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memorable in Clinton history

Early-Day Banker

By Jennifer Stehr

Tom J. Nance was very important to Custer County. He founded Clinton and contributed money and land to the town. Clinton has come a long way since the Nance days.

Tom Nance was father of two children--Albert Nance and Mrs. Blakesly Barron.

Nance founded Clinton in 1902. At that time, Custer County was called "G" County. Other men instrumental in the formation of the township were Nance's brother-in-law, C. W. Goodwin; A. N. Curry, his father-in-law; J. L. Avant; E. E. Blake; and F. E. Rickey.

Tom Nance helped organize the Custer County State Bank, the first bank in Clinton. Other businesses he helped to establish were the First National Bank, Clinton Building and Loan, the Oklahoma Western Railroad, and Clinton's first electric light com-

pany. He also donated land for many churches.

Nance's wife said, "He never wanted anything to be named after him." However, after his death, Mrs. Nance allowed Nance Elementary School to be named after him. She was also asked to allow Frisco Avenue to be named after him, which she declined.

Tom Nance was very important to the economic welfare of Clinton by working with various banking systems, encouraging the construction of the Oklahoma Western Railroad, providing a power company in homes and industries, and showing his concern for education by donating his time, money, and land for the building of schools. Without all of these contributions by Mr. Nance, Clinton may not have had the technology and the people for the town's growth and development.

A car accident took the life of our city's founder on November 16, 1916. He was returning home from an errand in Colony, Oklahoma, where he had been working on a project to get an Indian school located in Clinton, when his car struck a bridge east of town. Mr. Nance and the driver, Jeff Thornbrough, were killed instantly. Another passenger, Mrs. Sam Hawks, was seriously injured.

Death, of course, brought an end to the life of Tom J. Nance--but not to the growth of his hopes and dreams. Clinton lives on, and Mr. Nance's memory is our history. ■

JENNIFER STEHR, daughter of Fred and Jaree Stehr, is 13. Acting in 4-H raising chickens (a prize-winner at poultry shows), she placed first in the biological section of the Science Fair and is a member of the scholastic team.

