

Sam served overseas during World War I, entering the service early in 1917. He was in service nine months and fourteen days, and many times thought he would never see his home again. While he would not talk about some of the things of war he has seen, he says he learned many things about the world for the experience. When he left home in 1917, he put all of his belongings in a truck to have if he came back. Among his things was a rattlesnake hide that measured eight feet long and was twenty-two inches wide. He had killed this snake near his home shortly before leaving and valued it very much. When he returned home after the war his snake hide was gone.

He remembers when there was only one little store at Westville. At first they had to go to a little settlement in Arkansas called Cincinnati to get their corn and wheat ground. Then Steve Golden put in a mill up on the Illinois River which reduced travel considerably. There was a store run by Richard Beck and a mill operated by an Indian by name of Hildebrand up on Flint Creek, but they seldom went there as crossing the river was a hard job. Sometimes when the river could be forded they would make a trip to Siloam Springs where most of their supplies could be bought, and their hogs, cattle and grain sold. He remembers even in those days Siloam Springs was the largest of towns in their country and even then Siloam was just a small place.

Long ago when he was very young there were few people living along the river. In his immediate neighborhood he says there was Old Man Turtle, Steve Day, Jim Wilson, John Morning, Ned Hogshooter, Ned Bullfrog, and William Thompson, besides his family, and that was all the people they knew for a long time. As time passed more people began to build until at one time they had a good and well established community. Sam tells that in those early days living was good. Indians could build and live where they wanted to, and could farm what land they wished as it was under the Cherokee Nation. The Indians could hunt where they wanted without whiteman license or being bothered with whiteman. Hogs ran wild in the woods, and were more like community property. Cattle grazed everywhere as there were no fences. Cattle were kept branded or earmarked to identify ownership, and brands were highly respected.

In the days before statehood there were lots of wild turkey along the Illinois River, and they were hunted only as needed. But then came the invaders and foreigners and the turkey disappeared. The country Sam knows has always had deer. Sam tells that he had hunted much in his lifetime. On two different occasions when he did not have money to buy ammunition he killed deer with his hunting knife. His way was to lay in wait where the deer crossed the river. When the deer started swimming across Sam would dive into the water, overtake the deer, and cut its throat. This method of hunting was taught to him by an old Indian known as Twister. In his early days a most prized possession was a muzzle loading rifle, and he tells that the Indians were expert marksmen. He has seen men shoot a squirrel thru the head at almost impossible distances.

He talks about the times when the Indians grew Indian corn, flour corn, and nickory cane corn, each of which was used for a different purpose. Pumpkins, turnips, potatoes, and squash were grown as favorites for Indian foods. Sam remembers also when each Indian family had a fruit orchards. Times and progress have changed much of the Cherokee way of life. During May the Indians still gather the wild strawberry, and in June they go into the hills to gather nuckleberries. For some, the nuckleberry provides a little income, as they get two or three dollars a gallon for them.

He recalls the days long ago when Tom, Charley, and John Wickliff would come