

INDEX CARDS:

Chickasaw Nation  
Ardmore  
700 Ranch  
Tishomingo  
Pennington Creek  
Harley Institute  
Santa Fe Railroad  
Blacksmithing  
Dawes Commission  
Muskogee Phoenix

FIRST ARDMORE FAMILY  
Mr. and Mrs. George I. Douglas

The first family to settle in a home in the vicinity of the Ardmore of the present day was that of George B. Douglas of Gainesville, Texas.

The Douglas family consisted of George B., his wife, Margaret Ann Pendleton Douglas, two daughters, Ella and Betsy Jane, and four sons, Stephen A., Clarence B., Ashley W. and Frank S.

The elder daughter was the wife of L. O. Robertson and later married Capt. Wiley J. Woods. The younger daughter married C. F. McDonald of El Reno, where she now resides. Stephen A. married Maude Cearnal of Gainesville in 1888 and she is now living on South Douglas Boulevard. Clarence B. married Annie VanSyckle at Cosmopolis, Washington Territory, to which section he had followed her after their meeting and courtship in Gainesville, Texas. To them were born Knight P., Damon V., and Sadie Maude, all children still living. Mrs. Clarence B. Douglas died at Tulsa in April, 1933. Ashley Douglas married Viney McAlester who still lives at Ardmore in the old Douglas home and she has one son and one grandson, both named Stephen A. Frank Douglas married Dollie Davenport and they now live at Sulphur, where he is connected with the National Park Service in connection with Platt National Park. They have four daughters all living.

-2-

George B. Douglas, Mrs. Geo. E. Douglas, Ella, Stephen A. and Ashley have all passed away and are buried in the cemetery at the foot of Douglas Boulevard which was selected and located as a cemetery by George B. when the first death occurred in that locality, before Ardmore was located or named. The only improvements of any kind in the vicinity when the Douglas family began to break the sod, build a home and put in a ranch, were the log buildings of 700 Ranch, at one time operated by Richard McLesh, later prominent in State politics.

In 1885 G. B. Douglas secured a contract with the Chickasaw Nation to build a brick academy on the Pennington Creek a few miles above Tishomingo. It was a two days drive from Gainesville to the building site and the night camp was made near 700 Ranch. Building the Academy required more than one year as it was necessary to build log cabins for mechanics and laborers, burn a kiln of brick and freight lumber and supplies from Atoka by ox teams. In making the numerous trips necessary, between Gainesville and the new structure, the elder Douglas became much impressed by the natural beauty of the country near 700 Ranch and one day speaking to Stephen A. and Clarence said, "Someday the Santa Fe railroad will build north from Gainesville and

-3-

this 700 Ranch is forty miles from Gainesville, just the right distance for the location of a good railroad town.

I am going to open up a farm and ranch here at once. You boys finish up the Academy and then bring your tools, livestock and equipment from 'Tish' over here and help me."

There was some delay occasioned by the illness of George B., but in the early days of 1886 the family went into camp, and cutting logs from the forest, began and completed a double log house and a fine dug well about 8 feet in diameter. A stockade and sheds were built and soon sod was broken and the job of fencing began. One day quite some time after the house was occupied, surveyers for the Santa Fe from Gainesville showed up and these surveyers ran their preliminary survey between the two log rooms of the Douglas home which were connected by a ten-foot open porch. Douglas made the engineers welcome, furnished them food and water for the crew and induced the chief engineer to move the location line about one hundred feet east so as to miss the house and well. Following the preliminary survey the permanent line was run and in due time early in 1887 a stake was driven about one-half mile north of the north line of the Douglas place and on the maps of the engineers this

-4-

stake location was named Ardmore. Thus the prophecy or vision of this pioneer came true, and the railroad and town became realities as assets to his home.

The Douglas claim was taken out in the name of Dot Fitch, the small daughter of Dan Fitch, an intermarried Chickasaw citizen, and provided that at the end of ten years all of the improvements were to revert to Dot Fitch. When the ten years had expired Ardmore was a thriving young city and a satisfactory settlement had been made with the family of the Indians holding the original claim. George B. Douglas was a contractor and builder and built most of the early day modest homes and business houses of Ardmore. Stephen A. opened a blacksmith shop at the Douglas home and did the work of tool sharpening and horse shoeing for the railroad construction gangs, later moving his shop to "town".

Ashley Douglas was the town's first painter and followed this trade in Ardmore until his death.

Stephen A. later served six years as deputy U. S. Clerk and nine years as Postmaster and at one time was the owner of the Ardmoreite. He was later elected by the State legislature as the republican member of the State Capitol Commission and was put in charge of the construction of the Capitol building,

-5-

which work he carried out in an able and satisfactory manner.

Clarence B. was admitted to the bar at Ardmore in 1896, moved to Purcell in 1898 and to Muskogee in 1900 where he served on the Dawes Commission in the allotment of Indian lands for two years. He then bought the Muskogee-Phoenix which he owned and edited for more than seven years. When the State of Oklahoma was founded, he was named as the first Republican candidate for U. S. Senator. He moved to Tulsa in 1916 and for six years was managing director for the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce. He served under Secretary of War, Pat Hurley, as Special Representative of the War Department for three years and was a member of the Board of Regents of the Oklahoma Military Academy and Chairman of the Oklahoma Department of Waterways and Flood Control under Governor Murray. He has held important commissions under all Governors except one since Statehood. Following the death of his wife in 1923, after living almost a year in his cabin in the Cherokee hills he moved to El Reno, where he now makes his home with his sister, Mrs. C. F. McDonald.

The Douglas family lived in the double log house until the early nineties when Stephen A. built a home about a quarter

-6-

of a mile to the east. His father also moved near him purchasing a two-room new box house in a beautiful natural grove, just completed by Wm. McLemore, an early day Deputy U. S. Marshal. Clarence B. built a home nearby and so did Frank. A tract of ground, part of the Douglas ranch about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile wide and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile long, was then surveyed and named Ferndale Addition. Through its center from north to south a boulevard was laid out leading from the south of Ardmore to the gates of the cemetery formerly selected by the elder Douglas. This is now officially known as Douglas Boulevard. Charles Durie and family moved into and for several years lived in the original Douglas log house after members of that family built their homes in the Ferndale tract. The Clarence Douglas home was later sold to Congressman Charles D. Carter, whose widow thereafter resides.

Mrs. Stephen A. and Mrs. Ashley W. Douglas are the only surviving members of this pioneer family now living in Ardmore.

George B. Douglas died in 1897 and Mrs. George B. Douglas died in 1911, the former at the age of 70 and the latter at the age of 79.

During their lives they were the honor guests at

-7-

all anniversary day celebrations as the founders of Ardmore, and on their respective deaths suitable honors were paid to their memories by the press and public of Ardmore.

NOTE--This manuscript was given to this project by Clarence B. Douglas, of El Reno, upon the request from the Muskogee office of Project S-149. Ed.