

Ned tells of when his family lived on the post oak flats above Spring Creek ~~when~~ when was a small boy. Deer was plentiful then. His father built a hiding place up in a tree near where salt was put out for cattle. Whenever venison was needed his father would go hide in the tree and wait until the deer came. He reasoned that was much easier than tramping the woods all day.

In much earlier days Ned's friend Red Cloud Duncan lived a couple miles east of his home on Snake Creek. He recalls when this prominent Cherokee lawman would come by to visit when he was building his present home in 1894. That was the year Ned's father, George Downing, died of pneumonia. George Downing served under Gen. Stand Watie during the Civil War. He remembers when his Grandma Snell used to talk about the hard times during the Civil War, as well as the even more difficult times when she came to Indian Territory on the Tragic March of 1839. Ned says that when the Cherokees were forced to come to Indian Territory they were promised that this new home would be theirs 'as long as the water flowed and the grass grew', and it was so written in the removal documents and treaties. Ned is among many Indians who does not understand the way the whiteman thinks. It confuses him to try to understand how, since 1907, or since statehood the Federal Government has almost completely turned the Indian Nation over to the whiteman. Ned believes that he will live to see the complete end of Indian owned land in the area of the old Cherokee Nation.

Ned speaks out his views and observations of current governmental activity, farm controls, electrical co-ops, permits, licenses, authorities, and on. He thinks that the American people will eventually be destroyed by their own confusion of red tape, computerized living, and becoming robots of a soulless government. He is also outspoken in his observation of the county government and has watched the legal county machinery at work, which appears to be something less than clean and honest.

Mr. Downing tells that before statehood the Cherokee Nation was a wonderful place. The Nation belonged to the Cherokee Tribe, and all members shared in its holdings. A person could build a home wherever he wished, could cut timber as needed, graze his stock without interference. But all that is gone now. It would seem that the whiteman brought nothing that benefited the Indian, but did bring much of the state of poverty, sorrow, and unhappiness that confronts the Indian to-day.

Ned mentions old Cherokee families who lived in this country when he was a young man. Those that he remembers best were the Vanns, Wilkersons, Turners, Smiths, Jeffins, Duncans, Spade, Hughes, Butlers, and Shades. Joe Shade was one of the oldest he remembers, and he says his wife lived to be a 134 years old.

Before statehood, he tells that there was no town of Locust Grove, but there was a store about two miles north of its present location called Bryan's Post. There was a little store at Salina. These were the nearest trading places from his home on Snake Creek. To have their corn ground into meal they would go to Spade Hollow, Locust, or Tahlequah, but to get wheat made into flour they would go to Southwest City, Mo. He tells that they would get a thousands pounds of flour ground at a time that would last nearly a year.