

Legends of Osage County

When asked to tell about a city's history, often people will mention first the names of hometown heroes, those who became well known for their actions. Whether famous or infamous, these early movers and shakers helped shape the cities they came from. Some moved away from their Osage County roots, and then became nationally known. Others put their city 'on the map' while continuing to make a living there.



WILLIAM NEWTON

aka

LUCKY BILL

William Newton Sr., better known as "Lucky Bill," was one of those men whose life made a significant impact on the city he lived in, Quenemo. In later years, his daughter, Della "Dell O'Dell" Newton, surpassed her father in fame, being named "The World's Greatest Lady Magician."

Lucky Bill, born in 1859, made his debut in Quenemo during the fall of 1902, just after his 43rd birthday. He had already established himself as a wagon circus operator, operating "A First Class Vaudeville Show," a traveling exhibition that included magic, ventriloquism, marionettes, songs, marksmen and short sketches. The traveling show offered a variety of entertainment through the years, changing the acts to match the talent available.

From historical accounts, it was not a well thought out plan to stay in Quenemo that winter of 1902, but one that would serve the city well in the following years.

Lucky Bill's traveling circus performed all over Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado and Arkansas, mostly during the months of April through October.

He returned to winter in Quenemo, ultimately buying as many as 24 city lots and 23,000 square feet of farmland adjacent to town, as reported in an article written by Orin Copple King in 1992.

The local newspaper, The Quenemo Republican, reported in March 1905, "He is one of our best citizens and has helped more to build up the town during the past year than any other person here. He has bought tumbled down property and hired our mechanics to repair and improve it. He buys a large amount of provender for the herd of horses and other stock that he winters here and in the above ways helps nearly every family in the entire community. Lucky is always with us in all our enterprises and he does more charity work than any other citizen in town. His purse strings are always loose and his hands are always ready to help the needy."

Four years after the article appeared, a brief story in The Quenemo News explained that Lucky Bill was held in high esteem in Quenemo. He was fond of children and it was important to him to see them have a good time. He often gave children rides after school, using his circus ponies.

In 1910, Lucky Bill married Mae (Coyle) Dunlap, the circus piano player. This was at least the second marriage for both. Together, they raised five sons and a daughter.

Lucky Bill and Mae enjoyed a prosperous and exciting career, but it wasn't without its difficulties. Employing as many as 60 people at one time, travel was often a hardship, with dirt roads turning to bottomless mud paths at times. In 1915, less than 15,000 miles of

paved roads existed in the United States.

The 15 miles between Waverly and Burlington required two days of travel time for the entire show to arrive (as written in King's 1992 report). That was even after Lucky Bill had purchased two 3.5-ton Kelly-Springfield trucks and 12 trailers, along with several smaller trucks. Traveling by horses would have taken even longer.

Due to the draft and military needs, Lucky struggled to find working men. He also had difficulty with staffing when illnesses struck.

In 1909, The Quenemo News reported that Lucky Bill's son, William Newton Jr., became owner of a circus show, and used the title "Honest Bill" in advertisements. He had formed a partnership with W.L. Casten, and the two used a similar show format to that of Lucky Bill's.

The two Bills combined their shows on special occasions, most often to kick off a new season. Three years later, a surprise show in Quenemo, as advertised in The News, was slated for April 5, 1913. Another son, Henry, was starting up his own show, titled, "Happy Bill's Big Wagon Shows," and that date was to be a much-anticipated show where the men combined their efforts to showcase the best they had to offer.

Henry became ill with stomach trouble and was not able to perform in the combination show, but a month later he opened his show in Quenemo.

Over the course of his 20 plus years as a circus man, Lucky Bill established himself as an honest and fair man. Orin King's report states, "Nowhere in the press of Kansas can be found a disparaging remark. He was welcomed year after year to the small towns of Kansas as a friend. His shows were small but they were always inoffensive, entertaining and properly priced, and the public was always treated with respect."

In 1921, he sold his show to his son, William Jr. (Honest Bill), and continued to help on a limited basis. By 1928, he and Mae were enjoying a full social life in Quenemo, selling garden produce, playing Checkers with friends and tending to their real estate. He was a member of the Odd Fellows lodge and the Rebekas. He opened a Standard Oil gas station in 1928, even writing his own jingles (52 in all) for ads promoting the gas station in the newspaper.

Lucky Bill's demise came on a June day in 1937, when he was working at his son's circus show in Willimantic, Conn. He injured his ankle and it became infected, causing strep poisoning. He died two days later, June 19, at the age of 78, with Mae and Honest Bill by his side. He was buried at the cemetery, which was visible from his hospital room, at his request, in Willimantic.



The circus shows were entertaining to all who attended, and would change based on what types of talent were available.



O'DELLA NEWTON

aka

DELL O'DELL

Lucky Bill's only daughter, Della Newton, was born in 1902, and lived a life filled with entertaining others. Being the daughter of Lucky Bill, she grew up surrounded by entertainers and in front of the spotlight. Her early childhood was spent in the Quenemo area.

She learned to do tricks and acrobatics at an early age, becoming a serious advocate of women's health and physical fitness later. As a young woman, she combined educational health-related lectures with demonstrations using originally designed exercise gadgets. Her quick humor added to the event to make her a standout, and later, a national hit. Among her favorite feats at that time was to balance a large size divan on her chin.

At some point on her way to fame, O'Della Newton changed her name to the stage name "Dell O'Dell." She became fascinated with the world of magic and ultimately became one of the best-known women magicians nationally. She formed the "Friends of Magic Club," which boasted more than 20,000 enthusiasts. Considerable time and money was spent sending notices to each club member, at regular intervals, telling about something new in the magic world. She distributed hundreds of thousands of souvenirs and magi-

cal novelties to the club members over the years.

O'Dell married Charles Carrer, an expert juggler who was born in Switzerland. She had met him backstage. They lived in Long Island, New York, entertaining large crowds at posh venues. He was dubbed the "King of Jugglers" and she the "Queen of Magic." They also loved to entertain friends at the couple's home, which was filled with custom-designed metal furniture, including a collapsible chair, which provided amusement for all.

In an article titled, "Dell O'Dell on Both Sides of the Footlight," which tells the short story of her life of fame, the author writes, "Although Dell has played before the most famous people in modern history, she never forgets she owes a debt to the less fortunate. She is the favorite in orphanages, crippled children's homes and institutions throughout the country. Dell travels 75,000 miles a year giving magical performances, but never fails to go to hospitals and other like places where she puts on a full show at her own expense."

At Bank of Osage City, we are constantly looking to the future. With innovative new features and services, we look to serve a diversified audience. Keep your eye on us for upcoming products and services to suit our ever-changing customer.

Here you'll find the most flexible banking hours in Osage County

Lobby Hours:
Mon. - Fri.
8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Drive Up Hours:
Mon. - Fri.
7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Sat. 7 a.m. to Noon

Bank of OSAGE CITY

913 Market Street • Osage City • 785-528-5040



www.bankofosagecity.com

Bolz Insurance

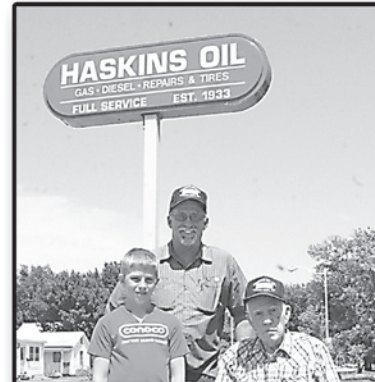
The smart way to buy insurance.



622 Topeka Ave.
Lyndon
(785) 828-4428

1610 S. Main
Ottawa
(785) 242-1907

3502 Westridge Dr.
Lawrence
(800) 400-4336



HASKINS OIL SERVICE

701 Market • Osage City
(785) 528-3732

Mon. - Fri. 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. & Sat. 7 a.m. - Noon
Since 1933

The late Cliff Haskins established the business in 1933 with the operation of a bulk truck route, servicing filling stations and farmers throughout the county. In 1957, his son Jack and wife, Darlene took over the business.



Jack and Darlene opened the station at 701 Market in 1961 when the owner retired.



Top left - Three generations stand beneath the Haskins Oil sign: Ryan, David, Jack.

The station photo at the far left was taken in the early 70's. The sign displays gas prices at 26¢. Block ice was also sold at the station and the ice house is visible in the background.

Valley View Village IV

511 Commercial • Carbondale

- Senior 62 or older, or disabled Housing
- One Bedroom Units
- Partial Utilities Paid
- Rent Based on Income
- Laundry on Site
- Activities available are: bingo, potluck luncheons, movies & games
- Community Room for your use
- Inside Mail Delivery

785-836-7123

Arlene High, Manager

TDD 800-766-3777

