

Ben talks about early days of Ft. Smith. The first time he went there they had street cars that ran in the middle of the street. They did not know any different and drove their wagon down the wrong side of the tracks.

After automobiles came into use, he had an old car and in going to Ft. Smith one day he had to stop often to pump up the tires. Just after he crossed the bridge into Ft. Smith, he saw a sign that said "Free Air". He was tired of pumping and stopped to take advantage of the offer. No one was around the filling station, so he helped himself. He put air in the tires until they looked good, and thought he would put in a little extra. One tire blew up, knocked him down, and blew his hat across the street. A man came running around from the back to see what had happened. He told Ben that he had to use a gage, which was news to Ben.

There was a time when the railroad bridge was the only crossing over the river into Ft. Smith, and travelers paid a toll fee to cross. He tells of taking cattle to Ft. Smith. When the herd got to the west side of the river, they were put in a stockyard and watered and fed, until a permit was obtained to cross the bridge. Arrangements had to be made to control traffic and set a time when only the cattle would be driven across. Most of the cattle were from out of the wild hill country and hard to handle. Driving them up on bridge with its rattling plank flooring and board sides left comforts to be desired. With the noise of hooves hitting the planks and horns knocking against the side railing, a bunch of scared cows went off the east end of the bridge in a wild stampede, and they scattered all over nigger town. Sometimes it would take half a day to get them all collected and penned up.

After a trip like that it was good to get back to the peace and quiet of Hanson, where "Mexico Jack", was busy at the anvil in the blacksmith shop, a sow and pigs wandered down main street, and dogs slept in the cool shade by the water tank.

Not far northwest of Hanson was the location of Maple Courthouse, where all the legal activities of the Sequoyah District of the Cherokee Nation were conducted. Cherokee gathered at this courthouse for payments of government money. It has been told that the government paid the Indians for their land. In the garbage and mechanics of government treaties with the Indians regarding land, this matter can certainly "plow up a nest of snakes" with some Indians. Some present day Indians cannot understand what the government was doing, when they would have Indians who could neither understand or read a treaty, place his "X" mark on a piece of paper. The subject can take on a variety of comments and discussions. Ben tells that the government payments meant little to most Indians, but it did buy a lot of whiskey. Some disturbing scenes took place at Maple Courthouse. Those charged with crimes and offenses were not fined or slapped on the back of the hand as is the twentieth century custom of to-day. Neither was there any bail bond put up. A court trial was held according to the judge and book. Punishment when found guilty in many cases, was carried out under the hanging tree. Some of the guilty were tied to a log and whipped.

Historic also is the Hanson country, for just a few miles to the northeast Sequoyah built his cabin about the year 1829, which is preserved by the State Historical Society.