

FORSYTH SCOUT - BEECHER ISLAND

Newsletter #5, June 2008

Welcome to the many new readers of the Newsletter this month. I'm glad to have all of you with us. I hope that you will enjoy the newsletter and find it entertaining.

You are all invited to submit any articles that you would like to have included in letter. They should in some way relate to the Forsyth Scouts, Beecher Island battle or the great plains Indian Wars or settlement of the frontier, or the people and places involved.

News Flash: From April 24 - 29, 2008, Jeanette Lyon and her son and daughter, Erik and Stacey, were in Lincoln County. Jeanette is the great great granddaughter of George and Maria Weichell.

George Weichell was killed on June 30, 1869 in the Spillman Creek Indian raid. The pregnant Maria Weichell was taken captive along with Scout Thomas Alderdice's wife, Susanna. While Susanna was killed by the Indians on July 11, 1869 in the rescue at the Battle of Summit Springs, Colorado Territory, the badly wounded Maria was rescued and sent to Omaha, and seemed to pretty much disappear from history. This is the first time in well over 100 years that any of the Weichell's descendants are known to have been back in the area. I hear that they had a chance to visit the original homestead and see the area where their ancestors settled, courtesy of some of our readers. Thank you to all who took part in showing Jeanette and her family around.



Calendar

Fort Harker Days will be coming up in July at Kanopolis, Kansas. This is where the Scouts left from on their expedition that would make them famous. Jim Gray, The Cowboy, at Drovers Mercantile in Ellsworth, Kansas, can provide details. He can be contacted at www.droversmercantile.com or kansascowboy@kans.com, or 785-472-4703

On September 13 & 14, 2008, the 109th **Beecher Island Reunion** will be held at the battleground. For information check here: http://www.wrayco.net/museum_beecher.html; or write:

Beecher Island Battle Ground Memorial Association, 33041 County Road 20,
Wray, CO 80758

If anyone has an event that you would like to have included in the newsletter, please feel free to submit it to me. It should have some historical connection to the Scouts, the Beecher Island battle or Great Plains Indian Wars or settlement of the mid-west.

The Scouts That Went for Aid The 1st Party

Scout Simpson Everett "Jack" Stilwell

After the first day of battle, on the evening of September 17 - 18, 1869, Scouts Jack Stilwell and Pierre Trudeau, answering a call for volunteers. Carrying a message from the badly wounded Colonel George A. Forsyth, they slipped away from Beecher Island, through the Indian lines and started the long dangerous trek back to Fort Wallace, through country teeming with Indians..

Simpson Everett "Jack or Comanche Jack" Stilwell was the son of William "Henry" Stilwell and Charlotte B. "Sarah" Winfrey. His grandparents Stilwell were Joseph Everett and Julia Stilwell. Jack's father was born about 1830 in Alabama and his mother was about the same age, born in Illinois or Indiana.

William Stilwell was a carpenter and farmer. In the mid 1850's the Stilwell's moved to Baldwin City or Palmyra Township, Douglas County, Kansas where they took a land claim. In 1863 William and Charlotte divorced and William left with Jack, Millard and Frank. Charlotte took Elizabeth and Mary. William joined Company B, 18th Missouri Infantry for a time during the Civil War.

By 1885 he was living with his daughter, Elizabeth Cooley and her family at Caldwell, Sumner County, Kansas. Later he lived in Kansas City, Kansas. William died December 1, 1893 at Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas and is buried at Union Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri.

At this time it is unknown when or where Jack's mother died or is buried, but probably in Indiana. She and the girls did return to Jackson County, Indiana where Charlotte married _____ Wiseman. In 1880 Charlotte is found living in Hamilton Township, Jackson County, Indiana, with her daughter, Elizabeth and her husband, Joseph Cooley and is shown as widowed or divorced..

Children:

- i. Simpson Everett "Jack or Comanche Jack" Stilwell was born August 18, 1850 in Iowa City, Johnson County, Iowa (though some accounts say on the eastern Kansas state line).

Jack was a busy young fellow. In 1863 Jack went to New Mexico; in 1867 he was employed as a guide for troops at Ft. Dodge, Kansas; in 1868 he was at Beecher Island; in 1871 he was at Fort Sill as post guide; by 1878 he was chief packer and then scout at Ft. Davis and Ft. Stockton, Texas.

In 1882 he went looking for the Earps after his brother,

Frank, was killed. By 1885 he was a U. S. Marshal at Anadarko and or Darlington, Indian Territory and later, a Judge in El Reno and in 1895 he was appointed U.S. Commissioner at Anadarko.

On May 6, 1895 in Braddock, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, he married Esther Hannah Sherwin (White), (daughter of William Sherwin and Ann _____). Esther was born February 24, 1872 in Leischester, England and came with her parents to the United States in 1881. The couple lived at Anadarko for a short time, but then moved to the area of Cody, Wyoming, where Jack managed part of Bill Cody's holdings.

After Jack's death, Esther married, in March of 1906, Carlton "Carl" D. Hammitt. Carl was apparently a friend of Jack's and had worked for William F. Cody. In 1900 Carl was boarding with the Stilwells.

Esther died February 7, 1937 in Billings, Yellowstone County, Montana and is buried with Carl in Riverside Cemetery, Cody, Wyoming.

Jack died of Bright's Disease (kidney failure) on February 17, 1903 in Cody, Park County, Wyoming. He was first buried in an unmarked grave in Riverside Cemetery, where the location was lost, and in 1984 his grave was located and was moved to Old Trail Town Cemetery, Cody, Wyoming, where he lays with several other noteworthy characters of the frontier.

For some time before his death, Jack and Scout Sigmund Shlesinger corresponded.

- ii. Frank Stilwell was born _____, 1855, probably in Johnson County, Iowa.

By 1877 he was in Arizona, where he had gone earlier with Jack. Frank had operated a livery stable and a bar at Charleston and Bisbee and had a disreputable reputation when he arrived in Tombstone in the early 1880's. He became associated with the Clanton gang of OK Corral fame, and the eventual killing of Wyatt Earp's brother, U. S. Marshal, Morgan Earp.

Frank in turn was killed by Wyatt Earp and some of his

associates on March 20, 1882 in the rail yard at Tucson, Arizona Territory, and was originally buried in the old Tucson City cemetery, but when the cemetery was moved, most of the residents were reburied in a mass grave in the Evergreen Cemetery in Tucson.

The following paragraphs seems to give the details nicely,

"A few days later (After Morgan was killed) Wyatt and his younger brother Warren, Doc Holliday, Sherman McMasters and "Turkey Creek" Jack Johnson, two gunmen who had been part of Earp's Charleston posse, accompanied the still very weak Virgil Earp and his wife to Tucson." Virgil was recuperating from an earlier gunshot wound to the arm, and he and his wife were going to the home of his parents in Colton, Ca. by train to complete his recuperation."

"They arrived at dusk. By a strange coincidence Frank Stilwell and Ike Clanton were in Tucson waiting to testify before a grand jury about the Bisbee Stagecoach robbery. There are various explanations as to why Clanton and Stilwell were at the Tucson train depot when the Earps appeared; one report had them waiting to meet a man named McDowell, another grand jury witness. There is also a strong possibility they were both lured to the spot. Perhaps another arrangement made by the Earp's powerful friends in Tombstone?"

"As always when he smelled gunpowder, Ike ran and vanished into the darkness. Stilwell hurried down the tracks, fleeing from the Earps." Shots rang out and Stilwell "died without drawing his six shooter. A special dispatch to the Epitaph, datelined March 21, described Stilwell's "riddled corpse"... "Six shots went into his body- four rifle balls and two loads of buckshot. Both legs were shot through and a charge through his breast, which must have been delivered close, as the coat was powder-burned and six buckshot holes within a radius of three inches".

Following Frank's killing, Jack started for Tombstone to right a perceived wrong, but never completed the trip and later returned to Texas or Oklahoma.

- iii. Howard C. Stillwell was born _____, 1856 Missouri and probably died young..
- iv. Millard O. Stilwell was born _____, 1858. He may have married and had a family, but further research is needed on this.

- v. Clara "May" Stilwell was born June __, 1860 in Palmyra Township, Douglas County, Kansas. Nothing further is known of her at this time.
- vi. Elizabeth R. Stilwell was born October 28, 1864 in Palmyra Township, Douglas County, Kansas.

In 1879 in _____, _____ County, Indiana, she married (1) Joseph E. Cooley. He was born November 6, 1854 at Waymansville, Bartholomew County, Indiana, and died in 1924 in Oklahoma.

Before 1930, she married (2) John Mescher.

Elizabeth died August 19, 1936 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, and is buried in Kolb Cemetery, Spencer, Oklahoma.

The children Of Elizabeth Stilwell and Joseph E. Cooley were:

- i. Daniel Clinton "Clint" Cooley, born September 25, 1880 in Hamilton Township, Jackson County, Indiana. He married and had children.
- ii. William Clifford "Cliff" Cooley, born July 25, 1884 in Cloud County, Kansas. He married and had a large family.
- iii. Walla Owen Cooley, born September 16, 1889 in Garvin County, Indian Territory (Oklahoma). He married but is not known to have had family.

Walla died November 4, 1965 in Temple, Bell County, Texas.

- iv. Everett Joseph Cooley, born September 29, 1891 in Dibble, McClain County, Indian Territory Oklahoma). He married and had a family.

Everett died June 20, 1964 in Mentone, San Bernardino County, California.

- v. Dale Louis Cooley, born September 8, 1894 in Purcell, McClain County, Indian Territory (Oklahoma). He married but is not known to have had any children.

Dale died August 4, 1961 in Butte County, California.

- vi. Jiles M. Cooley, born January 21, 1896 in Purcell, McClain County, Indian Territory (Oklahoma), and in 1930 was still single.
- vii. Tenal S. Cooley, born January 25, 1898 in Purcell,

McClain County, Indian Territory (Oklahoma). He married and is not known to have had any children.

Tenal died in September of 1965 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma.

It would appear that Jack Stilwell, though not having children of his own, did have a number of nephews.

Below are some newspaper clippings that give some insight into the life and times of Jack Stilwell after the Beecher Island battle. They are transcribed as published, except for obvious typos. Not all the stated facts appear to be correct.



The Indiana Weekly Messenger
Indiana, Pennsylvania
October 6, 1901

Jack Stilwell, The Scout

Jack Stilwell, one of General Sheridan's favorite scouts, is now in charge of Buffalo Bill's ranch near the town of Cody, in Big Horn basin. Stilwell was a Kansan, and it was he who carried the message from General Sandy Forsyth when the latter, with a band of scouts, was entrenched behind a barricade of dead men and horses upon a little island in the Republican River in 1868, surrounded by several thousand Indians.

It was imperative to get word of their predicament to the garrison at Fort Wallace, forty or fifty miles away, and Stilwell, then a mere boy, volunteered for the duty. No man ever undertook a more perilous mission. Forsyth's command was surrounded on all sides and it was necessary to pass through the Indian lines. When darkness fell, Stilwell stripped the body of an Indian warrior that had fallen in a charge upon Forsyth's little band. He clothed himself in the war trappings of the dead savage and crept through the Indian tepees. But the camp was so large that morning dawned before he could escape and he sought refuge in the carcass of a dead buffalo which lay in the side of a hill. Carefully covering himself with the hide and head of the dead animal, he lay there all day with the Indian children playing around him. When darkness came again he crept out and made his way across the plains to Fort Wallace, where he delivered Forsyth's appeal for rescue. It was written in simple, soldierly language, and gave no idea of the desperate plight of the beleaguered scouts. They had been living on the flesh of their horses for several days. Nearly everyone of the 100 frontiersmen who composed that celebrated company was

wounded, but Forsyth described his situation in these cool terms: "I am surrounded by several thousand Indians on a little island in the Republican river, with many dead and wounded. We have food and ammunition and can hold out several days longer, but need reinforcements. Please lose no time."

Within two hours after Stilwell's arrival at Fort Wallace, Col. Bankhead's troops were galloping across the prairie with Stilwell at their head, the Indians had left before they arrived. A son of Henry Ward Beecher was with Forsyth, and was killed the first day of the fight.



The Dallas Morning News
Dallas, Texas
November 24, 1893

**A SCOUT OF THE PLAINS
COMANCHE JACK'S VISIT TO THE WINDY CITY
On of the Survivors of the Republican River Fight Relates His Experiences
on that Occasion**

Chicago Herald.

"Comanche" Jack Stilwell of El Reno, Oklahoma, one of the last of the great scouts now alive who lent so much blood and romance to the operations of government troops against hostile Indians in the 1860's is at present the guest of his friend, Buffalo Bill, in this city. "Comanche" came to town three weeks ago and he has hit nothing but the high knolls ever since. Two or three weeks ago Buffalo Bill received a letter from Comanche which read something like this:

El Reno, OK - Dear Bill: I hear from a white man down here that you pretty much own a town called Chicago. I want to see you very much. I don't know how to go about it. Tell me if the range is good along the way and if I need to bring my dried meat along. Tell me also, Bill, if you have to mix any poison oak with your whiskey and some idea about the penalty for killing a man up there. I suppose I would be rather green among all those people, but if you say come I will take along two red shirts, providing you get the red necktie. Your friend,
Jack

Buffalo Bills letter was equally as characteristic. It read:

Chicago - Dear Jack: Come along but if you steal a horse to get here on be sure to pick out one that hasn't got too many brands on it, for good horses are scarce up here and you can sell one that is not badly burned. There is no penalty here for killing a man. There is, in fact a premium for doing that sort of

thing. Don't bring along any dried meat; the restaurants here are full of it. You needn't be afraid that you will be singled out for a countryman. The town is so full of green people that we have had to muzzle our horses to keep them from biting the outfit. Sincerely yours, Bill

Just before the great fair closed a sturdy man with a rugged face, a closely cropped brown mustache and silver threaded hair that curled back from a high forehead appeared at Buffalo Bill's tent. It was "Comanche". The two famous scouts had not met before in years. In fact it was Comanche's first visit to Chicago. With a plainsman twist of the hand Bill and Jack fell to talking about the times when Dull Knife was gallivanting around the southwest with murder in his heart and when Roman Nose, the big Cheyenne Chieftain, was an inhospitable fellow for a white man to meet, particularly when Roman Nose was burdened with a grievance.

"That fellow can tell you a story." said Major John Burke to the Herald reporter yesterday as he pointed a diamond pegged finger at "Comanche". The old scout limped slightly as he walked to a chair near the doorway and flung his black sombrero upon the table.

"My experience in that fight on the Republican?" he asked.

"That's it." replied Major Burke. "Comanche" rolled a cigarette with two fingers and then he told his thrilling story of a fight which is almost as famous in Indian history of the West as the mournful fate of Custer.

"Along about the middle of September, 1868, Colonel 'Sandy' Forsyth was ordered by General Sheridan to hire frontiersmen and start out to overhaul a war party of Brule and Ogallala, Sioux and Dog Soldier Cheyennes which had been raiding the country. The only other army men in the expedition were Lieutenant Beecher, a nephew of Henry Ward Beecher and Dr. Moores. The rest of the fifty men were frontiersmen. It was not long after leaving Fort Wallace with our supplies that we struck the trail of the marauders. From the tracks Indians left behind them we judged that there were about 3,000 tepees in the outfit. The trail led across the Republican River and was quite fresh. It was evident that the Indians were making slow progress owing to their great number and camp truck. We were thus enabled to cover as much ground in one day as they were in two. On the night of the 16th we camped on a flat and narrow sandbar. Early the next morning we were attacked by the Indians, who attempted to run off our stock. While we were saddling our horses a large party began a more vigorous fight upon us. The sun was just rising when it was decided that we should move upon a sand bar, which was an island in wet weather and when the river was high. There were a few small cottonwood trees on the small sandy strip. We quickly took possession of the upper end of the island, while the Indians swooped down upon the lower end. The fight was now on. Col. Forsyth detailed myself and five other men to go to bushwhacking and capture, if

possible, the position held by the Indians. This we accomplished, but the Indians had by this time stationed their sharpshooters in the hollows near by and prevented us from returning to the main body. The fight had lasted an hour and a half when we received the relief this we had sent for.”

“It was about this time that we discovered that the Indians were wrangling as to who should command them. At 10 o’clock old Roman Nose, chief of the Dog Soldiers and the most celebrated Indian fighter of that day, assumed command. He wore the same headdress which I had seen on his head in the previous fights - a gaudy barbaric contrivance with a buffalo horn standing on end just above the forehead and flanked on either side by a stuffed bird. When in command in battle Roman Nose carried a lance which he used to wave in directing the movements of his troops.”

“Sitting squarely on his horse with his feather lance uplifted, Roman Nose immediately ordered a charge which he lead in person. The Indians bore down on our center and breaking it dashed almost half way to the main party of our men when a bullet struck Roman Nose behind and pierced his abdomen. The old fellow fell nearly to the ground, when with his dying grasp, he caught the horse’s mane and made a desperate effort to return to his seat. But, he was hit so hard that he soon fainted and was born off the field by his soldiers. A young warrior who I have always believed was a relative of Dull Knife, now assumed command. He had just succeeded in rallying his horsemen nearly all of whom were dismayed at the fate of Roman Nose, when he too, fell dead with a bullet in his head. From that moment the Indians didn’t seem to recognize any commander, but kept up the fight in a haphazard way until after 5 o’clock when they received reinforcements and a new man in command. From this time until sundown no one man could describe the fight, as each of us was so busy with his own affairs that he paid no attention to the movements of his neighbor. It looked as though we were ‘selling out’. At sundown the Indians drew off their horses but left their sharpshooters. I then joined the main party and for the first time learned the effect of the fire of the Indians. Col. Forsyth had both legs broken, Lieutenant Beecher had a broken back and three bullets in his body, and Dr. Mooers had been fatally shot in the head. It looked as though I was about the only man left unhurt. As it was over twenty five men or more than one half our force were either dead or wounded.”

“It was nearly midnight,” Comanche continued, “when Col. Forsyth ordered old Pete Trudell (Trudeau) and myself to make a forced march to Fort Wallace, which was 120 miles away. Pete was an old trapper and one of the best rifle shots I ever saw. Wrapping blankets about ourselves we crawled out among the Indians whose camp we were soon to learn extended in a direct line south to Wallace, whereas we had been of the opinion that it ran to the west. Each of us had cut off a chunk of raw horse meat on the way and then with moccasins, made from the tops of our boots and with the rather stinking saddle blankets wrapped around us we made, a we thought, fairly representative Indians, at least

so far as poverty and filth were concerned. We succeeded in making three miles the first night. Then we hid ourselves in a washout in a ravine where the grass had grown so tall that it hung over the ledges. Here we lay all the next day listening to the fighting on the island, and yet we were powerless to get the relief we were after or return to our party. That night we made more track toward Fort Wallace only to find ourselves within half a mile of the main village of the Indians on the south fork of the Republican. We got into a swampy place and hid during the day, knowing the Indians would not follow us unto the marsh with their horses. The next morning, we found ourselves at the head of Goose Creek on a high, rolling prairie. “

“The Indians were so thick all around that we had to hide in the carcasses of two buffaloes. The beasts had been killed the year before so that it was an easy matter to crawl into the shells formed by the bleaching ribs. Of course there was more room outside, but it was not half so desirable as the place we had chosen. There was just enough hide on the bones to conceal us and so we lay there and waited for night to come. There was nothing unpleasant about the odor of our hiding places. Of course they were no violets, but we didn’t mind that. When night came we pulled out and reached Fort Wallace. As soon as we told our story General Sheridan ordered all available troops to the scene of the fight. Meantime, however, two couriers had reported the fight to Colonel Carpenter’s command, and that good old soldier, without waiting for soldiers, struck right out and reached the battlefield forty-eight hours before the troops from the fort got there.”

“That fight,” the old scout continued “was fought on the Arickaree fork of the Republican. I don’t know how to spell that word and I never saw a man who did. But that’s the story Burke wanted me to tell you.”

“It beats the devil,” replied Comanche. “This is the first time I ever saw Chicago or a pond of water bigger than a Kansas buffalo wallow. I’m having the whole thing here - best place I have ever struck. Went out on one of those things they call a steam launch. Rode on that until I got into the lake. Then I saw a boat bigger than this building. Says I to myself, I’ll just ride you a heat even if you do throw me. Got on it without knowing or caring where it was going. Pretty soon I saw a fellow I knew was a cow puncher.”

“‘Hey stranger,’ I said, do you know where you are going?’ ‘No, nor do I give a damn,’ the fellow said, ‘Neither do I.’ I admitted and we rode downtown. He was from Corpus Christi, Texas and before we got halfway into one of the streets we got balled up in the crowd and had to hire a cab to put us back on the boat again.”

Discussing the moral situation of Oklahoma, “Comanche” grew quite emphatic.

“They say,” he began, “that salvation is free, but it is my observation that it takes

a heap of money to spread the information. They are building churches all around Oklahoma - the Methodists, the Baptists, the Presbyterians and a long haired sect called Mennonites, or something like that. I'll tell you that when you get hold of a praying gambler or a swearing preacher you are in tough luck, and you can always tell these fellows, for they shave their mustaches and let their beards grow. It's the only body of water that I ever saw that I couldn't swim across."

"Comanche" is a city judge of El Reno. He said he accepted the office with a reason that he didn't know any law and could therefore make an impartial judge. He will remain in town a week.



The following article indicates that Jack was present and working as a U.S. Marshal, when the Oklahoma Territory was opened to settlers during the "Land Rush."

The Galveston Daily News
Galveston, Texas
May 15, 1889

REPORT RECEIVED

From United States Marshal Jones Regarding Conduct of His Deputies in Oklahoma.

Washington, May 14. - Attorney -general Miller has received a report from United States Marshal Jones of Kansas in regard to the conduct of himself and his deputies upon the opening of Oklahoma to settlement. He says that though he appreciated the influx of population that would follow the president's proclamation, and he knew the people could look to the civil authorities for safety and protection after April 22, when the functions of the military authorities ceased, and consequently he attempted, and thinks successfully, to organize a force of marshals at different points where it was supposed there would be a concentration of people sufficient to preserve them from lawlessness and bloodshed, which was expected would follow the opening of the territory. Marshal Jones says: I ordered from my old experienced deputies four to Guthrie, Captain Rarrick, A. S. Pyne, J. O. Sevorens an M. S. Keyes together with three new appointees at that point to protect home seekers against lawlessness from and after that critical moment (April 23) where had been stationed two to three companies of United States troops to preserve peace up to that date, whose function ceased the very moment when the greatest difficulties were likely to occur, and when thousands of home seekers, business men, gamblers and whiskey dealers, who rushed from the incoming train and personal conveyance, within four hours the entire face of the country was dotted with homesteaders, and two or three cities of from 1,000 to 15,000 inhabitants, born today, proved to me the necessity of a respectable number of deputy

marshals.

At Kingfisher I ordered John Walters, D. F. Wyatt, deputies of experience, and a new man, Hal F. Madden. At Darlington, Fort Reno, I made no change, leaving **Jack Stilwell** in charge, who had been a deputy there for three years and at Oklahoma City I ordered S. B. Koeny, A Jones and Ewers White; also had at that point G. E. Thurston, who had resided there for over a year, and who was appointed a marshal six months ago. Koeny had been a deputy for over three years, and Jones was appointed last January. At the request of the officer commanding the troops at Alfred for a marshal to capture horse thieves, I approved a couple of deputies and sent them to that point. They were old experienced deputies from the western district of Texas. I also appointed at the request of an officer of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad, eight of their employees, most of whom were conductors constantly passing though the territory, in anticipation of lawlessness on the trains. The full number of deputies in Oklahoma appointed by me is nineteen, those temporarily appointed to protect the railroad company. I believe a few of my deputies have attempted to file on as many tracts of land in the territory, but I know many of them have not, and while I instructed them no to do so, when they saw themselves surrounded by 500 to 750 persons at Guthrie, and at least one half that number at Oklahoma (City?) awaiting the hour of 12 to come, I do not wonder that some of them, deputies who were serving without pay and only in the interest of good order, took the fever and attempted to get a home. As to myself I never attempted to homestead a foot either in Oklahoma or other territory or state.”

In a postscript Marshal Jones says: “The country is absolutely quiet in Oklahoma, and I am astonished at the false report of bloodshed circulated by the papers. There has not been a single person killed by violence in that territory since the 22nd of April.”

The report is dated May 9. It is understood that the attorney-general is not satisfied with the report, and that he will call upon the marshal for a supplemental report giving the name of each officer who filed a claim and a descriptions of the lands referred to by him, together with an account of the attending circumstances.



San Antonio Daily Light
San Antonio, Texas
Monday, August 23, 1897

A GOOD INDIAN

Hired a Hearse in His Savage Days in Which to Take a Ride

Jack Stilwell, so well known to Kansas plainsmen, is now a sober and well behaved citizen of the little town of Anadarko, in Oklahoma. Stilwell got his first fame by passing through the Indians lines surrounding the position of Forsyth on the Arickaree in 1868, and getting to Fort Wallace for reinforcements. Later he served through Custer's campaigns, and still later appeared as one of the great cards in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.

When Oklahoma was opened to settlement Stilwell was at El Reno, where for a term he was police judge. The lawlessness in the territory took many of her citizens up to Wichita to the sessions of federal court. When Jack Stilwell went up the people of Wichita usually knew that he was there. He, with some friends, was in the habit of livening up the town by various kinds of freakish sport.

On one occasion he hired a hearse and they were going to take a drive over town when the undertaker learned that there was no funeral and vetoed the thing just as Jack was crawling into the body of the vehicle. Jack tried to argue that they had paid for the use of it and they could ride in it if they chose, but they had to give up the ride.

One evening, after they had been in town for several days and were feeling terribly good, Jack and some of his friends were walking down the street when they came to a bright, newly painted barber's pole.

Jack sought out the proprietor, found what the pole cost, and bought it on the spot. Then the crowd hoisted it on their shoulders and went down the street. They had not gone far before they "met up" with a patrolman, who, thinking they had of course, stolen the pole, arrested the crowd and took them to the city bastille. There they put up a small cash bond and were released until morning. When morning came they appeared for trial, and Jack explained that the pole was his and that he had paid for it; that he was going to take it to Oklahoma, where the natives had never seen a barber's pole, and it would be an object of curiosity and wonder. Then he sent for the barber from whom he had purchased the pole, and the result was that they were all released.

Whereupon they shouldered their pole and marched down the street again, to be arrested by another policeman and brought up before the judge again. As soon as the judge saw them, he ordered the officer to let them go. They started out in another direction, only to be arrested for a third time. In the end the chief of police was obliged to issue a general order stating that the pole belonged to Stilwell and he should not be molested. At the same time he intimated to Jack

that they had had sport enough, and it would be well for him to take his pole and return to his native wilds. - Guthrie (Oklahoma Territory) Leader

**The Herald and Torch
Hagerstown, Maryland
Thursday, March 28, 1889**

“COMANCHE JACK”S” RECORD.

In Indian Territory there are employed a large number of brave and hardy men as Deputy United States Marshals who appear periodically in the largest city and most convenient to their working place, so that Wichita is often called upon to entertain visitors of almost as much notoriety as “Billy the Kid,” or Jesse James. Chief among this number is Deputy United States Marshal Jack Stilwell, now stationed at Fort Reno, Indian Territory. Jack or rather “Comanche Jack,” as he is familiarly known, is a handsome looking chap, with a laughing blue eye, curly hair, slightly tinged with gray, for the noted borderman is just fifty years of age, about 5 feet 10 or 11 inches in height, and of a massive build. He is also the acknowledged crack pistol shot of the West, and even in the days of that Kansas cyclone, known as “Wild Bill,” who never missed a shot, Jack Stilwell ranked high.

The number of men killed by Jack is variously estimated at from twenty-five to thirty-one, and it is known that in addition he aided in sending seventeen other men over the valley of death by means of the hangman’s noose. Only a few weeks ago Jack sprang the trap in Wichita, which sent to their death two noted Creek Indian murderers, Jack and Joe Tobler. Even in that country, where “killers” are to be met with every day, “Comanche Jack” Stilwell is a curiosity, and is pointed out to strangers with a strange mixture of awe and pride.

By this it must not be understood that this gallant Deputy United States Marshal is a desperado who goes about glorying in his bloody work. On the contrary, he is rather retiring in his disposition, and only when he has been drinking does he boast of his deeds. When desperate work is to be done or a bad desperado is to be taken, Stilwell is always the man who is detailed to accomplish it. The Oklahoma desperadoes and cut throats all know and fear the intrepid officer, and are aware of the fact that he will get them dead or alive. Many are the traps that have been laid to kill him, but he is as cunning as he is brave, and has always managed to evade the snares that would have caused the death of a less accomplished plainsman.

Brought up as he was among the Comanche Indians, Jack has never exercised the right of franchise, and at the age of fifty has never cast a vote. He speaks

the Comanche and several other Indian languages as well as the Indians do themselves, and during the sitting of the United States Court in Wichita it is always an amusing sight to see the Indians, dressed in their primitive way, following the great "White Chief," as they call Jack, about the streets. He calls them his "menagerie," and says they are a lot of dirt, thieving wretches for the most part, as well as the most accomplished liars in the world.



Below is a transcription of a letter from Jack Stilwell to Scout Sigmund Shlesinger, one of several found in a Jewish archive in Cleveland, Ohio.

S. E. STILWELL
U. S. COMMISSIONER,
CODY, WYO,

August 13th 1899.

Dear Sam,

You did well to put your address on the wrapper you sent me for in moving out to this country we lost a lot of our goods crossing a stream among the rest was your address, so you see I couldn't write you.

Yes, I live out here, but I am not superintendent of anybody's 27,000 acres of land and I doubt if there are 50,000 under cultivation in the whole county and the county is as big as the state of Rhode Island if not bigger, but I am making a living and that is about all. This is the most delightful summer residence in the world, plenty of fish in all the streams, good hunting in the fall, the hottest day we have had

this summer was 81 °.

This is a good stock country and we expect a railroad in sweet by and by. Cody has some large interests here and is trying to get a large ditch for irrigation purposes.

You see we can't even raise a row in this country without irrigation of some kind.

Just at present Fredrick Remington & wife, Mrs. Cody, two daughters and some friends are camping up here in the mountains having a good time.

Sam, I would like to hear from you oftener than I do.

With kind regards from Mrs. Stilwell and my best wishes to you and your family.

I am Truly Yours

Jack

The signature on this transcription is a scan of the signature from the original letter signed by Scout Jack Stilwell.

Pierre Trudeau

Unfortunately, like many of the Scouts, Pierre Trudeau is somewhat of a mystery man, and few facts or details about him are known.

It would appear that he was of French ancestry or more probably, French Canadian, and had probably worked as a trapper in the fur trade earlier in life. He was one of the older scouts that signed on with Colonel Forsyth, according to Stilwell, being about 55 at the time of the battle. Other say he may have been in his mid thirties.

On the evening, following the first day of the battle at Beecher Island, September 17, 1868, he along with Scout Simpson Everett "Jack" Stilwell, who had requested Trudeau to accompany him, crept through the Indian lines and started on the long and dangerous trek back to Fort Wallace.

The first night they only made about three miles. During the next day, they laid in a ravine, overhung by long grass, and listened to the continuing battle on Beecher Island. Due to the number of Indians in the country around the island, they could only travel at night, and then had to use caution, so as to not be silhouetted against the moon as they traveled.

In due time they made their way to their goal, Fort Wallace, arriving late the evening of September 22 or early on the 23rd. Within 2 hours of Stilwell and Trudeau's arrival, Scouts Donovan and Pliley were also at the fort.

By at least two different routes, Scouts Stilwell, Trudeau and Donovan started back for the island. Pliley being too weak and ill to travel.

After the battle and the relief, Scouts Stilwell, Donovan and Pliley, went on to lead normal lives and see the wild West tamed.

What became of Pierre Trudeau? In my opinion, a definite answer is unknown. Several sources indicate that Scout Trudeau did not live more than a year or two after the battle. Indications are that he probably died at or near Fort Sill, Indian Territory (Oklahoma) and is probably buried at or near Fort Sill, but the location of his final resting place is unknown. The following article, excerpted from a larger article, gives an indication of the decline of Scout Jack Stilwell and of Trudeau's demise earlier.

Galveston Daily News
Galveston, Texas
Sunday, September 21, 1902

**Jack Stilwell, Famous Indian Scout, Dying
His Most Daring Achievement
By General Nelson A. Miles**

Written for The News

In the shadow of Eagle Mountain Judge "Jack" Stilwell, famous Indian scout is dying. He is in the grip of Bright's disease, and can not live many weeks longer. Knowing this he moved in from his ranch to be near medical treatment, and while the doctors may prolong his life they can not save it.

Stilwell, known all his life as Jack was the friend and counterpart??? of General Custer, "Wild Bill," "Texas Jack," "Buffalo Bill." General Miles and the Indian fighters, scouts and frontiersmen of the days gone by. When Custer fought his last fight and the resultant fury among the whites stamped out the Indian uprisings, when there was no longer need for the old scout, "Jack" Stilwell retired from the army, from cattle raising and ranching, and studied law.

Another excerpt from the same long article.

Trudeau never recovered from the terrible strain of that journey, but died the next spring at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. "Jack" Stilwell's youth stood him in good stead and he lived to make a name for himself as a lawyer. He was one of the bravest of the many brave men of the western frontier in the days of the Indian uprisings.



Frontier Trivia and Odds and Ends

General Charles Garrison Harker, was killed in the Civil War and Fort Harker, Kansas was later named for him, is buried in the same cemetery as General Louis H. Carpenter. Carpenter was in command of the first relief party to arrive at Beecher Island.

They are both buried at New Trinity Episcopal Church Cemetery, Swedesboro, New Jersey.



Reader Joe Rosa recently wrote asking if I had was aware of a revolver, possibly a .36 cal. Whitney, which was inscribed with Scout Jack Peate's name.

Apparently years ago it found it's way to England. How?? I recall reading or hearing about this, but do not remember where. Does anyone else recall ever reading or hearing about this historic firearm? If so, please drop me a line.



Lt. Fred Beecher's uncle, Reverend Thomas K. Beecher, performed the marriage ceremony when Samuel Langhorne Clemens (aka Mark Twain) was married to Olivia Langdon in February 1870 at Elmira, New York. One of Beecher's aunts was Harriet Beecher Stowe. Most of his uncles were ministers.