

EARLY HISTORY OF CLOUD COUNTY BY H.E. SMITH

Timid Sims

“Timid Sims,” as he was called, was held in very inferior repute among the boys at Texas Bar, because he had backed down before a six-shooter. A man on Texas Bar might be lacking in many qualities, but if he had “the sand” it covered a multitude of sins. “Sand” was the jocular translation for “grit.” Sand, in a locality possessing but little law and less order, was an absolute essential to a good standing in Texas Bar.

Timid Sims was a pale, slender, inoffensive, dreamy character, whose general aspect and manner gave you the impression that he didn't know exactly what he had come into the mines for! Indeed, that he didn't exactly know what he came into existence for. He had a body to clothe, shelter and feed, and it was imperative that he should work to shelter, clothe and feed it. He was not strong enough to do an able-bodied man's work. No one would employ him, even when hands were needed in the river claims during the busiest season; a circumstance which seemed to puzzle Sims exceedingly, until at last he was plainly told by one of the rougher and more outspoken miners that he “couldn't keep his lick with other men anyway, and the best thing he could do was to go into a grocery store, tend bar, or keep school.”

Sims, however, would mine. He borrowed a rocker, procured a very limited supply of flour, pork and potatoes on credit at the store, took possession of a deserted log cabin at the further end of the Bar, patched up the roof with old boards which came floating down the river, and tried at night to sleep comfortably on the floor in his scanty blankets. He worked here and there along the bank, sometimes washing over “old tailings,” sometimes working some bit of a bar or riffle exposed during a low stage of the river, which since “49” had been dug over a score of times. He made “six bits,” sometimes a dollar and a half a day, often nothing. His were reckoned “Chinaman's wages.” Taken altogether, poor Sims hardly passed for a whole man. It was not so much that he was feeling in body either, for there were other resident near him, able to lift no more pounds or swing a pick hour after hour with no more vigor than he; but there was about Sims an atmosphere of weakness and self-depreciation. He was always shrinking into holes and corners. He had no “bluff,” no self-assertion. If he went into a room full of strangers, he seemed frightened at an imaginary something. With a few he became intimate, and they called him a “clever little fellow.” To these he clung, and desired no more acquaintances. Every stranger he seemed to regard as an enemy. He was fond of solitude, and, during the summer, would neglect work altogether, wandering about the surrounding mountains.

Judy Lambert
Register of Deeds
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