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# Franklin Haltom O'Baugh: A Short Biography

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On February 9, 1922, the O’Baugh family of Arkadelphia, Arkansas, welcomed their sixth (of eight) child: Franklin Haltom O’Baugh. The O’Baugh family has somewhat of a legacy in this small town: J.H. O’Baugh, paternal great-grandfather to Franklin, was Arkadelphia’s first mayor when the city was incorporated in 1857 as county seat for one of Arkansas’ five oldest counties. As a bricklayer, J.H. O’Baugh developed the city first by building Arkadelphia’s original courthouse and then would-be Confederate Governor of Arkansas Harris Flanagin’s law office, which still stands today across from the current courthouse. Later on, he served as County Judge during the Civil War.

Our boy Franklin would become famous for more than the works of his ancestors. Growing up, Franklin had always been small—4 feet, 5 inches, and 60 pounds at age 18 — and came to be known as a “midget.” While a student at Arkadelphia High School, he served as the school’s mascot. This undoubtedly contributed to Franklin’s love of theatrics. At age 16, Franklin joined a “midget troupe” of little people actors. This troupe was formally trained in Hollywood, CA and New York City. The troupe toured the United States and Canada, giving stage performances. It was this connection with the troupe that led him to his greatest accomplishment: the silver screen.

In 1939, when Franklin was only 17 years of age, the blockbuster *The Wizard of Oz* thrilled the nation. As the country’s first Technicolor film, it made superstars out of Judy Garland and our very own hometown boy, Franklin H. O’Baugh. Franklin was cast as a Munchkin Soldier, and self-reported that they rehearsed for a total of five months on the role. Although only visible twice, native Arkadelphians were ecstatic to see Franklin on the big screen. The use of the little people in *The Wizard of Oz* was the largest gathering of such to date. After the buzz of the movie dwindled, Franklin lived out a quiet life, never marrying or rearing children, and passing away at age 41 on September 19, 1963. He had enough excitement for one life.

