

and Mrs. Wilhite is quick to tell of those long ago times.

From the long ago, she brings out a pair of worn oxen shoes. Oxen were worked as beasts of burden by the Cherokees in early Indian Territory. Oxen were favored over horses and mules because of their strength and gentleness, and if one broke a leg or got too old to work, he could always be eaten. This pair of oxen shoes protected the hooves of Sam Sander's team as he tilled and traveled the flint rock hill country.

From wooden pegs in her room she took down a double barrel muzzle loading shotgun made sometime in the 1850s. This was Uncle Levi's gun, she tells, as she handles it with the same loving care as perhaps its owner did. She still has some of the shot, powder, and wadding left by her uncle.

Among the treasures in an old truck, she shows an old bullet mould of Civil War vintage; a sausage mill of the type made in the 1830s handed down thru her family; and a wooden shoe last for pegging shoe soles.

She remembers when her father and other men wore moccasins. They were treated in some manner that made them waterproof. Moccasins worn in the winter were fur lined. She says that the Cherokees did not decorate their footwear as is the custom with most Indian tribes.

Jess Christie tells how some Cherokee babies are named. Early the following morning after a baby was born, the father would go for a walk. From the things he saw, a condition or circumstance observed, or an inspiration to his pleasure, the young one was so named.

On a Sunday in late April each year, hundreds of people gather at Caney Cemetery for Decoration Day. On this counterpart of Memorial Day, relatives of those who have passed on gather to decorate graves. Song service is usually held in the Caney Church at the graveyard. Weather permitting, many bring their dinner and spend much of the day visiting with friends. This burial ground is very old, and Mrs. Wilhite tells that her aunt, Elizabeth Sanders Smith was buried here in 1845, and was the first to be placed at rest in Caney cemetery. The cemetery is a large place for this hill country, and is neatly kept by the community.

After the Cherokees came to Indian Territory, one of the first schools to be built was at Caney. She recalls that a Cherokee woman, Sallie Starr, was one of the first teachers there and taught for many years. She showed an old school book used by her father at this school, and in which Sallie Starr wrote a note on April 22, 1867. Mrs. Wilhite also attended this school even when it was a log building. The log building had been rebuilt three times before a frame building was constructed. Wauhilla community later organized to include Bitting Springs and a new school was built nearer the Springs. The Chapel and Community Building at Caney Cemetery was built in 1931 of native stone. Among other early schools in adjoining communities were Stoney Point, Hungry Mountain, Rabbit Trap, and New Echota.

In those early days it was customary to use school buildings for church services. Cherokee and white preachers traveled about the country holding religious service wherever needed. Mrs. Wilhite remembers preachers would come to Caney and would always stay at the Levi Keys home. The Levi Keys did not have any children of their own, but did raise other children. They had a big house and always had room for visitors and travelers.