

Few have been the events that occurred, or the people who lived during her time that she does not remember. Numbered among the Indian families of the Bernice country were the Fields, Welch, Fleming, Jennings, Brewer, Countryman, Hilderbrand, Caywood, and the many Ballard decedents.

There are not many people left around Bernice who knew the old town. The original site of Bernice is now covered by many feet of water east of the present town. The original Bernice was not an old town in comparison. Its beginning was at the location of the Needmore post office and store. In 1913 the K. O. & G. railroad came thru and the town built up to have several stores and business places. Typical of the old towns was the public well in the middle of main street. Its school and churches were the centers of community activity. Apparently, the townspeople sought a better name for their town, and from several suggestions a name was chosen. The name came from Ross Mode, whose daughter was named Bernice. The town enjoyed many enterprises in its early days, supporting a livery stable, poultry house, hotel, lumber yard, and pool hall, along with other establishments. Some of the early day merchants were Miller, Stover, Wallen, Works, et al.

Long before there was a town of Bernice there lived the Wallen family just south of the present town. This family established a cemetery on top of a lone hill which now overlooks the lake. Started about 1880 this burial place has now been abandoned to the elements. At one time Easter sunrise services were held there.

But, the Wallen Cemetery like so many other things have given way to the new. Bernice no longer sees the farmers come to town with hay and grain to ship, or butter, eggs, and cream to sell. Instead, Bernice is a resort and retirement community populated with new people foreign and indifferent to what once was. The older families can be counted possibly on the fingers of one hand now.

Mrs. Bunch remembers as a little girl the times when her family would travel to the home of another Indian where they would have their religious worship. Then the Indians did not have church buildings and would hold their meetings in one of the homes, or under a brush arbor during the summer. A prominent meeting place was at the home of Charley Work, a full blood Cherokee.

She recalls the old days when they would travel to Vinita by wagon to get supplies. Usually it was a two-day trip just to get there. In bad winter weather, or when the creek was up, their trip would extend into several days.

Mrs. Bunch talks about the days when she was a student at the Cherokee Female Seminary. Of the Ballard family, her sister Janana Ballard was probably one of the best known and prominent of early teachers. She graduated from the Seminary in 1896 and was an educator among the Cherokees and in the Cherokee Nation most of her working lifetime. Mrs. Bunch has preserved many pictures, papers, and artifacts pertaining to her Seminary days.

Her first recollections of life are of the old family home on Grand River in the Oldfield Bend country. The first country store was at a nearby crossroads