

ROSS, ELIZABETH

THE BLUE SPRING

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Elizabeth Ross

Interviewer \*\*\*\*\*

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## THE BLUE SPRING

Many years ago the Blue Spring, as it was designated, was a pool of deep blue water in which were many fish, principally of the perch variety. The spring, now (1937) greatly reduced in depth, lies a short distance from the western end of "Coldweather Hollow", in the ranges of hills lying south of the Park Hill neighborhood. Coldweather, an old-time fullblood Cherokee, once lived in the hollow between two ridges, hence the name.

In the period at which Coldweather lived in the isolated section, homes were few and far between and the timbered hills and the valleys were filled with game. Deer and turkeys abounded and found water at the deep spring or in the brook running down the hollow from the spring, in consequence of which Coldweather was able to find and procure game, fourfooted or feathered without going far from his cabin.

Tall grass, wild peas and other succulent herbage covered the low ground or flats, as also the slopes of the ridges, in early times, and the cattle and horses be-

longing to residents of the outlying and more thickly populated localities sometimes wandered into the hills and found excellent pasturage. It is recalled that a resident of an adjacent community kept a number of cattle, cows, yearlings and calves included, and each late Autumn turned the herd out to find abundant pasturage in and about this hilly region. In the springtime after the grass had become sufficiently grown for pasturage, the cattle, now in sleek condition, were driven

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back onto the small prairie on which they were kept during the summer. There were also many hogs in the hills and small valleys not distant from the Blue Spring. The greater number of the hogs were as "wild as deer", and it was not until many years had passed that the wild hogs finally vanished.

In order to capture good-sized quantities of the fish inhabiting the Blue Spring, several men would occasionally enter the water and stir up the sediment from the bottom so that the water became muddy. Boughs of trees thickly covered with leaves were then dragged

through the murky water and numbers of fish swept out on the banks, no one then owning nets or short seines.

In near vicinity of the Blue Spring, at the beginning of the eighties of the last century, two men were being sought by deputy United States marshals. They found refuge in the timber and underbrush, but their hiding place became known to some of the officers. Accompanying the deputies from Fort Smith, Arkansas, was a shriveled little man who lived a few miles from the spring and who was anxious to aid in the capture of the wanted men. The name of this man was Bill Franks, and when he mounted his horse he carried with him a heavy double-barreled muzzle loading shotgun. Franks had loaded the weapon with heavy charges of powder upon which he placed more than ordinarily large charges of buckshot. Soon the vicinity of the hiding place was reached and the two men were discovered. Although upon conviction they would have received comparatively brief sentences, the two refused to surrender and raised their weapons. Firing immediately began and a number of shots were fired, with the result that one of

the man received a wound in the leg, whereupon he and his companion surrendered.

Early in the beginning of the firing a thunderous roar had come from the shotgun of Bill Franks, both barrels having been fired at the same instant and Franks had then dropped his firearm, thrown up his hands and fallen prone upon the ground, where he lay as if dead. Seemingly a bullet from the revolver of one of the "outlaws" had slain Franks. The officers secured their prisoners and gave attention to Bill Franks, who soon opened his eyes and struggled to his feet. The officers then found that Franks had not been struck by a bullet and was not seriously hurt. The overcharged shotgun had kicked Franks in the face and sent him senseless to the ground.

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Authority: R. R. Meigs, Park Hill, Oklahoma.