

INDEX CARDS

Farming--Choctaw Nation
Cotton gins--Choctaw Nation
Houses--Choctaw Nation
Postoffices--Indianola
Indianola
Social gatherings--Choctaw Nation

5660

Field Worker: Dovey P. Heady
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Interview with R. O. McElhany
Indianola, Oklahoma.

A BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH.

Mr. McElhany states as follows: I am the son of H. M. McElhany. I was born in Madison County, Arkansas. My father is of Cherokee descent; my mother, Sarah E. McElhany, was an American.

I came to Indian Territory with my parents in 1873, in a covered wagon, pulled by horses, and led a yoke of steers behind the wagon to plow with when we settled. We settled at Whitefield, Indian Territory. My father leased 25 acres of land from Tom Street and farmed there two years.

We left there in 1875 and settled near the Canadian River at what is now old Indianola, Oklahoma. At that time there were few white families in this settlement--mostly Indians. This was river bottom land and produced good crops. We took our corn, vegetables, etc., to McAlester and Krebs, Oklahoma, for disposal. Corn sold for 10¢ and 15¢ per bushel, vegetables were just as cheap.

We sold our cotton at Canadian, Oklahoma. Canadian was the closest gin. It was a horse gin. Cotton sold for \$50.00 per bale.

Our farming implements consisted of: A twisting shovel--this was used to break land. A home-made drumb planter, made of a nail keg with holes all around, about two or three inches apart. This was pulled in the manner of a plow and as the keg rolled over the seed dropped out of the holes. The home-made bull tongue plow was used to break new land. Later in about 1889, we bought our first plow, the cash turning plow. This was called the cash turning plow because we bought it and the others were home-made. The points were heated and beaten out of iron. The handles and tongues were made of Bois 'dare or oak timber.

We lived pretty hard the first two years. After that, times were not so hard. We dried our fruits and vegetables at home. We had plenty of wild game, such as turkey, deer, hogs, fish, squirrel. No one killed more than they wanted and, in that way, the game was protected.

-3-

5660

We had open range for our stock by paying a \$5.00 permit per year.

HOUSES AND CUSTOMS OF LIVING.

Houses were built of logs with chinking between the logs, rock or stick fireplaces. Most of the houses had dirt floors. We seldom saw a house with window glass--mostly just window shutters--no screens at all.

We made our brooms of buck brushes and wheat. Grew gourds for containers for meal, lard, sugar, water, etc. Made our spoons and forks of wood.

Of course, we made our own clothing with the cotton cards and spinning wheel. My mother covered persimmons seed with cloth for buttons. Some buttons were made of wood or bones. These were hard to make and required much time and were only used on the best clothes.

SOCIAL GATHERINGS.

Cotton dances, corn dances, community singing.

The country was mostly a wilderness, only a small amount of land was in cultivation. A patch of 20 or 25

-4-

5660

acres was considered a large farm because of the poor way they had of cultivating the ground.

My father put in a one-room log store at Old Indianola. It was called the McElhany store. Canadian, Oklahoma, was the closest trading post, so the mail was carried from Canadian on a horse to my father's store. People for miles around came there to get their mail. After about three years with the store and postoffice, my father decided to farm and sell the store. He sold it and the postoffice to J. H. Bynum. It then went by the name of Bynum and Carnerson. The store is still operating under the name of Bynum Grocery, only it has been moved to New Indianola, and is owned by Fred Bynum, a son of J. H. Bynum. It is now a large store and is not in connection with the postoffice.

In 1878 my father leased 25 acres of land from Lewie Perkins and farmed with a yoke of oxen. Most all the land in and around Indianola, Oklahoma, was broken by oxen.

Church in the fall and Indian ball games were about the only kind of entertainment in those days.

-5-

5660

One Indian ball court was where the Perkins farm is now, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Indianola. That was about the only summer afternoon entertainment, except singing and visiting our neighbors.

This was getting close to 1900. In 1902 Indianola was pretty well established. The town had then grown to a population of about 400. The Fort Smith and Western Railroad was then built through Indianola and on to Crowder, Oklahoma.

In 1907 my father was elected Representative of Oklahoma, Pittsburg County. He met with the first Legislature of Oklahoma, and voted to have the penitentiary at McAlester instead of a college.

My father could tell more about Oklahoma before and after statehood because he has taken a great part in politics.
