

RADGETT, JAMES R. INTERVIEW.

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3

Gus Hummingbird
Field worker
S-149
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An Interview with
James R. Padgett.

James R. Padgett, a pioneer white man of the Cherokee Nation, was born in South Carolina in 1858. His parents were natives of North Carolina.

The Padgetts moved to Georgia when James was twelve years of age. He lived in Georgia until 1881. When he was nineteen years of age, he married a Cherokee girl by the name of Vickery. The Cherokees at that time lived on a reservation in Georgia.

Mrs. Padgett's folks left Georgia for the Indian Territory in 1881 and Mr. Padgett immigrated with them.

They settled near the present site of Muskogee, Oklahoma, on a farm owned by Mr. Simp Bennett, a relative of the Vickery's. This place was located about four miles southeast of Muskogee, which was a small place when they came. Mrs. Padgett and Mr. Padgett did not get along very well among

her people, so five months afterwards James went to the Goingsnake District and settled near the present Piney neighborhood. While living at Piney, he married another Cherokee girl, named Eliza Sixkiller, who belonged to a prominent Cherokee family.

To this union there were born twelve children now living and Mr. Padgett still lives on the same farm his wife allotted.

Some old timers at Muskogee at the time Mr. Padgett arrived are Bill McMickens, Simp Bennett, Cobb, Colonel Harris, Joe Harris and Jim Harris.

FERRIES.

Mr. Padgett has crossed the Arkansas River several times on a ferry boat. He thinks the ferry was located a little north of the present Frisco Railway Bridge. He does not remember the man's name who operated this ferry.

The U.S Troops were stationed at Ft. Gibson at that time. He has been at Chief Bushyhead's home there on the Grand River.

FARMING

After the marriage of Mr. Padgett to the Sixkiller girl in the Goingsnake District, he was allowed to move on the farm of his father-in-law. Here he farmed for several years, raising all kinds of crops but corn was the principal crop. After he had made two crops or had lived two years among the Cherokees, he was adopted into the Cherokee Tribe which enabled him to vote and become a citizen, but he was not entitled to any land.

There were only a few wealthy people in this country at that time. The Walkingsticks were the wealthiest of that time.

Most of the farmers of his class did all their trading by barter or exchanging surplus goods.

He has walked as far as Evansville, a distance of fifteen miles to cradle wheat for the people along the Arkansas line in order to get cash to purchase clothing.

Everything in way of clothing was homemade.

FINANCING FARMERS.

There was plenty of money in the Cherokee Nation at that time but it was handled only by a few. A poor man

who did not want to go in debt was forced to go somewhere else to work.

The Cherokees would loan money to one another, but a white man would have difficulty in getting any.

He has seen the Sixkillers loan as much as Two Hundred Dollars to some of their neighbors. No security was demanded. A man's promise was his bond.

Mr. Padgett wanted to borrow money once in case of sickness so he went to his closest neighbor, Judge Noisewater. The old man told him to send his wife down, she, being a Cherokee, got the money.

FRONTIER TOWNS.

Ft. Smith, Siloam, Evansville and Dutch Mills were the frontier towns. Evansville was their trading point. Dutch Mills was their milling point. Some old time merchants at Dutch Mills were Ruf's See, Vol English, Thea Evans and Jim White.

EPIDEMICS

Communicable diseases seldom broke out in the Cherokee Country, Typhoid Fever, Measles, Chicken Pox, Influenza and other diseases were unknown. The only diseases that were to be found at any time was

the Smallpox and Consumption.

He has heard some old timers talk about Scarlet Fever during the Civil War. This disease killed thousands of them. Summer Chills and Paralysis cases could also be found among the Cherokees.

MEDICINE.

Most of these diseases were treated by the Cherokees themselves for there were no doctors in the country at that time. The only white doctors that could be found in cases of emergency were at Evansville and Dutch Mills, which was about fifteen miles away. What few there were at these places were very kind. They would come to the Cherokee country without any pay many times. Those that were able to pay, paid three dollars a trip. They usually came horse-back.

He never heard of Appendicitis, or he does not remember of any operation performed in this country at that time. The only operations he ever heard of was performed on an Indian, when Dr. Johnson cut a bullet out of his leg. Cherokee people knew a medicine—a wax made from some roots. This, applied to the wounded part, would draw out the lead poisoning. This wax was applied

on the gunshot wound of a boy named Terry when he was shot by the City Marshal of Tahlequah. But you could not buy these medicines from these Indians. They would doctor you. But they would not tell you their remedy. The same applies to the Cherokees now.

Some of the old time Cherokee doctors were Thompson Charles, John Hair, William Wolfe and Jennie Mause.

CUSTOMS.

The customs of the Cherokees differ much from the customs now. Every fall of the year when a neighbor would butcher a hog, it was the custom of this neighbor to send his closest neighbors a mess of fresh meat.

Any person who had helped with a corpse in any way was not allowed to come inside of a garden for four days.

All medicines that were made by the Cherokees were kept outside.

They believed that a crow cawing in the night was a warning that some of your nearest relatives were going to get killed.

They taught their children that all dreams told before breakfast would come to pass, so the children were taught not to tell bad dreams before breakfast.

7

STOCK AND STOCKMEN

Not everybody owned stock at that time. There were many cattle but just owned by a few. Among the early day stockmen were Richard Wolfe, Tom Horn, Bob Ross, Jim and John Walkingstick, Jonathan Whitmire and Lew Williams.

Lew Williams owned a ranch a little east of the present city of Westville, Oklahoma. He owned more cattle than any of the early cattle men. He was the chief buyer, the others mentioned would sell their cattle to Williams.

Mr. Padgett has worked some for Richard Wolfe. He has helped several times to drive cattle through to Ft. Gibson, which was a shipping point at that time. Wolfe lived near Proctor.

Some would drive their cattle to Dodge City, Kansas.

U.S. MARSHALS.

Mr. Padgett was personally acquainted with several early day officers.

He and Ned Christie were brothers-in-law.

He knows the history of Ned as well as any man. Since it has been told so many times he will not tell it. Mr. Padgett made the rails that the officers used for a shield when they set Ned's house afire.

He knew Col. White, Heck Brunner, Charley Copeland and many others. He also knew Soldier Hair and Arch Wolfe, Ned's partners.

Mr. Padgett has been appointed Guard several times at the Goingsnake Court House when Court was in session. He and Charley Shell were Guards at the trial of Walker Bark. He was convicted and sentenced to hang. Aaron Goingswolfe and John Looney were two of the jurors in this trial.

STOMP DANCE.

Some Cherokees belonged to a clan called "Night Hawks", this being a group that did not believe in intermarrying with the whites. They also did not believe in education. They taught the young generation the evils of an education. This was the same group that the government had so much trouble with after statehood pertaining to schooling Indian children.

The Goingsnake group had their grounds at John Wolfe's place near Wauhilla. Their leaders were John Wolfe and Ben Squirrel.

9

TOWNS.

Stilwell at that time was only a small place consisting of only one store which was located somewhere near the present New Hope Cemetery. This store was operated by Henry Dannenberg.

The land all around was owned by Henry Dannenberg, Liver Scott, Sam Johnson and Ben Freeman. When the K.C. S. Right-of-way was granted, it was moved to where it is now located.

RAILROADS

The Kansas City Southern Railroad was built through the Cherokee Country about 1893 and 1894. Several years afterwards, the St. Louis & San Francisco Railway Company asked for a permit to extend its lines into the Cherokee Country from the east. Mr. Johnathan Whitmire and Richard Wolfe were members of the Council at that time. At that time Mr. Padgett was working for Mr. Whitmire. He recollects Mr. Wolfe coming over to Mr. Whitmire's one Sunday and discussing this question of granting a right-of-way to the said company. It was their duty to vote on the question at the next meeting

of the legislature which was to convene in the near future. They agreed to vote granting the right-of-way providing that the said Company agreed to pay Fifty Dollars per mile for the right of way. When the legislature met this was granted.

SAW MILLS

There were only two sawmills in the early days that the people from his neighborhood got lumber from-- one was a mill owned by a man named Bee Hunter on Caney Creek below the present Wauhilla Post Office. The other was at Oil Springs below Chewey, Oklahoma. The first house that Padgett lived in was built from lumber that was sawed at this mill below Chewey. He hauled it about twenty-five miles. The flooring in the house that Charley Ketcher now lives in at Peavine came from the Bee Hunter mill about 1883.