

Martha Wing Hammel, Delaware

Interviewed by: J. W. Tyner

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Mrs. Hammel was born in 1879 in the Double Creek community near the Verdigris River, east of the little town of Watova. All of her 89 years have been spent in this area, and she has seen the many changes come to this part of north-east Oklahoma.

Her early recollections of family life deep in the river bottom woodlands are still clear to her. The family home was a large log house, as were many of the Indian homes at that time. Their way of life was much like that of their other pioneer settlers. Her parents were industrious and hard working and provided sufficiently for the family. Their log home was of simple furnishings. She remembers that her mother done most of the cooking at the big fireplace, and sometimes prepared food over a fire built outside. Double deck beds built into the walls were for the children. She recalls the many times visitors came, and they would then get to sleep on pallets on the floor, letting the guests have their beds high up on the wall. The long rough oak table and split log benches completed most of the home furniture.

The country was very thinly settled when she was a little girl, but relatives and neighbors visited and saw to each others needs. Schools were few and far between during her first school years. She first attended a little subscription school near her home which was called River Bottom School. Later she went to the first school built at Watova when her family moved up on the prairie. She finished the grades at Watova which was the extent of her schooling.

Her father died when she was yet a young girl, but she remembers bearing him tell of seeing buffalo on the prairies, in his early days. She herself recalls the time when great flocks of prairie chicken, ducks, and geese were common sights. Deer were plentiful in the river bottoms. Wolves could be seen frequently and now and then a panther was spotted. Where many wooded creeks now run, she remembers when all the area was just one big prairie, unfenced