

# JOHN A. WIMBERLY

1865-1933

John A. Wimberly, the subject of this sketch, was born in Henry County, Tennessee, April 20, 1865, and died at the Ponca City hospital, Oct. 24, 1933. The immediate cause of his death was pneumonia, although he had been in poor health for several years. He was the youngest of five children, and while he was yet a small boy the family moved to Illinois where he was reared and where he received his education. When he had reached the years of self-assertion the lure of the West induced him to migrate to western Kansas, where he loated and engaged in farming with an older brother in 1882. When the talk of opening Oklahoma to settlement, and when Captain David Payne was carrying on his aggressive campaign, he too, imbibed the boomer spirit but was not old enough at that time to file on public land. When the proclamation of President Harrison was issued opening Oklahoma to settlement, April 22, 1889, young John Wimberly was on the line waiting for the big rush for homesteads. He was a real 89er and was fortunate enough to locate a quarter section of land in what is now Kingfisher county.

He opened up and put in cultivation his homestead and made that his place of residence more than ten years. His home was first in Canadian county but a change of the county lines made him a resident of Kingfisher county. In fact, his farm was near Kingfisher and he was recognized as a Kingfisher man.

He was united in the bonds of marriage to Miss Martha J. Gilhan, Jan. 1, 1890. To this union four children were born, two of whom, with their mother survive. The children living are Miss Martha Wimberly, a school teacher at Webb City, Oklahoma and Mrs. Fern Saxon, of Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

The **Shidler Review** of October 26, states: "The funeral services for John A. Wimberly were conducted at the Presbyterian church in Shidler by Rev. Percy Nickless of Ponca City (the pastor under whom he professed his religious faith, and who baptized him a number of years ago) the auditorium of the church being packed to overflowing by his old friends and neighbors, and huge floral tributes attested the high degree of esteem in which he was held by all who knew him. Following the services the body was taken to Pawhuska where interment was made in the family lot by the side of a daughter, who preceded him across the Great Divide a number of years ago."

But few men were more closely identified with the history and development of the Territory of Oklahoma than John A. Wimberly. When he arrived in '89 he was young, ambitious and public spirited. He took great interest in the political organization of the new Territory and was always identified with the Republican party. At the first election for members of the Territorial legislature, he was elected to the House from Canadian county. Of the two other members from the same county, one was a populist and the other a democrat. Political lines were not closely drawn, personal popularity of the candidate and local interest determined the results. While he was the youngest member of either house, yet he was soon recognized as a man of

practical ideas, and one who was not afraid to express his opinion on any subject that came up for consideration.

In the contest to locate the capital, he was first for Guthrie as against Oklahoma City, but when Kingfisher became an aspirant for the honor of being the capital of Oklahoma, John A. Wimberly became an ardent supporter of his home town.

This, the first Territorial legislature met Aug. 27, 1890 and adjourned Dec. 24, 1890. The Territorial University at Norman, the Central Normal at Edmond, and the Agricultural & Mechanical College at Stillwater were established and located at this session of the legislature. Gov. Geo. W. Steele signed all bills creating these educational institutions, Dec. 24, 1890. Complying with the provisions of the bill locating the A. & M. College the Governor appointed John A. Wimberly, R. J. Barker, Amos Ewing, and Rev. J. P. Lane as the Board of Regents for the Agricultural and Mechanical College. These nominations were confirmed the same day by the Territorial Council. The records show that the Board was organized by the election of R. J. Barker, President and Secretary, and Amos Ewing, Treasurer.

The record also reads: "John A. Wimberly was elected superintendent of buildings on Nov. 25, 1891, with power to contract in the name of the Board of Regents, for the Director of the Experimental station, a residence, not to exceed a cost of \$1,300.00; a laboratory not to exceed \$700.00. He was also delegated by the Board to build all other buildings and sheds needed in starting the Experimental station. Mr. Wimberly took immediate charge and supervision of all the first buildings erected out of the very meager funds available at that time. He was also on the committee with J. P. Lane that purchased the first live stock for that institution. After serving two years on the Board he resigned and returned to his home in Kingfisher county.

He was elected to the second legislature from the 5th district, which was in Kingfisher county. This legislature met in Guthrie Jan. 1893. The experience that he had gained while a member of the first legislature and the information he had acquired concerning the Territory's new educational institutions made him a valuable member of the second legislature.

He continued to make his residence in Kingfisher county until the opening of the Kiowa and Comanche reservation. In 1902 Gov. Ferguson appointed him to the office of county commissioner of Caddo county, the other members of the first board of commissioners of Caddo being C. A. Cleveland and Frank Farwell. He resided at Anadarko for about three years and then moved to Pawhuska in Osage county, where he made his home for many years. He was not only in the real estate business but owned and operated a cattle ranch not far from that town. Mr. Wimberly had been in poor health for some time and had not been actively engaged in business for several years.

The writer served with John Wimberly in both the first and second territorial legislatures and at that time knew him intimately. While we were often on opposite sides in controversies when arguments became acrimonious, yet, at no time did I have cause to doubt John Wimberly's good faith and honesty of purpose.

In later years he had no ambition to be identified with state-wide affairs. He was content to live within the bounds of his own community and to have the love and respect of his neighbors. The encomiums and

words of kindness spoken of him by the newspapers of Osage county upon his departure show the respect and esteem in which he was held by those who knew him best.

Although the writer has seen but little of him in recent years, yet, he always regarded John Wimberly as a personal friend. Before the death of John A. Wimberly there were three members of the House of Representatives who served in the first Territorial legislature living; the other two members being the writer and Dr. E. R. Long, who represented Beaver county, and is now a resident of El Reno.

—Dan W. Peery.

## VICTOR M. LOCKE, Sr.

(1844-1929)

Born August 2, 1844, near Ten Mile Stand, Meigs County, Tennessee; died January 7, 1929, and buried in the family burying ground near Antlers, Oklahoma; son of Benjamin F. Locke and Mary (Sharp) Locke, both natives of Virginia and coming to Tennessee prior to the Civil War, the former dying in 1854 and the latter in 1870; farming people of respectability.

Victor M. Locke, Sr., was reared upon the old family homestead where he was born, having only such educational advantages as the common schools of that day afforded. At the beginning of the Civil War, when only fifteen years of age, on account of his youth, not being permitted to enlist, he was attached to the Third Tennessee Cavalry of the Confederate Army. On the Confederate rolls in the Adjutant General's office, War Department, Washington, D. C., his name appears on the muster roll of a detachment of paroled and exchanged prisoners at Camp Lee, near Richmond, Virginia, dated March 28, 1865, described as a private of Company I, 3rd Tennessee Cavalry, Confederate States Army, having enlisted at Ten Miles Stand, Tennessee. He was in the battles of Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, and Missionary Ridge, Tennessee, Ringgold Gap, Dallas, Kenesaw Mountain, and Peach Tree Creek, Georgia. Captured at the latter place July 22, 1864, and exchanged on the James River, Virginia, three weeks before evacuation of Petersburg, Virginia. Reentered Confederate service taking part in the siege of Petersburg. Upon withdrawal of Army of Northern Virginia, fought at the Battle of Five Forks and not being among those who surrendered at Appomattox Court House, was paroled at Kingston, Georgia, May 15, 1865.<sup>1</sup>

He came to the Choctaw Nation February 1, 1866, where he engaged in herding cattle and later clerking in stores at Lukfata and Doaksville. In 1870 he was married to Miss Susan Priscilla McKinney, daughter of Thompson McKinney, a prominent member of the Choctaw Tribe, and holding many public offices under said government. The following children survive: Victor M. Locke, Jr., Mrs. Charles E. Archer and Edwin S. Locke,—his wife having preceded him in death.

<sup>1</sup>History of Indian Territory, by Lewis Publishing Co., New York and Chicago, 1901, pp. 778-780; Victor M. Locke, Jr.

Whilst he resided at Doaksville he was Clerk of the Circuit Court of Towson County, Choctaw Nation. He also held the office of superintendent of public schools of said nation. About 1879 he embarked in the mercantile business on his own account. In 1887 establishing a store at Antlers, he enjoyed success from the beginning. His trade rapidly and constantly increased until he had one of the largest mercantile establishments in that section of the nation, carrying an extensive stock. In 1897 he retired from the mercantile business. His wife was a relative of Ex-Governor Thompson McKinney, her father being of the same name. He was a friend of the Indian and exercised great influence on local Indian affairs. In 1890 he was a supporter of the late Jacob Jackson in his race against the late Wlison M. Jones for Governor of the Choctaw Nation, out of which grew what was known as the Locke-Jones war. He was a brave and constant friend and adherent of any cause that he espoused.

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## JOSEPH GREEN RALLS

(1864-1933)

Born June 4, 1864, near Carmi, White County, Illinois, son of Henry Ralls and Sarah (Williams) Ralls, and died at Atoka, Oklahoma, November 25, 1933, where he is buried. His father, Henry Ralls, born in North Carolina, moved in childhood with his parents to Alabama. Whilst a young man Henry Ralls migrated to White County, Illinois, where he met and married Sarah Williams, the oldest child of Charles and Polly Williams, both Kentuckians. Soon after his marriage he purchased a farm near Carmi in said county, on which all of his children were born and reared to maturity. One son Nathaniel W. Ralls now owns and lives on the old homestead. Another brother, Judge George T. Ralls, of Coalgate, Oklahoma also survives. The mother was born in Kentucky but whilst a child her parents moved to White county, Illinois, where they lived until their death. From this family sprang the late J. Robert Williams, formerly a member of the Congress of the United States from the Twentieth Congressional District of Illinois. The Ralls family is of English extraction. In Green's History of the English People Colonel Ralls is mentioned as a faithful defender of the rights of the English people. The father of said Henry Ralls was Robert Ralls, a soldier on the side of the United States in the War of 1812.

Joseph Green Ralls having attended local schools in White county, Illinois, in 1883 entered the Southern Illinois College at Endfield, Illinois, attending for two years, and in 1885 entered the National Normal University of Lebanon, Ohio, graduating there receiving degrees of Bachelor of Science on Aug. 19, 1887, and of Bachelor of Laws on Aug. 19, 1888, and was admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court of the Staate of Ohio. In the same month he located at Fort Smith, Arkansas, being admitted to the bar in Arkansas, and there engaged in the practice of the law. On the passage of the Congress of the United States, on March 1, 1889, of an act establishing a United States Court in Indian Territory he immediately located at Muskogee, Indian Territory, to engage in the practice of the law. On April 2, 1889, the day after which said court was organized, the following attorneys were admitted to the bar, the same being the first admissions to said bar and all being admitted at the same sitting and at the same time subscribed



the roll as follows: Z. T. Waldron, D. Stewart Elliott, Townsend N. Foster, Napoleon B. Maxey, Walter A. Ledbetter, R. E. Jackson, Ridge Paschel, Sanford O. Hinds, E. G. Boudinott, Preston S. Lester, **Joseph G. Ralls**, Robert L. Owen, J. H. Crichton, W. D. Crawford, G. W. Pasco, S. S. Fears, James H. Ackin, D. M. Wisdom and W. C. Jackson. The records of said court show that Ralls & Crawford then were partners. In 1891 Joseph G. Ralls was appointed United States Commissioner for said court at Atoka in the Choctaw Nation, the first case on his docket being *United States v. Felix Moore*, filed Feb. 21, 1891.

On February 9th, 1893, Joseph G. Ralls and Eva Standley, daughter of Captain J. S. Standley<sup>1</sup> were married, ten children being born to said marriage. The widow Mrs. Eva Standley Ralls, of Atoka, Oklahoma, and the following children survive: Joseph G. Ralls, Jr., attorney at law, Atoka, Oklahoma; Mrs. Sara Presson of Canadian and Norman, Oklahoma; Thomas S. Ralls, Miss Claude Ralls and Miss Elizabeth Ralls all of Atoka, Oklahoma, and the following preceded him in death: Lewis Henry, born Nov. 22, 1900, died March 22, 1917; John, born June 28, 1914, died Oct. 10, 1915; Clara, born Aug. 3, 1905, died Jan. 26, 1912; Ann Elizabeth, died in infancy; James, born Mar. 23, 1895, died in infancy; Adele, born Jan. 17, 1902, died in infancy.

Judge Joseph G. Ralls resigning as United States Commissioner in the summer of 1893 engaged in the practice of the law at Atoka, continuously for a period of over forty years until his death. During all that period he was one of the attorneys for the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway Company. In April 1895 his brother, Judge George T. Ralls removed from Muskogee, and locating at Atoka joined him in the practice of the law under the firm name of Ralls & Ralls, which continued until June 16, 1897, when the latter was appointed United States Commissioner, which position he held until in 1905, when resigning he again joined his brother in the practice of the law, which continued until 1908, when he removed to Coalgate, Oklahoma, where he engaged in the practice of the law, his brother Joseph G. Ralls continuing at Atoka the practice alone until Mar. 16, 1928, when his son Joseph G. Ralls, Jr., became associated with him in the practice of the law which continued until his death.

In 1904 Joseph G. Ralls, among others, participated in the organization of a public school system in the town and community of Atoka, being elected and serving as president of the first school board for said town. During his residence there in one way or another he took a part in the encouragement of local schools. In 1915 he was appointed by the governor of the state as a member of the State Board of Education, ex officio Board of Regents for the Oklahoma State University and all state colleges and state schools except the A. & M. College, continuing in that capacity for four years, rendering capable, effective and faithful service.

He was a charter member of the Indian Territory Bar Association, organized at McAlester, February 22, 1900, being selected as one of the six members of its first council, and as chairman of the committee of three of the court division at Atoka "in examination of applicants for admission to the bar, and further for the purpose of reporting to the president any alleged violation of professional ethics on the part of any lawyer practicing at said bar." He remained as chairman of such committee until the admission of Indian Territory as a part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Oklahoma Chronicles Vol. 10 pp. 614-617.

State of Oklahoma. At the fifth annual session of the Indian Territory Bar Association, held at McAlester, Indian Territory, June 14th and 15th, 1904, Joseph G. Ralls was elected as president of said association. The executive committee of said bar association, embracing himself as chairman, W. A. Ledbetter, E. J. Fannin, R. L. Williams, F. H. Kellog, R. E. Jackson and W. H. Kornegay, met with a like committee on the part of the Oklahoma Territory Bar Association at Oklahoma City on September 17, 1904, when a plan for consolidation of the two associations was agreed upon, said amalgamation taking place at a meeting held at Shawnee during the last week of December, 1904. Immediately after statehood Joseph G. Ralls was elected chairman of the Bar Association of Atoka County and continued in that capacity until his death. During all that period he was an active member of the Oklahoma State Bar Association. In 1912 he was appointed by the Supreme Court of the State of Oklahoma as a member at large of the State Bar Commission, continuing in that position for a number of years until he resigned. He was one of the great and leading lawyers of the state. He was appointed by the United States District Court, with the consent and approval of the attorneys engaged on both sides in litigation, as special master, in cases of great importance. He also served in cases, by appointment, as special Justice of the Supreme Court. He was not only a diligent lawyer as to detail and fact but also diligent, accurate and capable as to conclusions of law. His entire professional career was characterized with proper regard for ethics. His earthly career as an honorable and upright attorney of the bar has come to a close.

In the spring of 1893 he became a member of a Blue Lodge of Masonry (Lodge No. 4, A. F. & A. M. at Atoka) and at the time of his death was a life member of said Lodge, under whose auspices his sistory at McAlester, and of Bedouin Temple (Shriner) at Muskogee, and the Order of Eastern Star, and also of Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.

Like all human beings he had his frailties but whatever they were they related only to himself. He came to Indian Territory at the first gesture toward the opening of the country to white settlement. He became a member of the Choctaw tribe by marriage. During all these years he was a forward looking man, rendering community service required of a good citizen. Whilst a life long Republican yet he was liberal in his views. Occasionally he would change his registration to that of a Democrat in order to support a long time friend in party primaries, but when the primary and general election was over he would change his registration back, saying that he hadn't changed his politics, he had just shifted his registration to support a friend. In 1906 he was nominated by the Republicans in the Atoka constitutional delegate district (No. 105) as a Republican candidate, making an unsuccessful campaign on the Republican ticket in a Democratic district, receiving said nomination as a recognition that he was the strongest candidate of his party in the district. An indulgent and loving husband and father and a faithful friend has crossed the river of death.

—R. L. WILLIAMS.

## SAMPSON THEOPILUS LANE.

(1839-1933)

Son of Sampson H. Lane and Lucy Ann (Winfield) Lane, born on a plantation in Fayette County, Tennessee, about fifty miles east of Memphis, on September 26, 1839, and died February 28, 1933, at Poteau, LeFlore County, Oklahoma, buried there in Oakland cemetery. His father dying when he was about one year old, when he reached the age of nine his grandfather Sampson Lane prevailed upon his mother to permit the boy to live with him, where he was provided with a private tutor until his grandfather died in 1852. At the age of fourteen years he entered LaGrange College, located in Franklin County, Alabama, which in 1855 was changed to LaGrange College and Military Academy, and in 1860 to the LaGrange Military Academy, the buildings of which on April 28, 1863, were burned by Federal Cavalry under command of Colonel Florence M. Cornye.<sup>1</sup> He also attended Emory & Birmingham Southern College Bulletin, Vol. 26, No. 6 (Nov. 1933) issue, p. 23. Henry and Randolph-Macon Colleges, and the University of Virginia.

Sampson Theophilus Lane, as S. T. Lane, enlisted May 16, 1861, at Memphis, Tennessee, as a private in Co. A, 7th (Duckworth's) Tennessee Cavalry, C. S. A., formerly known as Capt. T. H. Logwood's Company (Memphis Light Dragoons), 1st Tennessee Cavalry, C. S. A. He was captured near Memphis, Tennessee, October 29, 1863; imprisoned at Alton Military Prison, Illinois, and at Fort Delaware, Delaware, at which place he was released on June 11, 1865. As a brave soldier he participated on the side of the Confederacy in the following battles: Cow Skin Prairie, Bell Mont, Lockridge Mill, Farmington, Shiloh, Iuka, Oxford, Holly Springs, Davis' Mill, Middleton, Okalona, Black River, Jackson, Yazoo, and Chickamauga.

After the war returning to Memphis he engaged in the practice of the law and farming. He joined the Ku Klux Klan under General Forrest and remained a member until it was disbanded by General Forrest, who stated it having served its purpose, that it was no longer needed.

In 1871 he was licensed by the Methodist Episcopal Church South at Memphis, Tennessee, as a preacher of the Gospel and in 1874 entered into the ministry as an itinerant preacher, being assigned to a pastorate at Puducah, Kentucky. On May 25th, 1875, he was married to Miss Sallie Bland Parham at Germantown, Tennessee, where having taken a location from the annual conference, he taught school for many years. In 1888 he removed to Little Rock, Arkansas, later teaching school at Atkins and Dardanelle. Afterwards he was superintendent of a Methodist District school located at Booneville, Arkansas, continuing in that capacity for a number of years. Many boys from Indian Territory attended this school and through them he had occasion to visit their homes, coming in direct contact with the people of the Choctaw Nation. This occasioned his removal to Poteau on August 6, 1900. Preaching at various points in what is now LeFlore and Haskell Counties and teaching school at Whitefield, Shady Point, and LeFlore, he retained his residence during all that time at Poteau. He served several terms as Justice of the Peace in the city of Poteau, resigning therefrom in 1932, a short time before he was 93 years of age. From 1912 to 1922 he was scout master of the boy scouts, retiring in the latter year, being the oldest scout master in the world. He was active in the organization

of the Confederate Veterans, holding places of honor. Retaining his mental and physical strength, seldom having occasion to use a cane in walking or glasses with which to read, he taught a Sunday School class in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Poteau until within a few days of his death, endeavoring at all times to walk in the steps of his Master and to be ready for the final summons.

He left surviving his widow, Sallie (Parham) Lane, and two daughters, Mrs. H. J. (Linda) Fowler of Poteau, Oklahoma, and Mrs. M. E. (Vera) Turner of Eufaula, Oklahoma, another daughter Mrs. R. E. (Pat) Patrick, preceding him in death.<sup>2</sup> His available genealogy <sup>2</sup>Poteau News, March 2, 1933.

is as follows: His father, Sampson H. Lane, born April 18, 1809, killed accidentally on Christmas day, 1842, and mother, Lucy Ann Windfield, daughter of Joel Windfield and Francis (Shands) Windfield, were married in Sussex County, Virginia, May 10, 1838; his grandfather, Sampson Lane, born in 1772, Charles City County, Virginia, died at Memphis, Tennessee, December 1852, was married to Mary (Thomas) Allen, who was born in Orange County, Virginia, in 1792, the marriage taking place in Elbert County, Georgia, she dying in Desoto County, Mississippi in August 1857; his greatgrandfather, William Lane, born in Charles City County, Virginia, in 1757, serving in the colonial army, was married to Nancy Healey, who was born in Charles City County, Virginia. The Lane family coming from England settled in the colony of Virginia at an early date.

Believing in and living the simple life, and honest and courageous in thought, speech and act, with no sordid ambition for wealth or notoriety—an exemplification of a Southern Gentleman of the Old School, he lived a long and useful life.

—R. L. WILLIAMS.



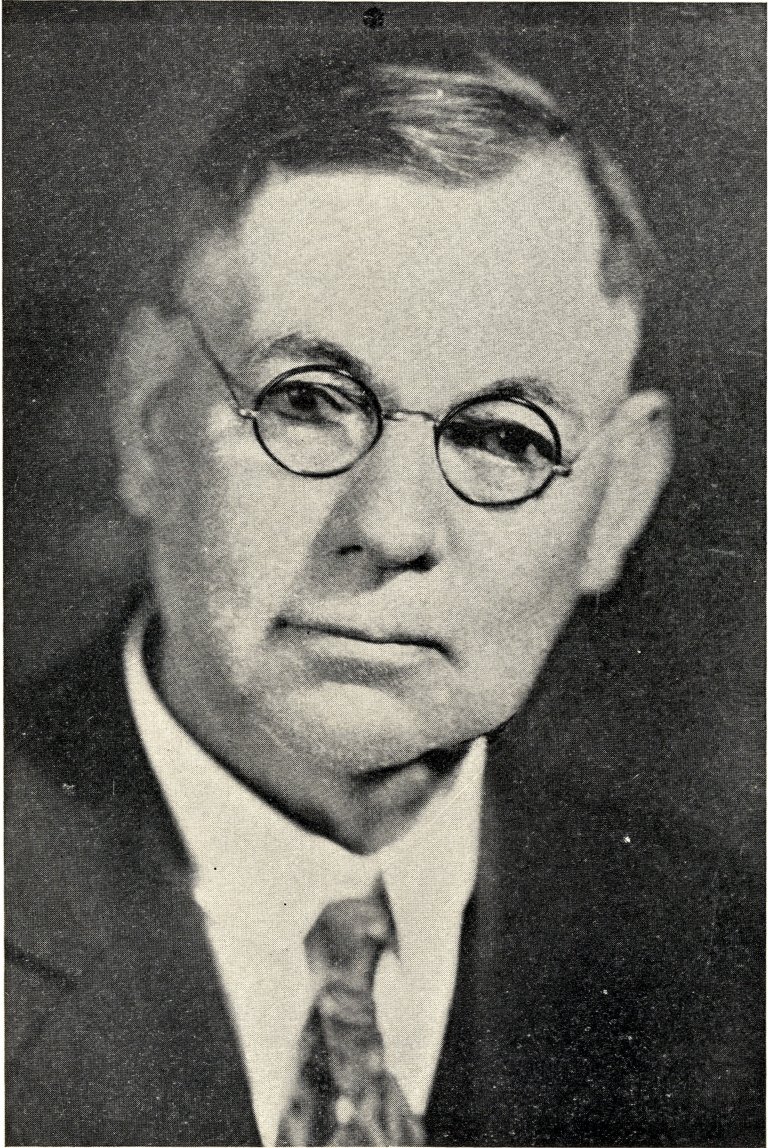
JOHN A. WIMBERLEY





V. M. LOCKE





JOSEPH GREEN RALLS  
ATOKA, OKLA.





SAMPSON THEOPILUS LANE  
POTEAU, OKLAHOMA