



ANIECE AND THREE NEPHEWS of Will O'Toole shown with him included (from left), Martha, Jack, Jim and Bob O'Toole. He lived with the Emmett O'Toole family on the O'Toole Ranch.

Survivor remembers Last Indian Raid

Will 'Billy' O'Toole, one of the survivors of the Last Indian Raid in Kansas, shared his memories about the raid with the late George Nellans, a longtime probate judge in Decatur County and an amateur historian.

Mr. O'Toole was an uncle of Marty Munson and Mary Horney of Oberlin and Jack O'Toole, now of Hiawatha, and lived with their parents, Emmett and Elizabeth O'Toole, and family on the O'Toole Ranch southwest of Oberlin. These are some excerpts from an account recorded by Mr. Nellans from Mr. O'Toole's story about the day the Indians attacked.

Sitting on the screened-in porch at the ranch house on the O'Toole Brothers Ranch of 1,000 or more broad acres, in the historic valley of the Sappa, the June moon showed worn cow paths marking the old Texas Cattle Trail, which had run down the pasture from the highlands into the bottom and across the creek and on north to Ogallala, Neb.

Mr. Nellans said they had gone there, to the very center of the stirring scenes 33 years ago to visit and get a statement from one of the prominent actors in those events of blood and destruction. Looking across through the green of the trees, they could see the white walls of the cottage that had risen on the ranch on the ruins of the old half-dugout and half-log house, with a dirt room, known then as the Keefer Ranch, but now a part of the O'Toole lands.

Here had gathered during the day and night many of those driven from their homes on the memorable Sept. 30, 1878.

Billy O'Toole is a pioneer in the West. In an early day, he was a settler in the Limestone Valley, in Jewell County. He drove stage for the Southwestern Stage Co. from Waterville, when that was the western end of the Central Branch Railroad. Later coming to Decatur County, he engaged in the cattle business, became a cowboy and made money.

His story of the Indian raid is of peculiar interest from the fact that his experience extends over a wide range of territory raided and from an intimate acquaintance with many of the living and the dead, with the former both before and after the raid.

He said, "At that time, I was living on the southeast quarter of section 2, town(ship) 4, range 30, with Ed Stillson, my partner, who was then

absent, having gone to Cawker City. On Sunday morning, Sept. 29, in the company of J.J. Keefer, I went over onto the North Sappa and selected a location for a ranch and winter range for our cattle.

"The site for the ranch was about three miles east of where Achilles is now, and later was owned by John W. Doyle. Sam Holstine, who had been to Buffalo Park with a shipment of beef, took dinner with us and said the Indians were coming. Mr. Holstine had sent his foreman to Kansas City with cattle, and with the saddle horses, was hurrying back to the ranch to be on hand to help protect the place when the Indians came.

"In chasing the horses he was driving, his splendid ivory handle, silver mounted Colt .44 six shooter had jumped out of the holster and he had lost it. He was lamenting the fact that the Indians were coming and he had nothing to shoot with and at the same time, we had no kind of a firearm with us. We had an ox team and wagon, but no horse with us. The fact that Holstine had told us of the Indians probably saved our lives, as we were on the lookout for them. Holstine advised us to go home, as he said the Indians were at the railroad and he was afraid they would catch him before he reached the ranch.

"Monday morning, we started home, crossing over from the North Fork to the South Sappa when near what was afterward known as the John L. Smith place, we saw about a mile and a half east, a band of the Indians about 10 a.m. There were about 25 in the party and when they were about a half mile of us, the Indians started to charge, so we turned the team and ran them over to the bank of the creek where we took our positions on the opposite side of the wagon from the Indians.

"Keefer picked up the axe that lay in the wagon and picked up a black looking stick that was lying on the ground and had a slight resemblance of a gun. By pointing the ax handle and stick across the wagon box and continually motioning for them to keep away, we stood them off.

"The Indians soon divided into two parties; a few went up on the hill north as a lookout and to watch us, while the main party circled around west of our position and turned south, crossing the creek to where old man Humphrey and his son, John, were making hay in the

head of the draw on the farm now owned by Tim Corcoran. They were either going home to dinner or had seen the Indians. They stopped the team and discussed what was the best to do for a considerable time. John wanted to unhitch the team and get away, while the father contended that the Indians would do them no harm, thus permitting the Indians to ride right up to them.

"The old man was killed outright and John was wounded, but managed to get away and ran up the creek to G.B. Street's place, warning them of their danger. They ran to the creek and hid in the timber and brush, taking the wounded man with them. He made so much noise from the pain that the others were afraid he would betray their hiding place. Finally providing him with water and making him as comfortable as possible, they went over to a cliff of rocks just east of the Jimmy Jones draw where they remained until a relief party found them.

"When we heard them shoot the Humphreys and heard them cry out in their agony, we knew the Indians were out to kill. We abandoned the team and wagon and hurried to town to Humphreys' house and, taking Mrs. Humphrey and a little 2-year-old granddaughter that was with her, ran on down to Robert Bridle's house about one-fourth mile east. They were just sitting down to dinner, without a thought of danger. We undertook to barricade the door of their log house, but the hinges being made of leather, we decided we could not make them secure against the onslaught of the Indians. About 50 yards south of the house was a piece of ground, heavily timbered with thick growth of underbrush. We decided to take refuge in that place and secreted ourselves in the thick brush under the protecting foliage of a large grape vine.

There were eight of us: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bridle and two daughters, Mrs. Humphrey and granddaughter, J.J. Keefer and myself. At Humphreys' house, we secured a Ballard rifle, Humphrey's buffalo gun, but could only find two cartridges for it.

Bridle had a double-barreled, muzzle-loading shotgun, which was loaded with a heavy charge. It later developed when an effort was made to discharge this gun, that the tubes were so stopped up with dirt and rust that it would not explode the charges. These were our arms of defense

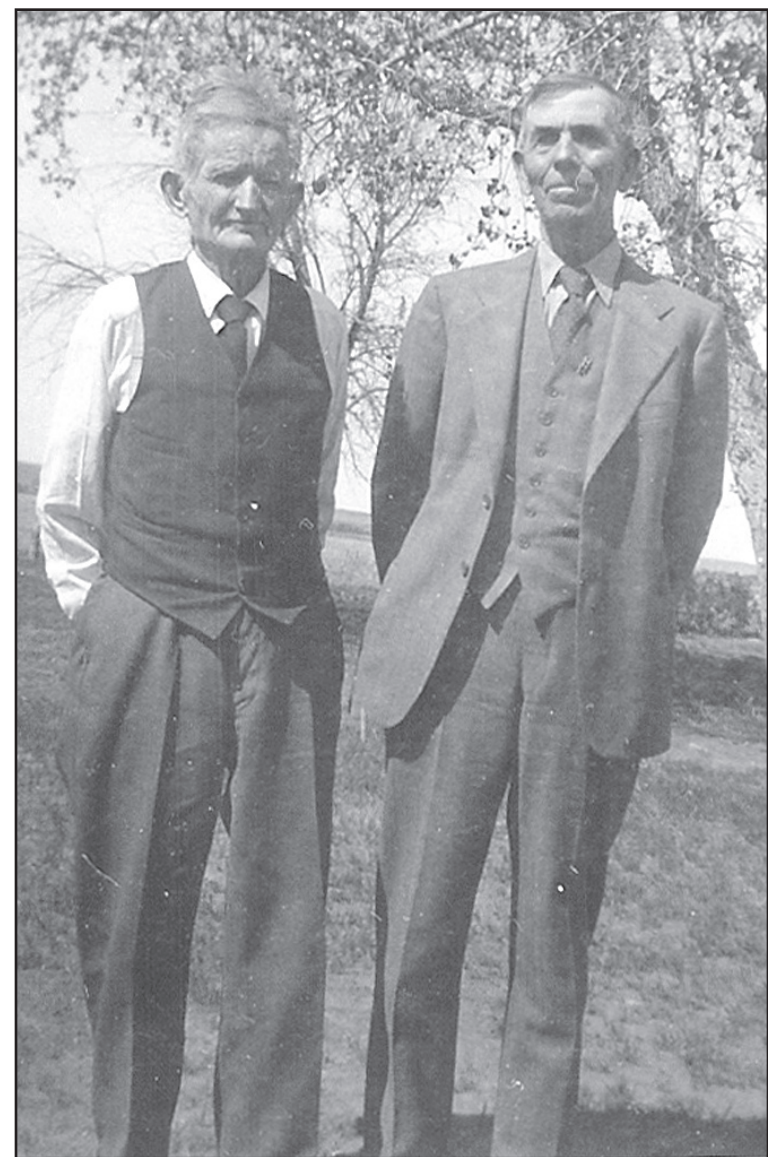


A SURVIVOR of the Last Indian Raid, Will 'Billy' O'Toole, had many memories which he shared in a story told to the late George Nellans.

and all we had for our protection in case of discovery. We were hiding about an hour when the main band of warriors made a charge on the house, filling the valley with their unearthly war whoops.

"They passed along the bank not 20 feet from us whooping as they went. In his charge, three of the warriors rode down a cow path that ran through the bayou, passing within 10 feet of where we were hiding behind the grape vine. They were so close, it seemed as if we could almost touch their ponies.

"They tore up and destroyed everything in the house. Three cows that were tied to picket ropes nearby were shot full of arrows and killed. They ripped open the feather beds, shook the feathers out and would laugh to see them fling through the air. Mrs. Bridle was quite a thrifty housekeeper and had put up several jars of preserves. The Indians found them and would scoop them out with their hands and devour them greedily, leaving their fingermarks on the sides of the jars. They also took his



WILLO'TOOLE (left) and John Love were both survivors of the Last Indian Raid, which happened southwest of Oberlin in 1878.

team of horses with them and killed chickens and hogs. At Humphreys' place, they destroyed or carried off property valued at \$814 and at the Bridle place, the damage was estimated at \$1,339.25.

"The Indians went into camp about a quarter of a mile northeast of the house and remained until about 4 or 5 in the evening when they moved northwest. They left their camp fires burning. Fearing some of them had not abandoned the camp, we remained concealed until after dark. We then traveled down through the bluffs until we came near the Keefer Ranch. There were a number of people at the ranch, who later proved to be men from the Solomon, Prairie Dog and down the Sappa, who were recovering some of the stolen property. Not

being certain whether they were Indians or white people, Keefer volunteered to investigate. Finding that the ranch was in the hands of white people, he sent some persons out to bring us into safety. Keefer had left his buffalo hunting gun, a Sharpes Big .50, at home and was continually lamenting the fact, and wishing he had it with him. He was an expert shot and would undoubtedly brought some of the Indians down, but it served a good purpose at home.

"On the morning of Oct. 1, about 40 men had gathered at Keefer's place. They organized and followed after the Indians. A fat heifer was bought of Keefer and butchered; the men "chipped in" to raise the money with which to pay for the same. The (See MEN on Page 4B)