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Discover History At Canadian River Valley Pioneer Museum!

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MUSEUM NOTES: AUGUST 17, 2021

CANADIAN ORPHANS HOME

Have you heard about the orphanage that was once located in Canadian? The Panhandle Orphans Home, also called the Canadian Orphans Home, was established by the local Church of Christ on March 1, 1921. It started because one of the church members, Mrs. Hawkins had died and left behind four children. The orphanage was first located in the home of Mr. and Mrs. H.B. Beach, located in Canadian (not sure of the exact location, but it was previously owned by J.B. Stickley and before then Mr. Burlingame). People in the panhandle quickly heard about the orphanage and homeless children were sent to the Beach's house. With too many children in their home to care for, the Canadian Orphans Home was moved into the old Canadian Baptist Academy in July 1921.

The Canadian Baptist Academy was built in 1904 and was used until 1913. In the beginning, the private school had 60 children in attendance. However, it lost several of its students when a local public school was built in 1907 and a public high school was built in 1910. The Canadian Baptist Academy closed in 1913 and the structure stood vacant until 1921.

Once the Canadian Orphans Home in the Beach's house reached its maximum capacity of 16 children, the Church of Christ moved the orphanage into the old vacant school. They thought it was large enough to house many more children and the grounds had enough acreage for them to play and learn.

In June 1921, a month before the children moved into the academy building, the local Canadian baseball team held a benefit game to raise money for the orphanage. Local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts walked around town selling tickets for 35 and 25 cents. It was considered so important it was recommended that all of the businesses in Canadian closed down at 4pm so their employees and families could attend the benefit game at the City League ball park located southwest of Canadian (Does anyone have any information about the City League ball park?).

However, by late July 1921, shortly after moving in, it soon became clear that the old academy school was not a viable long-term solution. The building was dilapidated and the money needed to repair it would be too great. William Landron Swinney of the Church of Christ hoped that they could raise enough funds to build a large fire-proof building on land donated by local attorney H.E. Hoover. Unfortunately, those plans never came to fruition.

The Canadian Orphans Home was run in the old academy school until 1924. Solomon Tipton donated land in Tipton, Oklahoma, and a new building was erected. In June 1924, the Canadian Orphans Home was closed down and the children were moved to Tipton.

The old academy building sat vacant again and was later destroyed by fire in 1927. The parking lot at the Canadian Middle School is the site where the old academy and orphanage once sat.

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