'Telling Their Story': Thomas Adolphus Hathaway/Tom Hays
Historical interment in Sowers Cemetery in Irving, Dallas County, Texas

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Thomas Adolphus 'Dolph' Hathaway was born in 1886 in Frisco, Collin County, Texas. Collin County is immediately north of Dallas County. He was the son of Richard Kinchen Hathaway and Agnes Mornia Holliday Hathaway.

Research reveals that Thomas was probably an only child. His father Richard Hathaway passed in 1889 and is interred in Collin County, Texas. His mother Agnes remarries and passed in 1905. She is interred as Mornia Agnes Holliday McDaniel in Denton County, Texas. Denton County is the county immediately north of Collin County.

Thomas Adolphus Hathaway married Brookie Chandler on August 7th, 1910, in Graham, Young County, Texas. Young County being 4 counties to the West of Collin County.

In the May 1910 census, Thomas and Brookie lived literally next door to each other. Brookie was living with her parents John Zechariah Chandler and Emma Jane Farmer Chandler and 3 siblings. John and Emma would have ten children with Brookie as their 8th child. Thomas Hathaway was a Farm hand living with The Ratcliff family, a young couple in their 20's with an infant.

Tom and Brookie were living in Henryetta, Okmulgee County, Oklahoma from at least 1914. Henryetta is close to the middle of the state. Per the obituary for Emma Chandler, Brookie's mother, Emma was living with Tom and Brookie in Henryetta at the time of her death in July of 1914. Brookie's father John had passed in 1911.

By 1917 Tom and Brookie had 2 children, son Gentry Kenneth aged 4 and daughter Loveta Mae was 1. A third child, daughter Alice Ozella, died in Henryetta in 1915 at 4 months old and was interred in the family cemetery in Finis, Jack County, Texas. Finis was a town on the border of Young and Jack counties that eventually disbanded and finally disappeared in the 1920's leaving today only the Finis Cemetery. Brookie's parents John and Emma Chandler are also interred in Finis Cemetery.

On Nov 16, 1917, Tom kissed his wife goodbye before leaving for work and told her what a good wife she was. That was not unusual for him since he loved his children dearly.

Tom worked as a mine inspector. Coal was mined in Henryetta from early 1900 until 1951 when mining operations were abandoned. His coworkers remembered Tom standing in a group at the entrance to a mine shaft but did not see him go in. Tom never returned home. His family assumed he had an attack of amnesia.

In the 1920 census Brookie and 7-year-old son Gentry were living in Wichita Falls, Wichita County, Texas. She was listed as widowed and a waitress in a café. Wichita County is two counties north of Young County, Texas. Daughter Loveta is not with them and may have lived with relatives in Jack County or Young County but unable to locate her in any 1920 census.

After 7 years Brookie declared Thomas Hathaway as deceased and married Lloyd Vandaveer prior to 1930.

In the 1930 census Brookie and Lloyd Vandaveer were living in Ennis, Ellis County Texas. Ellis County is the county directly south of Dallas County. Loveta and Gentry were with them and had been adopted by Lloyd who worked for the railroad.

Tom's daughter Loveta graduated from Ennis High School in 1934. She joined the Marines during WWII. In 1943 Loveta was stationed in Oklahoma City. The local newspaper, The Oklahoman, recognized her military service, telling of her meeting husband Willard McDuffie, yeoman 2nd class in the Navy, while they were both stationed in the same building in Dallas, Texas. They also told the story of Loveta's hunt for her father lost in Oklahoma 26 years before in 1917. How she always looks for a man with burly black hair and pronounced cleft chin every place she goes. Loveta quotes in the article 'I have a feeling someday I'll find him'.

Loveta and Willard divorced but Loveta married for a 2nd time in 1945 to Houston Freddie Brooks. Loveta and Freddie had no children of their own, but Freddie had two children from a previous marriage. Loveta and Freddie lived primarily on the Texas coast close to Houston most of their lives but are both buried in Ennis, Ellis County, Texas. Loveta, who passed in 1991, and her brother Gentry, passing in 1975, never found their father Thomas Hathaway while they were living. Unbeknownst to them was how close they were to their father all along.
In 2007, almost 100 years after Thomas' disappearance, descendants discovered that Thomas Aldous Hathaway moved to Texas between 1917 and 1919 and changed his name to Tom Hays. Tom may have moved initially to Delta County, Texas. Delta County being near the border of Texas and Oklahoma and NE of Dallas County.

In 1919 he married Helen Mae McMillan White. Helen had at least three children from a previous marriage to Alfred White who died in 1918 and is buried in Delta County. Helen and Tom had 7 children and appears that 5 of their children, born between 1919 and 1928, were all born in Delta County.

By 1930 the Hays family was living in the Sowers community in Dallas County and Tom was a laborer at Trinity Farms. The family lived for at least 6 years in Ward Four, Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana but were living back in the Sowers community by the early 1960's. By this time the Sowers community had been incorporated into the town of Irving.

Interestingly Tom named three of his children he had with Helen similar names as all three children he had with Brookie. Alma Ozell is similarly named as daughter Alice Ozella who passed in 1915. Daughter Loveta May Hays born in 1927 has almost identical name as daughter Loveta Mae Hathaway born in 1916. Son Kenneth Van Hays has the first name same as Gentry Kenneth Hathaway middle name who was born in 1907.

Tom passed in 1963 his occupation an employee of the Minyard's Grocery Store chain. His death certificate giving the fictious George Hays as his father but correctly naming his mother's maiden name as Holliday. Helen passed in 1977. Both are interred in Sowers cemetery as is Helen's daughter Clara White Watson, Clara's husband Ban and infant Frances Nadine. Clara Watson died two days before Tom Hays.

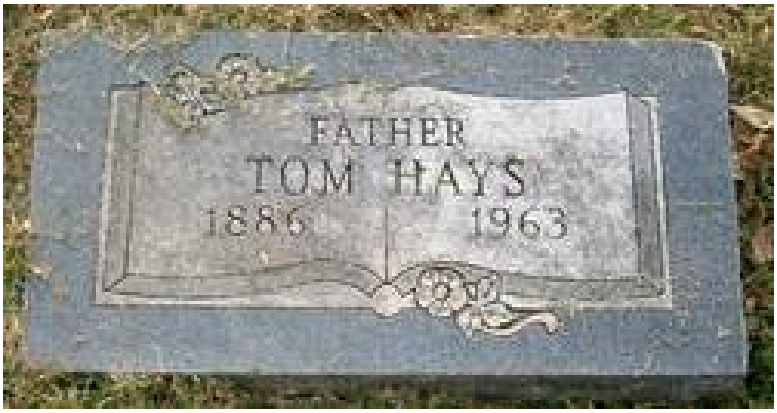
How and why Tom settled in Delta County in 1919 and then relocated to the Sowers Community in Dallas County in the 1930's and 1960's are unknown. He clearly did not have amnesia. Brookie Chandler's grandfather Alphonzo Chandler ran successful businesses in the counties surrounding Delta County so Tom may have been familiar enough to risk starting over there as a farmer.

And if he was trying to remove himself from the responsibility of a family and hard work, marrying a widow with 3 young children plus adding 7 additional children would seem a larger burden.

From 1920 through the 1940 census, he was the sole breadwinner for wife Helen and their children as well as the parents of Helen's deceased husband in the 1920's.

Loveta Hathaway's father has finally been found but yet he was only lost to his Hathaway family. Little did they know that Thomas Hathaway was living in the same state for almost all of their lives and just a county away during the early 1930's.

Historical information about this family was found in Findagrave.com, and familysearch.org.



https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/20336365/tom-hays



https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/23283461/loveta-mae-brooks

See also: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/24221819/thomas-adolphus-hathaway