

Jenks lived in that day of Cherokee Chiefs. At one time he worked for Chief Johnson Harris. He also knew well Chief Dennis Busbynead, Chief Joel Mayes, Chief, Tom Barrington, Chief Samuel Mayes, and Chief William C. Rogers.

Mrs. Ross tells of life in the Big Creek country of northeastern Nowata County. Many colored families had settled in that area long ago with the Delawares, Shawnees, and Cherokees. She tells that there were many people there at one time, and that Centralia (then known as Lucas) was their nearest trading center. There have been hard times in the Big Creek bottoms, as Mrs. Ross tells. One winter it had been cold, rainy and snowing and they had used up all their provisions. Her first husband was living then, and he and one of the older boys started out before daylight for Centralia to get supplies. During the day she and some of the other children hunted the woods for something to eat. They could not find anything - no persimmons, acorns, walnuts or anything. She had also put out a big washing on a rub board and tub and was tired and hungry. Her husband and son did not get back until dark, and she says that was the time they had really experienced hunger. Her husband told her that they had passed a man in a wagon as they walked to Centralia early that morning and when they came back that evening he had only gone about a mile, because the mud was so deep.

Jenks tells of one time he went to find an uncle who lived in the Creek Nation west of Wagoner in the Verdigris River bottoms. He did not find his uncle, Alec Keys, for nearly a week. He got very hungry and finally went to a house where a lady gave him some water and a pan of biscuits. He continued looking thru the bottoms for his uncle and met several Creek Indians. He tells that those Indians were very mean, and they did not like anybody. Relating that he was always hungry after walking thru that rough swampy country, he came to a man's house and asked for something to eat. The man told him he had plenty of meat but no bread. But that was just fine. The man went to his 'punchin floor' where he had a good supply of beef and hog meat and brought out a big chunk of beef ribs. He cooked it at the fireplace and was filled.

They describe a 'punchin floor' as a place under the floor of the house where meat is kept. A large and deep hole is dug and lined with fitted logs that are smoothed on the inside. They tell that this arrangement kept meat well for long periods of time.

Telling again of the experience when in the Creek Nation, he was only about 13 years old at that time. He then went to Muskogee where he met a man that knew his father and was given something to eat. Somewhere he had acquired a long old fashioned brass telescope. He was on his way back to Tahlequah. When he got to the Arkansas River, just east of Muskogee he called for the ferry so he could cross. He told them he had no money, but let them have his telescope until he could come back and pay the fare. They told him he better come back. That was the last he saw them. He took off thru the river bottom cane breaks and woods. The country was wild then, wild cattle roamed the river bottom, panthers and wolves prowled the hills, but this was nothing new to Jenks. Before he got out of the bottom, he stopped and ate a meal with some outlaws.

When Lynch Prairie was being settled he used to live in that area, not far from the Bequa Schoolhouse. That was just before statehood and there was then a large prairie there, but not most of it is grown up in brush and timber. It was near the big bend of the Grand River where he used to spend much time fishing.