

COPELAND

Gray County, Kansas

Written by Iris Scott

** Additional information added about certain people mentioned in this story*

Copeland, Gray County, Kansas, is located 39 miles west of Dodge City on U. S. 45 or one mile east of the Haskell County line on U. S. 45. (*Highway U. S. 45 was later changed to U. S. 56.*) Copeland is an enterprising agricultural community. Much of its business comes from Haskell County farmers, and Copeland in sentiment is largely a part of Haskell County. The population is approximately 160 people. A very unusual fact is that Copeland lies in the center of an area of land with a radius of 20 miles of farming land.

They named the town after E. L. Copeland, treasurer of the Santa Fe Railway Company. It was staked off on 3 Jun 1912 and incorporated in September 1925. The railroad was laid from Dodge City to Elkhart in 1912.

Silas R. Stebbins* came to Copeland a few weeks after the town was started, bringing his family and \$300. With the money, he bought two lots, one he sold, and the other one Mr. Stebbins erected a tent in which he began handling groceries. At about this same time, the work train arrived and started work on the new railroad, which meant building the town.

Windmills were unknown to Copeland at that time, so people hauled water in barrels from Lockport, an old post office two miles north of Copeland. It was the only way of obtaining water for six months until the railroad installed a water tank. In 1913 William Wilson came to Copeland and drilled the first well for Mr. Stebbins. Since then, 56 wells have been drilled in Copeland and all of the same make and model. That is very unusual for a town of its size. Mr. Wilson later sold the drilling outfit to Frank S. Thomas*, who is still operating it.

They held the first school class at the home of Mrs. Fosha, only because the school building was under construction at the time. Mrs. Anna Yeager was the teacher. There were seven pupils on the first day of school, two of whom later graduated from the Copeland school. These two pupils were Miss Nina Alexander*, who now teaches school, and Paul Stebbins*, who does electrical work. Both are still living in Copeland. The town built the new high school building in 1920, and the new grade school was erected in 1929, thus, doing away with the first buildings, now used as homes.

The first building in Copeland was the Stebbins Grocery Store. Then came the Rounds and Porter Lumber Company. Both were under construction at the same time. As mentioned before, Silas R. Stebbins used a tent as his house of business

before he had the actual store built. A boxcar, standing on the tracks, was used for the first depot, in which the agent, Mr. Baker, also lived. The railroad station was built in October of 1912. The same building still stands (1936) with James E. Niles* as the agent.

In 1913, the city was on the "boom." Several business buildings and homes were built. Samuel O. Winn*, who still lives here, was one of the first to build. The first Post Office was opened in the Stebbins sheet iron building where Mr. Silas Stebbins was postmaster. The first year, while the railroad was being completed, the mail was carried by horseback from Colusa (*A town in Haskell County that was active for only 3 years*), twelve miles north of Copeland, the route coming by way of Ingalls.

Also, in 1913, Mr. Gordon erected the first hotel. It was a four-room structure. Fourteen rooms have been added to it since then. In this same year, a livery stable was built by George Alexander. At that time, a livery stable was as great a necessity as garages are now. About a month later, Mr. O. Wilcox built a blacksmith shop, which has since been enlarged, and it now belongs to Mr. Feuer. It is one of the best in the west at this time and has all the electrical tools.

Mr. Graham started the first café in Copeland in the building now used for a telephone office. This same year Mr. Graham started a real estate business currently operated by T. L. Baskett and Associates.

In the spring of 1914, Mr. Stebbins used part of his building and opened an oil station, with Jim Hilliard in charge. Up to this time, there had not been any oil stations in Copeland.

In 1915, Dr. Munford started a drug store in the present Alexander dry goods building, and the first bank was created in the backroom of the Stebbins building. A new bank was built in 1916. The first sidewalks were installed in 1914 in front of the Alexander store. In 1925, L. F. Lameyer opened an oil station. He delivered all the oil for the people in the Copeland vicinity, doing all of the work himself. Now there are five service stations, four bulk stations, and six trucks for the oil business. In 1925, F. A. Johnson bought the Hardware stock of L. F. Lameyer's and is still operating it.

Miss Myrl Stebbins*, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Silas R. Stebbins, was born in 1913 and had the honor of being the first person born in Copeland.

C. D. Jennings erected the first elevator in 1914, and it now belongs to the Security Company. Mr. Jennings built another elevator in 1915. Ten years later, he erected a concrete elevator.

The Copeland streets were curbed and graveled in 1929. There are 36 business places in Copeland, which has a population of about 460.

Copeland is known far and wide as the home of what is believed to be the largest farmer-owned country elevator globally, buying in truckloads. The elevator belongs to the Co-operative Exchange. The first elevator of the organization, then a part of the Montezuma Co-operative. The elevator was built in 1919 and had a capacity of 16,000 bushels. In 1928, the farmers decided that a more massive elevator was needed, and in May, completed a concrete structure with a capacity of 150,000 bushels. An elevator built-in 1929 is the largest Farmer's home-owned elevator in the world. It is constructed of cement. Twelve additional tanks were built in 1930 and are 110 feet high. One elevator is 130 feet high and holds 517,000 bushels of grain. The cost of the elevator was \$125,000.

Additional Information

SILAS R. STEBBINS

SILAS RAY STEBBINS, son of Homer Pease Stebbins (1831-1907) and Sarah Elizabeth Kinney (1839-1924), was born on 19 Jul 1881. He was born and raised in Atchison, Atchison County, Kansas. About 1906, Silas married GEORGIA "MYRTLE" FLETCHER, daughter of James Martin Fletcher (1845-1914) and Lucinda Moots (born in 1849). Myrtle was born on 11 Jan 1885 in Decatur County, Iowa.

Five children were born to this marriage; PAUL H. STEBBINS (1907-1937), CARL M. STEBBINS (1908-1934), LEE MARTIN STEBBINS (1910-1966), MYRL IRENE (STEBBINS) FRAZIER (1913-2011), and her twin, MYRON STEBBINS (1913-1913).

About 1908, Silas and Myrtle, with their two sons, Paul and Carl, left Kansas and moved to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma. They returned to Kansas in about 1911, making Copeland their home, and in 1935, they moved to Sublette, Kansas. Silas Stebbins passed away there on 5 Nov 1949, and Myrtle also died in Sublette on 30 May 1953. They were buried at the Copeland (Kansas) Cemetery.

Newspaper Obituary

SILAS R. STEBBINS

The Hutchinson, Kansas News – Tuesday, 8 Nov 1949

Sublette – Silas Ray Stebbins, 68, retired greenhouse owner here and former Copeland store owner, died Saturday night at his home here.

Mr. Stebbins came to Sublette from Copeland in 1935 after disposing of his store and establishing the greenhouse he operated until three years ago. He was a native of Atchison.

Survivors include the widow, Myrtle; a son Lee of Burbank, California; a daughter, Mrs. Melvin

(Myrl) Frazier of Montezuma; three grandchildren and two sisters.

Burial will be at the Copeland Cemetery in Copeland, Kansas.

PAUL H. STEBBINS
Son of Silas & Myrtle Stebbins

PAUL H. STEBBINS, son of Silas Ray Stebbins and Myrtle Fletcher, was born on 30 Jul 1907 in Kansas. Paul never married. He worked as an Electrician and owned his own Electric Shop in Copeland, Kansas. He died on 7 Nov 1937 and was buried at the Copeland Cemetery.

Newspaper Obituary
CARL M. STEBBINS
Son of Silas & Myrtle Stebbins
(1908-1939)

The Montezuma (Kansas) Press – 1 Mar 1934

CARL STEBBINS DIES AS A RESULT OF BURNS

CARL M. STEBBINS, son of Mr. and Mrs. S. R. Stebbins, pioneer merchants of Copeland, died at 5:00 P.M. last Thursday evening as a result of burns received the afternoon before while washing his leather jacket in Naphtha. (*Naphtha is a flammable liquid hydrocarbon mixture.*)

The accident happened at Rocky Ford, Colorado, Wednesday afternoon at the home of his girl friend, Alta Souders. They were wringing the jacket when the Naphtha exploded, throwing the flames over their clothing. The lady died at 10 P.M. on Wednesday night. Mr. Stebbins lived until the next afternoon.

He leaves his father and mother, two brothers, Paul and Lee, and a sister... Mrs. Merle (Myrl) Frazier, all of Copeland. The funeral services were held at the Grade School building Sunday afternoon.

LEE MARTIN STEBBINS
Son of Silas & Myrtle Stebbins

LEE MARTIN STEBBINS, son of Silas Ray Stebbins and Myrtle Fletcher, was born on 27 Oct 1910 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma. Soon, after 1930, he was married to Maxine Holland (1914-1984). By 1940, they had moved to Glendale, Los Angeles County, California where Lee was working as a salesman. They did not have children. Lee passed away on 5 Aug 1966 in Cuba, Sandoval County, New Mexico. He was buried at the Santa Fe National Cemetery in Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico.

MYRL (STEBBINS) FRAZIER

Daughter of Silas & Myrtle Stebbins

MYRL IRENE FRAZIER, daughter of Silas Ray Stebbins and Myrtle Fletcher, was born on 25 Sep 1913 in Copeland, Kansas. On 29 Dec 1930, she married **MELVIN DAVID FRAZIER** in Guymon, Texas County, Oklahoma. They lived in Ingalls, where they raised Angus cattle and also farmed. Four children were born in their marriage, **DELORIS FRAZIER**, **BETTY FRAZIER**, **CARLENE FRAZIER**, and **CRYSTAL FRAZIER**. Myrl was a farmwife and a homemaker. Melvin died in 1976, and Myrl passed away on 9 Mar 2011 in Cimarron, Kansas. Burial for both was at the Copeland, Kansas Cemetery.

Additional Information

Frank S. THOMAS

FRANK SWARTZ THOMAS, son of Charles Admetus Thomas (1852-1927) and Hettie Jane Snyder (1868-1901), was born on 17 Apr 1889 in Kansas. The following year, his father moved the family to Porter County, Indiana. By 1910, they moved back to Kansas, settling in Ingalls in Gray County.

On 10 Apr 1913, Frank married **RETTA ELLEN WIGGS**, daughter of Henry Milton Wiggs (1852-1917) and Mary Elizabeth Updike (1862-1944). Retta was born on 6 Oct 1893 in Missouri. Frank was a farmer until 1925, when the family moved to Copeland, Gray County, Kansas, and he became the business owner of "Thomas & Company Well Drilling and Supplies."

Frank and Retta moved to Marshfield, Coos County, Oregon, just before he passed away on 18 Dec 1937 in Coos Bay, Coos County, Oregon. Retta died on 12 Dec 1980 in San Diego County, California. Burial was at the Sunset Memorial Park in Coos Bay, Oregon.

Frank and Retta had four daughters: **MARY "THELMA" THOMAS**, **SADA "IRENE" THOMAS**, **BETTY JO THOMAS**, and **RETTA ADELL THOMAS**.

Additional Information

NINA ALEXANDER

NINA ALEXANDER, daughter of Samuel Alexander (1876-1960) and Nora Euraine Day (1877-1961) was born on 6 Apr 1906 in Lockport, Haskell County, Kansas. The family moved to Copeland, Gray County, Kansas, about 1912 and were still living there in 1929. For four years, Nina attended college to become a schoolteacher, and in 1930, she rented a room at the home of Charles Thomas while she taught school in Montezuma, also in Gray County, Kansas.

Nina married **RUSSELL L. MONNINGER** (1897-1961), son of George M. Monninger (1868-1911) and Alice Pearl Russell (1869-1948), on 2 Jun 1932 in Dodge City, Ford County, Kansas. Russell worked as manager of the Kansas Milling Company in Montezuma for several years. Russell and Nina had one daughter, **NORMA LEE (MONNINGER) DODY**, born in about 1938.

Russell passed away in Montezuma, Kansas on 27 Dec 1961. Nina died there on 17 May 1984. Burial was at the Montezuma Fairview Cemetery.

Additional Information

JAMES E. NILES

JAMES EDGAR NILES, son of Winfield Scott Niles (1845-1914) and Martha L. Hendrix (1853-1905), was born on 20 Jan 1886 in Colony, Anderson County, Kansas. As a young child, James and his parents lived in Ozark, Anderson County, Kansas. About 1912, he married **JANET LAMBE**, daughter of Edward Lambe (1854-1918, *born in Ireland*) and Maria Elizabeth Newberry (1853-1936). Janet was born on 28 Apr 1889 in Wellington, Sumner County, Kansas.

James and Janet were living in Sumner County, Kansas, in 1913, but had moved on to Howard, Elk County, Kansas, in 1915. In 1920, they lived in Garden City, Finney County, Kansas, where James worked as a manager for a grocery store bakery. By 1925, they had moved to Larned, Pawnee County, Kansas, and in 1930, they made their home in Copeland, Kansas, where James worked as an Agent Telegrapher. He retired as an agent for the Santa Fe Railroad.

James passed away on 4 Jun 1962 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, and Janet died on 27 Jul 1967 in Clay County, Missouri. Burial was at the White Chapel Memorial Gardens in Gladstone, Clay County, Missouri.

James and Janet had two daughters:

LOIS EVELYN NILES was born on 23 Nov 1913 in Dalton, Sumner County, Kansas. She was married to Albert Pearson Taylor, Jr., son of Albert Taylor, Sr. and Martha Clements. Albert was born on 16 Jan 1903 in Missouri. He passed away on 3 Nov 1965 in Kansas City, Clay County, Missouri. Lois died there on 10 Nov 2001. Burial was at the White Chapel Memorial Gardens in Gladstone, Clay County, Missouri.

EDITH ELIZABETH NILES was born on 19 Aug 1915 in Howard, Elk County, Kansas, and was married to Steven Ellis Johnson, son of Fredrick Johnson and Grace Burrows. Steven was born on 31 May 1915 in Leoti, Wichita County, Kansas, and died on 12 Oct 1969 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. Edith passed away on 7 Nov 1995. One child may have been born in their marriage. Details were not available.

Additional Information
SAMUEL ORVILLE WINN

SAMUEL ORVILLE WINN, son of Benjamin Arthur Winn (1837-1921) and Emily Jordan (1842-1864), was born on 3 Sep 1862 in Illinois. On 6 Oct 1898, Samuel married **ELLA SANDERS**, daughter of Thomas J. Sanders (1832-1880) and Mary Louisa Adams (1840-1912), in Hartley County, Texas. Ella was born on 23 Oct 1868 in Tennessee.



SAMUEL & ELLA (SANDERS) WINN
Photograph provided by Liz Bournier Laney

Samuel and Ella had three known children: **ANNIE LEE WINN** (1900-1910), **HAZEL M. WINN** (1907-1976) and **HOWARD E. WINN** (1910-1949).

Samuel and Ella soon moved to Clayton, Union County, New Mexico, but returned to Texas by 1910, living in Dalhart (*in Dallam County*). until moving to Copeland, Kansas, about 1912. About 1936, they moved to Venice, Los Angeles County, California, and lived with their son, Howard and his wife, Helen. Ella died in Los Angeles County on 9 Mar 1942 and Samuel died there on 15 Dec 1942.