

Bart Mahaffie Part II – Childhood and education

Previous post in this series: [Bart Mahaffie Part I – Introduction](#)

George Barton “Bart” Mahaffie was the second son and third child of George B. “Doc” Mahaffie and Mary Frances “Mollie” Williams Mahaffie. He was born October 3, 1889, in Olathe, Kansas. His parents were farmers. They also operated a store in Olathe.



Rose, Doc, Bart, Mollie, and Charles Mahaffie, 1891

The Mahaffie's were a pioneering family. Bart's grandfather, James Beatty Mahaffie, and grandmother, Lucinda Henderson Mahaffie homesteaded in Olathe, west of Kansas City, and kept a stagecoach stop there at the eastern end of the Santa Fe Trail from 1858 to 1870.



Bart Mahaffie at age 5

Doc and Mollie moved their family when Bart was three to a new homestead in Oklahoma Territory, joining the 1893 Cherokee Strip Land Run which opened Oklahoma lands taken from Native Americans to homesteaders.

During the Land Run, Doc galloped ahead on horseback with his brother Billy to try to secure the best land. Molly drove the team pulling a covered wagon, her three children, Rose, Charles, and Bart, and a household's supplies aboard. They settled in Kingfisher, Oklahoma Territory. Another child, Oscar Beatty Mahaffie was born there.



Bart's childhood home, Komalty, Oklahoma

In 1901, when Bart was 11 or 12, the family moved further west to Komalty in Kiowa County, near Hobart, in west-central Oklahoma Territory.

Hobart then was newly settled, with only a few businesses. There Doc raised wheat and livestock, becoming a prosperous rancher trading cattle and mules as far as Amarillo and Wichita.

Mollie ran a busy household and established herself as a community leader, prominent in Hobart's civic affairs and social clubs. She was elected to the Hobart School Board, its first woman member, and served as School Board President from 1916 to 1919.

Mollie demanded that her children get the best education they could. In older age she said, "We were determined to educate our children if we never had a dollar."

Before she married, she had taught school for nine years, starting at the age of 16, studying at a teacher's college, called a normal school, in the summers. That focus on education was surely behind her daughter, Rose, being a school teacher and the fact that all four of her children attended college, two completing advanced degrees.

A little more about Hobart, the Komalty homestead, and Bart's family is [here](#).

"One of the most popular young men who ever lived in Hobart"



Teenaged Bart with sidearm about 1905

As Bart grew he learned ranching under his father's tutelage and he got a good schooling under his mother's direction. He grew to be a popular young member of the community.

Bart was a tall, handsome young man. He had blue eyes and dark hair. By high school, and surely before, he had distinguished himself as an athlete. He stood out, among other places, on the Hobart High School football team. After one game in 1905, the Hobart paper reported: "the sensational play of the game was made by Bart Mahaffie when Lee, Granite's splendid left halfback, broke away and raced down the field for a touchdown, with a clear track before him excepting Bart, who made a flying tackle and saved Hobart from being scored against."

High school graduation

Bart graduated from Hobart High School on Friday, May 18, 1906. The ceremony took place at the Presbyterian Church. There were a total of six graduates, most of whom spoke or performed at the ceremony. Bart's part was to make a speech on the "Flight of the Bat".



Bart (holding pennant) with his Kingfisher basketball teammates, between 1906-10

Higher education



Bart at Kingfisher College, between
1906-10

In the fall of 1906, Bart started at Kingfisher College where his older brother Charles had graduated in 1905. Over four years, he studied and played sports at Kingfisher, graduating with a bachelor's degree in June 1910.

That fall, Bart began studying law at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. He was enrolled for two years, but did not take a degree. While studying in Norman, he joined Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity and played on the Sooners football team.

After college Bart tried his hand at various jobs. In 1911, he was in Hobart, working for a real estate firm. By 1912, he had gone to work in Dallas for U.S. Bond & Mortgage Co. He visited Hobart late that summer on his way to Oklahoma City, where he was being transferred by his company. Bart continued to work in Oklahoma City until at least April 1914. Likely it was that summer when he left for Colorado to homestead.

Seeing a path for himself

Bart came at last to see a path for himself: to be a stock man like his father,

but his own boss with his own ranch.

American generations tended, in the 1800s, to move a state or more westward as each rose to adulthood. Westward meant land and it meant opportunity, a chance to make one's own way. Families were large and the home place would only be more crowded, less able to support another adult and family.

The Mahaffie's followed that path through their American generations; Bart Mahaffie's great great grandfather crossing from Northern Ireland to Pennsylvania, his great grandfather from Pennsylvania to Ohio and then Indiana, his grandfather from Indiana to Kansas. Bart's father, Doc, moved from Kansas to Oklahoma for new land. And now Bart was moving another state west for his own chance.

There was still land to be had, further west. The papers regularly wrote about Colorado, touting the opportunity to claim land and the state's beauty and healthful climate. Colorado beckoned.

Later posts in this series:

[*Bart Mahaffie Part III – To Colorado for land of his own*](#)

[*Bart Mahaffie Part IV – The flu reaches the 500 Ranch*](#)