

and very much a wild frontier. In those days, she reflects, prairie fires were disastrous and greatly feared. Winters were much more severe then compared to those of this day.

Watova, Indian Territory, was already a small village when she first saw it. She says the name "Watova" is of Delaware origin, but to her knowledge the meaning has been lost. Before the area was settled by cattlemen and white-man farmers, many Delaware Indians lived in this southern part of their lands. Now most of them have been pushed out and driven away, and the Delaware Nation no longer exists.

Before statehood, Watova was a busy and happy town. At it's peak growth it was home to some 500 people. To the east was the wheat farming country, while to the west was the cattle country. The Missouri-Pacific Railroad, or Iron Mountain Railroad as it is commonly called, came through Watova in 1889 which added much to its prosperity. At one time two large mercantile stores, rail depot, stockyards, a grain elevator gave a picture of a content and happiness on this frontier prairie. A nice brick school and three churches added to the community life. Today no business of any kind exists, no church bells ring, and the school was closed in 1967. The remaining population of fifty now slowly watch the little frontier town disappear.

In older days this part of the Indian Territory also had its share of outlaws and bad men. On one occasion, Mrs. Hammel recalls, her ten year old brother was at the depot in Nowate when Cherokee Bill robbed the railroad agent, took him outside and knocked him out with a blow on the head with his pistol, then calmly mounted his horse and rode away. She says the Verdigris River bottoms and the Caney River country harbored many outlaws when she was a young girl.