

COOK, JACK (Mrs.)

INTERVIEW

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L. W. Wilson  
Interviewer  
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Interview with Mrs. Jack Cook  
Cushing, Oklahoma.

My father and mother, with eight of their ten children, came to the Indian Territory, via the "covered wagon route", from Viola, Fulton County in Arkansas, a distance of three hundred and seventy-five miles. We covered the distance in exactly fourteen and one-half days flat, and landed at Stroud, Indian Territory, for a few days. We finally located at "Halls Siding", now Depew, then only a flag station.

My father, Dr. J. E. Cargill, of Shamrock, went to Muskogee with two bachelor cotton farmers and pulled some strings which resulted in the townsite of Depew being laid out.

And believe me, it was some wild and woolly place then. I remember a fire got out one evening where Depew now is and all kinds of wild animals ran out. We saw several wild deer run right by our door. We only stayed there a short time, but long enough to see the timber cleared from what is now the main street of Depew.

Leaving there, we next located on the John Arnold farm ten miles east of the present town of Cushing. My brother's father-in-law donated a corner of his land and dad built a

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residence and general merchandise store. Because of the many thousands of roses in the Arnold Nursery, we dubbed the place "Rose Hill". There we had many interesting experiences with the Sac and Fox Indians, who at that time had a large wigwam village just ~~one mile north of us~~, and from whom dad derived most of his trade.

Of course, we experienced many hardships, but with a strong belief in the future and with the courage of real pioneers, my parents stuck it out.

Schools were scattered and church was almost unheard of. But, being a family who had always gone to Sunday School and church, there was no alternative but to hitch old Dobbin to the two seated surrey which was then quite a luxury, and drive ten miles to Cushing where we attended services at the First Baptist Church.

This church was then located on the block just north of where the city jail is now. It was very impressive to me with its small stained glass windows and its presto lights which had to be pumped up before lighting. But this was a city church and a very fine one to me.

Naturally, one would feel the need of sustenance before getting home after such a drive over the <sup>p</sup>worst roads imaginable. But we never did leave church without a hearty invitation to the

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home of some of Cushing's pioneers. Many times we have enjoyed the hospitality of the H. C. Carver's, Charles Carpenter's and Charlie Walters. Their homes were always open to us and their gracious manner always made us feel welcome. This friendly gesture toward strangers in a strange land has lived in our hearts, and has marked them as real pioneers, pioneering in friendships.

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All these preliminaries bring me up to my first fair in Cushing in about 1908, I believe. They were then called "reunions". Reunions were held on the block where the City Hall now stands. Fruits and vegetables were displayed under a large arbor, where the band would play, at intervals, the latest hits of the season.

Groups of neighboring friends would spread their baskets together, and swap yarns while they ate. This probably was their first visit since the last reunion. Here and there was a hamburger stand, which many of us who didn't have a dime could enjoy smelling. These stands, which sold red lemonade and peanuts also, were usually run by the merchants. And, of course, there was the proverbial swing or merry-go-round which was such a thrill to every girl or boy. You would always see some where on the ground a small booth with a tinselled sign which read, "Madam, So and So, tells your past, present and future for only ten cents".

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The city water tower was also in this block and with its little beacon light on top, it looked so tall and wonderful to the country chap.

After one had walked all day seeing the sights of the reunion, which amounted to the same in thrills as a day at the World's Fair would now, one had to walk only two blocks to the Thompson Hotel, where you could rest in the spacious parlor while holding hands with the "boy friend", or if you felt so inclined and had the where-withal to do so, you could shop at the Cushing Trading Company, owned by H. T. Carver and Charles Carpenter. This store carried anything from a knitting needle to a thrashing machine. I bought my wedding dress there.

I remember it was at one of these reunions my boy friend and I had gone for a drive to the country in a top-less buggy. We went as far east as the end of Broadway Street now runs, and back, and passed only one house, that was John Foster's. He had dared to gamble on Cushing and had built his house in a corn field - way out east of town.

After returning to the reunion grounds that afternoon I met for the first time, Miss Clara Cox, now Mrs. Leon High. Her big moment at that time was Mr. C. E. Still, a bachelor merchant of Cushing. I'll never forget how nice they looked sitting in the shade of the big pavilion, crunching peanuts

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and drinking red lemonade, while the band dramatically blared forth the tunes of the then popular music, "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree," "Rainbow" and "The Preacher and the Grizzly Bear."

A large platform was erected on the grounds, and after sun down you should have seen some of Cushing's dignitaries "tripping the light fantastic" to the strains of "Waltz me around Again Willie," "The Irish Washer Woman" and "Hell Among the Yearlings."

I think at this time there were two cars in town. W. T. Larmer owned one that looked like a horseless buggy, high wheels and chain drive. He carried the mail on route four by Rose Hill. One day he ventured to drive this gas buggy on the route. Everyone got so excited and some said they knew this country was going to the devil fast, while others dared to get near it and even went so far as to say they wished they had one like it.

Then Charlie Phenix bought a touring car and for days he spent his time taking the population of Cushing for a few minutes joy ride, out in Swartout's pasture. Of course, the streets and highways were no place for a thing like this, with all the wagons and buggies and

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the mud in the streets, which in places was up to the horses waist line. The animals rebelled when they saw one coming, not being used to these noisy contraptions.

I remember as late as 1910, Jack and I lived at Ripley. Many a time have we driven to Cushing in our shiny new buggy, and once in a great while we would meet a car. Always, Jack would get out and stand by the horses' heads, talking to them and trying to comfort and console the prancing steeds. With cars so numerous now that seems almost impossible.