

Many Indians still live in the Welling area, decedents of early settlers. Some of those families are the Nofire, Sunday, Pack, Keys, Christie, Wolfe, Eagle, Whittington, Locust, Sanders, Wilhite, Bishop, Carlile, and others.

The one country store and post office does not tell of the Welling of long ago when it was the trading center of that area. Like many little towns throughout the country Welling declined in the face of progress, development, and related circumstances. Mr. Clay recalls when there was a big cotton gin at the north side of town. Along what would be main street were the big general stores, - Knight General Store, Hodges Mercantile, and the Gray Store. Across from the depot was the post office and a drug store. Two blacksmith shops and a grist mill helped to make up the business places of Welling, along with a shoe and harness shop and a barber shop. At the south end of town was the old Elm Springs Mission, for years the acme of educational institutions of that area. It was at the Mission that Henry got all of his schooling, saying that he finished the eighth grade there. Henry speaks with pride about this old school. He says they really taught you the "A,B,Cs". Some children boarded at the school all during the nine-month term for \$3. a month. Many children who lived nearby and walked to school paid fifty cents a month. This tuition, or charge, included books, meals, and excellent care of the children. He recalls that some of the teachers at the Mission when he attended were Miss Montgomery, Miss Fergusson, Miss Buchanan, and Miss Hunt, although there were others he does not remember.

Henry tells that there are some old log buildings still standing that were built before the Civil War. He remembers when there was lots of big pine timber in that country. Buildings constructed of rich pine logs seem to last indefinitely. Also, there was much alnut, hickory, pecan, and oak timber in that country at one time. While the railroad was in existence thru that country, much of the timber was cut and shipped out to eastern markets.

He tells that this used to be a fine hunting country when he was a boy. He says wild turkeys used to come right up around the house. Deer were all thru the woods and hills, and just about any kind of wild animal native to that area could be found.

The establishment of the first post office at Welling is of interest. The people of the area were in need of mail service to their community, and the nearest postoffice was at Wauhillau. Credit is given to old man Tom Turner for getting the "ball rolling". The people put up a little building and got a permit to establish a post office. Turner carried the mail twice a week on horseback for three, or four months with no charge to anyone until the utility could get established. The main mail route in those early days came from Tahlequah, by Wauhillau, on to Stilwell and Evansville, Arkansas. Turner would deliver and pick up mail at the Wauhillau facility.

Josie Nofire, a very old Indian woman, lives alone, a short distance from Henry's cabin. As a neighbor Henry goes down to see about her and takes care of some of her chores, getting in her stove wood, and other little jobs. Josie likes to talk to him about the old Indian ways, and particularly about signs, superstitions, conjure, and ancient beliefs. Henry likes to tease her about not being modern and forgetting about those things. She always scolds him by calling him "U-ke-ka" (white man).