

# OKLAHOMA'S FRONTIER INDIAN POLICE

## Part Five

### Black and White Lighthorsemen in Indian Territory

*By Art T. Burton*

There were quite a few black lighthorsemen in the Creek and Seminole Nations who became renown. In the Seminole Nation, Freedman Dennis Cyrus was the most noted black Indian police officer. Cyrus served with the Seminole Lighthorse for twenty-five years. Five of those years he held a deputy U.S. marshal commission under Marshal John Carroll at Fort Smith. Cyrus died on December 24, 1912. Other black Seminole Lighthorsemen included Cumsey Bruner, Ceaser Payne, Thomas Bruner, John Dennis and Tom Payne. Ceaser Payne was noted for killing a gang leader in the Seminole Nation named Bob Dossay.

In the Creek Nation, Thomas "Tacky" Grayson, a black Freedman was captain of the Lighthorse police for the Coweta District. He was involved in the capture of the Rufus Buck gang and was involved in more than a few shootings during his tenure as a lawman. One other black Creek Lighthorseman of note was Robert Marshall whose reputation was known throughout the Indian Territory. He was murdered in Muskogee on September 10, 1894 by a black criminal named Charles Smith, whom Marshall had caught in the act of trying to steal some horses. Other black Creek Lighthorsemen of the Muskogee District included Tom Kennard, John Miles, John Flowers and John "Cat" Roberts.

Another important Indian lawman, Deputy Marshal William "Bill" Smith, was the last Principal Chief of the Delaware. He was involved in the subduing of Cherokee Indian outlaw Ned Christy and the capture of Cherokee Bill. Smith was one of the best deputies to work for the Fort Smith and Muskogee courts.

Outside the Five Civilized Tribes, white men were hired and given leadership positions within the Indian Agency Police Departments. For many years, Frank Farrell was police chief of the Anadarko Agency. The old time territorial lawman Wiley Haines served as police chief for the Osage Indians in 1905. Earlier, the infamous Dalton brothers had served as Osage Indian police officers, before becoming outlaws.

Of the white men who became Indian Lighthorse policemen, one of the most famous was Samuel Robert Wilson. In 1877, at the age of sixteen, Wilson moved from Arkansas to Sugar Loaf County, Choctaw Nation. He learned to fluently speak the language and at the age of twenty-two married a Choctaw woman, which made him an intermarried citizen of the tribe. Wilson joined the National Choctaw Lighthorse Police under the leadership of Peter Conser. Later he served as a deputy sheriff under every sheriff in LeFlore County until his age prevented active service.

Due to coming statehood, most of the Indian police powers were given to the federal government by 1898; except for the Seminoles, who only disbanded their Lighthorse shortly after the turn of the century.

Many of the Indian tribes in present day Oklahoma have regained full police powers. The Muskogee (Creek) Nation have resurrected the Lighthorse police. The Cherokee Nation has the Cherokee Marshals Service which is the largest with 14 officers. Others with police departments include the Comanche, Ponca, Kaw, Iowa, Miami, Osage, Cheyenne/Arapaho, Kickapoo, Pawnee, Otoe-Missouri, Shawnee, Potawatomi, Sac & Fox, and Choctaw.

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