

Among Joe Ross' many folks was John Ross, Chief of the Cherokee Nation West from 1839 to 1866. Chief Ross was an Uncle of Joe. Lewis Ross was his grandpa.

Joe tells that when he was a young fellow there was an old Negro by name of Walker Johnson. This old man came over the Trail of Tears with the Cherokees. Very little was known of his early life, but he was a good man, and well respected by his Indian neighbors in the Snake Creek country. Joe recalls that Walker used to come work for his father during harvest time. Walker was a great story teller and would always have an audience at night. Joe tells that this old man's knowledge of the stars, the woods and plants, insects, birds, and the habits of all wild things was almost unbelievable.

Mr. Ross has spent many years in Claremore and Rogers County, having served in various government offices. He knows much of Rogers County and its people of early days. He tells that when stage coaches used to travel from Coffeyville, Kansas, to Ft. Smith they traveled a road that came down the Verdigris River to Claremore then the road headed Southeast. Below Claremore there was a stage stop known as Walkley Inn, which was a very popular stopping place for travelers as they provided rooms and accommodations. It was here that the U. S. Marshalls used to stop in their travels thru the Indian Nation. In that Panther Creek-Verdigris River country early day outlaws from the Rider and Cochran gangs took refuge. There always was some activity or excitement in that community. One time Joe was down at Tiawah and went up on Panther Creek where the stage road crossed to see the body of a dead man floating in the creek. He says in those days dead men were found in many places.

He tells that between Tiawah and Claremore and just north of the Panther Creek bridge on the highway there used to be a large cemetery in the old days. When the Mo-Pac railroad was built thru the country it was built thru part of the cemetery with it moving any of the graves. Later, State Highway No. 88 was built alongside the railroad and again none of the disturbed graves were moved. To-day just outside the right-of-way fence there remain two marble monuments - all that is left of something once held sacred. This is the progress of a civilized nation.