

Biographical Sketch of Early-Day Pioneer, Mrs. Elizabeth Hampton

by S. A. D. Easterling, for the *Aline Chronoscope*

A three-part series of articles published bi-weekly
in the *Aline Chronoscope*, a weekly newspaper
in Alfalfa county, Oklahoma

Transcribed from microfilm at the Oklahoma Historical Society,
Oklahoma City, by Rodney C. Murrow, 9 August 1973.
Spelling and punctuation remain as they appear in the original documents.

Part One, Friday May 6, 1921

I will try and tell you a little more about Mrs. Hampton, our aged friend. Her maiden name was Clark, and she was born and reared near Tuscumbia, Miller county, Missouri.

She was first married to William Shearly, who spent much of his time in railroad work. To this union four children were born, three girls and one son. Mr. Shearly was murdered by a drunken man, who in his sober moments was a good friend. Rube Robertson, the murderer, was hanged for his crime. After this, for years, she did all the work to be done by man in the timber and on the farm.

After having been a widow for about seven years she was again married to John Hampton. They made ties, cut cord wood and farmed on the Osage bottoms near Babtown, Mo. For years they lived on the bank of the Osage river and kept a wood yard and supplied the steamboats plying the river with wood for which they got \$1.50 a cord. She cut one cord of wood a day and did her house work while her husband cut two cords. They also made it a business to catch rafts of timber that would break anchorage and go down the river, when it would rise, for which they were rewarded by the owners who always had their rafts branded so they could readily identify them.

At one time she jumped from a boat onto a big cottonwood log and it turned with her and she went under, but as she was a good swimmer, she came out all right. She says she has swam the Osage many a time, and if she hadn't been a good swimmer she would have drowned long ago. She plowed corn many a day for 50 cents a day and wove cloth at 10 and 5 cents a yard to get means to support her children. In addition to their other work they would usually catch about \$200 worth of furs during the season, as fur opossum and coons abounded in plenty along the Osage bottoms. As I have not yet reached the most remarkable incident of this aged woman's life, I will continue it later.

-- S. A. D. Easterling

Part Two, Friday, May 13, 1921

During the Civil War she was advised to never refuse the soldiers anything about the house which they should want, which was generally something to eat and she says she has stood and cooked all day and sometimes until 4 o'clock in the morning. The state militia would often come to her house and she always had a good supply of meat on hand. Their hogs ran at large and fattened on the waste that abounded in plenty in the woods. She was never treated mean, as some others, on account of her kindly treatment to the soldiers. The rebels would also come to her for food. One day there were nine of them came and asked her if she had any thing cooked, she told them she had only five biscuits and two small ponies of cornbread but she could get them something more if they would wait a little while, but they said they were in a hurry and they took what she had and went on their way.

She had a brother, John, who came home from the army on a furlough. One day he and some other men got after a rebel sympathizer. Her brother marched him in front of him, jabbing him occasionally with a sharp bayonet. His sister was very much displeased and told John she hoped he would get paid back. Sure enough, in a few days the rebels took their turn. They got possession of him and marched him off, stripped him of his uniform and put an old dirty suit of clothes on

him and an old hat with the crown out. They made him take an oath that he would not take up arms against them again and started him home. After John had been gone some time, the parties at the house saw a ragged man coming down the road and she said, "I believe it is John," who it proved to be. He was greatly humiliated, and returned to his post of duty in the army.

Hiram Jones, a close neighbor, was known to have money hidden away and a gang of men went to him for his money. Jones refused to tell the hiding place so they hanged him, by the neck, several times until they had him nearly choked to death.

Finally he told them, but he did not tell them where it all was, as he had it in different places. They got his money, burned his house and barn and all outbuildings except the chicken house.

In her childhood days a man had robbed an Indian grave on the bluff above her father's home some distance and had gotten some jewels and gold. With the thought in view of the rich find, she and the other children, decided they would see what they could find, so they slipped away and Bill, a brother, was digging away in an Indian grave and as it was growing late in the evening Bill struck something and unearthed it. It proved to be a skull and when he saw it's grinning teeth and the holes for the eyes, he was greatly alarmed and jumped out of the grave saying, "I have found a man's skull, I am going home." They were all so frightened they lost their way and wandered around for hours and would always come back to the grave. Finally they heard their mother blowing the bugle and their father firing the gun. When they got the direction they made it safely home. Bill's father criticized him severely and told him if he dug into another Indian grave he would put a big rock in the grave and chain him to it and the Indian would haunt him. They never tried it again or went about the graves.

As this is getting too long and I have not yet reached the best of the story of the life of this aged woman I will continue it later.

-- S. A. D. Easterling

Part Three, Friday, May 27, 1921

After spending many years on the river farm they sold out and moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa, and after staying there for a few years they longed to return to their old home on the Osage, so made arrangements to return and purchase again, if possible, their old farm on the river. Mr. Hampton drew his money out of the bank, in preparation for their trip, and went to stop over night with a friend. He went to a store on an errand and, strange to say, her second husband, became the victim of a murderer.

He had over \$2,000 on his person when he was shot and died before Mrs. Hampton got to see him again. His money was all taken. Mrs. Hampton heard the shot but thought nothing of it until a messenger informed her. The man who was supposed to have committed the crime, was convicted on circumstantial evidence and served a term in the penitentiary.

She was again left alone to battle with the hardships that confront a widow without means and she toiled as stated in a previous article. One of her children, Martha Jane, 12 yrs. old, who was temporarily staying with a relative, was stolen away to her sorrow. Time went on without any trace of her until a half century had gone by.

About the year 1909 she got word that Martha Jane still lived, and was in Okla. City. Her daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Adams, whom she lived with in Missouri, received a letter one day from Martha Jane. She told her mother as she came from the mail box, "I have a letter for you from sister, Martha," she said, "Oh! no, Martha Jane is not alive, it's not from her." Yes it is from Martha Jane -- She was so rejoiced when she found her daughter really lived that she manifested her joy by jumping and said she was going to see her, but Mrs. Adams said she was too old and it was too far for her to go alone. For some time she could not get her daughter's consent, and finally she said to her, "If I can't go by good means, I will go by bad means." I sleep in that back room and I have the money and I can walk to the railroad station, and you will get up some morning and I will be done". Finally she consented she should go.

Accordingly they wrote to Martha Jane, whom a great many years before had become Mrs. Sherrell, that on a certain date she would be in Oklahoma City, but did not say what route she would come. Her grandsons, Jasper and Eleck Sherrell went to different trains which arrived at the same hour, and Jasper was the lucky one. He saw some one step off the train and said that is grandma for she looks like mother. He laid his hand on her shoulder and said, "Is this granny." "Yes, but who are you?" My name is Sherrell. Martha Jane's son? Yes. She was taken direct to Martha Jane's home, where they rejoiced together. While her parents were religious and her brother Bill, mentioned before, was a Methodist preacher, Granny had never been converted but Martha Jane had become a Christian and the grandchildren especially Jasper, Elick and Silas Sherrell, were devoted men of God. Not long after her association with them, she became

interested in her soul's welfare. She had smoked her pipe so long she could not remember when she began, and says she walked many times a quarter of a mile to get her pipe filled. She went to a revival meeting, became awakened and sought the Lord and was happily converted. Three days afterwards one of her grandsons said, "Granny, where is your pipe? Her answer was, "I'll declare, I hadn't thought of it." And she never did use it again, having been completely delivered from the appetite.

Some time afterward she was taken very sick and had been sick about two weeks. The doctors said it was old age principally that ailed her and there could be nothing done. She seemed to be at the point of death. The Sherrell's did not only believe God was able to heal the soul but the body as well, and went to their knees in prayer. Faith laid hold. Granny jumped from the bed, went leaping and rejoicing and praising God for His love that had raised her up and made her well. Since her conversion she especially loves the association of Christian people.

With the exception of a few years spent in Alabama with her grandson, Elick Sherrell whose address is Grand Bay, she has made her home in Oklahoma since 1909. She is not contented without something to do and says if she could only work in the timber again and split rails she would feel better. She helps wash dishes and such light work about the house as her folks will permit her to do, but her main work with her hands now is to sew quilt blocks. She says she has made several quilt tops since living here and has four on hands now. She makes her home with her grandsons, John and Silas Sherrell. John lives west of Carmen, near the Green Valley school house and Silas 1 1/2 mile east and 2 south of the school house. One of her eyes is fairly good yet but she can't see much out of the other. She is bothered with asthma, especially early of mornings. She was very sick at one time last winter and Dr. Matlock of Carmen was called and treated her. She says the doctor told her she had the constitution of a mule but she told him he was only making fun of her.

I wish you could all see our aged friend and talk with her, and I wish I could have written more interestingly regarding her life. I got most of my information direct from her and have done my best to interest you as this grand old woman has been of interest to me. Let us honor and treat kindly the aged ones as they go down the western slope. Now you can judge what was the most remarkable incident in her life.

-- S. A. D. Easterling

Aline Chronoscope, Friday, July 20, 1923

Country's Grand Old Woman Dies at Age of 107 Years

**Mrs. Elizabeth Hampton Lived
a Century of Hardship. -- Twice
Widowed by Tragedy.**

Stricken with paralysis last Thursday, Mrs. Elizabeth Hampton died Sunday at the home of her grandson, John W. Sherrell, eight miles west of Carmen. She was past 107 years old and up to the time of her last illness was enjoying good health and taking active part in the affairs of the neighborhood. At the last presidential election she cast her first vote for Harding going into the voting booth unaided. Her sight was good.

Funeral services were held Monday at the Sand Creek Church and the body was laid to rest there. A large gathering of neighbors and friends attended and paid honor to the "Country's Grand Old Woman."

An obituary sketch written by S. A. D. Easterling, a neighbor and a friend, is an interesting story of the remarkable life of the good old woman and is here presented.

Wood's country's oldest citizen, Mrs. Elizabeth Hampton, passed away at her grandson's, John W. Sherrell, west of Carmen about seven o'clock Sunday evening. She was stricken with paralysis last Thursday, her left side being completely paralyzed and her speech so she could not speak distinctly. Her health for the past few weeks had been better than usual and she was cheerful and happy having just been discussing with her daughter, Martha Jane, about a bundle of remnants she had ordered for her favorite work, piecing quilts.

Grannie, as she was familiarly called had passed beyond the century mark but her exact age is not known as the record of her birth was burned years ago when she lost her home by fire. In answer to a phone call the writer and his wife were at her bedside Friday evening. She seemed to recognize us and gripped my hand with her right hand which she still had the use of. Dr. Harris of Carmen visited her and advised her that there was no hope for her recovery. Readers of the Chronoscope will remember a few years ago an incident in the life of this aged woman we tried to pen, we try to write the closing chapter of this remarkable woman. Few live to the advanced age to which she lived. She went through hardships beyond the average person of this life. She was born in Miller county, Missouri on a farm. On account of her father's health and lack of boys to do the work she became a farmen, plowing the soil, planting and tilling and in fact doing everything that was done on the farm as well as the work about the home. She lived in the days of the homespun and home woven cloth and did a great deal of this work for others as well as for the household at home. She was married twice, both of her husbands being murdered. Her first husband, William Shearly who was murdered by a drunken man for which he was executed for his crime.

Seven years later she was married to John Hampton and for years they lived on the Osage river near Babtown, where they owned a farm besides doing the farming they made railroad ties cut cord wood and kept a wood yard on the Osage and sold wood to the steamboats which plied the Osage. She was not afraid of the river or high water and had many thrilling adventures when the water was high many rafts of rail road ties would break loose above, with cables or heavy ropes at hand she would paddle her skiff, as she called it, out to the floating raft, make fast the rope and paddle back to the shore and anchor it to a tree for which she would be amply rewarded by the owner who would identify his timber by the brand attached. Later they sold out and moved to Iowa where Mr. Hampton was robbed and murdered. She had six children, three by each husband.

In later years she moved to Oklahoma and made her home with her grandson, the Sherrell brothers for a few years. She made her home in Alabama with Eleck Sherrell whom she loved and esteemed very much for his noble Christian character. It was at the coming of her grandsons, and at her advanced age about sixteen years ago she was converted. She was addicted to the tobacco habit, having used it so long that she could not remember when she began but on being converted her appetite entirely left her. She identified herself with the Free Methodist Church and remained a member until called home.

Her funeral was conducted by the Rev. Shipley of Carmen assisted by Rev. E. O. Davenport of Oklahoma City at the Sand Creek Holiness church and the precious remains laid to rest in the cemetery at that place to await the first resurrection.

Her kindly disposition won for her admiring friends everywhere she was known. She romped and played with the children to their delight. She made her home the last few years with her grandsons John and Silas Sherrell. We enjoyed several good visits with her at our own home. Her last visit was last winter during the revival meeting at the church here conducted by Rev. Waters of Estes Park, Colo. She was a regular attendant and her testimony was an inspiration to all. She was indeed an interesting figure. She had longed to go home and be with her lord she loved so well and she felt resigned, especially the last few weeks of her life to stay and suffer if it was his will. Her loved ones are heartbroken but do not sorrow as those who have no hope. While they have bidden adieu to her here they will meet her again around the great throne to part no more.

Transcribed from microfilm at the Oklahoma Historical Society,
Oklahoma City, by Rodney C. Murrow, 9 August 1973.
Spelling and punctuation remain as they appear in the original document.