

DEAREN, L. M.

INTERVIEW.

12874.

Charline Culbertson,
Investigator,
January 17, 1938.

An Interview With L. M. Dearen,
South C. St., McAlester, Oklahoma.

I was born in Harden County, Tennessee, the year of 1848. My parents were James and Martha Harden; both are buried in Tennessee.

I came to the Indian Territory in 1887 from Arkansas. My wife, four children and I came from Arkansas by wagon. I had come from Tennessee to Arkansas by wagon driving through for another man. I located in the Choctaw Nation on the same plot I am living on today; however, it is not the same house. My first home was a little log house which burned. The old Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Texas road ran directly in front of my house. All the wagons enroute to Texas passed on this road. The Snake Indians passed on this road on their ponies, with paint of different colors on their faces. In this district we were never harmed. The Indians were peaceable and very friendly. Many times they have stopped by my place and had a meal in my home.

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I knew something about the Indian laws as there was horse stealing going on and on one occasion a white man was punished for stealing hogs. A Choctaw Indian man would hold each arm near a hickory tree while they gave him one hundred lashes with a whip. After the first twenty-five lashes he fainted but they continued until they had given him one hundred. If a man was found stealing horses three times he was shot by the sheriff. This was done at Wilburton some thirty miles east of McAlester where court was held. If the sheriff missed killing him the first shot he was not allowed to fire again.

Before Statehood I farmed about one hundred acres of land which was mostly planted in corn and things which we could eat. The sage grass near my place was waist high. I recall one toll bridge across Gaines Creek near McAlester but do not recall the operator.

We would buy pork from the Indians and pay ten cents a pound if we bought by the hundred pounds. I attended the Indian camp meetings which were held at Ward Springs south and west of McAlester. Reverend Hancock was preacher and talked in both languages. The Indian ball games were attended at Wilburton.