

THE LADY SHOOTIST

By Art T. Burton

In an earlier article I wrote titled, "Women of the Shooting Iron" I mentioned a young lady named F.M. Miller who was a deputy U.S. marshal. A newspaper stated that she was commissioned as a deputy U.S. marshal, which would make her truly unique. There are rumors of other women being commissioned but this is the only case I have found where a newspaper validated the story. On a recent research trip to Fort Smith, Arkansas, I found another short article on this young lady. I have decided to combine the two short articles. Ms. Miller is the only female I have found to work in the field as a deputy U.S. Marshal in the Indian Territory. In the Oklahoma Territory it appears that Ms. S.M. Burche and Ms. Mamie Fossett were actually office workers but did on occasion do field work out of the Guthrie federal office. Ms. Miller's scenario was entirely different.

The **Fort Smith Elevator** on November 6, 1891, printed an article that stated:

"A Paris Texas, correspondent says that Ben Campbell, a deputy marshal for the Federal court at South McAlester, has for his guard a Mrs. Miller, who is said to be a dashing brunette of charming manners. She goes with him on all his trips and wears a Mexican sombrero.

The woman carries a pistol buckled around her and has a Winchester strapped to her saddle. She is an expert shot and a superb horsewoman, and brave to the verge of recklessness. It is said that she aspires to win a name equal to that of Belle Starr, differing from her by exerting herself to run down criminals and in the enforcement of the law."

An article on Ms. Miller appeared a few days later in the Muskogee Phoenix on November 19, 1891. This article stated that Miller was commissioned out of the federal court at Paris, Texas.

At that time, according to the newspaper, she was the only female deputy known to work the Indian Territory. Ms. Miller had the reputation of being a fearless and efficient officer and had locked up more than a few offenders. The article went on to say, she was a "young woman of prepossessing appearance, wears a cowboy hat and is always adorned with a pistol belt full of cartridges and a dangerous looking Colt pistol which she knows how to use." Ms. Miller had been in Muskogee for a few days. She assisted Deputy U.S. Marshal Cantrel in transporting some prisoners from Talahina, which was in the Choctaw Nation, to the Muskogee, Creek Nation, federal jail. Hopefully in the future there will be more information on this colorful peace officer."

Copyright 2002. Art T. Burton.