

REMINISCENCE NUMBER FIVE

My fifth and last experience was with one John Handly a Texan who drifted up here just at the close of the Civil war. He was employed by Taury Jones on his farm, which is now known as the Woodlief farm.

On the night of June 30, 1865 he shot and killed one John Sutton, the father of a family of refugees from the Cherokee country.

They lived just across the creek south of the Woodlief residence in a log house. It seems that Mrs. Sutton had been making a hunting shirt for Handly and a short piece of ribbon was left which he had given Mrs. Sutton, but afterward he thought he ought to have it, so he called for in on the night stated above. Mrs. Sutton said she had used it, whereupon he commenced to use abusive language and Mr. Sutton ordered him out of the house, but Handly didn't go. So Sutton reached for his rifle hanging on the wall. Handly ran out then but as he went out Sutton fired and wounded Handly slightly in the fleshy part of the arm.

A furious storm with thunder and lightning was raging at the time. Handly didn't go away, but going around the house and watching his opportunity when it lightened, he fired killing Sutton almost instantly.

Handly then returned to Taury Jones'. It rained nearly all night and the creeks rose rapidly, and in the morning Taury Creek was past fording. (No bridge there). Word was sent to Ottawa for the sheriff to come out quickly as Handly had already left. Billy Pickrell had not been here long at that time, but I liked his looks and I asked him to go with me and he consented. We got away about eight o'clock.

In some way I learned that Handly was on the south side of Taury Creek. With his pony he had swam the creek.

An Indian by the name of Jo

King whom I knew well, lived just east of where John Conard now lives, said Handly had passed there very early in the morning; he showed us the tracks of his pony. Handly kept close to the creek and the water rising covered the track so that it was difficult to follow the trail. It was a hot day but we kept steadily at our work and at eleven o'clock in the morning we got the track out on the high prairie in the neighborhood of the A. C. Shinn or Ed. Hume farms.

In our hunt we discovered that his pony was shod and that one shoe was off. This enabled us to quickly distinguish it from other tracks.

He had a trick of leaving the traveled road and riding in the prairie grass for quite a distance and then back into the road again. We soon got on to that trick, and when he was in the road we rode quite rapidly, but when he turned into the prairie it was slow work.

Out eight miles northwest of Ottawa he stopped at the Reuben Hackett farm, got something to eat there; told Mr. Hackett that he had been in a fuss at Ottawa and was wounded in the arm. All day long in the broiling hot sun we followed his track and trail. His course lay to the north and west and when darkness closed in on us we were close to the village of Clinton on the Wakarusa in Douglas county and about twelve or fifteen miles from Topeka. We stopped at the first house we came to in the village and inquired for our man, and were not a little surprised to find he had stopped at the same place about an hour before and bought a few ears of corn to feed his pony. He told the man he wanted to hire to drive teams. The man told him there were two trains camped across the creek going to Santa Fe, New Mexico, perhaps they would hire him.

The man, (I forgot his name) ad-

vised us not to attempt to arrest him that night but wait until the early morning. We gladly accepted the advice as neither our horses nor ourselves had eaten a bite since early in the morning. Mr. Pickrell was a new comer and while I knew he was a tireless rider, I thought he surely would show some signs of fatigue, but when I asked him if he was tired, he just looked at me and laughed, as much as to say I can stand this chase as long as you can.

After feeding our horses and eating our supper we immediately retired, to be awakened at half past three in the morning. We were called at that time and our breakfast was ready. A little after four a. m. we crossed the Wakarusa to the two trains in camp there.

I was pretty sober, as I thought I knew what kind of a desperado we were tackling. Pickrell was more cheerful. The trains were parked in a circle and as we approached the first wagon I said to Pickrell, "You do the talking." Pickrell said, "Hello." A man pushed the wagon cover back and said, "What's wanted?" Pickrell said, "Have you seen any loose mules around here?" The man said "No." Then the man said, "You belong to the other train don't you?" And Pickrell said "Yes." The man said, "Well there's a man asleep under my wagon that wants to hire to drive." "Yes," says Pickrell, "we want him." There he was sure enough, crawling out from under the wagon, at the same time strapping on his revolver. His pony was lariatied one hundred and fifty feet away.

He walked rapidly to the lariat pin and pulled it up and commenced to do up his lariat. In an undertone I told Pickrell that now was our only chance; if we parleyed an instant he would get us both.

Revolvers in hand, and putting spurs to our horses we rode at him furiously, yelling at him to hold up his hands or he would be a dead man.

I saw his hand move toward his

revolver and I was about to shoot when tremuously he put up his hands. After securing his revolver, he was perfectly tame and easy to manage. Most desperadoes are ar-rant cowards when fairly covered.

We placed hand-cuffs on Handly and putting him on his pony and tying his feet together under the pony, we started for Ottawa, and without halting arrived there at 3 p. m.

Mr. Robbins, the sheriff, had returned and I turned the prisoner over to him. Handly had a preliminary hearing that evening before A. H. Dow, justice of the peace. The justice told me the Ottawa Indians were greatly excited over the killing of Sutton by Handly, and he thought they would shoot him if opportunity offered, and he wished the sheriff and I would stay close by him during the examination.

A large number of the Indians were present, but they were quiet and there was no demonstration toward violence. Handly was bound over to the district court and the crowd dispersed. The sheriff and myself roomed together in a room in the court house and we took Handly into our room for the night. He was handcuffed and manacled, and slept on the floor on some blankets. There was a light in the room all night.

The room had two large windows, covered by green shutter blinds.

It was warm and the windows were up, but the blinds closed—slats open. About two o'clock in the morning two shots were fired as one, into the room through those blinds, filling the room with a dense smoke.

It was a terrific shock to both Robbins and myself and Handly fairly turned a double summersault while yelling bloody murder at the top of his voice. Hastily dressing I stepped out on the street, but I saw no one, but I could hear the thump of the horses feet as they crossed the ford going north. When the smoke cleared away we found that one ball

had grazed Handly's head, a very close call indeed.

The next morning Handly was taken to the Douglas county jail.

He was never tried in this county. He took a change of venue to Douglas county, was tried there and found guilty of murder in the first degree and was hung in the Doug-

las county jail at the same time that Ernest Watecha, the murderer of Wm. Hastings, was.

I think those were the only two legal hangings that have ever occurred in the history of this county.

This closes my reminiscences of my dealings with criminals in the early history of this county.