

NEWMAN, LEE

INTERVIEW

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Investigator, Nannie Lee Burns,
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Interview with Lee Newman.
102 H. Street, NW,
Miami, Oklahoma.

Frank Modoc, the outstanding member of the Modocs brought to this county in the Fall of 1873, was born on Butte Creek Siskiyou County, California, in 1846, of Modoc parentage. His parents dying when he was quite small, he, after a while, was adopted by a maiden lady of the tribe named, from her unusual voice, Steamboat.

She gave the lad the name of Frank, which caused him to be called, in later years, "Steamboat Frank". She took pains to provide her adopted son with all of the advantages that she could procure for him and, as was customary in their tribe, when the boy was fifteen she married him. She lived but a few years and later Steamboat Frank married another Modoc lady named Alice, who came with him to the Quapaw Agency, when the tribe was brought here in the Fall of 1873. She is the mother of their son, Elwood Frank Modoc, born about 1884. Steamboat early espoused the cause of Captain Jack.

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Captain Jack.

The Modocs, by treaty, were forced to leave their homes in the Pitt River Valley, located in Northern California, to make their homes with the Klamaths, who lived in a mountainous country in Oregon. The Modocs tilled the soil so they became dissatisfied with their Oregon home and a part of them, under the leadership of Captain Jack, returned to their former home. This country had been settled by the white people, who resented the Indians' return and requested that they be returned to the Klamaths. In 1872, the Secretary of the Interior sent A. B. Meacham, former Indian Commissioner of Oregon, L. S. Dyer, agent at Klamath Falls, and Dr. Thomas, a Methodist minister, to try to persuade them to return. They refused to consider anything sort of the restoration of their old home on Pitt River, so the men failed to accomplish anything. Disregarding the advice of Dr. Thomas, the other members insisted on trying again and arranged for another meeting.

The Modocs remembered how twenty-one years before, Ben Wright and others had arranged for a talk with them on

peace and had under the pretense of a "peace talk" killed forty Modocs. Now in 1872 they retaliated by killing General Canby and Dr. Thomas and severely wounding A. B. Meacham under the same conditions.

The Modocs retreated to the lava beds of the mountains and for seven months resisted all attempts of the United States soldiers and were at last subdued only with the help of the Warm Springs Indians. In their stronghold they had plenty of water and their scouting parties at night secured enough food. Captain Jack and his three principal assistants were court-martialed and executed and the balance of the band, a hundred and fifty-two in number consisting mostly of scarred old men, women and children, were placed aboard a train in charge of soldiers and brought to Baxter Springs, Kansas, where they were loaded a few at a time in wagons after being searched for knives and weapons. Many of them wore blankets and moccasins, rings in their ears and noses. Their hair was shaved high over the ears and the hair in the middle of their heads was plaited in long braids which hung down the middle of their backs.

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Worn and weary, they were taken in small parties to the west bank of Spring River west of the Jim Charlie ford, where they were supplied with round government tents. They were policed by three local men, namely: John Powers, Joe Bigknife and Charles Welch, assisted by the soldiers who were stationed near. At this place the Government had before this erected a frame building thirty by a hundred feet in preparation for the anticipated removal of the Kiowas, Comanches, Cheyennes and Arapahoes to the Quabaw Reservation.

The New Home.

The government furnished the Modocs with beef from the local cattlemen and issued rations to them every three months consisting of beans, meal, green coffee, sugar, salt, etc. Sometimes they would visit the neighboring farms and trade their green coffee for chickens, giving two cups of coffee for a chicken or a pint of coffee for a bucket of potatoes.

Here the first Winter they lived mostly in tents and many of the number died. The Modoc Cemetery contains two rows of unmarked graves which are those of the ones who died that first Winter. From the very first they showed a

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willingness to work and a desire to learn. They would work for 50 cents per day and walk several miles to do the work. They had peculiar baskets made of reed or hemp, wide at the top and tapering to points at the bottoms. The bottom of the basket would rest on the ground when they sat down. This basket would hold about two bushels. The women would take these baskets to the woods and return, carrying their burdens by means of broad straps that fitted across the foreheads and fastened to the baskets back of the shoulders.

Several have spoken of the eagerness that the Modocs displayed in sending their children to school-rooms and sometimes the older people themselves would visit the school-rooms and just sit for hours listening. They would, before their church was built, walk the fourteen miles to the Quapaw Mission School just to hear the teachers talk of Christianity and sing the Gospel hymns.

Their children were placed here before their school and church house was built and it was not an unusual sight to see both Nez Perces and the Modocs seated in the same room with their blankets wrapped around them, listening to the early missionaries and teachers.

The comment of one of the old ministers is, the only trouble he ever had with the Modocs was in closing a service as they wanted to listen and talk so long each time.

All of the older people who remember the Modocs have only the highest words of commendation and praise for their industrious ways, their eagerness to learn and the peaceable way in which they lived. Only once was any disturbance reported and that was when they had a disagreement with the Agent. This was quickly settled as some of them got word to their friends, the Friends, who were in charge of the Wyandotte Mission at Wyandotte, and four of the ladies from there drove overland in a spring wagon from Wyandotte to their church house where they, the Modocs, were gathered. The ladies were: Mrs. Kirk, the wife of the superintendent, and her daughter, Ethel; Miss Lizzie Test, a teacher; and Zonia Jackson. The ladies were able to adjust the differences between the Agent and the Indians assembled and after a dinner with them returned to their homes that afternoon.

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By the beginning of the second Winter most of the Modocs had been furnished with log houses on the four thousand-acre tract of land that had been purchased for them from the Shawnees on the State line north of Seneca, Missouri, at a cost of \$6,000.00.

They were a thrifty people and within two years several of them had saved from their small allowances enough to purchase a cow or a horse or some hogs.

In addition to the farm that was operated under the supervision of the Government farmer, Mr. Pickering, some Modocs had small acreages planted for themselves.

Frank Modoc.

The outstanding person among the Modocs was Steamboat Frank. He was twenty-seven years of age when they came here and even before this had been anxious to take advantage of the opportunities offered. He was their interpreter, was dressed in citizen's clothing and I am told was a good-looking man who was always neatly and tastefully dressed and was among the first to be converted by the Friends People and ever afterwards took a very active part in the converting of his fellow tribesmen.

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Steamboat Frank by industry and managing soon erected for his wife a comfortable house and the other buildings built included a good barn, wagon-shed and corn-crib, with the aid of the Government carpenter and the Government furnishing the hardware.

In 1882, Steamboat Frank asked permission of the United States Indian Agent here, D. E. Dyar, for his son and himself to accompany Ira D. Kellogg to Iowa and after his arrival in that state spoke under Frances E. Willard pleading for the Temperance Cause. At Des Moines, Miss Willard and Steamboat Frank spoke from the same platform.

Returning to his home here, Steamboat Frank served the local congregation at their church here and today a large sized portrait of him still hangs in the front of the Modoc Church just to the right of the pulpit.

When he applied for permission to go to Iowa, for convenience the Agency changed his name from Steamboat Frank to Frank Modoc. Afterwards, he is referred to as Frank Modoc.

His wife, Alice, became ill and the thoughtfulness that he showed to her during her illness is best illustrated by the following incident:

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One day she expressed a desire for some fresh fish such as they had had in their western home and not being able to obtain them here, Frank Modoc went to the nearest railroad station and ordered the fish from Saint Louis which were sent to him the following day.

She died in 1884 and his own health not being good, permission was obtained for him to visit his western home.

Before he departed for the West, his gift to the ministry was acknowledged and approved by the Spring River Quarterly Meeting of Ministry and Oversight.

By this act, Frank Modoc became the first full-blood Indian ever recorded as a minister of the Gospel in the Society of the Friends.

During his stay in Oregon his health improved and after three months trying to impress on his friends there the importance of Christianity, he returned to his friends here.

Continuing to devote himself to the ministry in the later part of 1884, he told the Friends here that he felt that he lacked the necessary education to express his views

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to others and asked if any way could be opened for him to obtain more education.

~~When Mary Morrell of the New England Yearly Meeting~~
visited the Spring River Meeting in the early part of 1885, she recommended that he be sent to Oak Grove Seminary, Maine. Now under the legal name of Frank Modoc, on April 9, 1885, in company with his son, Elwood, he departed for Maine. The son was later sent to the White's Institute at Wabash, Indiana, but the father continued his studies in Maine until during the second year when his health failed to such an extent that he was compelled to leave school. He went temporarily to the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Frye, expecting to leave, after a short rest, for his home in this country. His strength failed so rapidly that he was unable to leave their home where he died June 12, 1886. He was buried in Portland, Maine, by the Friends.

Among the names most frequently mentioned here are those of Princess Mary, the sister of Captain Jack, who was brought here and lived here until after 1904, when she was permitted

to return to her kinsmen in Oregon. She was an elderly woman and lived in a very small, primitive house here.

Faithful William, or as he was afterwards called, William Faithful, was the one who informed General Canby and Dr. Thomas of the Modocs' intention to retaliate on them for a previous wrong. His story to them was not credited and both were killed. He, with his wife, Lucy Faithful, are buried in the Modoc cemetery.

Bogus Charlie was the early chief here. Ben Lawyer, another brought here from the Lava Beds, was a later chief.

Scarface Charlie is often recalled by the older settlers and is remembered easily because of a very conspicuous saber cut extending the length of his face.

Others often mentioned are Jerry Hubbard Modoc, Alice Frank, Lucy Clinton, Samuel and Susen Lawyer.

Today only a very few of the descendants remain here; in fact, Mrs. Haymen, who was three years old when they came, and Mr. James of Seneca, Missouri, are the only ones who survive of the original band and who are still living in this part of the country.