

SEABOLT, ALFRED PICTURES. INTERVIEW 12846

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BIOGRAPHIC FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History - Part for Oklahoma

SEABOLT, ALFRED PICKENS. INTERVIEW. 12846.

Field Worker's name Gomer Gower.

This report made on (date) February 1, 1938.

1. Name Alfred Pickens Seabolt.
2. Post Office Address Spiro, Oklahoma, Route 2.
3. Residence address (or location) One mile south of Braden.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: nth April Day 2 Year 1870.
5. Place of birth Cherokee Nation.

6. Name of Father Henry Seabolt. Place of birth: Georgia.
 Other information about father Served as Confederate.

7. Name of Mother Eliza Jane (Bange) Place of birth: Georgia.
 Other information about mother Buried near Muldrow.

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Write on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 14.

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Gomer Gower;
Investigator,
Feb. 1, 1938.

An Interview With Alfred Seabolt,
Route 2, Spiro, Oklahoma.

Alfred Pickens Seabolt was born near what is now Muldrow, Oklahoma, in the then Cherokee Nation, on April 2, 1870.

His father, Henry Seabolt, whose Cherokee name was "Hanaly Costee" was a one-half Cherokee, who was born in the old Cherokee Nation, East of the Mississippi River in 1833, as was his mother, Eliaz Jane Bange. They both came with the Eastern Cherokees to the new Indian Territory under the leadership of John Ross, and settled in Sequoyah District on Big Skin Bayou when both were mere children.

His parents were united in marriage in conformity with the Cherokee Tribal laws early in 1853 and their first child, Columbus, was born July 13th, 1854.

Henry Seabolt died after an eventful and useful life, on March 30th, 1875.

His mother lived to a ripe old age. It was from her that he learned much of the early history of the Cherokee people and of the experiences of his father while he lived.

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In his boyhood he attended the local schools and then he attended the Cherokee Seminary at Tahlequah and still later he completed his education at Hindsville Academy at Hindsville, Arkansas. He attended the latter school at his own expense and as a consequence, he derived more benefit from his studies.

On September 22nd, 1890, he was united in marriage to Ida Caldonia Brooks, a white woman. Of that union four sons were born. Their names follow in the order of their birth: Alfred Lafayette, Ottoway, Martin Luther and Robert Emmett.

He suffered the loss of his first wife, through death, on January 18th, 1901.

Then on March 29, 1903, he married Virgie L. Woodward, at Maple, a village near the present town of Muldrow. Of this union, three children were born: Vera May, Ura Esta and Eugene Clinton.

On the advent of Statehood, he was elected constable in Muldrow Township, which office he later resigned to accept a commission as Deputy Sheriff under John A. Johnson, Sheriff of Sequoyah County. He served in that position four years.

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In 1920, he moved to LeFlore County and engaged in farming. Soon thereafter, he was elected successively for two terms as clerk of the Township Board of Braden Township. He resigned this office to accept a commission as Deputy Sheriff which was tendered him by Monroe Self, then, 1925, sheriff of LeFlore County.

He has held the office of Justice of the Peace in his precinct continuously since 1920.

With this interesting background, Mr. Seabolt qualifies as a pioneer who learned much and retained much of the vicissitudes through which his people, the Cherokees, passed when being transplanted from their beloved hunting grounds in the Southeastern States to the new Indian Territory, in behest to the commands of the white man.

As has already been noted, his father, a one-half Cherokee, died in 1875. For that reason, what he learned of his parents' experiences as immigrants and of their lives after arrival, on through and after the Civil War, he gleaned from his mother, who, as one who has passed through that turbulent period, would quite often relate to her children the experiences of her husband, their father, and of herself.

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She, being an infant at the time of the removal, could not speak of her own knowledge of matters concerned with the undertaking and she in turn depended upon what she had been told by her parents and others. From them she learned that the hardships suffered while on the long trail by all the participants, but more especially by the women, were such as to be almost unbelievable. Pregnant women were required to continue in the march right up to the minute of childbirth. Not even a pause would be tolerated. In the event the wagons which accompanied the emigrants were already full of ailing women and children, a condition which was quite frequent, hapless women were left to die at the roadside and the brains of the infants dashed out against a convenient tree. Cattle, because of their commercial value, would have been given gentler and more humane consideration.

Of course of the outstanding experiences of her husband in connection with the Civil War, she related that he was one of those who felt that the Cherokee people should remain neutral. For that reason, he affiliated himself with what were then known as "Pin Indians", an organization of Cherokees

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who, like her husband, felt that the best interests of the Cherokee Nation would be served by assuming a neutral position in the coming conflict. That organization was given the appellation, "Pin Indians" because of their custom of wearing a pin fastened in their clothing to distinguish them as such.

The organization was short lived as the pressure exerted by adherents of both the Federal and Confederate sides was such as to render it impossible to remain neutral in the momentous matter. It was not only unpopular with a majority of the tribe, but finally brought upon its head the wrath of the leaders of both the contending factions. For these reasons, the organization abandoned its cause and its various members aligned themselves with one side or the other.

At that time, her husband joined the Federal forces and on May 30th, 1861, he enlisted in Company A of the third Indian Regiment and was made its captain, in which position he served until the close of the war, in 1865.

One of the engagements in which he took part was that at Wilson Creek, Missouri. In that battle, his mother's brother, Robert Bange, was killed and another brother, Riddle

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Bange, was overcome by the heat and Chola, which means tobacco in the Cherokee language. Seabolt was listed as among the missing.

At the time of the occupation of Fort Smith by the Confederates, his father's company was a part of the Federal forces which wrested it from them. Upon the routing of the Confederates from the fort, General Blunt, who was in command of the Federal forces, detailed Captain Seabolt with his company to follow, and if possible capture Stand Watie and his band. In fleeing from the captured fort, Watie and his band crossed the nearby Poteau River on a wooden bridge and burned the bridge behind them. However, the captain and his company succeeded in fording the comparatively shallow stream and resumed the chase along the old stage line road which led from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Scullyville. Several skirmishes were had between the fliers and their pursuers. Recent evidence of those skirmishes is disclosed in the fact that in the construction of highway 271, which for some distance followed the course of the old stage line, numerous human skeletons were unearthed and quantities of rifle bullets were found.

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Just before reaching Scullyville, the exciting chase was abandoned and Captain Seabolt and his company of infantry returned to Fort Smith, and the wily Stand Watie with his mounted troops crossed the Arkansas River into the Cherokee Nation at a point near what is now Redland.

Upon the return of Captain Seabolt to Fort Smith, he was ordered to proceed with his company to Fort Gibson. He had not gone far in that direction, just slightly east of what is now Muldrow, when he again encountered the redoubtable Stand Watie and his forces and a running fight was had in a westerly direction extending nearly to the present town of Manson. Upon arriving at that point, it was discovered that both forces had exhausted their supply of ammunition. Instead of withdrawing from the field of battle, however, Watie undertook to ride down the company commanded by Captain Seabolt, and with their sabers cut it to pieces. The captain, however, in order to meet this mode of attack, deployed his men in "pig-pen" squares, that is, placed them in a crouching position in squares, all facing outward, with the butts of their bayoneted rifles set firmly in the ground, having the bayonets pointing at an angle toward their charging mounted foes.

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These would come charging at full speed with upraised swords ready to decapitate all who came within their reach. But they had ^{not} reckoned with their host, for a well known military fact is that horses will recoil before sharp steel unless spurred to the task. That spurring had the effect of causing the mounts to attempt to leap over the crouching men and their bayoneted rifles. In making these leaps the unfortunate animals were impaled and in most instances thrown to the ground together with their courageous riders, in which cases they would be immediately pounced upon by others who formed the "pig-pens". In that manner the strategic attack of Watie's mounted forces was successfully repelled, at a considerable loss to Watie in men and horses.

One summer during the occupancy of Fort Gibson by the Federals, a vast number of mules were being fed and a quantity of hay had been cut from the surrounding prairie and stacked. The mules were kept within an enclosure which also enclosed the stacks of hay. Here again the active Watie sought to inflict damage upon the adversary of his cause. At an opportune moment he had his mounted men shoot firebrands attached to arrows into the now thoroughly dry haystacks.

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That act not only caused a spectacular conflagration but it also caused a stampede of the mules which, from fright caused by the roaring of the burning hay, refused to permit a mere fence to stand between them and safety and the wide-open ranges. Watie then gathered up the widely scattered mules, hoping he would find a use for them in his operations against the enemy. Here, again, he was stalemated for the means of transportation of Confederate supplies was confined principally to oxen and ox-wagons, and no harness for mules and horses were at hand. To meet this contingency, he asked the Federal command for a conference under a flag of truce. That request was granted and upon the conference being held, Watie proposed that he would exchange ox-yokes for harness on the basis of comparative value. He explained that the mules which he had gathered up on the open range were of no value to him without harness; that most of his oxen had been killed for beef and that, therefore, he had a quantity of yokes at his disposal which might become useful to the Federals in the event his proposition met with approval. To that proposition the federals politely replied that they were not in the market for ox-yokes and that he himself, as a part of

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the Confederacy, would not long have use for either the mules or the harness which he so eagerly sought to acquire.

Captain Seabolt was one of the conferees on the part of the Federals and, along with the remainder of the Federal participants in the conference, was much amused at the audacity of Watie.

The mules remained in his possession for a time, in which they were found to be more of a burden than an aid to his active operations.

The mother of Alfred Seabolt also related to her children that during the reconstruction period, a vicious form of feudalism became rife in the entire Cherokee Nation and that conditions, on that account were exceedingly bad near their home in the now Sequoyah County. Many men were waylaid and killed. The lives of men who had fought on the side of the Federals were in constant jeopardy from a hidden attack by participants on the Confederate side and the lives of men who had participated on the side of the Confederates were in like jeopardy of an attack of ex-Federals. A horrible and tragic reign of terror prevailed.

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Captain Seabolt, ever a peace-loving man, discerned that the courts were unable to cope with the situation as it seemed impossible to secure a conviction of accused parties to these crimes. Damaging evidence to defendants placed the life of the one giving it in jeopardy. Consequently trials in the Cherokee courts were transformed into farces. Seeing the futility of further bloodshed, he and several companions began to act as mediators between the two factions and at every opportunity would point out to enraged individuals upon murder bent their duty to abide by the law of their own people; that to refuse to do so would finally end in the extinction of the tribe.

That persuasive attitude on the part of the peacemakers finally bore fruit and subsequently, in a very satisfactory degree, ended the chaos into which the Cherokee people were enmeshed as the result of divided opinion and interests, in the outcome of the Civil war.

The relation of one story in connection with that chaotic condition is enlightening and brings out clearly the bitterness with which one side regarded the other. An ex-Federal soldier named Coody was ambushed and killed allegedly by a

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band of three ex-Confederates who had blacked their faces in order to resemble negroes as nearly as possible. That attack had been witnessed a young boy only. An effort was made to prosecute and convict the slayers in the Cherokee Circuit Court presided over by Circuit Judge, David Drew. The identification of the accused men by the young boy was held insufficient to sustain conviction, and the three men were freed of the charge which had been brought against them.

Soon after that occurrence, it was rumored that a few men, ex-Federals, had conspired to take the life of District Judge Faulkner in retaliation, perhaps, for the lively interest which he had shown in the trial of the three ex-Confederates. Judge Faulkner, a venerable man of seventy or more years, was unaware of the proposed attack upon his life. Even had he been made aware of it, his advanced age precluded a likelihood that he could have successfully repelled it. The peacemakers, of which mention has been made, after learning all they could about the proposed attack were able to determine the night upon which it was to be made and they intercepted the ex-Federals when they were on their way to

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carry their hideous design into effect and in their usual persuasive manner succeeded in turning them aside from their murderous intent. The venerable District Judge, through the good work of the peacemakers, was not molested. The point at which the peacemakers intercepted the conspirators was Choate's Crossing on Skin Bayou Creek.

Mr. Seabolt himself recalls that when he was about ten or twelve years of age, the section of the Cherokee Nation in which he lived at that time was infested with horse thieves, whisky - peddlers and all other manner of vile characters. Of these outlaws, Bear Grimmett and Pete Hawk were considered to be among the worst of them. These men would sometimes stop at his mother's house and demand their dinners and feed for their horses. However, they always paid liberally for these accommodations. During his lawless career, Grimmett, in a brush with the officers, killed Deputy United States Marshal Beck on Big Sallisaw Creek, northwest of Sallisaw. After that occurrence, the two men became real desperadoes and took pleasure in defying the officers at every turn. However, the fate which usually follows the footsteps of such characters befell them in an unknown manner. The story is that the

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two men had visited Van Buren, Arkansas, for the purpose of replenishing their supply of whisky and , upon their return journey to their hideout, ostensibly became involved in a dispute between themselves on the west side of Lee's Creek, where, it is thought, they shot it out and each killed the other. Both men were found dead and grasping their six-shooters. The finding of their horses and the supply of whisky near the dead bodies adds color to the view that they had killed each other.

Mr. Seabolt has in his possession a certificate issued by the Department of the Interior in which it is certified that the restrictions upon the alienation of his allotment (except his homestead) are thereby removed.

He was granted his allotment in the Cherokee Nation, but moved to the Choctaw Nation in January, 1920, where he has since been engaged in farming and public official duties.