

SELF, THOMAS SLOANE

INTERVIEW

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Hazel B. Greene, Interviewer.
 Indian Pioneer History S-149.
 J. S. Clark, Supervisor.
 10-1-37

Name; Thomas Sloane Self,
 8 miles west and north of
 Hugo, Oklahoma.

Date of birth-----1869

Place of birth-----Selfs, Texas, 9 miles north
 of Honey Grove.

Father-----William Carroll Self, (white man)

Place of birth-----Alabama.

Mother-----Caroline Baxter Self, 1/4 Cherokee
 Indian.

Place of birth-----Georgia, 1842.

Mr. and Mrs. Self, parents of Thomas Sloane Self, are both
 buried in the Spring family cemetery, about a quarter of a
 mile south of the city limits of Hugo, at the end of South
 Eighth Street.

My mother was grown when her father, William Baxter,
 was enlisted in the army during the Civil War, and I believe
 she said that he was stationed at Fort Towson, and that the
 family moved to Doaksville to be near him. I don't know how
 long they lived at Doaksville, but I know that my mother's
 mother was buried at Doaksville in the Doaksville cemetery.

Mother's oldest brother was also named William

Baxter, and was killed in action in the Civil War. A little brother of Mother's, nine years old, was killed by the Yankees. Mother's sister, Jane, married Arch Russell. He also fought in the Civil War and lived to be a good old age. He died at Caddo, Indian Territory, about 1905. His wife, Jane, died when their son (Billy William) Russell was born in 1867. He was eight days old when Mother took him and reared him as a twin to my sister Harriet-Self Springs, who now lives at Britton. Billy was sheriff of Kiamichi County, Indian Territory, Choctaw Nation, and in his capacity as sheriff was transporting two prisoners to surrender them to another sheriff. This sheriff was also named William Russell and lived at Denison, Texas. At Madill the train stopped to take on water and the prisoners shot my brother to death and escaped. This occurred on Christmas Eve night in 1904.

Grandfather Baxter, William Baxter and Arch Russell all fought under the command of General Cooper. I do not know the name of their companies.

Mother's father had only two brothers; one was named Elisha Baxter and he was Governor of Arkansas when he died. The other brother, James, was a minister when he died.

My mother's brother, Elisha Saxter, moved to the Indian Territory long years before we did, and settled near Caddo. That was the reason we moved over here to the Indian Territory. We wanted to be near them. Elisha Saxter raised a large family out about three miles east of Caddo, ^{at} Granville, Walter and Charlie Saxter still live there. A daughter, Daisy, who is Mrs. Guy Crossett, lives in Caddo. Mr. Crossett is the publisher of a newspaper at Caddo and frequently writes for magazines. Mother has a half-sister at Caddo. She is Josephine, widow of Clay Greeny. She was sixty-eight years old last April.

Mother's sister, Betty, married George Oakes who was one-eighth Choctaw Indian and who was also a brother to Lem N. Oakes. They had been married eight months when her clothing caught fire from a fire around a wash pot, and she was burned to death. Then George Oakes married Missie, a daughter of Colonel Jim N. Folsom of Doaksville.

Mother lived until June 19th, 1915. She was seventy-three years old when she died. When we moved from Welfs, Texas, to Caddo, I was just a lad. Bill Russel was a couple of years older. Father got dissatisfied and returned to Texas, and left Bill and me to finish the crop that was barely started. We gathered it and then we returned to Texas, to find that Pa had the "Territory fever"

again. He was arranging to move over here again, so he, Bill Russel and I came over that spring, and camped at the home of George Oakes. We brought a hundred head of cattle with us and Pa pretended to sell them to George Oakes, because no white man was permitted to have more than ten cows and calves in the Indian Territory and every white man had to pay \$5.00 per year per lot to keep ten cows and calves here but the Choctaw citizens were allowed to own all the stock that they cared to get together. The brand was O bar J.

After I had married an Indian girl, and had become a citizen of the Choctaw Nation, I claimed the cattle, and we branded them with the mule shoe brand. This brand consisted of two mule shoes with a bar over them on the side and one on the hip. We raised cattle by the hundreds. Our brand was known all over the Choctaw Nation and up to the lines of Texas and Arkansas. When father died we rounded up sixty thousand dollars worth of his cattle and sold them to John Helm, present Sheriff of Pushmataha County. Those were father's individual cattle. We had a way of distinguishing his brand from mine, even though we both branded the mule shoe. He kept all the choice salable cattle sold off each Spring,

but he still had sixty thousand dollars worth of cattle on the range when he died. We never raised many hogs, just enough for our own meat and for guests, and we always had plenty of guests.

Our home was a typical "Rangers Hotel". No person ever went away from our house hungry. The table was kept set day and night. Any range rider or any member of the family could come in at any time of the day or night and find plenty to eat either on the table under covers or in the two big old kitchen safes that stood on either side of the hall. The long table occupied the central part of the hall and the extreme south end of the hall was used for a bed room. The hall was about twenty-eight feet long and it ran clear through the house. The Spring that we came over here I guess was about 1384; we selected a building site, about four and a half miles east of the present town of Hugo, and about a mile north of Hugo.

The location was upon the prairie, a half mile or so from where Salt Creek flows south, and was about a mile south of the famous salt springs, where Mr. Robert M. Jones and Mr. Thomas William Oakes attempted the manufacture of salt. We made rails and fence lots

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and patches for corn and other feed; we cut poles out of which to make corn cribs and horse barns and all kinds of out buildings. We built fences and plenty of out buildings, including a saddle house because there were so many of us boys and each had his own saddle: Bill and I then went to hauling lumber from the saw mill that belonged to Dick Locke (Victor W. Locke, Sr.)

From away upon One Creek, southeast of Antlers, we hauled lumber enough to build two 13 X 13 foot rooms two siderooms and the hall. We had to haul this lumber for twenty miles. We made our boards for roofing. Mr. Chouteau, a Frenchman, built the chimneys of native stone. We put up our winter's supply of hay that summer too. We just cut it out on the prairie, and stacked it in the lots around poles. It would turn better, when properly stacked.

Mother and the girls and the little boys came over when the house was completed. The big east room was always the "Boys" room. It was strictly for the boys and their guests. The "Girls" room was immediately back of it, and the kitchen was across the hall. The hall was always the dining room with the south end reserved for an extra bed room. The west room was Mother's room and the general living room. There were always two beds in it, one in

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the hall and always three in the East room and two in the Girls' room and one each one all over the house was a big feather bed, a feather bolster, and a pair of feather pillows. My mother had made all of those pillows, bolsters, and feather beds herself, by picking the feathers off of ducks and geese which she had raised, and as her children married, she gave each couple a feather bed, a pair of pillows and a bolster, and the linens for them, and five quilts. She would always have on hand, in the storeroom, a lot of thin bags of feathers curing so as to keep up her supply of beds, and to take the place of the ones which she gave away.

Pa and Ma reared nine of their own children to be grown and they were all married but one. Walter was killed by a train at the Goodland railroad station when he was sixteen. Mother reared several orphans and partly reared several others, and when these orphans were married she gave to them just like she did to her own children. Occasionally she would have a few feathers to sell. That money and the money that the wool brought was strictly Ma's money. And she always had a reserve fund for her children when they got in a tight and needed money. We had a big flock of sheep and they were hers. In a big

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old kitchen safe in the Boys' room was her reserve supply of quilts which were all new and out of that supply mother gave quilts to her children as they were married and then she would go to making more quilts. She kept the kitchen safe full. Then her everyday quilts were stacked on and in a big chest in the hall. Mother and her daughters made all these quilts. I was about to forget that mother always gave each one of her children who was married a pair of red wool blankets. These blankets were all wool.

There were front doors to the front rooms, then all the other doors led into the hall and out the back of the hall. This hall has been the place where many a notable of pioneer Indian Territory has put his feet under the table and eaten as fine a meal as one could find anywhere in the Indian Territory. I have known my mother to bake a hundred biscuits for breakfast, slice a whole ham the night before, make coffee real strong in a big old tea-kettle, and have another kettle of boiling water to thin it with.

Father churned always, and always while Ma cooked breakfast; she used a big wash pan to take up butter in, and put it on the table in a big bowl. A pound of butter would just be a starter for the crowd who usually ate at

her table. They would milk about ten cows daily.

Grace was always said at our table. If Pa was not there to return thanks, Ma would do it or one of the boys. And we always felt like returning thanks too, for those meals.

Billy Russel was the oldest boy; I was next, then George, Dave, Frank, Charlie, Doss and Walter, George's twin died. The girls were Harriet and Nannie. Then the orphan girls whom I recall were Lula Spring, Nannie's daughter, and Nancy Potter. There were others who stayed just a few months or years. I have known my father and mother when they would hear of some children being orphaned going for miles to bring these orphans to our home and care for them until they were either grown or provided with other homes. If they needed new clothes, Pa bought the cloth and Mother made the clothes. If they were sick Pa got a doctor for them.

When any of Pa's and Ma's married children died, Pa always paid the doctor's bill and burial expenses. Never did he permit a widowed daughter-in-law to bear that expense, and he always bought \$40.00 coffins.

Nobody got up before sun-up at our house,

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unless there was some special reason. Pa always said from sun to sun was long enough for anybody to work. He was a wonderful success. He was a good manager, though he could neither read or write. He could not even write his name. Just anybody signed his checks and he has a certain mark that he made and his bankers always knew that mark.

Along about 1904, the country around Hugo got so fenced up that there was not enough range for my father's stock, so he established a ranch upon Rock Creek, fourteen miles southeast of Antlers, just north of Hattan, and was there about seven years when he died.

When we lived on the ranch east and north of Hugo, in 1884 or 1885, Bill Russel and I carried the mail for about three years from Longview Indian Territory to Doaksville, and thence to Goodland and Nelson.

Longview was a post office in the home of George Oakes, and was two miles south of our ranch, and the old house still stands three miles east of Hugo, just a hundred yards or so up in the pasture, off the Highway, running east to Fort Rowson. We took turn about carrying the mail, but Pa must have had the contract, because we were so young, and we never saw any money, but I imagine

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Pa got about \$45.00 per month. We would go to Longview get the mail and strike out on the old Military road east, then northeast past the head of Dry Creek, past the Indian ball ground prairie, to Rock Chimney crossing on Kiamichi river, where Mitchel Tillis, a negro-Choctaw ran a ferry, thence we would go to Doaksville, where Edward W. Tims was postmaster. We always returned the same day or tried to do so. Once or twice the river rose past the ferrying stage after we got over there. Mr. Mitchell put us across the river many times. I remember once when Red river had run down so fast that the Kiamichi was swift and water was all over the bottoms too, ^{so} that Mr. Mitchell would have been afraid to ferry us across but, fortunately, we were on the home side.

On Tuesdays we would again go to Longview, get the mail and travel the Military road a couple of miles, then angle off past Spring Chapel, and on west to the home of Silas Bacon, in which the Goodland Post Office was located. That was the original Goodland Post Office and it was located in that old hewn log house that is still standing. After the railroad came through the post office was moved to the station of Goodland orphanage, in a little building off by itself, where it

is today.

When we left Goodland we traveled west just a little way until we struck the mouth of Boggy road which led to the Military road, which ran east and west from Doaksville to Old Bennington, or Jackson I guess it was then, and when we struck the mouth of Boggy road, we followed it north about three miles, where it intersected the Military road; we crossed that and traveled a trail of our own which led us regularly past Dick Roebuck's place to Nelson. Just here I want to say that the road that I traveled with the mail ran from Spring Chapel, west between the Levi Spring and Charlie Sanguin place which is about a mile southwest of Hugo and then on west about three miles to the Bacon home.

From the Dick Roebuck place to Spencer Academy there were only two houses in sight, they were James Usray's and Judge Tom Jakes'. And they were not within "hollering" distance of the road. I was not allowed to leave the regular trail or route, and the only place where I could get a drink of water on that fifteen mile trip was a seepy spring out there on the prairie about half way between the Roebuck place and Nelson. It was a poor spring and sometimes I had to run the cattle out of

it to get a drink, but it would sure taste good after riding in the hot sun so far. We always returned home the same day or that is, we carried the mail back by Goodland and to Longview. Then it was all repeated on Thursdays and Saturdays; on alternating days we made the Doaksville trip.

I would have liked to have stopped at the Uray place every time I passed, but I would just have to wait until Sunday, because of not being allowed to leave the regular route. Then the Girl and I decided to get married. Her name was Annie Maud Uray. She cost me a hundred dollars, which I had to pay for the license, after I had gotten ten men to sign a paper to the effect that I was honorable and upright, and would make a good, substantial citizen. I presented that paper, with my hundred dollars, to the Reverend Mr. Silas Bacon, who was County Clerk, and he wrote out my license and we went over on Long Creek to the home of Mr. Parson Millar and were married. That ceremony made me a citizen of the Choctaw tribe, with all their rights and privileges. It gave me a right to vote in the Choctaw elections and gave me also a right to an allotment of land.

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Annie Maud and I kept house for Mr. Jim Ustay the first year we were married. Then we moved to the Ustay place on the road about mile southeast of Spring Chapel. We lived there a couple of years, then settled on our place about eight miles west and two miles north of Hugo. By the way we used to go straight across the prairie; our place was only about eight miles from Hugo. There we reared our family and there we lived for forty years or more. There our house was burned and we moved into this shack where we live now.

My father nearly always had a deputy sheriff's commission, and carried a gun. Once after he had been warned to look out for an escaped horse thief, father rode out on the road which he thought the horse thief would come along, and was patrolling it when the fellow rode alongside of him. Father attempted to pull his gun and arrest him, but the thief was too quick for him, and wrenched his gun out of his hand and shot at him until he emptied the gun. Pa always said he out ran the bullets. He swam his horse across the river to get away from the thief. That fellow would have killed him if his aim had been good, because he was desperate. You know they executed horse thieves here in those days. Pa was a member of the Anti-horse-thief association.