

LEWIS, S. R.

INTERVIEW.

7324  
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Third Interview

7110

INDEX CARDS:

United States Marshal  
Outlaws  
Ghost Town-Ringold  
Robberies  
Bud Ledbetter  
Osage Nation  
Chelsea  
Grasshopper Ford  
Keetoowahs  
Night Hawks  
Chewey

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Effie S. Jackson,  
Interviewer,  
August 25, 1937.

An Interview with S. R. Lewis,  
516 Alex Building, Tulsa, Okla.

Lon Lewis and The Green Brothers

My uncle, Lon Lewis, first Sheriff of Tulsa County, was a native of Texas, born in Lampasas County, about 1865. His father was Reverend Stephen Merriwether Lewis. Educated at Austin, Texas, at twenty-two years appointed as a Texas Ranger, stationed in the Panhandle during the time the Denver and Rio Grande were being constructed. In 1892 Lewis was appointed Deputy United States Marshal by Judge S. M. Rutherford. He served ten years in the Northern District, headquarters at Tulsa, a man of fine morals.

In a recent issue of the Sunday Tulsa World there was a long illustrated story of the killing of the Green boys. Most of it was so erroneous that I feel a factual account should be given. The picture of Chas. McClelland shown was the young son

- 2 -

of the McClelland who was in the posse. The son was away at college at that time. There were only two of the Green Boys killed, not three, and Bruner had nothing to do with the killing. I was there and I know. It is a good thing that actual records from people who experienced various happenings are being made. Too much of Oklahoma History has been hearsay.

Whether the incident be great or small it should be correct.

There were three Green brothers, Arthur, Bill, and Ed, and all just farmer boys living with their father, an inter-married Cherokee. His farm was at Green Lake on the Caney River, four miles north of Collinsville. Later the Greens became cowboys for Halsell at the Mashed-O Ranch. Their first depredation was the robbing of a store at Ringold, near the present town of Ramona. They also robbed a store on Posey Creek, twenty-five miles south of Tulsa. The episode that led to their extermination was the killing of a Shawnee Indian named George Walden. They were hired by Milt Barker to kill Walden.

- 3 -

Walden lived in a tent on Buck Creek, thirty miles north of Tulsa. It seems that the trouble primarily was over a Cherokee woman named Min Locket. She had a farm near Vernon. Walden and Barker had traded wives. Min originally was Walden's wife. Through the sale of some Shawnee lands in Kansas a sum of about \$500.00 was due Min Locket. She had Bill Rogers (W. C. Rogers) appointed guardian. Walden, who had been her husband, was going to draw the money. Milt Barker, with whom she lived, paid the Green boys \$250.00 to kill Walden. This was in the fall of 1896.

As soon as word was received at Rutherford of the killing of Walden he sent Bud Ledbetter to join Lon Lewis and get the murderers. Lewis deputized me as his posseman. I was only twenty-one. We went up to Buck Creek where Walden lived when the killing took place. Walden's wife told the story as follows:

Bill Green, a very officious fellow, rode up to Walden's tent and tied his horse. Bill said, "I am hungry". She cooked him some bacon and eggs. He

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7324

- 4 -

ate them, then said to Walden, "Come outside, I want to talk to you, I have a jug of whiskey". Once outside, Ed Green stepped from his hiding place and killed Walden. (Arthur Green at that time was lying in an upstairs room at Barker's home, his hip injured from shot at Ringold during a robbery, so he was not guilty of murdering Walden).

Ledbetter and Lon Lewis searched for the Green boys on the Caney River and in the eastern part of the Osage Nation. Finally they disbanded. Lewis returned to Tulsa, Ledbetter to Muskogee. A week later they again took the trail. I was along this time. We went on the Caney River not far from the Green boys' home to the home of a man named Osborne. Lewis sent for Charles M. McClelland, a well-known Indian fighter and killer, who owned a ranch near McClelland came to Osborne's home and a plan was framed to capture the Green boys. McClelland was to furnish a man to ride with the Green boys to gain their confidence. The man chosen was Charles Leonard Trainor.

- 5 -

He was a good subject. He was under indictment for larceny at that time for stealing cattle. (This charge was to be dropped if he carried out Ledbetter's plan).

Trainer went to Green's home, told him he was in trouble with the law (as he was) and said, "Tell the Green boys I want to scout with them." The father took Trainer and rode south of where Collinsville is now to the Green boys' hideout. Trainer made known his plans to rob Uncle Clem Rogers' (father of Will) bank at Chelsea. The boys fell for the plan and agreed to go with him. A few days later Trainer slipped away to a rendezvous with the officers. The date for the robbery was fixed and a detailed plan made. Lon Lewis and I went to Tulsa, telephoned Rutherford to send Ledbetter. Rutherford also sent O'Brien, Wagoner United States Deputy Marshal. We all went to Osborne's place on the Caney--got in touch with McClelland.

Early on the morning of October 12, 1896, McClelland came to Osborne's house bringing Smith

- 8 -

Bushyhead, a Cherokee Indian, with him. Then the posse started for the rendezvous where the Green boys had agreed with Trainor to cross a trail-way ford on the Verdigris, called the Grasshopper Ford. The posse consisted of Bud Ledbetter, Lon Lewis, Jason Clark--Ledbetter's half-brother, Charles McClelland, Osborne, O'Brien and myself. The posse rode east across the prairie about ten miles, leaving Oolagah to the south, then turned south, skirting Charles Rogers' home on the Verdigris, and arrived at the rendezvous about 1:00 o'clock P.M. We hid the horses in the woods, took our rifles and shot guns and went to the ford. We divided into two parties. It was understood that Trainor was to lead the boys to the east side of the river where a demand was to be made to surrender. Osborne, Jason Clark and I remained hidden on the east side of the river. The rest crossed to the west side and hid in the timber.

It was understood that Trainor would arrive about 2:00 o'clock P.M. Then Osborne and I heard horses on

- 7 -

the trail-way, my first and last experience with bandits and murderers. Osborne pulled me down out of sight. The men rode down the trail single file, Trainor in front riding a gray horse. As they were riding down the river bank, Bill said to Trainor, "Wagons can't cross here." Trainor said "No"? and rode into deep water to allow his horse to drink, then rode out on the east side where there were some flat rocks. The officers were on top of the bank behind trees and bushes. When they reached the flat rocks. Trainor said, "Ed, you and Bill ride up and see what you can see." Arthur had laid down on the flat rocks to get a drink of water. Bill and Ed crossed and went upon the bank. There they were confronted by Lewis, Ledbetter, and McClelland who told them to throw up their hands and surrender. The Green boys went for their rifles. Lewis' rifle spoke first, shooting Bill through the shoulder. McClelland's double barreled shotgun got Ed but didn't kill him. It was only loaded with turkey-shot. Ed fell to the

- 8 -

ground and rolled into the river bed onto the flat rocks. Ed began firing with pistols. Osborne and I shot from the other side from behind a big tree about one hundred yards away down stream. Ledbetter fired the shot that killed Ed. Smith Bushy-head shot Arthur through the upper part of his lungs. Bill and Ed both died. The officers picked up Arthur and took him to Muskogee.

Arthur was tried and given five years, as was Barker. Arthur, you remember, was not present when Walden was killed. He was at Barker's home suffering with an injured hip. He served his term, came back and lived on a farm near Mingo. He was not strong, having weak lungs from shot. He went to New Mexico where he died.

The Green boys were buried in the Musgrove Graveyard where Sally Musgrove, Will Rogers' grandmother, is buried. As for Leonard Trainor, he eventually went to Hollywood. He was a friend of Will Rogers and was often used in cowboy pictures. His particular pleasure was to care for Will Rogers' favorite horse.

- 9 -

I understand Trainor is still in the movies.

Lon Lewis' only other experience worth mentioning while he was United States Deputy Marshal was the shooting scrap with Dick Adams on Snake Creek, near Bixby, while trailing Texas Jack. Then there was the hunt for the two Christian brothers, a gang that broke jail at Oklahoma City and killed an officer. They escaped to the Creek Nation and then disappeared, possibly getting through to the border. (1897)

Lon Lewis became Tulsa's first Sheriff in 1907--served until 1909. He passed away September, 1909, of tuberculosis at Beggs, Oklahoma. His widow still lives there.