

## **EARLY HISTORY OF CLOUD COUNTY**

### **BY H.E. SMITH**

#### **Timid Sims**

“I’ll swim off and take a line to him,” at last said Sims. “No, don’t go,” said someone among the crowd; “it’s certain death!” “I will!” said Sims. “No, you won’t –not if I can help it,” said Jim Freemantle. “You’re wrong to try it; and if you do, we’re going to stop you. We’ve as good a right to stop a man from committing suicide as murder.”

There was a murmur of assent from the bystanders. Sims turned away and walked toward his cabin. When again he emerged, it was with a cocked six-shooter in his hand. He came straight toward the group and spoke:

“You say you will stop me from swimming off to the Black Rock. I do not intend that you shall. You have succeeded in making my life thoroughly miserable on this Flat by injustice, taunt and abuse, and now that there’s a chance of getting rid of it you want to stop me. You see you have made a mistake. You’ve put me up for a man without grit. Well, I’m going to show you that courage runs in streaks, and it takes different circumstances in different men to draw it out. I’m courageous enough now to own that I have backed down before some of your six-shooters, because I didn’t think my life was worth you dirty little claim. But any of you would risk your lives in a dispute over a pack of cards, because you’ve got a fighting reputation to keep up at any cost, and you dare not live to be called coward by some hound who would pick your pockets had he a chance.

Not one of you dare go near Tom Wilson’s cabin when I nursed him through the smallpox. Not one of you dare go prospecting as I did on the headwaters of the Owen’s river and camp out for weeks alone, fifty miles from the nearest settlement. I’m not afraid of the river, savage as it looks; for the roar of its waters, as I’ve listened to them many a long night in my cabin, has been a kinder voice than any of yours, and if I down, I want the Stanislaus to bury me somewhere deep down in its channel, where your hands at least may never drag me out. Let me pass!”

They made way for him. His face was white, hard, firm and desperate. He walked with a proud step, like a king going to the scaffold. All the shrinking timidity, the baffled hesitation of former days, had disappeared. It was another man who passed through the crowd, another being who had, as it were, suddenly risen up and usurped the body of Timid Sims

**Judy Lambert**  
**Register of Deeds**  
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