

GAITHER, W. W. INTERVIEW

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Indian-Pioneer History S-149
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INTERVIEW WITH W.W. GAITHER
Pittsburg County.

I came to Indian Territory in the year of 1872 with my parents, Granville and Adaline Gaither. We located near what is known now as Wesley, or what we called then Rogers station. My father moved us in two covered wagons bringing very little with us except a few necessities. At present time the only thing I have that we brought with us from Arkansas is a bread pan and rolling pin which belonged to my mother as it was made for her as a wedding present. These I would say are about eighty or ninety years old.

My parents are buried on Coal Hill which is about six miles north and east of Kiowa. There are about a dozen graves there, mostly Indian graves. There are no markings there and the cemetery has been abandoned for many years; in fact I have not been to it in some time.

Our first home was a double log house as were most of them in the Choctaw Nation. After we came to the territory my father worked on laying the MK&T railroad and tending

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to a little tom fuller patch as there was very little farming being done as this was a cattle country and there was plenty of good grass.

My first employment was working on a ranch; however, in the earlier days we did not call them ranches as the cattle would all run on the range and once a year we would have our round-ups. A man by the name of Harris had the first big wire fence pasture for his cattle in this part of the country. Other ranches were the Sloans, Judge Ward and Cob Barnetts.

I remember in the year of 1884 I went by horseback through the Jack Fork trail and across the Kiamichi River to buy cattle from the Indians. We never thought of any danger or that we were taking a risk to carry \$1000.00 or \$1400.00 on our persons. The Indians would not take your check, they wanted silver or gold. We paid three dollars a head for yearlings. I don't remember driving cattle to market except one time and then we drove a bunch to old North McAlester before South McAlester was ever built.

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Many of the Texas rangers would send their cattle up here to range. The white man in the early day was not allowed to hold cattle in the territory but would have an Indian friend in whose name he could register them; but the white man could come and buy and sell any time he wanted to.

Near Wesley was the old Well's stage stand on the trail from Stringtown to Fort Smith, Arkansas. There was also the toll bridge operated by Mrs. Rogers which was across the Nolatubbie Creek near Rogers station.

There is an old trail about a mile and a half east from my present home where the Confederate soldiers marched during the Civil War from Doaksville, Arkansas, to Perryville, Indian Territory. This is at a point about three miles north of Savanna, on the U. S. Highway No. 69. The trail went across Ball mountain and through Founds valley. A soldier died and was buried on top of Ball mountain which is directly east of my place. They had nothing with which to dig a grave so only piled rock on the body and after I moved here I found the skeleton.

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At the time of the Civil War my parents and I lived in Arkansas.

Court was held in Fort Smith, Arkansas, but many a crime was committed and was never taken to court. Bodies would be found and some times the people would claim the body and other times the body would be buried and that was the last of it.

I knew several U. S. Marshals; three were Charley LeFlore, George Pounds and a man by the name of Smith. I remember them coming down the Stringtown to Fort Smith trail, taking some Comanche Indians to Fort Smith. There were fourteen Indians in the group and they were all dressed in blankets. They were being transported by horseback and they also had their chuck wagon which carried their supplies.

There was lots of wild game such as deer, turkey, squirrel.

I had a good many Indian friends. I have been away from home and one would be there while I was gone and would have killed deer and left a ham hanging in my door.