

# French S. E. Amos

By John Alley

The last of the four men  
on the first O.U. faculty  
ends his campus service



A recent picture of French S. E. Amos in his Norman home

**I**N his book on Abraham Lincoln, Mr. Don C. Seitz tells of the incident in which the President sent his Virginia friend, Mr. French Stanton Evans, to Secretary Salmon P. Chase on May 6, 1861 with a letter saying, "If there is an appraisership still vacant at Baltimore, I very sincerely wish you would give it to him.—(Evans)."

That same year Mr. Peter Amos, of western Virginia, a neighbor of Evans, was arrested by Federal troops and imprisoned at Wheeling, charged with giving aid and comfort to the enemies of the United States. Amos was later paroled. Even though this elderly advocate of secession might have been tempted to disregard his parole and renew his activities in furnishing shelter or assistance to Confederate soldiers upon his return to his home in northwestern Virginia, the military situation there removed this temptation. For during the summer of 1861 the Confederate forces had been disastrously defeated and driven out of western Virginia. The "Old Dominion State" never recovered from this disaster and was eventually rent in sunder by the incorporation of the western half of its area as the new state of West Virginia, admitted to the Union in 1863.

On July 4, 1861, P. B. Amos, eldest son of Peter Amos, who was serving with the Confederate forces, was captured at the Battle of Rich Mountain, Virginia, and taken to Camp Chase, Ohio, where he languished in this inhospitable Federal prison, until exchanged in the latter part of the War.

**A**S the above incidents indicate, the Evans family of northwestern Virginia were loyal to the union, and to President Lincoln, who in turn rewarded them with his appreciation and patronage; while the Amos family of the same neighborhood, were equally loyal to the Confederacy. Soon after the war Luther James Amos, the younger son of the unreconstructed rebel, Peter Amos, married the younger sister of French Stanton Evans, the friend and confidant of Abraham Lincoln. The

firstborn of this marriage was named French Stanton Evans Amos, who is the subject of this sketch.

The fact that the infant Amos, born January 1, 1871, in the midst of the political strife of reconstruction days, was christened with the full name of his loyal unionist uncle, indicates that the Confederate father, at least for the moment, deferred to the unionist sentiment in the family. French Stanton Evans Amos, who saw the light of day just seven miles south of Mason and Dixon's line, in whose veins the hot blood of rabid rebellion was tempered by the cooler blood of union loyalty, spent the first years of his childhood in the land of his ancestors of mingled sympathies, but grew to maturity and received his education in the Lone Star State, a hotbed of confederate sentiments. But French Amos never joined the "Society of Unreconstructed Rebels": he is not the type who grew up in the belief that "Damyanke" was one word. Inherited prejudices have never handicapped his capacity to view problems of government and politics objectively, weigh them dispassionately and present them fairly.

In 1882, Luther James Amos, then a well-to-do stockman, moved his small family, two sons, a daughter and their mother, to the greener pastures of south Texas. At a point about twelve miles north of Lampasas and 65 miles north of Austin, Amos purchased six thousand acres of virgin prairie land from the state of Texas and went into the sheep business in a big way. The family made their home in Lampasas, where the precocious elder son continued his education, graduating with the degree of bachelor of arts at Centenary College at the early age of seventeen.

Eager to try his hand at teaching, but handicapped by his youthfulness, French Amos was consistently rejected by public school authorities. When the President of Centenary College learned that his prize student had been thus rudely treated, on account of his tender years and boyish looks, he promptly invited him to return to his Alma Mater, as a part-time instructor

and graduate student. The offer was accepted and Amos remained four years longer as an instructor, in the meantime qualifying for, and receiving, a master's degree.

Sheep ranching was highly prosperous for a time with the elder Amos. But the Cleveland Administration of 1885-89 revised the Republican high tariff system, taking the duty off wool. Thereupon the sheep business of south Texas went "blooey." The Amos ranch sold sheep in the Chicago stockyards for seventy-five cents which had cost ten dollars each in Texas.

While young French Amos stuck to his job as a junior instructor in Centenary College, the elder Amos, along with his younger brother, P. R. Amos, joined the melee which swept across the South Canadian river into Oklahoma territory at high noon, April 22, 1889. The Amos brothers purchased relinquishments on adjoining claims north of Oklahoma City, in the area now known as Nichols Hills. Later they established the first exclusive shoe store in Oklahoma City.

**I**N the fall of 1892, French Stanton Evans Amos became instructor in history and civics on the first faculty of the University of Oklahoma. He was the baby of the teaching staff, a scant twenty-one years of age. His three elder colleagues of the teaching staff were David R. Boyd, president of the University; Professor Edwin DeBarr, Chemistry and Physics, and Professor William N. Rice, Classical Languages and Literature.

Probably the most interesting feature of this first session of the University of Oklahoma was the fact that of the sixty students who presented themselves for admission not one qualified for freshman standing. Hence the University of Oklahoma began its career as a Preparatory School. As a matter of fact the University continued for many years to be more of a prep school than a college. It was not until 1907 that college enrolments outnumbered those of the preparatory school.

The courses taught by Amos in history

(PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 27)

## French S. E. Amos

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15)

and government were, therefore, of the type now found in high school curricula. Hence the urge of research type of college teaching was lacking and the youthful instructor found other outlets to command his restless energy. He became President Boyd's right-hand man on matters of administrative detail and policy: the problems of "selling" the University to the public, and particularly, to the legislature of Oklahoma territory. In this field of endeavor one of the most distinctive services Amos performed was the creation of the Oklahoma Historical Society, becoming its first president and custodian, and tying the organization in with the University of Oklahoma.

This piece of master strategy had its beginnings in December, 1894, when the youthful University instructor organized his class in history as an Historical Society. A charter in conformity with the laws of Oklahoma territory was applied for, and on January 21, 1895, Territorial Secretary Thomas J. Lowe issued the perpetual Charter, under which the Oklahoma Historical Society still operates. In the 1895 session of the Territorial Legislature, "Council Bill No. 74," sponsored by Senator A. C. Scott, was passed, providing for the maintenance of the society at the University of Oklahoma, and appropriating the sum of \$2,000 therefor.

Later, editor W. P. Campbell, of the *Waukomis Hornet*, was appointed custodian, and continued the work of collecting, arranging and filing material in the room in the University building set aside for this purpose. The University catalog of 1895-1896, contains the following reference to the Historical Society Archives:

A complete file of every newspaper published in the Territory is being made and if "history is past politics and politics is present history," then such a collection will be invaluable. This Society has its rooms in the University, and its collections are open, free of charge, to all students, thus furnishing a valuable reference library to all engaged in university work. It is desired that the residents and friends of Oklahoma will encourage this society by their influence, their contributions, and their free good will.

Had Amos elected to stay on the job at the University and stand guard over "his baby," the Oklahoma Historical Society might still be an adjunct of our institution and its archives a part of our library, as is the case in many states.

For three years Amos continued as Instructor of History and Civics in the university at the meager salary of \$900 per year. During the summer of 1895 Mr. W. L. Chapman, then principal of Highgate College, which private institution was located at the east edge of Norman on the ground now occupied by the Central State Hospital, persuaded Amos to join with him in another private college venture at Vinita, Indian Territory. The institution

IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS.

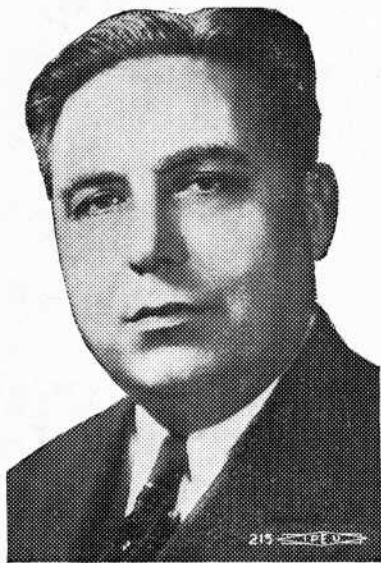
A paper copy of this issue is available at call number LH 1 .O6S6 in Bizzell Memorial Library.

## YOUTH OF OKLAHOMA AND NATION TO BE GIVEN EVERY EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGE

The young men and women of today deserve every possible aid and encouragement to attend our institutions of higher learning. If the future prosperity and soundness of government of the United States are to continue, we must at the present time make sure that every educational facility is made possible for all young people who yearn for an education.

These are the sentiments of Gomer Smith, one of Oklahoma's most progressive and most able Congressmen.

Gomer Smith, who is at the present time a Candidate for the democratic nomination for U.S. Senator, points with pride to the co-operative dormitory on the University of Oklahoma campus which houses 96 men who are attending school. This dormitory provides as



Gomer Smith

fine living quarters as may be found at Norman, at a total cost to the student of fourteen dollars per month. That sum includes ample living quarters, AND three meals per day.

Yet, most of the occupants of the dormitory would still be unable to attend the University if it were not for the National Youth Administration—a governmental project which employs young men and women so that they may garner an education.

Gomer Smith states that this governmental action—this aid to young men and women to pursue higher learning—is one of the most progressive social reforms of our time. Mr. Smith adds that it is not only a step in the right direction, but that it should be followed by subsequent legislation to encompass a greater number of institutions and young people.

Gomer Smith is emphatic in his declaration that: "The young people of today must be given every educational advantage at the disposal of the Federal Government."

So popular has the co-operative dormitory at Norman become, that members of the Law School wish to organize a similar plan of housing, exclusive for law students.

In answer to a question concerning the scholastic achievements of students in the dormitory, and employed by the NYA, Gomer Smith states that almost without exception they have high grade averages. A vote cast for Gomer Smith for U.S. Senator, is a vote cast for the good of every student and college in Oklahoma.

(Paid Political Advertisement)

which Chapman and Amos took charge of as co-principals in the fall of 1895 was known as Halsell College, endowed by the wealthy ranchman, W. E. Halsell.

Chapman later took up the practice of law at Shawnee, where he now lives in retirement. A third instructor in Halsell College in 1895-96, was Mr. Fenton M. Sanger, who later studied medicine, took up the practice in Oklahoma City where he is still active, as one of the outstanding physicians of the Capital City.

A scourge of smallpox wrecked the attendance of Halsell College before the close of the academic year. In the summer of 1896 Amos gave up his teaching career to become a journalist, to which profession he devoted the next quarter century of his life.

After one year as an employe of the *Cherokee Champion* of Vinita, Amos became its owner, editor and publisher. The following year he also acquired the *Cherokee Chieftain*, combining the two under the new title, the *Vinita Leader*, which journal is still going strong. For a time Mr. R. M. McClintock, now the incisive and brilliant columnist of the *Daily Oklahoman*, was associated with Amos on the *Vinita Leader*.

When Lee Cruce was elected governor of Oklahoma in 1910 he persuaded Amos to take a vacation from his editorial duties and come to Oklahoma City as his secretary and political counselor. After four years of this service, during a turbulent administration, in the storm center of Oklahoma political strife and intrigue, Amos was glad to return to the more placid and satisfactory life of a country town newspaper editor.

During the year 1911, while the writer was president of the University Preparatory School at Tonkawa, on whose Board of Regents Governor Cruce served as ex-officio member, an acquaintanceship was formed with the governor's genial secretary. Ten years after the close of Governor Cruce's administration this ex-secretary appeared in the writer's office in the old Library building, as an applicant for re-instatement in his former job as instructor in civics at the University of Oklahoma. A pleasant visit resulted and Amos departed with the assurance that his application would be given due consideration.

Knowing that Amos had a host of friends with many formidable political connections, as was to be expected in the case of a county seat newspaper editor with a political complex, who had also served one full term in the seats of the mighty as political adviser to the chief executive of Oklahoma, it was only natural to expect a deluge of endorsements from Oklahoma politicians exhorting the employment of Amos as a deserving Democrat.

As the days passed and the expected did not happen, my estimate of Amos as a prospective instructor, motivated by the

proper ethical standards, mounted. Eventually, I phoned him to come and see me. In the interview I explained the situation which he might expect to encounter as a member of our teaching staff, calling his attention to his advanced years, his long absence from the teaching profession, the increasingly higher academic standards which colleges were demanding and the prospect of younger men with better credentials going over his head.

When this final touch had been added to the gloomy picture, Amos leaned back in his chair, smiled, and remarked "I can take it on the chin, and like it."

During his years of hard grind on our teaching staff, Amos has done exactly that. We have "poured it on him" and he has liked it. During the year 1930-1931 he took a year off, without pay, and worked like a Trojan in graduate study at the University of California, bringing back a string of "A's" in the most difficult advanced courses in political science which that magnificent university offered.

No teacher on the University campus has worked harder than Amos. He has been a voracious reader, collecting one of the finest private libraries in Norman, with some five hundred titles in his chosen field of American politics of the Reconstruction Period. He is now taking time off to complete his research and write something worthwhile as a contribution to productive and original scholarship in the field.

When Amos returned from his graduate study in California, Dean Reaves suggested that he had earned a promotion—a suggestion in which I heartily concurred. He was promoted in 1932, an action which I felt was a tardy recognition of a deserving and underpaid University teacher.

**F**RENCH Stanton Evans Amos retires as one of the best-loved teachers on this campus. Ask any one of his host of former students! He carries with him the wholesome respect and unstinted admiration of his colleagues in the department of government and in the University at large. My personal estimate of his service and attitude may well be expressed by the following excerpt of my letter to him, dated December 7, 1937:

The department is greatly indebted to you for the splendid service you have performed. For the past fifteen years you have labored unceasingly at a meager salary, always carrying one of the heaviest teaching loads in the department. You have been a glutton for punishment, and when the punishment came, instead of whimpering or sulking, you have come back smiling and asking for more. It may be that the Lord has made a better sportsman than you, but if He has, it has not been my good fortune to have met this particular gentleman.

To the staff members of our department Amos has always been the helpful and hardworking colleague, doing more than his share. But, more important, he has helped build morale through his pleasing personality, his genial good humor and happy mien, and beyond all else—his droll

IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS.

A paper copy of this issue is available at call number LH 1 .0686 in Bizzell Memorial Library.

anecdotes of a full and busy life on the last frontier. Through trying years his unflinching optimism has prevailed, with the result that there has been a more contented and happier staff. Always he has been the gentleman and the scholar—happy in his work and pleasant with his co-workers. His absence from the department of government will be grievously felt by faculty and students alike. His departure will leave an aching void on our teaching staff which we cannot hope to fill. There will never be another French Amos!

▲ ▲ ▲

## Homemaking

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

terested in the proposed new building and the new Practice Home.

The increased enrolment both in major students and non-majors and the greater interest on the part of the student body make us feel that we are meeting a definite need on this campus. However, there are many things we might do if our facilities were enlarged and improved and the staff increased.

There should be an opportunity for more homemaking courses for non-majors, including courses for men, and it should be possible to provide more varied experience for the majors, particularly opportunities for laboratory work in textile experimentation, nutrition, home furnishing, study of household equipment, meal service to large groups of people, experimental cookery, research in home economics education and studying the behavior of children. Not only the laboratories and equipment will have to be increased to take care of the needs, but also the staff. Additional assistance at the Nursery School as well as for the other phases of our program is needed.

Our quarters are woefully inadequate for carrying on research. Some interesting problems have been undertaken the last few years, such as the vitamin C content of various citrus fruits and of some canned

fruit juices; the vitamin A value of feterrita; the use of the sorghum grains and of soy bean flour in batteries and doughs; ways and means of extending home economics instruction into the home; the effect of cooking upon the vitamin content of foods; the improvement in food and nutrition habits, due to home economics teaching, both in white and Indian families; the nutritional value of the diets of students doing light-housekeeping; pupil development through home projects; and an evaluation of pupil development in consumer buying. Additional room and facilities are necessary for research, as the field is broadening and becoming more important year by year.

▲ ▲ ▲

### Weaver goes east

Resigning as director of traffic control and regulation for the Oklahoma State Safety Department, Reynolds Weaver, '28 ex, has taken a position as assistant to the director of the Automotive Safety Foundation of New York. The resignation was effective June 1.

Only 26 years of age, Mr. Weaver is said to be the youngest traffic control engineer in the United States. He is a member of Kappa Alpha fraternity.

▲

### Former professor dies

Dr. Alfred Buice, former professor of chemistry at the University, died at Santa Monica, California, February 9. He resigned his position at the University in 1930 to accept a similar position at Washington State College. Later he was bacteriologist for the state of Washington, retiring in 1936 and moving to Chelsea, Oklahoma. At the time of his death he was serving as special bacteriologist in litigation for Spokane, Washington.

▲

### Officers of state group

Members of the Oklahoma Funeral Directors Association have elected Russell Chapman, '17ex, of Tishomingo, secretary-treasurer of their organization, and H. P. Meyer, '30ex, of Norman, to the position of first vice-president.