

Alvin West

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came the government like a black cloud of despair to destroy and change. Oologah Dam and Reservoir project was created and the whole river valley clear to the Kansas line was wiped out in so far as homes, farms, towns, and other joys common to that people. People had to move out of the area to make way for the government project to the extent that not enough children were left to support the fine school at Talala. The school closed its doors in 1964. This fine old stone building now looks out at a confused world from the weeds that are growing up in its yard and from broken window panes.

To the west and north of Talala great areas are now in cattle ranches. Mr. West says that it is 85 miles around the Cobb ranch. The old Skinner-Farley ranch is another of the large cattle operations. The big cattle ranches have replaced most of the cultivation farming, and never again will Mr. West see corn piled up at the railroad 30 feet high and in a stretch 300 feet long!

One of the oldest churches in Talala is the Methodist which dates from the 1880s. Following not far behind were the Baptist and Christian Churches. Of the newer church buildings is the County Baptist which was moved in from across the river somewhere near Alluwe.

In the early days country stores were not common in this area as they were in some other parts. However, east of Talala near the river was the old Sunnyside Store at one time. Dave McClure operated this store for many years. There was once a couple of stores at Watova, which Mr. West includes in the Talala area.

The old cemeteries bespeak of the people who have lived long ago, old home sites, and communities that existed at one time. Overlooking the waters now forming Oologah Lake is the remains of old buildings that was once the Bible family home place. A short distance back up on the bluff from the ruins is a little cemetery of the Bible family, long since deserted and forgotten. Many small family plots have been lost in the march of progress and development, and Mr. West recalls very few that remain. He says there is one grave in a pasture on the old Whisnot place. Back over southwest, among the coal stripping mines there is a colored cemetery. The little Nicholson cemetery was moved from the lake area by the govt. to the Talala Cemetery. He says that the first burial in the Talala Cemetery was that of the infant child of Mr. and Mrs. Farrow back in the 1890s.

At one time there was a depot or stop house at every town and village on the Missouri-Pacific railroad. Now in its run thru northeast Okla. the depots can almost be counted on the fingers of one hand. Yet, Talala still has a railroad agent, Rose Daniels who has been there for many years. The next agent going north would be Nowata, then Coffeyville, Kans. This is one of the many changes Mr. West has seen. He says he has seen more changes take place in the last twenty years than any other time in his life.