

WEWOKA

Wewoka is one of the oldest cities of the state. Historical above all others except Ft. Gibson and Ft. Sill. The city itself was founded in 1866 by one Elijah J. Brown, a white man who was selected by the Federal Government to bring the refugee Seminoles back from LeRoy, Kansas, where they had found refuge during the strife in the home land.

There is to be found in Wewoka at this time, the first postmaster's commissioner ever issued to a post master at this place. The commissioner recites that on the 13th day of May, 1867, Elijah T. Brown, was appointed postmaster at WE-WO-KA, Seminole Nation, State of ARKANSAS. This ancient document may be found hanging on the wall of the office of C Guy Cutlip, local attorney.

The word, Wewoka, means in the Seminole or Creek language, "Barking Waters." Because of some tiny falls on Wewoka Creek just north of the city where the bridge now spans the stream on the Wewoka-Tulsa highway rippling over the rocks the town derived its name, "Barking Waters."

In those days immediately subsequent to the Civil war Wewoka became a remount station between those two far flung pioneer army posts, Ft. Gibson and Ft. Sill. Soon afterwards a government agency was established at this place and troop headquarters established.

Here during those days the ill fated George Custer was stationed, to be known among the older Seminoles as "The Yellow Hair." The intrepid Phil Sheridan was also stationed here for a time, and long prior to these days Washington Irving stopped on his return to Ft. Gibson from what he thought was an inspection of the "Prairie."

Soon after the Civil war Wewoka was adopted by the Seminoles as the seat of Government. A capitol building and council house was erected. Later a townsite was opened (for the benefit of the Indians only) and by proper management this townsite was later opened to the whites. The title was perfected by Act of Congress, and a lot drawing took place in November, 1902, which gave to each of those holding a chance either two residence lots or one business lot. The chance taken was on the location of the property. Chances were sold all over the world: in China, England, South Africa and many in Canada.

The old Capitol building which so long served the Seminoles became a United States Government court house during those days when the government held court at Wewoka before statehood, and subsequent to statehood, the old building served as a courthouse for Seminole County. It was in this old building that the Seminole made their laws, and there, too, they executed them. The trials took place before the Council and upon conviction, the convicted was either seated at the foot of the "Execution Tree" and shot to death or tied to the Whipping tree and whipped according to the sentence of the court.

The old Execution Tree stands in the historical rooms of the state historical society in Oklahoma City at the Capitol Building. The bullet marks may still be seen and one can almost image the blood stains still remaining.

The whipping tree stands on the court house grounds at the southwest corner of the present county court house. Here, during the days the Seminoles held forth in law making and law executing, the culprit had his hands and feet tied together, the hands tied over the lower branch of the now old tree (the great branch stretching out toward the southward today) and between the feet was placed a rale or pole. The whipping was done by a Lighthorseman, and the groans and the cries of the victim could be heard for many blocks.

The treasurer of the Seminoles was in Wewoka in the old Wewoka Trading Company building that burned down in November, 1925. During the days of the Seminole government the Federal government shipped the bullion and species, gold, silver and paper money direct to A. J. Brown, Seminole National Treasurer at Wewoka, and he paid the funds directly to the tribesmen. It was an inspiring sight to see the wagon drawn by the Seminole Nation's swiftest horses and guarded by five or six Lighthorsemen, with ready carbines in their hands, meet the shipments of money, and see the horses dash at breakneck speed from the little old depot to the waiting vaults of the old Trading Company Building. That old building was located at the spot where the Cutlip building now stands.

The Wewoka Trading Company was one of the pioneer business concerns of the Indian Territory. It was established by John F. Brown, Andrew J. Brown and Courtland L. Long in the eighties, and rose in importance until it was rated as one of the greatest commercial undertakings of the southwest, valued by Bradstreet & Dunn at a million dollars one time, and the big store carried everything to be wished from a knitting needle to a threshing machine. This company made its own paper money, called by the Seminoles "Choka Sodka." The paper was prepared in Canada and signed by C. L. Long, Secretary and John F. Brown or A. J. Brown as President or Vice President. It was redeemable in goods at the big store of the company.

During the Constitutional conventional Seminole County was carved out of the old Seminole Nation and three miles of the Creek Nation, running from the North Canadian river south along the east side of the county to three miles south of Wewoka. The old Creek-Seminole National line was the very eastern line of what is known as Muskogee Avenue located just behind the Farmers National Bank and the present court house. All east of that line was the Creek Nation. All west, the Seminole.

In March, 1923, oil was discovered a mile and half southeast of the then town of Wewoka. A new era came to the town. What had been a small country town commenced its development into a city, and that progress has never ceased up the writing of this article. R. H. Smith, now of Philadelphia was the one who first really discovered oil in this county, although as far back as 1901 drilling machinery was operating on the townsite of Wewoka in quest for the black gold. In July 1907, oil was discovered in the 1260 foot horizon and produced in vast quantities. But no other wells produced. The Wewoka Trading Company was offered a half million dollars for their holdings in that early day and refused it. In December, 1925, the Magnolia Petroleum Company in a well two miles due south of town first discovered oil in the Wilcox sand. This give rise to development in other portions of the county, and to that well is attributable at this time, perhaps, the great Seminole Oil Fields, with its millions, upon millions of flowing wealth.

A vast change has been accomplished. Where the pig trails were are blue ribbons of paved highways. Where the log cabin welcomed the school children on the hills of the county, great Union Graded schools bring the children to the seat of learning in enclosed trucks, proof against all kinds of weather. Where the trooper shouted to his comrades and the teamster to his mules at the Crossing of Wewoka Creek in the old days, the great oil field truck chugs along and the speeding automobile dashes on its way. A transition has taken place, and promises for the future are evident on all hands.

written by C. Guy Cutlip