

clipping from unnamed newspaper in Newport, Arkansas

Accidentally Shot

Ben Simmons of Tupelo Suffers Probably Fatal Shot by Dropping his Pistol While on Train.

Thursday, February 15, 1906 - Ben F Simmons, ex-assessor, and one o Jackson County's most prominent and substantial citizens, who lived near Tupelo, in Breckenridge township, lies in St. Vincent's Infirmary in a very low condition , with little hope of recovery, as a result of a wound from a pistol accidentally discharged while Mr. Simmons was en route to Little Rock on an Iron Mountain Train.

Mr. Simmons came to Newport Wednesday, leaving on No 3 at 5:10 p.m. with a party of friends. About 7 o'clock when the train was about twenty miles this side of the capital city, Mr. Simmons went into the toilet room. His friends heard a pistol shot and Mr. Simmons staggered out and would have fallen, but for help from Mr. Slayton.

Mr Simmons had carried a 38-caliber Colt revolver in his belt and the scabbard became inverted, let the pistol drop to the floor, which caused it's discharge. The ball entering his left side below the fifth rib and ranged upward, supposedly lodging in the neighborhood of his lungs.

There was not a doctor upon the train, and he was taken upon arrival to the infirmary, and there he is receiving every attention. His brothers, R.T. Simmons, Sheriff H.S. Simmons, and Dr J.F. Simmons went down on a late train that night, the last two named returning the next morning.

When they left the wounded man, to whom the hopes and sympathy of out people go out to, he was conscious there was some chance of his full recovery. He is 48 years of age and has always enjoyed rugged health.

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end clipping, AFB comments:

Ben Simmons did recover from the gunshot, He lived another 33 years and fathered 2 more children after the gunshot incident.

Granddaughter Wilma Elphingstone believed that Grandfather Ben's trip to Little Rock with a pistol was related to his jealous suspicion that a railroad conductor had eyes for his lovely young wife Lula. Wilma found this newspaper clipping in the microfilm files at Newport Library.

Grandson Ben Simmons Jones recalls feeling the bullet under the skin of his grandfather's chest on several occasions. Ben Jones also has a photograph of grandfather Ben holding rifle, standing beside his horse and a bear he had killed. Bear hunts in Mississippi -maybe same camp as writer William Faulkner - were a favorite hobby and pastime. see Faulkner's "Big Woods, the Hunting Stories" for stories that seem to reference Ben and his son Sax.

The Dr J F Simmons most likely is his 21 year old son, James Felix Simmons 1885-1968.

Ben's uncle Dr Joseph Bibb Simmons, died 1893 and is buried St Francis County, Ark

Also: From Deaths as Reported in Newport Weekly Independnt, 1901-1917, in Newport Library 6/15/00: Nov 16, 1909, Simmons, Mrs. Loretta

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