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Field Worker, L. W. Wilson,  
August 9, 1937.

Interview with Emma Patton-Drake,  
Sallisaw, Oklahoma.

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NORMAN SEYMOUR DRAKE.  
A biographic sketch.

The subject was born in Rochester, New York, in October, 1838. He was a graduate of Harvard College and was taking a short course at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, just at the outbreak of the Civil War.

He enlisted in the navy and was assigned as 2nd Lieutenant on the battleship "Ram Switzerland" under Captain Jones. This was the next boat in line after Admiral Farragut's ship. While on this ship Capt. Jones in some way, while tied up at Vicksburg, Mississippi, through negligence in properly lifting the gang-plank to a certain height when starting to pull from shore, permitted some Confederate soldiers to board the ship. They started a massacre of the ship's crew. The fight took place directly in front of some of the engine's exhaust pipes and Lieutenant Drake hastened to the engine room, instructing the engineer to apply the steam, which routed them from

the boat. For this act Lieutenant Drake was promoted to the rank of Captain and fought the battle in Mobile Bay against the Confederates in 1864.

Captain Blake had three brothers, Carlos, Quincy and Theodore. Carlos was a graduate of West Point and fought in the Confederate Army and was stationed at Ft. Smith, Arkansas. Quincy likewise was a graduate from West Point, lived in Illinois and fought with the Federal Troops. Before the war ceased he was promoted to Major General. Theodore was also a West Point graduate and fought with the Federal Army. Soon after the war he established the first "school of correction" at Detroit, Michigan.

#### AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

The entire United States was in a devastated and unsettled condition and the brothers, whom wanderlust had overtaken, began to drift apart never to see each other again on this earth.

Captain Blake had a desire to see his brother who had been in the Confederate Army if he still lived, in what was then the far west, Ft. Smith, Arkansas.

Whether or not he ever found his brother, Carlos, no one ever heard him say, but he retraced where he himself had fought at Mobile Bay and New Orleans, Louisiana, and continued by steamboat (name unknown) to Ft. Smith Arkansas, arriving at Ft. Smith in 1868.

In 1869, he pioneered into the Indian Territory and having some financial means, in his own mind, he felt that he had come to the land of opportunity.

Mr. Drake first familiarized himself with the Indian laws, and at this instance he started negotiations to open a mercantile house, which would not only serve the people along the trail and stage line operating between Ft. Gibson, Indian Territory, and Ft. Smith, Arkansas, but would serve the community for miles in each direction. He perfected negotiations with an Indian by the name of John Taylor for the site he desired. This location was on the north side of the Arkansas River, on the prairie which later became known as Drake Prairie and is so known at the present day. He erected his buildings principally of logs on this prairie about four miles off the trail. People along the trail came to him to trade, eat and rest their teams, for it was the only store and resting place at that time

On the north side of the Arkansas River between Ft. Gibson, Indian Territory, and Ft. Smith Arkansas. This location today could possibly be better described as being about five miles due south of the present town of McKee, Oklahoma.

After the building was constructed, he started stocking his store with a line of general merchandise that was hauled by freight wagons from Ft. Smith, Arkansas, and then later by steam boats that had regular landings at Skulville, now Spiro, Oklahoma, Tamaha and Webber Falls, Indian Territory.

Besides operating the store, he bought from the Indians their hides, furs, and cotton or if not purchased with cash would give them merchandise in exchange for the same. There was no cotton gin nearer him in those days than Ft. Smith Arkansas. The cotton was shipped by steamboat or freighted by teams to the cotton buyers at Ft. Smith and was commonly called "Snake Cotton"

Snake cotton was wrapped in a large long burlap sack, thus the name snake. Around these long, large sacks of cotton were placed whippoles to bind the sacks to keep them from bursting. Whip-poles were saplings

split half in two and while green were wrapped around the sacks of cotton, making the ends fast with bark.

Business at the Drake Store thrived and grew by leaps and bounds and, of course, proving very profitable at all times to the owner.

Within a few years the Cherokees began receiving moneys from the government for annuities, and so on. Dr Drake was a learned man and alert to the times, so he began furnishing the Indians food stuff, clothing, and hardware on a credit basis, pending the arrival of their payments. He always financed himself for he had accumulated from the beginning and had the necessary cash in the banks at Ft. Smith and Little Rock, Arkansas. The method of keeping his accounts was similar to others in the pioneer days. Many times he bought forty or fifty thousand dollars worth of merchandise a whole year in advance from wholesale houses at Little Rock, Arkansas, Memphis, Tennessee, St. Louis, Missouri and Louisville, Kentucky, to be delivered in June. This was the time of year the rivers were up and the steamboats could ply them, not losing sight however of the fact that merchandise was being received every two weeks by wagon train from Ft. Smith, Arkansas.

If an Indian was credited for a certain amount, say one hundred dollars, the entire amount was charged him and due bills given him in five and ten dollar denominations to cover. In short, there were no itemized accounts kept at his store with his customers.

Mr. Drake also took mortgages on cattle, horses, mules and hogs. This practice was not only true with the Indians but also the white people as they continued to move in the Territory near and around his community.

White people continued to drift in and around the Drake center until he saw the necessity for a school for white children. He built, at his own expense, a neat little clapboard school house; and more than that employed, and paid for himself, a school teacher to teach the white children and he furnished the books.

Many people in eastern Oklahoma have heard much of the so-called "Drake stand," thinking of it in the sense of a stage stand but the tavern part was only a side issue to the owner. It was not a recognized stage stand on the recognized stage road and the ones who came off the line to his place came due to his hospitality

and it was spoken of by all along the trail as they contacted each other.

Mr. Drake was one of few men who believed in taking care of his own business and letting everyone else do likewise. He despised United States marshals for some of the tactics practiced by them, and he would rather not have them around him. If one did show up he used every method possible to have him leave from around his premises. He usually asked what they wanted. Sometimes it was first one article and then another. He would give them what they wanted without pay and tell them to get going.

The interviewer had the opportunity to talk to one of these old marshals, C. B. Rhodes by name, who said he left the Trail and went to his store for a ham and he threw a ham at him and told him to get on to Ft. Smith as he was not needed around there. He said when he needed the marshals he would go for them.

Mr. Drake was loved by all far and near except the United States Marshals. He despised them, for often times they would place whiskey on wagons and then arrest

the owners. Many a time he has come to the innocent immigrant's rescue and paid these rats, as he called them, off, so the pioneers could continue their journey with their wives and children.

His wealth grew and grew until he had acquired a claim to more than ten square miles of land through his Indian friend, John Taylor, besides a nice fortune accumulated in cash. All these years he lived alone but nearing the age of fifty he met a young lady of Cherokee descent whom he wooed and won.

This young lady by name was Miss Emma Patton. She was born near the present town of Muldrow, Oklahoma, June 13, 1871. They were married according to the Cherokee laws in 1889 and continued together until death did separate them.

The St. L.I.M.&S. Railroad built through this section of the Indian Territory from Ft. Smith, Arkansas, to Coffeyville, Kansas, in 1887-8-9-. The road was completed to Ft. Gibson, Indian Territory, in 1888, and on the land which Mr. Drake had as a claim sprang up a telegraph station by the name of McKee, Indian Territory.

The days of the freight wagon trains and steamboats were rapidly fading out. To facilitate matters, he erected a store building, dwelling, and grist mill at McKee, Indian Territory, moving all his merchandise to this location using the buildings left behind on the Drake Prairie for his tenants.

Besides his business at McKee he had accumulated many cattle and naturally employed many cowhands. Each year he would ship a train load of cattle by rail to the markets back in the states.

Together he and his good wife lived, worked and shared, and there was soon to arrive from heaven a bundle to bless them. When it arrived it was found to be a little baby girl, whom they named Emma after her mother. Emma grew to womanhood and married a Mr. Fisher and Emma Fisher lives today at 225 NW 5th Street, Oklahoma, City Oklahoma. Two sons were born, one named Raymond, the other Seymore. Today they are sterling young men, men of good character and so loved by their friends and neighbors that they have been elevated to some of the highest positions of Sequoyah County. Particularly Raymond, the elder of the

two brothers. Seymore was named after his father and a distant relative of his father's, Governor Horatio Seymore of New York, who at one time was a candidate for the President of these United States against General U. S. Grant and was defeated in 1868. These two brothers live at Sallisaw, Oklahoma.

We have followed the life of Mr. Drake thus far, including his removal from "Log Town" on the land of the Indian, John Taylor, located between Vian and Sallisaw Creeks then known as the "Drake Stand" to McKee, Indian Territory, where he became the first postmaster. Besides handling one thousand head of cattle at McKee, his mercantile business continued to flourish and it is remembered, to show the immensity of his business, that he had a standing order with Swift & Company to ship him each two weeks one car load of salt meat and at that many times the meat would be delivered direct to the customer from the car, none of it ever entering the inside of his store. He also bought much cotton and one year he had purchased three million pounds of cotton from five to six cents per pound and sold it for ten cents per pound.

On and on he continued to climb the ladder of success and as he climbed he was always hospitable as was his good wife and saw that no one went hungry, unclothed or lacked medical attention whom they knew or heard of. He had grown to believe ~~that~~ all men were honest only to learn in his latter years they were not and his wife has today approximately one hundred thousand dollars in notes long past due, unpaid, and never will be paid, by those whom he trusted.

He has also suffered because two large fires destroyed not only his business houses, dwellings, gins and mills but all their contents, which amounted to thousands of dollars and it seems useless to say that he suffered losses a great deal more rapidly than it took him to acquire money. In short the ladder he had climbed to success was knocked from under him in comparatively a few short years.

During one of these fires his wife tells of some nineteen hundred bales of cotton, ginned, bagged and tied, lying on the station grounds of the St. L I.M.&S Railroad to be shipped, for there was no place to store it and the

railroad would not accept it until cars could be had in which to load it. This was due to a car shortage and so the burning of this cotton was the loss of the owner and not of the railroad.

It became so hot from the fire in this cotton that the railroad ties caught fire and burned, and the steel rails were so warped when the fire had died down that they were of no more service to the railroad. For more than a day the railroad was unable to operate a train on this account and finally passengers, baggage and mail passed by running a train to each side of the fire and transferring passengers by foot and baggage and mail by team and wagon from one train to the other. Freight trains were tied up.

Mr. Drake passed from this world to meet his Maker in the year 1928, leaving behind to meet him later in the great beyond his true and loving wife, daughter and two sons afore mentioned. He was laid to rest in the Sallisaw Cemetery at Sallisaw, Oklahoma.

There was a family cemetery at "Lo-Town" near the pioneer Drake home but none of his relatives were

buried there and he had no desire to be buried on private ground, although he gave and dedicated the plot to those old friends and pioneers with whom he toiled and lived.

Besides his views of the cemetery he gave, in his declining years he remembered, too, although he made no remark, that the first interment made on the lonely Drake prairie, where in those days the wolves and the coyotes howled, had been buried a man who was shot by a posse of Indians for horse stealing. This horse thief was the first man to be buried in the cemetery established by him and known today as the Drake Cemetery. Not all buried there were thieves, robbers and murderers-- far from it. The reason this one was buried there was because the posse had chased and shot him and he apparently had escaped. Later, they found him dead by his horse that was grazing contentedly on the long blue stem grass nearby. He was an unknown man to the community, was not identified and naturally lies in an unknown grave. He was the pride, at one time of some mother's heart. No doubt this mother has passed over the river to the great beyond, never knowing why her wandering boy didn't return. This is

only one incident of its kind that happened to such people in the pioneer days of the Indian Territory.

Thus, we have written, as it were, the epitaph of Norman S. Drake. A man of English parentage, whose parents and forefathers fought for freedom, against their own people in the thirteen colonies to which they came to worship God at the dictates of their own conscience. We find that he himself fought for the things he thought best, believing that "United we stand, divided we fall" though he had to oppose his own flesh and blood, his beloved brother, as many had to do during our Civil War. Historians write of the glory of this war, but burial parties saw murder while historians saw glory.

The all wise Creator deemed and so ordained that Norman S. Drake should not die during the crisis of the war, for he still had work for him to do. He was learned, talented, accomplished, hospitable, and a pioneer as well as a builder and a help to all mankind.

He came to our State, which was then a Territory, seeking opportunities, knowing well the South was bankrupt and the North in which he lived was very unsettled, not only seeking opportunity but to try to locate

his brother who opposed him in the war. He grasped the situation, saw the opportunity and took the advantage which it afforded him. He adapted himself to our Territory and the people of the West. He learned to love and do for them and they for him, and he never returned to his old homestead in the land in which he was born and reared to manhood.

He saw the trails and cow paths turn to ribbons of concrete highways. He saw the steamboat transportation and old freight wagon trains transform, as it were, to railroads, motor trucks and aeroplanes. He saw the little log school and church houses grow to buildings that tower high into the heavens. He saw the little trading posts and villages give way to great cities.

The time came when he had to say to himself "I have finished my course, I have given my life, my all, for my Country, my State and my home. All I had, I gave them freely."

We pay tribute to such a great pioneer in our state, who has helped make it a place safe in which to live and rear our children. To those loved ones whom he has left to mourn, we can truthfully say that the deeds of such great men as he shall live forever.

*Panegyric! Read for give me*

*L.S.C.  
12-8-37*