

THOMAS, MATIE MOWBRAY

INTERVIEW

Lawrence D. Hibbs  
Field Worker,

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Interview with Matie (Thomas) Nowbray.  
547 North Cheyenne St.  
Tulsa, Oklahoma.

An interview between Matie (Heck Thomas 547 North Cheyenne Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma. and Lawrence D. Hibbs, field worker. Covering the early day experience of her husband as an enforcement officer and his part in helping State to the position it now holds among the other States of the nation. This is told in Heck Thomas' own words.

In the summer of 1885 I was traveling through the country in the vicinity of Lime Stone Gap in Indian Territory. I was not looking for anyone in that vicinity but stopped at the General store for a few provisions and was told that a young man had been found dead (murdered) in a corn field on the outskirts of the town. He was a local young man and a farm boy.

... that time there were no officers except the deputy marshals traveling through, so I went to the scene of the murder and began an investigation. Some boys playing in the corn field had discovered the boy which was identified as a young fellow, named Ed. Davis, who worked on a farm near by. I found that the young fellow had been missing several days after attending a dance in the neighborhood.. I learned he had attended the dance at the home of

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George Morris whose father made his home there also. During the dance the old man Morris played the fiddle for the dancers. All went merrily, due to plenty of whiskey, and after the dance young Davis started for home, but as the rest of the crowd prepared to leave, the old man Morris cried "don't go yet, let's have another dance" and stood in the doorway playing his fiddle and keeping the people from going. His son had been gone from the house some half hour.

It had rained the day after the dance and before the body was found and I was afraid clues would be scarce but I found a shot gun shell which had been fired in the weeds by the side of the road. It was a home filled shell and I found a piece of peculiar paper that had been used as wadding. A thin piece of paper with a brown stripe. I found only one shell and only one charge had been fired into the body. In looking for foot prints I found prints in the corn field made by cowboy boots with heels badly run down and the sole of the left boot loose at the toe so that it showed that it dragged.

I had this evidence and then hunted evidence as to enemies, and female association.

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I found that both George Morris and his father had been suspected of cattle thefts in the neighborhood and that Davis was supposed to have some knowledge of this. Also Morris' wife was an old sweetheart of Davis, and there was some jealousy on account of it. So I began my investigation of their lives. In searching the Morris home, I found paper lining a dresser drawer in an upstairs bedroom matching the paper that had been used in the shot gun shell and that paper from the shell exactly fitted a torn corner in the paper in the dresser drawer. I searched for the cowboy boots and finally found them thrown away back under the house, the run down heel and the torn sole exactly fitting the foot print found in the corn field where the body was found.

When the Morrises were arraigned, they confessed to the murder and were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Young Morris had hidden by the side of the road and shot Davis as he went along and then carried the body in to the corn field.

The following is a letter written by I. C. Parker, Ft. Smith Arkansas Federal Judge to Grover Cleveland in 1893.

I. O. Parker,  
District Judge

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U. S. Courts  
At Chambers

Ft. Smith, Arkansas.

February 21, 1893.

Grover Cleveland.

The President

I am informed that the friends of Capt Heck Thomas, now living at Guthrie, Oklahoma, will present him to you as a suitable person to be appointed Marshal of the United States Courts for Oklahoma.

I have known Capt Thomas since 1885 and I can state that he is entirely qualified for the position. He has done much service as a deputy Marshal, is thoroughly conversant with the duties of the office, and is entirely familiar with the country and the people living in it. He is a man of high character and intelligence and of great courage and I regard him as peculiarly qualified to meet the emergencies which are likely to arise in the office of Marshal of Oklahoma.

I do not believe you could appoint anyone who would be better adapted to the office than Capt Thomas. I am sure he would discharge the duties of the office to your entire satisfaction and so as to bring commendations in his favor from the people who look to that officer in the territory for protection.

Cap't Thomas has done very much service for the Government in the way of breaking up lawless bands of desperadoes, made up of murderers, train, bank and Express robbers. I regard him as just the man for the position. He is a man of integrity and I would be glad to see him appointed.

I am respectfully,

(dictated).  
Your friend,  
I. C. Parker