

# The Sooner Magazine

OKLAHOMA



ALUMNI NEWS

## The Oklahoma Personality

### Three Traditions Have Moulded the Alert Sooner of Today

By Stanley Vestal, Author of 'Kit Carson,' 'Fandango,' etc.

**E**VERY Oklahoman who has travelled in other states must have felt a subtle difference in the people there. Undoubtedly, there is a distinct Oklahoma personality. Definition, however, is difficult. Most of the states on the plains were settled along straight East-to-West trails, and you have only to look to the eastward to explain them. But Oklahoma was settled by folks from all quarters of the compass, and the prosperity of the state continues to draw them. This fact makes definition difficult.

One thing, though, is certain. The Oklahoman, on the average, is a better man physically than other Americans. He has better health, greater strength, a finer physique. The official statistics for the draft in the late war prove that beyond a doubt. Eighty per cent of the Oklahomans drafted were found fit for military service—a record equalled by few states, and surpassed by none. The farther you go from Oklahoma—East or West—the lower the average, until you find in New York, New England, and California, a bare fifty-five per cent fit for duty.

This superior vigor is the basis of that alertness, that punch and go which is so marked a characteristic of the business and industry of the state. We pride ourselves upon our ability to get results, to achieve the end, even when the means to the end seem altogether lacking. But everyone has noted this quality in the Oklahoman; it is unnecessary to dwell upon such an obvious trait.

The peculiar character of the

Oklahoman has been formed by the influence of three great traditions brought here by the people who made the state. First, in order of time came the heroic Western tradition which arose in the days of Kit Carson and swept the Plains in the period of the great cattle industry—a tradition of courage, of absolute personal independence, of fine chivalry to all good women, of loyal friendship, and a basic conviction that every man should mind his own business.

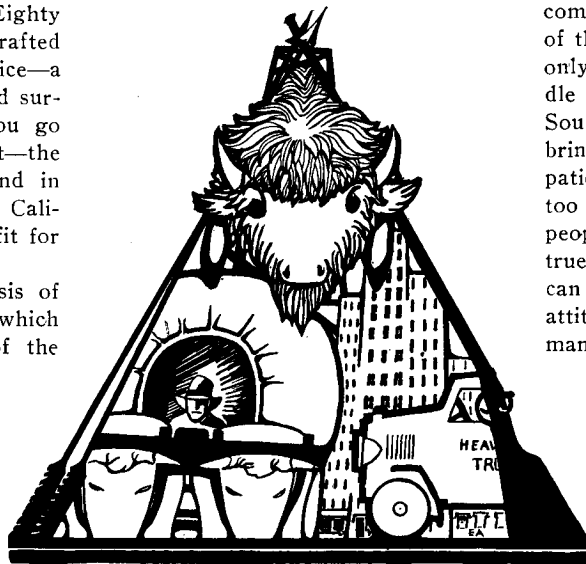
Second, the tradition of the Old South, which added a flower of old world courtesy to the simplicity and directness of the Western code, but was—in most ways—closely parallel in spirit. It is no accident that Owen Wister made his typical cowboy a Vir-

ginian. Both these traditions were essentially aristocratic, acknowledging no master, and though sometimes careless of the law, exceedingly strict in enforcing the code. Both were firmly rooted in Oklahoma before the third tradition came in. For the Texas cattleman and the Five Civilized Tribes brought in the southern tradition quite early, and the western tradition was here from its inception.

The third tradition was that of middle western Puritanism; it came in with the settlers who took claims and built towns as one reservation after another was thrown open. This tradition was based upon village life in New England, and today it flourishes in our small towns. At its best it was a fine thing, but it is out of favor in America today, and assuredly it has little in common with the aristocratic traditions of the south and west. It had no code, only a law, and was essentially a middle class point of view. Those of Southern ancestry or Western upbringing are apt to have mighty little patience with it; for it is altogether too much inclined to meddle with other people's affairs. And this is a thing no true Southerner, no true Westerner, can tolerate. You feel that it is not the attitude characteristic of the Oklahoman.

For example: at the University of Oklahoma an honor system against cheating in examinations was tried for several years. It failed, and was abandoned. Why? Because the code of Oklahoman, as understood by the cream of her young people, does not permit telling tales about

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OKLAHOMA—PAST AND PRESENT

Drawn by Elwyn Atkinson

# Norman's New \$150,000 Theater

*The Sooner Is One of Finest in Oklahoma; Open February 1*

*By Zona Moore, '30*

**T**HE finest theater of its size in Oklahoma will be opened in Norman about February 1 and it is being built with the desire of the university students as its guide. Harold Gimeno, '17 mus., '21 arts-sc., is architect and an owner.

The new \$150,000 theater, the Sooner, is in Spanish architecture, of yellow bricks, trimmed with white limestone and tile. The inner walls are also of brick and tile, bronzed and trimmed with wood carvings and cabinet work. The vaulted and beautifully decorated ceiling of the auditorium is doubly attractive because of its massive stained wooden beams and its hand painted decorations. These decorations are a feature of the entire building. In the auditorium they take the form of the various fraternity crests, painted in brilliant colors, and arranged along wooden beams.

The side walls of the room have tall, graceful arches, which give the appearance of huge windows, but are in reality blue backgrounds with soft lighting effects. In the archways and the beautiful stained glass windows will be hung draperies of velour, damask, and silver and gold cloths. Jeweled materials and Spanish shawls and banners will be hung from the walls and balconies.

Spanish decorations again predominate in the lobby, the walls of which are covered with brilliant tiles which have been imported from Valencia. These colors extend to the hand painted decorations on the stairways and the elaborately furnished lobby on the mezzanine floor. Bright drapes, thick rugs, overstuffed lounges and chairs, many floor lamps and hanging mirrors make this an imposing room.

The stage is large enough to accommodate any road show and the fly loft is high enough to permit the scenery to be taken up straight instead of being rolled up. Under the stage are the dressing rooms.

The unusual chandeliers which are of antique and vari-colored opalescent glass, were designed by Gimeno. In addition to these lights which hang from the beams, only soft indirect glows will light the auditorium. The

lights are controlled by a rheostat which permits their being dimmed or brightened slowly instead of changing them abruptly.

Besides the outstanding beauty of the building, is the comfortable capacity of its auditorium, which is 1,200, making it Norman's largest theater. Adding much to its attraction, is the \$15,000 vitaphone which is being installed now. The machine is the best which could be purchased and since it is the only one in town will insure talking pictures for the Sooner theater. Plans are being made for Orpheum circuit shows, but no positive decision will be made until some time in March, according to H. N. Britten, lease holder of the building and manager.

Britten, who has been a theater man in Norman for eight years, says of the project, "I believe the students will show their appreciation of a really fine thing by giving us more patronage than ever, and the townspeople are sure to come in larger numbers now that it be unnecessary to stand in line for an hour before getting a seat."

The leather cushioned chairs of the auditorium and the red velour chairs of the loges represent a cost of \$15,000. The loge chairs are the best procurable as are many of the other features. Gimeno expressed the belief that no theater in the southwest had more expensive or better materials than the New Sooner. The marble of the auditorium came from Italy and Vermont and the tile from Spain.

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## *The Oklahoma Personality*

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other people. The cheater was despised and ignored, and sometimes got better marks than those who had seen him cheat. But he was not reported.

**T**HIS tradition of self-respect and independence has enabled the Oklahoman to pitch in and do his work without worrying as to what other people might think of it. He is not ashamed of manual labor, if it is necessary, as the man in the East is ashamed. And the Southern

tradition has made him feel an obligation to be courteous, as well.

Everywhere in the east and middle west you will meet the servant who is too good for his job and wants you to know it. The filling stations and restaurants are full of them, people whose self-respect is so small that they are either servile or insolent. Of course, this deceives nobody: the man who shouts that he is as good as you are is always a man who has some doubt about the truth of his statement. If he were sure of it, he would not think about it at all. Such conduct is not a reflection of the typical Oklahoma attitude; it does not show the traditional influence. It is a rare thing in this state.

Which of these traditions will prevail, as the codes blend, is uncertain. But I, for one, cannot help believing that the aristocratic, self-respecting code will mark the true Oklahoman in the future as in the past. For it is not only a blend of the two finest codes of America—the Southern and the Western. It is not only a fine code, not only a heroic code, not only in accord with the traditional Washington, the traditional Lincoln. It inevitably appeals strongly to youth, and youth is the time when character is developed and standards of action established.

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When the Methodist church named Dr. John A. Rice, editor of the Oklahoma Methodist, and a leader in the modernistic wing of that denomination, to be pastor of McFarlin Memorial Methodist church in Norman, objection was made by the church board that it wanted a young man and that it could not afford to pay the salary required for Doctor Rice. R. M. McFarlin, builder of the church, has been donating \$5,000 annually to the church, but recently reduced that contribution to \$3,600. Finally, Rev. John O. Ensor, pastor at Altus, was chosen pastor of McFarlin church.

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Dr. Homer L. Dodge, dean of the graduate school, is in England for a period of six months on research study. Dr. Edward Everett Dale is temporarily acting as dean of the school.