

VAUGHN, JIM

INTERVIEW

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279

Billie Byrd  
Investigator  
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Interview with  
Jim Vaughn  
Paden, Oklahoma.

There was no end of law breaking in the early territorial days. Many stole anything they saw, some killed innocent people, some were bootleggers and others robbed the drunks and other persons. United States marshals and others were sent out by the higher people to check these things, but the country was wild and there was no quick transportation so that a number of the bad men sought safety in the hills and wooded lands where they hid until at a time when they would get out and do another bad deed.

Bill Crosby was the name of an outlaw who was well-known as Cherokee Bill. He terrorized the country around Fort Gibson, Tahlequah and the Cookson Hills. His brother, Clarence Crosby, was another bad one. He was nervy enough to kill a man just for pastime, but he was never

outwardly heard for his outlawry. Still, he was not considered harmless, for he carried bone handled six-shooters.

Ike Rogers was a negro United States Marshal in the territorial days during the days of Cherokee Bill. He often was in the company of Bass Reeves, another negro United States Marshal, when covering trails leading out from Keokuk Falls and over to the eastern part of the Territory.

A time came when Cherokee Bill was wanted by the law, so Ike Rogers decided to take it into his hands to capture the noted Cherokee Bill and bring him before the court. Ike Rogers was known to always draw first on any criminal but Cherokee Bill's wife was a cousin to Rogers and he did not want to kill the criminal. Rogers wanted to make the capture without a gun fight. He finally found Cherokee Bill and arrested him.

Clarence Crosby, a brother to Cherokee Bill Crosby, saw Rogers make the arrest. In this way, the officer making the arrest made himself a marked man, but this

- 3 -

arrest marked the end of the outlaw career of Cherokee Bill when he was taken to Fort Smith.

At that time the Government had their headquarters at Tahlequah, handling all the tribal affairs of the Cherokees with the payments of the annuities. It was at Tahlequah that Ike Rogers met up with Clarence Crosby who was under an idiotic fit of drunkenness and roughing around. Rogers noticed Crosby in this condition and ordered him to go home, because if he didn't behave himself he would meet with the same fate that his brother, Bill, had.

It happened that Clarence Crosby was not real drunk but was only acting as if he was, hoping that he could get something started up with the United States marshal, something that would lead up to the arrest of his brother. Clarence, at this time, was living at Fort Gibson so that he replied to the officer, "Well, I am going home to stay and if you ever come down there and put your first step about that country around Fort Gibson, it will be the

last of you." Afterwards, he left for home.

Later on, the Government thought it best to move the headquarters to Fort Gibson and several years had passed when Ike Rogers boarded a train to Fort Gibson on some duty trip that had to be made; but before he started, he called up Clarence Crosby and told him that he was coming down and that he wanted to find him in good behaviour when he did arrive at Fort Gibson.

Arriving in Fort Gibson, as the negro United States marshal was stepping off of the last step of the train, he fell to the ground, dead from a shot that rang out from a crowded depot platform.

Investigation was immediately started but no evidence was ever found. Crosby was found standing among the crowd and every one of the crowd was questioned and searched but nothing incriminating was ever found.

Things quieted down without the murder being solved but most anyone remembered that Crosby had often

- 5 -

vowed th t he would kill the marshal if he ever came to that country.

With the passing of the years, no one ever knew about the shooting definitely until Clarence Crosby was stricken with tuberculosis and on his death bed he confessed to shooting the marshal as he stepped off the train, and to throwing the gun away.

#### RANCHES

There were a great many ranches during the open range country of the early territorial days, some of which were the WF Ranch, the Glipped Horn and the Half Moon. The S-L Ranch was located west of the present Checotah, Oklahoma, and was owned by a fellow named Litson. The ranches were all large tracts of land.

The ranch hands took part in all kinds of amusements such as roping, riding of broncs, racing and other sports that could be arranged. The whites, negroes and Indians all took part in these events. as

- 6 -

they were free and for the purpose of fun only.

Any of the bets put up for the events were claimed rightfully and no one thought bad about it at all. It seemed strange that a great many of the winners of the bets, especially of the first prize, all happened to be negroes, but there were also white and Indian winners in all of them.

During those early days, the Indians, negroes and whites bunked in the same bunk-houses, ate at the same table and thought nothing of mingling freely together anywhere.

Things went on in this manner for a long time, until a certain man named Lucas, after some sort of misunderstandings with the negroes finally introduced and stirred up the feelings of a number of the people that a separate law should be set aside for the negroes. This move was first started in and around Checotah, Oklahoma, until it was finally made a law that the negroes were to be a separate class from the whites and Indians and were not to mix with the whites so freely as they had done.