



TARRANT COUNTY

TXGENWEB

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Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

James E. Neely

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James E. Neely was a Union veteran of a Kansas regiment who lived in Tarrant County for many years, the last portion of which he lived at Smithfield. During the 1890's he moved to the Oklahoma Territory where he died in 1903.

Family sources at Ancestry.com report that Mr. Neely was born in Kentucky on August 31, 1846, a son of Edward D. Neely (born about 1826) and his wife, Julie (or Judy) W. Neely (1826-1890), both of whom lie buried in Crowley Cemetery in southwest Tarrant County, Texas.

Mr. Neely appears in the 1890 census of Union veterans of the Civil War. He was living in Smithfield at the time. He told the census taker he was a private in Co. G, 7th Kansas Cavalry, that he enlisted on February 23, 1865, and served five months and three days. If this is correct he would have left the service on or about July 26, 1865. A report of the Kansas Adjutant General's office prepared in 1867 shows only one man named Neely in Co. G, 7th Kansas Cavalry...John E. Neely. The report shows him to have enlisted on February 23, 1865 while a resident of Leavenworth, and to have deserted at Omaha, Nebraska Territory, on August 7, 1865.

During the winter of 1864, and into the summer of 1865, the Seventh was stationed in the St. Louis District, the several squadrons being employed in scouting expeditions against guerrillas. On the 18th of July, 1865, the regiment was ordered to Omaha City, Neb., from thence to Fort Kearney, and again to Fort Leavenworth. It arrived at the latter place September 14, 1865, and was mustered out and received its discharge on the 29th of the same month.

James E. Neely and Anna Robertson were married about 1865. Family sources say she was born in Canada on June 26, 1849, and died in Washington State on December 19, 1911. She told the 1900 census taker in Oklahoma that she was the mother of nine children, all of whom were still living.

The Neely's were among the first settlers of Cloud County, Kansas, where James's father served in as the first probate judge in September, 1866. Several mentions of Edward and James Neely (some of which are reproduced here) are to be found in E.F. Hollibaugh's Biographical history of Cloud County, Kansas biographies of representative citizens, published in 1903: *"...The early settlers were neighbors even when thirty, forty or fifty miles apart. For several years in this small neighborhood there was but one mowing machine, and that did duty for all. John Cory was the lucky owner, and usually had to go about thirty miles from home to some of his nearest neighbors to mow. Among these were the Clovers and Nyes, on Petes creek; Corys, Van Nattas, Myers and Wests, on Salt creek; Hagamans, Thorpes and Randal Honey, on Elm creek: Hellers, Neelys, Morleys, B.V. Honey, Coopers, Seaburys and Chesters, on Elk creek. Even some could be mentioned who lived at Sibley and White Rock that helped to constitute the settlement. These are what might be called the primitive settlers of the Republican valley..."*

"...The country at this time was in a crude state. Where Clyde now stands, "Uncle Heller" and his son David lived in a crude log house. They had built a new one which was required as a store-room for the few goods of Chauncey Cowell and Charles Davis, which had just been brought into the country. The next house was erected on the west side of the creek - a cabin built of round logs with a dirt roof occupied by Joseph Berry. The next building was similar in architecture and occupied by Tom Hay. The next house was built by J.B. Rupe and occupied by Andrew W. Smith. Still further west, on what is known as the William Crammer farm, lived Ed Neely. The Cline residence stood on the Kennedy farm, later owned by Reverend Cornforth. Israel Heller lived in a cabin adjoining his father's on the east. This was the extent of what might be termed the Elk Creek settlement...."

"...In October, 1886, Mr. [Andrew W.] Smith, in company with James Neely, and his [Smith's] son, the subject of this sketch, left the Elk creek settlement for the purpose of trapping. When about twenty miles west of where Cawker City now stands they were joined by a band of Otoe Indians. Mr. Smith was desirous of meeting a financial obligation and allowed the two young men to return home with a load of buffalo meat while he remained and trapped with the Indians and concluded with the remark, 'I'm going to pay that debt off or die in the attempt,' perhaps little thinking that this would be the last known of his earthly career. The Otoes declared he left them and was murdered by the Cheyennes, but suspicion pointed to them as being the guilty culprits who committed the dark deed, as the pony Mr. Smith had with him was afterwards seen in the possession of the Otoes..."

"ROMANCE OF THE PLAIN AS TOLD BY URIAH SMITH, THE CHAMPION BUFFALO SHOOTER OF CLOUD COUNTY....*A humorous circumstance occurred while on a hunting tour in 1867 with a party consisting of Mr. Smith, Mr. Morley and James Neeley. They were joined where Concordia now stands by Thomas and William Riley, Henry Simons and Thomas Wilcox.*

"...The immense herd was traveling in a northerly direction at a rapid gait and had gained about four miles ere the hunters could overtake them. At this point the great drove halted in one of the bends of the creek to graze. Mr. Smith and Mr. Morley followed around through the dry bed of the branch to find a favorable position from where they could shoot to the best advantage. Just as the situation was attained and the hunters had gained a place of ambush from where they

could select the choicest marks for their prey unobserved by the herd, an old and decrepit animal came wandering near and stopped to graze directly in the path between the anxious sportsmen and the coveted buffalo. He was but two or three rods distant and they endeavored to get him out of the way but he would merely turn his sightless eyes in that direction and quietly feed on. Mr. Smith threw gravel obtained from the bed of the creek, but like the hero who stood on the deck of the burning ship, "he would not go," and the outwitted hunters were compelled to make a new stand, from which they killed two buffalo and wounded another. They then shifted their position to a rise of ground, and were crawling on their hands and knees toward the herd. As Mr. Morley, who was in the lead, looked backward he exclaimed, "Look behind you, Smith." Mr. Smith turned and discovered the venerable and almost helpless old bison walking straight toward him. Desiring to not frighten the main body by rising to his feet Mr. Smith remained in a sitting posture and lustily waved his hat, but the aged monarch continued, quite unconcerned. Mr. Morley, who was amused by the ludicrous situation, laughed aloud, which the animal evidently heard, although he could not see, for he halted, pricked up his ears and ambled off in an easterly and parallel direction. Being filled with compassion for the poor old veteran of the plains. Mr. Smith ended his miserable existence by a bullet from his unerring rifle. It is needless to affirm, choice steaks were not taken from his carcass, or the hide preserved that was as devoid of the once thick, shaggy coat of hair as the body of an elephant. They then pursued the main herd and killed two more..."

On September 24, 1878 James E. Neely patented a one-hundred sixty acre tract of land in southwest Tarrant County. His father, E. D. Neely, and brother, W. S. Neely, also patented tracts of land in their own names in Tarrant County. James's tract and his father's shared a common border, and W. S. Neely's was almost within earshot of James's.

In 1880 James E. Neely and his family are shown in the census in Precinct 7 of Tarrant County, Texas. His parents, E. D. and J. W. Neely, appear on the same page of the census. J. E. Neely's wife, Anna, said she was born in Canada to two parents who were born in Scotland. They had seven children living with them: William E., Bennie, Scott, John, David, Ellie, and Bird. The birthplaces of the children suggest the family made the move from Kansas to Texas about 1871 or 1872.

On June 11, 1881 Mr. Neely applied for a federal pension based upon his service in the U. S. Army. His wife also received a widow's pension, but the date of her filing is not shown.

Mr. Neely appears in the 1890 census of Union veterans as a resident of Smithfield, Tarrant County, Texas. He owned a small tract of land in that year in Smithfield in partnership with Daniel E. Lebow, with whom he later moved to Oklahoma. Since Mr. Lebow's wife was a Neely before he married her, it seems possibly that they were somehow related by marriage.

The 1900 Oklahoma census shows that one of the Neely grandchildren was born in Texas in January, 1892, while another was born in the Oklahoma Territory in July, 1893. Perhaps the whole Neely clan made the move from Smithfield, Texas to Oklahoma during that time, possibly in connection with one of the 1893 land runs.

The census taker in 1900 found Mr. Neely and his family living in Sheridan Township, Garfield County, Oklahoma. Mr. Neely said he and his wife had been married for thirty-five years, thus they

must have been married about 1865, He said he and both his parents were born in Kentucky. Mrs. Anna Neely said she was born in January, 1848 in Canada, as were both her parents. In that year they had four children still living with them: David, James, Dona, and Lee. Some of the married Neely children were also living nearby...including William Neely, who said he was born in October, 1867 in Kansas, and Benjamin, who said he was born in December, 1868 in Kansas.

The Neelys' next-door neighbors in 1900 were the family of Daniel E. Lebow, also one of our Union veterans, who had been in partnership with James Neely in Smithfield, Texas at the time the 1890 census was taken.

James E. Neely's index card in the National Archives shows his date of death as May 18, 1903. Family sources indicate that after his death, Mrs. Anne Neely left Oklahoma where she died at Anacortes in Skagit County, Washington on December 19, 1911.

The Neelys' nine children included William E. Neely, Benjamin A. Neely, Walter Scott Neely, David V. Neely, John Neely, Ellie Neely, James Bird Neely, Dona Neely, and Lee Neely. Much of the information which follows concerning these children was posted at ancestry.com by Neely descendants; information also was taken from the 1880 and 1900 federal census schedules.

William E. Neely was born in Kansas about 1868. He was living with his wife, J. F. Neely, in Tarrant County in 1880. He and his wife, Lucy Neely, were living in Sheridan Township, Garfield County, Oklahoma when the 1900 census was taken. He died in Portland, Oregon on February 16, 1941 (or 1942). His wife's name was Lucy May Neely.

Benjamin A. Neely was born in Kansas in 1869. In 1900, he and his family lived next-door to his parents in Garfield County, Oklahoma. He died August 11, 1945 in Linn, Oregon. He was married to Louisa Tenney (1876-1942).

Walter Scott Neely was born in Kansas on February 24, 1871. He died January 23, 1949 in Los Angeles, California. His wife was Mrs. Laura A. Neely.

John Neely was born in Texas about 1872.

David V. Neely was born in Texas in August or September, 1874. He died in Seattle, Washington on January 29, 1954. His wife was Mrs. Ora Neely (1882-1970).

Ellie Neely was born in Texas about 1877. She was probably married before the family was listed in the 1900 census in Kentucky.

James Bird Neely was born in Texas in July 1879. In 1920, he was a single man working at a lumber mill in Anacortes, Skagit County, Washington.

Dona Neely was born in Texas November, 1881. She was married first to Edward G. Pierson, then to William H. Porter. By 1910, she had moved from Oklahoma to Anacortes, Skagit County, Washington.

Lee Neely was born in Texas in February, 1886.. He married Lottie Slagle (1890-1963). Lee died December 17, 1961 in Snohomish County, Washington.