

Notice of Copyright

Published and unpublished materials may be protected by Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S. Code). Any copies of published and unpublished materials provided by the Western History Collections are for research, scholarship, and study purposes only.

Use of certain published materials and manuscripts is restricted by law, by reason of their origin, or by donor agreement. For the protection of its holdings, the Western History Collections also reserves the right to restrict the use of unprocessed materials, or books and documents of exceptional value and fragility. Use of any material is subject to the approval of the Curator.

Citing Resources from the Western History Collections

For citations in published or unpublished papers, this repository should be listed as the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

An example of a proper citation:

Oklahoma Federation of Labor Collection, M452, Box 5, Folder 2. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

BRADSHAW, ROY (MRS.) INTERVIEW 12325

250

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (NELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325

Effie S. Jackson,
Journalist,
December 3, 1937.

An interview with Mrs. Roy Bradshaw,
1688 S. Victor Ave., Tulsa, Okla.
Mrs. Bradshaw (Nell Morgan Stapler)
a direct descendant of the Ross-
Stapler-Morgan families.

The Stapler family in Wilmington, Delaware, were English, Quakers in religion. The earliest record I have of my great grandfather, John Stapler, is when he came into possession of a historic estate, corner of Front and Thorn Streets, Wilmington, Delaware, parallel with the wharf. This was about 1791. This was a show place. It came into the Stapler family through John's marriage to the daughter of James Brian (it had been the Brian estate). John Stapler carried on an extensive Nova Scotia trade. This home still remains as a relic of historic interest. Attached to this estate was the Stapler Center presented to the community by John Stapler in 1792. On this he built an almshouse.

Mary Brian Stapler was the daughter of John Stapler. She attended a girls' school in Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (NELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325.

- 2 -

There she met Louisa Jane Hicks, a niece of John Ross and also his daughters (by the Indian wife Quatie, deceased) who were in school at Lawrenceville. John Ross was in Washington at this time (1844) on business. He visited his daughters and there met the beautiful young girl, Mary Brian Stapler, eighteen years old. Mrs. Bradshaw has a copy of the letter in which John Ross asks John Stapler for his daughter's hand in marriage. This letter was copied from the original in the possession of Leon Ross, grandson of John Ross. It was written by Ross from Boston, Massachusetts, August 14, 1844, and was very formal, couched in fine language in keeping with the times. Mr. Stapler must have been willing to give his daughter to the Indian Chief for a description of the wedding appears in the papers of that day. A description of the wedding is given in the following extract from "The Tribune, Hartwell, Pennsylvania, of Thursday Morning, September 5, 1844.

"Marriage of Ross at Hartwell's Hotel-
Pennsylvania,
Tuesday, September 5,

"To the Editor of the Tribune:

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (NELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325

- 3 -

A grand wedding party was present at the marriage of John Ross the celebrated Cherokee chief in the President's parlour of the Hartwell Hotel to Mary Brian Stapler of Wilmington Delaware. He is about fifty-five. The beautiful and highly accomplished bride is eighteen.

The bride was given away by her brother John W. Stapler and attended by her sister and a niece of John Ross, (Louisa Jane Hicks) as bridesmaids. A wedding party of twenty (all half-breed Indians) daughters and nephews of the groom was brought from New Jersey boarding schools. Ross is considered to be worth half a million dollars. After a brief sojourn at the hotel he proposes to take his beautiful bride straight to his wild home in the south western prairies." Wisconsin Historical Society (This is only an excerpt from the complete account).

Mrs. Bradshaw calls attention to his "wild home in the west". She has two pictures of this home, one rather small photograph and one large tinted one. These pictures were made and given her by her cousin, Leon Ross, who owned the original. The picture shows a very handsome colonial mansion

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (MELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325

- 4 -

and why it was called "The Ross Cottage" is a question she cannot answer. This mansion was burned during the Civil War. She also has a picture about 10 x 12 of John Ross and his bride which also was given to her by Leon Ross from the original. There were two children by the marriage of John Ross and Mary Brian, a son John and a daughter Anna. John had two children, Leon, already referred to and Adda (deceased). Mrs. Myrtle Rose (Sem) of Muskogee is a daughter of Adda and according to Mrs. Bradshaw has the brocaded satin wedding gown of her grandmother, Mary Stapler Ross.

Another aftermath of the wedding of John Ross to Mary Stapler was the marriage of Mary's brother John W. Stapler and Louisa Jane Hicks, niece of John Ross. They had met for the first time as members of the John Ross wedding party. They were the grandparents of Mrs. Bradshaw.

Other letters and documents complete the married life of John and Mary Ross. A letter written to her, Mary, by John Ross, July 25, 1845, from Washington, reveals

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (NELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325

- 5 -

the fine consolation he offers her because of her grief at the action of the Friends Society. The Staplers were Friends or Quakers. Mary's marriage to John Ross, one outside her church and race, brought about her dismissal from the Friends Society. It is a letter breathing devotion, almost worship, a piece of literature in itself. Reference is made to the new born child, Anna, also to Anna's nurse. This nurse played an important part in the life of Mary. She had been her nurse during her childhood, later the nurse of her children, Anna and John, and today lies buried not far from the body of John Ross and Anna Ross, Ross Cemetery Park Hill, but by a strange quirk of fate far from the grave of her mistress in far-away Delaware.

The final document closing the story of John Ross is one detailing his funeral in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1866. The article describes the service at the residence of his brother-in-law, John W. Stapler, Wilmington, Delaware, under auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church. A list of pall bearers are given, chapel services were held later at

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (NELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325

- 6 -

Methodist Episcopal Church and burial at Brandywine Cemetery, in the Stapler family burial grounds "Where the mortal remains of the chief was laid by the side of his noble and Christian wife, an accomplished lady of Delawarian birth, whose death preceeded that of her husband but one short year." Their daughter was called "Prairie Flower" by President Buchanan. The Cherokees wanted their chief to rest among his people and later brought the remains back to Park Hill where a monument marks his resting place in the Ross Cemetery at that place.

As stated before John W. Stapler, brother of Mary, met Louisa Jane Hicks, niece of John Ross, at the wedding of John Ross and Mary Brian Stapler. Louisa Jane Hicks was the granddaughter of the famous Chief Charles Hicks and daughter of Chief Elijah Hicks. (Elijah Hicks is buried in Claremore Cemetery, originally the private burial ground of the Hicks family). Jane as she was called oftener than Louisa, was born in New Echota, Georgia, August 20, 1825. At the age of eleven she came in the first division of one thousand Cherokees in the Removal. Her

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (NELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325

- 7 -

father, Chief Elijah Hicks, was in command. Two hundred in his division died on the way. They rode twenty in a wagon. According to the record Mrs. Bradshaw has, Elijah was the mainstay and counsellor of the Cherokees during the Removal of his division. This division left Georgia in August, 1836, and were enroute until January, 1837. Jane Hicks has told her sons of the privation of that journey, arriving on the banks of the Illinois River in a severe snow storm. There they settled near the present site of Tahlequah, living in tents until cabins could be built.

Jane Hicks received her early education at Dwight Mission, then completed it at Lawrenceville, New Jersey. It was while she was in attendance there that she met Mary Brian Stapler, an acquaintanceship that was to determine their lives, Mary to become Mrs. John Ross and Jane to become her sister-in-law by marriage to John Wharton Stapler, of Wilmington, Delaware. John Stapler was a graduate of Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania. After their marriage, they came to Tahlequah about 1854, where he established one of the first mercantile stores,

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (NELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 18325

- 8 -

known under the name of John W. Stapler and Sons, which continued in business until the death of his two sons John and James, a few years ago.

The Stapler farm and home was directly across from the Cherokee Capitol on Main Street. It started as a substantial log house, this was later framed in and a two story wing added, and other two story wings added, and colonial porches were added. Mrs. Bradshaw has pictures showing the evolution of this home from a cabin to a mansion. It was a gathering place for notables. This home was burned during the 90's. In one picture appears the old nurse who had raised Mary Brian Ross and cared for the daughter Anna. She, the nurse lies buried near the grave of John Ross. To the Stapler family her grave with its marker of location has a distinctive value. John W. Stapler's old father, John Stapler of Wilmington, Delaware, came out west to visit his son and, while here, died and was buried in Park Hill Cemetery. He was a member of the Friends Society and did not believe in marking a grave so the old family nurse,

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (NELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325.

- 9 -

when she died, was buried near him and thus preserves identification of his grave. Mary Brian Stapler lies in the Stapler family burial ground in far-a-way Delaware, while her husband, father and children lie in the land of his Cherokee people, the Ross Cemetery, Park Hill.

The Cherokees called John W. Stapler by an Indian name meaning "church steeple" because of his height and great dignity. A story is told of his early experience with the Indians. He sold stamps in his store and the full-bloods would come here and buy them and ask the clerks to stamp them. Mr. Stapler got tired of this and posted a notice in his store which read "Postage stamps for sale, but you'll have to lick your own stamps." After his death his business was carried on by his two sons, James and John Brian Stapler.

Louisa Jane Hicks Stapler has left her mark among women leaders of territorial days. Mrs. Stapler organized the first Sunday School in Tahlequah, 1867, and was its Superintendent for twenty-seven years. She organized and was president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (NELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325

- 10 -

the Indian Territory and honorary life president. She entertained Frances Willard in her home at the time she was present for the organization. Frances Willard gave Mrs. Stapler her picture as a memento. This picture is now in the possession of the granddaughter, Mrs. Bradshaw. She plans to present this picture to the Frances Willard Home for Girls, Tulsa, during the Christmas Season, 1937. Mrs. Bradshaw also has a picture of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union Convention held at Atlanta. Mrs. Stapler sits beside Frances Willard, Alice Robertson is standing near; well representing the young Indian Territory. Mrs. Bradshaw does not have the date of her grandmother's death, probably in the 90's, but memoranda from newspaper of the day stress her half century of activity in territorial history.

Mr. and Mrs. John W. Stapler left three children, Maggie, James and John B. They also reared a nephew E. D. Hicks, who lives in Tahlequah. John B. Stapler

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (NELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325

- 11 A -

married Ellie Morgan, daughter of Gideon Morgan and of this marriage there were two children, Nell Stapler Bradshaw, Tulsa, and John Brian Stapler, Tablequah. James and John Stapler continued in the mercantile business left them by their father and took their place in the leadership of community affairs. James became postmaster, John a member of the Board of Trustees of the Seminary. These brothers organized the first bank in Tablequah, known as the Bank of Tablequah in 1891. They also headed a group of Cherokees that made possible the first telephone line, 1885, in the Indian Territory. This line extended from the office of Staplers and Son to the store of John Scott at Fort Gibson. John Stapler was the first man in the Territory to transmit his voice to a distant point. The brothers were very devoted to each other. John was blind, and when the bell rang, John said, "James, you answer it," and James said, "No, you?" and John accepted the favor and attendant honor.

John Stapler passed away in 1934. His widow, Mrs. Ellie Morgan Stapler, lives in Tablequah, as does

BRADSHAW, MRS. ROY (MELL STAPLER) INTERVIEW 12325

- 12 -

his son, John B. Stapler II. His daughter, Mrs. Roy Bradshaw, lives in Tulsa.

To enter the Bradshaw home is to feel the dominance of the John Ross personality. The physical setting seems to center around the large portrait of John Ross (original in Smithsonian) which receives an almost human aspect from the glow of the wood-burning fireplace. Near is another life like picture of John Ross and his bride, Mary Brian Stapler and near that one of the beautiful southern mansion to which he took his eastern bride. The many kefflooms of the Ross and Stapler families form a fitting background for the family story as told by Mell Stapler Bradshaw (Roy). Mrs. Bradshaw supplemented and supported her statements with letters, pictures and documents from a well kept file. Field worker