

Ben recalls when the railroad was being built. Construction in those days was with mule teams and slip scrapers, and hand labor. He remembers when it was a big thrill to see the Missouri-Pacific passenger trains stop in Hanson. In the early days of Hanson, it suffered three different fires that hurt the growth of the town, but the people would rebuild in most cases. Hanson would probably have grown into a bigger town, but there was one man who would not let the Kansas City Southern railroad build their line thru Hanson across his lands. Still, for years a big blacksmith shop continued there, and he says they had one of the best horse shoers in the country. Hanson had three doctor offices there at one time - Dr. Fields, Dr. Green, and Dr. Ray. In the hill country to the north and west many cattle were brought to Hanson for shipment. Ben recalls one time he saw a whole train load of cattle leave from the Hanson yard, the biggest bunch of cattle he has ever seen. Early day merchants and business men in Hanson included Dave Faulkner, J. V. Dowell, Ragland and Herwin, Lon Gilbert, Troutwine, et al.

While the Hanson country was mostly farming the scattered spots of good land, there was also the hill country where cattle grazed the open range. Ben's life has been mostly in handling cattle. When a young fellow Ben tried to stay in school off and on for several years. Finally he gave it up and decided to be a cattleman, starting from the beginning. His Dad agreed to let him quit school, and let him ride with older experienced cowboys, as his dad told him "a tender-assed cowboy aint no good". He did learn much in the cattle business, first as a cowboy working for his dad, tending cattle during the winter, rounding cattle up in spring and fall, and shipping in summer. Later he bought cattle for his father. He tells he used to travel all through the still rough and wild country of northeast Sequoyah County, and be gone for days, staying at night wherever there was a house in the backwoods. He tells that long ago the winters were sometimes very bad. He recalled one winter when there was lots of snow and cold, he saw a cow that froze to death and was leaning against a fence. That old cow stood upright until she thawed out come spring. He remembers when he first started out as a cowboy, his dad took him to Ft. Smith and bought him a fine saddle, which was one of his proud possessions for years. When he was buying cattle in the hill country for his dad, he could stop anywhere at night and stay all night with some family. Early day families always welcomed anyone to come to their home and share their fare and lodging. He says that was in 'another world', for to-day if someone came wanting to stay all night, they would call the sheriff!

Among the early day settlers to Hanson country were Faulkners, Blairs, Ross, Pattons, Seabolt, Leslie, and Adairs, all Indians. He recalls one of the old Ross men had five different wives. When one died, she was buried out in the back yard. This was usually the beginning of many family cemeteries that are sometimes found to-day, most of which are abandoned.

Just north of Hanson is the little crossroads settlement of Atkins. Like most of the people of olden times each knew the other for miles around, as the country was not so over populated and cluttered up as it is now. Ben knew most of the people around Atkins. He used to work with a boy from up there by name of Chock Floyd. One summer, Ben, Chock, and some other boys went off to work in the harvest fields up in Kansas. They separated