

Field Worker: Amelia F. Harris
March 12, 1937

264

BIOGRAPHY OF Stephen A. Woody (White)
417 West 15th Street
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

BORN De Lonaga, Georgia
December 10, 1869

PARENTS Father, J. C. Woody, Georgia
Mother, Rosie Woody, Georgia

I was the youngest of thirteen children. Mother died at
the age of 96 years.

I was born in De Lonaga, Georgia and came to Oklahoma with
a party of ten men from Caldwell, Kansas to Round Pond, Oklahoma about
September 1892- to make the run in the Cherokee Strip.

One of these men was riding a race horse named "Kentucky
Whip". All of the men rode good horses except me, my horse was just
a common little cow pony but tough and could stand lots of punishment.
We also, had a chuck wagon following us- with provisions, bedding and
stakes for our claims.

We were all lined up the day of the opening. There was, also,
a Rock Island freight train with about forty box cars, filled with
people. A look at one of those trains was a sight worth seeing. The
cars were jammed with people, in the cars, on top, hanging on the sides
and even riding the coal tender. There were people in buggies, two
wheel carts, wagons, horse back, and many a foot. Just any way to get
there. All stood in line for the signal which was a gun fired at noon
and the stampede began.

My brother lived over near Pond Creek, the land on the Creek
was very fertile and I wanted to stake a claim as near this creek as I
could.

So the ten of us started in that direction as fast as our horses could travel. They all out run my old cow pony and some staked good land, the "race horse" became exhausted and died on the way. I overtook another one of the men, his fine horse was down, blood rushing from his nose and mouth, he died too. I plodded on and was with in five or six miles of where I wanted to go, when I met the mass of people from the south. I had entered from the north. I knew there was no use to go on so I turned back and stopped at the first place that seemed vacant. Stuck up my stakes on 160 acres. This land was thirteen miles southeast of the Town of Fond Creek, which was a railroad station.

The Government tried to establish and keep the main town at "Round Pond". I lived at Round Pond and I put in a barber shop there, remained one year. In the meantime I dug a well, built a dugout and made a few other improvements on the claim, Lumber was so high- I paid twenty-five cents for two small tomato boxes and fifty cents for a 1x12x5 ft. long to nail on top of these boxes, so I would have a bench for the table.

I finally sold my rights to the claim to the County Clerk from Elsworth County, Kansas for \$150.00 cash, and I went back to Kansas.

In the early part of 1906 my brother wrote me that there would be a drawing for land known as the "Big Pasture", I again came back to Oklahoma. There were two places to register one at Fort Sill, the other El Reno. I went to Fort Sill and registered for a farm, but did not get one. I lived at Lawton which was just a tent town, and joined the Police force, the first that was organized in that town. Our jail house, a big tent and we chained our prisoners to wagon wheels and placed a guard over them until they were tried and sentenced or turned loose. Our nearest jail house was at Guthrie; I paid \$25.00 per month for a lot in which to put a tent
(my home)

and twenty-five cents a tub for water. I bought some straw and put it in one corner of the tent on the ground for my bed. Some time later we bought furniture.

Heck Thomas was the chief of police and I was under him (at Lawton). Lawton was an over grown Tent Town- with good and bad settlers. We had tent Churches, tent schools, tent hotels, tent grocery stores and tent Dry goods store and even a tent Bank.

I will give you a incident relative to that first bank. I had a nephew who was a photographer there. We were passing by the tent, "First National Bank"; the grass was about knee high and a cow was grazing on the grass. We stopped and took a picture. Later I approached the banker and asked him if I might take a picture of the Bank and he said "No". I told him I already had one- that he would pay good money for same and I showed him the picture and he ordered two dozen.

Heck Thomas and his fourteen assistants were kept very busy keeping law and order, for there were open saloons- gambling devices of every kind and dancing all under one big tent, that covered a block. There was a big wheel up on a platform built about seven feet high, where every body could see it. The man who operated the wheel would holler; "All ready, all ready, go", the wheel would start revolving and all games would start then. You could hear the money clinking as they started betting- when the wheel stopped the games, stopped. This method was repeated all day and night.

The Indians and their wives liked the roulette wheel best and some were very lucky. .

One night while on duty, I, with three others were called to this big tent to quiet some drunks. We arrested fifteen and took

them out of the saloon. Of course there was some shooting and some how the bar tender got shot in the leg. He laid the blame on the police. We had a big bell at police headquarters, which ran 1 gong for the Chief, Heck Thomas, two gongs for the assistant chief, then three or more. Every police had to answer and the one nearest the trouble, with an assistant, went to the trouble. We just had one mounted police, Rufe Le Force, he was later killed by a Mr. Russell, Editor of Democrat- paper. We notified his folks and a brother was to come for the body. We waited two days and as nobody came we started to bury him. The funeral procession was four miles long. As we were lowering him into the grave a man drove up in a buggy, hollering to stop. It was his brother and he took his body back to Georgia for burial. Before the brother left he asked to see Russell, the man who killed Rufe. The took him to the Fort Sill guard house, where we had him for safe keeping, as public sentiment run pretty high. Rufe's brother gazed a long time at Russell, as if he did not want to forget him.

Russell was tried and sentenced for four years, but he got a new trial and came clear. He immediately left for the East where he started up a paper. Later he was mysteriously killed and the mystery was never solved. It was presumed that Rufe's brother killed him.

There were lots of outlaws and cattle rustlers. I was instrumental in catching the biggest gang of cattle thieves in that part of the state. They were the Davis Brothers, the oldest brother was named Andy, and the youngest Gib. I forgot the other brother's names.

We trailed them one night to Dr. Neal's Ranch where they sold fifteen head. Heck Thomas, was with us and in the excitement he lost his gun. He offered a reward of twenty-five dollars but never recovered the gun. The boys on the force made up a purse of one-fifty dollars and bought him another one, but he did not like it as well as his old gun.

Now about the Davis Brother (cattle thieves), if the cattle were branded they would throw their hides into a well (they had two wells full) other wise they would sell the hides. They would steal cattle from the Government and sell them right back to the government for the Indians. They were convicted and sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

I have a picture of Heck Thomas, and his police. They were Judge Blanding, Police Judge, Cal Hawkins, Assistant Police, Jewell Martimer and Buck Lancaster, X Heatherton, X Lawrance, Ferry Foster- Jailer, Heck's Brother-in-law and my self. All are dead but two, Martimer and my self.

I also have a letter to me, dated February 16, 1893 from Heck Thomas instructing me how to shift the boys on police force, I also have my Deputy ship notice from C. C. Hammond, Sheriff of Comanche County.

There were several Indian Deputy sheriffs in Comanche County. The first one elected to that office was "Post Oak Jim" (he lives at ^{Cache} Chash, Oklahoma). These Indians made good deputies especially in rounding up cattle and horse thieves. Post Oak Jim would get drunk and gamble a little. One night in a gambling game he got shot through the mouth and the bullet passed on out of the

back of his neck. He then made a promise never to drink or gamble again. I think he kept his promise.

Field Workers note: A photostatic copy of the letter or commission can be had or a copy of the picture.
