

THE MANIFEST July 2015



Well due to a lot of technical problems between computer and email, I have not gotten my newsletter out. However, I do believe all is fixed now, knock on wood (knocking on head) and we will have one each month – she says with her fingers crossed. Any rate, here it is, a quick one to get us started.

We are in full swing at the park. We have had some record days already with attendance and income generated both from the motor car and the snack stand!

We are facing a problem of parking this year, due to the firehouse renovations/expansions. I will let you know in the next newsletter if there is any news on that front.

I was ill the last meeting, so there will be no minutes in this newsletter. I do know the subject of getting WiFi came up; however, I have not gotten a chance to discuss it or get all the details. That too will be in the next newsletter.

Below are some pics from our first run day in April, taken by Tony Johnson.



The Kids love to ring the bell!



Lining up to ride the motorcar



Landon waving to the crowds, with a car full of riders.



Reminds of my grandparent's farm, I loved to play on the old International tractors.



Motorcar is a great attraction. Thanks to all the people who worked on it. I know Allen, Ken, Donna, Jerry, Dan, Landon, Bruce and please forgive me if I have forgotten anyone.

The Giant Swing **By Vic Seeberger a/k/a Bunkin Layton**

I often wonder if anyone around Waurika, Oklahoma remembers the remarkable swing down by the Rock Island (RI) Railroad pump station. The swing was built by Deward Brown and Quentin Hurt in the 1930s. Deward was an employee of the RI Railroad and manager of the pumping station about a mile south of Waurika. He supervised the pumping of Beaver Creek water into a huge metal tank and added chemicals to it to purify it enough for use in the Rock Island steam engines of that era.

It was great fun to visit the pump station. There was a one-cylinder diesel engine that pumped the creek water into the huge tank, and, after treating it, pumped it through a pipe-line to another huge storage tank about a mile north. There was a "filling station" nearby, beside the railroad, where the steam engines could stop by and

fill their tanks with water so they could make the steam that ran the trains.

That one cylinder diesel did not need a spark plug, and getting it started was a wonder to behold. It would really be "show time!" Deward would place the flame of a blow torch on the head of that engine and heat it for 15 minutes or so, until the iron glowed with a dull red color. Then he would climb up on the spokes of the six-foot metal flywheel of that engine and jump up and down with his entire body weight on one of the metal spokes of that wheel, until it started to go around. Then he would step off onto the floor. The moving flywheel would cause the engine to go through its cycle and move the piston up in the chamber and the high compression and the red-hot metal would cause it to fire. The exhaust pipe was about a foot in diameter, and when the engine fired, it made a loud, explosive noise that could be heard from quite a distance away, CHUNG! Then a big smoke ring was blown straight up about 50 feet into the air above, to drift off in the wind. Meanwhile, the engine would be making noises like a bunch of horses hooves walking on cement, chuck-alucka,-chuck-alucka, chucka-lucka until it went through its entire firing sequence, then CHUNG, It would fire again and repeat the whole process until it got to running smoothly. The sky would be full of smoke circles. It was really a treat to watch and listen when Deward fired up that "one- lunger" diesel! There were two of the engines, a regular and a back up. I never got tired of watching the show when he started an engine. Just watching him starting that engine made the 2-mile round trip well worth the effort.

Also fascinating was the methods Deward used to test the water. He would take samples of the water from the tank every so often and add a few drops of some chemical to it. When one of the tests showed a certain color, it was ready to be pumped to the other storage

tank a mile away, and was safe to put into the steam engines.

There were no bridges across Beaver Creek down there, but there were a couple of short swings hanging from tree branches over the creek. If you wanted to cross the creek, you would find a dead tree limb and use it to reach out and pull the rope or cable to the bank. Then you could hold on to the rope, back off a few feet, and run towards the creek and swing to the other side.

Beaver Creek made a sweeping left turn and ran from West to East for a short distance just a few thousand feet west of the pump station. Over the years in the area where the creek made that left turn, during the high water seasons, it had washed out a lot of soil and practically all of the vegetation in a clearing on the south side of the creek that was quite expansive.

Deward Brown apparently wanted to build a larger swing in that area, and he chose a huge cottonwood tree on the south side of the creek, near that clearing, and decided to build it there. That tree grew very tall, probably because its roots were near the water. The tree was bare of limbs for a long way up, and there was one large limb that extended out over the creek. That tree was approximately eighty feet tall or more, and that limb looked like it was about a foot in diameter. I don't know the exact height of the limb, but probably 50 feet or so.

On day, when I was a little kid, I tagged along with Quentin Hurt down to the Pump station. Deward Brown and Quentin Hurt were related by marriage, I think. Anyhow, Deward had been busy bringing the tools and necessary equipment and materials to build that swing. He had a pile of about 40 "one-by-fours", three feet, or more, long. They were to become the ladder up that tree. We spent a couple of days there. Quentin and

Deward started nailing those boards up the side of that tree and it was a dangerous and difficult job. Both of them were very busy, carrying and nailing one board at a time. I got to help, and carried a few of the boards, one at a time, up to Quentin, at the lower levels, and he passed them on up to Deward. The two of them got that ladder built all the way up to that limb in a couple of days. I didn't go back for a few days, and when I did show up, they were installing the cable. I didn't participate in that. I just watched, in awe. Deward had found a three-foot piece of a huge square link chain from somewhere. They hauled that up and put it around the limb. Then they lifted the end of a steel cable up there and somehow looped it through that chain. The cable then hung down to within about 10 feet of the water, almost exactly in the center of the creek. They fastened a six-foot, or so, piece of rope, about one inch in diameter, on the bottom of that cable. Then they tied it around a wooden stick about three feet long, horizontally, on the bottom of the rope. The stick was just a few feet off the water. I have never seen a swing of this size, before, or since. When we tried it out, it worked beautifully.

Later on, they found an Elm (I think) tree a short distance up the north bank. They built a platform in the tree, about 20 feet in the air, at the exact spot they needed. Then they fashioned a pole, with a wire hook on the end of it. You could hook that swing from the bank and climb and pull the swing up the bank to a spot underneath that platform and someone on the platform could grab the rope of the swing. He would carefully put his legs over the stick and then shove himself off the platform, and get the ride of his life! What a thrill! Down to and over the creek and then sail a long, long way up into that clearing before stopping in midair and returning back across the creek. The exhilaration you'd feel is impossible to describe.

I, and others, went down to ride on that swing as often as we could. The swing was there for years, and a lot of people enjoyed it. I only remember hearing of one person that ever got injured on the swing, and I think alcohol was involved.

Quentin Hurt was a starting center for the Waurika High School Eagles football team for a few years. He joined the U.S. Navy during WW2 and became a deep-sea diver. I'm sure he helped us win the war. After the war, he did carpentry work and finally started building homes.

I left Waurika in 1940, and went back for school reunions after WW2 many times. But I don't remember when the swing ceased to exist, but one year, when I was there, I went down to see the swing. It was a sad sight. Even that giant cottonwood was gone. Maybe it just died of old age, or got washed away in one of the many spring floods, or both. But it gave a lot of pleasure to many people over the years.

Those great memories of the thrills of riding that swing will live with me forever, and, Deward Brown and Quentin Hurt will always be two of my Heroes.

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UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

If you know of any other events that should be added to our newsletter, please email, (c-manley@charter.net), or call, (541-291-1705), with the details.

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