

Virgil A. Brown's story belongs to the earliest days of pioneer Kansas. He was among Cloud County's earliest settlers, arriving on Wolf Creek in 1867 when the area remained largely unsettled and wild. Buffalo still roamed along the creek valley, covering the countryside "*like a living, surging mass of animal life.*"

Brown came from Ohio. He served his country during the Civil War, fighting in some of the war's best-known battles. After the war, he settled in Cloud County, helping transform the prairie into farmland. Despite grasshopper

plagues, drought, and the hardships common to frontier life, Brown became one of the county's successful stockmen and farmers.

Brown's place in local history rests not only on what he built, but on what he witnessed. During the Indian uprisings of 1868, he served in a local militia organized to protect settlers. On August 13 of that year, Brown witnessed the killing of Benjamin White, an event that shocked the young Wolf Creek settlement and forever altered the lives of the White family, Cloud County, and Kansas history.

WHITE

Benjamin and Sarah White's stories are heart wrenching and shocking.

The Benjamin White family homesteaded a few miles west of Wolf Creek in 1866. A few years prior, warning had been given by the Natives that any white man who settled west of Wolf Creek would be killed as it was their hunting grounds and parts of it sacred. Benjamin did not know of this warning and figured if there were settlers already there, the Natives must have already been "dealt with." He moved a bit further south and took out an additional claim on land just east of Wolf Creek as well. They were quite close to the boundary line.

Two years later, Benjamin and his sons were cutting and stacking hay miles from home. As they were finishing for the day, they noticed Natives heading their way. He sent the boys off to get help to retrieve their horses which the Natives had cut loose. Virgil Brown just happened to be nearby.

As the boys returned with some men for help, they were attacked. They had no protection when the Natives began shooting. Benjamin saw the attack and started toward his boys to help. That's when Benjamin was shot. Brown and another settler, Mr. English, hurried to Benjamin's aid. When they reached him, his last words were asking if his boys were okay.

The men and the boys, unharmed, headed toward the White homestead to relay the terrible news, only to encounter Mrs. White and the younger girls walking along the way. The homestead had been attacked as well. Sarah had been captured.

Mary and the smaller children escaped, but Sarah was dragged off. Through the trauma, Sarah's intelligence helped her survive. Her story and rescue are detailed in Bethlynn White's book, *Captured*. This author would encourage you, dear readers, to pursue the rest of that incredible story.



Lady Shirley's

SOCIETY PAPERS

Season II: Ninth Edition, September 2026

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY STORIES

Dearest Reader,

The promise of Fall brings a calm sort of anticipation. Longing for moments of quiet, for peace, and the soft turning of seasons. A gentleness to stay grounded in the present as the year begins its slow, graceful end, as we look back to see how far we've come. Allowing the past to move us gently forward.

Concordia has often changed in gentle ways - soft strokes of changing colors. Some hues deepen, some fade, and some return to us unexpectedly, like memories brushed forward by the season.

Before the first leaves begin to consider their descent, this author finds herself thinking of the colors carried in the names of those who shaped our early story. Not merely shades on a painter's wheel, but tones of character, industry, hard work, and resilience. The steadfast Green of ink and enterprise, the earthy Brown of soil and settlement, and the stark White of frontier trials that once bleached our community with fear, shock, and sadness before restoring it with hope.

These colors remind us that Concordia's past was never monochrome. It was a palette mixed by many hands - some well-known, some nearly forgotten - all leaving their tint upon this place we call home. Each name, each story, adds a stroke to the canvas, painting a landscape richer than any single hue could offer alone.

This is the season when the prairie begins to soften, when the greens of summer give way to the browns of harvest, and when the sky itself can turn a pale, startling white in the early morning. Nature echoes our history, and our history echoes nature, each reminding us that change is both inevitable and beautiful.

As the colors around us begin their annual shift, let us look back on the Greens, Browns, and Whites who colored Concordia's beginnings. Their hues still linger in our story like the last warm days of summer - grounding us, calling us to remember as we step gently into shorter days, richer sunsets, and autumn's familiar embrace.

*Yours truly,
Lady Shirley*

GREEN

Ray Green is remembered today for two things: newspapers and the Browns. As one of Concordia's three prominent newspaper editors, he helped shape public opinion across north-central Kansas for more than four decades. His second claim to fame came with his marriage to Gertrude Brown, widow of Earl Van Dorn Brown and heir to the Brown Grand Theatre.

Concordia's newspaper business was anything but polite. Competition among the city's leading papers was fierce, and editors often settled their disputes in print. Green's Blade-Empire and Gomer Davies' The Kansan dominated the field, and the two men loathed one another. Their rivalry produced decades of public feuds, biting editorials, and personal insults.

Before entering the newspaper business, Green, a graduate of Baker University, served as principal of Concordia High School from 1906 to 1909. He was described as a capable educator who was well-liked. However, in his later newspaper years, his rival Gomer Davies rarely missed an opportunity to mock him, referring to him as "Prof. Nosey Ray Green" long after Green had left education behind.

In 1909, Green and Lynn Bloom purchased the Daily Blade and Weekly Empire, and by 1915 Green became sole owner and editor of the publications. Under his leadership, the newspapers became one of the most influential newspaper operations in north-central Kansas and beyond.

Much of the paper's growing reputation stemmed from his hiring of Marion Ellet. Her intelligent, and often entertaining, articles and editorials earned the Blade-Empire attention far beyond the boundaries of Concordia.

While Green's professional fortunes were rising, an equally significant event was unfolding in his personal life. In 1914 he quietly married Mrs. Gertrude Brown in her home at 210 West Seventh Street, now known as The Inn at 210. Only a minister and eight close friends attended the ceremony. Although their engagement had been known to a small circle, the marriage came as a surprise to many in Concordia society. Shortly afterward, Green purchased the remaining shares of the newspaper, giving him complete control of the business and linking his future with one of Concordia's most prominent families.

Janet Pease Emery perhaps explained the marriage best: *"She had the money; he the talent and drive to use her money productively. It was a good marriage. He brought prestige and excitement into their home; she contributed social grace, charm and the wherewithal to make the most of it. Each wholly understood and respected the motives of the other."*

Society columns described the groom as "Mr. Snowden R. Green," prompting rival newspapers to comment on the overly dignified formality of his name, suggesting Green was attempting to elevate his social standing through the use of the distinguished-sounding "Snowden."

The Greens quickly became two of Concordia's leading hosts and entertainers. They filled their social calendar with grand parties and gatherings. Green founded the Fish Club, organizing fishing excursions to distant and exotic locations. His interests were many and varied. He loved camping and frequently escaped into the wilderness to "rough it." He developed a passion for gardening and helped cultivate the grounds of Cotswold Walls, you may recall as the Home Beautiful, featured in these Society Papers, introducing numerous trees and flowers, especially Gertrude's beloved tulips. He loved sporting events and gourmet cooking, often creating unusual culinary offerings, including what Emery described as his favorite delicacy: french-fried rose buds.

From 1916 to 1922, Green managed the Brown Grand Theatre. During the early years, business flourished. He booked talent and promoted performances, continuing the legacy of the theater as Concordia's entertainment jewel. The arrival of motion pictures, however, began to change audience habits. As "talkies" grew more popular, attendance at live theatrical performances declined. Green brought in wrestling and boxing matches to keep the venue profitable. Despite his best promotional efforts, the theatre was no longer profitable and

sold the Brown Grand to the Concordia Amusement Company in 1925.

Green's newspaper career extended for forty-one years and was marked by equal measures of brilliance and controversy. Janet Emery summarized him succinctly: he was "a brilliant publisher and a poor reporter, a good friend and a bad enemy." His emotions often found their way into print, resulting in libel suits and frequent public feuds with competing editors, particularly Gomer Davies.

Perhaps this author's favorite story is his clash with Delmer Harris, Sr., who you may recall from last month's edition. During the 1941 mayoral campaign, Green supported Harris's opponent and published an editorial comparing Harris to Hitler. Harris won the election, but the insult would not be allowed to stand. He encountered Green one evening and settled the matter with a punch to the face. Harris reportedly marched directly to County Attorney Marvin Brummett's office to confess. Green chose not to press charges. He knew he had it coming.

When Ray Green died in 1950, he left the Blade-Empire to the people who had helped build his success, bequeathing his stock to the newspaper's employees.

BROWN

No...not *THAT* Brown...

This author would like to introduce a far less famous Brown who nevertheless helped shape early Cloud County history. Virgil A. Brown first caught this author's

attention while paging through E.F. Hollibaugh's Biographical History of Cloud County. The surname Brown naturally stood out, though this Brown was no relation to Concordia's more celebrated Brown family.

Ray Green and Lynn bloom took over the Daily Blade and the Weekly Empire in 1909. Green became the sole owner and editor of the Concordia Empire in 1915. These papers were the leading newspapers in not only Concordia, but in this section of the State.

In 1914 Ray Green and Mrs. Gertrude Brown were quietly married in the home of Mrs. Brown in the presence of a pastor and 8 close friends. The marriage came as a surprise to their greater circle of friends, though their engagement was known to their intimate circle of friends. They made their home in Gertrude's home at 210 W. 7th, which today is The Inn at 210. Green owned half of the newspaper at this time and promptly purchased the remaining shares after their wedding. Shortly after, their marriage announcement appeared in society columns as Mr. Snowden R. Green weds Mrs. Gertrude Brown. Opposing newspapers ran with this new name of Snowden being printed in Society as if he was trying to be recognized as a Society Man though he was not. Some even took it as a way to put himself above the other newspapers in stature.

According to Janet Emery's book It Takes People to Make a Town, Gertrude was 10 years Ray's senior. "She had the money; he the talent and drive to use her money productively. It was a good marriage. He brought prestige and excitement into their home; she contributed social grace, charm and the warewithall to make the most of it. Each wholly understood and respected the motives of the other.

Ray Green began as Concordia High School Principal from 1906 - 1909. Newspapers say he was a good principal and well-liked by teachers. He graduated from Baker University. Gomer Davies, editor of The Kansan, and rival often referred to Green as Prof. Nosey Ray Green.

Green ran the Blade-Empire for 41 years. When Green died in 1950 he bequeathed his stock in the Blade-Empire to the newspaper employees.

Green was a brilliant publisher and a poor reporter, a good friend and a bad enemy. His emotion often got the best of his reporting. Many libel lawsuits were brought against him over the years and the wars with rival reporter Gomer Davies were often publicly printed without sparing words. One of these author's favorite stories involve Delmer Harris, Senior, you'll recall from last month's Society Papers. Harris was running for Mayor in 1941. Green supported his opponent and wrote some rather damaging words comparing Harris to Hitler. Harris won that election, but wasn't going to let Green get away with his Hitler comparison. He encountered Green one night and punched him in the face! The Harris promptly "marched right downtown to county attorney marvin Brummett to confess to the offense." No charges were pressed by Green, though Harris would have liked the opportunity to confront him in court. Green knew he had it coming.

In addition to his newspaper, Ray Green managed the Brown Grand from 1916-1922 after marrying Gertrude Brown. Business was good in the beginning and Green booked the talent. However, once "talkies" became popular, people wanted to go to the movies rather than live theatre. Despite great advertising and promotion but Green, numbers began to dwindle for theatrical performances. Green began booking wrestling and boxing matches in the last years until business was no longer sustainable and they sold the theatre to the Concordia Amusement Company in 1925,

When Gertrude and Ray married they were quickly the leading entertainers of the town. They held grand parties, Green founded the Fish Club, scheduling fishing excursions in exotic places. Green loved camping and took many trips "roughing it" in the wilderness. He had a fondness for gardening, introducing many types of trees and flowers, especially tulips which Gertrude loved, into the garden of their second home which you'll recall was the Home Beautiful. He also enjoyed sporting events, and gourmet cooking, concocting amazing dishes "including his favorite delicacy - french fried rosebuds.