

**ROSE ELLA
DUNN
NOBLE FLEMING
1878-1955**



**ROSE
OF
THE
CIMARRON**

Teenager Rose Dunn earned herself a place in Oklahoma history with her exploits. Whether she was romancing outlaw George “Bittercreek” Newcomb or helping her bounty hunter brothers, her story was larger than life during the closing years of the Old West.

Rose Dunn was born in Winfield, Kansas in September 1878. Although her family was poor, she was educated in a convent. Her widowed mother had married the local physician, whom Rose argued with, so she would often go visit her older brothers at their nearby Ingalls, Oklahoma ranch.

The brothers taught her to ride, rope and shoot. When they joined the Doolin gang, the other outlaws grew to love Rose, due to her sweet personality. Newcomb soon joined the gang when the Daltons were wiped out in 1892.

Through her brothers, she met Newcomb when she was fourteen. The striking beauty with a kind demeanor became very infatuated with Newcomb, who called her his “Rose of Cimarron”, for her horse riding along the Cimarron River. Her brothers soon left the outlaw life and became bounty hunters.

On September 1, 1893, the gang were drinking at an Ingalls saloon when thirteen U. S. Marshals ordered the bandits to come out with their hands up. One yelled, “Go to hell!” and opened fire, causing frightened townspeople to run for cover. Watching from the second floor of the Pierce Hotel, she retrieved Newcomb’s rifle from his room and, using a bed sheet tied in knots, lowered herself to the ground.

During a hail of bullets, she ran to a badly wounded Newcomb in the street with two belts of ammunition and the Winchester rifle. She fired at the Marshals while Newcomb reloaded his revolvers, allowing him to flee to the barn at the end of the street. The gunfight provided cover for the posse as they loaded Newcomb on a horse and made their escape. Dunn hid out with the gang for two months, nursing them back to health.

By 1895, Newcomb had a \$5,000 bounty on his head. That caught the attention of the Dunn brothers. Loyalty didn’t amount too much when that much money was involved. The next time “Bittercreek” came to visit Rose, the brothers were waiting. They shot him and the outlaw with him as they dismounted, killed them both. Rose was never prosecuted for her actions and lived out the rest of her life as a respectable citizen.

Rose was married to Oklahoma politician Charles Nobel from 1897 until his death in 1930. In 1900, the couple and two of her brothers moved to New Mexico to begin a new life away from any mention of the outlaws. Rose married Richard Fleming in 1946 and moved to Washington state, where she died in June 1955 at age 76 in Salkum.

Her short outlaw life launched her to the level of western legend. Rose of Cimarron’s role in the Ingalls gunfight was told in a 1915 booklet and movie written by Bill Tilghman, with the usual exaggeration and dramatization. This story was repeated in numerous books for the next 37 years. According to Fleming, the stories “caused my wife a great deal of embarrassment and forced her into virtual seclusion”.