

Charles' father was Robert Ross and his mother was Annie Millsap Ross. He was born on what is his original Indian allotment and has lived here these many years to see a great change come to his country. He admits too of helping in the many changes, as he was one of the County Commissioners of Muskogee County for several years.

Mr. Ross first attended the Prairie Knob School two miles east of his home. He also went to the Ross School and the Vann School in his district while in the lower grades. He finished his education at the Cherokee Male Seminary at Tahlequah which apparently gave background for his successful life as a farmer, rancher, and public official.

He tells that his faction of the Ross family had left Georgia before the forced removal to come to the Indian Territory, as like some, saw the outcome of events to happen. There were several families that came with this earlier Ross group and they settled first in western Arkansas thinking they were in the Indian Territory. Their stay there did not last long as white people burned their homes and stole their livestock. They then went into Texas and stayed for a while before finally coming to the forks of the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers where they settled permanently. Mr. Ross considers his forefathers the earliest permanent settlers in his home area.

Of the other early day settlers to this district were the Vanns, Morgans, Smiths, Rogers, and Carliles. He recalls that when he was a young fellow the Cherokee Smith family would have a big Thanksgiving dinner for all the neighbors and Indians for miles around would come for the harvesttime observance. He recalls also that across the river was the Redbird Smiths of the Keetoowahs who preserved the ancient religious Cherokee ceremonies and rituals. Cotton always enjoyed attending these meetings.

He recalls hearing his father tell of a murder trial in which Vann Smith was tried and convicted. Vann was taken before the judge for formal sentencing. In the meantime Vann had starved himself while held in jail and was down to about ninety pounds. The judge looked at him and said "I have never hung a dead man yet, and I don't intend to start now", and turned Vann loose. Later Vann caught up on his eating and got fat as a hog.

One of the many changes Mr. Ross has seen was the settling up of the country. He recalls when as a young man he hauled cotton to Checotah and it was at least five miles between houses. He also hauled grain to Sallisaw in a wagon but there were many Indians living in that part of the country then and the trip was not so lonesome. In those days there were no fences and the roads just wound thru the woods and across the prairies.

The Ross family used to have a large cemetery near the river. In 1943 a flood came down the Canadian River and completely washed it away, leaving no trace of the graveyard. Nowadays most people of the area use the Vann, Drum Springs, or Fields Cemetery.

Of interest was a permit issued to his father, Robert Ross, dated March 15, 1898 giving authority for him to hire a whiteman for thirty days. This paper, along with others, was shown by Mr. Ross which he has kept over the years.

Tragic times have come to the Ross family, as have most early day families