

INDEX CARDS

Marriage--Indian Territory
Intermarried whites--Creek Nation
Ferries--Arkansas River
Cowboys
Churches--Creek Nation
Schools--Creek Nation
Social gatherings--Creek Nation
Outlaws--Dalton brothers
Outlaws--Chickasaw Nation
Outlaws--Lee gang
Thomas, Heck
Journey to Oklahoma
Hospitality--Cherokee Nation
Fords--Cansy River
Coal--Cherokee Nation
Tulsa
Mowbray, George W.
Typhoid
Law enforcement--Federal
Drunkenness--Creek Nation

Perryman, Moses
Law enforcement--Indian police
Social gatherings--Creek Nation
Crime--Chickasaw Nation
Negroes--Chickasaw Nation
Fords--South Canadian River
Sasakwa

Brown, John F.

INTERVIEW WITH MATIE (HECK) THOMAS

FIELD WORKER, LAWRENCE D. HIBBS

APRIL 27, 1937

An interview between Matie ^{Monbray} (Heck) Thomas 547 N, Cheyenne Avenue, Tulsa and Lawrence D. Hibbs, field worker, covering the early life of her husband, Heck Thomas, and his solving a murder case in the Southern part of the state.

My husband, the late Heck Thomas was Deputy United States Marshal in Oklahoma and Indian Territory for thirty years. He was a native of Georgia and of a very prominent Georgia family. All of his people were Officers in the Confederate Army. His brother, Col. L. P. Thomas, led the charge at the battle of Atlanta (the battle described in the late best seller "Gone with the Wind"). A number of his relatives were killed in battles of the Civil war. One Uncle, Gen. Edward L. Thomas, was Indian agent at Sac and Fox agency for some years.

"Heck" was christened Henry Andrew Thomas, born at Rome, Georgia, January 6, 1850, and the youngest of twelve children. His ancestors came to America in 1632, and were very prominent in early American history. One ancestor, Hon. Francis Thomas, was Governor of Maryland, and several served as Congressman and in other offices, and several fought in the Revolutionary war. Heck was always fond of adventure, and always loved the great outdoors.

He was being educated for a Methodist preacher when the Civil war broke out. He was too young to enlist, much as he craved to, but went with his Uncle as courier. His life was a round of adventure. Earlier stories tell of his coming west and his love of adventure leading to his joining the United States Marshal's force at Paris, Texas, which then had jurisdiction over the southern part of Indian Territory. He also had a commission as Deputy United States Marshal from Ft. Smith, Arkansas, which had jurisdiction over part of Indian Territory. I have a letter in my possession from Judge I. C. Parker of Ft. Smith (called the hanging judge) dated February 21, 1893, where he speaks in the very highest of terms as to his prowess as an officer and also his integrity as a man.

Heck was a tall slender man, six feet tall, dark hair and complexion and a pair of the keenest dark eyes I ever saw. At a glance he sized up a man and his judgment was very seldom at fault. He was straight as an arrow, soft spoken with the typical southern drawl, courteous to every one.

He was an out-standing figure in any crowd.

While working in the southern part of the State in the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations, word came to him of a brutal murder which had taken place in the Kiamichi Mountains southeast of Tahleah.

3

A young man and his wife by the name of Williams and who had just been married two weeks and were from Southern Kansas, were traveling in this sparsely settled district, prospecting. They had but one horse. The woman was riding and the man was leading the horse which was also packed with their camping outfit and his prospecting tools. They had passed an Indian house which was occupied by an Indian (MA-HAR-KEY-SON) and his two wives, several children and the man's father. The couple had stopped for water and to ask directions. They went on their way but were stealthily followed by the Indians, and as they paused to rest, the son shot the man down. They caught the wife who was terrified and running from them, took her to the cabin and had the Indian wives cook dinner for her; then took her to a high bluff with a creek flowing at the base and as the old man went a little distance away and made a noise, she turned to look what it was, and the Indian shot her, and her body fell down the high embankment and lodged in the stony creek. They piled rocks on the body, leaving it where it fell, and buried the man in a shallow grave. They burned the Suit Case, but kept the horse and saddle.

One of the Indian wives became jealous of the other and told of this murder, and my husband was sent to investigate.

4

I don't have the exact dates but it was in the late summer or early fall of 1887.

He went into that part of the country and went to the cabin, which he had been watching several days, waiting for the man to leave. He found they would be gone several days and tried in a casual way to get information from the squaws, but they would tell nothing. He always made friends with children, so he made friends with the little Indian boy about twelve years old, asked him about hunting etc., and after getting him away from the house, asked him about the man and woman. The boy refused to tell, said didn't know, so Heck tied a rope around his neck and said he would hang him if he didn't tell him all about it. The boy said his father would kill him, but Heck told him he would take care of him and wouldn't let him be hurt, so the boy told him all. He said his father was mad because the white man and his wife were prospecting there, said too many white folks coming in here. He led the way to the shallow grave and to the creek where the woman's body was. The water must have shifted the woman's body some as one hand and arm were protruding from the water.

Heck immediately left for Paris, Texas, Got warrants for their arrests and raced back with a couple of possemen and arrested the Indians. He had taken the boy with him and put him under protection

of the U. S. Court. At the trial the little fellow wouldn't talk or answer any questions. Heck noticed that the father was watching the child with such an evil look that he called the Court's attention to it and the boy was placed where the baleful look wouldn't be encountered, and then the boy told the whole story. The men were convicted and sentenced to be hanged. The old Indian died while in jail waiting to be hanged at Paris, Texas. The son was hanged at Paris, Texas, I don't have the date but this is on record at the Federal Court at Paris, Texas.

The boy was sent to a Government school for Indians, Heck worked hard on this case and was anxious to find identification of the couple. He had cut some curiously shaped red buttons from her dress and also a piece of the dress from the decomposed body and by this they were identified as a couple from Southern Kansas, who had been married but two weeks and gone on this prospecting trip as a honeymoon. Cards and descriptions of the horse, etc, were sent out and the father of the young woman came to make the identification.

Heck was ready for another case, but he was saddened by this for some time.