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INTERVIEW WITH JESSE ADAIR

Jesse Adair, a pioneer citizen of the Cherokee Nation, was born in Georgia, May 15, 1868. He is the son of John O'Dare and Jane Bates. John O'Dare was a full-blood Irishman who came from Ireland about 1842. John and brother, Virgil, landed in America at New York, then drifted south seeking employment in the saw-mills of the pine forests of the south. They found employment near the Cherokee reservation in Georgia. Here John married into an Indian family.

To this union there were seven children born, Anna, John, Jesse, Madison B., Frank, Zeke and Jule K. Adair. They are all living except Madison who died a few years ago. They now live just about two miles from the farm they settled when they came to the Cherokee Nation.

After the arrival of the 'Dares in the Indian Territory. They at once applied through the legislature of the Cherokee Nation to become citizens of that nation. It was granted to the 'Dares to become citizens of the Cherokees Nation and their name changed to Adair.

Mrs. O'Dare's relatives who came to the Cherokee Nation with the immigrants were the Adairs. Therefore O'Dare was changed into Adair in order to receive the per capita

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share of anything that was to be divided among the Cherokees.

This county received its name in honor of some of the Adairs. The Adairs settled on Evansville Creek near the present Grant Fourkiller farm. They remained on this farm for four years, then moved to Piney. Settled on the same farm where Jule Adair now lives.

#### EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Jesse was not raised in poverty as many other boys of his time. Mr. Adair was a prosperous early day farmer. He was considered a rich man. He operated about a forty acre farm. The soil was rich and almost everything that was planted produced abundantly.

Jesse received a fair education at Piney. He completed the eighth grade. The schools at that time were controlled by a Board of education consisting of three members.

This Board in turn appointed the various school boards throughout the Cherokee Nation.

The school board at Piney at that early time was Johnson Watt, Frank Malone and Dale Wright.

Piney for a long time was called Camp Piney because a government camp was located here after the coming of

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the immigrants. The camp was in operation for about three years. Here many Cherokees came to receive their rations, furnished by the government until they were able to make their own living, after the removal.

This information was given to Jesse Adair by Mr. Gale Wright who came here with the treaty Indians in 1828.

#### CHURCHES

About 1822 church was established at Piney by an old Circuit Rider as they were called then. This was a preacher who visited each community. This preacher's name was Charley Duncan. Rev. Duncan held several revivals at Piney. Among the old people who took active part in this church were the Dalones, Twists, Gatts, Lurns and Adairs.

Lak Grove Church has been established some time before this and Biggys, Chormleys, Starrs and Riders took an active part in that church. This part here was told to Mr. Adair by Gale Wright, an old Settler.

The earliest missionary to the Cherokees was Duncan . Bryant. He was sent here by the missionary Baptist Church. While on this mission Bryant took sick and died in this neighborhood. The Cherokee people buried him. A tombstone was erected in his memory at his grave many years

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afterwards. This monument is found on the farm of Frank Adair now.

#### CAMP MEETINGS

Mr. Adair recalls a Camp Meeting he attended about 1880. This Meeting was located on Evansville Creek near the present Chalk Bluff Bridge.

People would come from miles around to attend the services, remaining sometimes for two months. These were usually held in the summer in August and September after the crops were laid-by.

Food was furnished by each family. Each family bringing a supply to last for several days.

Camp houses were built at this place.

#### CATTLE AND CATTLE MEN

Many cattle were to be found on the hills and in the valleys of the Cherokee Nation. The range was free, plenty of grass, water and people did not steal as they do now. There was not anything to hinder a man from raising cattle at that time.

Not everybody raised cattle in the Cherokee Nation, although every body owned a milch-cow.

The big cattle men at that time were Andy Dick,

Zeke Starr and Cale Wright, each of whom owned about Two Hundred head. Nearly all the farmers sold their stock to these three men. The price of a yearling was from Two Dollars to about Five. It had to be a fat yearling if it brought Five dollars. These men sold most of their cattle to Lew Williams who owned a ranch near the present site of the city of Westville, Oklahoma.

Williams shipped his cattle from Ft. Gibson. This was already a shipping point on the Missouri Pacific.

He sometimes drove his cattle through to Dodge City, Kansas. The local cattle men, Wright, Starr and Dick, drove through a few times. It took the boys about six weeks to make the trip. Frank Malone who died recently was one of their trusted cowboys. The Twist boys used to help in these drives, driving as many as two hundred head.

The cowboys would receive about Eighteen dollars a month and board.

#### FARMING

Most of the farming was done by home-made implements. Machinery was not known at that time.

Everything was sowed by hand, wheat, oats and corn being the chief crops in the Cherokee Nation.

Corn was the main food among the fullblood.

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Cherokees. It could be used for food in so many different ways. Meal, haminy, and skin-corn was made from corn. These were the most popular "dishes" of the fullbloods.

Wheat was also raised to a great extent in the Piney community. At harvest time "crews" were grouped to harvest the wheat. Every man who had a wheat crop would join this group in order to get help to have his crop harvested.

These men would go from patch to patch. A good cradler would cradle about three acres a day. The threshing was done by a groundhog thresher as it was called then. This outfit threshed about twenty five bushels per day. The charge for threshing was about the same as it is now.

Rotation of crops was not practiced at all. Many a farm was killed by planting corn year after year.

Orchards, vineyards and small berries as strawberry, dewberry and blackberry were not known to be cultivated. These berries grew in the woods wild. Canning and preserving these berries for winter use as we do now was also unknown at that time.

Many hogs were raised on the farms. A dozen or more brood sows were kept by the Cherokees. They were not first class hog raisers--the herd would drift away and remain

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in the woods. They stayed fat all the time on account of the plenty mast.

So every farmer who had hogs at any time had a claim in the woods. He could go any time in the fall of the year and kill enough to supply him through the winter.

#### FINANCING FARMERS

Money was not scarce in the Indian Territory.

Large sums of it were kept at home for there were no banks at that time. The farmers were not financed very often for they had every thing to eat at home. In case of bad luck that might overtake some neighbor, he could borrow from his next door neighbor if the neighbor had it. The transaction would not be known to any one except the borrower and the lender. There would be no note of mortgage signed. The borrower's word was good.

He remembers his father borrowing Two Hundred Dollars from a Mrs. Collins, a widow, who lived on Piney at that time. Another time he remembers Mr. Adair lending One Hundred Dollars to Mr. Eli Wright, and no mortgage was made.

Most of the common people of the Cherokee Nation did all their hiring and paying by the surplus produce that

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they had. Some industrious young men would make a big crop for a neighbor for a couple of loads of corn, payable at gathering time.

Some would work for a horse and saddle.

The people had plenty to eat. They had plenty of cornbread, skincorn, hominy, pumpkins, beans, meat, venison, turkey, and Car-Nut-Chee. This last named food was the favorite dish of the fullblood Cherokee. It was made from hickory-nut goodies cooked with skin-corn and beans. This mixture made a very rich food.

Game was plentiful in Finney community at that time. Squirrels, rabbits, wild-pigeons, quails and other small game were plentiful. the squirrels sometimes so thick that they would destroy the crops. Wild-Pigeons came in droves in the fall of the year, and form "Roosts" as they were called. Here thousands of them were killed. Many men became rich dealing in wild-pigeons. They bought them from the Indians for about Fifty Cents a dozen, and sold them to the city markets in Arkansas for Three Dollars a dozen.

Thousands of them were shipped out of Fayetteville and Ft. Smith to points north. Deer could be found in droves.

Every stream in the Cherokee Nation was full of fish. The main streams were the Evansville, Dutch Mills and

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Barron Fork Creeks.

The Caney Creek was a good stream but it went dry in the latter part of the summer.

The main sport in those days was the "Poisoning" a hole of water. This was done by tramping of "Buck Eye" powder. This was made from roots beat into a powder. After the tramping of this powder, fish would become crazy and were easily caught or speared. They did not remain in that state very long. The Cherokees told the early white men that the root used was a tame root. This was almost an annual affair with the Cherokees. Thousands of fish were killed. Next year there would be that many more. The old timers now say there were more fish in the streams than there are now since the game laws have gone into effect.

#### FURS AND HIDES

Fur was also plenty in the early days. Raccoon, Opossum, Skunk, Otter, Mink, Wolf and other animals were found in the Indian country. The price being very small for fur, they did not hunt much at that time. The price ran from five cents to about two dollars.

Mr. Adair has killed as many as five Opossums on one tree. The chief market towns were Evansville and Cincinnati, Arkansas.

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The fur dealer at Evansville was Jim Chandler; at Cincinnati, Bill Ray and a Mr. Craig.

Cincinnati was a wheat milling point and the miller was a Mr. Walls.

Shoes were made from the hides of animals in the fullblood settlements at that time.

#### U.S. MARSHALS

The U.S. Marshals who were well known in Piney community at that time were Todd Hunter and Tom Johnson from Fayetteville. These two men would come in search of some bootleggers who were operating along the Arkansas line. Several searches were made by these men in this community. The homes searched were the Johnson Watt, Louis Skitt and Hec Bussey homes. These three men were later arrested, tried and convicted. They served seven years in Detroit, Michigan, Federal Penitentiary. After the expiration of their terms, Watt and Skitt were put on the train and brought to St. Louis, Mo. the end of the railroad.

These two Cherokees came through the wild country of northern Oklahoma. They had only five dollars that the U.S. had given them when released. They came through the Seneca, Quapaw and Osage Reservations. They were on the road about two months.

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## MINERALS

Lead was found in several places in Goingsnake District. At Piney an early day white man named Foss Barker found lead not far from where Mr. Adair now lives. Two fullblood Cherokees, Larkin Fourkiller and Thompson Charles, were making their own bullets from lead taken from a branch bed in this community.

The two Cherokees would never tell where this lead could be found.

## HORSE RACING

Horse-Racing was a great sport in those days. Only a few persons owned race horses. Here at Piney Boz Starr owned a race mare "Gray Alice". She was supposed to be the fastest horse on quarter-mile in the southwest.

Adair was at one important race during that time. This race was run east of Oak Grove near the Arkansas line. Mr. Starr and a man from Missouri matched this race. Starr's mare won this race. At this race Starr's mare was ridden by a new rider, Alex Bingham, the regular rider for Starr being sick.

Shortly after this, the Starr mare killed herself in a race at Siloam picnic.

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#### OUTLAWS

There were no native outlaws in the community. Terrells from Kentucky were the only outlaws that ever were in Piney neighborhood. They came here as seeking employment which they found on the Adair farm. They were found here by the U. S. Marshals in 1878.

After leaving the Adair farm, they went to Laysville, Arkansas. Here they were located again. In the fight that took place, they were both killed.

#### MAIL

The Mail was delivered to Evansville from Tahlequah on a horse. He does not remember the carrier. The only printed matter that the people had was the Cherokee Advocate, a newspaper printed at Tahlequah, both in English and Cherokee.

The paper would usually arrive at the Post Office toward the last of the week. Many people from the Cherokee country would flock to Evansville, to get the paper. They did this more when the Courts were in session.

On Sundays many old time fullbloods would walk to their neighbor's home to get the news of the country.

#### THE KILLING OF MAJOR RIDGE

This story was told to Mr. Adair by Mr. Cale Wright who was an old settler.

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I had heard that the Adairs knew all about the killings of Major Ridge and Jim Starr, and I asked him for this information.

Major Ridge was killed just over the line in Arkansas near the present White Rock school house. Major had some relatives that lived on the line at that time. He also had relatives near the present site of Fayetteville. While he was scouting from the "Pin" Indians, as the Cherokees were called, who sought to kill him and Boudinot, the Major was discovered in that neighborhood, waylaid and killed. He was killed just after dark.

The next morning at daylight Jim Starr was killed at his home near Oak Grove. Starr had just arisen from bed. He went to the front porch and two men jumped from behind a clump of rose bushes in the front yard and <sup>he</sup> was shot several times through the body.

Then they came in the house hunting Tom Starr, the brother of Jim, but Tom escaped by running out the back door.

One of the Cherokees was identified. His name was Stann.

Major Ridge was buried at Piney. He remained there for twenty two years. Then some Representatives of the U.S. Government came and took what remained of him.

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These representatives told the Wrights that they were going to take him to Fayetteville. Unto this day the people in this community do not know where they took Major Ridge.