

In the days of their youth, there was not much crime in the country. Most people were too busy trying to make a living. There were differences of opinion at times, usually settled by a knock-down-drag-out fight. There was a Sheriff by the name of Joe Bread at Vinita, and some Indian marshalls who kept what law and order was required. On one occasion George Squirrel killed John Downing in a gun fight at Estella. Another time there, Bert Doublehead shot Frank Skeen in a drunken brawl. Bert went to prison for five years, but the killing stayed on his mind and he died shortly after release from tuberculosis contracted in prison. After Bert died his wife, Susie Doublehead, married Blossom Foot. Sam Parks, a Cherokee lawyer in Vinita, handled many cases requiring legal aid for the Indians of the community.

Early houses in the community were mostly made of logs. John Brown put up a saw mill on Pawpaw Creek and provided many with lumber with which to build rough board houses. There was some good sandstone in the area and some houses were built of it.

Gib relates that the old log structure that was Thompson Chapel was torn down about 1914 and the people of the community built the present Chapel with their own labor and money. Mr. Fallin's father hauled the lumber for the construction on a wagon from Vinita. Somehow the Methodist Church got control of the chapel, which they later closed and were going to remove it. The people of the community bought it back for \$100 (which was hard to come by in those days), even though the people built and owned the building in the first place.

Gib's father made many coffins in the early days, and his mother and a Mrs. Franklin would line the coffins with cotton and cloth to put away their dead. The dead were not embalmed in those days, as the undertaking business was a new profession. Most families could not afford the luxury of an undertaker then.

Gib's father died when he was three years old, and his mother passed away when he was fifteen. Bert Oskison, a half breed Cherokee was appointed by the Cherokee Court as his guardian. The Oskison's were prominent farmers and ranchers in the Estella community. There were three of the boys: John, Bert, and Dick. John attended Cherokee Male Seminary and became a writer. His best known book was "Brothers Three", dealing with his family and the community in early days in Indian territory.

Whether a matter of convenience, economy, or choice, many early Indians did not go thru the civil ceremony of marriage. Common law marriages were accepted. Separation and dissolution of a common law union created no legal problems. Some however preferred the marriage services conducted by an Indian minister or other legal authority.

The Fallins recall times when serious and destructive woods and prairie fires ravaged the country. Before fire season of the year, people would rake and burn leaves, weeds and grass around their buildings. When fires broke out all the neighbors would turn out to fight the fire. Most roads were just trails thru the woods, and to the unacquainted, a person could get lost easily in those early days.