

SMISER, NORMA.

JAMES SHERMAN STANDLEY.

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#7349

Etta D. Mason

Interviewer

September 19, 1937.

Interview with Norma Smiser
Atoka, Oklahoma..

My father, James Sherman Standley, was born March 8, 1841, in Carroll County, Mississippi, four miles west of the town of Black Hawk on a farm. This farm was on the road leading from Black Hawk to Marion, a town on the Yazoo River, the name of which town was later changed to Sidon.

Father's primary education was had in the common schools near his home, but he was graduated from the Kentucky Military Institute near Frankfort, Kentucky, June 13, 1860, taking first honors of his class.

Father had always been the pride of his parents because of his model life and worthy ambition and his father was present at the graduating exercises and presented him with a \$200 watch and chain; Governor Mayafin, then Governor of Kentucky was also present and presented Father with a handsome award and a brief address full of truths and advice.

Father commenced to read law in October of the same year in the office of Colonel Daniel R. Russell in Carrollton, Mississippi.

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Preparatory to the War between the states which came on early in 1861, a military company was organized in Carrollton, called the "Carroll Rifles" and Father was elected First Lieutenant. He was later detailed as Acting Assisting Adjutant General and served in several important battles during the Civil War.

Lieutenant Standley was wounded in the right arm in the battle of Seven Pines which permanently disabled him, and necessitated his resignation and withdrawal from the military services of the Confederate army, ⁱⁿ July, 1864.

In the meantime, however, he received the Captaincy of his company by promotion and resigned July, 1864.

Captain Standley was the last surviving member of General Bee's staff, and about two years ago, when the Daughters of the Confederacy erected in San Antonio, Texas, a monument to General Bee, Captain Standley was tendered a handsome banquet, given a seat of honor and ^{was} much sought out because of his army history and fame.

While on leave of absence at his home in Carroll County, Mississippi, on account of the gunshot wound in

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his right arm, Captain Standley met Miss Alice Robinson Posey, formerly of Port Gibson, Claiborne County, Mississippi, but temporarily in Carroll and Tallahatchie Counties, courted her and they were married, at the home of her cousin, Jerry Robinson, June 10, 1863.

In the summer of 1866, James S. Standley and his wife became members of the Christian Church and found much comfort and happiness in endeavoring to continue faithful to their vows and time only the more demonstrates the wisdom of their course and the commendation of their example.

By this marriage there were ten children; Blanch, Norma, Lillian, Mary, Kate, James S. Jr., Eva, Claude Money, Leona and Anna twins. The first six of the children were born in Carroll County, Mississippi, and the four younger were born in the Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory, near South Canadian on a farm.

In September 1874, my father removed from the state of Mississippi with his family to the Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory and settled on a farm near South Canadian.

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In January 1881, Father moved from the farm near South Canadian to Atoka, at which place my mother, Alice Robinson Standley, died April 4, 1881, in the greatest triumph of Christian faith.

Anna Posey Standley died in Atoka September 5, 1884; Mary Standley was drowned ⁱⁿ July 1886 in Boggy Creek near Atoka; James S. Standley, Jr., died in Atoka March 31, 1896; all are buried in the cemetery at Atoka.

In 1882 Father met Mrs. Lizzie C. Harrison of Leesburg, Virginia, who was then in Washington City, and married her in Leesburg November 29, 1882. She is his surviving widow and has returned to Washington City to make her home with her daughter and son.

Previous to leaving Mississippi, my father completed the study of law which he had begun before the Civil War and obtained license to practice in all that state, and later he obtained license to practice in the Choctaw Courts, the U. S. Court at Ft. Smith Ark; the U. S. Courts in the Indian Territory, and in the Circuit Court of Appeals.

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In 1874 Father secured the establishment of his and his family's citizenship in the Choctaw Nation and since the year 1879 has figured with some prominence in the public affairs of the Choctaw Nation, representing that nation much in Washington City somewhat conspicuously in connection with the "Leased District". Even Father's political enemies said of him that he was a clean man, an able man, a man of invaluable worth to his Choctaw people. Two great points he contended for in the Atoka Agreement were a perpetual school fund for the Choctaws and the effort to restrict the sale of lands and to make the homestead inalienable for twenty-one years; thus he strove to protect his people.

Governor Green McCurtain valued Father's strength, worth and ability so keenly that he has said "I have felt crippled in my administration since he was stricken down and had to resign".

The following is a copy of the resolution passed by the Choctaw Council concerning Father's death:

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Whereas the sad intelligence of the death of our late comrade co-worker, and fellow citizen, Captain J. S.

Standley has just been conveyed to us: and

Whereas: while in life his energies were directed in the achievements of the best ends, for the interest of his fellow citizens, and feeling deeply the loss we have sustained:

Therefore, be it resolved by the general Council of the Choctaw Nation assembled:

That out of respect to the memory of our esteemed and honored friend, the Senate and House of Representatives of the Choctaw Nation in general council assembled, adjourned at 5 P.M. this 20th day of October and remained dissolved until Monday Oct. 22, at 9 A.M. and that the Principal Chief be directed to appoint a committee consisting of two senators and one representative to attend the funeral of Captain J. S. Standley; and

Be it further resolved that the said committee so appointed, convey to the members of Capt. Standley's family the deep condolences of the Choctaw Council in this the hour of their sad bereavement.

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Proposed by J. L. Ward.

In compliance with the resolutions this day passed by both houses the Council, authorizing me to appoint a committee to attend the funeral of J. S. Standley, in obedience to that resolution I hereby appoint Senator J. L. Ward of Atoka County, Senator Frank Fulson of Sans Bois County and Representative Calvin Howel of Eagle County.

In witness whereof, "I have hereunto set my hand, as the Principal chief of the Choctaw Nation on this, the 20th day of October A. D. 1904.

Green McCurtain,
Principal Chief Choctaw Nation.

The following is a copy of the last paragraph of father's will:

"If I could bequeath to you the same degree of faith and love in Christ which I enjoy and which I have enjoyed for many years, I would feel that I had bequeathed to you something of more value than all the gold on the Pacific slope, and render you more comfort, consolation and happiness than all of the other pleasures of life. I speak from the experience of many years."

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The following is from a clipping ⁱⁿ my scrap book,
concerning the death of my father:

"Captain James Sherman Standley died last Thursday morning at 8 o'clock at the home of his eldest daughter, Mrs. S. S. Saiser, after seven weeks spent in a hospital surrounded by his four daughters and grandchildren.

Four years ago last March while in Washington City, Captain Standley had the first attack and appearance of that dread disease, consumption. Having passed his sixtieth birthday, specialists had comforted him by stating he need not fear the development at that age. With such assurance, with a flattering future of honor, position and fame well earned in a way to command universal respect, he received the sad intelligence of his condition with the bravest and most Christian fortitude. He praised God for all his tender mercies, bountiful blessings and eternal salvation and murmured not at his affliction. He wrote his children to hurry up and that all he had to regret was that he had not done more for God and in the days left him on earth he would strive to do more.

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Thus he lived the few remaining days on earth. His friends and family all felt the great faith in God, the source of his wondrous strength. He had obeyed the command, "Add unto your faith knowledge, patience, virtue, temperance," His friends, physicians, and all who were thrown with him during his days of suffering marveled at his patience, his self-denial and thought of those who attended him. He was never too ill to notice the comfort of those sitting with him and to urge that they take due precaution against taking cold or being uncomfortable. He labored to help himself in any way he could always saying, "They will be done".

The last few days of his life he prayed without ceasing, "O, God, let me go now - right now." He called all his children around him and talked of any and all things; nothing was left without an expression of his wishes and direction of carrying out of same.

His mind, the great strength in all his life, was clear and perfect to the last. His last breath was as peaceful as a child going to sleep."

The following is a note from Reverend Murrow concerning the death of my father:

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Atoka, October 20th, 8:30 A.M.

Mrs. Smiser, My Dear Daughter:

Your dear father's prayer is answered. God saw best to require a few hours more of patience and resignation. Now he is laying his well earned crown at Jesus feet; now he is welcomed by the loved ones gone before. He is in Paradise with his Redeemer and the loved ones. He is in the mansion prepared. He has heard, "Well done good and faithful servant", the most glorious tribute he has ever received.

O, my daughter does it not thrill your soul with the most exquisite joy to know that your dear father is in Heaven? O, blessed comfort. It drives sorrow out of the heart and fills it with joy and praise to God. O, the blessings of Christianity.

Sincerely

Bro. Murrow.