

HICKS, HERBERT W.

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INTERVIEW WITH HERBERT W. HICKS,
Grandson of Rev. Samuel A. Worcester,
Early Missionary to Cherokees.

OLD INDIAN DAYS

As I first remember Fort Gibson, in 1867, the Arkansas and Grand River bottoms were a great cane -
~~brake~~, with immense growth of cottonwood, elm, over-
cup oak, pecan, sycamore and walnut trees, which was
so heavy that the roads, which we traveled on horseback,
were quite dark, even at midday. Many of those grand
old trees were felled, by the soldiers, during the
Civil War, in such a manner that they fell across,
and over each other, so as to form a barricade against
the enemy. Thorn trees were cut down, all over Garrison
hill, where the soldiers were located, so that would be
almost impossible for cavalry to get through.

The fort, at that time was built near the Grand
River, in the form of a square stockade, built of logs,
set on end in the ground. A block house was built of
logs at each corner, having a lower story for the women

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and children to be gathered in, with an over-hanging upper story, with loop holes for cannon, and with solid iron cannon balls stacked in pyramids on the platforms.

The barracks and officer's quarters around them were built of heavy logs. Col. Gustavus Loomis and my grandfather, Dr. S. A. Worcester, a missionary printer, who lived at Park Hill, twenty miles away, were close friends, and Colonel Loomis sometimes permitted the Army Cavalry Band to go to Tahlequah to play for some of Dr. Worcester's Temperance meetings. This band was said to be the best in the army at that time. There was great grief throughout the population at the fort when the Colonel with his popular band were ordered to another Fort.

OLD BLOCK HOUSE RE-PLACED WITH NEW STONE BUILDINGS.

Before the Civil War was started, the old square block house at the fort had been replaced with new stone buildings, up on Garrison Hill and General Belknap was in command of the fort with another army band on the works.

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General Melknap permitted his band to go to the Cherokee Female Seminary at Tahlequah to play for one of the early picnics on May 7. The anniversary of the opening of the seminary is still celebrated to this day.

I was at Fort Gibson, at the flag raising when the post was re-occupied during the Civil war by the Indian brigade, in command of Colonel Wm. A. Phillips of the Third Regiment, Indian Home Guards. A general celebration was being held and there was much rejoicing, but the rejoicing ceased suddenly when the cannon salute was fired, for a terrible thing had happened.

The salute was fired too rapidly; it became overheated and exploded, killing the gunner and mutilating him badly and while his body was being carried from the field, a dark cloud of mourning fell over the assembly. Such are some of the experiences of war.

LAST OLD BLOCK HOUSE SOLD

I had been the owner for a good many years of the last old block house that had not been torn down, but even half of that building had been torn away. I recently sold the old block house to be replaced by the present

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government, in collaboration with our state authorities. It is being developed as one of the principal State Historic properties, and is an interesting point for sight-seeing, in connection with the remaining stone buildings, (which have formerly been bought by private citizens, and rebuilt into homes,) with the National Cemetery, located near the old fort.

HELPED TO ARREST GRATZ DALTON

A friend I will call "Charlie," and I rode into Claremore one morning in the late 80's. Charlie lived five or six miles north of Claremore, and I was a visitor at his ranch. He was a deputy United States Marshal, as well as a rancher.

One of the first things Charlie found awaiting him was a telegram from Tulsa, stating that some of the Dalton gang had been seen near Tulsa and were heading northeast, toward Claremore and for Charlie to intercept them, if possible.

Charlie says to me, "Well you see what I am up against. I am going to get up a small posse and try

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and take them prisoners. If you want to go along, I'll get you a good gun and swear you in as my deputy, the same as the other members of the posse; if you'd rather not risk getting shot up, you know the way back to the ranch and can go on alone, and stay there until I get back." I thought over the matter, and decided rather than to be thought a coward I would go with them.

So Charlie got me a good Winchester, with plenty of cartridges, and with a couple of other fellows, whom I will call only Joe and Joel, all well armed with six-shooters and two winchesters, we rode west from Claremore several miles, until we came to a good sized creek, with only two crossing^s about three miles apart.

Charlie decided that this was the most likely place to get them when they came through, so we spent the rest of the day watching the two crossings, but no Dalton boys appeared. Undaunted, Charlie says, "Well boys we will just keep watching those crossings through the night. I think they will be along before daylight."

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So he scattered us up and down the creek, with instructions to keep close watch and if any of us located them, immediately to get word to the whole posse, before any move. Just after daylight, Joe, who had the north crossing, came hunting the others, saying two of the Daltons had just come to the house he was watching, put their horses in the barn, and had gone into the house for breakfast.

The four of us lost no time in getting back up the creek to where the Daltons were. We left our horses in the brush, on the creek, and crawled to the barn, out of sight from the house. The barn was a large one, with a driveway running through it, and had stalls and granaries on each side. Charlie placed us in empty stalls, on each side of the driveway, and gave us final instructions.

"Boys," he said, "I don't believe in good citizens being killed by outlaws, and it is my policy always to get the drop on them. I don't care how bad a man may be, if he sees the other fellow has the drop on him and

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means business, he will put up his hands and surrender. I don't want any of us to get killed or shot up, so you boys let me do the leading. Don't show yourselves or make a move until I do, but keep them covered with your guns, and shoot to kill if you have to. Let them get clear inside the barn, and at the right time I'll step out, and you do likewise."

He had hardly finished his instructions, when we, peeping through the cracks of the barn, saw two men coming from the house. They had left their Winchesters on their saddles, but had on their six-shooters as they came through the big gate, toward the barn. They separated, and each went around a different side of the barn, as though they were suspicious. Seeing nothing out of the ordinary, they came on together, and into the barn, Gratz Dalton in the lead, the other man, whose name I can't recall, was right behind him.

When they were well inside the barn, Charlie suddenly jumped out from one of the stalls, and throwing down on them, with his No. 10 shot-gun, loaded with buck-shot,

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commanded them to throw up their hands. Dalton recognized him, and said, "Why, what's the matter Charlie?" Charlie answered, "Throw up your hands, or I'll cut you in two."

Looking around both sides and seeing he was covered from all sides, his hands went up high. His partner was twisting and squirming, and if he had been near the door would have made a fight before giving up, but seeing all the guns trained toward him and believing he would be cut in two if he made a move, he also threw up his hands and gave up his guns.

We got a wagon and team from a farmer and after tying their feet and handcuffing them, we loaded them in the wagon and headed for Claremore. Dalton told us frankly that he did not expect to ever reach Claremore. He thought we would take him down the creek and hang him.

The Daltons at that time were doing quite a nice business, rustling cattle and horses in the territory, driving them over the line into Kansas and selling them and then doing the same thing on their return to the Territory, with Kansas cattle and horses.

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Gratz joked with the boys, on the way to Claremore. He had been a deputy marshal at one time, and had arrested Joe on a whiskey charge, and hauled him around for thirty days before delivering him to Fort Smith, where Judge Parker ordered him released.

Joe was almost a full-blood Cherokee, and Gratz said he could see Joe's gun was covering him with both barrels, and, as he looked into Charlie's No. 10 it looked as big as a cannon. Looking along the barrel, into Charlie's eyes, he saw that they were steady, and believing Joe's gun would go off accidentally, he knew it was time to put up his hands.

Gratz was among those killed when the Dalton boys and their gang undertook to rob ^{two} banks at the same time in Coffeyville, a year or so later.