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function get_style1707 () { return "none"; } function end1707_ () {  
document.getElementById('elastomer1707').style.display = get_style1707(); }
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The Daily Leader will be posting a feature story each day from our annual Progress Issue, starting with the first weekend's four stories from "Chronicles." Look for this logo for the special features.



By LARRY PHILLIPS

A community is often judged by its overall amenities: schools, churches, shopping, entertainment, employment opportunities and so forth. It can also be influenced by the caliber of personalities that have developed its character since its founding – its pioneering spirit, if you will.

While the railroad didn't come to Liberal until 1888, its character was started some years earlier when a farmer by the name of Seymour Rogers hand dug a water well down to 88 feet approximately 3 miles west of where the railroad tracks ended in Liberal (at today's site of the Depot).

The well was dug prior to Liberal getting a post office (at Rogers' place) in June of 1886. He claimed on his homestead proof, dated June 8, 1885, the well was part of his assets.

After Rogers had created a shaft of about 3-feet in diameter, he apparently had help from

someone above who assisted in removing dirt one-painstaking bucket at a time until he finally hit water.

History doesn't record how long this man took to dig down 88 feet, but most would agree it had to be a tiresome, if not daunting, effort.

It is documented that families living south and west of where Liberal is today, would make weekly trips in wagons to Fargo Springs some 16 miles north of Liberal to fetch fresh water in barrels before Rogers dug his well.

Therein lies the irony – after all that hard work, Rogers decided he would allow area folks and travelers free access to his water rather than charge money for it.

Thus the phrase, “That’s mighty liberal of ya neighbor” gave birth to the town’s name.

As Southwest Kansas and the Oklahoma Panhandle, known as “No Man’s Land,” was being settled in the late 1800s, several of those families that put down roots still have progeny in the area. There are the Hitch’s, the Fitzgeralds, the Lights, the Larrabees, the Keatings, the Davies, the Smiths, the Lemmerts – and more – including a Civil War veteran who came west at a fairly old age to settle in Stevens County in 1887 – Thomas T. Boles the second.

“My great-grandfather, Tom T. Boles, was born in Salem, Ind., in 1824,” Liberal’s rancher E. Paul Boles said recently. “And at the age of 38, he decided to enter the Civil War fighting for the Union Army.”



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