

SHEPILL, VIRGIL

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Interviewer
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Interview with Virgil Sherrill
Kiowa, Oklahoma

I was born at Lynn, in the Chickasaw Nation, in the year 1886. My parents were Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Sherrill.

We were living on Jess Moore's farm, in a little log house, when I was born. We then moved two miles from this place to the Billie Arch farm for a while then returned to the Moore farm and farmed on a little place about one half mile from the first house where we had lived.

We had a nice fruit orchard. We got our water from a near by spring.

We were located about three quarters of a mile from Lynn where there was one General Merchandise store operated by Hightower; the postmaster was Bob Green and there was a blacksmith shop operated by Babe Rushing. There were also two country doctors in the settlement, Dr. Jackman and Dr. Logan.

Mr. Hightower sold out his stock of goods to a man from Texas named Roberts and moved to Durant.

There was no lumber closer than Durant, which

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was just a small town at this time. There was a sawmill at Durant that cut cottonwood. We got our lumber at this mill and used it to build our little box house and a little log house. We had the first pine house in that district. The lumber was brought from Denison, Texas. This pine house had two rooms and a side room. This is where my mother died when I was just past six years old.

I had started to school the year before. I went to school about one half mile from our place down by the Washita River. The school was in the middle of a corn field. Our teacher was Colonel Hickman, who was seventy-five years old. All the school equipment we had were cottonwood slabs to sit on and boxes for desks. The teacher had a cane bottomed chair. Our book was the blue back speller and each of us had a slate. All ages and grades used the same book and we studied it until it wore out. We carved our slate pencils from the soap stone from what we called the Soap Stone Mountain. It was at this place that Father married again.

Father and Uncle Tom Richardson put in an old type cotton gin. Cotton seed was blown out on the ground and anyone who wanted it could have it. No one would

pay money for cotton seed. Father later bought the Munger gin system that was run by steam. He bought it from a firm in Dallas.

One evening after Father had closed the gin for the season we were at a church meeting and saw the light of a fire and soon discovered it to be the gin. When I was back there six or seven years ago the old boiler was still there on the lot.

You could hardly raise corn because of the prairie chickens; they would strip the grains of corn out of the ears in the fields.

We killed lots of turkey, quail and deer. Father killed loads of deer and quail and took them into Denison, Texas, and sold them. Quail would come in big coveys. We used to drive them into nets. One time when I was about nine years old, I helped to drive a covey of forty quail into a net just as you would drive cattle. We sold these quail at Denison.

The way we often times killed our prairie chickens was by placing corn in a long trough; the prairie chickens would all crowd into the trough and with one shot we could kill the long string of them.

We took our wheat and corn to Byrd's Mill where we had it ground. We took our cotton and hogs to market at Denison.

We then moved back to Lynn on the Thompson place where we built rail fences and where we stayed for three years. I remember that some Indians cut up the first wire fence that was put up in that vicinity. They cut it all up one night because they did not want the land fenced up.

We sold our cotton for ten cents a pound; one year we made sixty one bales of cotton and picked it all our selves. Dad hauled it to Ardmore and sold it there.

When we lived at the Hightower place at Lynn the United States surveyors camped on our place while they were surveying the land around Lynn.

Father made the run in the Cherokee Strip but was not lucky.

During these days we had wagon peddlers. Some people never went to town so they would buy their clothes and all their supplies from these peddlers.

Everyone carried a gun every place he or she went. When we took the cotton to Market each man always had his gun lying beside him.

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I am in possession of an old time thirty-eight Winchester. It is one of the first Winchesters that was ever made but I do not know just how old it is.

When we borrowed money we never made a note but our word was good as to time and manner in which we promised to repay the loan.

Court was held at Ft. Smith, Arkansas, and at Paris, Texas, before McAlester was built up. After McAlester was built court was held there. I have seen the United States Marshals come through Lynn with prisoners chained together. These United States Marshals had wagons which were especially built to haul their prisoners in.

I recall one United States Marshal named Charley Burns. I recall one outlaw named Scarface Jim who came to Lynn quite often. I was never afraid of him. He would not harm you if you left him alone.

The wild hogs were bad about getting into the corn fields and ruining them. There was always a leader among them. Among these hogs was a variety called the "razor-back" hog and another kind which was called the "mule-footed" hog. The mule footed hog could climb

like a cat and could not be fattened. If you penned a mule footed hog up you had to build a very high fence to keep it in.

I will always remember the first canned corn we ever had; we thought it was so good that we had it for breakfast.

The first panther I ever heard was late one evening when we took the stock down to the river to water them and on my return I heard loud screams like that of a woman, but when my mule heard this he began to run and I could hardly hold on. I was so scared I thought we would never get home.

It was the custom in those days to keep anyone over night if he or she rode up to your place late. One evening a very nicely dressed man came to our place and he seemed a fine gentleman, but after his night's visit we soon discovered that he was disguising himself and was locating cattle and he turned out to be a cattle thief.

One night not long after this some outlaws came to our gate and asked Father to bring them a drink as they could not get down from their horses. We children

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had gone to bed. After Father took them the drink of water the outlaws demanded that Father shculd go with them, saying that he knew too much about them. Father told them that his wife was sick and that he could not go, but that made no difference to the outlaws. They said that Father could go into t e house to get his hat and tell his wife good bye but that he had to go with them.

So when Father went back into the house, he got his gun and came to the door with his finger on the trigger and told this band of outlaws to ride on or he would kill them all. They rode on and were never seen in that part of the country again.