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Chauncey O. Moore, Supervisor
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149

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James R. Carselovey
Research Field Worker

Interview: Dr. Oliver Bagby
N. Smith St.
Vinita, Oklahoma

My name is Oliver Bagby, M. D. I was born at Boles, Franklin County, Missouri on December 26, 1858.

My father's name was Julian Bagby. He lived at New Haven, Missouri, all of his life and died and was buried there. Three of my brothers still live there and conduct the New Haven Nursery, a nationally known concern.

I graduated from the University of Missouri in June, 1881 and practiced a year at Boles, where I was born and raised. I decided then that I would go to the Indian Territory and I arrived in Vinita in November, 1882. I was the first doctor to arrive in Vinita but Dr. Morris Frazee came during the following year and we opened the first drug store in Vinita.

Vinita's First Drug Store

Charley Pool had a cold drink stand in the west room of the old San Francisco Hotel, a frame building, which stood on the present site of the Cobb Hotel in Vinita. We bought him out and Dr. Frazee and I were the proud owners of Vinita's first drug store and I was its first doctor.

Gets Married

In October, 1883, I went back to Boles, Mo. and was married to Miss Mary E. Miller, a sister of Ed and Billie Miller, who later came to Vinita and bought out the first hardware store in Vinita. I brought my wife right back to Vinita and started in practicing medicine.

Small Pox Breaks Out

In 1882 an epidemic of small pox broke out among the negroes on Grand river fifteen miles southeast of Vinita. It was the old black small pox that was very dangerous before medical science learned how to control it and the Na-

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tional Council ordered me to vaccinate 2000 people in the vicinity between Vinita and Grand river. While I was doing this four or five cases broke out in Vinita and among them was W. R. Badgett, a clerk in G. W. Green's dry goods store. We opened a pest house on the outskirts of Vinita and soon had the town under control and that was about the extent of the outbreak in Vinita but we did have a lot of cases among the negroes and some of them died. Badgett had such^a bad case that he carried marks on his face to his dying day. I have never heard of a single case that I vaccinated that ever had the small pox. I was talking to a man today who said that I had vaccinated him fifty-five years ago and that he had been exposed to the small pox time after time since then but had never taken it. He even waited on his wife while she had it but had used every precaution from taking it.

Skinner Brothers in 1884

In 1884 James and Nat Skinner built a building one door east of the corner of Illinois and Wilson Sts. where they put in a grocery store and where they continued in business for several years, finally selling out to William Chouteau who had come here from Kansas. The Skinner brothers then branched out into the cattle business. Nat stayed on for a while with E. N. Ratcliff, as a partner, but James married Lucy Parks a daughter of George Washington Parks and moved to Adair where he was one of the early day cattle men.

I opened an office in the north end of the Skinner building, a frame structure, in 1884 and Dr. B. F. Fortner came to Vinita in the same year and opened an office in the south end of the same building.

Fortner & Bagby in 1887

When Dr. Fortner had been here three years, we formed a partnership and moved our office to the Raymond building, a frame structure, which stood where the present site of the United States Post Office now stands.

Vinita's First Brick Building

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In 1883, W. C. Patton who had been conducting a general merchandise store in a frame building where the Bailey Brothers store now stands, moved the old building away from his lot on Illinois Ave. and erected the first brick building in Vinita. It was a two story brick, trimmed with white limestone rock which he shipped in from Cotton Wood Falls. He put in a fine drug store and a general merchandise store on the lower floor and occupied the entire upper story for a residence. It was the finest living quarters in Vinita at that time. Ed Halsell and Dr. Pat Fite of Muskogee who married two of the Patton girls were married in these apartments, I think, in the same year.

The next two brick buildings were built in 1884, Skinner Brothers building one on West Illinois and Arch Goodykoontz one where the present site of the First National Bank now stands on South Wilson St.

Vinita's First Hardware

Arch Goodykoontz opened the first hardware store in his new brick building at the corner of Wilson & Illinois in 1884. He operated the place until the summer of 1885 when he sold out to Ed and Billie Miller, my brothers-in-law, who had come here from New Haven, Mo.

About the year 1884, Frank Cass came to Vinita and married Mrs. Arnold a sister of Mrs. William Miller and Mrs. L. W. Marks and he and his brother opened a dry goods store on the east side of the M. K. & T. tracks.

When Arch Goodykoontz sold his hardware to Miller Brothers, he sold his brick building to W. E. Halsell. By this time the cattle business was getting good in the Indian Territory and Goodykoontz decided to go into the cattle business.

Goodykoontz and Cass Murdered

In the summer of 1885, Goodykoontz got Frank Cass to go in with him and they loaded a hack, took a lot of money with them and started to Western

Oklahoma to buy cattle. They camped in the Canadian river bottom on their way out where two Creek negroes slipped up on them and shot them dead, taking all of their money, team and hack and left the bodies lay right where they were shot.

They were not found until the buzzards began to fly around and were in a very badly decomposed condition when found. The United States officers caught the negroes and they were hanged at Wichita, Kansas. The bodies of Goodykoontz and Cass were brought back to Vinita and buried in what is now the Fairview Cemetery. Goodykoontz had a fine bird dog which he took with him on this trip and it was also shot and killed by the negroes. I have had many good hunts with that dog in days when game was plentiful. We hunted prairie chickens those days, instead of quail, and they were thicker than the quail are at this time.

Jumps Two Stories

In 1888, the frame building owned by A. C. Raymond and in which Dr. Fortner and I had our office caught on fire and was totally destroyed. We had our office next to the alley and I was up in the office throwing books into the alley when all at once the stair steps burst into flames and no me trapped in our office. There was nothing left for me to do but follow the books right on into the alley, which I did with no damage except a little soreness for a few days.

This fire destroyed all the buildings from the Post Office where the Raymond building was to the Skinner building where William Chouteau and his son, John, were conducting a grocery store. The Chouteaus moved across the track when they were burned out and built a store and residence on the north side of East Illinois Avenue, when Tom Bluejacket later lived.

Ft. Fortner and I moved our office across the alley to the new Patton building, where we stayed until 1897 in which year W. E. Halsell wrecked the old frame building he bought from Arc. Goodykoontz and built the brick building now occupied by the First National Bank. We moved our office upstairs in that building that same year to the rooms now occupied by Dr. W. C. Read, where we

remained for ten years.

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Dr. Fortner to Springfield

In 1907, Dr. B. F. Fortner went to Springfield, Mo. to take charge of the Frisco Railroad hospital. I practiced about two years after Dr. Fortner left, when my brother, Dr. Louis Bagby came to Vinita from New Haven, Mo. and went in with me. We kept up our partnership for a few years until Dr. C. S. Neer came to Vinita when I retired from the practice of medicine and devoted my time to the banking business.

First National Bank

On the 15th day of March, 1892 we organized the first bank ever in Vinita and it was the third to be chartered in the state. S. S. Cobb was its first president and I was one of the first directors of the First National Bank of Vinita. At the end of the first year I was elected as its president and served continuously at its head for 32 years. On account of failing health, I retired in 1925, and my brother, Dr. Louis Bagby, was named in my place.

There are three of the original directors of the First National Bank who are still living, namely: W. A. Graham of Pryor, M. E. Milford and myself of Vinita. Mr. Graham has served continuously on the board since its organization and has never missed an annual meeting of the Board of Directors. He is now 86 years old.

Dr. Fortner Dies

Dr. B. F. Fortner did not like his work at the Frisco Hospital in Springfield and only remained with them one year. He came back to Vinita and went into private practice and after about six years, he retired. He died in September, 1917 and was buried in the Fairview Cemetery at Vinita.

Comments

Dr. Bagby is now 78 years old and gave me this story without ever referring to a note. He has a wonderful memory and is by far the best prospect I

have so far interviewed. He makes his daily trips to the bank when he is ~~not~~ on the sick list but generally speaking he is in excellent health, for a man of his age. He has done much for the upbuilding of Vinita and has been one of its pioneer citizens for the past fifty-five years. He became famous as a practitioner and then branched into bank organization work, with singular success. Dr. Bagby and associates organized the first banks at Tulsa, Claremore, Chelsea and Miami and he was the first president of the First National Bank of Tulsa. Recently at a home coming celebration, Dr. Bagby invited all the babies he had delivered into the world, they came from all parts of the country, many of them now grandfathers and grandmothers, and to all who came, Dr. Bagby gave a shining new quarter.