs. Around the mid-fifties or so, there likely were a hundred or more already in place—nobody was certain of the count; it changed too often. What never changed was that the supply of administrative ability, never abundant anyway, failed to keep pace with accelerating bureaucratic needs. Worse still, this was most likely the case when and where the needs were greatest.

Several of Oklahoma's public agencies dwarfed in complexity and responsibility all but the largest of its private businesses. To administer any of them well, Oklahoma had to find a combination

of business genius, financial acumen, and political talent beyond anything reasonably expected in its creaking framework of government. That is why so many of the ABCs were so far from being efficient administrative models. On the contrary: They might as well have been medieval baronies, for one after another was no better than a principality ruled by an iron-fisted feudal lord.

Such was the kingdom of vocational education.[1]

Insiders said that Oklahoma's vocational system was one of its best run public programs, and they agreed on the reason, too: It was because vocational education was run. It was not administered, not directed, not managed—vocational education was run. J.B. Perky was why it ran so well. J.B. Perky was why vocational education had run so well for so long. In fact, he had run it so well and so long that Jim Perky might as well have been vocational education in Oklahoma. That was a fact in 1957. And in 1957 that fact was headed toward being a problem.

It was not there yet. On the contrary: Time after time, Perky showed that his special way of doing things gave him the power to do some very special things. One involved the fate of distributive education.

In the early 1950s, DE was still something of a foundling. It only recently had broken loose from trades and industries to form its division, and its budget consisted of the other divisions' scraps and leftovers—one percent of all vocational spending.

Even one percent was generous compared to what some would have allowed it, though. In 1951, a majority of the United States House of Representatives decided that distributive education was too insignificant to fund at all and sent the Senate a bill that denied DE a single dollar. Hastily ignited by the American Vocational Association (AVA), a firestorm of letters and phone calls descended upon senators, enough that the Senate rejected the House bill and forced a compromise: DE lost not all of its federal funding, only half. A year later, similar maneuvering cost it another half of that.[2]

Oklahoma's program suffered along with all the rest and would have suffered more but for Oklahoma's director. Shuffling state monies from one account to another, Perky made up for most of

what Oklahoma lost out of Washington and stabilized DE enrollments. That done, he then orchestrated a campaign to rescue the national program.

As it happened—except that it likely did not just happen—Jim Perky had the right tool in the right place at the right time. Like other student organizations, DECA, the student club affiliated with distributive education, published its own national magazine, *The Distributor*. Not by coincidence was *The Distributor* published in Stillwater, Oklahoma; and not by accident was it overseen by M.J. DeBenning, head of Oklahoma's DE division. Among its most loyal sponsors were the National Retail Merchants Association, the National Dry Goods Association, and the Sears Roebuck Foundation.

Because he had friends like these, Distributive Education in America had no better friend anywhere than Oklahoma's Jim Perky. The new administration of President Dwight Eisenhower was alert for any chance to befriend any business group, especially the ones with words like national or association or foundation in their titles; and it wasted no time in showing that it knew how friends treated friends. In 1953, the White House sent Congress a budget that authorized an immediate increase—an immediate 184 percent increase—for distributive education. Congress responded with less haste than had the White House but with even greater generosity. It took lawmakers two years, but in the end federal appropriations for distributive education nearly tripled.[3]

Oklahoma's enrollments showed the difference money made. Perky had managed to pull together only enough money to enroll fewer than 2,000 DE students in 1952. With Eisenhower in place, Perky in power, and federal funds restored, Oklahoma's enrollments more than doubled, to 4,664. Thereafter, things pretty much leveled out. From the mid-fifties onward, distributive education reached a steady 3,000 or so annually.[4]

Oklahoma's other divisions moved to their own rhythms. Vocational agriculture's enrollments climbed at the decade's beginning, dipped slightly in 1952, then went up again. The 1954-1955 school year turned out to set a highwater mark: 31,558 people—most of them schoolboys—signed up for vocational agriculture.

Thereafter, the figure stabilized somewhere around 28,000 a year. Enrollments in home economics also went up by a thousand or so annually in the early fifties; and they, too, crested in 1954-1955, when total enrollment passed 33,000. A slide then set in and continued until 1958, after which things leveled off at 27,000 or so per year. Trades and industries was the one division to grow consistently over the decade. T&I entered the fifties with an annual enrollment around 6,000. The number reached 9,000 in 1953, hit 10,000 in 1956, went beyond 12,000 the next year, then kept on rising. Even at its top, however, T&I's enrollments never reached as much as half of the others'.[5]

Moreover, a portion of T&I's improvement was essentially arbitrary and purely temporary. In 1956, Congress amended the then-operative law on vocational education—the George-Barden Act—with the so-called Health Amendment. To encourage the preparation of practical nurses, Washington made five million dollars available to the states for each of the next four years. The money was to pay 75 percent of the cost of preparing these nurses in the first year, half in each of the next three. Oklahoma jumped in line at once. Within weeks, the state produced and Washington approved its plan to turn out practical nurses. Initially assigned to trades and industries, practical nursing education only later broke off to become an independent division.

The program was designed to prepare practical nursing students for their licensing exams, and it used different methods to get them ready. Extension classes offered those already working as practical nurses the formal schooling needed to qualify for licensing. Other adults were eligible for one-year preparatory courses offered through cooperating hospitals. Younger people could potentially participate in high school programs during their senior year, provided that their schools qualified.[6]

The program opened in one of Oklahoma City's unused elementary schools. In its first year, just over two hundred fifty working practical nurses signed up for extension classes there or at sites in twelve communities. Of the first thirty-six to graduate from the extension courses, thirty-five then passed the required licensing exams.

Partly because Congress had insisted on a year's lead time, no hospitals or high schools offered classes that first year, but one hundred fifty-two students studied in one of nine local hospitals as soon as it was possible, in year two. (Although several districts had shown an interest, there still were no high school programs even then.) Thereafter, the hospitals' one-year programs accounted for the lion's share of total enrollments; students favored them by a ratio of about five-to-two. All students in all practical nursing programs still were fewer than 1,200 in 1959; and nearly half of those were included in the count because they were in brand-new courses for nursing aides.[7]

The lack of numbers said something. The Oklahoma vocational system that greeted the 1960s was not the system that had entered the 1950s. Nonetheless, the differences were slight; and Washington, not Oklahoma, was usually responsible for those. Oklahoma had accepted a few changes from the outside, but Oklahoma also had adapted even those changes to its own way of doing things, and its own way had not changed at all.

There were plenty of other examples, much more important examples, too. Predictably, vocational agriculture offered one of the most revealing. In its famed *Brown v. Topeka (Kansas) Board of Education* decision of 1954, the United States Supreme Court ripped the mask from Jim Crow and expelled that wrongdoer from America's public schools. Oklahoma started dismantling its state segregation provisions almost at once.[8] The quick start was to Oklahoma's everlasting credit, but it was no guarantee that an end was going to be reached either swiftly or smoothly. In quite a few cases, it was neither, and vocational agriculture was one of those cases.

It took eleven years, until 1965, to execute the merger of the (white) Future Farmers of America with the (black) New Farmers of America. Even then, it was less a merger than an execution, which enlarged one by eliminating the other. The New Farmers of America became an old memory, one steadily fading with the passing of the old men who remembered it from when they were young boys.

As for black teachers, the African Americans who had taught agriculture in black schools left one by one, some to other jobs,

some to retirement, some to graveyards. Few were replaced. There had been twenty-eight of these African-American teachers in 1954, when *Brown* was announced. Some forty years later, Oklahoma did not have even one African American in even one agriculture classroom.[9] It was enough to cause one to wonder just how much Oklahoma had changed its ways.

That question kept coming up. It even surrounded one of the century's most important educational measures. The year was 1958, and the new law was the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). At the time, only the first Morrill Act and the original Smith-Hughes Act had had anything like its significance.

When the Soviets sent Sputnik into orbit, they put America on notice: The United States had fallen behind, and there was no way to catch up that did not pass through the schools. The country needed more of everything, better of everything, too, especially when it came to scientists, mathematicians, engineers, and technicians. With this massive new law, Congress committed $1 billion over four years to buy what America needed.

It took ten separate titles to fill out the purchase order. For the purposes of vocational education, the important section was Title VIII. Title VIII rewrote previous statutes going as far back as the first one, Smith-Hughes. One change involved pumping another $60 million into state vocational training over the next four years. That almost doubled what had been available. More important was the new law's insistence that the extra money be kept out of the hands of traditional divisions. No, this money had to be "used exclusively for the training of... highly skilled technicians in recognized occupations requiring scientific knowledge in fields necessary for the national defense."[10]

Skilled technicians, scientific knowledge, national defense—those kinds of phrases got tossed around a lot in post-Sputnik America. Even if no one knew exactly what they meant, everyone knew that they sounded momentous, and they did here. Not even lawmakers were sure of what they meant by their own words. Instead, they left it to each state's designated board of vocational education to figure it out. In Oklahoma's case, that was the state board of education, the same board already obligated to oversee every teacher and every classroom in every grade of every school

in every district everywhere in Oklahoma. No wonder board members long ago had decided to let its executive officer handle this vocational business. The officer had been ready for the assignment, and why not? The man's name was James Barney Perky.

The use that Perky made of the NDEA was predictable—at least it was predictable for him. Careful to follow the precise letter of the law, he helped Oklahoma State University establish and fund a department to turn out technical teachers. The law ordered that some of the NDEA money be spent that way, and this particular money did just that. Of course, it happened that this money also strengthened Perky's bonds with the land grant school; and it may have been that last, personal preference, not the law's impersonal mandate, that made it predictable that OSU would end up with the program and the money. In fact, it probably was inevitable.[11]

Where the statute permitted discretion, Perky exercised his in ways just as predictable—once more, predictable for him. The consequence was that a law conceived and crafted to break new ground turned into a tool used on well-worn soil. Take Oklahoma's notion of what "occupations" were "necessary for the national defense."

Most of these newly vital trades turned out to be new names for old jobs. The only thing new about them was the claim that they were "necessary for national defense." Take aircraft maintenance technology. The trades and industries division had been teaching aircraft maintenance technology for years, but no one had thought to call it that or, for that matter, had thought it essential for America's security. Rethinking both pulled in plenty of new dollars, but it put nothing new at all into national defense. Drafting and design was something else that seemed to have been around forever, and the training always prepared people for good-paying, white-collar jobs. Beyond these obvious merits, another was suddenly discovered in 1958: Drafting and design turned out to be an "occupation... necessary for the national defense."

Defending freedom from a drafting table must have been pretty hard work, and a warrior could work up a real sweat lining up

those T-squares to block the Red menace. Not in Oklahoma, though—not where the installation, maintenance, and repair of air conditioning units were all declared to be "occupations... necessary for the national defense."[12]

Even more striking than what Oklahoma did with NDEA money was what Oklahoma did not do. Washington set aside a portion of the money as incentives for states to experiment with so-called area schools. This was a new but promising idea: One area school would bring students from many districts for training too costly for any single system. Several states used the incentives to build experimental programs, most with remarkable success. Oklahoma ignored both the incentives and the experiments.

In fact, Oklahoma shoved the most innovative of the NDEA's other projects off onto its colleges and universities. Eleven schools, all postsecondary institutions, took over these new programs. Two, one at Okmulgee, the other in Oklahoma City, were branches of OSU. Sayre and Poteau stood out for using NDEA money to put technical programs into their high schools, but there was a reason: Sayre and Poteau attached locally-funded junior colleges to their high schools.[13]

Otherwise, the vocational system that Perky led after the National Defense Education Act turned out to be pretty much what had been before it. For that matter, it was not that much different from what it had been back in the forties, the thirties even. Home economics still had to do more with less than any other division. Coming up with new names to disguise old things pushed the creative envelope of trades and industries. The newer nursing and distributive education divisions knew their places and quietly kept to them. Vocational agriculture also knew its place, but there was nothing quiet about that, nothing new either. J.B. Perky made sure that everyone knew that vocational agriculture was still on top. That had not changed at all.

Not much else resisted change so absolutely. Things were changing and they went right on changing. Only the pace shifted, always accelerating. More and more change coming faster and faster until it affected everything that it touched and until it touched everything—even Oklahoma.

That Russian gadget, that thing called Sputnik, hardly caused all this; but Sputnik was a stunning symbol for a lot of what was involved. For one thing, the Soviets' man-made satellite raised the appalling prospect that Americans soon would be sleeping by the light of a Communist moon. Statesmen, not comedians, said as much.[14] In retrospect, the literal phrase belonged somewhere between the goofy and the absurd; but, at the time, it was appalling; it was a prospect; and it cost a lot of people a lot of sleep.

The reason was not out there somewhere in space; it was right here on earth. This was where two superpowers, each the implacable enemy of the other, engaged in a Cold War. Both maintained arsenals of fearsome power, yet their choice of weapons favored the technological above the merely brutal. Sputnik symbolized how they competed, with what they competed, and that they competed everywhere, even in the nowhere of space. Sputnik also signaled who was winning.

Missiles, like the one that took that thing into space, meant even more and even worse. The fact that those missiles might just as easily have carried nuclear warheads completed all that Sputnik represented. It might be the beginning of the Cold War's final chapter, the chapter in which fate would record how a nation was caught defenseless and how it was destroyed by a monstrous enemy.

Was it any wonder, then, that Congress responded so swiftly, so comprehensively, perhaps so desperately? The answer was as certain and as straightforward as the law's title: the National Defense Education Act.

It may have been, however, that changes would have come even had there been no Sputnik, perhaps even had there been no Cold War. After all, technology involved more than small satellites and great weapons. Technology was—technology always had been—what made America's economy so distinctive and so successful.[15] If anything, the early post-World War II years only intensified its importance. That was when technology erupted into a cascade of material abundance. Televisions, kitchen appliances, washing machines, clothes dryers, high-fidelity recordings and sound equipment, plastics in a thousand shapes with a thousand purposes—these displayed technology's largess.

Still, that uninterrupted flow of the "new and improved" carried only the most visible evidence of its bounty. More important was its process, a process that permitted millions of workers in millions of jobs to earn billions of dollars. Jobs and income were what Americans really owed technology, and any generation would have acknowledged that debt, this generation above all. Forever scarred by the Great Depression, this generation never escaped the fear that another, even greater depression might strike them again.

Their children—baby boom kids—had missed those experiences. When the 1950s began, they were a vast tide that poured into elementary classrooms and spilled over into any space available. As the 1950s were ending, they were bursting out of the grade schools, overrunning the junior highs, and bearing down on the high schools. Of course, there would not be enough classrooms, enough teachers, or enough of anything to teach them. There never had been.

Then what? Would there be enough jobs? What jobs? Doing what? Paying what? For what skills? No question had an answer. What was certain was that technology had the answers—if there were any.

Sooner or later, every one of them would need answers, sooner for those going straight from school to work, later if they stayed around for more schooling. Never before did so many have that choice, and never before did so many exercise it. One by one, each decision changed one person's life, and the sum of their choices changed the nation. Until then, college diplomas had been badges of the privileged; after, they were tickets into the middle class. They affirmed that education was an investment, not a luxury, that there was no better use for the nation's wealth and no better assurance for fortune's increase. They foretold of a day in which the soft hum of compact machines would quiet the deafening racket of monstrous factories.

Of course, there was another side.

Technology had a twin named automation. Like technology, automation was a bearer of gifts—but very different gifts. Technology turned out good jobs with good pay. Automation just turned out goods—stuff—the cheaper the better. Technology satisfied man-

kind's deepest cravings. Automation fed an appetite for stuff and feasted on a hunger that was insatiable. Technology moved Americans ahead, always forward, always upward. Automation whirled them in a place of no purpose—no purpose but to sink a hole too deep to fill. Technology made workers more productive. Automation made them expendable.

Just ask the statisticians with the United States Bureau of the Census. They knew about that, and they knew firsthand. There had been jobs for 4,000 statisticians in 1950; it took that many to tabulate and interpret the 1950 census. With automated equipment, the census of 1960 did just fine with fifty.[16]

Strange to say, it was not the statisticians that counted. It was the coal miners. Four hundred fifteen thousand Americans mined coal in 1950, most in Appalachia, most by hand. New machinery thereafter made work easier—but not easier for very many. Two of three miners—some 280,000 people—were not working at all twelve years later.[17]

Many of those probably turned out to see John Kennedy, when the Massachusetts senator took his presidential campaign to West Virginia in 1960. Insiders expected West Virginia's primary to decide the Democratic nomination, and it did. When he carried that overwhelmingly Protestant state, Kennedy proved that the country could elect an Irish Catholic president, even an Irish Catholic with the clipped accents of Boston and the regal airs of Harvard. Kennedy won his party's nomination there, in the dispirited coal fields and wasted hollows of West Virginia. The subsequent Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles served mostly for the party to bestow it and the candidate to accept it.

Kennedy won a lot in West Virginia, and he may have learned more. He had been saying all along that he wanted to get America "moving again," but it took West Virginia for those impersonal words to register as personal faces. Some were the grim, solemn faces of out-of-work coal miners; some the anxious, frightened faces of wives and kin; others the innocent, hopeful faces of children. West Virginia made John Kennedy president, and West Virginia gave President Kennedy his first legislative achievement: the Area Redevelopment Act of 1961.

This was one of the administration's few bills to find a way around the congressional roadblock imposed by conservative southern Democrats. Their number was small, but their power was immense. It came partly from their many years in office, years that may (or may not) have made them wiser but that, either way, gave them the seniority to rule nearly every major committee. More power came from the fact that theirs were the votes able to tip the balance, both in the committee rooms and on the floor, the Democrats' liberal forces lined up against the Republicans' conservative minority.[18]

Area redevelopment was different, principally because those same lawmakers represented the states and localities most in need of redeveloping. The law targeted only America's poorest regions, and poverty was the one thing that their constituents had in abundance.

In theory, the only places affected were those subject to "stress unemployment," meaning those regions made poor by automation. The law qualified such areas for federal money to lure industry and attract jobs and made their residents eligible for specialized vocational training to get those jobs. But the economic reality was that there was no way to isolate any one ailment from the overall epidemic of poverty, and the political reality was that lawmakers always erred on the side of inclusion. The consequence was—at least for Oklahoma—that most of the state qualified. That put J.B. Perky in charge of the training end of it.

The timing could not have been better, not the way that Perky looked at it. Nearly twenty years since World War II had discharged the last veteran, the federal government pulled the plug on veterans' agriculture training. The end came just as the Area Redevelopment Act went into effect, and the timing permitted the old program to continue—it merely became the new one.

Perky put Larry Hansen, whom he had found and hired to run the veterans' program, in charge of redevelopment training. Almost overnight, Stilwell, Poteau, Panama, Holdenville, and Tahlequah announced that they were starting some exciting and innovative new vocational programs, each of them carefully designed to rehabilitate a town and restore the victims of automation. Of

course, Stilwell, Poteau, Panama, and the like were not exactly famed for their cutting-edge technology; but their new vocational courses turned out not to be all that forward-looking either. On the contrary: In every case, the first classes used existing vocational agriculture shops to teach "farm mechanics," whatever that was. The next year's Manpower Development and Training Act reorganized the federal program and made it nationwide. Oklahoma took advantage of the change and put in a few classes for office clerks, welders, and auto mechanics. These were anything but innovative or futuristic, however, and the flavor of manpower training Oklahoma-style remained decidedly bucolic.[19]

The same thing could have been said about the vocational schooling in most states; in fact, it was being said. By one of his first executive orders, President Kennedy directed Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Anthony Celebrezze to assemble a Panel of Consultants on Vocational Education, an expert group charged to reevaluate the entirety of America's vocational education. The panel also was to recommend changes, however slight or however substantial.

Given the times, it was unlikely that any recommendations would be slight. It had not been even fifty years since Woodrow Wilson's Commission of National Aid to Vocational Education had laid the predicate for the Smith-Hughes Act, but rarely had so few years seen such massive changes. There had been at least one global depression and two world wars, not to mention a smaller but no less vicious war in Korea and another war heating up in Vietnam. Unemployment rates kept inching upward, perhaps about to prove that the price of automation today was going to be another depression tomorrow. Already, there were signals that things were not well. From ill-tempered urban slums; from small, dried-up towns; from abandoned homes and farms; from the scarred hills and dark hollows of Appalachia—from all of them came low, throbbing choruses of pain with faint notes of anger. Surrounding everything was the sense that all of this was somehow bound up in a life-and-death contest, a contest that America was losing. Consider in that regard what Congress had said of the relatively insignificant manpower act: that it was needed to en-

sure "that the Nation may meet the... requirements of the struggle for freedom."[20] How much greater, then, were the responsibilities of vocational education in general.

No wonder it took most of a year for the panel to assemble a staff and to frame its inquiry. No wonder the panel used another year of study and deliberation before releasing its report. No wonder the report said what it did as forcefully as it did.

Most of it could be reduced to one word: failure. Vocational education failed those who needed it most. It failed the disadvantaged and the disabled. It failed adults out of school. It failed youngsters who had dropped out of school. It failed to reach urban ghettos. It failed to restore ruined communities. It failed to learn from its past, failed to evaluate its present, failed to plan its future. It failed even to preserve the data that would measure how much it had failed.

Vocational education's failure was so complete that no amount of money could mend it. Worse: Because money spent was money wasted, spending more would only buy more failure. That is why the system of vocational training could never be reformed. It had to be torn down; then it had to be replaced.

Specifically, the panel urged that most of the laws governing vocational education—statutes going back to the Smith-Hughes Act—be repealed. The first thing that had to go was putting new money in old programs. Vocational agriculture, home economics, even trades and industries—the words, themselves, were echoes of the past, not summons to the future. The programs might stay—they still served their purposes—but those purposes could no longer define the system itself.[21]

Two months after receiving the panel's report, President Kennedy sent Congress what became the National Education Improvement Act of 1963. No previous federal education law had been as bold. Seven titles, broken into twenty-four sections, addressed everything from elementary classrooms to college education, with libraries and adult extension courses on the side. Title V, Part A of the bill translated the panel's blunt recommendations into intricate legislative language needed to revolutionize vocational training.

Not everyone was ready for a revolution. In fact, the leadership of the American Vocational Association hastily assembled its own panel of experts and dispatched its leading figures to Capitol Hill. Milo J. Peterson, the association's president, made the AVA's case directly and simply. "Existing vocational education acts," he declared, "are just as sound today as they were when enacted into law. They should not be disturbed."

Peterson's chief point was that the worst thing about the administration's bill was its defining feature: that it would end allocating federal money by occupations. As far as he and others were concerned, that issue was beyond discussion: Delegates at the AVA's most recent national convention had voted unanimously to leave that defining feature untouched.[22]

The law that Congress passed and President Kennedy signed appeared to be a compromise on that and other less controversial points. Modifying formulas used in earlier laws, the 1963 act stayed with the practice of assigning set percentages of each state's share of federal funds to its agriculture, home economics, and similar programs. Even then, however, the law for the first time ignored those traditional divisions when it came to calculating the sum of money that each state received—the money was divided up according to the state's population in the ages most to gain from vocational training. In that way, what a state's people needed, not where they worked or where they lived, became the controlling factor. To underscore that point, the act urged states to shift their money out of any one category and put it anywhere needs were greatest.[23]

Those were important differences, but they were mostly mechanical differences. Far more important were the substantive and philosophical judgments embodied in the 1963 act. They shared the resolve that vocational education had to rise above turning out farmers and homemakers, had to go beyond producing plumbers and nurses, had to transcend serving professions at all. Vocational education had to serve people.

That was why the law made commitments not to different occupations but to different groups in different ways. Some were understood to have been there all along—high school students need-

ing to learn a trade, adults wanting to update old skills or pick up new ones. But others had been overlooked before—people needing postsecondary schooling, dropouts unprepared for decent jobs. Many had scarcely been considered before—the poor, the isolated, the uneducated, the physically and mentally infirm. Vocational education had to serve them all, not as tomorrow's farmers and homemakers and plumbers and nurses, but as today's clients.

That simple change of perspective transformed even the most conventional of programs in new and creative ways. Consider the two most traditional. Vocational agriculture would still be offered—but the new law insisted that it be relevant to students who would never plow a field or raise an animal. Home economics would have its place, too—but that place had to reach beyond the kitchen and nursery into careers grounded in what this new kind of home economics had to offer.[24]

Finally, there was new money (the $60 million rose to $222.5 million over three years), but the money had to achieve new things, and the range of its uses was more important than the sum of its portions. Whenever possible, new programs were to be integrated with existing ones and combined into new, independent divisions. Curriculum development, strategic planning, program evaluation, demonstration and experimental projects—each a recommendation of the consultants' panel—became an obligation imposed by federal law and funded by federal money. Most radical of all was the law's decree that one-third of each state's money had to be set aside and kept out of the hands of the old-style programs and occupational categories. Instead, each state would have to divide that share between postsecondary education for adults and area vocational schools for secondary students. Both were significant innovations. Postsecondary work generally had been off-limits to the vocational system; and area schools had been novel experiments until then, suggested but not required under any previous federal law.[25]

Oklahoma had ignored that law's suggestion; but it rushed to get everything possible from the new one's provisions, moved fast enough that Oklahoma was first to receive the new money. Dollars flowed from Washington, passed through Stillwater, and

descended as a welcome rain of checks to suppliers, vendors, employees, and others. Jim Perky insisted that his office, not the state treasury, control the federal money, just as he insisted that every check bear his personal signature. As usual, he got his way.[26]

Otherwise, much of what happened immediately thereafter displayed once more Oklahoma's remarkable ability to disguise old habits with new names. This time it included coming up with entire divisions, giving them new names but old purposes. One was the Health Occupations Education Division, an impressively up-to-date title, but its principal responsibility was training nurses—a program nearly ten years old. The new division simply offered the old courses at the old sites. It even paid for them with old money, revenue still coming in under the redevelopment and manpower training acts. The division did come up with one new program—training scrub technicians—but that line of work was neither fashionable nor attractive.[27]

A second new division, the Business and Office Education Division, spent its first year teaching zero students in zero classes. Instead, it sent people calling on high school principals and district superintendents, imploring them to add new business courses or to replace their old ones with others that would fit new federal standards. The school people were unpersuaded to do either, and understandably so: No one could tell them just what any of those new courses would have to teach or where they could find teachers qualified to teach them.[28]

That is not to say that the 1963 law had no noticeable consequences for Oklahoma. It did. At least it did when the state had little choice, and it had almost no choice at all over what to do with a third of its new money. That was what the law set aside either for adult, postsecondary education or for a system of area secondary schools. Forced to do one or the other, Oklahoma chose to do both.

Even before Congress had passed the 1963 act, most of Oklahoma's colleges were already working in vocational education, but in ways generally independent of Perky's office. Some had begun vocational work on their own, others had been pulled in by the National Defense Education Act; but one way or another, fifteen of

Oklahoma's colleges were offering some eighty occupational programs at the time the law was passed. Oklahoma State University was most active of all, enrolling more than 2,500 students at its technical branches in Oklahoma City and Okmulgee. Because of the 1963 law, every one of those schools was eligible for more money and able to serve more people. That was the law's consequence for them: more.[29]

As for the area schools, Oklahoma had none in 1963, never had had one, never had shown much interest in having one. But this law gave the system only one choice and that a poor one: Either let the colleges drain off a third of the federal money or come up with some area schools. Its hand forced, the system made room for an altogether new vocational project, the rare new program that actually did new things in new ways. To run it, Oklahoma put the right man in the right place at the right time. The choice was so close to perfect that it could have been improved upon only had it been made knowingly.

The right man was Francis Tuttle, and his qualifications were both predictable and exceptional. The predictable part was that he met Jim Perky's essential requirement: Vocational education—better yet, vocational agriculture—ran through Francis Tuttle's veins.[30]

He had been a farm boy himself, born and raised near Wellston; and he always said that the two most important men in his life were the two ag teachers there, Ed Boles and J.L. Edson. Francis Tuttle had to have been among the very best students either ever taught. His blue corduroy jacket, Wellston written in gold embroidery across the back, Tuttle stitched in gold thread along the chest, could be seen at practically every FFA event and in or near the winner's circle at every contest. In 1938, the year that he graduated from high school, Oklahoma's boys elected him secretary of their state FFA. Two years at Connors Junior College—one of the A&M schools "of the secondary grade"—earned him an associate degree and more show awards too, these won with the livestock judging team. After two more years at Oklahoma A&M, Tuttle had a fresh bachelor's degree, certification to teach vocational agriculture, and his first job—jobs, really. That was in Kiowa County, at the little town of Gotebo, where he

taught agriculture year-round; spent fall and summer weekends hauling his boys to FFA contests; and traveled southwestern Oklahoma all winter to referee basketball games. The military shipped him off to the Pacific for the last phases of the Second World War; but he returned to teach another three years at Gotebo, two more at nearby Snyder, then returned to Gotebo as its superintendent of schools.

By then, Francis Tuttle had spent more than half his life in vocational agriculture. The blood in his veins was running red, not blue and gold, but Francis Tuttle had what Jim Perky required.

And he had more. When Tuttle took the top job at Gotebo, the state had no minimal standards for a school superintendent; all it took was the confidence of the school board's majority. That soon changed, however, and Oklahoma started requiring that administrators hold advanced degrees. Tuttle began a master's degree at Oklahoma A&M in Stillwater; but he finished closer to home at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. He later earned a doctorate at the university, too.

While improving his credentials, he kept moving on to bigger jobs with better salaries, first to the superintendency at Holdenville, where he spent five years, then to one of the state's premier school posts, superintendent of Muskogee's public schools. At $15,000 a year, Muskogee's superintendent earned what Jim Perky did as the state's director of vocational education; in fact, it was the same salary paid Oliver Hodge, the state superintendent of public instruction.

Tuttle was about to start his third year at Muskogee when Superintendent Hodge called one day, saying that he wanted Tuttle for an even better job at an even better salary. The superintendent said that he and Jim Perky had been talking and both agreed: Francis Tuttle was the man they wanted for these new area schools—wanted him so much, Hodge went on, that they were ready to match Muskogee's salary and raise it 10 percent to $16,500, more than either Perky or he, himself, was making.

Francis Tuttle resigned at Muskogee, took the job as head of area schools division, and began learning how Oklahoma went about the business of vocational education. His first lesson came within a month—just before payday, it was—when Perky called

him in for some news. "Tuttle," Perky told him, "your salary's going to be $15,000, not $16,500." Then and there, Francis Tuttle learned two lessons. One was that Oliver Hodge may have been the one who approached him, and Oliver Hodge may have been the one who hired him, but Jim Perky was the one he worked for. The second lesson was that when a man worked for Jim Perky he really worked under Jim Perky, not with him. Those first lessons cost Francis Tuttle $1,500—and the lessons just kept coming.

For one thing, they got him to wondering why it had been Hodge, not Perky, who had contacted him in the first place. It was true that the state superintendent technically was the vocational director's boss, but that was on paper. Practice was plainly different with vocational education, especially different when it came to hiring. Maybe on the way to the bank—maybe not—Tuttle began to figure it out.

Oliver Hodge and Jim Perky must have known that this position was going to be unlike any other in the state system. Heads of other divisions worked one-on-one with district superintendents and school principals, always backed by their giant of a boss. Everyone knew that their boss was not given to negotiation and compromise; but he had no need to be. If they wanted to work with Jim Perky, the school people had to do it Jim Perky's way—either that or they did nothing at all. The choice was theirs.

It was going to be different with the area schools, though. Area schools had to be just that—they had to rely on any number of districts over an entire area—and the division's success would depend directly on its director's personality and skills. Independent school districts had no need to participate, no reason to appease the state office, and not much experience at cooperating with each other—or with anybody else. They could keep right on doing what they were used to doing: nothing.

That was why this position called for an administrator who was both a seasoned educator and a natural diplomat. It needed a leader able to persuade and motivate people, not some tyrant to order them around. It had to have someone who knew and understood school superintendents, someone whom they knew and respected, someone they could work with, not for. And everyone—even Perky and especially Hodge—had to face it: The fellow had it

right who allowed that "Mr. Perky wasn't necessarily the strongest human coordinator."[31]

And that particular lesson was worth more than $1,500.

Someone else paid most of the price for another of Tuttle's first lessons: that it was going to be hard to get and to keep good help. Arch Alexander filled the "good help" part of that—good friend, too. He and Tuttle had met years before, down in Kiowa County, where Alexander taught science and coached basketball at Hobart while Tuttle was building a reputation for his judgment and authority as a basketball official, the best official that Alexander ever saw, he later said. Their paths separated thereafter, but they met up again in Norman at the university, where both received doctorates in education. Alexander went from there to the presidency of the two-year college at Sayre, one of Oklahoma's first colleges to take up vocational schooling, while Tuttle started down the road to what he was told was a better job with better pay.

Once Tuttle had the job—if not the pay—he learned that a second position was about to open up, this one perfect for Alexander; and he arranged for his old friend to drive up to Stillwater and talk it over with his new boss. Perky offered him the job on the spot, but this time he declared straight out that it paid a lot less than Alexander was making at Sayre. "Do you want the job, or don't you want the job?"—thus Perky ended the interview as well as any prospects for negotiation, and thereupon Arch Alexander began a long and distinguished career in vocational education.

It was not to be an uninterrupted career; this proved to be only a first and short phase, just thirteen months. It might have run indefinitely had not Jim Perky called Alexander's home one day, had not Mrs. Alexander been the only one there, or had not Perky talked to her just like he talked to her husband. But every one of those things did happen, and their result was something that Bonnie Alexander had never experienced before and never intended to endure again. She made that plain later that day, when she met her husband at the door, demanding that he tell her one thing: "What kind of guy is Perky?"

"Well, he's a very demanding individual....," he began.

A quick and quiet resignation followed shortly thereafter. Dr.

and Mrs. Alexander left Stillwater, and the couple returned to the less-demanding environment of a college campus. Arch Alexander had interrupted—he believed that he had ended—his career with vocational education to become a dean at Cameron, then a two-year college in Lawton.[32]

Yes, Perky was a very demanding individual, probably too demanding too often for too many—and that last included more than the Alexanders. But it did not include Francis Tuttle. Tuttle could be just as patient as Perky was demanding. In fact, he could afford to be even more patient, because Francis Tuttle knew that whether Jim Perky ever changed or not, the times were bound to change. They had to—that was why calendars came with tear-away pages. When it got right down to it, that was why there were retirement laws, too.

More importantly, times already were changing, and they were changing fast. Within the decade that followed 1957, when Oklahoma had celebrated fifty years of statehood, the state unburdened itself of much of its past. In those few years, Oklahoma changed as much, maybe more, than it had in its first half-century.[33]

Take the peculiar quality of its politics. A national magazine had good reason to have noted in 1954 that "There's always an aroma in Oklahoma at election time,"[34] but a lot of the decay responsible for that odor got aired out and buried thereafter.

After nearly sixty years of steadily more inequitable representation, the Oklahoma legislature got itself reapportioned finally and fairly. Of course, the lawmakers received no credit for this—rightly so: they resisted federal judges as long as they could in every way that they could—but that was no matter. What counted was that people in urban counties and metropolitan regions finally had representation in proportion to their number.

Thereafter, it was almost like lawmaking turned into something new. As a group, legislators began being measurably better educated and demonstrably more experienced, maybe even better public servants. That was the trend with every session, with every year when the legislature began to hold annual sessions, starting in 1964. On top of that, each successive session seemed to

include more Republicans and accord them more influence than the one before. Here was one sign that Oklahoma was becoming a two-party state.

It already was at the top. It took Oklahomans fifty-five years to elect one Republican governor (Henry Bellmon, in 1962), but they must have liked it; they elected their second at the earliest opportunity—Dewey Bartlett, in 1966. As elections became contests, they also became meaningful. That fewer secondary races cluttered the ballot and fewer candidates baffled the public helped, too. As the number of elected offices declined, the executive branch grew more manageable—more like a branch and less like a thicket.

Finally, there was the fact that a lot of the old bulls, accustomed to bossing people and agencies for as long as anyone could remember, were being put out to pasture. One after another reached retirement age and stepped down, often after elaborate public ceremonies in which employees and politicians offered every ounce of gratitude expected of them. There had to have been occasions in which at least part of that gratitude was because nothing more was going to be expected of them, not by this one anyway. The long and short of it was that time was catching up with Oklahoma.

There were people in Stillwater, many of them working in the offices of vocational education, who probably agreed that it was about time. If they did, it likely was quietly and infrequently and never while at work. Instead, they waited patiently, until time caught up with Jim Perky; and they applauded heartily when it did. That happened in 1967, when James Barney Perky reached sixty-five, retired, and started spending his time at the cabin he loved in Idaho. Behind him, he left the agency that had hired him so many years before, back when he was just as green as cabbage. He left behind the agency that he had directed, dominated, and defined for twenty-six years. Nineteen sixty-seven was the end of an era.

There were abundant signs that a new one, a very different one, lay just ahead.

In retrospect, the first had appeared a few months earlier, in

November of 1966. That was when Dewey Bartlett went from being the Republican candidate for governor to become the Republican governor-elect. Only Henry Bellmon had made that jump before; and, of course, only Henry Bellmon had completed the next step: taking away that "-elect" part. Bellmon had been a governor—still was, in fact—and that made him Dewey Bartlett's mentor as well as predecessor.

Bartlett had a lot to learn. Nothing he had absorbed as a student at Princeton or as an oilman in Tulsa had prepared him for this. He had been in politics just a few years, those as a junior member of a powerless senate minority. Henry Bellmon had a lot to teach him, and other Republican governors could teach him more. That was why the two went on the road immediately after the election, visiting one statehouse after another, calling on Republican chief executives.

One stop would have been enough, for Bartlett anyway. That was in Columbus, Ohio, where Governor James Rhodes delivered a lecture on the importance of economic development. Creating new jobs and equipping people to fill them—this was a governor's real work, Rhodes declared. If the new governor were to follow Jim Rhodes' example, he just might do as much for Oklahoma as Rhodes had done for Ohio. Whether it happened or whether it did not—that would be the real test of any governor's ability. Fail there and a governor might as well fail in everything. Succeed there and a governor had done the most that he could do for his state—the most he could do for himself, too: It sure made his re-election a lot easier.

Maybe it was that last part that so impressed Bartlett—a recent constitutional amendment made him Oklahoma's first governor eligible for re-election—but whatever it was, it made all the difference in the world. Bartlett left Jim Rhodes's office, turned to Henry Bellmon, and said they might as well head back to Oklahoma. He had learned everything he needed to know. Oklahoma needed a job-getter in the governor's office, and Oklahoma was about to get one.[35]

"Smoke-stack chasing," Henry Bellmon had sometimes dismissed it, especially when discouraged; but Dewey Bartlett nev-

er got discouraged. Industrial recruitment became his passion, perhaps his obsession. Wherever two or three out-of-state executives would gather, there Governor Bartlett wanted to be also, telling them of Oklahoma's potential and selling them on Oklahoma's future. Whenever possible he was there, telling and selling. Sometimes it worked, sometimes not, but he may have learned as much from the failures as from the triumphs.

One thing he learned was to let no defeat, however great, discourage him, however briefly. He might have to leave empty-handed, but he must never go without leaving something behind. Usually that was a handsome, framed document that bore the state's seal beside the governor's signature. It bestowed upon the recipient the exalted title of "Honorary OKIE." Another frequent gift was a small lapel pin of blue and green enamel against a gold background, gold-colored that is. These soon acquired legendary status; they were Dewey Bartlett's famed OKIE pins. Oklahoma: Key to Industrial Expansion, OKIE was supposed to mean—John Steinbeck, dust bowls, and whatever else be damned.

The governor even alerted dictionary publishers to this definition and urged them to incorporate it in their future editions. Lexicographers may not have been of one mind on this: Was the guy serious or not? For that matter, there were Oklahomans uncertain of how to take their governor's fixation on all things OKIE: Was it embarrassing or merely amusing?

Whatever the scholars and his critics might decide, Dewey Bartlett was unabashed about promoting Oklahoma's industrial future. If it produced one new job or if it moved one person into a better job, Dewey Bartlett was going to use it. That is why he took so seriously the rare opportunity of selecting a new director of Oklahoma's vocational system. No governor in more than a quarter-century had had a say in that, and this governor was going to say everything he could on the subject. He might say it privately, not publicly, and quietly, not bombastically, but he was going to say it where it counted. Dewey Bartlett was going to put a fellow job-getter in that place.

Others had their own reasons to take it just as seriously. Every one of the department's top people was a potential successor.

This was especially true for those who had served the longest, and, of them, the ones who had been closest to Jim Perky. Several might claim to be rightful heir to the throne—it may have been that one or two had hopes—but, if so, how they looked at it did not count.

What counted was how Oliver Hodge and the members of the State Board of Education looked at it. As superintendent of public instruction, Hodge chaired the state board, and that was the board that did double-duty as the State Board for Vocational Education as well. Since its other members were appointees of the governor, it counted how Dewey Bartlett looked at it, too.

Put that way—that Superintendent Oliver Hodge, a handful of political appointees, and Governor Dewey Bartlett were the ones who made the decision—the decision that Francis Tuttle was to be Jim Perky's successor was anything but shocking. While it may not have been inevitable, it was more than predictable. It certainly was easy.

That is, it was easy for them. Hodge, Bartlett, and the others were unmoved by anybody's presumed right of inheritance. It meant nothing to them that Tuttle was the least experienced among the top Stillwater staff. It meant even less that he was the only one who had not risen through the ranks, not through the ranks of vocational agriculture in particular.

But that did mean something, quite a lot. Everyone recognized Perky's favoritism toward vocational agriculture and his bias toward those who taught it. How could they not? There was Perky's own biography. There was his stubborn insistence upon keeping his hands on agriculture even while serving as state director. There was the fact that the ladder reaching from the classroom into administration always seemed shortest when the first rung was teaching agriculture in some rural school.

Francis Tuttle had come up a different way. It was true that he had taught agriculture, just like it was true that he had been an FFA boy himself; but that had been years ago. Since then, he had been outside the vocational system altogether. Up until three years earlier, he had been a school superintendent, and everyone knew what Perky and his inner circle thought of school superin-

tendents. School superintendents were (as Jim Perky liked to say) on "the other side of the fence."

That was why the choice so easy for a few to make in Oklahoma City was not as easy for everyone to accept in Stillwater. Nonetheless, if there was disappointment, it was concealed; if there was opposition, it was silent. That is, things were silent or concealed until Francis Tuttle made his first important decision. Then it was neither.

It started with a phone call to Lawton and Tuttle's invitation for Arch Alexander to come back from Cameron. Tuttle wanted his longtime and respected friend working alongside him as an assistant state director. The position, itself, was a new one, a small, first step toward a coming reorganization. While getting it authorized, Tuttle had insisted on one thing: the salary of an assistant state director had to be scheduled above what Alexander was drawing at Cameron. Arch Alexander jumped at the chance to improve his salary but mostly to resume their friendship and his career. Temporarily leaving Bonnie and their son in Lawton so the boy could finish high school, Arch Alexander went back to Stillwater. Francis Tuttle had his first key man.

And with him came his first big problem.

Shortly after Tuttle's call to Alexander, other phones began ringing. One call caused more calls, each of those caused still more calls, and soon there was a cacophony of bells ringing across rural and small-town Oklahoma. Tuttle heard about it when his own phone rang. Oliver Hodge was on the line. They had to talk.

What was going on in Stillwater? Hodge wanted to know. His phone had been ringing nonstop. It sounded like every school superintendent, banker, merchant, and big shot had just been told that this new director had it in for vocational agriculture. To hear them tell it, he was set on ruining the best thing going. He was even passing over its most experienced people to make room for old pals, ex-coaches, college eggheads, fools like that. And, no, Oliver Hodge was not calling to ask Francis Tuttle any questions. Instead, he gave him a simple order: Take care of it.

He did. Tuttle called in vocational agriculture's entire staff to announce that somebody or some group of people was making

a mistake, a big one—not to mention a stupid and heavy-handed one—but it was going to be the last one. He neither knew nor cared who or how many had made it. All everyone in that room needed to know was that no one who cared about working there was going to make that mistake again. Anybody who had a complaint knew where to find Francis Tuttle and had no need to call anybody else, anywhere, anytime with any slander.

That said, he then summoned agriculture teachers from all over the state, telling them to come to Stillwater for what he said was going to be a little heart-to-heart talk. No one knows how many in his audience took it that way, but no one left with the slightest doubt that Francis Tuttle had heart, plenty of heart.[36]

It made no difference that his appointment had been official for some time. That was when, that was where, and that was how Francis Tuttle succeeded Jim Perky. Francis Tuttle was the boss.

It could not have happened at a better time—or at a worse time either. Even at the time, some thought the one, some the other, some both. What no one dared think was that neither could it have happened at a more important time. The reason was that it took time, itself, to make manifest both why and how that really was.

Notes

1. Of course, not only vocational education. The role that J.B. Perky played in vocational education had any number of exact parallels, starting with E.T. Dunlap, lord of higher education, Lloyd Rader, master of the welfare department, and H.E. Bailey, boss of the turnpike authority. Those were men who knew what they were doing, namely, pretty much anything they wanted to do.

2. Arthur F. McClure, James Riley Chrisman, and Perry Mock, *Education for Work: The Historical Evolution of Vocational and Distributive Education in America* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985), pp. 103-104.

3. Ibid., pp. 104-105; Lucille Patton, "Marketing Education," unpublished and undated manuscript in author's possession, pp. 4-6.

4. Carl Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Educa-*

tion in Oklahoma (Stillwater: Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, n.d.), p. 38.

5. Ibid., pp. 37-38.

6. Ibid., pp. 38-39; McClure, Chrisman, and Mock, *Education for Work*, pp. 105-106.

7. Roy P. Stewart, *Programs for People: Oklahoma Vocational Education* (Oklahoma City: Western Heritage Books for the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, 1982), pp. 68, 70; Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma*, p. 39.

8. For the state's response—in particular for the statesmanlike role played by Governor Raymond Gary—see James R. Scales and Danney Goble, *Oklahoma Politics: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), pp. 298-299.

9. Lucille Patton, "Vocational Agriculture," unpublished and undated (but 1996) manuscript in author's possession, pp. 6-7.

10. Roy W. Roberts, *Vocational and Practical Arts Education: History, Development, and Principles*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 321-325; McClure, Chrisman, and Mock, *Education for Work*, pp. 106-107. The quoted passage from the statute is taken from Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma*, p. 40.

11. Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma*, p. 41; Stewart, *Programs for People*, p. 117.

12. Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma*, p. 41.

13. Ibid.; Stewart, *Programs for People*, p. 117.

14. Most notably Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Baines Johnson, of Texas. Admittedly, no one ever successfully accused the Texan of undue eloquence. But, then, neither did any sensible person dismiss Johnson's instinct for public opinion and his gift for reducing it to the lowest common denominator. Lyndon Johnson was even better when it came to public fear.

15. As "deep background" on the importance of technology to this nation, particularly as a substitute for abundant and cheap human labor, see the magnificent trilogy by Daniel J. Boorstin: *The Americans: The Colonial Experience, The Americans: The National Experience,* and *The Americans: The Democratic Experience*

(New York: Random House, 1958, 1965, 1973).

16. McClure, Chrisman, and Mock, *Education for Work*, p. 107.

17. Ibid.

18. For a description of the South's power and its effect, especially on the Kennedy presidency, see Carl Albert with Danney Goble, *Little Giant: The Life and Times of Speaker Carl Albert* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), pp. 219-231, 244-249.

19. Stewart, *Programs for People*, pp. 131-133; oral history interview with Larry Hansen, State Department of Vocational and Technical Education, June 15, 1995.

20. Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma*, p. 44.

21. United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Education for a Changing World of Work: Report of the Panel of Consultants on Vocational Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963).

22. Mary Louise Ellis, "A Synthesis of Activities Leading to the Enactment of the Vocational Education Act of 1963," unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1970, pp. 77-78, 80.

23. McClure, Chrisman, and Mock, *Education for Work*, p. 115-116.

24. Pamela E. Green, "The Impact of Leadership Experiences on the Career Choice of Former FHA/HERO National Officers," unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1986, p. 8.

25. The fullest background and discussion of the landmark 1963 legislation is available in Ellis, "A Synthesis of Activities Leading to the Enactment of the Vocational Education Act of 1963," pp. 30-171. For a concise description of its chief provisions and most significant innovations, see McClure, Chrisman, and Mock, *Education for Work*, pp. 111-117. Its general application to Oklahoma is presented in Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma*, p. 43-48.

26. Hansen interview, June 15, 1995.

27. Tyson, *The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma*, p. 46.

28. Lucille Patton, "Vocational Business and Office Education," unpublished and undated (but 1996) manuscript in author's possession, p. 2.

29. Dan S. Hobbs, "The Development of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma Public Colleges and Universities," *Journal of Technology*, April 1976: 13.

30. The comment about the importance of his having vocational education running through his veins is Tuttle's own. It appears in the principal basis for this biographical sketch: Tuttle's oral history interview with Leo Presley, March 28, 1996. Another source is Stewart, *Programs for People*, pp. 84-85.

31. Francis Tuttle oral history interview with Leo Presley, March 28, 1996. The comment about Perky's not "necessarily [being] the strongest human coordinator" is Presley's. Its phrasing alone is enough to measure its truth.

32. Alexander oral history interview, March 28, 1996, transcript in author's possession.

33. The discussion that follows is developed much more extensively in James R. Scales and Danney Goble, *Oklahoma Politics: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), pp. 333-349.

34. "Aroma in Oklahoma," Time, July 19, 1954, p. 18.

35. The source for this story is a conversation that the author had with Governor Bellmon in the fall of 1992. Bellmon remembered it well and was still struck by his successor's single-mindedness on that subject.

36. The full story comes in Francis Tuttle's interview with Leo Presley on March 28, 1996. A transcript is in the author's possession.

4

Reaching

At the time, only the few who knew history would even have noticed that Francis Tuttle was taking over Oklahoma's vocational education in the system's fiftieth year, and probably few of them would have believed that the timing was anything but coincidental. For most people, there was reason either to believe that the timing could have been better or that it could have been worse. There even was reason to believe that it could have been both or that it could have been neither. In 1967, though, there seemed to be no reason at all to attach any great importance to the accidents of timing.

Now there is. Looking back upon it, this proved to be a time of changes so sweeping that it amounted to a second instance of what biologists call punctuated equilibrium. It had had happened before, back in 1917. At the moment President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Hughes Act into law everything that had been America's vocational education crumbled and everything that became its vocational education arose. It had been as if an entire ecological equilibrium suddenly had caved in and another had emerged to replace it.

In Oklahoma, that happened again almost exactly fifty years later. In a stunningly short time, Oklahomans reinvented almost everything about their state's vocational education—its mission, its organization, its governance, its funding, everything, even its name. In Oklahoma, vocational education changed so swiftly, so completely, and so permanently that its past was closed off into history and its present opened into the future.

Who would have thought that possible in 1967? There probably were not many, but Francis Tuttle surely was one and Dewey

Bartlett must have been another, and those two had reason to think that it might happen.

A year before, when Tuttle was not yet director and Bartlett not yet governor, the two had been among the most notable and aggressive champions of what many Oklahomans must have regarded as just another in an endless and meaningless series of unintelligible state questions. At the time, it seemed that nearly every ballot in every election was crowded by at least one state question, often many more. All were written in a language so incomprehensible that few voters were likely to read them and fewer still to easily understand them. If generally confused on the questions, the voters were usually certain with their answers: no. That, at least, was a common explanation for the abnormally high casualty rate inflicted on such proposals. That was a consequence that neither Bartlett nor Tuttle was willing to accept.

They never had to. In May 1966, Oklahoma voters temporarily suspended their nasty habit of rejecting constitutional amendments to approve State Question 434. The new amendment permitted two or more local school districts to unite into a single district for the purposes of vocational education. Each new vocational district was to be governed by its own, elected vocational board, and that board's first item of business would be to establish and maintain an area school that would serve the secondary students of every member district as well as their interested adult residents. Property rolls from all of the districts were also to be combined, thereby giving each a secure and sizable tax base. To tap them, the vocational districts were permitted to levy up to five mills for capital construction and ten more for operating expenses, subject, that is, to the approval of district voters. Of course, the state and federal governments were already committed to regular additions of new money for new programs in these new kinds of schools.

At the time, it may have been that no one could have seen the long-range difference being made on that election day, but Francis Tuttle was one who later came to see that this difference had made all the difference in everything that happened thereafter. By pooling the resources of separate school districts, the combined vocational districts were able to accomplish more than any single

district could conceive or the state by itself could fund. In fact, this innovative intergovernmental mechanism was what ended up giving Oklahoma's vocational system a financial security unknown but not unenvied by every other state. That, Francis Tuttle concluded, was the "real thing that made it [vocational education] work." Without it, he went on, "Oklahoma would be in the dark ages as far as vocational education is concerned."[1]

Even with it, the system's immediate future looked anything but bright in 1967. As Tuttle later remembered it, most Oklahomans still had just about as much respect for vocational education as had the haughty professional educators and its other narrow-minded critics nearly a century before—which is to say, no respect at all. In most school districts, its classes were still to be found buried down in basements or hid away in outbuildings. The general attitude remained that vocational education was solely for those unfortunates who could do nothing else. The way he remembered it, "If you couldn't function in a regular school classroom, they sent you to vocational education."[2]

Such archaic and benighted fictions were surely unfair, but they were not unrelated to a set of truths as undeniable as they were unfavorable. In 1967, when Francis Tuttle took over Oklahoma's vocational system, just about everything that respected authorities had said of the nation's system four years earlier might still be said of Oklahoma's. Within a year, it actually was said and said by people who should have known. In fact, they had been paid to know. They were with two separate consulting groups, one operating out of Dallas, the other out of Oklahoma State University; and in 1968 they released the full and detailed studies they had been commissioned to undertake concerning the state vocational system.[3] The conclusions of each were almost identical. Both declared that Oklahoma's existing vocational system was a mess that was about to become a disaster, a tragedy, or both.

Both sets of consultants maintained that Oklahoma wasted its few resources trying to do too much and getting too little. They argued that the state invested too little where positive returns were the most promising and squandered too much where such results were not likely at all. They wrote that the state was training its people for jobs that no longer existed and that its vocation-

al system was doing nothing to create new jobs to replace them. They concluded that vocational education was failing Oklahoma's taxpayers and Oklahoma's employers and even its own students. They said all of that, and they said it firmly and loudly.

The sad truth was that neither team of consultants could find more than a single encouraging sign, and that one involved more hope than fact at the time. A full decade after federal law had first inspired other states to experiment with area vocational schools, Oklahoma was finally getting a few started. Even that, they anticipated, was not likely to stay very encouraging very long. Because the statutes necessary to vitalize State Question 434 had not been approved when the studies had begun, the handful of existing area schools were not yet anchored by a stable financing mechanism. As it was, every one of them was doomed because of inadequate or inoperative funding.

The wonder might have been that any existed at all. Back in 1958, Oklahoma had stubbornly ignored the recommendation that every state use the Manpower Development and Training Act to experiment with area schools. Instead, it had just kept on doing what it had been doing. Only when the Kennedy administration's 1963 act reserved a third of all federal funds either for area schools or for postsecondary training did it move at all—and that barely. Fifteen Oklahoma colleges immediately used the federal bounty to beef up their eighty occupational programs and add new ones; but it took four years, until 1967, when Francis Tuttle finally replaced Jim Perky, for the state to establish just five area schools and those only to serve its very largest cities.[4] Until 1967—that long, and if the experts were right, it could go no further. Oklahoma could not afford even one more. It already could not fund adequately what it had.

In 1967, mediocrity was what Oklahoma had. In 1967, irrelevance was what Oklahoma could expect. Instead, Oklahoma pulled itself from the slough of mediocrity and moved into the center of national relevance. Oklahoma did both in a stunningly short period after 1967.

Oklahoma's transformation may have been greater than that of most states, and surely it was more positive, but it was no less indebted to what was happening elsewhere—literally everywhere.

This was when the entire ecology of American vocational training shifted, just as it had in 1917 and just for the same reason. A new federal law smashed one smothering environment in order to sustain another, just as another federal law had in 1917. This was when a new law mobilized the powerful and brought hope to the marginal, just as that other law had in 1917.

This law's title was purely pedestrian—the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968—but its origins were anything but commonplace. In fact, it sprang from the loftiest of intent and it arose with the mightiest of purpose. Of course it did: This was Lyndon Johnson's law, part of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, an enduring expression of Lyndon Johnson's legacy.

It just was not Lyndon Johnson's idea. Neither was it Lyndon Johnson who would have to carry it out.

Never one to shoot for targets close or easy, Lyndon Johnson was determined to match—maybe to exceed—the legislative record of his first political idol: Franklin Roosevelt. To do that, LBJ had assembled his own version of FDR's famed "Brain Trust." Especially after his record landslide victory of 1964, Johnson had called upon the nation's most esteemed sociologists, economists, welfare workers, and others and collected them into teams. Each team was charged to make specific recommendations for new legislation to solve this or that social problem.

All in all, close to fifty of these teams met, most made their recommendations, and many suggestions made their way into the Great Society's statute books. Collectively, they yielded steady eruptions of legislative energies not seen since Franklin Roosevelt's fabled "100 Days" of 1933. This was no small accomplishment, and the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 were part of that accomplishment.[5]

Not without reason, then, was this one of the most important education statutes ever passed by Congress, a landmark in federal law for vocational education. In essence, it threw out the compromises that had bound the 1963 statute, expanded and made mandatory its most experimental features, and added a host of new features. All this it wrapped in page after page of administrative rules and procedures and pumped full the boundless

benevolence that President Lyndon Johnson said was the mark of a Great Society.

However complex its language and however intricate its details, virtually everything in the law grew from upon a single philosophical shift of perspective. Heretofore, vocational education had been principally about, well, it had been about vocations. It educated some people for this, some for that, some for something else. In every case, though, its education was for something or another.

This law made it different—permanently different. The 1968 act reversed the entire thrust of vocational education, turning its face away from vocations and toward education. The difference was more than semantical. From that moment on, its defining mission has been to educate people as people rather than for any particular trade or job.

In that sense, this act had the potential of returning vocational education all the way back to its very roots. In 1876, when Dr. John Runkle stopped at the Russian exhibit for the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, it was not because he wanted to see an improvement in how to educate workers to be better workers. It was because he instantly recognized in the simple tools and planned exercises of Victor Della Vos's display that there was a way to unite manual training with mental development. The union of both promised the restoration of humanity's unsatisfied hunger for both practical skills and intellectual growth. What John Runkle saw was that it was not enough to educate someone to be a better worker. If education had to equip a student to make a better living, no less did it have to prepare that student to live a better life and thereby to build a better society—to build a Great Society, one might say.

In a way, this was a return to those original lofty ideals. It could only manifest itself, however, in the precise, practical language of law and in the detailed procedures of public policy. The Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 had plenty of both.

For one thing, it dangled before the states new and rich sources of income. These were inducements intended to persuade them to take on a great range of novel programs, many of which had never been tried before. In fact, quite a few had been thought up only

recently, but those who had done the thinking—namely hired academicians, social workers, and assorted policy theorists—were convinced that they were necessary to address the needs of one underprivileged group or another. Almost always these were needs and groups that had been conspicuously ignored under traditional state offerings.

Inducements were one thing, bureaucratic requirements were another, and the same act that offered the first ordered the second. The effect was that Oklahoma—other states, too—had to remake its entire administrative structure.

Until then, the system's working structure remained pretty much what it always had been: a handful of divisions, almost all set up occupation by occupation—farmers here, tradesmen there, homemakers out back. Every once in a while a new division had come along, usually because Washington had said it had to. Area schools had been assigned to an independent division in 1964, but that was because federal law said they had to be. Given that four years had produced five schools, it had hardly been overworked.

Of the ten divisions that constituted the system as late as the 1967-1968 school year, seven were occupationally based: agriculture, trade and industrial education, home economics education, business and office education, distributive education, health occupations education, and industrial arts. The first three, in fact, had comprised the original bureaucratic structure, the one of 1917. Not much had changed in fifty years. Then everything changed in one year. Five new divisions appeared almost overnight. At least as important as the number was their common purpose. Not one was designed to serve any one occupation or group of occupations. All were defined solely by a function, and each was assigned responsibility for its share of the system's overall administrative needs.

One was to oversee business and finance. Another was to administer manpower training. A third was responsible for research, planning, and evaluation. Educational services were given to a fourth. The fifth was generally to supervise and coordinate special services—something of a catch-all category.[6]

Not one but all of them were expected to serve farmers, just

like every one of them was supposed to serve tradesmen, homemakers, and everybody else. There was a difference, however. They served each by serving the system, itself. It has been that way ever since.

Federal law had envisioned that possibility. In fact, Washington designed the law to nudge that vision toward reality by requiring that specific new divisions be maintained with specific responsibilities. In the case of planning, research, and evaluation, it was an entire set of new responsibilities. The method was simple. Washington only had to require that each state pledge at least a tenth of all the federal money it received as something of a tithe, money to be used exclusively for measuring what worked and for exploring what ought to be tried next. In bureaucratic words, it was for research, planning, and evaluation.

Planning—if only in a crude sense—had been around for a long time. It was crudest of all when planning had amounted to Jim Perky's sitting down and figuring out what he wanted to do next. Perky generally had permitted no one, not even his highest staff, to influence any organization's most fundamental planning document: the departmental budget. In fact, he usually had refused to let anyone see it.[7]

When the Vocational Education Act of 1963 obligated each state to use a portion of its federal allotment for planning, that had to go. Oklahoma complied, but it just complied. It did so not by choice and not with enthusiasm.

There was a notable difference after the 1968 Amendments tightened Washington's demands. That time, Oklahoma responded immediately as well as eagerly.

Before the year was out, the state department had funded, staffed, and put to work an entire new division devoted purely to research, planning, and evaluation.

More than that, a partnership with Oklahoma State University already had generated one of the nation's earliest and most comprehensive research tools, OTIS, the Occupational Training Information System. For the first time, OTIS recorded the jobs available at the time and forecast those that would have to be filled in the future. Against those it set the numbers of skilled workers that were or would be available. So informed, Oklahoma's

vocational educators knew what they had to do: design and target new training programs to fill in the gaps that separated the sets of numbers.

In very little time—less than ten years—most of the top people in other states' vocational systems also knew what they had to do if they wanted to plan as intelligently as possible for the most effective training programs possible. Those who did know how needed only to ask the prestigious American Vocational Association. There was a ready answer: Get thee to Oklahoma.[8]

It had not always been that way. It used to be that Oklahomans were the ones making an exodus, and the most important of their trips had been to South Carolina.

Back when the paid consultants were depositing the paychecks they had earned for their blistering reports, plenty of folks had been ready to give their own opinions for nothing. Most of their judgments were negative, and the most telling tended to come from the most knowledgeable—from people who had to depend on vocational education to do its job if they were going to do their own. One of those was Air Force Major General Melvin McNickle.[9]

General McNickle commanded the Oklahoma City Air Materiel Area, at the time the official name for what most Oklahomans still thought of as Tinker Field. At Tinker, General McNickle saw close-up the relationship between vocational education and industry. That is, he saw that there was no relationship.

His command gave the general the responsibility for filling thousands of civilian jobs, the kind of jobs that came with steady and comfortable paychecks, but his problem was that the vocational system was sending him no more than a handful of people able to fill them. It ended up that the United States Air Force was having to do what the Oklahoma vocational system was supposed to be doing. The Air Force was having to prepare and teach its own vocational classes to train its own civilian employees—and the United States of America had not ordered Major General Melvin McNickle to come to Oklahoma so he could run some school.

That was quite a problem, but it was not the general's problem alone. The fact that Tinker employed about a fifth of the Oklahoma City-area workforce took that problem right into the boardroom of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, and the fact

was that when the chamber's big shots were not happy, no one was happy. The fact that Tinker posted far and away the largest single payroll of any employer in the state made it a problem for the new governor, too: Governor Dewey Bartlett. The fact that people of that stature all shared the same problem showed Francis Tuttle exactly what he had to do.

He had to get Arch Alexander out to South Carolina.

The reason would have been apparent to anyone familiar with vocational education in America at the time. South Carolina's system was considered to be the model of a great one. South Carolina showed what a state could do with vocational schooling and how a state should do it. There were other outstanding programs. Bucks County, Pennsylvania, ran an exemplary local system; both Georgia and North Carolina had solid reputations for their state programs; and Alexander was to scout all of these. Still, it was South Carolina that stood out from all the rest.

The reason was that South Carolina was running a vocational training program more interested in economics than in education. Vocational education in South Carolina meant industrial development for South Carolina. That was its principal purpose, that is what South Carolina did better than anyone else, and that is what put Arch Alexander on an airplane headed east.

He had company on his first trip, pretty impressive company at that. Of course it was: Governor Dewey Bartlett had drawn up the passenger list. Filling it were some of Oklahoma's most powerful businessmen; its biggest bankers; its most influential newspaper publishers; and crews from most of its radio and television stations, each crew packing as much gear as it could handle.

There was plenty of room, though; they flew on one of the biggest jets in the entire United States Air Force, the plane supplied courtesy of General Melvin McNickle. In fact, when Alexander and party landed at a military airfield in Columbia, South Carolina, it looked for all the world like the general was there waiting for them. An air force general did greet them—the general who commanded the South Carolina airbase—but the confusion was understandable: This one was McNickle's twin brother.

Twin was one thing, a clone was something else, and when Arch Alexander later found out what a clone was he remembered

that he might already have run into one. While the rest of the group had made the rounds assigned to them, Alexander had gone off with the one fellow he was most interested in seeing, the man in charge of what South Carolina called its special schools. His name was A. Wade Martin; but from the moment they met, Alexander was convinced that he had known this guy already—Wade Martin was a perfect clone of Jim Perky.

Alexander eventually decided that if anything Martin may have been the rougher of the two. If so, he had ample forewarning. Right off the bat, Martin put Alexander on notice. He said that Alexander should understand that he was not dealing with another educator but with an engineer. Martin was an engineer, and the educator would do well to remember that he was one engineer who knew how to deal with him and his kind. That pleasantry aside, Wade Martin then completed his welcoming by telling Arch Alexander straight out: "I believe in cooperative education. You coo and I'll operate."

Operate he did, but engineer Martin ended up doing quite a bit of educating as well. The two drove up into North Carolina and down into parts of Georgia. Mostly they stuck to South Carolina, and that was an education in itself. Take Kings Tree County, for example. One of the poorest counties in one of the country's poorest states, the county had set up a vocational school that served both older adults and school children. More than that, it served employers. In fact, the school was why there were any employers there to serve at all. Its presence was a commitment that the state of South Carolina was going to train any workers any company needed to set up any plant anywhere in the county—to develop, print, warehouse, and distribute training manuals if they needed them, too. Different companies—first in textiles, then in other lines—had accepted the offer, and Kings Tree County was being remade top to bottom, more appropriately, being remade from schoolhouse outward.

That was nothing, though, compared to the banana warehouse. Martin started dropping hints about it as soon as he picked Alexander up, but it was quite a while before he let him see it. When Alexander finally got there, it looked like there was no there, there. He found himself in the middle of a seedy, rundown

industrial area; but sure enough, there in the midst of half-empty and vacant old buildings sat what must have been and apparently still was a banana warehouse. It must have seen better days, but those days had been gone for decades. There was just one entrance, a poorly marked and dimly lit door; and to reach it Martin led him across a railroad track and around the back. As he neared the door, Alexander decided that the place was not so much disappointing as it was sad.

Then the door opened. There was not a banana in sight. Instead, cables and wires ran everywhere sprawling across the polished floor, rising to follow shiny girders above, then descending to meet at a combination audio-television-film studio. It was everything that one would expect to see in a commercial broadcast facility, and then only one in a top market. A high-speed, four-color printing press sat along one wall, it, too, as fine as any press in any print shop anywhere. Stacked high nearby was its output: a mountain range of pamphlets, brochures, and books. Column after column consisted of everything needed to build a complete curriculum, industry by industry.

Oklahoma had nothing like it, but no other state did either, so Alexander felt no shame in that. What he did feel was awe—awe mixed with wonder. The only thing he could think to say came out as a question: "Why did you put it down here?"

"The local educators would probably have nit-picked me to death if I had put it in a proper building," the engineer explained to the educator. "Nobody even knows it's here."

The last was an exaggeration. School teachers and administrators may have been unsuspecting, but the visiting businessmen and the political leaders who catered to them knew where it was and what it was. This was no banana warehouse but an incomparable recruiting tool. It all but shouted "If you'll come to South Carolina, we'll train your people. We'll develop training aids for them and manuals for them, everything you need to get your people ready to go and be productive on your first day."

Arch Alexander was not through in South Carolina, not by a long shot. He ended up going back and forth, between there and Oklahoma, for the better part of a year. Maybe that was because he had to carry back considerably more than the one lesson

Dewey Bartlett had taken from Governor Rhodes's office. Bartlett had learned what vocational education could do. Alexander—and Tuttle and a lot of other people—were learning how South Carolina did it. The common lesson was that vocational education could be redefined, not only to fit the ideals of some policymakers and social planners in Washington, but to serve the practical needs of businessmen and politicians right at home. Vocational education ought to mean industrial recruitment, job creation, and economic development. Defined like that, vocational education might turn out to be what defined Oklahoma's future. A new federal law had helped make that possible. Oklahoma's governor, legislators, and vocational educators made it happen.

They took a first, long step just as quickly as possible, even though it had been a long time coming.

Since its own establishment in 1929, the State Board of Education had played dual roles. The board's principal purpose had always been to oversee the state's overall public school system, but it also had played a subordinate role wearing the disguise of the State Board for Vocational Education. The arrangement had never served either the education board or the vocational system especially well. After almost forty years, it probably served neither at all. If so, few seemed to think about it; even fewer seemed to care. Worse, those who should have cared had reasons to prefer it that way. After all, a distracted board served wonderfully the interests of a domineering director.

That became irrelevant, a relic of history, as of July 1, 1968. On that day, Oklahoma made the oversight of vocational education the single purpose of a newly defined, distinct official board—the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education. Because its members included the elected superintendent of public instruction (whom statute assigned to chair it) along with the six members of the state education board, it was assured both continuity with the past and cooperation in the future. Because those were joined by six other members (each appointed by the governor) plus the state director in a non-voting capacity, its primary role was plain. It was to guide a new, independent agency created by the same statute: the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education.

There had been no such thing in Oklahoma. In most states, there still is not. In Oklahoma's case (probably in quite a few others' too) vocational education had been treated as an ill-fitting appendage, always and awkwardly attached to something else, usually something that did not particularly want it hanging on. On July 1, 1968, though, vocational education in Oklahoma at last became what it is today. Its status is that of an independent executive agency that answers only to its own, equally independent governing board. Since 1968, the consequence has been that vocational education enjoys a stature and security in Oklahoma that no other system has anywhere else.

It did not take long to learn how much difference that could make, and David Hall was the first to learn it.

An affable, glad-handed prosecutor out of Tulsa, Hall was the Democrats' nominee for governor in 1970. Winning by the narrowest of margins—barely two thousand votes—David Hall denied Dewey Bartlett the re-election that otherwise would have been his. Thereupon, David Hall put his affability aside and turned his glad hand into a vengeful fist. He set out to purge every department and every agency of every employee identified with his predecessor and victim, replacing each with one of his own kind. He generally failed to get very far; with the vocational system he got nowhere at all. He never made it past Leslie Guy Fisher.

Having just been elected to succeed Oliver Hodge as superintendent of public instruction, Fisher chaired the new vo-tech board, and he used that position to teach the governor a primary lesson about state government. "You're trying to fire somebody you can't fire," the superintendent informed him. "He works for me. I'm chairman of his board... [and] no damn governor like you is going to touch him, so forget it." A math lesson followed: "Let's count votes, because I won by a hell of a lot more than you did." There was no need for Fisher to follow-up with a Bible lesson; the superintendent had made a believer of the governor.[10] Every succeeding governor has learned to believe it, too—some with more grace than others.

Other people learned their own lessons about the importance of there being an independent executive agency. Even Francis Tuttle

learned one, and it was not merely that the department's independence could save his job. Over time, he came to appreciate that it was that same independence that more than anything else enabled him to do his job. To listen to his reasoning is to learn what he learned and how he learned it.

Years into Tuttle's retirement, an interviewer asked that he identify "the most significant factor in the development of Oklahoma's quality vocational education programs." It was a good question, perhaps the most important question that could have been asked. Responding to it, Tuttle—a veteran superintendent of schools before serving as state vocational director—first reflected on what he had discovered when he first moved from academic to vocational work. The two were different, different in every respect.

Vocational education served entirely different kinds of students, students who brought to their classrooms very different styles of learning. To teach them effectively, vocational educators had to teach them differently. They needed different strategies, different curricula, different materials. Vocational educators even needed different ways to evaluate their students and their programs.

In time, though, Tuttle had realized that these were only the most immediate and most visible differences. The fundamental difference was that academic instruction could comfortably maintain the same course content year after year, usually for decades, frequently even longer. Subjects like English grammar, American history, or plane geometry never changed—in the last instance, not since a Greek named Euclid. Instruction might, but not the content.

What inevitably made vocational education different in every way was that it was different in that one way. It had to change every time its subject changed—which is to say, every time technology changed. Moreover, it had to be flexible enough to change overnight—any night, every night.

The sum of all of those lessons was Tuttle's answer. What was "the most significant factor…?" This: "Vocational education in Oklahoma could not [have thrived] within the confines of the traditional educational structure.… Having a separate vocational board that devoted itself totally to vocational issues increased our

ability to respond quickly to the needs of the economy, business, industry, and students."[11]

His phrasing was enough to underscore what Francis Tuttle had understood to be vocational education's mission. As state director, he had made sure that he was surrounded by people who shared the same understanding and the same determination to achieve it.

Some he inherited from J.B. Perky.[12] They had been Perky's kind of people—every one shared a background in vocational agriculture in one form or another—and they stayed his kind, at least in that respect. Otherwise, they turned out to be Tuttle's kind of people as well.

One was Byrle Killian. An FFA boy from tiny Olustee, Oklahoma, Killian had earned a degree in vocational agriculture at Oklahoma A&M and then had taught agriculture, starting at Guthrie in 1940. Perky had brought him into the state agriculture division during the Second World War, and he gradually had risen through its ranks. When Tuttle took over from Perky, he had Killian as an assistant state director, and he stayed in that capacity another ten years.

Perky first had met Larry Hansen working on Roy Turner's ranch as a bookkeeper. Impressed, Perky had made a place for him with the veterans' program that the agriculture division ran, in 1947. Starting there, Hansen had moved steadily from one job to another, always going a little higher up the ladder. He was Tuttle's original finance director until Dewey Bartlett borrowed him for a year's service with the governor's office, in 1970. Hansen returned to Stillwater the next year, this time as an assistant state director; and he stayed until he retired, in 1984.

Bill Stevenson was an FFA product, having spent two years as president of Sallisaw's chapter. He was another A&M man and another veteran agriculture teacher, having taught in Westville, Boswell, and Madill. While shouldering every burden that Jim Perky had placed on his teachers, Stevenson had entered graduate school at the renamed Oklahoma State University and had stayed with it until receiving his doctorate, in 1968. Perky once said to him "Bill, you sure have some wild ideas, but a fellow who taught vocational agriculture for twenty years can't be all bad."

Francis Tuttle must have agreed—at least with that bit about his not being all bad. He put Stevenson to work as fast as he could, directing the first vo-tech research unit. That was in that year again, 1968. Under one title or another, Stevenson devoted twenty years to building a reputation in and for Oklahoma that eventually took him out of Oklahoma, to the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, based at Ohio State University. The United Nations borrowed him to help set up industrial training programs for developing nations. No, Dr. Bill Stevenson was not all bad, not by a long shot.

Killian, Hansen, Stevenson (there were others)—these were more than talented individuals. They were the core of an evolving management team. As the years passed, Tuttle added his own people to work with him while he ran the program. Some, he worked with until they could run it, themselves.

Like those whom Perky had nurtured over the years, Tuttle's proteges shared a common background, but theirs was a very different one. Few were veterans of vocational agriculture, but several did have doctorates in education. In other words, they tended to be a lot like Francis Tuttle and Arch Alexander.

Alexander, of course, had been Tuttle's first pick, one worth fighting for. Tuttle had put him in the highest post then available, one of his assistant directors. Just as soon as he could get another position authorized, in 1972, Tuttle had moved Alexander in it: deputy state director. He was always more than a deputy, though; executive operating officer would have been more like it. The reason was that Arch Alexander managed the state agency and its entire staff day-in and day-out, leaving Francis Tuttle free to deal with school superintendents, policymakers, and the top people in business and industry.[13]

The arrangement fit perfectly Tuttle's own notions about leadership and his own leadership style. Before his first payday, Francis Tuttle had learned what leadership meant to Jim Perky: that it started—and ended—with Jim Perky. Leadership had meant being "tough," being "hard-nosed." A leader "ran a tight ship," and the best leaders could "get mean and run over you to accomplish what they wanted to accomplish."[14] Such was leadership Jim Perky-style.

Many of the lessons that Tuttle absorbed back then were negative. They were examples of what not to do, and neither he nor his successors have done them since. Instead, Tuttle put in place a participatory, team approach, thereby igniting an instant but long-awaited revolution so forceful that it became an institution. Simply put, it was—and is—how things are done.

This is how Francis Tuttle describes it:

> Based on input from the staff that worked with programs in the field and from interaction with business, industry, the legislature, and the board, we established departmental goals. Each division was responsible for carrying out those programs and providing those services that would assure our goals were accomplished.[15]

Notice two of the smallest words he uses: "we" and "our." They made the biggest difference of all, the difference that makes leadership participatory. One form is what Tuttle called a management team. Again, here is his own account and description. Note the consequences that he ascribes to it, and notice this time his big words and complex phrases.

> I used my management team to develop direction and to recommend policy, but I also tried to delegate decision-making to the division heads as often as possible.... Having a separate staff that devotes its entire attention to vocational education assures adequate time and expertise for new projects and to resolving deficiencies in existing programs. The vocational education specialists have the opportunity to develop the expertise and experience that is needed to deal with the complex issues of industry training; productivity improvement; government contracting; industry-specific, short-term training programs; and employment of disadvantaged adults, handicapped youth and adults, high school dropouts, dislocated workers, and inmates. Without the support of a separate board and the availability of skilled vocational specialists, these areas would not be

> adequately addressed and as much progress would not have been made.[16]

Big words are scattered all over here—to "delegate" "decision-making" to "specialists" with the "expertise" to remedy "deficiencies"—words like that. They bump up against some pretty complicated terms, too: things like "productivity improvement;" "government contracting;" "industry-specific, short-term training;" and "employment of disadvantaged adults, handicapped youth and adults, high school dropouts, dislocated workers, and inmates."

The juxtaposition explains why every instrument and every method of leadership had to change: Too much had become too complicated for any one person, whoever that person might be. There had to be a management team, and it had to use all of the talents and all of the energy available in a large, diverse, and expert staff.

A new and revolutionary federal statute, an independent institutional status, a thoroughgoing internal reorganization, a new style of management with an able corps ready to implement it—these were the visible signs of an evolutionary eruption as massive as it was sudden. They gave Oklahoma's vocational system an altogether new environment, an environment able to nourish rich and abundant changes. To appreciate just one of them, set Oklahoma beside South Carolina, not when Arch Alexander first went there but a few years after his return.[17]

In the beginning, Alexander saw and Oklahoma copied. The most obvious borrowing involved what both states then called special schools—Oklahoma borrowed the term, too—and they were the first to assign them their own division at the state level. In both states, these so-called special schools tended to be more special than schools. They offered customized instruction in ad hoc facilities, instant schools built to do one thing, one time. That was to provide the start-up training to guarantee new employers the workforce they needed to be productive from day one. The idea originated in South Carolina. Oklahoma was the first state to do the same. In little time, Oklahoma's version may have equaled South Carolina's. In not much more, Oklahoma's probably surpassed it.

Among Oklahoma's improvements was its better organized and better managed equipment pool. Both states poured money, imagination, and energy into creating these reservoirs and filling them with anything any employer might expect any new employee in any new plant to operate. They made sure that every piece was the latest and best available, and all of the other states were left to look on jealously from the shadows. Of course, neither South Carolina nor Oklahoma was given to hiding its light under a bushel—but only Oklahoma refused to hide anything in some banana warehouse either.

Oklahoma never tried to conceal its pool from anyone, especially not from politicians and educators. It was politicians who made the pool possible, especially the legislators who enacted, in 1970, a special law permitting the vo-tech department to purchase and lend industrial equipment. From the moment its new, 20,000 square-foot facility opened, in 1972, the department made sure that every politician, every educator, and every business manager knew what it had, knew where it was, and knew how to use it. It was (and is) on the campus of Oklahoma State University. (OSU built it, then leased it to vo-tech, thereby sparing the agency immediate expenses.) It is both symbol and substance of Oklahoma's commitment to securing good jobs for its people by way of guaranteeing good workers for its employers.

Not that there ever was all that much being stored anyway. In only five years, the department bought and inventoried some 55,000 pieces of industrial equipment—everything from power drills to forklifts. Its total value was $14 million. All but some half-million dollars' worth was somewhere on loan on any given day.[18]

The banana warehouse aside, Oklahoma improved on South Carolina's model in several ways. Another was to take South Carolina's notion of moving equipment from site to site and turn it upside down. Oklahoma, in effect, moved the sites instead. In a sense that is exactly what its innovative mobile facilities did. The first appeared in 1971, part of a federally-funded but state-run experiment. With federal grant money, the department bought a few of the largest mobile homes it could find, refashioned them

into moveable counseling and guidance centers, and hooked them behind some big diesel rigs. The trucks then headed out for southeastern Oklahoma, bound for an area that consisted of some of the state's very poorest counties. They made their way through seven counties, all poor, always poor, all so used to being poor that it felt natural—not good, just natural. Nonetheless, not one community in one county was so poor that it did not have its own site for vocational services. The site may have been temporary; but it was there, open for business, at least once a year, every year.

The pilot program grew into a standing service offered to similar areas. The grant's money spent and the pilot project concluded, the Oklahoma department immediately doubled the counties served in the southeast to fourteen and sent out four mobile units, each staffed with two career specialists. Two other units, each similarly staffed, patrolled Oklahoma County; a third operated out of Burns Flat, in the southwest.[19]

If its mobile units took the South Carolina model and sent it down the road (literally), there were any number of ways that Oklahoma opened altogether new paths for other states to follow. Oklahoma offered the nation's first quick-start occupational training programs for both new and expanding businesses. Oklahoma was the first state to maintain a division devoted to short-term adult education. It also was first to establish a division for promoting business productivity and the first to dedicate an entire division to developing human resources.[20]

In every respect, Oklahoma had pulled ahead of the nation and broken away from its own past. The best measure of how far and how fast it had moved begins with recalling where Oklahoma had been as recently as 1968. That year's landmark federal law had been the first to set aside a significant portion of Washington's money to get as many new area schools as possible in as many states as possible built and operating as quickly as possible. In 1968, Oklahoma had five of these schools, and two panels of experts had concluded that the state was at the end of that particular road.

Francis Tuttle disagreed. With the federal legislation in place,

he and his staff dared hope that Oklahoma might add an average of one school per year.

Tuttle and staff turned out to be about as far off as the experts. In 1976, eight years later, Oklahoma maintained an entire network of area vocational-technical schools. Sometimes known as AVTS, they were to be found at twenty-three sites, not five. The first were doing fine in the big cities, and the new ones were doing even better. They reached from Afton, in the northeast, to Burns Flat, in the southwest, from Fairview, up near Kansas, over to Poteau, right next to Arkansas.[21]

Oklahoma had outdone the professionals' expectations and even its own ambitions. It also had outdone its original model: South Carolina. In fact, it had left South Carolina far behind not only in its special schools but in the area schools as well.

There was a reason. Right from the start, everyone from Governor Bartlett and Francis Tuttle on down had insisted that Oklahoma must build area schools open to both secondary students and adults. South Carolina had ignored the first; its area schools were purely postsecondary. Thus the irony: At the very time that Oklahoma was adding area schools just as fast as contractors could finish them, South Carolina was starting to close theirs. Within years, some of the same schools that Arch Alexander had so admired in 1968 disappeared, sacrificed to academic aspiration as under-funded, ill-equipped, and poorly-staffed community colleges. In every respect—in money, in equipment, in personnel—the area schools of Oklahoma had it better, and they had it better right from the start.[22]

There is considerable evidence that they produced better, too. What they produced was jobs, thousands of them. Some were with venerable companies that, however old, were entirely new to Oklahoma. Raleigh Industries was one. English-owned and English-based, Raleigh had a long and solid worldwide reputation as a manufacturer of bicycles, particularly the thin-tired, three-speed models that it marketed as English racing bikes. Neither the design nor the designation changed at all when Raleigh began to build them in Enid, Oklahoma. Explaining why they had chosen Enid as the site for their single American plant, Raleigh offi-

cials pointed directly to Enid's "fine vo-tech school" as a deciding factor.[23]

On at least one occasion, a major company's first "plant" was an area vocational school. On a June day in 1977, when Goodyear Tire & Rubber broke ground for a new facility in Lawton—the ground being an empty cow pasture—its first employees were beginning their second day on the job. Some were transferred Goodyear supervisors; most were trainees hired the day before. Their workplace was Lawton's Great Plains area school, and the school remained Goodyear's home until contractors finally turned the pasture into a factory.[24]

With a record like that, was it any wonder that the system built area schools more than twice as fast as the most optimistic had dared hope? Of course not—not when legislators could so easily see what vocational education meant for their constituents, and certainly not when they saw what vocational education could mean for their careers. Every dollar spent on vocational education—and the state spent more and more every year—was a dollar invested in economic development. No less was every dollar a measure of vocational education's growing political weight. Neither the legislators nor the vocational people seemed particularly troubled by that.

E.T. Dunlap was more than troubled. E.T. Dunlap was enraged.

Born in the hills of southeastern Oklahoma, E.T. Dunlap had done just about everything that a school man could do, everything from teaching in a one-room school to holding the presidency of a state college. He had done just about everything that a politician could do, too, everything from winning election as county superintendent of schools to chairing a house committee on education. In 1961, both careers reached a single apex when Dunlap was named chancellor of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. As chancellor, Dunlap was famed for having all of the subtlety and all of the tenderness of a fellow agency head: Jim Perky—which is to say, none at all.

That had made no difference while Perky had been in power. It was true that the two thought alike, but it also was true that they

almost never thought about the same thing. Perky had his private kingdom; Dunlap had his. Perky tended to his agriculture teachers and put up with the home economists. Dunlap yanked college purse strings and bossed around college presidents.

Francis Tuttle was no Jim Perky, and Francis Tuttle did not think like E.T. Dunlap. Neither would have made a difference had it not been for the fact that both Tuttle and Dunlap soon had to think about the same things, about education, money, and power.

Federal law—in particular, the postsecondary provisions of the 1968 Vocational Education Amendments—made that probable. Vocational education's swift expansion—especially its movement into postsecondary schooling—made it inescapable. The clash of one man's authority with the other's vision made it ugly.

All of those elements, not least the ugliness element, turned a relatively simple question into a bitter contest. Who would control postsecondary technical training? At first, there were compromises. (Between 1973 and 1981, the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education formally contracted with the State Regents for Higher Education to turn over the federal funds it received to support technical and occupational programs offered in the state's colleges.) Then the compromises broke down. (In 1981 the regents voted to refuse any of Washington's money if it came through the vocational department and ended their relationship outright.) Next, there was open and public conflict. (The regents announced that any adult training or postsecondary education would be done in a state college or it would not be done at all.) In the end, there was a court fight. (The fight went all the way to the state supreme court because neither side was willing to drop it.)

Was it worth all that? Did it make a difference? Ask one who ought to have known: the winner. "I thought it was so important that if we didn't win this," Francis Tuttle later recalled, "we might as well quit. If we'd been controlled by higher education, especially Dunlap, nothing would have happened."[25]

Of course, plenty did happen, and the sum of them all took Oklahoma into the mid-1980s with a vocational system that was a national model—and a wonder. The numbers alone were impressive enough: enrollments of nearly a quarter-million, a

network of twenty-four area vocational districts with facilities at forty-one sites crisscrossing the state in 1986. More astonishing still was that virtually all of this had occurred so rapidly. Francis Tuttle had taken Oklahoma out of the past and into the present. As he began to consider retirement, he also began his search for a successor able to take it into the future.

With Alexander due to retire in 1984 and his own retirement on the near horizon, Tuttle suddenly added another position to the state staff. He called it associate director, a title that put it just below a deputy director and right above an assistant director, which was about all the definition it ever had or ever needed. After all, the position lasted just long enough for one man to fill it, but that was as long as it was supposed to last. Tuttle wanted only one man in it, and he wanted that man to be Roy Peters.

Peters might as well have been born and raised for the job. Both his mother and father had given more than forty years to the public schools of five Oklahoma communities before the two retired, together. For most of his growing-up years, that had been at Alex, where Roy Peters, Sr. was becoming something of a local legend as the district superintendent from 1947 to 1961. Decades later, townsfolk were still talking about Superintendent Peters and his one-man construction boom, a boom that did not end until he had remodeled every room in the high school, built its first cafeteria and library, and added the facilities for new music and home economics programs. In particular, they remembered the hot, dry summer of 1954, when Peters and a few teachers had used their own vacation time to turn the school's old gym into a first-class auditorium, one that became the town's only meeting place. "It gave those people a place to go," was one fellow's explanation for why it was so memorable.[26]

The superintendent also had insisted on having a first-class vocational program, just like both he and Christine Peters had encouraged that their three children be active in church, school, and community life. It was little wonder that Roy, Jr., and his sisters, Marilyn and Jeanie, all grew up to become teachers, themselves; and it was no wonder at all that the boy followed a path that led straight from home and school to vocational education.[27]

In 1959, while a student at little Alex High School, Roy Peters, Jr. was elected national president of the Future Business Leaders of America, the student group affiliated with business and office education. Leaving Alex for Norman, he took a degree in business education and landed his first job, teaching business and distributive education classes at Oklahoma City's U. S. Grant High School, in 1964. Peters joined the state department, to teach adult marketing programs, in 1971, the same year that he earned his master's degree from Oklahoma State. When the Moore-Norman Area Vo-Tech School opened in 1973, its first superintendent (Clovis Weatherford) recruited Roy Peters as his assistant. He held that job until he took over the Canadian Valley AVTS, with campuses in El Reno and Chickasha, in 1981. More than a half-dozen new programs were in place and $1.5 million of new construction was nearing completion when Peters left that for his new assignment, in 1984.[28]

That was when Roy Peters became Francis Tuttle's associate state director, whatever that was. What it was was director-in-waiting. The path that Tuttle, himself, had followed—joining the state staff, learning the ropes, handling the responsibilities, proving that he was the right person in the right place at the right time—that was the path he opened for Roy Peters. Its destination was the same, too. After Francis Tuttle retired, on December 31, 1985, Roy Peters stepped up to be his successor.

He inherited a solid program, politically strong, pragmatically focused, and nationally respected. In each respect, Francis Tuttle had taken it beyond the highest hopes of even its most devoted champions. Roy Peters took it directly into the bailiwicks of its most distrustful critics.

In a sense, there had been critics before there had been anything to criticize—anything to criticize in Oklahoma that is. The reason was that the criticism was older than Oklahoma. Almost from the moment that some nineteenth century schoolteachers had started to fancy themselves experts and professionals, the tendency had been for mainstream educators to dismiss vocational education. If it had to exist at all, it belonged in the field, the

shop, or the kitchen—someplace where it could not pollute the noble air of their academic classrooms.

American vocational education had been less successful in overcoming those sentiments than in institutionalizing them. Indeed, a good portion of every federal law from 1917 onward had been given over to keeping vocational programming as far away as possible from the academic curriculum.[29]

Despite everything that Oklahoma's vocational educators had accomplished, they had never resolved those fundamental differences. If anything, their achievements had only intensified the system's rivalry, with higher education, in particular.

Alfred M. Philips knew that. As the first president of Tulsa Junior College, Al Philips always had to straddle, however uncomfortably, both sides of the rivalry. On the day it opened for business, in 1970, Tulsa Junior College enrolled 839 students in some 32 occupational programs; but on that day and every day to follow, Al Philips still had to wrestle with what he called "educational snobbery," namely the "American educational value system...which elevates academic skills above applied skills."[30]

It should be said, though, that the situation did not necessarily look any better from the purely vocational side. Recall that even Francis Tuttle had been persuaded that vocational and academic education were utterly different in every respect—in what they taught, in whom they taught, in how they taught, in how they tested, in everything. To Tuttle, their differences had been so absolute that their separation was as essential as it was inevitable. In fact, separation of the two was what Francis Tuttle had decided was "the most significant factor in the development of Oklahoma's quality vocational education programs."[31]

When Roy Peters took over the Oklahoma system, circumstances were changing even if attitudes were not—not yet. For one thing, federal legislation, beginning in 1963 and accelerating rapidly since 1968, was steadily less tolerant of institutional warfare and becoming dependably more agreeable to paying for peace. More important, both higher education and vocational education were being remade in Oklahoma with the spread of an altogether new institution that was neither one nor the other but both: the metropolitan, two-year college.

Oklahoma had maintained a system of two-year schools for some time—since statehood, in fact, although system may have been too charitable a term. The First Legislature had given Oklahoma six unique agricultural and mechanical schools "of the secondary grade," and a surprising number of Oklahoma communities later added to them their own two-year municipal colleges. More surprising still, many of these appeared in the financially-strapped 1930s, an inexplicable quirk of timing had it not been for the fact that the thirties were when every penny collected from property taxes was reserved exclusively for local governments and schools. Whatever the reason, as many as thirty-five once existed, most of them as extensions of some local high school, often sharing the same building.[32]

Tulsa Junior College was different from the moment it opened, in 1970. For one thing, it was entirely state-funded. For another, it was in Tulsa—not in Carnegie, not in Shidler, not in Wetumka, but in the heart of a large and growing metropolitan region. Almost immediately thereafter, two-year colleges also opened in Midwest City (Oscar Rose) and in the state capital, itself (South Oklahoma City.) Both originated as locally funded community colleges but soon thereafter became part of a new state system. This one truly was a system, for it included (as well as funded) what remained of the two-year municipal colleges and assigned overall governing authority to the State Regents for Higher Education. Whatever their origins, whatever their age, wherever their sites, all of these state junior colleges followed the path that Tulsa Junior College had opened so widely—every one combined a complete academic curriculum with full vocational programming.[33]

At that point, differences between vocational education and the two-year college's occupational programs disappeared. Oklahoma's junior colleges and its area vo-tech schools were teaching the same kinds of subjects to the same kinds of students in the same kinds of ways for the same kinds of reasons. Did it make any difference where all of that happened? Roy Peters said no. Hans Brisch agreed.

Brisch was E.T. Dunlap's successor as higher education's chancellor, and Brisch was as different from Dunlap as Peters

was from Jim Perky. Personalities alone may not have made that much difference, but they certainly did nothing to impede what the two were resolved to work out—a series of cooperative agreements that linked specific occupational programs at particular colleges with the vocational offerings at nearby area schools.

For instance, the presence of the Federal Aviation Administration's huge Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center adjacent to Oklahoma City's Will Rogers World Airport had drawn both Oklahoma City Community College and the Metro Area Vocational-Technical School into offering what amounted to the same programs in aircraft mechanics and maintenance. By coordinating what they offered and when they offered it, the vocational-technical education department and the state regents made it possible for students to move from site to site and also to earn college credit for their vocational courses. Four pairs of institutions that shared some six hundred very grateful students constituted the initial partnerships. Those initial agreements became 180 in just five years; they passed 250 in another three.[34]

While reaching toward the colleges, Roy Peters reached in another direction as well, toward what Oklahoma calls its "common schools." "School-to-Work" was the name first given the gesture in Washington. Like much else, the name originated there, but Oklahoma pioneered some of its earliest and most creative local expressions.

Some were as simple and as effective as "Rad Week," a pilot program that brought ninth and tenth graders from a half-dozen communities to Woodward's High Plains AVTS. Funded entirely by the state department, the program was especially successful in getting both boys and girls to conceive of their futures as things to be determined for themselves by themselves, instead of as distant but unavoidable fates already defined because of their gender.[35]

Bill Clinton's election to the presidency and the new administration's fondness for what the president and Democratic Congress called "investments" made more money available to states and communities that were willing to experiment with School-to-Work. At Peters' insistence, the state department actively encour-

aged as many Oklahoma schools as possible to try as much as possible as quickly as possible.

The public schools of Altus, Drumright, Durant, Lawton, Oklahoma City, and Tulsa were first to develop some of the early initiatives. Helped by $3.2 million in federal grant money and inspired by the active involvement of the state vocational department, they asked parents and local business leaders to help design comprehensive programs that would define what students needed to learn at school by what they soon would need to know at work. The schools included both area vocational-technical schools and regular secondary schools. Once both academic and vocational courses had been redefined, each to complement the other, students would take classes at both schools.[36]

Whatever class, in whatever subject, wherever taught, the ultimate purpose was as radical as it was venerable: to achieve at last what Dr. Runkle had considered so inspiring in Russia's Philadelphia exhibit more than a century before—the systematic integration and full application of academic principles with practical skills.

One would have thought that more recent Russians were behind this one, too. From the beginning of the Clinton administration, its vision of School-to-Work was mired in controversy, much of it petty politics presenting itself as noble principles. Conservative Republicans often greeted it with the same contempt they otherwise reserved for godless governments and alternative lifestyles. In fact, one member of Oklahoma's School-to-Work Executive Council claimed to detect in it "the finest, most refined, Marxist process ever developed by humankind"[37]

The fact that School-to-Work's expansion was so identified with Bill Clinton was the only discernable explanation for such unthinking hostility. Whatever the reason, the program was bound to suffer after the November 1994, elections, when the GOP took control of the house of representatives and assigned its law-making power to new Speaker Newt Gingrich and Newt's merry band of conservative men.

By then, Oklahoma already had taken its earliest School-to-Work experiments far past the pilot stage and well into a highly evolved form. Sometimes called "Tech Prep," sometimes "2-plus-

2," this involved the full integration of a student's academic and vocational preparation from the final two years of high school through another two years of postsecondary instruction at an AVTS, a cooperating junior college, or both. No fewer than ninety of Oklahoma's high schools, nineteen of its area vo-tech schools, and twelve of its colleges already were working on that by 1995.[38]

Because federal money had helped it happen—Oklahoma received $1.7 million for key start-up funds that year—one brutal political fight after another was necessary to sustain it. Given the 1994 election results, that had to be expected. Not many would have expected vocational education to lead the fight, though, stepping forward to champion not merely its own claims but the interests of both secondary and higher education as well. Expected or not, that is precisely what happened, and it was evidence of how important vocational education was becoming to academic instruction at every level.

More remarkable still was that Roy Peters was ready to reverse the images that each had long had of the other as well as of what many people still thought of both. "If you couldn't function in a regular school classroom, they sent you to vocational education" was the problem that Francis Tuttle remembered having to deal with as late as 1967. Not much later, his successor was saying that the problem was just the opposite, that the regular school classrooms were not functioning well enough to sustain vocational education. He said it with both evidence and conviction.

The strongest evidence came from the people who were best situated to know—employers. Surveyed about their experiences after hiring high school graduates who had combined their regular studies with work in vo-tech schools, employers reported nothing but satisfaction with their job preparation. That merely confirmed what they already knew: that they could count on Oklahoma to send them competent welders, carpenters, bricklayers, and secretaries—people with technical skills. What the recent graduates lacked was competence of an altogether different kind—the competence to analyze, to diagnose, to reason, to calculate, and to communicate. And the failure lay not in the students but in their schools.

The employers said that; Roy Peters explained it.

Too many students, he argued, "wandered through the cafeteria line of [regular, academic] education spending too much time in the desserts." High on his list of intellectual junk foods were the academic subjects that were being taught as general courses in science, mathematics, or whatever. They could not help but be too easy because they had to be unfocused and disconnected. They—not their students—should be sent away, far away, never to return. In their place should be hard courses, applied courses, courses like calculus, physics, chemistry, and biology.

This was not just because students deserved excellence in both their vocational and their academic studies. It was because there could be no excellence in one unless there was excellence in the other. The reason was that the two forms of instruction were actually one, for they had not two purposes but one: to prepare competent workers who were competent thinkers. "We can no longer school like we used to school" was his message.[39]

At least in its vocational programs, Oklahoma was no longer schooling as it had been. Already it was schooling people both to hold better jobs and to live better lives. Its several dropout prevention and recovery programs provided life-redeeming second chances for kids too often written off before. Twenty "welfare-to-work" programs equipped welfare recipients with the job skills to land good jobs and with the personal and social skills to keep them. In the state's many penal institutions, what the department called Skills Centers enjoyed a national reputation for returning inmates to society as productive citizens rather than as criminals temporarily between prison terms.[40]

In a sense, the projects under the division of Skills Centers offered especially useful models for what creative schooling could achieve for any student in any circumstances. One consisted of a public-private partnership with both the State Office of Juvenile Affairs and the Associated General Contractors of Oklahoma. That project approached troubled kids in the state's custody not as criminals-in-waiting but as clients-in-training, and their training only started with instruction in the skills they might need for the jobs the contractors might want to fill. It also strengthened their academic skills in everything from math to reading by relating ev-

erything directly to the construction trade. No less important were simple lessons they obviously had never learned, partly because there had been no kind of schooling for those lessons. How to live on their own, how to work in a team, even how to establish utility service and how to balance a checkbook—all of these figured in, as well. They all got down to schooling in life skills.[41]

In all of these ways, Oklahoma was showing by example what it meant to school in a new way; but it also employed other, more direct ways to offer that very large lesson to a very big audience. Not least of them was through the packaged lesson plans that it had been offering for some time—since 1968, in fact.

In its Vocational Education Amendments of 1968, Congress had ordered every state to establish and maintain a division responsible for planning curriculum and instruction. Nineteen sixty-eight also happened to be when teams of external investigators said that Oklahoma's vocational system had a chance for national prominence if it could achieve first-rate work there, and first-rate work is exactly what Francis Tuttle and Ron Meek had in mind when they started—in 1968, of course.

Tuttle put Meek, whom Jim Perky had appreciated enough to assign him to agriculture mechanics, in charge of building a planning division for curriculum and instruction, and he told him to make it work. He even dispatched Meek to see firsthand if any other states were doing anything worthwhile in curriculum and instruction—sent him, in fact, to every one of the twenty states doing anything at all. He also encouraged Meek to attend every workshop, seminar, and teachers' meeting if any might have anything that might help. The immediate result came that very year, in 1968, when Francis Tuttle and Ron Meek came up with what they called a Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center (CIMC).

Not even ten years after Ron Meek started making his rounds and the CIMC opened its doors, Oklahoma already had established its primacy as a national resource for curriculum and instructional materials. That meant a lot—and a lot more than just prestige. It made Oklahoma a major player in a billion-dollar-a-year business and a major influence where occupational training

was presented anywhere by anybody. Along the way, Ron Meek had become so well known and so highly respected in the field that his peers had elected him the founding president of their national association.

As for Oklahoma, its CIMC materials made it known and respected wherever they were used—namely, in all fifty states and in countries around the world. Entire industries (the American construction industry was one) swiftly learned to turn to Oklahoma for the design and preparation of complete teaching packages—texts, workbooks, instructors' guides, unit outlines, exams, record forms—everything needed to teach every aspect of every craft involved in their business. In sum, Oklahoma's CIMC could (and did) produce what an industry needed to take an average person today and produce a skilled practitioner tomorrow, skilled enough to be certified and licensed in a trade, if need be.[42]

An early measure of Oklahoma's prominence came in 1975. The United States Office of Education had just begun to encourage regional coordination of state curriculum planning, and Oklahoma was the obvious choice that year to take the lead in forming and directing one of the first to get off the ground, the Mid-America Vocational Curriculum Consortium (MAVCC).

This was (and is) something of a collective curriculum and instruction materials center, serving most of the central United States, from the Mississippi to the Rockies, from Canada to the Rio Grande. The exact territory has shifted over time—ten states are current participants—but neither its purposes nor its benefits have ever varied. Not least of those benefits is the money it has saved the member states because each no longer has to invent and then reinvent its own wheels, one for each industry in each state. With its demonstrated capacity to design, prepare, and distribute complete sets of competency-based instructional materials that are fitted specifically to the entire region, the employers in every state have learned what to expect and they have learned that they will get it. Finally, because each set of materials comprehensively covers everything that can be taught on every aspect of every trade for every participating industry, classroom instructors have the time to concentrate on how to teach it, not to mention the time to teach it well.[43]

Every bit of that counted for a lot in the classroom, but what counted most was what necessarily had to happen outside the classroom—better put: on what happened after the classroom. Was there any direct evidence that any of these steady improvements in any aspect of Oklahoma's vocational system had any real results, particularly in what originally had been defined as its most important goals, namely, to bring Oklahoma new jobs and to equip Oklahomans to earn higher incomes. There were answers almost from the very beginning.

Consider what Oklahoma initially had called its special schools. When the first of them opened, in 1968, Oklahoma freely copied South Carolina's name and hoped to follow South Carolina's example in luring businesses with these ad hoc training arrangements. Within a few years, though, Oklahoma's project answered to a new name—TIP, the acronym for the Training for Industry Program—and Oklahoma had more than matched South Carolina's success. In 1976, for example, TIP was a direct cause for $58,471,000 in new investments in industrial plants that filled 2,672 new jobs.[44]

As impressive as the early figures had been, they were pretty abstract—and they were just the beginning. For a closer and more intimate look, go to Norman a few years later, in 1987, when a new, high-tech Hitachi plant came to town. Although the Tokyo-based company had existing facilities around the world, its executives said that they had chosen to put its newest manufacturing plant there, in Norman, Oklahoma. Why? Because of their confidence that TIP would deliver five hundred of the new employees they had to have immediately, not to mention any number they would need thereafter.

For once, echoes of agreement could have been heard that year from Norman's rival college-town, Stillwater, where a subsidiary of World Color Press was building a state-of-the-art production plant. The base for several country bands and the boots-and-hats crowd, Stillwater could hardly have been the most obvious choice of the printing plant's principal client—Rolling Stone magazine, with print runs of 1.4 million each—but Stillwater made perfect sense to the company. After all, Stillwater also was the base for the one state vo-tech system that one company vice president

said "surpasses any... in which our company has a facility."[45]

It was not much longer before the state's top political and economic leaders were crediting the refashioned vocational system, especially its TIP projects, for doing more to bring jobs to Oklahoma than anything the state had done since there had been a state, since 1907. There were no dependable sets of comparative figures to prove that claim, but there were enough numbers to make it entirely credible. In its first thirty years, more than a thousand companies had called upon TIP's services for the design and delivery of customized training programs. General Motors, Seagate, Lucent Technologies, America Online, Whirlpool, both Southwest and American Airlines—these and hundreds more had received everything they had wanted, everything from needs assessments, to both pre-employment and pre-production training, to curriculum development, to final skills instruction and skills upgrading. They also had gotten what they wanted wherever they wanted it, either at a state facility or at their own site. And not one company had paid one penny for any of it. They had paid tens of millions of dollars in salaries and wages, though. The sum represented the income earned by each company's share of the 80,000 Oklahomans who had gone through TIP's customized training.[46]

If Oklahoma's TIP projects outdid other states in attracting new employers, even they were no match for what Oklahoma did on behalf of its existing businesses and industries. That was particularly true at the highest level: the firms that depended on the highest investments in technology, making them the firms that paid the best wages to the most skilled people they could find. As early as 1984, two-thirds of those companies required vo-tech certification for hiring, and many were requiring regular updating of their employees' skills. Soon, in 1992, sixty-four of the state's sixty-six largest processing and manufacturing companies required that their employees update their skills with formal training at a nearby AVTS.[47]

Those things had a way of adding up, even if few Oklahomans had any notion of their sum. How many employees were trained for businesses and industries in a single year? Two thousand? Ten thousand? Twenty thousand? If it was fiscal year 1997-1998,

try 180,000. Most (128,000) were enrolled in safety classes or in customized training that had been designed company by company on behalf of existing concerns. The other 18,000 were in TIP programs, every student there to pick up skills needed for jobs with new or expanding companies.[48]

One hundred-eighty thousand enrollments—and that was not the half of it. After he had taken over from Francis Tuttle in 1986, Roy Peters had overseen this expansion, building in part on his predecessor's most visible successes, the area vo-tech schools. Remember, though, that Roy Peters also had gone beyond that to integrate vocational preparation with the academic work being done in both secondary and higher education. Recall all that; then do the math.

In 1986, total vocational enrollments had equaled 240,733.

In 1999, they totaled 481,821.

In 1986, the area vo-tech network had consisted of twenty-six districts, which maintained collectively forty-two campuses scattered across the state.

In 1999, twenty-nine vocational districts offered instruction at fifty-four campuses that blanketed the state. (By that time, its AVTS system alone assured Oklahomans what amounted to full coverage for vocational training. After all, 97 percent of the state's population lived within a few miles of at least one AVTS, not infrequently close to several.)

In 1999, more than 3,500 vocational teachers prepared and presented classes in more than 2,500 vocational subjects to their fellow Oklahomans—some of those being in an area school, some in a comprehensive high school, some behind bars in a state correctional site.[49]

The experts had not needed to await these 1999 numbers to recognize just how much Roy Peters had brought to vocational education in Oklahoma or, for that matter, for them to appreciate how much Roy Peters had contributed to American vocational training in general. They already knew that. That was why the American Vocational Association had honored Roy Peters as the nation's outstanding vocational educator at its 1995 annual convention in Denver.[50]

Roy Peters accomplished a lot, not least because he had

learned a lot. He had the record to prove it and even the degree to certify it. He was Dr. Roy Peters as of 1987, the year that Oklahoma State University approved his doctoral dissertation. Its subject could not have been closer to perfect—"A Case Study of Three States Identified as Having a High-Quality State Vocational Education System"—and it was packed with lessons on what he had learned on behalf of any state that sought to have an outstanding program. Most of these were lessons he had learned not in the classroom, not in the library, but on the job—his job as Francis Tuttle's associate state director. Many were lessons that he had probably intended to apply to himself once he was Tuttle's successor in the top spot. One lesson that fit into both categories was something Roy Peters had learned firsthand from Francis Tuttle: He one day would have to prepare his own successor. As that time approached, Roy Peters found that he had no need to look far.

Ann Benson was born at the town hospital in Stillwater. After graduating from nearby Coyle High School, she returned to Stillwater and earned her bachelor's degree in home economics at Oklahoma State University. In time, she added two more OSU degrees, a master's and a doctorate. After teaching home economics in a few north-central Oklahoma communities, she went back to Stillwater to be a curriculum specialist with the state system in 1973. She directed the Mid-America Vocational Curriculum Consortium for ten years, starting when it did, in 1975. Those ten ended when Roy Peters made her his assistant state director for educational services. That job amounted to extended in-service training for the one that awaited her. It came in 1999, when Roy Peters left to take over the Tulsa-based Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence, and Ann Benson took his place as state director.

Jim Perky, Francis Tuttle, Roy Peters, Ann Benson—of course, she was the first woman to hold the director's job, but by 1999 that fact may have been more incidental than anything else. At least, it may have been incidental with the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, for that was about the only species of education in Oklahoma in which gender tended to be insignificant, if not irrelevant.

It was one of the things that set the vocational system apart, not only for its history but also for the consequences. In 1999, when Dr. Ann Benson became state director, only 37 of Oklahoma's 547 public school superintendents were women. In 1999, when women comprised well over half of higher education's students, only one woman headed any of Oklahoma's twenty-seven colleges and universities, Joe Anna Hibler, at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. In 1999, there was not one woman among the nine members of the State Regents for Higher Education. In fact, only six had ever sat on the board since its creation, in 1941.[51]

Even that dismal record might have been enviable for the first half-century of vocational education in Oklahoma. Not surprisingly, Oklahoma's vocational education department had had to overcome quite a bit of its own history to reach where it was in 1999. In reaching there, the department had made some pretty important history as well.

Jim Perky, who could not have been unaware of his prejudices and who must not have been ashamed of them either, had revealed them on every single payday of his very long tenure. As late as the day that he picked up his own, last paycheck, Jim Perky and every other man on the state staff had taken home bigger checks than any woman had received. That was true below the very top, too. Female supervisors in the home economics division, which meant every supervisor in home economics, got less than any male supervisor over in agriculture, which meant every supervisor in agriculture. Even within divisions—in health occupations, in distributive education, in every division in which women worked at the same level as men—the women always received less pay.[52]

Jim Perky's last payday was the last payday for that as well. Francis Tuttle's first act upon taking over was to set a single salary scale and apply it to every position, rank by rank, across every division. From that day on, women and men who have done the same work have earned the same pay.

Imagine: that was in 1967—as late as that. In a way, though, 1967 was as early as that, too. The reason is that Oklahoma's vocational education department had achieved equal-pay-for-

equal-work status before Washington had thought the subject important enough for congressional action. In 1967, there was no federal equal-pay law that applied to administrators, executives, and other professionals. When Francis Tuttle had ordered that salaries be paid without respect to gender, he thereby had put Oklahoma years ahead, and it stayed there for some time. Five years, it was; it took five years for Congress to get around to enacting an appropriate equal-pay law, in 1972.[53] It was about time.

That explains Francis Tuttle's answer to a question asked him years later. Asked what he considered his "biggest accomplishment" in the eighteen years he had spent as state director, Tuttle replied that two or three things came immediately to mind. Without saying that one was "any more important than the other," he did insist that equal-pay-for-equal-work had to be right at the top.[54]

He said that in 1996—said that the first thing he did as director was one of the very best things he ever did. Nearly thirty years since Jim Perky's last payday, Francis Tuttle was right again.

On that issue, he always had been; and he had helped to see that Oklahoma was right on that one as well. Consider the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976—another round in the regular updating of federal statutes. This one is known mostly for its insistence that sex discrimination end in all its forms, the overt as well as the subtle, the obvious as well as the concealed. With ten detailed prohibitions and mandates, the 1976 law was not about to miss its target, and it did not.

In Oklahoma, however, everything that the law forbade and everything that the law required amounted to less than what the law offered—the opportunity for Oklahoma to do what was expected of it and then for Oklahoma to do the unexpected as well. The last is by far the most revealing.

At the time, social scientists and policy analysts were only beginning to understand that women's economic disadvantages were only partly due to the kind of overt acts that the 1976 Amendments and other federal laws forbade. The greater cause, the most common as well, consisted of readily identifiable but entirely personal circumstances. Divorce, spousal abandonment,

single parenthood, a husband's death—any of these were more likely to do more damage to more women than even the worst kinds of out-and-out employment discrimination. Pretty much nobody was thinking about those kinds of things back then, nobody but a few of Oklahoma's policymakers and its top vocational educators; but they were doing more than thinking. They were acting.

In 1978, with seed money from Governor David Boren's office, the vo-tech department set up a counseling, training, and job placement service for what it called displaced homemakers. They typically were casualties of divorce, abandonment, or a husband's death, if they had ever been married at all. In one form or another, theirs were the misfortunes most likely to impoverish women and their children, if they had them.

The Moore-Norman AVTS had the first pilot program, and it was so innovative and so productive that the United States Department of Labor searched it out and made it a model for what every state could and should be doing. More than that, Washington next put considerable federal money behind the effort; and the state legislature added more from Oklahoma, too. The flow of money soon made it available at fourteen sites in Oklahoma—not to mention at any number of sites that were being similarly funded in any number of other states. In that way, what a handful of Oklahomans had thought up on their own became one of the state's most important vocational projects and one of the nation's most promising social services.[55]

This legacy of creative change was part of its history some twenty years later, when Ann Benson took over the vo-tech system. That particular strain of its history may even be why vo-tech no longer exists.

It is *Career*Tech now. The term, itself, is a scrunched-together diminutive, a short, thoroughly modern-sounding substitute for the much more lofty name that became official on May 19, 2000. That was when Governor Frank Keating signed House Bill 2128 into law and the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education instantly metamorphosed itself into the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. At the exact same moment, the State Board of Vocational-Technical Education mutated into the State Board of Career and Technology Edu-

cation.[56] Career and Technology Education—quite a mouthful: *Career*Tech will have to do.

Part of what was involved may have been fashion, maybe even claims to status, whether real or imaginary. At a minimum, it was part of an unmistakable national trend. Even the staid American Vocational Association, since 1925 the profession's principal national association, already had surrendered to the times and restyled itself as the Association for Career and Technical Education. Moreover, official agencies and governing boards in thirty other states also had shaken the old-fashioned sounding "vocational" from their titles and replaced it with stylish variants of "career," "technology," or some imaginative shortening and recombination of both.[57]

Nonetheless, even this simple name change reflected evolving substance more than it did momentary style. Already, not one of the twenty-nine area schools still called itself this-or-that area vo-tech school. The reason was that both the words *vo-tech* and *school* had connotations that were not so much negative (though they may have been) as they were deceptive. "School" was something that, well, something that schoolchildren attended; and some schoolchildren—primarily high school juniors and seniors—did attend these institutions. But their enrollments, 330,000 of them, were not schoolchildren at all, not even children. They were full-grown, almost always self-supporting adults. Moreover, their instruction was more likely to address continuing processes than to concentrate upon static skills. In both ways, *technology centers* truly did reflect much more accurately what those schools taught and to whom they taught it.

The same logic, of course, applied to both the state department's work and to its governing board's responsibilities. The added element for them was that those two also shared a single, over-riding mission: to educate all who hoped to enter, to advance, or to change not just their jobs but their careers.[58] Career and Technology Education it has to be then.

In practice, many of the differences between what vocational-technical education had been and what career and technology education is have been both subtle and evolutionary. For example, School-to-Work—the systematic integration of occupational

with academic instruction—is more alive than ever and more extensive, too. Nearly every college and nearly every technology center have entered multiple agreements with cooperating, not competing, institutions of the other form. And although there were a few who had claimed that to expose career education to impressionable young school kids was to serve an international Marxist conspiracy, the fact that nearly a quarter of Oklahoma's seventh graders, a third of its eighth graders, and half of its ninth graders have come to participate each year in *Career*Tech programs seems to have done the kids no harm and the Reds no good.[59]

In some ways, the integration of instruction has been even more complete, as well as more telling, in what is being taught than it has been in to whom it is being taught. Can, or even should, vocational learning be combined with academic study? That conundrum has been there since Dr. Runkle first paused before Russia's Philadelphia Centennial exhibit. While the philosophers and the education professors have not been able to decide quite yet, Oklahoma's Career Clusters have been doing just that. The idea begins with grouping any number of occupations into general career areas—business management, sales and service, engineering and mathematics, for instances. Each cluster is then fitted with its own match of interrelated technical, academic, and workplace skills. The result is an invaluable planning device that can illuminate a student's entire educational pathway.

It must be admitted that other states have been doing this, too, if, for no other reason, because contemporary federal law—the so-called Carl Perkins legislation in particular—actively encourages that they try. It can be argued, however, that no other state has done as much as well for as long as Oklahoma. Why else did the U. S. Department of Education, in June of 2001, select Oklahoma for a $2.2 million federal grant to identify the knowledge and skills that will help twenty-first century students connect what they learn in school with what they can do in the future?[60]

There is every reason to believe that whatever they will be learning and whatever they will be doing, both will share some basis in electronic communication. When they get there, Oklahoma will be waiting for them. In fact, Oklahoma is there right now, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week via its *Career*Tech

Learning Network. In part because Washington considered the possibilities worthy enough for a special $921,000 federal appropriation, the Learning Network was able to put its first courses online in the spring of 2002.

Will it pay off? Given Oklahoma's record, the question is not *if* but *how much*. Just look at what Oklahoma has shown it can do. The U. S. Department of Education took a look for itself in 2001, while it was seeking the very best of America's best programs, those that were truly exemplary, programs that did anything anyone might expect of a great program.

The standards were so high that the department expected that very few schools, maybe none at all, could meet them. Merely to be considered, a program had to have shown over and over that it has regularly improved personal skills, that it has done that effectively enough to measure, and that it has done it decisively enough to improve personal lives as well. Moreover, the entire curriculum had to build upon a solid base in the relevant academic disciplines while simultaneously assuring mastery of every current technical application. Every element and every instance of both classroom and applied instruction had to be models for rigor as well as relevancy.

There was one thing more: The United States Department of Education was looking for those rare programs that did more than prepare people for work, no matter how well it prepared how many for what. An exemplary program was one that turned out citizens prepared for a lifetime of enriched learning.

It was hard to find a program that excelled in even one of these qualities, not to mention in all of them. In the entire nation, the department found exactly three that did. Anyone who wants to see one now has it a lot easier. Take a short drive along State Highway 33, across Creek County to Drumright, Oklahoma.

The route passes through a lot of history.[61] The center of an incredible World War I-era oil boom, Drumright—pretty much all of Creek County—has slipped quite a lot since. Not until 2000 did the county's population match again the 64,000 recorded in the census of 1930, and that was in residents, not in wealth; Creek County's per capita income (estimated to hover around $17,000 in 1998) puts it fifty-first among Oklahoma's seventy-seven coun-

ties. Drumright has so faded that the state's designated "Major Cities of Oklahoma" makes no place for it. The Village is there. Bethany is there. Mustang is there. Drumright is not.[62]

The future looks better, though, and the Drumright campus of Central Tech is a big reason why. Everything it does is impressive, most of it is extraordinary, and one is exemplary. At least that is what the U. S. Department of Education has said of Central Tech's telecommunications program—that it is one of three truly exemplary programs in the nation.

It did (and it does) everything that anyone can desire, starting with an integrated curriculum and inspired instruction that improves—that changes—people's lives. It routinely takes fresh high school graduates and unskilled adults, gives them two years of technical, academic, and life-skills training, and sends them off to jobs that pay $40,000 a year or more with companies that are desperate to pay for their abilities.[63]

How typical is Drumright, though? Maybe its exceptional results come only from exceptional circumstances. What would happen in a less promising site, and what site could be less promising than a prison?

Nearly every Oklahoma prison is the site for a so-called Skills Center. Since beginning in 1971 with a few occupational training programs for a handful of inmates, the CareerTech Skills Centers Division (CTSC) has evolved into a virtual statewide school system. It maintains "campuses" at eighteen public prisons, one private prison, and four juvenile facilities. Of course, the length of its "semesters" varies with the length of its students' sentences (ten months is the average), and the curriculum is unusually heavy on basic life and coping skills. All that aside, though, how well has it done, given such difficult circumstances? In other words, has it paid off?

In recent years, eight hundred or more people at any one time have special hope that it will. They are its students, the inmates who want to get out, to stay out, and to do better. Every Oklahoman who pays taxes should wish them success. In a state with a prison population of 23,000 and more, when the annual cost per convict runs to $15,000 and above, and with a recidivism rate that practically guarantees that many of these convicts released

today will be criminals returned tomorrow, every taxpayer has every reason to hope for good results.

The results are good, good enough that every taxpayer ought to celebrate. In recent years, nearly three-quarters of CTSC's graduates go straight into training-related jobs. Enough find other work that close to 90 percent of the total will be working immediately upon their release. On the average, they will draw wages that approach $10 per hour. Some will be back in a while but not many; typically only 2 to 3 percent of the trained inmates return to prison within a year. Those few will go back to being tax-eaters, but the rest will have become taxpayers, permanent taxpayers instead.[64]

That is quite a difference. But, then the recent years have yielded differences that have been much greater even than that. The differences—the differences between then and now—represent not only history's story but also history's value. The reason is that only those who understand this history will be able to appreciate their present.

Only those who do know history will be likely to note that schoolchildren today call agricultural education what every generation before theirs thought of as vocational agriculture. Only they can appreciate just how unusual and just how important it is when they see young schoolgirls in blue-and-gold corduroy jackets or when they learn that one of today's favorite FFA projects involves supervised practice in the installation and maintenance of shade-tolerant lawn grasses.

A person who knows this history will notice that there is no home economics now. There is something called family and consumer sciences education, but that is not home economics. What it is, though, is something very close to what was called domestic science long ago, back before any school superintendent ever thought of having a home economics class clean his home and cook his breakfast. Its philosophy, its methods, its content—everything that defines this thing called family and consumer sciences—look a lot like what its founders expected of the American Home Economics Association when it was founded in 1908.

In fact, this new thing called Career and Technology Education itself also looks a lot like what Dr. Runkle thought he was seeing

more than a century ago. Its philosophy, its methods, and its content also can remind the historically conscious of what vocational education has been as well as of what it might have been. More than that, it permits at least fleeting intimations of what all of education at its very best could have been, what it might have been all along had it not been for the self-interests of some and for the short-sightedness of others.

Not many Oklahomans will be able to reflect on that, for not many will ever know this history. Nonetheless, there is one piece of this history that every Oklahoman, even the newest, must know. Here it is:

Today's *Career*Tech is one of the things that Oklahomans do best—meaning that it is something that Oklahomans do better than just about anything else and better than just about anyone else, too.

One of those who knew and appreciated that fact was Pete Buswell, a veteran of more than 30 years in the information technology field and its related learning services. He came from Waltham, Massachusetts, to replace the recently retired Ann Benson on January 13, 2003. Only the fifth state director in the system's entire history, he was, of course, the only one not to have risen to that position from the ranks or even from within the state.

The reason was that both Pete Buswell and the system he led followed very different paths to mesh with each other. Buswell's path was biographical; the system's path was historical.

In the end, the divergence in those two paths was too much to overcome. After a difficult five-month tenure, characterized by rocky relationships with some members of the legislature, some from within the system, but more importantly from within the board that hired him, Buswell concluded that his decision to lead the system was an ill-timed career move. On May 21, 2003, the State Board accepted the New England native's resignation as state director, and he returned to Massachusetts. That same day, Phil Berkenbile was appointed as his interim successor.

Berkenbile brought a long and respected history to his new assignment. He had functioned for two months as Buswell's chief of staff, previously serving as the agency's associate state director of

educational services. His work as an agricultural education teacher at Morrison Public Schools, as a state agricultural education program administrator, and later as Morrison's school superintendent, had prepared him well to restore harmony to the system he was appointed, at least temporarily, to lead.

The date is July 1, 2003. At this writing, Berkenbile continues as state director. The State Board is expected to begin a search for a permanent director, and as a result, will either remove the word interim from Berkenbile's title or select another to fill the prestigious post.

Regardless, as any one of the former five directors will tell you, the system is bigger than any one person. As it has worked out, Oklahoma has built a national reputation not because of its director, but because it has learned a critically important lesson.

Oklahoma has learned that it must reach outward, that it must reach inward, and it must reach upward. It has learned that it must never stop reaching.

Notes

1. Tuttle offers that judgment in his oral history interview with Leo Presley, Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, June 16, 1995.

2. Oklahoma City *Daily Oklahoman*, January 11, 1986.

3. The out-of-state consulting firm was Ling-Timco-Vought, of Dallas, Texas. Its full report is available in the library of the Oklahoma *CareerTech* headquarters in Stillwater. The in-state examination is by Maurice W. Roney and Paul V. Braden, *Occupational Education Beyond the High School in Oklahoma: An Analytical Study with Recommendations for a Statewide System for Manpower Development* (Stillwater: Oklahoma State University Research Foundation, 1968).

4. The first opened in Tulsa in 1965. In the next three years, Oklahoma City, Duncan, Enid, and Ardmore added schools.

5. For the accounts of the overall process and reasoned judgments on it, see: Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 203-207.

6. "History of Vo-Tech in United States in General," undated, unpaginated, and unpublished paper, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education.

7. Larry Hansen in oral history interview with Leo Presley, April 23, 1996.

8. That did not mean that other states had to send their people to observe Oklahoma personally (although many did.) All they really had to do was assign them to read the eighth chapter of the AVA's authoritative guide, namely: Francis T. Tuttle and Charles O. Hopkins, "Implementation of the Planning Program, in Carl S. Lamar, ed., *Comprehensive Planning for Vocational Education: A Guide for Administrators* (Arlington, Virginia: American Vocational Association, 1978), pp. 203-211. There they could see how the nation's leading experts went about planning. It was everything they needed to know.

9. The following long discussion is based upon the interview that Leo Presley did with Francis Tuttle and Arch Alexander on June 16, 1995. A transcript is in the author's possession. All quotations come from that source.

10. Tuttle, himself, relates the story, complete with quotations, in his oral history interview with Leo Presley, April 23, 1996.

11. Tuttle quoted in Roy Virgil Peters, Jr., "A Case Study of Three States Identified as Having a High-Quality State Vocational Education System," unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1987, p. 61.

12. The biographical sketches that follow come from Roy P. Stewart, *Programs for People: Oklahoma Vocational Education* (Oklahoma City: Western Heritage Books for the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education, 1982), pp. 100-102, 96-97, 179-184; and Lucille Patton, "Leadership Unparalleled," unpublished and undated manuscript in author's possession, pp. 18-52.

13. Peters, "A Case Study of Three States Identified as Having a High-Quality Vocational Education System," p. 64.

14. The description comes from Tuttle's oral history interview with Leo Presley, March 28, 1996.

15. Tuttle quoted in Peters, "A Case Study of Three States Identi-

fied as Having a High-Quality Vocational Education System," p. 64.

16. Quoted ibid., pp. 65-66.

17. As it happens, Arch Alexander later made the observations himself and the following comments are based upon his conclusions. They are available in Alexander's interview with Leo Presley, April 23, 1996.

18. Francis T. Tuttle and Arch B. Alexander, "Vocational Education and Economic Development," in Paul V. Braden, ed., "Human Resource and Regional Economic Development," unpublished staff report for the Office of Economic Research, United States Economic Development Administration, 1977, pp. 211-229; Lucille Patton, "Physical Facilities, Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education," unpublished paper in author's possession, p. 4.

19. Tuttle and Alexander, "Vocational Education and Economic Development," pp. 229-232; Stewart, *Programs for People*, pp. 157-159.

20. Francis Tuttle oral history interview with Leo Presley, April 23, 1996; Tuttle, "Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma: An Overview," bound but unpublished paper, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education Library, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1982, pp. 6, 15-16.

21. "Eighth Annual Report of the Oklahoma Advisory Council for Vocational-Technical Education" (1976), pp. 9, 18.

22. Arch Alexander in oral history interview with Leo Presley and others, April 10, 1996.

23. Tuttle and Alexander, "Vocational Education and Economic Development," p. 220.

24. Press release, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, May 9, 2002. Since its completion, Goodyear's Lawton facility has undergone seven major expansions, which represent a combined investment of $5.5 billion. In its twenty-five-year history, Goodyear has relied upon the Great Plains school for most of the 4,900 who have worked there at one time or another. Now the largest single producer of tires in the world, Lawton's Goodyear plant currently employs 2,300 and pumps an estimated $150 million into the area economy every year.

25. Tuttle quotation in his oral history interview with Leo Pres-

ley, April 23, 1996. See also Tuttle, "Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma: An Overview," p. 8.

26. Oklahoma City *Daily Oklahoman*, June 26, 1998.

27. Oklahoma City *Daily Oklahoman*, March 23, 1992.

28. Oklahoma City *Daily Oklahoman*, May 18, 1984; September 14, 1985.

29. See above, pp. 22-25.

30. Stewart, *Programs for People*, p. 124.

31. See above, pp. 000-000.

32. Wylie Chalmus Quattlebaum, "The Status of the Municipal Junior College in Oklahoma, 1938-1939," unpublished Master's of Education thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1939.

33. Stewart, *Programs for People*, p. 125.

34. Oklahoma City *Daily Oklahoman*, March 29, 1987; December 20, 1989, April 26, 1998.

35. Ibid., June 19, 1988.

36. Ibid., March 4, 1996.

37. Ibid. The observer was Philip Ring, whom Governor Frank Keating had appointed to the twenty-four-member group. The executive council was, itself, the product of an unfortunate mix of partisan and ideological politics. Legislators—in particular the Democratic leaders of both house and senate—had forced Governor Keating to create it by executive order after he had vetoed the legislation otherwise authorizing the vocational education board's collaboration in launching the School-to-Work initiatives.

38. Ibid., August 2, 1992; March 5, 1995.

39. Ibid., February 3, 1994.

40. Ibid., April 26, 1998.

41. Ibid., March 31, 1997.

42. Lucille Patton, "Curriculum and Instructional Services," unpublished paper in author's possession, pp. 1-4.

43. Stewart, *Programs for People*, pp. 204-207.

44. "Report of the Advisory Council" (1976), p. 9.

45. Oklahoma City *Daily Oklahoman*, May 10, 1987.

46. Ibid., April 26, 1998.

47. Mahmood Hajisadeghi, "A Descriptive Study of Ways High Technology Industries' Training Needs Can Be Met Through Oklahoma Vocational and Technical Schools," Unpublished Ed.D. dis-

sertation, Oklahoma State University, 1984, p. 70; Brenda McIntosh, "The Perceptions of Area Vocational-Technical Centers by Selected Chief Executive Officers of Large Companies with Offices in Oklahoma," unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1993, p. 97. The companies had to have a minimum of 250 workers for inclusion in the survey.

48. Oklahoma City *Daily Oklahoman*, November 3, 1998.

49. Ibid., January 9, 1999.

50. Ibid., December 2, 1995.

51. Oklahoma City *Daily Oklahoman*, January 23, 1999.

52. Arch Alexander and Leo Presley, oral history interview, April 23, 1996.

53. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 had mandated equity in the salaries and benefits paid most but not all workers, whether in the public or the private sector. It had to be amended in 1972 to extend the principle to these administrative, executive, and professional levels. See: Lou Ann Hargrave, "Trends in Minority Female Enrollment in Oklahoma Non-Traditional Vocational and Technical Programs from 1971-1981," unpublished master's thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1977, p. 14.

54. Tuttle in oral history interview, April 23, 1996. The other two, of course, were amending the constitution to finance the area school network and keeping post-secondary training out of the hands of Chancellor E.T. Dunlap.

55. Stewart, *Programs for People*, pp. 149-150; Tuttle, "Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma," p. 10.

56. Oklahoma City *Daily Oklahoman*, May 23, 2000.

57. Ibid., July 15, 2000.

58. Ibid.

59. "Realizing the Vision: Taking a Closer Look at the Facts," (Stillwater: Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, 2003), p.6.

60. okcareertech.org/pio/releases/release2002/cluster.htm, March 25, 2003.

61. At its peak, around 1915 to 1920, the so-called Drumright-Cushing field delivered nearly a fifth of the petroleum in the United States and around a twentieth of the oil produced on the planet.

62. *Oklahoma Almanac, 2001-2002*, 48th ed. rev. (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 2001). Data regarding Creek County comes from pages 416-417. A list of "Major Cities of Oklahoma" is at page 542. The list consists of thirty-eight cities ranked by the United States Census Bureau's estimates of populations in 1999.

63. Press release, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, April 12, 2001.

64. Press releases, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, February 6, 2002, and February 26, 2003.

Appendix

Selected Chronology

This selected chronology, draws primarily on information available in the text that it accompanies. Occasionally there are items taken from the research upon which the book is based, even if the particular details do not appear in the text, itself. Of special value in most of these instances is an existing timeline that was prepared anonymously but almost certainly by someone within what was then called the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education. Entitled "History of Vo-Tech in United States in General," it is both unpaginated and undated, but its last entry is for the year 1989. The complete typescript is available in the Resource Center of the Stillwater offices of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

1862

- By the so-called Morrill Act, the United States government donates portions of the public lands to each state as a permanent endowment for a college that will emphasize the study of agriculture and the so-called mechanical arts. Commonly referred to as A&M schools, these will also be known as land grant colleges.

1870

- The National Education Association is founded with the conviction that education must be considered a science and that educators deserve the status of professionals who earn rewards commensurate to their special expertise.

1872

- Iowa State College offers the first regular college courses in housekeeping. Of course, only female students are eligible for these pioneering classes.

1876

- At the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Dr. John D. Runkle, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, perceives in the Russian exhibit a method to unite academic with vocational education. Runkle's inspiration will in time be regarded as the original seed for what becomes the nation's system of vocational education.

1880

- Calvin M. Woodward introduces to Washington University, in Saint Louis, the nation's first complete curriculum for "manual training."

1886

- The founding of the American Federation of Labor (AF of L) marks the beginning of what becomes and long remains the most significant voice for organized labor in the United States. Especially in its early years, the AF of L will be extremely suspicious of introducing manual training to the public schools, union leaders seeing in this a ploy by management to weaken labor's control of entry into the most desirable crafts and trades.

1887

- The Hatch Act authorizes the United States Department of Agriculture to work with the nation's land grant colleges to establish agricultural experiment stations in every state. Within the year, the colleges and the new stations combine stations in every state. Within the year, the colleges and the new stations combine to form the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations.

1889

- By proclamation of President Benjamin Harrison, the so-called Oklahoma District becomes subject to settlement under the general land laws. Shortly thereafter, Indian reservations in the western part of latter-day Oklahoma will be similarly "opened" to settlement. As this happens, each area is added to Oklahoma Territory.

1890

- With a Second Morrill Act, the federal government broadens the mission of the land grant colleges, especially in their work with the farming and rural dwelling population. It also guarantees them continuing annual appropriations to support their work.

- Governor George W. Steele signs legislation prepared by the First Territorial Legislature to establish an "Agricultural and Mechanical College of the Territory of Oklahoma" and to place it in Payne County. The Stillwater site will be selected in the following year.

1892

- Jones Academy is founded near Hartshorne, in the Choctaw Nation. From the first, the academy offers agricultural, industrial, and "domestic" instruction, but it separates those subjects from its regular, academic curriculum.

1895

- The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) is founded. Identified primarily with very large corporations and firms, the early NAM will be especially critical of using tax monies for educating a working class.

1896

- John Fields, a recent graduate of Pennsylvania State University, arrives at Oklahoma's A&M college to teach both chemistry and physics and will soon emerge as the territory's foremost advocate of a scientific approach to agriculture.

1899

- In the first of what will become annual conferences, advocates of what they think of as "domestic sciences" push to have the field recognized as a scientific discipline when practiced by trained professionals.

1900

- Nationwide, some thirty colleges or universities routinely offer courses in domestic sciences like cooking and sewing, as well as in more specialized offerings, a typical one being "The Management of Help."

1902

- The Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union is organized, dedicating itself to the education of "the agricultural class in scientific farming." As such, the Farmers' Union will become a major sponsor of instruction in vocational agriculture through the public schools.

1905

- H. F. Rusch, a graduate of the Kansas State Normal School, leaves Jones Academy, where he had been teaching since 1903, for Oklahoma City, where he will build what is credited as the first effective manual training program for any public school in what becomes Oklahoma. Within two years, Lawton, Comanche, and Ardmore also will have successful programs.

1905

- Inspired largely by John Fields, the Oklahoma territorial legislature requires that agriculture be taught, both as a science and as a vocation, in all of the territory's public schools. The statute is emasculated, however, when teachers and their allies defeat a necessary companion measure to require that the field be included in the preparation of all teachers.

1906

- A nationwide movement on behalf of vocational education culminates in the founding of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education (NSPIE). At this point and for several years to come, the effort targets states, encouraging that each incorporate a full vocational curriculum.

1906-1907

- Voters elect delegates to prepare a constitution for the nation's forty-sixth state: Oklahoma. The vast majority of those elected have benefitted from the active endorsement of the Farmers' Union, and the constitution they produce is the nation's first to mandate anything like what is found in its Article 13, section 7: "The Legislature shall provide for the teaching of the elements of agriculture, horticulture, stock feeding, and domestic science in the common schools of the State."

1910

- According to the NSPIE, twenty-nine of the nation's forty-six states offer at least some form of vocational education in their public schools.

1912

- The NSPIE hires Charles A. Prosser as its full-time secretary, and Prosser sets up an office in Washington, near Capitol Hill. Thereupon, the organization will shift its promotion of vocational education from

the states and state legislatures to the federal government and Congress.

1914

- By a resolution approved on January 20, Congress authorizes the president to appoint a Commission on Aid to Vocational Education and orders the commission to report its findings and recommendations by June 1. President Woodrow Wilson's appointees include Charles Prosser of the NSPIE and Senator Hoke Smith and Representative Dudley Hughes, both of Georgia. The outbreak of the First World War that summer slows the commission's work and forces a postponement of its deadline.

1916

- Since statehood in 1907, the Oklahoma legislature has regularly provided support for vocational agriculture in the state's schools. More comprehensive forms of vocational instruction are also available in the public schools of Ponca City, Drumright, Checotah, and Muskogee, among others. In addition, the state also funds vocational work at its two college preparatory schools at Tonkawa and Claremore.

1917

- Having earlier received the recommendations of the Commission on Aid to Vocational Education, Congress passes and President Woodrow Wilson signs the so-called Smith-Hughes Act on February 23.
- On March 24, within weeks of the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, the Oklahoma legislature officially agrees to accept its terms and promises to "meet all conditions necessary" to receive federal funding for its participation in the program. A federally approved plan is required by the law, and Oklahoma's plan is formally accepted in August.

1918

- In the first school year under the Smith-Hughes law, total enrollment in all forms of vocational training is just under a thousand. Only fourteen schools offer home economics, and they teach just over 400 girls. Only 276 boys study vocational agriculture, most of them in a state preparatory or secondary agricultural school. The Trades and Industries Division prepares not one person for either a trade or an industry. Instead, every one of the 318 young men it enrolls is an army draftee training for the world war.

1925

- The American Vocational Association is founded as the nation's principal voice for vocational education.

1926

- The annual state fair sees the formation of the Farm Boys' Country Life Achievement Club, a precursor to what will evolve into the state FFA.

1927

- Vocational rehabilitation is made a responsibility of the state board and assigned its own division: the Division of Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation. It will remain with vocational education for ten years, when it will become a division directly under the State Department of Education.
- Two new positions (each an area assistant supervisor) are created for the Division of Vocational Agriculture. The first to hold them are Ross Floyd, who is assigned eastern Oklahoma, and James B. Perky, who is given charge of the state's western portion.
- Vocational agriculture teachers from across the state use the occasion of the annual interscholastic conference at Oklahoma A&M College to form the Future Farmers of Oklahoma.
- Under the leadership of Langston University's D.C. Jones, 13 local chapters comprised of 403 boys form the New Farmers of Oklahoma. Like all of vocational education in Oklahoma (for that matter, like nearly everything concerned with public education at all), vocational agriculture is thoroughly segregated. Thus, the NFO is a club for black schoolboys only. The Oklahoma club will become a charter member of the nationwide (and just as segregated) New Farmers of America when it is formed eight years later.

1928

- Representatives of several states' student organizations meet together at the American Royal Livestock Show in Kansas City, where they launch the Future Farmers of America (FFA). Oklahoma is accepted as an early member.

1929

- Oklahoma establishes a new State Board of Education to consist of six gubernatorial appointees plus the elected state superintendent of public instruction, who will chair it. In addition to its many duties overseeing every form of schooling except higher education, the board is also designated Oklahoma's official State Board for Vocational Education for governance under the Smith-Hughes Act. In addition, vocational education is assigned to its own division within the new department.
- The George-Reed Act extends and amends the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. In addition to increasing the federal support for all of vocational education, the new act gives home economics the status of an independent division (heretofore, it has been under trades and industries), and it assures home economics a fairer share of future federal funding.
- Tulsa Public Schools offers one of the nation's first programs in what will later be known as distributive education. Called retail selling, Tulsa's program places high school students with local retailers and complements their work experience with classroom studies.
- Henry G. Bennett assumes the presidency of Oklahoma A&M College.

1931

- James Barney Perky replaces E.B. Nelms as state supervisor for vocational agriculture.

1932

- Perky moves his division to Stillwater into facilities that President Henry Bennett has made available on the campus of Oklahoma A&M College.

1935

- The George-Ellzey Act replaces the George-Reed Act of 1929. The principal change is to add another half-million to bring the total federal supplement for vocational agriculture and home economics to $3 million each. The law also makes available, for the first time, federal funds to train teachers and to supplement their salaries for what it calls distributive education.
- With the expiration of their teaching contracts on June 30, more than thirty of the state's best vocational agriculture teachers resign to accept better-paying positions with the federal Soil Conservation Service.

1937

- Oklahoma's (white) home economics students and their (white) teachers organize the Future Homemakers of Oklahoma. As with vocational agriculture, a segregated, all-black New Homemakers of Oklahoma will also be organized, and this will happen in 1943. The Oklahoma groups will become members of the Future Homemakers of America or of the New Homemakers of America when they are later founded (separately, of course), the FHA in 1944, the NHA in 1945.

1938

- Henry Bennett arranges for federal funds to construct a frame building that Perky and his staff will occupy on Stillwater's Monroe Street.

1940

- After the sudden and shocking fall of France to Nazi armies, United States Commissioner of Education John Studebaker assembles a small panel consisting of the nation's most esteemed vocational educators and asks that they plan to train 1.25 million defense workers in the next twelve months. J.B. Perky is one of the few summoned, and the recommendations that he and the rest offer become federal policy in precisely twenty-three days, when the Vocational Training for War Workers Program is created and assigned to each state's Division of Trades and Industries. J.B. Perky thereupon becomes both Oklahoma's director for war production training and state supervisor of food production training.

1941

- A new law in April reorganizes the State Department of Education, even though it continues the arrangement of having the State Board of Education perform double-duty in the guise of the State Board for Vocational Education. One change in that respect is that the vocational board is authorized to add two new positions: an executive officer for the board and a director for the state vocational system that it oversees. On June 6, the board fills both positions at once: James Barney Perky becomes state director of vocational education as well as executive officer of the State Board for Vocational Education. While accepting his new responsibilities, Perky also insists upon retaining his position as state supervisor for vocational agriculture.

1942

- Tulsa opens a Douglas bomber plant in the city's northeast corner, where it will produce 3,138 B-24 Liberators; outfit another 4,000 military airplanes; and produce, pack, and ship 20,000 tons of aircraft parts. Immediately east of Oklahoma City, Tinker Field and the manufacturing plants that surround it begin to build and outfit C-47s and other vital planes. In each case, thousands of highly skilled aircraft workers will be needed, will be trained, and will be hired.

1943

- The Association of Oklahoma Distributors Clubs is officially organized and recognized as the student organization associated with distributive education.

1945

- Distributive education, which has been assigned to the Trades and Industries Division, is separated and given independent status.

1946

- The George-Barden Act more than doubles annual appropriations for all forms of vocational education and alters the formula for their distribution. Despite the significant gains made in Oklahoma (and elsewhere) by industry, the revisions tend to benefit vocational agriculture relative to other programs.
- The State Board of Vocational Education contracts with the United States Veterans Administration to produce a Veterans' Agriculture Training Program, which is to offer "institutional-on-farm-training" for veterans.

1947

- Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) is formed at a convention of state organizations held in Memphis. Oklahoma becomes a charter member.

1951

- After the house of representatives passes a bill to end all funding for distributive education, J.B. Perky (and others) ignite a firestorm of protests that ends with the senate restoring at least some of the funding,

half of it. Similar maneuvering two years later forces the new administration of Dwight Eisenhower to triple federal spending for DE.

1954

- Future Business Leaders of America is chartered in Oklahoma as a club for college-age students.
- In what is commonly referred to as the Brown decision, the United States Supreme Court unanimously holds that legally imposed segregation of the public schools violates Constitutional guarantees under the Fourteenth Amendment. Although other states resist, all stubbornly, Oklahoma begins dismantling its separate-but-equal school system immediately. The beginning comes quickly for Oklahomans, but the end will come slowly for everyone.

1956

- With the so-called Health Amendment to the continuing George-Barden Act, Congress adds the preparation of practical nurses to the mission of state vocational education programs.

1957

- In May, Oklahoma A&M College is renamed Oklahoma State University.
- The launching of a Soviet man-made satellite, Sputnik, explodes into a frenzied reexamination of American education in general and of the nation's scientific and technical education in particular.

1958

- Many state vocational offices relocate to a remodeled brick building on Stillwater's West Sixth Street. The late Henry Bennett had the National Youth Administration build the structure back in the 1930s, and the university has made it available for vocational education's use.
- With the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), Congress opens the nation's purse strings to enrich virtually any form of education that in any conceivable way can be said to contribute almost anything at all to the nation's supposedly imperiled security. For the purposes of vocational schooling, the important section is Title VIII, which rewrites statutes as far back as Smith-Hughes. Doubling the money that already has been authorized, the new law insists that the added funds be used "exclusively for the training of... highly skilled technicians in recog-

nized occupations requiring scientific knowledge in fields necessary for the national defense."

1959

- Oklahoma State University creates and staffs a Technical Teacher Education Department. Its purpose is to produce instructors qualified to teach in technical training programs, in particular the new ones created under the NDEA.

1961

- Congress approves and President John Kennedy signs the Area Redevelopment Act, targeting regions of chronic unemployment for stepped-up job training.

1962

- Expanding on the previous year's redevelopment act, the Manpower Development and Training Act offers advanced technical training, particularly to the unemployed, more particularly still to those who are considered the victims of what is called automation.

1963

- After two years of study and deliberation, a panel of experts charged by the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to evaluate the state of vocational education in America issues a blistering report: *Education for a Changing World of Work*. It is extremely critical of traditional programming, in particular its focus upon occupational divisions, especially when so many of the occupations seem hopelessly outdated. Instead, it recommends that vocational education target not professions but people, especially those heretofore systematically slighted, if not ignored altogether.
- Inspired by certain recommendations from *Education for a Changing World of Work*, Title V of the National Education Improvement Act of 1963 both expands the federal role in vocational education and shifts its emphasis. Typical of its innovations is the act's rejection of the traditional formulas governing the distribution of federal aid to the states (heretofore, largely functions of where their residents live, of where they work, or of both) in favor of a distribution based upon the number of each state's residents within certain age groups. The act also encourages state experimentation in what are called area schools.

1964

- Largely in response to the 1963 act, the state vocational department adds new divisions responsible for business and office education, health occupations, and area schools. In addition, a new Division of Special Services is made responsible for various functions that are unrelated to any particular occupation or division.
- Acting primarily through the Tulsa Public Schools, Tulsa opens the state's first area school, with an initial enrollment of 321. Over the next three years, other area schools will open in Oklahoma City, Ardmore, Duncan, and Enid.

1965

- The new Division of Business and Office Education sponsors an affiliated student club, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). In 2000, all *Career*Tech programs in Oklahoma become affiliated with Business Professionals of America (BPA). A parallel club for students in programs under the Division of Trades and Industries is chartered as the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA). The name of the organization is officially changed to SkillsUSA-VICA in 1999.
- Oklahoma chapters of the New Farmers of America, all-black clubs made necessary by the earlier racial segregation of Oklahoma's schools and their FFA chapters, dissolve as they fold into the Future Farmers of America. In 1969 the membership increases again when girls are admitted to the national organization. The official name is changed to the National FFA Organization in 1988.
- The Future Homemakers of America and New Homemakers of America merge into one national organization, FHA. Oklahoma's Langston University will now have hosted the first national rally of the New Homemakers of America in 1945 and the last in 1965. The Oklahoma chapters of the Future Homemakers of America will be expanded to include HERO (Home Economics Related Occupations) chapters in 1981. In 1999, FHA/HERO will change its name to Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA).

1966

- During the May runoff elections, voters approve State Question 434, which permits one or more school districts to form a single vocational district, each to be governed by its own, elected vocational board and all expected to build and maintain area vocational-technical schools (AVTS).

- In November, Dewey Bartlett is elected governor. Between his election and his inauguration in January 1967, Bartlett commits himself to becoming Oklahoma's "job-gettingest" governor ever and resolves to make the state's vocational education system a major force in his crusade for economic expansion.

1967

- After forty-four years of service to vocational education in Oklahoma (the last twenty-six of them as its state director), James B. Perky retires. Francis Tuttle, who joined the staff just three years earlier to head the division established for area schools, is named his successor.
- In his first act as state director (and five years before any federal law will require it), Francis Tuttle orders that salaries be equalized at all levels without regard to gender.

1968

- The Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 fundamentally reorder the purposes and nature of vocational education in America.
- Two consulting groups, one based in Dallas, Texas, the other at Oklahoma State University, complete reports that are exceedingly critical of vocational education in Oklahoma. High on their common list of complaints are charges that the system wastes too many of its resources training people for jobs that no longer exist and contributes too little toward attracting the new jobs that are needed to replace them.
- By a legislative act made effective on July 1, governance of vocational education is transferred from the State Board of Education to the newly established State Board for Vocational and Technical Education. The same statute also establishes, as an independent executive agency, the State Department of Vocational-Technical Education (SDVTE).
- The administrative structure of the State Department changes dramatically, most notably with the delineation of eleven areas of responsibility that the department groups into six non-occupational divisions: business; finance and manpower training; area vo-tech schools; research, planning, and evaluation; educational services and administration; and special services.
- Oklahoma establishes a Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center (CIMC), which will soon become a national leader in the design, development, and dissemination of educational materials custom fitted to the needs of entire industries.

1970

- New legislation authorizes the SDVTE to purchase and lend industrial equipment and thereby to create a pool of equipment available for job training whenever and wherever needed. Two years later, Oklahoma State University will provide warehousing facilities on its Stillwater campus. By 1975 the equipment pool will include everything from power drills to forklifts—55,000 items in all.
- Tulsa Junior College, the state's first metropolitan two-year school, opens. Among its course offerings are those required for its 32 occupational programs, which share an opening-day enrollment of 839.

1971

- The first Skills Centers offer vocational training classes to inmates under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Corrections.
- Launched with funds from a federal grant, the SDVTE refashions mobile homes and dispatches them to seven of southeastern Oklahoma's poorest counties, where they serve as mobile counseling and guidance centers. The pilot program will be so successful that it will be extended to fourteen southeastern counties, and two new mobile units will be added, one based in Oklahoma County, the other in Burns Flat, for the state's southwestern region.

1972

- A new staff position is added to the SDVTE's administration—deputy state director—and filled by Arch Alexander. In that capacity, Alexander will relieve Francis Tuttle of the responsibility for day-to-day oversight of the headquarters staff and free him for other purposes.
- Congressional approval of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1972 expands occupational training, especially at the postsecondary level.

1973

- Tensions surface between the State Department of Vocational-Technical Education and the State Regents for Higher Education. At issue is control over the vocational programs that are offered through the state colleges and universities. The parties agree to compromise their differences beginning this year by entering into formal contracts whereby the SDVTE agrees to hand over to the regents the federal funds that it receives to support vocational education that is offered at the postsec-

ondary level. Such compromises will only delay final resolution, until the two parties can take their differences to the state supreme court. The court will decide the issue in favor of the SDVTE.

1974

- The Oklahoma Health Occupations Student Organization (OHOSO) is formed as the student club associated with the Division of Health Occupations. Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) will be officially organized in 1976 with Oklahoma as a charter state.

1975

- Encouraged by the United States Office of Education, Oklahoma takes the lead in organizing the Mid-America Vocational Curriculum Consortium, a multi-state project to coordinate, develop, and distribute curriculum materials that are usable across the entire central portion of the United States. Ann Benson, who joined the state staff as a curriculum specialist in 1973, will direct the project over its first ten years.

1976

- As a measure of vocational education's contributions to bringing new investments and jobs to Oklahoma, its various programs—the Training for Industry (TIP) projects in particular—are credited with being major factors in this year's increase of $58,471,000 in capital investments in Oklahoma and the addition of 2,672 new jobs for its people.
- Best known for its forbidding gender discrimination or bias in vocational education's programming, the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 are approved by Congress and signed into law by President Gerald R. Ford.

1977

- In June, Goodyear Tire & Rubber breaks ground to build a major manufacturing plant at Lawton. The company credits the Great Plains AVTS for its choice of the site. In fact, Goodyear will use the campus of the AVTS to train all of the employees it will have to hire until its own facilities are fully operational. Over the next quarter-century, Goodyear's Lawton plant will undergo seven major expansions at a combined cost of $5.5 billion to become the world's largest single producer of tires and pump $150 million annually into the local economy. Some 4,900 area residents will work there at one time or another over those 25 years; and 2,300 of them will be Goodyear employees in 2002 alone.

1978

- With the Moore-Norman AVTS responsible for the pilot program, the SDVTE prepares a job counseling, training, and placement service for what it describes as displaced homemakers. It thereafter will be added as a continuing service, and the U.S. Department of Labor will urge other states to consider it a model for similar programs across the nation.
- The American Industrial Arts Student Association (AIASA) is established with Oklahoma as one of the first state associations to charter. In 1988, the name will be changed to the Technology Student Association (TSA).

1984

- As a measure of the value that Oklahoma employers attach to SDVTE training, an estimated two-thirds of the state's largest and most competitive firms have made vo-tech certification a minimum requirement for hiring.
- Roy Peters, at the time head of the Canadian Valley AVTS, is picked to fill the newly authorized position of associate state director.

1985

- On December 31, Francis Tuttle retires after eighteen years of service as state director of vocational education. He is to be succeeded by his associate state director, Roy Peters. At the time of transition, vocational enrollments total over 200,000; and the system maintains a network of 25 area school districts with 41 sites across the state.

1986

- In his first year as state director, Roy Peters oversees the development of twenty-one Bid Assistance Centers. Located at various AVTS sites, the centers help Oklahoma firms collect $200 million in federal government contracts.

1987

- Due to the strengths of their AVTS facilities, two college-town rivals, Norman and Stillwater, land major new industries. For Norman, it is the newest manufacturing plant to be built by Hitachi, a Tokyo-based and globally involved high-tech firm. Stillwater's plum is a state-of-the-art production plant that will operate through a subsidiary of World Color Press.

- The State Department of Vocational and Technical Education and the State Regents for Higher Education begin to coordinate the parallel vocational programs that they offer at both area schools and nearby colleges. The first set of agreements matches programs in just four pairs of institutions. By 1993, there will be 180 more of these agreements in place, and the total will pass 250 by 1995.

1988

- The State Department of Vocational and Technical Education adds a Small Business Innovation Research program to help Oklahoma's technology-oriented firms compete for federal research and development monies. Similarly, the department's new Technology Transfer Network connects the state's companies directly to federal laboratories and assures them access to the other resources that are available through a number of federal agencies.
- New business programs are developed and directed specifically for the owners of small business (those employing fewer than twenty persons), medium-sized businesses, and for individuals who are considering opening their own businesses.
- The state agency informally drops the word State from the department name, making it the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education (ODVTE).
- Francis Tuttle is honored with election to the presidency of the American Vocational Association.

1992

- Sixty-four of the state's sixty-six largest processing and manufacturing companies require their current employees to update their job skills in this one but rather typical year. So confident are they of the state's vocational system, that all sixty-four rely entirely on the ODVTE to prepare and present all of the instruction their employees must have.

1995

- As an extension of Oklahoma's School-to-Work strategies, ninety of its high schools, nineteen of its area vo-tech schools, and twelve of its colleges cooperate in programs designed to integrate a student's academic and vocational studies from the junior and senior years of high school through another two years of postsecondary preparation.

- The American Vocational Association names Roy Peters the nation's outstanding vocational educator.

1999

- Roy Peters resigns as state director to accept a position with the Tulsa-based Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence. Over his tenure of thirteen years as director, total vocational enrollments have more than doubled to reach 481,821, and 29 vocational districts have made training easily accessible for 97 percent of the state's population through their 54 sites. Dr. Ann Benson is immediately named interim state director and will succeed Peters in the permanent position.
- After a series of devastating tornados strike all over the state on the evening of May 3, the department responds with a swiftness equaled only by its creativity. Within weeks, the ODVTE prepares and presents through thirteen of its area schools a complete "Skills to Rebuild" curriculum, classes designed to equip people with the skills they will need to repair their own homes and businesses.

2000

- By legislation signed by Governor Frank Keating on May 19, the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education is renamed the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. Its governing board is similarly renamed the State Board of Career and Technology Education. Not needing statutory permission, all area votech schools already have substituted the term *Technology Center* in their names.

2001

- The United States Department of Education awards Oklahoma a $2.2 million federal grant to identify and coordinate what the nation's twenty-first century students will need to learn in their schools if they are later to perform well on their jobs.
- The United States Department of Education identifies the telecommunications program offered at the Drumright campus of the Central Technology Center as an exemplary vocational program, one of only three in the nation that the department considers worthy of that high distinction.
- The Tinker Education Partnership Agreement, signed by Governor Frank Keating, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Sandy Gar-

rett, *Career*Tech Director Ann Benson, Hans Brisch, Chancellor of the State Regents for Higher Education, Tinker's Major General Charles Johnson II, and Robert Conner, executive director of Tinker's Air Logistics Center, commits the *Career*Tech system to train and Tinker to hire at least 3,400 of the new employees that the base will need to replace those scheduled to retire by 2007.

2002

- With the support of a special $921,000 congressional appropriation, *Career*Tech Learning Network offers its first on-line vocational courses.
- *Expansion Management,* the country's leading trade journal among economic development professionals, identifies Oklahoma's *Career*Tech as one of the nation's two most outstanding workforce training programs.
- Fulfilling the pledge she had made when accepting the position, Ann Benson announces her retirement in her fourth year as state director.

2003

- The *Career*Tech Skills Centers Division (CTSC) evolved into what amounts to a state-wide school system, with "campuses" at eighteen public prisons, one private prison and four juvenile facilities. In recent years, nearly three-quarters of CTSC's graduates go straight into training-related jobs, and enough others find work that close to 90 percent are working immediately upon their release. On the average, they draw wages approaching $10 per hour, and their first-year recidivism rate has been reduced to no more than 2 to 3 percent.
- On January 13, Pete Buswell, nationally respected for his management expertise in the field of worldwide learning services, succeeds Dr. Ann Benson as *Career*Tech's state director. Buswell is only the fifth to hold that position in the system's history.
- After a difficult five-month tenure, Buswell resigns on May 21. That same day Dr. Phil Berkenbile, a man with deep roots in the *Career*Tech system, is appointed interim state director.

Editor's Note: The following milestones are additions to the original Chronology. These items were provided by staff at the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

2003

- The Oklahoma State Legislature established a new structure for the State Board of Career and Technology Education. Whereas the former board consisted of 13 members, the redesigned board had nine members consisting of the state superintendent of public instruction, two members from the State Board of Education, five members appointed by Congressional district, and one at-large member.

2004

- The CareerTech System reached the milestone of 500,000 total enrollments during the same year that Dr. Phil Berkenbile was hired as the sixth state director in the system's history.
- In 2004, Oklahoma voters approved two state questions that created the Oklahoma Lottery Commission and the Oklahoma Lottery Trust Fund to help support education.
- The Oklahoma legislature passed State Bill 1271, which authorized technology centers to hire certified instructors to teach math and science (including calculus and physics) for pre-engineering, biomedical science, and biotechnology students. In addition, CareerTech partnered with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to launch the Cooperative Alliance Program, which allowed high school students to earn college credit toward science degrees by completing courses at technology centers or colleges.

2005

- In cooperation with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, the CareerTech state agency began producing the television program "Oklahoma Horizon," which focused on agriculture, economic development, and training and education for career success. The weekly 30-minute show aired for 12 years on OETA channels in multiple time slots. The "Oklahoma Horizon" staff ceased production in June 2017, largely due to statewide budget cuts that affected all state agencies.
- CareerTech, along with ACT, developed the Career Readiness Certificate to help job applicants prove to employers that they have the foun-

dational skills necessary to begin work and successfully participate in job training programs.

2006

- The 2006 Perkins Act, an updated version of earlier Perkins laws passed in 1998, 1990, and 1984, provided resources to secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs to support innovation and program improvement. The Perkins Act specifically includes career and technology student organization activities as an allowable use of funds at the state and local level.
- The first Oklahoma CareerTech Foundation Minority Scholarship was presented to recruit qualified individuals to pursue an educational plan in a college or university.
- A $1 million grant was given to the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education by the United States Department of Labor for its youthful offender program.

2007

- Technology Education changed its name to Technology Engineering and later to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
- Sixteen Career Clusters were created to provide an organizing tool or framework for schools, colleges, small learning communities, academies, magnet schools, Tech Prep sites and High School That Work sites.

2008

- The Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center began offering full-color curriculum to its customers, and the Printing Plant upgraded equipment to produce these products.
- Tri County Technology Center entered into a Cooperative Alliance with higher education. Now all 29 technology centers had Cooperative Alliances, making it a true statewide partnership.

2009

- The *Women in Leadership* program began to create a professional learning community that will maximize leadership opportunities for women in CareerTech education. The first cohort of women participated in four sessions where they learned how to influence others, communicate information, and lead and think strategically.

2010

- After several years of declining state revenue, the state agency began to adjust priorities and tighten its belt. In spite of the oil boom that occurred from around 2008 to 2015, Oklahoma public school funding faced a 24 percent budget reduction during that time. As one of many cost-cutting measures, CareerTech's Service Center and Warehouse divisions merged to increase efficiency. An early retirement incentive followed by a reduction in force resulted in 30 fewer full-time employees. (The early retirement incentive accounted for 21 of the 30 employees.)
- In July, State Director Phil Berkenbile began a one-year term as president of the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium.
- A partnership between the state agency and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education allowed 27 technology center districts to accept e-Transcripts, transcripts sent electronically, from their partner comprehensive schools.

2011

- The Oklahoma CareerTech Skills Centers School System celebrated 40 years of restoring lives.

2012

- Oklahoma Military Connection places civilian employers in contact with Oklahoma Transitioning military, veterans, service members, and their families. It is a cooperative effort among the following:
  - Oklahoma Employment Security Commission.
  - Office of Workforce Development.
  - Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (CareerTech for Vets).
  - Oklahoma Military Department (Employment Coordination Program).
  - Citizen Soldier for Life.

2013

- Following Dr. Berkenbile's retirement, in April 2013, the CareerTech Board named Dr. Robert Sommers the agency's seventh director. Governor Mary Fallin also named him the state's secretary of educa-

tion and workforce development. Sommers placed digital delivery as a priority for the CareerTech system. He facilitated a mini reorganization of the agency, in addition to strategic planning and performance-improvement efforts. After serving as state director for 16 months, Dr. Sommers returned to his home state of Ohio. (Dr. Berkenbile remained on the Oklahoma Technology Trust Board and the Oklahoma FFA Executive Board.)

2014

- The state legislature moved the Adult Education-Lifelong Learning grant to the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

2015

- The OkCareerGuide.org website is a partnership among the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, CareerTech for VETS, Oklahoma Works and Kuder Connect 2 Business. The website offers the following:
  - Education and planning resources and guidance for middle school, high school, postsecondary, and adult students.
  - Career transition information for veterans.
  - Resources for parents, teachers and school counselors.
  - Opportunities to target businesses and other potential employers.
- Dr. Marcie Mack becomes the eighth state director. She had served as the deputy state director/chief operations officer and the interim state director for the agency. Prior to coming to the state CareerTech agency, she served in various capacities at Autry Technology Center in Enid. During her tenure as state director, Dr. Mack created statewide advisory committees with business and industry leaders, students, educators and military personnel. She also continued to advance the system's mission in the midst of state economic challenges through partnerships with various entities.
- The Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education received approval to count several Project Lead The Way courses as math and science academic credits in the Achieving Classroom Excellence College Preparatory/Work Ready Curriculum and the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program. The approval resulted from cooperation among the state CareerTech agency, the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

2017-2018

- Nearly half (86,131) of Oklahoma ninth- through 12th-grade students were enrolled in CareerTech classes in FY2018.

2019

- State energy industry representatives create the Oklahoma Energy Workforce Consortium to ensure that a talented and highly skilled workforce is ready to meet the growing demands of a top Oklahoma industry. A goal of the consortium is to develop a career cluster for energy to make Oklahoma students more aware of the energy industry and the career paths available to them in energy. Governor Kevin Stitt also tasked the Oklahoma CareerTech System with creating a strategic emphasis on educating and training the next generation of the state's energy workforce.
- The state agency's appropriations request for fiscal year 2020 targeted narrowing Oklahoma's skills gap through a proposed funding increase to allow CareerTech to achieve the following:
  - Fund more than 130 unfunded programs and provide for 90 new programs to be added to K-12 CareerTech offerings.
  - Add 12 new programs in state correctional facilities that would serve 500 to 600 more inmates.
  - Increase Training for Industry Programs by 10 percent to more than 3,200 enrollments.
  - Increase customized training by 10 percent to almost 300,000 enrollments.
  - Increase certifications/credentials annually by 5 percent, adding almost 2,400 more during three years.

2020

- With the COVID-19 outbreak, the state CareerTech system responded to safeguard the health of its students, employees, partners, and the public. Agency and technology center leadership implemented specific measures to help mitigate the known and potential risks, in line with directives issued by the Governor and guidance provided by state and national public health authorities. These measures included implementing telework processes for agency and school employees, canceling or rescheduling events as appropriate, moving instruction to online platforms, and pursuing opportunities to proactively address the unique needs of partners and stakeholders statewide, among many other measures. A hallmark of the CareerTech System's response was

its flexibility in supporting the safer-at-home efforts of all Oklahoma residents.

- The Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education partnered with VirtualJobShadow.com to encourage more students to investigate nontraditional careers. A nontraditional career is one in which less than 25 percent of the labor force is of one gender.

2021

- The Oklahoma CareerTech Testing Center (CTTC), a division of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, began offering Class D written driver's license and motorcycle license tests throughout its network of test sites. CTTC and the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety entered an agreement to offer the tests through CTTC's network of test facilities.
- Oklahoma CareerTech and the Film Education Institute of Oklahoma signed a memorandum of understanding to work together and with other industry partners to provide training and curriculum to meet the film industry's employment demands in Oklahoma. The CareerTech system's network of school districts, technology centers and skills centers will offer career training for photographers, set designers, hair and makeup artists, grips, gaffers and other film and television production professionals.

2022

- Oklahoma CareerTech launched a video series highlighting career and training opportunities in Oklahoma's aerospace industry. The 40 videos features the stories of people working and training in nearly every sector of aviation and aerospace. The series, titled "Clear for Takeoff: Get Trained in Oklahoma Aerospace," was developed over several months in cooperation with the ACES program at the Oklahoma Department of Commerce.
- The Oklahoma Legislature appropriated $8.8 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to expand Oklahoma CareerTech programs and address the state's nursing workforce shortage.
- Following the resignation of Marcie Mack, Lee Denney was named as interim state director. Denney, a resident of Cushing, served in the Oklahoma House of Representatives from 2004 to 2016, representing District 33. She served on various committees, including appropriations and budget; higher education career technology; energy; eco-

nomic development and tourism; arts and culture, as chairman; and banking, as vice chairman. She also served as chairman of the appropriations and budget subcommittee on common education.

- The Oklahoma State Board of Career and Technology Education selected Brent Haken as the ninth state director of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. Haken began his official duties as state director in January 2023. He came to the state agency from Morrison Public Schools, where he served as superintendent.

Selected Photos

Mr. J.B. Perky
State Director 1941-1967

Dr. Francis Tuttle
State Director 1967-1986

Dr. Roy Peters
State Director 1986-1999

Dr. Ann Benson
State Director 1999-2002

Mr. Pete Buswell
State Director 2003

Dr. Phil Berkenbile
State Director 2004-2013

Dr. Robert Sommers
State Director 2013-2015

Dr. Marcie Mack
State Director 2015-2022

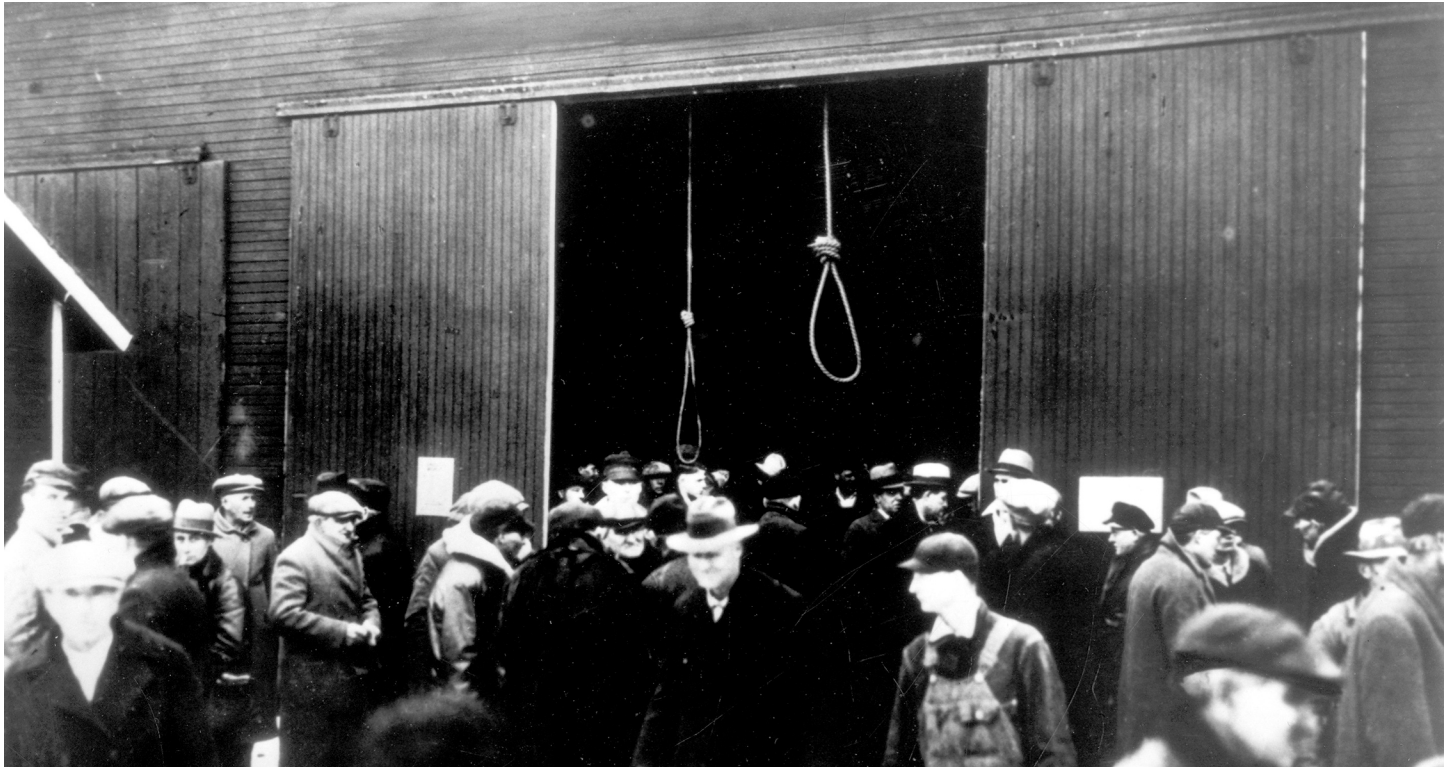
Mr. Brent Haken
State Director 2023-

Young Indian children were expected to learn the "skills" necessary to function in their conquerors' world—in this case, young girls train as seamstresses.

Western Histories Collection, OU Library

Poor agricultural practices and years of sustained drought caused the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. The winds whipped across the plowed fields, raising billowing clouds of dust to the sky. Throughout the decade, farm prices kept low, dust kept blowing, and agriculture teachers kept making a difference.

Perhaps no mechanical innovation meant more to American agriculture than did the small, gasoline-powered tractor. Henry Ford's version—the so-called Fordson—is shown here, probably in the 1920s, when they first came into widespread use in Oklahoma.



Western Histories Collection, OU Library

One of the most chilling sights from the hard-hit thirties was the forced auctions of family farms struck by foreclosures. This family's friends and neighbors hung a chilling message to indicate the fate that awaits the creditors and would-be bidders who would take this family's farm.

Carl Albert Collection, OU Library

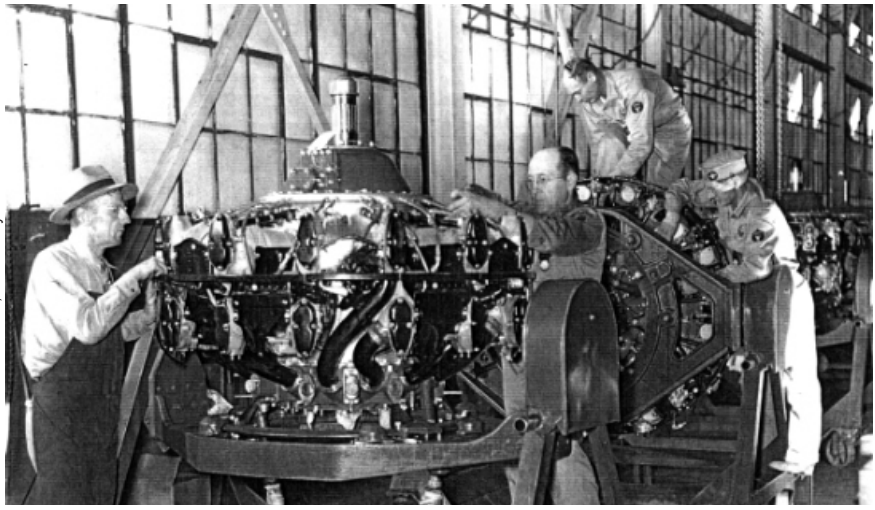
Two trainees, Orval Webb and O. I. Jenkins, learn to reline brakes in the National Defense Industrial Training Program. Their obvious age explains why they (and many others) were available for that training.

Carl Albert Collection, OU Library

Probably nothing under the National Defense Training Program meant more to the American war effort—or more to Oklahoma—than did the preparation of skilled aircraft workers. These workers had been on federal relief rolls before beginning their training at Stillwater.

Western Histories Collection, OU Library

"Shiny Noses Forgotten"—thus began this photo's original caption. The phrase says much about the day's prevailing attitudes concerning femininity, just as the picture is evidence of a process that will, in time, both overturn and overcome those views and replace femininity with feminism.

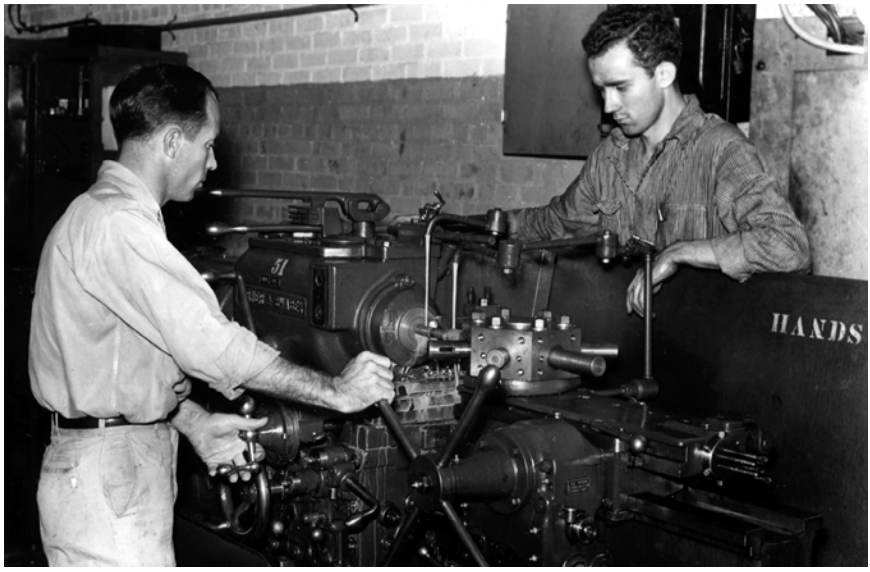


Western Histories Collection, OU Library

After receiving vocational training, these mechanics are using skills they never had before (aircraft engine repair) at an airbase that had not existed before (Tinker Field), which adjoined a city that had not existed before (Midwest City).

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

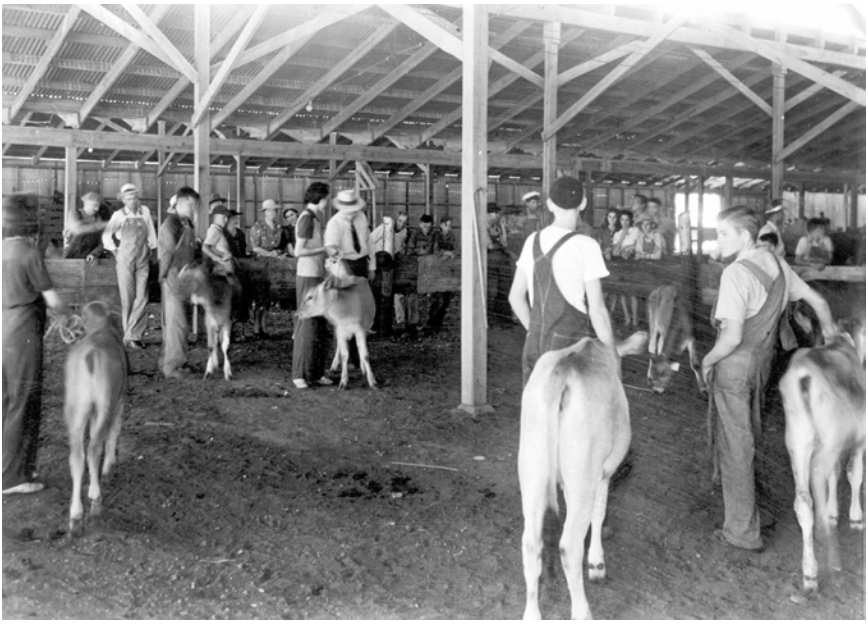
Students are intent on learning in this oxyacetylene welding lab in a late 1940s program. While other types of welding have significantly changed over the years, the basic concepts of oxyacetylene welding have changed very little.



Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

An instructor is demonstrating skills on a turret lathe in this early machine tool program. Until the late 1980s, when Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) lathes were introduced, this was the only way to mass produce machine parts with any consistency.

Farm boys showing their calves, a local livestock show, the poultry and produce exhibits at a county fair and an Oklahoma FFA member grooming his hog—these are the images that most Oklahomans had of vocational education during most of J.B. Perky's long reign.



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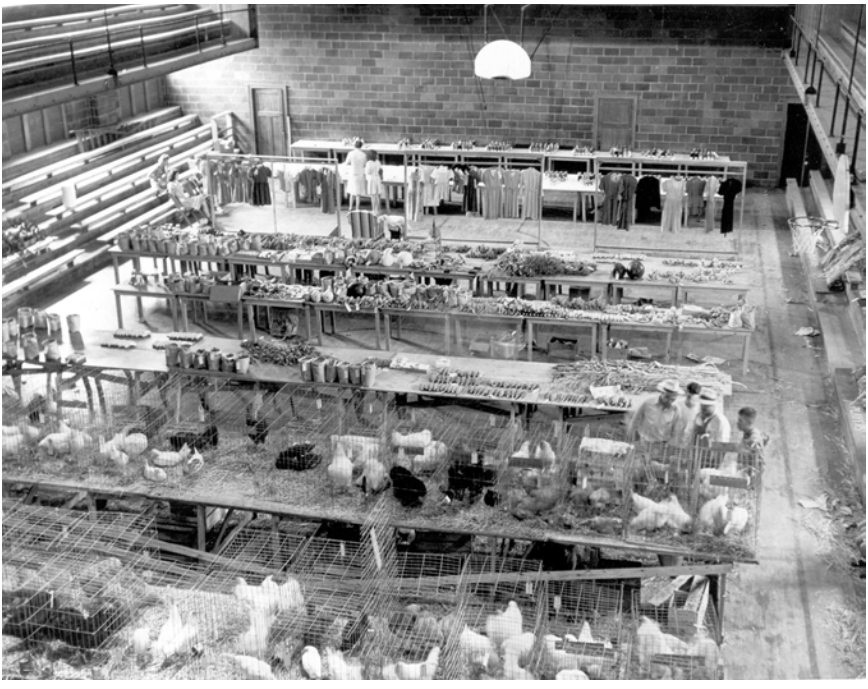


Western Histories Collection, OU Library

Western Histories Collection, OU Library

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Retired ODCTE deputy director Dr. Arch Alexander and U.S. Congressman Wes Watkins present a special award to Otha Grimes. Grimes, a Tulsa oilman and one of the initial inductees into the Oklahoma CareerTech Foundation's Hall of Fame, contributed greatly to the early success of the Foundation.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

The J.B. Perky Building, the first facility designed specifically for offices for the vocational and technical education staff, was built in 1969 and first occupied in January 1970. A host of dignitaries, including State Director Francis Tuttle, Mrs. Perky, OSU President-Emeritus Oliver Wilham, and OSU President Robert Kamm (second from right) dedicated the building to Perky.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

In 1978, the Oklahoma Legislature, at the recommendation of Governor George Nigh, approved a special appropriation to fund a memorial garden honoring former Governor Dewey Bartlett. Members of the Bartlett family were present on March 6, 1981, at the dedication. Governor Bartlett provided the initial impetus for the modern-day system of career and technology education. Gov. Nigh, left, and Dr. Francis Tuttle, presided over the dedication ceremonies.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Thousands of visitors from other states and foreign countries have traveled to Oklahoma to see the foundations of Oklahoma's highly regarded system of career and technology education. Louisiana's Governor Buddy Roemer, second from right, who headed one such delegation in the early 1990s, listens intently as Francis Tuttle Technology Center's Jim McGuiness, explains how Oklahoma's system serves the needs of the state's businesses and industries.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

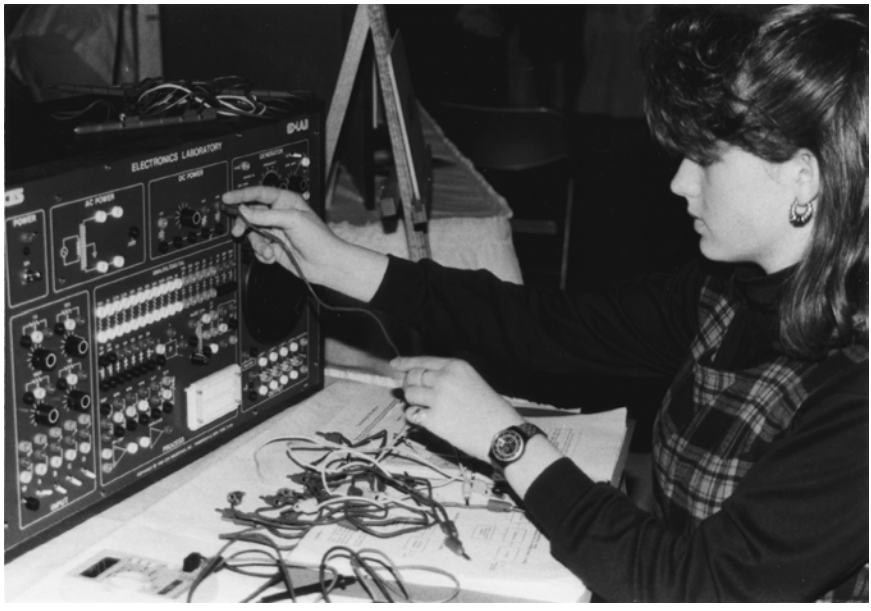
One of the reasons for the success of Oklahoma's CareerTech system is the outstanding support it receives from businesses and industries. One such supporter is American Honda, who provided a large donation of motorcycles and parts to Central Technology Center in Drumright in the 1980s.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

As Oklahoma's agricultural industry has matured during the last half century, so, too, has the curriculum of Oklahoma's agricultural education programs. Today's agricultural education students still learn about cows, sows, and plows but they also develop skills for a wide variety of current and emerging agriculture-related occupations. Here, Chickasha High School agricultural education instructor Shirley Stephens provides some flower arranging tips to her students.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Staying current with advancing technology is a constant challenge for Oklahoma's career and technology education programs. New technology is costly and ages quickly. In this 1990s photo, a student in the machine tool program at Tulsa Technology Center operates an automatic chucker.



Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

A technology center student practices a skill-building exercise in her electronics program.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Meeting the employee training needs of Oklahoma's businesses and industries sometimes goes far beyond the expected. In this 1980s photo, students in an electrical lineman training program at Meridian Technology Center get used to dangling from poles by playing catch with a basketball. This, and hundreds of other training programs, are customized to meet specialized needs of Oklahoma's employers.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Tinker Air Force Base has relied on Oklahoma's career and technology education system for more than three decades to update and upgrade the skills of current employees. A skills training center, located on base, offers training programs specifically designed to meet the needs of Tinker Air Force Base. The skills center was initially operated by the ODCTE but is now offered by Mid-Del Technology Center.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

In the mid- to late 1970s, the state equipment pool transferred two lathes and a mill, originally used by the military, to an Oklahoma City Skills Center after they were acquired as federal surplus property through the National Industrial Equipment Reserve (NIER) project.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Training programs are offered wherever and whenever needed for Oklahoma's businesses and industries. Employees may train at a technology center, in a rented facility, at a particular business or industry, or a mobile unit. Francis Tuttle Technology Center sent its mobile computer van to various sites throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Once populated entirely by young males, Oklahoma's agricultural education programs are increasingly serving females as well. Females now comprise a large percentage of the ag ed student population.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Ag ed programs have also moved from the country to the city. In this photo, students in the then Tulsa McLain High School agricultural education program finish a classroom exercise under the tutelage of Ernie Martens, program instructor.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Stanley Gault, president of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., was the keynote speaker for the "Salute to Oklahoma Vo-Tech" hosted in 1992 by the Nigh Institute at the University of Central Oklahoma. Gault lauded the system as a key partner in making Goodyear's Lawton plant one of the nation's premier tire manufacturing facilities.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Early day Licensed Practical Nursing programs were often offered through local hospitals, prior to the growth of Oklahoma's network of technology centers, beginning in the mid-1960s. Enrollment in LPN and other health occupations programs have skyrocketed in recent years. A growing number of specialized training programs are being offered in Oklahoma's technology centers, including such specialized fields as radiology technology, sonography, orthotics and prosthetics, and dental hygiene.

Oklahoma's network of technology centers began with Tri County Technology Center in Bartlesville (above), which opened as Oklahoma's first technology center district in 1967. The network became complete in 1991 with the establishment of Green Country Technology Center, Okmulgee (below).

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Jack Smith, longtime president and chief executive officer of General Motors, is one of Oklahoma CareerTech's biggest fans. Smith became enamored with the system when pioneering the GM Youth Education Systems, an effort to prepare the next generation of auto service technicians. Many of the first training programs were offered though Oklahoma's network of technology centers. In 1996, he traveled from Detroit to Tulsa to keynote CareerTech's annual summer conference.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

About half of Tinker Air Force Base employees are eligible for retirement before 2007, so the base has turned to Oklahoma's CareerTech system for replacement workers. Although a specialized CareerTech training center for incumbent workers has long been operated on the base, Tinker has greatly expanded its partnership with Oklahoma City area technology centers to train and hire new workers.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

One of Oklahoma's largest employers is Georgia-Pacific, which operates a paper mill in Muskogee. Plant Manager Karl Meyers says training programs offered through Indian Capital Technology Center have been an integral part of the success and continued growth of the Muskogee mill.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

Lawton's Goodyear Plant, the largest single producer of tires in the world, has relied on Great Plains Technology Center as its training arm for 25 years. In 2002, the $5.5 billion plant pumped more than $150 million into southwest Oklahoma's economy.

A Note on Sources

The literature on the history of American vocational education tends to be rather spotty. Only a few studies even attempt to place the subject within the broader history of American education in general. Fewer still do so with an eye to the even larger picture of the overall history of the nation, itself. Instead, most focus tightly upon the subject, never wandering too far from—or too high above—the immediate topic.

There is an obvious explanation for that: Most have been written by people who, themselves, have been very close to the subject. The effect is not only that they tend to be narrow in conception but that they also tend to be celebratory in style. The worst of them turn out to be both uncritical on their narrow subject and unaware of a context that would make it a larger one.

The same qualities usually characterize the sizable periodical literature on the subject. Again, only a very few take the trouble of providing a context for what they have to report; and the fact is that they usually are reporting, not analyzing. The difference is readily observable when one compares the handful of academic or professional articles that cover the field with the huge mass of journalistic pieces directed at a general public.

Exactly the opposite is true for another species of sources. Graduate theses and dissertations are directed at anything but a general audience. Sometimes, in fact, it is hard to see just what audience they are expected to address—at least what audience beyond the four or five academicians who serve on each student's graduate committee. Both the students forced to write them and the professors forced to read them are more to be pitied than censured. Perhaps because they live in a world in which the phrase "productive scholar" is actually thought to mean something

beyond its illustration of an oxymoron, they seem so determined that no one doubt the purity of their scholarship that they deliberately make its presentation so ugly and so unexciting that no one would ever think to question its virtue.

Ironically, much of the most insightful as well as the best written work on this subject comes from the most unexpected source: the publications, documents, and records of the public agencies that are responsible for vocational education, itself. Even the most bureaucratic and routine of official reports usually contain information pertinent to the agency's immediate purpose and relevant to a larger history as well. When these are supplemented with the non-official exchanges between policymakers—for example, what turns up in the papers of congressmen and others—the result is both rich and welcome.

This book has drawn upon all of these kinds of sources, and the bibliography that follows identifies them one-by-one and category-by-category. Note that, despite its possibly surprising length, it omits any number of works that I located and read only to discover that they were tangential to my writing as well as to the history of vocational education in Oklahoma. There are enough left, however, to provide abundant opportunities should anyone want to read more on any particular topic. Collectively, they also provide a pretty good start should someone someday decide to relearn and to rewrite this history.

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Danney and Grant Goble

Danney Goble is a Professor of Letters at the University of Oklahoma. He is a native Oklahoman, descended from pioneers who settled the Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory before 1900. Raised in Edmond, he holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Central Oklahoma. His master's degree is from the University of Oklahoma and his Ph.D. is from the University of Missouri.

Dr. Goble is author or coauthor of seven books, each of which has received one or more academic prizes. *Little Giant: The Life and Times of Speaker Carl Albert* was a 1991 nominee for the Pulitzer Prize in Biography or Autobiography, and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists honored *A Matter of Black and White: The Autobiography of Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher* as the nation's Outstanding Book in Political Science for 1997. His coauthored textbook on state history, *The Story of Oklahoma*, was named the 1994 Book of the Year by the Oklahoma Historical Society. *TULSA! A Biography of the American City* was the book that city commissioned to commemorate the centennial of its founding and also was a finalist for the 1998 Oklahoma Book Award.

As a teacher, Dr. Goble has been honored for Excellence in College Teaching by the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence. The Oklahoma Heritage Association awarded him the McCasland Prize for outstanding college teaching, and the University of Central Oklahoma has honored him as a Distinguished Graduate.

Editor's Note: Danney Goble died on March 8, 2007 at the age of 60.


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