

John Joseph Mathews, '20as, of Pawhuska, a member of the Osage Indian tribe, has won the attention of the nation with his superbly beautiful "Wah'Kon-Tah," which was one of a dual selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club for November. Mr Mathews' book is the first book of any university press ever to be selected by a major book club. It is published by the University of Oklahoma Press. Mr Mathews is a contributing editor of "The Sooner Magazine"

Book-of-the-month

BY THE EDITOR

"*Wah'Kon-Tah* is one of the University of Oklahoma's sterling contributions to literature. Some day we in the east will wake up to the fact that out in Norman they not only issue the finest magazine, *Books Abroad*, that America possesses in the field of contemporary European writing, but that they're making themselves the center for Indian literature and for live regional writing, too. *Folk-Say*, now in its fourth annual issue under the editorship of B. A. Botkin, is superb."—Harry Emerson Wildes in *The Philadelphia Public-Ledger*, November 1.

THE Oklahoma which always interested H. L. Mencken, the Oklahoma which attracted James Truslow Adams in his *The Epic of America*, the Oklahoma of letters has received the *cum laude* in the selection by the Book-of-the-Month Club, Inc., of *Wah'Kon-Tah* by John Joseph Mathews, '20as, as one of a dual selection for November.

The book, a spiritual history of the Osage Indians, is published by the University of Oklahoma Press and, according to *The Retail Bookseller*, is the first university press book ever to be selected by one of the major book clubs. It is also the first time an Oklahoman has ever been honored by such a book club selection.

The author is himself an Osage Indian. He attended the University of Oklahoma, where he was a member of Kappa Alpha fraternity, receiving his B. A. degree in 1920. Later, he read natural science at the University of Oxford, England, being in residence in Merton college. There he received his degree in natural science and read modern history. During the war he was in the aviation service. Following his years in Europe,

Mr Mathews returned to the United States and entered the real estate business in Los Angeles. It was during this time that he became a contributing editor of *The Sooner Magazine** in which appeared his first magazine articles. In 1929 he returned to Oklahoma, to live in Pawhuska.

The Mathews family, long established in America (Mathews, Virginia, is named for one of them), came over during the seventeenth century. Mr Mathews has his Indian blood through the famous westerner Old Bill Williams, who deserted a missionary's life to marry an Osage. Mr Mathews grandfather married a daughter of Williams. It was this Captain John Mathews who endeavored unsuccessfully to bring the Osages on the side of the Confederates in the Civil war. The tribe divided, one part sustaining the side of the north, the other that of the south. Captain Mathews was killed shortly afterwards by Unionist soldiers. When the Osage tribe moved to its Oklahoma reservation, the Mathews family came with it. The family home is on Grandview avenue, opposite the agency and overlooking Pawhuska. The home, like the ranch near Pawhuska, has always been in the possession of the family.

Major Laban J. Miles, for years agent of the Osage Indians, was a personal friend of William Shirley Mathews, and in the Miles home Jo Mathews played often. During his years as an agent, Major Miles kept notes of his experiences. Many sought to get these valuable notes which in truth epitomized the declining years of one of America's greatest Indian tribes; but the Major designed

*It is interesting to note that the first magazine article of George Milburn, '30ex, appeared in this magazine.

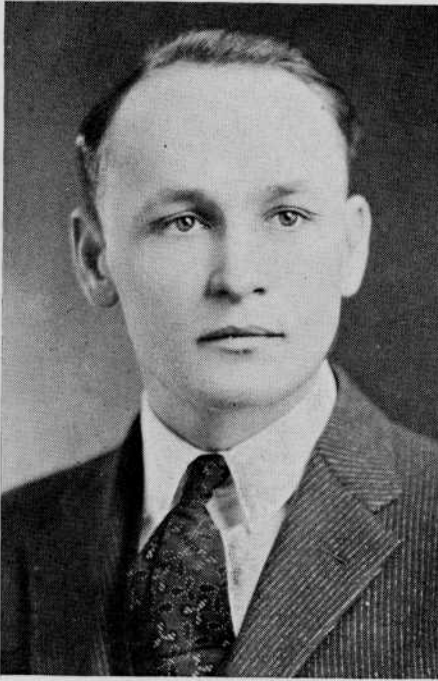


them for Mr Mathews. Major Miles died April 12, 1931. His notes were turned over to Mr Mathews.

Long a keen friend of the movement represented by the University of Oklahoma Press, the publishing division of the university, Mr Mathews consented to do the notes into a book. He took a deserted cabin twenty miles from Pawhuska, at the juncture of the old trails leading from Kansas to the Osage capital. He was in the midst of a land singularly undisturbed from those days in which the Osages had been wont to roam over it, before those days when the white man had destroyed his empire. Mr Mathews' "study" was elementary, if it could be called a study. It consisted of a bridge table and an office chair, a folding typewriter and a portable phonograph. When he tired of writing, he would turn on the phonograph and play Indian music. Or he would take his gun and wander into the woods. There were screened-in front and back porches. The front porch was the sleeping room. It faced east, faced the rising sun. When the first rays of the sun warned him day was beginning, Mr Mathews was up. He would go to the open well at the back of the house, draw up a bucket of water and prepare for his shower. This was relatively simple. A hole punched in the bucket served for the shower. This was hoisted up on a tree and then the author proceeded to take a bath in the tingling morning air.

Dressed, Mr Mathews turned cook. He had a gasoline stove on the screened-in back porch and a liberal supply of canned goods. Rather, a liberal supply of spaghetti, which was the *entree* and the *piece de resistance* of most of his meals. An old copper coffee pot served

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sons and communities served. Dr. Scroggs served in this position until he was 73 in 1925, which was three years past the normal age a man is expected to continue with active work in an institution of higher learning. Even when Dr. Paul L. Vogt, took the position as director of the extension division in 1926, Dr. Scroggs was active enough to take the job as director of the department of publications for the extension division.

During his early days after college, Dr. Scroggs had as a part of his work connections as an instructor in music in Springfield and Carthage, and has taught piano, organ, violin, clarinet and trombone. Further than that he is an author of some ability, having written in addition to a host of educational articles, debate bulletins and religious treatises, a book, one of his best known, called, "Complete Living," a volume which deals with all phases of life. In this Dr. Scroggs presents valuable suggestions for those desiring well rounded lives.

His work in beginning community institutes for the extension division has been a great factor in the development of community spirit. The ideas expounded by this man have been developed for the good of town dweller and farmer, and the institute has been influential in bringing a closer understanding between farmer and business man. The musical inclinations of Dr. Scroggs have brought community singing as a means of increasing this spirit of friendliness between the community factions. Dr. Scroggs has written "Songs of Lafayette" for his alma mater, and "Oklahoma Community Songs."

Leslie Salter, '21as, '22law, is making a national success with the United States department of justice. He is an assistant United States Attorney General and lives in Washington, D. C.

The list of titles and membership in organizations reads like the decorations of a French general and some of them are: member of the National University Extension Association, National Academy of Visual Education, American Academy of Political and Social Science, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Oklahoma Academy of Science, American Spelling Reform Association, Oklahoma Foundation of Public Welfare, Oklahoma Memorial Association, Oklahoma Educational Association, and last but not least, he is a Phi Beta Kappa.

Dr. Scroggs is of Scotch ancestry which accounts probably for his love of the old Scotch game of golf, or for his activity. The American progenitors of the Scroggs family settled in Pennsylvania in 1771, and General J. E. Scroggs, a great uncle of the subject of this review, went forth during the Revolution as a patriot, rising to the rank of brigadier-general.

When on October 26th of this year, the eightieth birthday of "the grand old man" rolled around, Mr T. M. Beard, program director for WNAD, the university radio station, commemorated the anniversary for the university by presenting a tribute for Dr. Scroggs to the radio audience. A special orchestra program was dedicated to him also. True to form, Dr. Scroggs traveled over to Stillwater on that day for a banquet in his honor given by the Oklahoma A. and M. college, where Schiller Scroggs, a son of this educator, "like father," is director of administrative research for the college. At this time a greeting from the university extension division, signed by Dr. W. B. Bizzell, the presi-

dent of the university, and Dr. Vogt, the dean of the extension division, was presented.

And thus the years of eight decades have been filled ladies and gentlemen, and what greater memorial could be suggested than the evidence of progressive education in Oklahoma, in which this man has played such an important part in the formative years?

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TO SAVE THE STADIUM UNION

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their unpaid pledge is standing in their way to returning to Norman to enjoy a football game," Mr Hutto observed. "Many people pledged more than they could afford; and more than that, conditions have changed considerably now from that time when the pledges were made. If these alumni who have pledged were permitted to give only a dollar toward their pledge, it would give them a happier feeling and it would tide the project over a very critical time. I do not think that we should try to force people to pay; when an alumni obviously cannot pay anything on his pledge, we should recognize that his first obligation is to his family. But there are many alumni who can pay and who ought to be given the opportunity to do so."

Executive board members will be responsible for their districts. They can organize them as they see fit. The plan most favorably discussed is for the board member to name county chairmen.

The bond payment on the Stadium Union due April 1, 1933 is \$21,000 principal and \$9,487.50 interest. It is hoped to raise around \$7,000 on back pledges, the athletic association to pay for \$10,000 of the sum due and the rest to be supplied from pledges and fees.

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BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH

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to brew his coffee. Breakfast ready Mr Mathews would sit down to eat. But, frequently as not, he would start writing, and many were the meals that sat cold and uneaten as the spirit moved in the writing of *Wah'Kon-Tah*.

Gradually, it became known about the reservation that Mr Mathews was writing a book about the Osages. Gradually, Indian after Indian dropped in or called for him, to add their bit to his own knowledge and the Major's notes. Out of all of these sharings came the inexpressibly beautiful *Wah'Kon-Tah*, of which Harry Emerson Wildes of the *Philadelphia Public-Ledger* declared had



saved the Osages from cultural extinction and which Henry Seidel Canby, editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature* said that "One aspect of life as it was actually lived on this continent... will have its best memorial in *Wah'Kon-Tah*. It is a book about the good earth of America."

In New York Mr Mathews was well received. Lewis Titterton, who broadcasts for the National Broadcasting company on "Characters and Books" interviewed the author November 6 over the N. B. C. station WJZ. There were other honors for him before he returned to Norman November 17.

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GEORGE B. PARKER, '08

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ed a pardon by President Theodore Roosevelt and at another time was pardoned from the Colorado state penitentiary. Each time Starr would turn over a new leaf—but always, after a little while, an epidemic of bank robberies would break out in his vicinity and the hunt for Henry Starr would be on again. About 1909 or '10 when Oklahoma was in the throes of a Henry Starr hunt, the governor offered \$1,500 for him, dead or alive. Banks were being robbed all over the state, and though no one had seen Henry Starr, the papers of the state gave him credit for being on a new rampage.

The editor of the *Oklahoma News* had a theory that the newspapers were all wrong and that Henry Starr was not in Oklahoma. George Parker was sitting at his desk pounding out a dope story along that line one afternoon when his phone rang. The call was from a former classmate who was then starting his business career carrying ice water up and down stairs in his uncle's hotel in Stroud.

A "LITTLE" EXCITEMENT

"Say, Deac," said this classmate's voice over the phone, "we had a little ex-

Norman is rapidly expanding eastward on Main street. This is a view of newer downtown Norman as you turn onto Main street from the Oklahoma City-Ardmore highway

citement here just now and I happened to think about you being on a paper and I thought you might be interested. Henry Starr's just been shot out in the street. He robbed our bank."

Just like that—a story to make a young reporter famous, all his own, hot off the plate, within a few minutes after it happened.

The famous bandit had been brought down by a single shot fired by an excited clerk in a hardware store who had fired at random through a show window, at the group of galloping horsemen who were then storming down the street in a getaway—and that one shot brought down the prize bandit of the gang.

HIS EDITORIAL RISE

From reporter Mr Parker was advanced to city editor, and finally to managing editor of the *Oklahoma News*, in 1914. In 1920 he was sent to Cleveland to run the *Cleveland Press*. From Cleveland he was sent to Houston, Texas, as editor in charge of the Scripps-Howard papers of the southwest, which include those published in El Paso, Houston, Fort Worth, Oklahoma City, Albuquerque and Memphis. Since 1927 he has been editor-in-chief of the entire Scripps-Howard organization.

Last year Mr and Mrs Parker moved to Mount Kisco. They have bought land in Lawrence Farms and will build there.

Meantime they occupy the old Daly home—the big colonial mansion in front of which the stuffed elk used to stand—on the Pleasantville Road, next to Mount Kisco golf club. Their 18-year-old son, George B. Parker, jr., and their 16-year-old daughter, Mary, attend Scarborough school on the Vanderlip estate and both are going to be newspaper reporters when they finish college.

Mrs Parker's present interest is Westchester history and she already knows more about the county than a lot of our natives. Mr Parker plays a little golf, not so well, and doesn't care.

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NEW UNIVERSITY DEBATE FORUM

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forty-four entries were listed of which twenty-five new men were selected making the university debate forum, containing the senior and junior divisions, comprise a squad of thirty-two members. On October 20, try-outs for the women's debating teams were held to select ten members. Their program will be conducted along the same lines as the men's.

Informal and formal discussion of various subjects will be held within two groups. Leading men on the campus will be invited to lead the forum on timely topics of the day. As the plans for the forum take place the department intends to publish a university forum magazine in the form of a monthly bulletin. In this magazine analysis of various timely questions will be prepared and will also include articles by leading professors on the campus, members of the public speaking department, and others.

It is interesting to note that last year the members of the university debating squad maintained an A- average in all scholastic work.