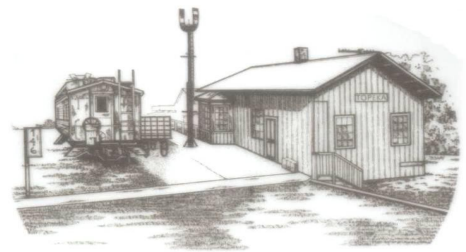




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Yoder Oil A Family Tradition

For most Topeka residents Yoder Oil Company on South Main has been a fixture of the business community for as long as they can remember. In fact, there are only a handful of people who are old enough to remember it's humble beginnings in 1926. Yet, after 83 years the business remains in the Yoder family.

Yoder Oil actually had its beginning as the "Home Oil Company". It was Erman B. Yoder who started the oil business in 1926. In 1931 he sold the company to a couple of his employees Perry and Menno Yoder and moved to southern California where he went to work for his father, Melvin A.

Yoder, building houses. After only two years Erman and his wife



Yoder Oil Station built in 1933

Gladys moved back to Topeka with

their two children, Kathryn (who later married Ellsworth Peterson) and Robert. It was the Great Depression and Perry and Menno were unable to make their payments. So once again Erman was back in the oil business, changing the name to Yoder Oil Company.

Erman built a service station and garage which attached to his house on the corner of Main and West Mill Street. In April of 1937 his son Robert L. (Bob) went to work in the family business. Bob was one of 18 students to graduate that year from Topeka High School. Father and son operated the business pumping gasoline, repairing cars, and delivering home heating oil. When World War II came along Robert served his country as a sergeant in North Africa in charge of medical supplies. It was there that he met his future bride, a nurse from Boston by the name of Mary. The two did face a bit of a problem. Mary was a lieutenant and Bob was only a sergeant. As a commissioned officer Mary wasn't suppose to associate with non-commissioned personnel. But, their love prevailed. Military service took them to Italy and France as well. Following the war they got married and Bob came home with his bride to join the family business and raise a family.

In 1948 the present structure was built on the east side of South Main. In that same year Edwin Yoder and his son Galen, who operated the Hawpatch Dairy, introduced ice cream to the Hawpatch product line. Two years later the Hawpatch Dairy Bar opened in the north end of Yoder Oil's new building. The business quickly grew and became a full

service restaurant. Several years later the restaurant part was sold to Ed and Beulah Sheley while the ice business returned to Hawpatch Dairy. Hawpatch Dairy was located on South Main where the current mini mall stands.

When Erman retired in 1959, Robert was there to carry on the business. Like his father before him, Bob also supplemented his income by driving a school bus for the Metropolitan School District of Topeka. In fact he bought his father's old route (bus routes were bought and sold from one bus driver to another.). It was a route he would drive for the next 19 years. Bob and Mary had two sons, Dennis a 1965 THS graduate and Robert Jr. from the Class of 1966, who both got involved in the family business at an early age by doing odd jobs around the garage.

Continued on page 3



Robert & Mary Yoder
Pompeii, Italy

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“Is It The End of The World?”

D.A. Hochstetler tells the story of his great grandparents John S. & Barbara Miller and the unsettling experience they had in 1918. It was a Monday morning on the 11th day of the 11th month at 11 minutes past the 11th hour. As D.A. tells it, “They thought it was the end of the world.”

The Millers had purchased the old Joe Whetstone farm located on CR 500 S and 4645 W in the fall of 1915. Since over 50 percent of the farm was rich black soil they were not sure what to plant. Initially they raised peppermint but later, according to D.A., they got a contract to raise onions.

That contract turned out to be a great blessing because on June 23rd of 1918 there was a hard frost that leveled the corn. However they were able to raise a large crop of late onions. In early November the onion harvest began, all by hand of course. The onions had to be pulled, the tops cut off, and then crated in wooden crates (presumably ones made in their own workshop). The wooden crates then had to be loaded onto wagons and hauled to Topeka to be loaded into train cars for shipment.



As they were loading the onions on to the freight car suddenly they heard a frightening noise. The train's whistle began to blow, the creamery whistle began to blow, church bells and the school bell began to ring. The whistles and the ringing bells went on and on. John and his sons had no idea what was happening. Later they said that they thought perhaps it was the end of the world or something like that.

D.A. writes that after regaining their composure and strength, “Grandpa and his sons continued on in loading their onions”.

In the months and years that followed the whole affair became a frequent subject of conversation as well as sermon material.

What had happened on the 11th day of the 11th month at 11 minutes after the 11th hour on that Monday morning in 1918, was the celebration of the armistice that ended World War I. Given the communication of the day it is understandable that folks in a somewhat isolated community would not have known about the end of the war.

The following year President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11, 1919 as Armistice Day; a day of remembrance. President Wilson called on Americans to observe two minutes of silence at 11 minutes after 11 o'clock to honor the memory of those who had died in what many believed to have been *the war to end all wars*. Sadly that was not to be. Just over two decades later America would be plunged into World War II following the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on December 7th, 1941.

During the 1920's and 30s, each of the sitting Presidents issued an annual proclamation declaring November 11th as Armistice Day to remember and honor those who had died in World War I. In 1938, on May 13th, Congress passed legislation making it a national holiday for all federal employees and those living in the District of Columbia. It is interesting to note that the federal government had no jurisdiction over individual states when it came to designating national holidays. It was an issue of “States Rights”. Most states did following Washington's lead.

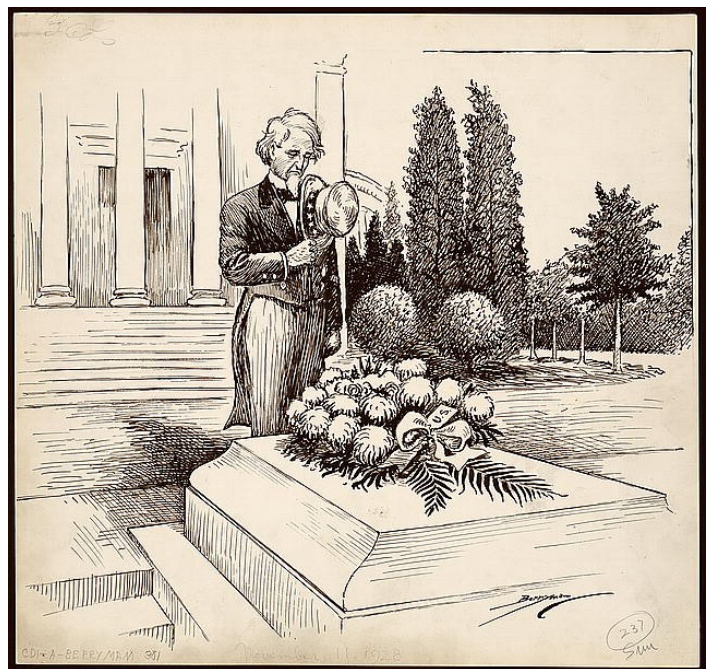
In 1954 President Dwight David (Ike) Eisenhower signed into law legislation that officially changed the name to Veterans Day to honor the memory of all those who had lost their lives in defense of freedom.

Then in 1968, Congress passed what was called the “Monday Holiday Law” designating the 4th Monday of October as Veterans Day. No doubt the “Monday” idea was to give Americans a four-day weekend. It's interesting to note that the law did not take effect until 1971. Initially all the states followed suit. But by 1972 a number had switched back to the original November 11th date. Needless to say, just when to celebrate Veterans Day became quite confusing.

The issue was finally settled in 1975 when Congress passed legislation to permanently designate November 11th Veterans Day across America. Again so typical of Congress, the law did not take effect until 1978.

Over the years celebration of Veterans Day lost much of its fervor. However, the events of 911 along with the establishing of Patriot Day have served to rekindle America's sense of gratitude for those who have sacrificed so we can enjoy the blessings of freedom.

HC



Pen and ink over graphite by Clifford Berryman
Probably published in *The Evening Star*
(Washington, D.C.) November 11, 1928. Digital
image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Track Notes:



Scheduled Events:

- January 19, 2010
The Story of Snax In Pax
6:30 PM Topeka Library
- February 16, 2010: TAHS Board Meeting
- March 16, 2010
6:30 PM Topeka Library

TAHS Quiz

1. What year did Robert L.(Bob) Yoder graduate from Topeka High School?
2. What was Mary Yoder's military rank during World War II?
3. What was Veterans Day originally known as?
4. What was John Miller doing when the train whistle blew and the church bells rang?
5. Who was the first U.S. President to declare a Day of Remembrance? What year?



Topeka's 1960's Bowling Team

Culligan Soft Water Tournament in Chicago

L to R: Fritz Lambright, Doc Lehman, Donnie Fought, Ralph Troyer, Burdett "Cap" Roy, and Charlie Anders

Yoder Oil continued: Robert continued to operate the business until his retirement on December 31st of 1981. Without skipping a beat the Yoder brothers partnered together to carry on the family tradition. That partnership continued until 1997 when Dennis became the sole owner of Yoder Oil Company, Inc. Yoder Oil continues to service the community with automotive repair service and the delivery of home heating oil as well as other petroleum products. In recent years T. W. Auto Parts was added and incorporated into the front show room. Today Dennis has four full time employees and several part-timers.

HG

\$25,000 Matching Grant

The Topeka Area Historical Society has been given a matching grant for up to \$25,000.00 by an anonymous benefactor. We need your help to reach this goal.

The matching grant has been offered for the purpose of establishing an endowment fund. One of the critical needs facing the Historical Society is sustainability. While our membership is growing, membership dues are not enough to fund the maintenance of our Depot Museum and the annual expenses of operating the organization.

The Topeka Area Historical Society is a not-for-profit corporation with 501-c-3 status. Therefore all donations are tax deductible. Please consider a generous end of the year gift and help us raise \$25,000 to match the full amount of the grant.

Your Membership Matters !

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\$10.00 a year

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Barney,**



With Membership you:

- ✓ Receive meeting notification
- ✓ Receive the quarterly newsletter
- ✓ Provide quarterly newsletters to the 3rd grade students at Topeka Elementary
- ✓ Help to maintain and preserve Topeka's rich heritage for future generations

Topeka Area Historical Society

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www.topekahistoricalsociety.com

2009 Board of Directors

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Doris Haggard, Vice President
Janice Gingerich, Treasurer
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Cleo Hartzler, Director
Galen Yoder, Director

Museum Curator

Susie Parker

Answers: 1) 1937; 2) Lieutenant; 3) Armistice Day;
4) loading onions; 5) Woodrow Wilson, in 1919

Topeka 3rd Graders Study Local History

Topeka Elementary School's three 3rd grade classes are learning about Topeka area history. One important component of that curriculum is the quarterly newsletter published by the Topeka Area Historical Society. Each student is provided with a copy of the newsletter by the historical society. Copies are also placed in the school's library.

Each spring 3rd graders take a field trip to the Depot Museum for a hands-on look at Topeka's rich heritage. A number of historical society board members are always there to serve as tour guides. The highlight for many students is a chance to climb aboard the caboose and look inside.



Bob Coon (L) and Cleo Hartzler (R) talk local railroad history with members of Mrs. Christner's 3-B class.



Mrs. Strawser points to important events of the time line of Topeka history for her students in 3-A.



Bob Coon talks about Indian artifacts and history from the area with Mrs. Tobi Culp and students from 3-C.

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