

WILLIAM POLLOCK: PAWNEE INDIAN, ARTIST AND ROUGH RIDER

By Frank F. Finney

William Pollock, a full blood Pawnee Indian came to manhood in that difficult period when the reservations were being broken up and the Indians were taking allotments and becoming full-fledged United States citizens. At the age of 22, under the Congressional Act of March 3, 1893, he received his allotment comprising the Northeast quarter of Section 35-Township 22, Range 4E, about three miles west of the Pawnee Agency. Unlike most of the older Indians, this young Pawnee whole heartedly accepted the white man's ways.

He received the Pawnee name of Tay-loo-wah-ah-who as a child, and at the agency school became William Pollock, a namesake of an official in the Indian service and who was at one time agent for the Osages at Pawhuska. From the agency school he advanced to the Haskell Institute at Lawrence, Kansas, where he became an outstanding student. He played in the band but was preeminently gifted as an artist and in this realm was a predecessor of his fellow tribesman, Acee Blue Eagle, the famous artist of the present day.

As an artist, he is best remembered by those of us who lived at the Pawnee agency, by his paintings on wagons used by the Indians. These small Studebaker wagons which were assembled at the Haskell school and sent to the Indians, bore his paintings of Indian portraits on the side-boards and spread-eagles on the end-gates. His ability as an artist began to be recognized on a wider scale when some of his work was exhibited at the Smithsonian Institute at Washington.

During the time our family lived at the Pawnee Agency and my father and J. H. Sherburne had the store there, Pollock was employed in the Agent's office. I remember him as being tall, straight and athletic. One day he was in the store and my father said, "Pollock, draw me a picture", and handed him a piece of wrapping paper. The young artist obliged and sketched an Indian head adorned with a war-bonnet.

Pollock was destined to be a warrior with the courage of his fighting forebears, but went into battle with his hair cut short and without their paint and war bonnets. Although a warlike tribe, the Pawnees had ever been friends and allies of the United States Government. Soon after General Custer's command was wiped out on the Little Big Horn, Major Frank North came to the Pawnee Agency to enlist Indian scouts to fight in General Crook's punitive expedition being organized against the Sioux. Major North was highly

thought of by the Pawnees and many of them had formerly served as scouts under his direction. My father, who then resided at the Osage Agency recorded in his journal that Major North passed through the Agency with a company of about one hundred Pawnee Indians on their way to Coffeyville, Kansas, to entrain for the Northwest. He said that Major North was authorized to enlist only one hundred men, but so eager were the Pawnees to fight their old enemies, that many of those left behind after the quota was filled, straggled through the Agency on foot with a few pack ponies, trying to catch up with Major North and his band in the hopes that they would still be accepted.

When the Spanish-American war became imminent, Pollock was among the first to volunteer. As a member of the 1st Volunteer Cavalry, (Roosevelt's Rough Riders), he fought in the battles of Las Guasimas, San Juan Hill and Santiago with distinction and won special commendation from Col. Theodore Roosevelt. In his book, "The Rough Riders", Roosevelt wrote, "Among the men I noticed leading the charges and always nearest the enemy, were Pawnee Pollock, Simpson of Texas and Dudley Dean."

Further along in his book and at more length, Roosevelt said:

One of the gamest fighters and best soldiers in the regiment was Pollock a full-blooded Pawnee. He had been educated, like most of the other Indians, at one of those admirable Indian schools which have added so much to the total of the small credit account with which the White race balances the unpleasant debit account of its dealings with the Red. Pollock was a solitary fellow—an excellent penman, much given to drawing pictures. When we got to Santiago he developed into a regimental clerk. I never suspected him in having a sense of humor until one day, at the end of our stay in Cuba as he was sitting in the Adjutant's tent working over the returns, there turned up a trooper of the First who had been acting as a barber. Eying him with immovable face, Pollock asked, in a guttural voice, "Do you cut hair?" The man answered, "Yes"; and Pollock continued, "Then you had better cut mine," muttering, in an explanatory soliloquy, "Don't want to wear mine long like a wild Indian when I am in a civilized warfare."

Billy McGinty, Roosevelt's personal orderly, who still lives in Ripley, Oklahoma, served for a time with Pollock in Troop "D." He says, "Bill Pollock was a fine fellow. He drew pictures around the camp a lot. A braver man never wore the American uniform. In one battle he took off his shirt and lost it. I found another one for him to keep him out of trouble."

Edward F. Loughmiller, another member of troop "D" and a comrade of Pollock, lives in Oklahoma City. He says, "In an engagement the bullets were flying fast and everyone was lying down excepting Pollock who was standing behind a tree. Our Lieutenant, Dave Goodrich of the auto tire family, tried to get him and order him to get down, but the fire became too hot for him to reach him and he decided to let the Indian fight in his own way. Goodrich said Pollock was firing deliberately and making every shot count."

Pollock survived the Mauser bullets and returned to his people safely. His sojourn with them was brief after the war ended, and he died of pneumonia at Pawnee in March, 1899. Not long before his fatal illness, he had signed a contract to join Buffalo Bill's show for a tour of the country and appearances in Madison Square Garden in New York.

He was buried with military honors in the Pawnee cemetery and the Pawnee Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars was named for him. The life of Pawnee William Pollock was short but long enough for him to leave a proud and honorable record in the annals of Oklahoma and his tribe.