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*Amanda Stubblefield, 100 years old*

*pioneer spirit: Amanda Stubblefield*

# Rush Springs Centenarian

By Travis Anthony

(first published in the August 26, 1984 issue of the CHICKASHA DAILY EXPRESS)

Born in Gatewood, Missouri, on August 16, 1884, Amanda Stubblefield or Aunt Mandy or Granny, as she is affectionately called by friends and relatives, is a remarkable "Centenarian Lady"! As she observed her one hundredth birthday, she talked with visitors and well wishers all day as they came to her home in Rush Springs.

"I love to talk and have company," she told my wife Fran and me, as we sat by open south windows in old-fashioned rocking chairs talking with her the next day after the celebration.

Brightly colored birthday cards fastened to the wall gave a festive atmosphere to the room. Among the many cards was one from President Reagan and also one from Senator Boren. We learned, in addition, that Jimmy Carter sent greetings to her on her ninetieth birthday.

During an interesting two-hour visit and a follow-up two days later, I learned several things from Aunt Mandy.

She has three children—Ethel Mosley of Duncan, Berta Mosley of Chickasha, and Earl Stubblefield of Rush Springs. There are four grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren.

In her one hundred years, she has seldom needed medical attention. Years

ago, she visited Sulphur and took some sulphur baths for a touch of rheumatism. A few years later, a doctor prescribed some wine for a dizzy feeling she developed. She got a small bottle and kept it for years, never opening it. "I didn't drink it. I didn't want to become a wino," she told us with a smile.

Nine years ago, she broke her hip. She propels herself across the room in the wheelchair she is confined in. A son and daughter-in-law live in a house next door.

"I try to be as little trouble as possible," she told us. "I can't stand to think about bothering people at night."

She had the love and companionship of her husband Dan, until his death at

age 91.

Amanda, the oldest of eleven children, left Missouri at age 6 with her family and two other families in covered wagons, heading for Texas. "All going West to get rich," she told me with a twinkle in her eyes.

It took six weeks, forty-two days, to make the trip that began on May 1, 1890.

The spring rains turned rivers into raging torrents of water. The little girl from Missouri gazed in fear as the wagons were ferried across the rushing water, one wagon at a time, teams unhitched, with driver standing at their heads, holding to their bridles. Some days it rained all day, making



*A Treasured Family Portrait*

travel impossible. There was danger of the team overheating and scalding their shoulders from the rubbing harness. The family sat "cooped up" in a small enclosure listening to the rain pelting the canvas top and felt occasional drips of water seeping through the wagon sheet cover.

The rain stopped. The journey resumed. At night, the families gathered around the campfire. They told stories, sang songs, and played music. At times there would be twenty wagons strung out convoy style traveling West. Then there would be breakaways as families headed for different destinations at various points in the journey.

The three families from Missouri reached Texas, stayed one year at Lewisville, and then all moved to Indian Territory looking for better opportunity, especially grass with free range for their cattle. They pitched camp in the vicinity of what is now Clarita. Here Amanda's father built their log cabin home and used his skill to build log cabins for the other two families.

Amanda remembered her parents paying five cents a day for her to attend school in the Indian Nation. A teacher called Uncle Jim by all the students was loved by all even though he was stern and enforced the rules of the school--without exception. One rule was that boys and girls played on separate parts of the school ground--boys on the east and south side, girls on the west and north, with the added privilege of staying in the school house.

When an older girl told Amanda, "There really ain't any Santa Claus, it's just your pa," Amanda couldn't believe it.

"You're just telling me that. I KNOW better!"

"Naw, you'll find out!"

Amanda remembered: "At first, I got mad and wouldn't believe her. Then when I was convinced she was right, I cried."

"People traveled to Davis or Ardmore to buy things. It took two days to go there and back. When somebody made the long trip, all the neighbors sent for things."

"The day before Christmas, Pa and Ma had gone to do the milking. My oldest brother and I both knew there was no Santa Claus by now. We also knew Pa hadn't been able to go to town or send for anything. No use to hang up a stocking! Little sister, who still believed in Santa, was busy trying to hang her stocking above the fireplace."

"No use hanging up your stocking. Santa's not coming this year," we told her.

"Yes, he is!"

"Nope!"

"He's gonna bring me a pretty string of beads!"

"Santa DIDN'T come! Ma made a molasses cake for dinner. It was so good. Pa managed to shoot a wild turkey that morning. We invited our neighbors for Christmas dinner."

"I do remember one Christmas. I got a beautiful doll with dark hair like mine, and Sister got one with light hair that matched her blonde hair. Pa was so good at making things; he made us doll beds beautifully carved from wood."

"I love company, always have. When I was a little girl in Missouri, I always watched the road. If I saw a woman and children walking our direction, I always hoped they were coming to see us."

"One of my uncles played the fiddle, and he would let me ride with him when he played for dances. I rode side saddle and was unseated several times

when my horse shied from a snake in the road. Fortunately, I usually managed to land on my feet."

"Pa wouldn't let me go to a dance where there would be drinking or fighting."

"In Indian Territory, bootleggers would stop in the woods some distance from the dance and fire a gun in the air. This was a signal indicating moonshine was for sale."

"The greatest fear we kids had in the Indian Nation was copperheads. They were everywhere in the weeds. We'd stand off, hoe distance, when cutting weeds around a stump. We didn't want to pull out a copperhead with the weeds."

Aunt Mandy has lived in the Rush Springs area for seventy-two years. Living on a farm, she worked in the fields chopping cotton, hoeing corn, cutting kaffir heads, gathering corn, and picking cotton. She wore a bonnet and gloves to protect herself from 100-degree summer sun. They moved their house from farm to town in 1918.

"What was the big difference living in town?" I asked her.

"Didn't have so many weeds to cut" was her reply.

She read books, magazines, and the Bible every day until the last two years when failing eyesight made reading impossible.

I promised to take tapes to her that have parts of my two books *CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN* and *SUNSHINE AND SHADOWS* for her to listen to.

As we reluctantly ended our visit, I looked at this lovely pioneer sitting in her wheelchair, living by herself, with a clear mind and wonderful sense of humor at 100 plus years; and I thought, "Amanda, you typify the wonderful people whose courage, strength, and simple dignity developed our country!"



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