



2006 Photo of the Ouachita River near Camden AR, submitted to the Wikimedia Commons, the free media depository. The photographer was Robert Nunnelly

DRAFT as of
June 20, 2016

Chapter three

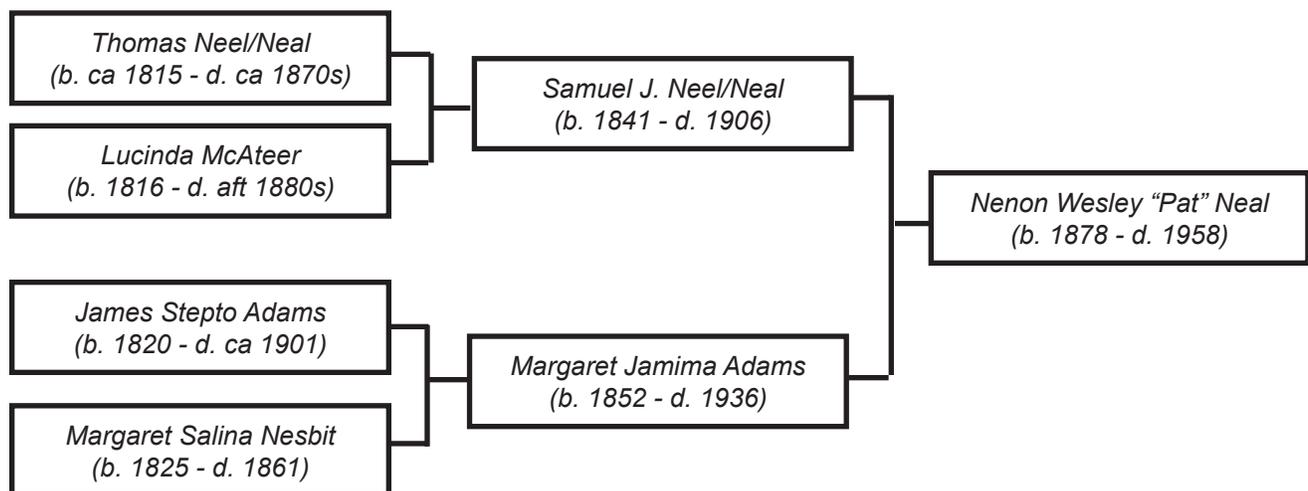
Tom Neel Crosses the “Washita”

Flowing out of the Ouachita Mountains in western Arkansas, the Ouachita River is wide and deep enough at Camden, Arkansas for steamboats to come up from the south. Ouachita is pronounced “Wah-shi-ta” and on early maps, it’s spelled Washita.

Around 1849, Thomas Neel, the grandfather of Nenon “Pat” Neel, crossed the Ouachita into Camden, Arkansas, a town of about 800 people at the time. While he spelled his name “Neel” at that time and perhaps all his life, in this book the authors will refer to the “Neal” spelling that was adopted by his son, Samuel J., in the 1890s.

This Chapter has four distinct parts:

- **Part One—Pass Cypress Creek, Then Go Up** tells Tom’s story from 1849, when he arrives in Ouachita County until 1861 at which time two of his sons went off to fight for the Confederacy.
- **Part Two—Civil War Hits Close to Neal Home** tells the story of Tom’s two sons in the Civil War and then the family’s recovery in the 1870s during the last decade of Tom’s life.
- **Part Three—The Neals’ Peaceful Home at Bluff City** turns to Tom Neel’s oldest son, Samuel J. Neal, the father of Nenon “Pat” Neal. It traces the family in and out of Texas in the 1870s and 1880s before settling down near the Nevada County village of Bluff City. Pat Neal would live near there until 1918 at which time he married and moved to Hempstead County near the historic town of Washington.
- **Part Four—Grandma’s Dad--Stepsto Adams**



NEAL TIMELINE

1815—Thomas Neal born in North Carolina

1816—Lucinda McAteer born in South Carolina

1840—Thomas Neal marries Lucinda McAteer in South Carolina?

1841—Samuel James Neal born to Thomas & Lucinda in Alabama

1842—Thomas & Lucinda in Mississippi

1850—Thomas & Lucinda in Arkansas by this time

1857—Thomas Neal granted land patents in present-day Nevada County, Arkansas

1861-64—Samuel and his brother, Robert, serve in the Confederacy during the Civil War

1869—Samuel marries Jamima Adams in Lafayette County, AR

1870—Samuel & Jamima living with his father in Nevada County, AR

1878—Samuel & Jamima's son, Nenon born in Hubbard Texas

1880—Samuel & Jamima in census of Hill County, TX

1906—Samuel died at age 65 near Bluff City, AR

Spelling Variations of the Neal Name

NEILL / NEEL / NEIL / NIELL / NEAL

In the 1800s, how a person's name was spelled depended, not on the person, but on the writer of the name. Until the 1890s, the Neal family seemed to prefer 'NEEL' as the way to spell their name. One family legend is that Samuel Neal was advised he was spelling his name wrong and so he changed it to 'NEAL.' It would appear that his siblings followed suit. Below is a listing of name variations found on documents from 1850 until Samuel's death.

1850—*NEILL, Thomas, on Ouachita County Census*

1857—*NEEL, Thomas, on Land Patent # 3323*

1859—*NEEL, Thomas, on Land Patent # 8746*

1860—*NEEL, Thomas, on Land Patent # 10498*

1860—*NEAL, Thomas, on Ouachita County Census (Post office: Caney)*

1861—*NEEL, Thomas, on Land Patent # 13209*

1862-64—*NEEL or NEIL, Samuel, on Company B Muster Rolls.*

1869—*NEIL?, Samuel, marriage record to Margaret Jemima Adams*

1869—*NEEL on Samuel's handwriting sample.*

1870—*NEEL, Thomas, on Ouachita County Census (Post office: Caney)*

1880—*NEEL, Samuel on Hill County Texas Census.*

1887—*NEIL, Samuel, on Ouachita County land grant.*

1890—*NEIL, S. J., land sale to John T. Adams*

1896—*NEAL, S. J., Civil War Pension Application*

1896—*NEAL, S.J., Proof of Service*

1900—*NIELL, Samuel, on Nevada County Census.*

1901—*NEIL, S. J., land purchase from W.J. Walthal.*

1906—*NEAL, S.J., on tombstone.*



Photo above: undeveloped land in an unknown location in present-day Nevada County, AR

DRAFT as of
July 9, 2016

ch chapter three — part 1

Pass Cypress Creek, Then Go Up

PREFACE: This part one of chapter three describes the arrival of Tom Neal and his family in Ouachita County, Arkansas before 1850 and their lives for the next dozen years. With only some census and land records to go by, the authors have chose to tell Tom’s story through the history of the area in which he lived. The time period is from 1849 until the Civil War started in 1861.

In 1849, Tom Neal arrived in Camden, Arkansas, the county seat of was and still is Ouachita (“Washita) County. He would travel west about 30 miles to the place he would homestead. The area around that place was also in Ouachita County until 1871 at which time it became part of a new county, Nevada County, in 1871.

Please take note: the conversations and situations in this chapter are fictional. We know from census and government land sale records that the people named in the chapter actually were living in the county at the locations described in the narrative. These people no doubt had met and perhaps was well acquainted with Tom Neal. To bring life into the telling of Tom Neal’s story, fictional conversations and every-day dealings are used, but with a solid historical footing. An attempt has been made to be as historically accurate as possible. So please recognize that all names, locations and dates mentioned in this chapter are real.

At the bottom of the pages, footnotes have been provided that cite sources used as a historical foundation for the chapter. The authors were guided to some of these sources by Ouachita-Nevada Counties historian, Jerry McKelvy, as well as members of the local historical societies in that area.

What do we know for certain? Well, sometime around 1849, Thomas and Lucinda (McAteer) stopped their wagons in the forested wilderness of western Ouachita County¹, Arkansas, and squatted on a parcel of available land that they intended to purchase under the 1820 Land Act. With them were their children including the oldest, Samuel James Neal, father of our Nenon “Pat” Neal. Thomas would take his wagon and family and find his way to the most suitable land available that was close to that of his wife’s cousin, James McAteer.²

1 Ouachita County was formed in 1842, named for the Ouachita River that flows through it. It would remain Ouachita County all through the Civil War period. In 1871, the land that Thomas Neal homesteaded became part of the newly formed Nevada County.

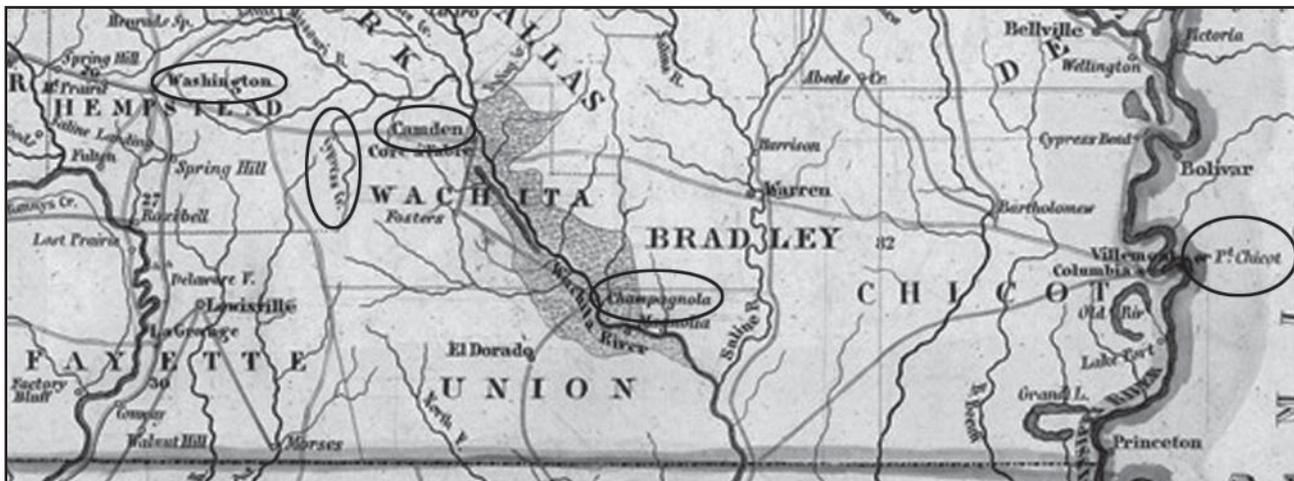
2 Thomas’s wife’s maiden name was McAteer. The James McAteer and Thomas Neal families were living next to each other in the 1850 Ouachita County census. Their initial land patents were less than a mile from each other. At this point, we don’t know the relationship between James and Lucinda, so they are referred to as “cousins.”

This new land was in Sec. 8, Twp 13, Rng 20. Arriving earlier than Thomas, McAteer, it seems, already had a place one mile northwest of Thomas's in Sec. 5. Both Thomas's and James's land was wedged between the Caney and Cypress Creek a couple of miles south of where their waters come together on their way northward to the Little Missouri River.

Initially these earliest white settlers had to rely on springs or haul water from the creeks until a well could be put down. Lots of work lay ahead for the Neal family when they arrived in December 1849.³ Our story begins with the Neal Family having ferried over the Ouachita River at Camden, the county seat.

3 The exact time period that Thomas and Lucinda arrived at their homestead between Caney and Cypress Creeks is not known. The couple's son, William, was born in 1848 in the State of Mississippi. They were counted by Ouachita County census takers in December 1850. So their arrival had to be in between those dates. Since many settlers came in the late fall and winter months, the time of arrival has been placed as December 1849, for story-telling purposes.

Exhibit 1: 1851 Map of Southern Arkansas



Above is the southern portion of the 1851 Map of Arkansas shown on page 26. The five places circled on the map are relevant to the Thomas Neal story. At the far right, Pt. Chicot (present-day Lake Village) is the place where the Neal family probably ferried over the Mississippi River from their previous home in Mississippi. Their destination would have been first to Camden on the Ouachita River. The actual land the Neals were headed for was near Cypress Creek (circled). Circled below Camden on the Ouachita river was a town named Champagnolle. The Federal Land Office was at Champagnolle, and all the wouldbe government land purchasers had to go there to make application for and actually pay for the land they wished to purchase. On the far left was historic Washington on the old "Southwest Trail."

December 1949--Thomas Neal Arrives in Camden AR

In the late 1840s enough wagon trains of settlers had rolled into Camden Arkansas that the local business people knew how to handle them. Once each wagon rolled off the ferry at the foot of Washington Street, it's driver was guided to an area along the river where the settler could "park" his wagon, water his stock, take care of the family's needs, and then walk up on Washington St. to conduct business before moving on.

It was early afternoon by the time that Tom got his turn and the Neal wagon made it across on the ferry. He placed it down with the other wagons and went about watering and feeding his stock being followed around by his shadow, eight-year old Samuel "Sammie" Neal. Lucinda took care of the needs of the other four children (ages 7, 4, 3, and 1).

Besides his four head of oxen, Tom had a cow, a mule and two pigs making the trip. As he looked at the other wagons, he saw many with the same types of livestock. These people were going out into the wilderness and if they didn't bring it with them, they wouldn't get it where they were going.

Once things were settled in, Tom saw no choice but to leave Lucinda and the smaller children to look after all their possessions.

"Lucie, the post office is right up there by that bunch of stores, I think. I need to get up there quick to pick up the letter," Tom Neal said in an anxious tone. Lucinda (McAteer) Neal's cousin, Jim McAteer, was to have dropped off a letter addressed to the Neal couple at the post office his last time in Camden. It was to contain instructions on how to get to his place.

"Well, here, take this letter I wrote last night to the folks back home; in my last letter, I told them I'd send them a letter when we arrived here in Camden. I guess this is the only place we can post anything for awhile, don't you think?"

"Maybe so—we're really on the edge of things aren't we? This isn't a very big town, and it's supposed to be the biggest one around. But I suspect it's going to get bigger in a hurry."

Eight-year old Sammie Neal, was excited, "Pa, look over there on the river! Look! Look what's coming up it! Ever seen a boat that big, Pa?" Just

At left, a steam powered boat on the Ouachita River. Photo courtesy of the Ouachita River Foundation.



At left, a ferry over the Ouachita River at Camden; circa 1930. Photo courtesy of the Arkansas State Archives.



then the boat let out a loud noise like Sammie had never heard before. And he'd never seen clouds of smoke belching from the top of anything except his cabin back in Mississippi.

"You know I haven't and...well, it's a steamboat. That's what is causing that smoke. The steamboat captain was just now blowing his horn to let everyone know he's coming into the wharf over there," and her pointed to a big ramp near them that went to the water's edge.

"I heard that some of the settlers were coming in by steamboat from all the way down in New Orleans—guess that's where this river goes, or at least it goes to the old' Mississippi way down below where we crossed it.

"Hurry, son, come with me; we'd better find that post office. This place is going to get real busy when that boat starts unloading folks. Lucie, we'll be back as soon as we can."

As soon as the two Neals, father and son, got to the top of the rise where the businesses were, Sammie looked back down at the steamboat about to tie up at the wharf. "What a sight!" Sammie thought, and he hoped someday he'd get to ride on one.

Just then Thomas got the attention of a man passing on the street and asked him where the post office was.

"See that big building right over there?" the man asked. "Well, that's the court house and the post office is in it."

"Much obliged sir," Thomas replied and the two men touched the brims of their hats to each other as they parted.

Sun Shines on the Neal Family

When Tom and Sammie got to the post office, Sammie just politely sat down outside where he could watch people coming in and out of the court house. Then Tom walked into the little room that was the Camden Post Office; the postmaster⁴ was saying to a man at the counter, "Now, John, here's the form. Now it wants you to put the legal description of where you want to have your post office. And they are wanting you to tell them how close is the next post office—don't want them on top of each other. You're the only one been in here except ole George Adams—now his trading post is 'bout 14 mile west of here on the Washington Road like yours, and yours is gonna be 'bout 25 mile from here. Seems like the people up in Washington want them to be a least four mile 'part, so there shouldn't be a problem. But if I was you, don't let any moss grow 'aneith yer feet. Oh, you need to tell them the name you want to call the post office. You'll only get that name if no one else as claimed it. Decided what you want to call your post office?"

Before John could tell him he thought he'd try the name of "Caney," the postmaster interrupted him.

"Hey, hold up, John, an' let me see whut this man wants," and he turned to Tom Neal and nodded a silent greeting.

Tom didn't waste any time, "My name is Tom Neal and I'm expectin' a letter to be waiting here from a Jim McAteer. I'm here to pick it up."

Postmaster Rainey reached back to a cabinet with about 20 cubby holes arranged to sort the letters by alphabet. Reaching in the one that had "N" painted below it, the Postmaster pulled out the

4 *U.S. Postal records listed James Vaughn as the Camden Postmaster until April 1849, at which time he was replaced by John S.H. Rainey. Rainey would serve until 1851 when he was replaced by Edward Woodland. By Camden's name was indicated (c.h.) which this author has interpreted to mean the Post Office was in the Court House.*

15 Sep 1849

Tom and Lucindy,

Take road to Washington. Go past Cypress Creek. Turn up first trail to the north and go 3 mile or so. Look for smoke from a cabin. That won't be our place but ours close by.

Jim and Violet

Oh, if Pete McCollum has any Christmas candy, bring us all some.

only letter in it.

“Yup, here ‘tis,” and handed the letter to Tom.

The Postmaster and McNeely were going to start their conversation but both held up. Tom had gotten their attention. Tom, without noticing them, ripped open the letter and read it mumbling the words just about loud enough for everyone to hear.”

Tom, a little perplexed by the instructions, was reading the letter a second time when the postmaster cleared his throat. When Tom looked up the two men were smiling at him. Postmaster Rainey said, “Mr. Neal, this is your lucky day.” They each reached out their hands to Tom and said, “Welcome to Ouachita County, Tom.”

Then the postmaster continued, “I’m John Rainey, been postmaster since April. This man here is John McNeely; he’s got a little trading post about 25 mile from here. Follow those instructions McAteer gave you and you’ll go right by John’s place.”

Then McNeely took over, “Listen, I’ve met Jim and “Vilet,” even been up to their place. You and your family camp with me tonight along with some other wagons, and I’ll get you to McAteer’s place by day after tomorrow. Besides my being over here talking about opening a post office, I’m loading up supplies that should be coming in on that steamboat that just probably saw.

“See this street out front—that’s Washington Street. When you get ready to leave here, just drive your wagon right up this street heading west—about a mile and a half out there you’ll come to a bayou and you should see a few other wagons setting up camp there too. I’ll join you all directly. My idee’ for us all is to stay there tonight, and we’ll all head out together early in the morning. I’ll get you to old Jim McAteer’s place, and I’d be obliged for any business you kin give me at my trading post in the future. We’re in this all together.

“Well, fellows, I’d better get down to that boat before those goods of mine get in the wrong hands. See you later tonight, Tom.”

When John McNeely had left, the postmaster turned his attention on Tom. “Now, Tom—McNeely is a straight shooter. It’s good you two hooked up. Now, a man don’t ever ask too much ‘bout another’s business. Most of the settlers coming in here brought money with them so they can buy that

government land that's being sold for \$1.25 an acre. Now Sheriff Grant⁵ has his office next door at our little jail and he's in here 'bout every day and give me the news. Says we're starting to get some bad types wanting to rob the settlers of their money. So one can't be too careful, and you can expect the Sheriff will be helping watch over you all out there at the bayou this evening.

"The other option might be that if a man had any money, and I ain't sayin' you do or don't, I'd say you walk that money over to the bank right now and leave it with them. Problem is we got a lot of different businesses here but 'nary a bank, yet. We got a newspaper, hotels, saloons, grocers, lawyers, dry goods, barbers—but no bank.⁶ So, if you had any money, and I ain't sayin' you do or don't, hide it well and stay with other wagons like McNeely's group until you get to McAteer's place."

Rainey went on, "Now...how much do you know about this land purchase deal that's here—this government land for \$1.25 an acre?"

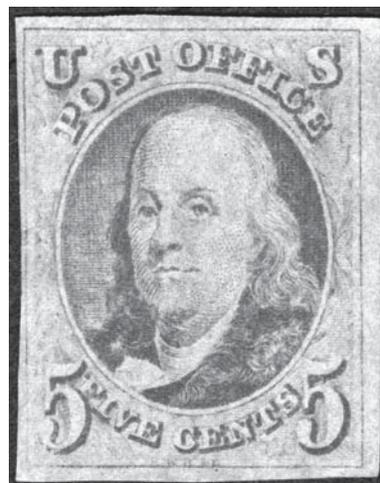
Tom shuffled his feet and said, "Well not as much as I need to know, that's for sure."

Rainey continued, "Well over there on the wall is a notice from the Federal Land Office down at "Shampanoly" (Champagnolle) about 30 mile down river. I got some extras of it and I'll send you off with one. It tells about your needing to file your entry for your land and pay the cost—then they will make sure it's available and not already spoken for. So you're going to have to go down there in person. Now, your place is going to be about 30 miles in the other direction just about—so if you got money guard it well until you need it to take down there to "Shampanoly."

"You're lucky again, Tom. Jim McAteer's got this just about figured out already for you, and he's probably scouted out the land around him that's good. He can help you step off your land. If you don't know how yet, he'll help you with the section, township and range stuff needed to pinpoint your spot. Plus, if need be, the county has a surveyor that McNeely can probably get out there to help when he gets time. Right now he's just about the busiest beaver in this whole county."

He paused a second and then said, "Well, I've had my say. Looks like I've got more people coming in. Pleased to meet you, Tom, and I know I'll be seeing you again." Tom thanked the man and started to leave but stopped and said, "Oh, my wife wanted this letter mailed. And also who's Pete McCollum Jim mentioned."

The postmaster took the letter, collected a nickel from him for postage, and said, McCollum's store is right across the street, and yes, he said, McCollum had Christmas candy.



Above, this five-cent stamp was, issued in 1847, was the first ever issued by the U.S. Post Office. Prior to 1847, all stamps were issued locally.

⁵ *Goodspeed's History of Ouachita County, Arkansas*, lists G.L. Grant as Sheriff from 1848 until 1854.

⁶ Per Jerry McKelvy, Nevada County historian, in 2016: "A newspaper article from 1848 has this description of Camden: Steamboats run between Camden and New Orleans six to eight months of the year. There are two churches (Methodist and Baptist), three schools (a male and female academy and a primary school), one printing office, five large mercantile businesses and several smaller ones, two hotels, numerous boarding houses, and other shops. The professions of law and medicine are well represented. The city has only two licensed dram shops (liquor stores)."

“Bought some this morning but if I don’t stop eating it, there won’t be any left for the family,” he said with a little laugh.

Back at the Wagon Along the Ouachita

When Tom and Sammie got back to the wagon, he found Lucinda and the children enjoying themselves with the other settler families. Tom took Lucie aside, showed her Cousin Jim’s letter and told her all that had happened at the post office. Then he called out, “Sammie, why don’t you take your Ma and show her where that McCollum store is, and you all get some Christmas candy for us to take to our new home. Lucie, you take little Mary (the seven-year old) with you; I’ll keep the younger ones and watch over our stock and things.”

As the three-some left and started up the hill, the words of Postmaster Rainey were still heavy on Tom’s mind. Yes, he and Lucindy did have money with them—about \$200. Some was hidden in the wagon but most was being carried by Lucinda and him, hidden in various ways. And a little money was even sewn into Sammie’s coat.

They would need a minimum of half their money to buy the first 80 acres of land. Plus there might be some other costs charged by the Federal Land Office. At any case, Tom decided he wouldn’t leave the wagon again until they got to Jim and Violet’s place—he’d always have his musket handy plus his hunting knife he always wore; and he planned on being watchful of the people who came around who had no business being around.

About an hour later, here came Lucinda, Sammie and Mary got back to the wagon all happy, and each sucking on a stick of candy. According to Lucinda, McCollum’s was the nicest general store she had ever been in.

In his store, Mr. McCollum had let each of them sample one NECCO⁷ wafer, a new candy that was immediately popular back east and down in New Orleans where McCollum’s shipments came from. Then when Sammie blurted out about the little ones back at the wagon, Peter McCollum threw in a few of the wafers for them to taste.

At the wagon, everyone by the baby, “Billy”, got to taste one.

Lucinda, ever budget conscious, thought the new wafers were a little too expensive; instead she purchased good sized bags of rock and stick candy to take along to their new home. She quickly hid the bags safely within the contents of the wagon as securely as if this cherished cargo were money.

Around the Bayou Campfire

With their cow and their mule each tied to the wagon and little Sammie walking along making



The NECCO candy wafers, invented in 1847, are a favorite of present-day Civil War enactors wishing to carry an authentic candy from that time period.

⁷ In 1847, these candy lozenges were invented by English immigrant, Oliver Chase, and eventually manufactured by New English Confectionery Company as NECCO wafers. It was popular among soldiers in the Civil War, and today, battlefield re-enactors carry them in an attempt to be authentic in every way.



Above, the McCollum-Chidester House in Camden, Arkansas. Early merchant, Peter McCollum, built the house in 1847 using materials brought by steamboat up the Ouachita River from New Orleans. The house was purchased by stagecoach owner, John Chidester, in 1858. Today, the house is home of the Ouachita County Historical Society. Photo courtesy of the Encyclopedia of Arkansas.

Two campfires were ablaze because it was getting cold on that December evening. Everyone in the camp stood up and looked to see who was rolling in. A young black boy strode toward Tom's wagon and motioned to a vacant place in the semi-circle of wagons. After Tom took that place, he saw there was room for two more wagons to make a full circle. He didn't see McNeely in the bunch but the boy came up to Tom, smiling and friendly, and said he belonged to McNeely—that his master would be along shortly⁸.

There wasn't any need for Tom to build his family a fire. It was obvious everyone would huddle around the ones already started until bedding down time—immediately a little community of settlers was formed—immediately it was a happy place. In no time the women folk seemed to fall into a natural rhythm to fix enough food for everyone. It was cornbread and beans like just about every night on the trail from Mississippi but that was appreciated by all.

Just before dark, two wagons rolled in, loaded down with supplies. John McNeely was leading the first one. A young man appearing to be in his twenties was leading the second wagon. Tom heard

sure the pigs didn't dawdle (Tom could have rode the mule but chose to walk at the head of the oxen). Sammie, Tom's Shadow was walking too and being ever watchful of the pigs; Lucinda had everyone else up in the wagon seat.

The Neal family moved up Washington Street from the river on their way to the camp site McNeely had told them to find. Near the outskirts of the little settlement that had been growing up right along Washington Street, Lucinda pointed out a really nice house up on a rise to the north.

"I was told to look for his house when we left town. I'm pretty sure that house belongs to Mr. McCollum. It sure is fancy ain't it?"

Tom Neal, walking along side the oxen, slowed them down a bit for everyone to get a look at the fancy house; then he gave the oxen the signal to move out. He thought Lucinda felt the same as him—the simple life on their own piece of land was both their dream—living in a town like this wasn't ever going to be for them. As for young Sammie, was he impressed by the pretty house? What house? Sammie had never taken his mind off that steamboat moored down at the Camden wharf. Now that would be something for him to dream about.

About an hour before sunset, Tom came up on a group of three wagons just off the road in a nice dry area but near a little bayou where water could be had.

⁸ In the 1850 Census of Slave Inhabitants, John McNeely was listed as owning three slaves, a 40-year old female, a 13-year old male, and a four-year old male. Living in McNeely's household of "Free Inhabitants" was a 24-year old male by the name of William Brown.

him call the man “Billy”, short for William. McNeely’s boy ran to McNeely’s wagons and started getting camp set up for the three of them. When it was dark, McNeely came in the light of the brightest campfire and addressed the menfolk and their wives. He motioned over toward Tom and said, “Now Tom Neal over here, he’s lucky; he knows where he wants to end up—he just needs a little help to make sure he don’t get off on the wrong path and be sort of stuck. I been to where he’s going to home-stead so that’s that—he’ll get there.

“Now, the rest of you, what is it, three families?” McNeely said, looking over to his boy who nodded yes. “Who all knows where he’s wanting to get to?”

Two of the men raised their hands—one wanted to go up to Mount Moriah⁹ and he’d come once before and knew how to get there—he just felt good about being in their group of wagons as far as they went. The second man said he was told by relatives to go to where this old Washington Post Road crossed Caney Creek; he was to stop and camp there—they would be looking for him and take care of him after that.

The third man who didn’t hold up his hand looked kind of embarrassed. Well, he said, he and his wife just headed out seeing what the future held. They didn’t have any children, and they really didn’t know where they wanted to end up. Everyone seemed to nod their heads as if that’s well and good.

McNeely spoke up, “Well sir, that’s all well and good. Why don’t you and your missus visit with the other folks, and you can talk to me too. Down the trail, I’d suggest you maybe tag along with one of these other wagons. There’s a lot of land out there but it’s wilderness. Be lots of times we all need someone else to help, or someone needs our help. So you all visit with each other night. We’ll head out at daybreak tomorrow.”

With that McNeely called his party together and gave them some instructions. Then he headed for his bed roll; it wasn’t long before the whole camp was asleep except for McNeely’s helpers who, all night long, alternated between patrolling the circle of wagons and catching a quick nap on one of the bed rolls.

Into the Wilderness

The settlers were all up at the crack of dawn, and the women folk went to fixing up batches of biscuits and brewing pots of coffee. John McNeely threw in a side of smoked bacon to top it all off. He had brought smoked bacon into Camden to put on his account at one of the stores. Maybe because it was almost Christmas, he just decided to hold back a side and treat the new settlers with it. Everyone had a good breakfast and was ready to move out.

With McNeely in the lead and his other wagon in the rear, the little wagon train rolled back on the Washington Post Road and started west.

The distance to McNeely’s trading post was about twenty miles. McNeely decided to see how it went—he’d like to get the wagons all the way there before dark, but he didn’t want to push too hard. He’d just see how it went. But in the wagon train’s favor was cool weather with dry conditions and a solid road on which the oxen would have good footing.

It was almost dark when the wagons came up on a little cabin beside the road—that was the McNeely trading post. Back in the trees were some smaller cabins and farm buildings. Everyone was

9 The post office at Mount Moriah was established in 1844 by William Nations.

dead tired, so all the men and their families did what chores necessary to go through the night, and everyone was asleep again.

Again the following morning, all the new settlers were up at dawn getting their breakfast and doing all necessary to move on. Eventually McNeely came out of the biggest cabin away from the trading post and went from settler to settler finding out their plans and wishing them well. The settler who didn't know where he was headed decided to follow the settler heading for Mt. Moriah. He said he'd go all that way to see what it looked like and would double back if nothing suited him.

The settler who was to take the Washington Road to Caney Creek and camp there waiting for his relatives to find him was about to head out. McNeely asked the settler to hold up.

"Tom, why don't you go off with him. Not far down the road you'll cross Cypress Creek, go about a half mile past the Creek and you'll see a trail wide enough for a wagon heading off to the north. Take that road and before long you'll run into some other folks who can guide you to McAteer's place. Oh, and I hope to have a post office set up here eventually but it may take a couple of years. We'll be going back and forth to Camden about every 10 days or so; let me know if you want me to take or pick up anything for you."

"Oh, one other thing, you'll pass close to Wesley Green's¹⁰ place. Now, if he wants you to see him, he'll be out. Otherwise just go on by. He's a decent fellow—younger than you or me, but he's been here longer and still adjustin' to all of us coming in lately. On top of that, he's not a real southerner—come from Kentuck, he did.

"Now a pretty recent settler up there is Leroy "Puree-fy."¹¹ I expect him to be out working with his men; he's a real sociable type it seems, and he'll give you some guidance from that point on. He's from Georgia, and I expect he's going to try to put together a real plantation if everything goes as he plans.

"Oh say hello to everyone up there for us."

McNeely started to walk away and stopped abruptly. He still wasn't through talking, and this he intended for the other settler as well.

"Now, don't be concerned but there are still a few Choctaws around. Last I heard, there's one family living up on Caney Creek; up west of the area where you're going, Tom."

Tom furrowed his brow and blurted out, "But I thought they were moved out over ten years

Thomas & Lucinda's Children

(All but Thomas M. Neal, born in 1853, would have been with the Thomas Neal wagon in December 1849).

1. **Samuel James NEAL**, (born 16 August 1841, Alabama -- died 23 October 1906, Arkansas.
2. **Mary NEAL** was born about 1842 in Mississippi. We don't have her death date.
3. **Robert Stewart NEAL**, born about 1845, Mississippi; died 10 October 1891.
4. **Elizabeth NEAL** was born about 1846 in Mississippi. She died after 1870 at the age of 24.
5. **William NEAL** was born about 1848 in Mississippi. He died before 1860 at the age of 12 in Arkansas.
6. **Thomas M. NEAL**, born 1853, Arkansas; married Sarah E. WOOD, about 1873; died 1905, Nevada Co., Arkansas.

10 Wesley H. Green's land patent in Sec. 17, Township 13, Range 20, was dated in 1848, seven years before the date of John McNeely's land patent and nine years before that of Thomas Neal's.

11 The settler was Leroy Purifoy (often pronounced as "Puree-fy" in the French tradition at that time). Purifoy's first land patent was in Section 9, Township 13, Range 20, just one mile east of Thomas Neal's first land patent in Section 8. Both the Purifoy and the Neal patents were dated on the same day, July 1, 1857.

ago.”

McNeely replied, “Well, yes, but there were so few settlers back then, quite a few of them Choctaws just stayed on because the hunting was good here—they had a good life here and weren’t bothering anyone. So they’ve just been sticking around until the time come there was so many of us that everybody be uncomfortable. They’ve been slowly moving over to Indian Territory in recent years I’ve been told. I only know of that one family I’m telling you about in this area.

“You know, these Indians, they’ve been moved from Alabama, then Mississippi, then Arkansas.¹² They are tired of moving, but they know they have to. Just thought I’d tell you all. Don’t do anything rash to cause trouble with them, understand?”

Tom should have realized that little Sammie, his shadow, was standing behind him, and he heard every word that was said. It didn’t really bother the little fellow—first steamboats and now Indians. “I’m going to like this place,” he thought to himself.

After expressing his genuine gratitude to McNeely for his guidance, Tom led his oxen back on the road with his cow and mule tied to the wagon and Sammie herding the pigs along. The other settler was about 50 yards ahead, and that was well enough to keep from eating the dust kicked up.

Tom and the other settler had no trouble finding the wagon trail on which to turn north. Before the two settlers parted, Tom said, “I don’t think I got your name,”

“Walker, John Walker.¹³ I’m sure we’ll be seeing each other around. Good luck to ya.”

Without any further delay the two settlers headed off in their separate directions.

Wagon Trail Between Caney and Cypress Creeks

On the trail north, Tom’s wagon soon passed a place that looked settled, Tom figured that must be the Wesley Green place. As McNeely suggested, Tom didn’t do a lot of gawking and just went on up the trail at his steady pace—no one made an appearance.

After they had gone on what Tom thought was about two miles, the trail led into a creek on the right and he knew that was Cypress Creek again. Being December, the creek was low and easy to cross. Tom was at the place he felt he needed to pay special attention—he had to be close to his destination.

Almost immediately after crossing the creek, Tom noticed three men who were cutting timber and working on some kind of a fenced stock pen up to the right. They had already seen Tom’s wagon, and a man had reached the road and was waiting for Tom’s wagon.

“Name’s La-roy Puree-fy. Who might you all be?” the man said quite cordial like. When Tom introduced his family to him, Purifoy said, “Well, I been tol’ to look out fo’ you fokes. You’ah Jim McAtee’s kin, ain’t ya? Well they’s been lookin’ fo ya’ah fo a couple of weeks now. Listen, we ain’t been here too long our selves; our cabin is over to the east—can’t see it from here. Those are my men up there working with me.”¹⁴

12 See “Indian Removal,” Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture.

13 In 1857, John R. Walker obtained land grants for a total of 360 acres of land in Sections 20 and 29, Township 13, Range 20. The land was a short distance from the historic old village called Young.

14 In the 1850 Schedule of Slave Inhabitants, Leroy Purifoy owned four slaves—they seemed to be listed as husband-wife combinations—a 29-year-old male and a 27-year old female followed by a 24-year old male and a 19-year old female.

Exhibit 2—1850 Ouachita County Census Listing Thomas Neal

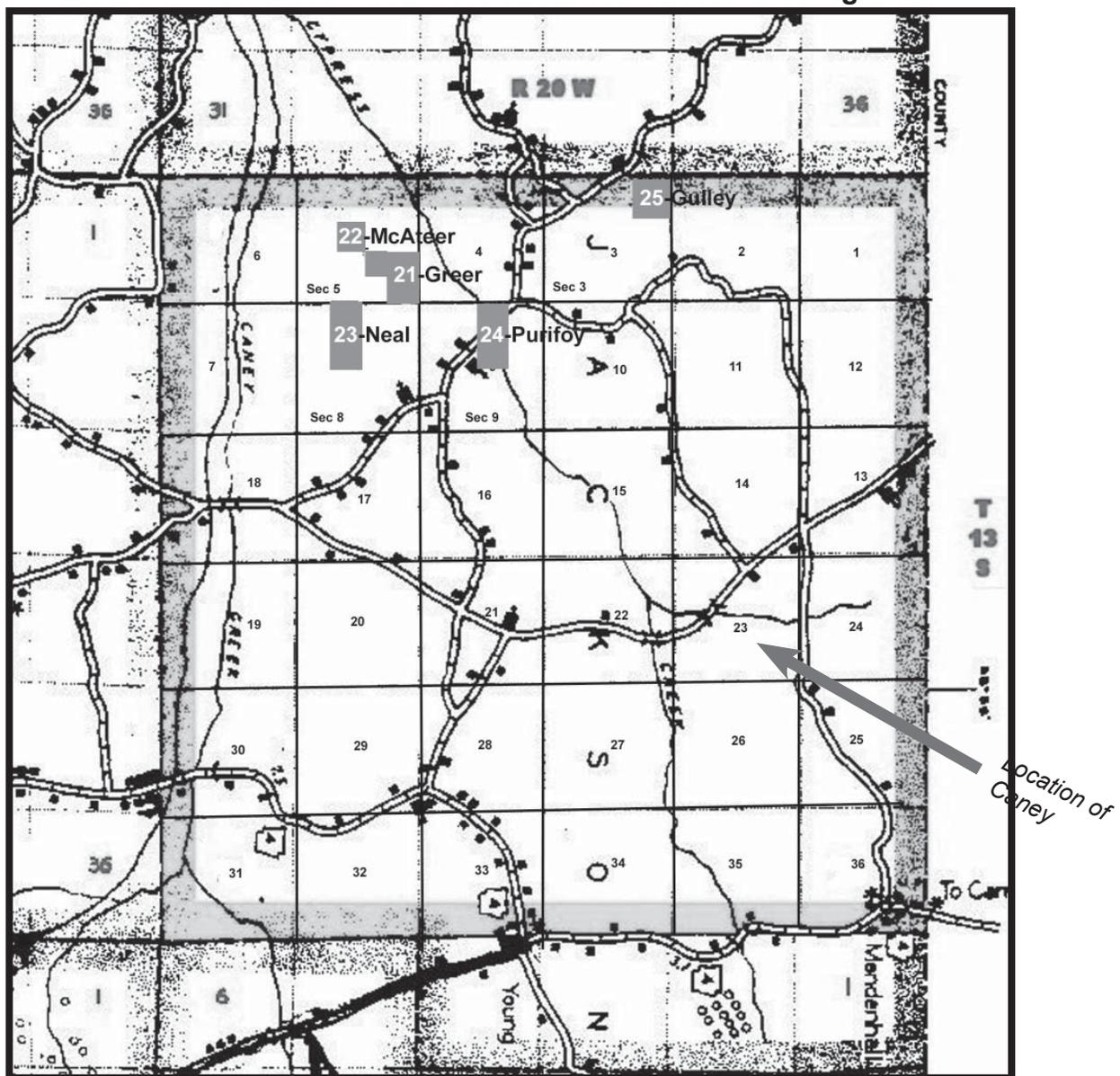
SCHEDULE I.—Free Inhabitants in William's Township in the County of Ouachita State of Arkansas enumerated by me, on the 25 day of Novr. 1850. Peter Ingram Ass't Marshal.

Dwelling-house numbered in the order of visitation.	Family numbered in the order of visitation.	The Name of every Person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age.	Value of Real Estate owned.	Place of Birth: Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Married within the year. (Marked within this year.)	Males over 20 years of age who cannot read & write.	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.	
			Age.	Sex.	White, black, or mulatto.							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
21	21	John M. Greer	45	M		Farmer		Ark				
		Amelia C. "	34	F				Ark				
		Alexander P.	17	M		Labourer		Ark				
		Harriet "	14	M				Ark				
		John W. "	10	M				Ark				
		Martha "	4	F				Ark				
22	22	James McArthur	32	M		Farmer		Ark				
		Udel "	34	F				Ark				
		John A. "	12	M				Ark				
		William G. "	8	M				Ark				
23	23	Thomas Keel	35	M		Farmer		Ark				
		Lacinda "	34	F				Ark				
		Samuel "	11	M				Ark				
		Mary "	8	F				Miss				
		Robert "	5	F				Miss				
		Elizabeth "	4	F				Miss				
		William "	2	M				Miss				
24	24	Leroy Purpor	35	M		Farmer		Ark				
		Elizabeth "	33	F				Ark				
		John "	13	M				Ark				
		Martha "	11	F				Ark				
		William L. "	9	M				Ark				
		Thomas W. "	7	M				Ark				
		Elizabeth "	4	F				Ark				
		Francis "	1	M				Ark				
		Shaul L. Gully	21	M		Labourer		Ark				
25	25	John Gully Sr.	63	M		Farmer	500	Ark				
		Luency "	60	F				Ark				
		John Gully Jr.	28	M		Farmer		Ark				
		Galvin "	23	M		Labourer		Ark			1	
		Georg "	16	M		Student		Ark			1	
		Matthew "	14	M				Ark			1	
		Robt J. Black	14	M				Ark			1	
		Mary E. "	10	F				Ark				
		Christopher G.	6	M				Ark				
		John "	4	F				Ark				
		William G. Gully	23	M		Labourer		Ark				

NEIGHBORS IN 1850—Below is a table showing the neighbors on each side of Thomas & Lucinda when the 1850 Census was taken (see Exhibit 2) as well as the date and location of each neighbor's first land patent. Below the table is a plat map of present-day Jackson Township (Missouri Township in 1850) with the land parcels plotted for each of the five families. The location of (old) Caney is shown by the arrow at the lower right.

Household #	Couple's Name	Date of First Land Patent	Location of 1st Patent Sec/Twp/Rng
21	Greer, John M & Amelia	9/1/1856	5 13 20
22	McAteer, James & Violet	3/1/1855	5 13 20
23	Neel, Thomas & Lucinda	7/1/1857	8 13 20
24	Purifoy, Leroy & Elizabeth	7/1/1857	9 13 20
25	Gulley, John M & Nancy	7/1/1861	3 13 20

Exhibit 3 -- 1st Land Patents for Thomas Neal and His Neighbors



“I bet you’re anxious to see your place McAtee thought you’d like. Look straight west from where we are—well it’s one mile that way almost exactly—that is if it suits you plenty to choose from right now but don’t know for how long.”

Thomas had to admit to Purifoy that he didn’t mean to be inhospitable but he was sure anxious to get to Lucinda’s cousin’s place.

Purifoy understood. Pointing on up the trail, he said, “They’s just up there—a little farther along you’ll smell the smoke from the John Gree’h cabin. The trail goes back across the creek and leads right up by his cabin. When you get to his place, you’ll see the smoke from Jim McAtee’s cabin farther to the northwest a little bit. You’ah be home!”

As Tom got ready to pull out Purifoy threw in something else that was music to his ears. “Now, Thomas, bad weather’s coming on and we need to get you’ah in a cabin quick like. I already told McAtee’ I could spare one of my men for a day or so to help get the cabin up. We’re all going to need to help each other, and I’m sure there’s a day I’ll need some help in return. Even though I have my two young men here, both Jim and John helped me for a day or so right after I arrived.”

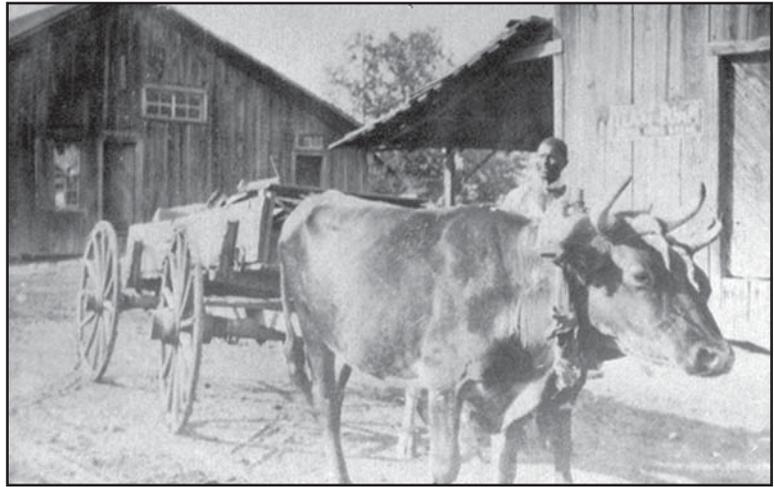
Tom gave the man the most grateful thanks he could give out, but before he could pull out, Purifoy stopped him again—”Seen your mule there—fine looking—before long let’s talk about studding him with the two mare horses I got. And for that matter, I got a boar who we can put with those two sows you got—course them sows need to get their strength back though—can see they come a long way.”

When Tom had his wagon out of ear shot from the Purifoy’s, he said to Lucie, “I’d say Mr. Puree-fy is pretty well set up, what with those two strong, young bucks helping him up on the hill. But, Lucie, I got a feeling we’re going to do just fine in these parts. Let’s go home!”

About 30 minutes after leaving the Purifoy place, the trail led back to Cypress Creek and after crossing over, Tom could see the smoke rising from a cabin just over the rise. The trail led right to the cabin of John Greer.

The Greers heard the wagon coming up the trail. When he saw in the distance it was a settler’s wagon, John Greer felt sure it must be the Neal family. They insisted all the Neals come into their rather sizable cabin, have something to drink and visit a little bit. Then Mr. Greer (who was up in his 40s) told Tom to load up and he’d walk them the rest of the way over to cousin Jim’s place.

They hadn’t gone very far before they saw smoke from the McAtee cabin; then they finally spotted the cabin. Lucie muttered, “Praise the Lord!”



Oxen were a very important work animal for early settlers and continued in use through the early 1900s. Above, a wagon pulled being pulled by oxen ca 1900 in Nevada County, Arkansas. Photo courtesy of the Nevada County Depot & Museum

Sammie Neal's Introduction to His New Home

For the rest of the day and throughout the night, the little McAteer cabin was busting at the seams with McAteer's family of four and the Neal family of seven. McAteer's ten-year old son, John, remembered Sammie from when they were younger, and they became best friends again almost immediately. For six-year old, William McAteer, these were new cousins who he didn't remember from before. John and Sammie would not have realized it at the time, but they would travel many roads and face many challenges together over the next couple of decades.

It was getting late, and the Neal family was really beat—everyone went to bed as soon as it was dark. The adults got the only two beds in the cabin and all the children slept on the floor.

The following day was yet another exciting one for the Neal family. The land Jim McAteer was to propose for them was just south of his own land but about a half mile south of the cabin. Before heading out, Tom's pigs were put into Jim's pig sty and his cow put into a field that had been fenced off close to the cabin.

During the previous two years, Jim had been clearing on his land south of his cabin so it was easy for Tom's wagon to go over a trail that had been created over time; then they arrived at the un-cleared and unclaimed plot Jim hoped Tom's family would like. From that point on, the two men started chopping away small trees and bushes to get the wagon onto the new land. By noon time, they had progressed about a quarter mile in and began clearing an area to set up camp.

Sammie and his cousins, John and William, were sent out to gather all the dead branches and wood they could find for the Neal family to burn through that first night. Lucie Neal had insisted—she wanted her family to spend that night on their “own land.”

While Lucie and Jim's wife, Violet, started getting a meal ready for everyone, Tom and Jim started walking in an ever widening circle. They were looking for two things—springs and good locations for the cabin and barn to be built. In almost no time, they found a spring with a steady flow about a thousand feet south of the camp. The water from the spring flowed nicely and made a little stream that led down to the west toward Caney Creek.

“You know, Tom, look there a little farther south—maybe 150 feet—how about you start your place there. It's a little higher up than the spring so you can look down and see what's coming up to it. Now with Lucie insisting you all stay here tonight, we'll go on back home after we eat and start doing chores. You all can get to work on clearing a path to your cabin site, and tomorrow I'll come spend bout a half day working. Then the day after tomorrow let's get a couple of more men here and get you a cabin built.”

Tom didn't know what to say but he understood—all the help wasn't for free—he'd be helping his current neighbors and those yet to come. It was the code that all settlers were living by, it seemed.

After the McAteers had left, Tom and Lucie worked energetically on the camp site on which they would spend their first night on their own land. They had been camping out for weeks but not in a wilderness area like this. While they kept a close eye on the younger children, they pretty well forgot about the ever-responsible but adventuresome Sammie.

While gathering wood earlier, Sammie had stumbled on a well-worn path that led to the north-west—he wanted so bad to explore down that path. Seeing that he wasn't needed at the camp site, he decided to take a chance; he was going to see where that path went with the hope he'd be back before the folks missed him.

The Choctaw Children (Fictional) Meet Sammie

Sammie had gone down the path so far that he couldn't see the camp where his parents were working; he couldn't even hear his Dad's axe chopping. Suddenly he saw the two children up ahead. Sammie wasn't alarmed and didn't bolt in fear; he just squatted down on the path and watched them.

The boy, older than Sammie, glanced toward him but just kept at his task. It seemed to Sammie the boy was setting an animal trap of some sort; and he felt that if the boy got distracted he'd trip the trap and have to start over again.

But the little girl, younger than Sammie, stopped digging at the base of a tree and just sat on the ground and stared at him. They were Indian children, Sammie knew. During his family's travels out of Mississippi, he'd seen the Indian families who were also on the move as well.

When the trap was set to the boy's satisfaction, the two children came up the path toward Sammie. They squatted down when they reached him, and the older boy motioned to the water gourd¹⁵ Sammie had around his neck. Sammie offered up his water gourd, and the two children each took long drinks because they apparently were very thirsty.

The older boy started to talk in short choppy sentences, and he used his hands and arms to try to make himself clear to Sammie.

"You come today...we go when sun come up," pointing to the west.

Raising his voice more, he continued: "Three times...you come...we go. Father say no more. We go...we stop...we go no more," and he held up four fingers.

Then with his voice quieter the boy said sternly, "You stay!" pointing to the ground. "Not come...no more."

The boy looked at Sammie with an asking look and said "Yes?" Sammie nodded.

Then the boy turned toward his trap. "Tomorrow...when sun up...trap mine...sun go down...trap yours." Again he looked at Sammie for agreement. Sammie said yes and as the children got up to leave, Sammie handed out his water gourd to the boy. "We trade," he said.

Both of the Indian children smiled as they got up and ran down the path in the other direction away from where Sammie had come.

When the Indian children had left, Sammie was curious about the tree the little girl was digging around. But when he got to the spot, he recognized what it was—he had heard his father and Uncle James talk about a "witness tree." It was a tree right at the corner of a person's land that marked the corner boundary. His dad would want to know about this spot. On the opposite side, the tree had some numbers carved in it, and there were piles of rocks lined up like arrows on the ground—one pile pointing north and one pointing west.

Sammie understood that he was at a corner of the new property his family was going to homestead on. The tree had been marked to show the corner of Uncle Jim's land. He also realized he'd



Above, a water gourd

¹⁵ A gourd refers to the fruits of plants similar to pumpkins, cucumbers and melons. When hollowed and dried out, the gourd's shell hardens and can be used to hold water. In olden days, such gourds made for a nice canteen to be carried around.

probably traveled farther from his family's wagon than he should have, and he needed to hustle back to them. Sammie certainly had an exciting first day at his new home in the forested wilderness of southwest Arkansas.

First Night on the New Neal Land

His parents had just begun to be concerned when Sammie ran back into their camp.

"Pa, Pa," Sammie exclaimed almost out of breath. "I found one—a "witness tree" and he pointed in the direction from which he had come.

"And Pa, I saw these Indian children. We traded. I got an animal trap all set up for my water gourd. Was that alright, Pa?"

Still too excited to stop talking, Sammie went on, "Pa, they are leaving tomorrow morning. Said for us to stay here, kind of nice like—not to follow them. Who are they Pa?"

Well, Thomas was really wanting to get onto his boy for wandering off like that, but he'd brought back so much information. Tom had so many questions to ask the boy so he just thought the two of them would sit down over at the camp fire, eat some stew and talk about Sammie's adventure.

Thomas began, "Now first, Sammie, maybe you'd better walk me over to that witness tree and that trap tomorrow so I can see them. And there's a lot of work needs to be done around here for quite a spell so that we will have some kind of a cabin for us to live in. So I need you with me all the time. We need to get some of this land cleared and ready to plow and plant a garden before long so we might have something to eat. But we also need to set up lots more animal traps—one won't do. You understand, son?"

Sammie nodded and said, "Yes, Pa." But he felt so good about their new home already.

About that time, Sammie's mother, Lucinda, came over to sit for a moment although she had much left to do before it got dark. Quickly, Sammie's father told his mother all that their young son had experienced during the afternoon. Sammie wished he hadn't done it because he could feel his mother's eyes burning through him. "I might be in a lot of trouble, still," he thought.

Thomas continued, "Now Sammy I'm guessing the Indian children were from that Choctaw family living down that way that Mr. McNeely and your Uncle Jim told us about. Now that Indian boy had probably heard his father tell the white settlers about them moving on and he's just repeating what he's heard. But, if the Injun boy is right, they likely will be gone tomorrow.

"Boy, I'm hoping to see that animal trap. Jim says those Indians are experts at trapping, and I'd like to see how they do it. We're going to need a lot of game for our food this winter until we're on our feet. And I'm wanting to see that witness tree. That marker will help us step off our land. We'll put "witness tree" markers at every corner so people will know this land is spoken for."

Thomas and Lucy started to talk about the location of their cabin and Sammie got kind of bored. Then it was time for everyone to bed down for the night. Their first day on their own land was about to end.

Tom and Lucinda Reflect on the 1840s

Before nightfall, Thomas Neal had unloaded the wagon of their possessions and secured them under the wagon. That way his family could sleep in the wagon bed and not be on the damp ground. They had spent the previous night at Lucinda's cousin's place and Lucie knew they should return there tomorrow; but she wanted for her family to spend one night on their new land; a dream had come through for Lucinda and the family. To be on land that didn't belong to anyone but the U.S. Government, and it was willing to let them have it for a reasonable price. They just had to be on the land.

Exhibit 4—Thomas Neal's 1861 Land Patent

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

CERTIFICATE }
No. 13,209 }

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Whereas Thomas Neal of Ouachita County Arkansas

has deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States, a Certificate of the REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at Champagnolle whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said Thomas Neal

according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820, entitled "An act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for the south west quarter of the north east quarter of section seven in Township Thirteen South of Range Twenty west in the District of Kansas subject to sale at Champagnolle Arkansas containing forty acres according to the official plat of the Survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the SURVEYOR GENERAL, which said tract has been purchased by the said Thomas Neal

NOW KNOW YE, That the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress in such case made and provided, HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said Thomas Neal

and to his heirs, the said tract above described: To have and to hold the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances, of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said Thomas Neal

and to his heirs and assigns forever.

In Testimony Whereof, I, Abraham Lincoln PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these Letters to be made PATENT, and the SEAL of the GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed.

GIVEN under my hand, at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the First day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty one and of the INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES the eighty fifth



BY THE PRESIDENT: Abraham Lincoln

By W. U. Flood

Secretary.

J. S. Granger

Recorder of the General Land Office.

With the children already asleep in the wagon, Thomas and Lucinda sat around the camp fire that was getting low and look up at the millions of stars in the blackened sky.

“Well, Lucie, it’s taken us almost ten years from when we left South Carolina to finally get to what we were looking for—our own piece of land. Now to look at it, I think this land will be good for crops; it’s sandy and I think my plough will go through it once all the tree roots rot away. I’m really happy to have it.”

Thomas knew what Lucie was thinking, “...now if we could just get a roof over our head.”

“Thomas,” Lucie asked, “how long before we get the cabin up?”

Tom really didn’t know but he was hoping it would be up in less than a week. But they also needed a shelter built for the livestock and for their hogs.

Tom got out his two axes and his shovels; with a whet stone, started to sharpen them as he sat there. He was going to start felling trees in earnest the very next day. He would be clearing land for several years to come. It’s what a settler does when they are the first to homestead on a new piece of land.

Tom thought about the process that would play out—once the trees were down and the land cleared except for stumps, he’d start tilling the land as best he could, maneuvering around the stumps. Once the stumps had died, Tom would set to burning them out. It would be awhile before a field was completely cleared. He had lots of work ahead but he was excited about it.

His plan was straightforward—clear land until sometime in February and then start getting crops out. He didn’t dread it for a moment. Working on one’s own place made a lot of difference to a man.

As Lucie climbed in the wagon to rest among all the children, Thomas said, “Lucie, tomorrow, I want you and the kids to go back to cousin Jim’s and stay until the cabin is up. And we need to get some of this wilderness cleared off before it’s safe for all of you to be over here. But I want Sammie with me. He’s a big help, and I’m sure this is where he wants to be.”

She nodded that she understood. So Lucie turned in and Thomas stayed up a little longer, and thought back to the past week since they landed in Camden. It was full of memories for the ages.

Except for Death of Child, the 1850s Mostly Good to Thomas and Lucinda.

Times were hard for the Neal couple during their first couple of years on their new land. But



Above, depiction of a settler clearing land in Michigan. Anywhere trees had to be cleared, the most difficult task was removing the stumps. Source: Michigan State University “Agriculture in Michigan” online presentation

they made steady progress on taming the land to the point that Tom decided to lay claim to the land west of him toward Caney Creek. As time permitted, he started clearing that land to the point a new settler knew it had been taken.

Thomas and Lucinda hadn't been on their place too long until the storekeeper at Caney had his application for a post office approved. The Caney Post Office opened up on November 5, 1852. That was an improvement all the settlers in the Neal's neighborhood welcomed. It would still be a good while before a public school could be organized, and there wasn't an organized church yet either.

In 1853, Lucinda gave birth to a son, Thomas M. Neal. He was the only one of their six children to be born in Arkansas. During the decade, however, their son, William, passed away.

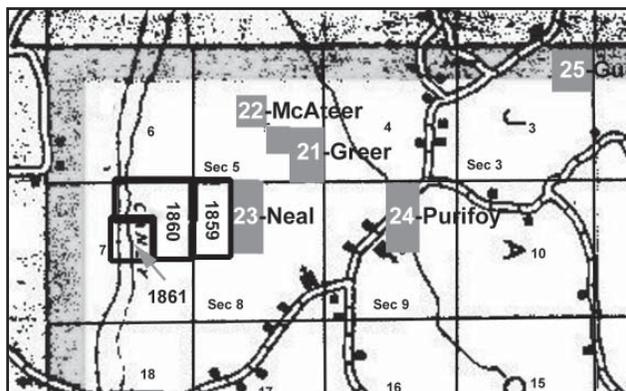
Many times during the 1850s, Thomas and his neighbors in Township 13, Range 20, made the long 60-mile trip to the Federal Land Office way over on the Ouachita River southeast of Camden in a town (now gone) called Champagnolle. It was a port at which thousands of bales of cotton was shipped from the area to places as far off as New Orleans.¹⁶

Thomas and his neighbor, Leroy Purifoy, made the trip over and back together more than once. There were others on the road for the same purpose, and Thomas felt a kinship with all who had stepped up and passed the same tests required to hold a Federal land patent. Thomas would make the trip to Champagnolle a total of four times, signing entry papers and paying the required price of the Federal land. Then he would return home and wait.

When the paper work was approved in Washington, DC, the finalized land patent certificate would be mailed back to Champagnolle. From there the certificate would be mailed to Thomas in care of the Caney Post Office. Those certificates would have arrived in 1857, 1859, 1860 and the last one, April 1, 1861.

Except for the last one, all of Thomas Neal's land patent papers included the signature of U.S. President, James Buchanan. Thomas Neal's April 1, 1861, Land Patent, for 40 acres, would give him a grand total of two whole quarters of land--320 acres. But the patent held the signature of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. When Tom's last certificate arrived in the Caney Post Office, there was no celebration—all was somber. Although few Camden newspapers made their way into Thomas's neighborhood, everyone knew that states, including Arkansas, were wanting to secede from the Union, in part, because Lincoln had been elected.

Thomas Neal, being a southerner since birth, and a citizen of the state of Arkansas for the past dozen years, was ready to support Arkansas in its decision about statehood.



Above, a plat map of the northwest corner of Twp. 20, Rng.13, in Nevada County, AR. Thomas Neal's original 80 -acre land grant is the gray area with the number 23 in it. The areas bordered to the west show 80-acres he was awarded in 1859, 120-acres in 1860 and a final 40-acres in 1861 making a total of 360 acres in all.

¹⁶ Once the seat of Union county, Champagnolle was replaced by El Dorado as the seat in 1844. But the Federal Land Office was placed there in 1845, and the river town remained important until the Civil War started in 1861. Source: Encyclopedia of Arkansas.

The events of Part 1 of Chapter 3 played out in the area depicted by the bottom half of the map below. The whole map will come into play in Part 2 involving the Civil War. Part 3 takes place in the areas of Bluff City, Chidester and Liberty in the upper portion of the map. This 1900 map is rare in that it shows Bluff City and Chidester, which still exist, as well as Caney and Liberty post offices that have disappeared many decades ago. Hence, this map helps to tell the Neal story from 1849 all the way up to the present time.

Exhibit 4 -- 1900 Geological Map of Eastern Nevada and Western Ouachita Counties

