

LYNCH, ROBERT.

INTERVIEW

12161

304

Investigator, Carl R. Sherwood,
November 17, 1937.

Interview with Robert Lynch,
Muskogee, Oklahoma.

My grandfather, John Lynch Adair, was born in Georgia and left there during the general removal of the Cherokees in 1839, while a small boy.

His father was Thomas B. Adair, a descendant of a brother of General James Adair, the Indian historian.

His mother was Rachel Lynch, from whom he derived his Cherokee blood. His parents died while he was a child, and he was adopted by his aunt, Mrs. Maria Thompson, afterward Cunningham by her second marriage, and given over to the guardianship of two of his uncles, Joseph M. Lynch and James Allen Thompson, the latter an uncle by marriage. He had one sister, who died in the great removal west.

John Lynch Adair began his education in a Moravian missionary school, under the supervision of a Mr. Voghn, a Moravian minister.

At this school he learned more how to endure pain than from the speller and other books as he was daily whipped for idleness and mischief. The boy was quick, active and swift

LYNCH, ROBERT. INTERVIEW.

12161

-2-

of foot, and fond of rough and tumble exercises, especially of coon hunting with the "niggers" at night. His uncles and aunts had hundreds of slaves.

That there might be a chance for his reformation, John Lynch Adair was taken from his old associations and put into the family of the Reverend Mr. Cephas Washbourne, who had formerly been a missionary of Dwight Mission in the Cherokee Nation, and who was then living near Bentonville, Arkansas.

Here, John took on more of Yankee habits and speech than knowledge of common school studies.

In the family of this divine and scholar, John Adair resided for about three years when he was sent to Ozark Institute near Fayetteville, Arkansas, of which Mr. R. W. Meeklin, or "Uncle Bob" as he was called by the boys, was head.

At this school were a score or more of Cherokee boys. Here my grandfather first began to make progress in his studies. Language was his favorite study and in Latin he became a proficient scholar, and in Greek, proficient to a small extent.

LYNCH, ROBERT.

INTERVIEW.

12161

-3-

In 1849, when the 'gold excitement' in California was at its highest and his guardians had refused to send him to college when he wished to complete his studies, because, as they believed, he had education enough to be a doctor, he and a cousin of his, William Buffington, a Cherokee, decided to try their fortunes in the gold fields of California. His guardians, uncles and aunts not being averse to such an undertaking, and believing there would soon be a return of two boys thoroughly disgusted with rambling, gave them an ox wagon and a team of four yoke of oxen, with a lame negro to drive them, and enough provisions to go on an Arctic exploration.

In about four years they returned with a good deal of experience but with very little gold.

After his return in 1853, Mr. Adair was married to Miss Jeffries of Springfield, Missouri.

The character of his life up to the beginning of the Civil War was entirely private, his occupation being

-4-

principally farming. He joined the South and formed a company of Home Guards and was commissioned Captain. He was never in any battle but one and that was at old Fort Wayne near Mayesville, Arkansas, in 1862.

As a scout, he was in many skirmishes and hand-to-hand fights, where differences were decided in a few minutes. After the Confederate armies had been driven south and General Stand Watie of the Cherokee regiment had been stationed at an advance guard south of the Arkansas River, Captain Adair disbanded his company, which, in fragments, made its way through the enemy's lines to General Watie's command.

Captain Adair served through the entire war and after the surrender returned to the Cherokee Nation in 1868 with his family from Belleview, Texas, where he had moved his family in 1863. On his arrival in his own country he settled at Tahlequah, the capital town of the Cherokee Nation.

He reached Tahlequah with a helpless and hungry family and 75 cents in his pockets.

He did various kinds of work to support his family and

was finally relieved from drudgery by being appointed first as Auditor; next, Clerk of the Cherokee Senate; then he was Executive Councilor under Chief Downing; Commissioner to re-survey the boundary lines between his Nation and the states of Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas as far west as the Arkansas River.