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JAMES CARSON JAMISON 1830-1916

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James Carson Jamison, born near village of Paynesville, Pike County, Mo., Sept. 30, 1830, died at Guthrie, Okla., Nov. 19, 1916, with interment at Clarksville, Mo., was son of John Cowden Jamison, of Scotch-Irish descent, and his wife, Margaret Jamison, a distant relative. His father, from Mecklenburg County, N. C., in 1827, settled on a tract of wild land on south side of Guinn's Creek, three miles southeast of Paynesville, in what was known as the "Jamison Settlement." An uncle, whose name was also James Carson Jamison, and his sons, John, Adam, Samuel, Joseph and James took up practically all the wild land on both sides of the creek from Smith's Mill to the south where it spread over the prairie. When five years old, his father acquired and moved to a tract of land on Sulphur Creek near Louisville, Mo.

After the death of the father and mother, the children gave up the farm, each finding a home as best they could. When 14 years old, a cousin by the name of J. Carson Jamison offered him a home with him and there he lived, three miles east of Paynesville, attending the district school in winter and working on the farm in spring and summer until 1848.

In the spring of 1849 he left for California with the James Brown party, consisting of Brown and wife, son and daughter, and a colored boy and girl, and Enoch Emerson, Jeff Huntsman, Alfred Jamison, Thomas Morris, a man named Sperry, and James (Rockey) McPike, author of the expression, "I'm bound for California, if the rope don't break," and himself. The party crossed the Missouri river five miles above St. Joseph on April 5, 1849, and he arrived in Sacramento on October 9, 1849, having at Fort Kearney left the Brown party and joined the Wisconsin Star Company, which was under the leadership of Capt. W. C. Monroe, a Missouri River steamboat man, and a nephew of Rev. Andrew Monroe, and among whom was Lucius Fairchild¹, later a general in the U. S. Army during the Civil War, and Governor of the state of Wisconsin, and Victor Seaman, the skipper who commanded the vessel upon which Meiggs, after defaulting as comptroller of the city of San Francisco, escaped to South America.

James Carson Jamison in 1850 was in the mining camps in California of "Rough and Ready," in Nevada County, and at Todd's Valley, in Placer County, in the summer and fall, and

¹ *History of Oklahoma*, p. 239, by Foreman.

paid a dollar in gold dust for a single copy of a newspaper, measured by pinch. That is what the thumb and forefinger could hold between them when pressed together, an expert getting good measure, and in some instances a copy of a newspaper was passed on to another party for a dollar and then on to others to get the news from back East. Frequently he walked afoot ten miles to meet the stage coach to get *The Republican*, a St. Louis newspaper, and paid a dollar for an issue.²

In December, 1855, after having spent six years in California, he left San Francisco on the old steamship, *Sierra Nevada*, Capt. Blethen commanding, and on December 5, 1855, joined William Walker³ in Nicaragua⁴, where, having been made a lieutenant in the great filibuster's army, was severely wounded on April 11, 1856 at the first battle of Rivas, and later promoted to the captaincy of his company on account of gallant service in action and was its commander in subsequent engagements.

From 1855 to 1857 in Nicaragua were three years of desperate battles, hairbreadth escapes from implacable and bloodthirsty enemies, sanguinary reprisals, wounds, dancing with dark-eyed Spanish señoritas, drinking of much red wine abundant in that country, and an almost daily interpretation of the code duello to satisfy the hot-blooded Americans. General Walker was not opposed to duelling, having fought many himself, yet at one time so many of his officers were incapacitated by wounds received in this manner that the efficiency of his command in the field was seriously threatened. Not forbidding duelling, but adopting tactics no less effective, a meeting between two officers had been arranged on the strand at San Juan del Sur, Jamison being one of the seconds. The principals had taken position and were waiting for the "One, Two, Three—Fire!" when an officer, his sword flashing in the sun, was seen approaching rapidly on horseback. The duelling party waited to learn his mission. Without dismounting, the officer said: "Gentlemen, General Walker presents his compliments, and directs me to say that the survivor or survivors of this duel will be shot." The cessation of duelling for awhile followed.

In the second battle of Rivas, Captain Jamison, having fallen severely wounded with a rifle ball in the calf of his right leg, was lodged in a cathedral, used temporarily as a hospital. From pain and exhaustion he sank into slumber, to be awakened by rifle balls striking the cathedral bell. He found that Walker's army was retreating, and that if he did not escape he would be shot as soon as discovered. Dragging himself out of the cathedral in his wounded condition, he fled through a jungle of cactus, his body lacerated with innumerable injuries, until he found a pony

² St. Louis (Mo.) *Republic*, July 8, 1908.

³ *My Day*, Reminiscences of a Long Life, by Mrs. Roger A. Pryor, p. 121.

⁴ Vol. 20, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, June, p. 157.

on which he made his escape and rejoined his comrades. This was not the only wound received by him, and in later years when questioned about other wounds he would say that they were the souvenirs of a too truculent youth, and should be forgotten. High up in each leg, near his body, and close to the femoral artery, General Jamison carried two big leaden balls. Near his heart was a long scar made by a bullet that diverted from its straight course and ricocheted along his ribs. A crease in his skull that would part his hair exactly in the middle marked the course of another bullet that came near ending his life. Under his left jaw was a scar made by a machete in the hands of a desperate Mexican in the California goldfields. Backed against a wall, the Mexican aimed a blow to strike off his head, and would have succeeded had not Jamison thrown his head back as far as he could. There was a torrent of blood, but the Missourian's head was still on his shoulders, and his companions ran to his rescue and put the Mexican permanently out of the mining business.

He had a brother, Alexander Jackson Jamison, who also was in California, and the following sisters: Mrs. Margaret Jennings of San Jose, California, Mrs. Mary Spires of Montgomery City, Mo., and Mrs. Katherine Brown of Modesto, Mo.

His wife's mother, Mrs. Margaret White, died at his residence at Jefferson City on January 14, 1888, whilst he was Adjutant General of that State. James Madison White, a brother of his wife, at the age of 80 years, died at his and his sister's (Mrs. J. C. Jamison's) home on December 20, 1929 in Rogers, Ark., and was buried at Clarksville, Mo. His wife, Mrs. Sarah Ann Jamison, 87 years old, died on Feb. 5, 1930 at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Galen Crow, who was married to Galen Crow at Guthrie, Okla., on Oct. 18, at Rogers, Ark., 1905, and was also buried at Clarksville, Mo.

General Jamison returned to Pike County from Nicaragua as the Civil War was impending, and when it did come he joined the fortunes of the South and was given a captain's commission in a Missouri regiment of the Confederate States Army. His health had been greatly impaired by service in Nicaragua, and after engaging in the Battle of Lexington in Missouri was taken prisoner by the enemy and confined for a long period in a number of federal strongholds. One of his severest wounds was received in battle in the Civil War.

Whilst on parole from his war prison confinement he married on June 10, 1862, Miss Sarah Ann White of Clarksville, Mo., and when peace was restored engaged in the newspaper business in Pike County, Mo., and at different times owned newspapers at Clarksville, Bowling Green and Louisiana, Mo.

In 1867, with William S. Pepper, he bought and published the Clarksville Sentinel, which he later sold to Lemuel Welch, and in 1874, with W. B. Carlisle, purchased the Riverside Press

and in 1880 sold it to Champ Clark and going to Colorado for a rest returned in July of that year and bought the Bowling Green Express, changing its name to the Times, and the same year sold it to W. F. Mayhall, and later repurchased the Riverside Press at Louisiana, Mo., and in April, 1885 sold same to W. O. Gray.

Always actively interested in public affairs, when Gen. John S. Marmaduke became governor of Missouri, he was appointed Adjutant General of the state. Great industrial unrest developed, and as Adjutant General, he rendered much service to the public in controlling with state troops disorders at railroad shops at Hannibal in 1885 and 1886, and among coal miners at Bevier, and suppressing disturbances among the Bald Knobbers in Southern Missouri.⁵

After Governor Marmaduke's death, General Jamison was continued as Adjutant General under Governor Morehouse, who as Lieutenant Governor succeeded to the Governorship, being Adjutant General from 1885 to 1889.

With him the spirit of adventure still existed. Oklahoma being opened to settlement on April 22, 1889, he came with its pioneer homeseekers. Immediately after the opening, under the provisional government, he was a member of Arbitration Board No. 1 at Guthrie, and also served as City Councilman.

After organization of the territorial government, under its Enabling act passed by Congress May 2, 1890, he was elected and served a term as Justice of the Peace, and during the campaign in 1892 published the Guthrie Democrat.

Governor W. C. Renfrow appointed him Adjutant General of Oklahoma Territory, and as such he organized Oklahoma's first regiment of Militia, and in that early day was potent in preserving order, and at the close of that administration in 1897 retired to his farm near Guthrie and lived the life of a country gentlemen of the old school, dispensing hospitality as he had known it in his native Missouri.

In contrast to the activities of his early life, this brave, honest and chivalrous man's later years were tenderly associated with nature's gentlest creatures, the birds. He wrote pages of newspaper letters pleading for their care and protection, and for the enactment of laws under which they might find shelter, and was a moving cause in the organization of the first state Audubon society. Declining the honor of the active office as its first President, he was made its honorary President. Since that time the observance of bird day has been introduced into the public schools of the state of Oklahoma.

Among his relics was one of the silver medals struck in San Francisco for the American survivors of the bloody second battle

⁵ Vol. 17, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 1939, p. 42.

of Rivas.⁶ On one side is an "American Phalanx," then in an argent field appear six mountain peaks and the rising sun, and last, in a field of blue: "Reps. Nicaragua. 1855-6-7." On the reverse side is an inscription showing the name of the owner and his rank in Walker's Army.

The survivors of Walker's first expedition to Nicaragua organized an association, and held annual meetings in California, the last on April 11, 1911 at Monrovia, California, with only three surviving members (in picture): General Jamison (left), Major John M. Baldwin (center), Walker's Judge Advocate, and Col. William K. Rogers of Berkley (right).⁷ This was the last meeting of the association, but General Jamison was the last to pass away. (See his picture taken when Adjutant General of Missouri.)

He stood six feet in his stockings and weighed as a young man 170 pounds. When over 80 years of age, there shone in his face the same indomitable courage that distinguished him in other days, the fire of bravery and daring not having faded from his blue eyes. In repose his expression was one of resolution and determination, beginning at the tip of his iron-like brow and extending to the line where his mane of white hair began mantling his brows. There was something lion-like in his bearing and one would feel that it was unwise and dangerous to provoke his anger, yet with a smile he would extend his hand in greeting, his face indicating kindness.

These men to whom these medals after lapse of years were awarded still heard the songs of the troubadors—that floated to the shores of the Carolinas in other centuries from lands across the sea, and exemplified such almost forgotten lines as from Ticker's Virginians of the Valley:

"The knightliest of the Knightly race,
That since the days of old,
Have kept the lamp of chivalry
Alight in hearts of gold.
The kindliest of the kindly band
That rarely hating ease!
Yet rode with Raleigh round the land,
With Smith around the seas.

Who climbed the blue embattled hills
Against uncounted foes,
And planted there, in valleys fair,
The lily and the rose!
Whose fragrance lives in many lands
Whose beauty stars the earth:
And lights the hearth of happy homes
With loveliness and worth!"

⁶ Presented by his daughter, Mrs. Galen Crow, of Rogers, Ark., to the Oklahoma Historical Society, and now in its museum.

⁷ *With Walker in Nicaragua*, by General Jamison, Publishers, E. W. Stephens Co., Columbia, Mo., 1909.