

PIERSON, ELSIE

INTERVIEW

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An Interview with Elsie Pierson, Borger, Texas.  
By - Ruth Kerbo - Interviewer.  
August 16th, 1937.

Smith Pierson is one of the many early residents of Greer County who recalls the famous Indian scare of 1890, resulting from the shooting of Bob Poline, Kiowa sub Chief, by a white settler named Loftin.

Retaliation by the Indians was feared and several citizens, led by S. H. Tittle, went across the North Fork of Red River to make terms with the Indians.

When the ambassadors returned and reported that the Indians were still angry and bent on revenge, the settlers organized a militia and sent for some old Springfield army rifles in possession of the state.

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There were not enough of these army rifles to go around and some of the citizens used their own Winchesters. Judge Stephens served as drill master and prided himself on his snappy commands.

At one drill period, Ed Claunch used his own rifle in which he had accidentally left a cartridge. Judge Stephens had just maneuvered his company into firing formation and had given the order "take aim".

Claunch, with the rest of the company, snapped his rifle to his shoulder and prepared to snap the trigger on what he believed was an empty chamber. "Fire", Judge Stephens yelled.

Claunch did exactly that, and a bullet hit the dust in front of the Judge's feet. The Judge was thoroughly disgusted with his recruit, and even threatened to resign his post with the company and said, "Let the confounded redskins butcher you all", and after a speech along this line the Judge yelled, "Company dismissed". After the troop was dispersed, Judge Stephens softened and forgave the offender. They even had a round of drinks together with the Judge as host.

Smith Pierson came to Greer County from Hamilton County, Texas, in 1886 with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Pierson. The family located on a claim near Granite for a year and later moved to a tract of land on the Elm River. During one summer the settlers lived in tents. When a storm blew down their canvas dwellings one night, they were forced to spend the rest of the night in the wagon box, which they covered with canvas.

Then the Pierson family moved to Mangum or Tin City as it was called, which consisted of only three buildings. The other establishments were all dugouts.

Dave Yokum was the first sheriff of Greer County but he served for only a few months, and Tom Williamson was the second sheriff.

The three dwellings in Mangum were the Crouch hotel, the H. C. Sweet residence, and the J. R. Curry residence. Ed and Nige Claunch lived in dugouts. Mr. Sweet later sold his store to George McDougal.

In front of the little cluster of dwellings there was a water trough from which stray cattle of the range often drank. Settlers wished the trough for the use of their own stock, and some of the more adventurous settlers tied tin cans on the tails of the intruders.

Later, the Piersons established a hotel on the present site of the Border - McGregor building, and Kitts Miller, man of mystery, made his appearance in the pioneer community. Miller was a favorite of Smith Pierson, who was attracted by his generosity. Mr. Pierson saw Miller leaving Mangum one evening on his horse. Miller never returned, and his body

was found a year later in the Lake Creek Community.

Miller was identified partly by the boots which he wore. His revolver was also found, but the cause of his death was never ascertained. — The theory was advanced that he was a detective or a Federal operative who had met with foul play.

About this time Mr. Pierson went to his first school that was conducted in a dugout owned by Henry Daniels and John Rose. Rose, who was the first Justice of Peace in Mangum, was accustomed to look for his cattle on foot, and one day in the vicinity of Elm River he encountered a mean bull which chased him round and round a tree. Rose was too fleshy to climb the tree and decided to do battle with the bull with a pocket knife. He succeeded in slashing the creature across the nose with the small weapon and in making his escape.

Professor John R. Nigh taught the first school in Mangum. The older boys and girls were wont to "keep company" and to neglect their studies for romantic interests. Nigh was disgusted by this display of adolescent affection and informed the scholars that he was conducting a grammar

school and not a "sparking school".

One of the famous shootings of Mangum was that of Ben Franklin, who was critically wounded by George Mobly in Clampel's saloon in 1888. Franklin was brought to the Pierson hotel on a blanket for first aid treatment. Mobly escaped to Wichita Falls on horseback and was subsequently cleared of the charge.

It was recalled that Mobly shot Franklin through his right hand as Franklin was attempting to fire.

Mr. Pierson was present when Red Buck, noted outlaw, and Dolf Pickleslimer paid a visit to the pioneer settlement. Word was received that the ugly visitors were going to take in the town, and that they had even mentioned "shooting up the works".

The outlaws were looking for a quarrel when they approached a group of settlers. They picked a quarrel at once, and Pickleslimer attacked one of them with a knife. He was K.O.'d by Walter Pendergraft, who used the butt end of his revolver.

When the outlaws saw that the boys were not sociable

they went off to John Rose's wagon yard for their horses and were soon seen shooting their way out of town. Mangum never received another formal visit from Red Buck and his pals.

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