

days. On the east side of the river the road forked, one going east into the Jay, Grove, and Southwest City country, and the other road going to Salina, Peggs, and Tahlequah.

Tom tells that one time he was in partnership with a man called Ben Half in operating a little store. Ben was sort of a wild half-breed and was known to keep company with John Barleycorn. Tom suspected Ben of dipping into the till so offered to sell out or buy his interest. With no fuss or words, Tom sold out to Ben. Then Tom built a store of his own next to the Ben Half building which he run for many years. Ben closed his store after a few years and moved up north somewhere. Tom sold a few groceries, grain and hay, harness, and operated a drey service around the area.

Mr. Ward recalls when the stagecoaches would come into town, pulled by nice four-horse teams. There was always a little group of townspeople to meet the colorful stage to see the travelers, and more especially to get mail. When money and valuables were being transported on the stage, Mr. Ward remembers there was always a man riding shotgun. He recalls one particular guard known only as "Buck", who was a fierce looking man with steel grey eyes and a handlebar mustache, and cradled a 10-gauge shotgun in his arms.

He mentions that in the very early days a couple of well-to-do men had built fine homes opposite each other on Grand River at Ketchum. The fact that he says that slaves were used in the construction of the brick homes must have placed the time before the Civil War. While telling of these houses, he tells also that his grandmother who was a Cherokee was married to a white man and they lived at Eve Springs in or near what is now Nashville, Tenn. This grandfather bought and sold slaves, and they never left their homeland.

Recalling again his very young days in the Chickasaw Nation, they lived at a place called Coothey Flats, and their trading center was at a little place called Ryan which is now in Jefferson County. Ryan was almost on the bank of Red River, and he recalls seeing small freight boats plying up and down the river.

In his young days Tom liked to hunt and remembers there were lots of deer and turkey along Grand River. He also liked to hunt wolves and coyotes on horseback. He tells that at one time there were many grey and timber wolves, and a few black wolves. The black wolves were a prize catch and they would bring a good price. He recalls too when he would hunt turkey on a moonlight night. He says when he first came to the Cherokee Nation there were millions of passenger pigeons, and has seen the trees with large limbs broken by their weight while roosting. It is difficult to believe that in so few years the white market hunters had wiped out this beautiful bird. A black mark in history is recorded when the last known passenger pigeon died in 1913. The present generation will also see once common species of wildlife become extinct.

Tom tells that his young days were most enjoyable. All of his brothers and sisters were good musicians. They spent many nights playing at home, as well as for parties and country dances. The country dances were not without fist fights and shootings. He says one time some big braiser came to a dance and was determined to sit in one of the girls lap. A friend of his who was a very peaceful man and was not known to be of aggressive nature took offense to the advances of the man. He called the big man outside and nearly beat him to death.