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HISTORY OF TIMPSON CHAPEL, CRAIG COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

By John Armstrong

One of Craig County's historic spots is the Timpson Chapel building and cemetery located northwest of Vinita, not far from Estella Community.

The land on which the building stands was set aside for the purpose by the Dawes Commission,

Timpson Chapel would have been more correctly named had it been called Smith Chapel, because the man for whom it was named originally was called Bare Smith, a full blood Cherokee Indian. Smith adopted the name Timpson when he was serving in the southern Army during the Civil War.

He and his brother, Liver Smith, were Methodist preachers after the war. Bare did not like the white man because of his mistreatment of the Indians, and he often said "mean to us", "It was not the government that mistreated us; it was the white man that did not like us."

Bare's name in Cherokee was Wi-o-na. Cherokees who settled the community which they called Pawpaw Creek, were all related - brothers and sisters, first, second and third cousins.

They were among the first Indians to come from Tennessee to this land which the government said would be theirs "as long as the grass grows and the water runs," coming on their own, as the settlers of the Cherokee Nation. Included were: Liver Smith (U-wa-la), John Sack Smith (Gon-da-gu-ti), Bare (Smith) Timpson (Wi-o-na), and two sisters Betsy Smith Buzzard (Gwa-tsi su-li), and Eliza Smith (U-du-ski).

Betsy Smith married John Suli (or John Buzzard in English) who was killed in the Civil War. They had a daughter, Eliza Buzzard. Betsy was married after the war to a man named Crutchfield, and they had a daughter, Jennie, who became Mrs. Ed Walker. Eliza Buzzard married L. B. Woodall.

"Aunt Betsy" Buzzard was the leading mother of the community. She and her two daughters took four sets of orphan children into their home and raised them. These included: Katy Walker, Maggie Rogers, James Armstrong, Susie Timpson, Sam Timpson, Nancy Timpson, Katy Timpson, and myself.

Among other early settlers in the community were John Boot, Gu-a-g-a-i (English name not known) who was the mother of Jim Horsefly, and Ben Hilderbrand.

My maternal grandfather, a cousin of the Smiths, was John Falling. He is buried in the family graveyard at Timpson Chapel Cemetery, where also are the graves of other members of the family. This cemetery dates back to about 1870.