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M. J. Stockton,
Field Worker.

Interview With Mrs. L. A. Henry (Ross)
by
M. J. Stockton--- ----- Field Worker.

Lenora Alpha (Ross) Henry answered the questions asked and volunteered the following information.

I was born April 11, 1874 on a farm near Griffin, Georgia which is in Spike County. We left Georgia when I was six years old and moved to Alabama. From there we came to the Cooweescoowee District. I came here in March and in April I was thirteen years old. That was in 1887.

Mother.

Josephine Pricilla Ross was born December 4, 1854 in Monroe County, Georgia. She married at the age of twenty. She is an Irish girl.

Father.

Charlie George Ross was born May 15, 1848 in Monroe County, Georgia. He is an Irishman too. He and mother are distant cousins.

My Parents.

Their first farm was in Georgia after their marriage. A few years later they farmed in Alabama. Here they had a friend and neighbor who told them of the opening up of a new country in Cooweescoowee District in the Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, a land with opportunities for all, both whites and Indians, a wide open country with

big prairies and meadows, a fine farming land. Father and his ancestors had always been tillers of the soil, He realized that this new country might be to his advantage. So when his friend, Mr. Patrick Henry, came home to visit his parents he was ready to go with him.

Henry, a Cherokee Indian, had already been enrolled, He had moved to the Cherokee Nation in 1886, and located in Chelsea, and built a frame building which housed his general merchandise store and a small two-room house on a farm he had selected. That is where my father located when he came here a year later. He had to get a permit (paying five dollars) before he could lease the Henry farm. Everything was under Cherokee Indian law in those days.

We came direct to the land, which is one and a half miles east of Bushyhead. We came in a covered wagon for the first thirty or forty miles through Alabama to a railroad station; there we took a train and rode all the way by rail to Chelsea, Indian Territory. Father, having come on a month before we did, met us at the station and we rode on to the farm in the wagon. Father had a fine garden all up when we arrived at our new home.

We raised wheat in a big way in the early days. Before father fenced in his leased acreage he let the cattle

roam all over it to enrich the soil. Just when the wheat began to grow he drove all cattle out and fenced the two hundred acres of wheat. He had a bumper crop, the best he had ever raised. He got twenty bushels to the acre. That gave him his start in this new country. He had his own flour and meal, and meat, lard, and soap from the hogs he raised. He also built and operated a cotton gin, the first in this part of the District.

On Sundays we would hitch up the horses to the wagon, put chairs in it to sit on, and all go to Chelsea to church, where a Methodist preacher held meetings. We attended services in the little one-room frame school building at Chelsea. There wasn't any other place near to go. There were times when we went in the wagon up into the Delaware country and attended the camp meetings. Chief Journeycake was the Indian preacher and they had an interpreter. We have stayed all night in his home many times.

We had many of Indian friends both among the Delawares and the Cherokees. We kept a full-blood Cherokee man in our home once, for a week. He was lost from his settlement and he could not speak a word of English.

We attended the stomp dances and ate with the Indians. The young Indian men and grown boys were each required to hunt and bring a certain amount of game, deer, etc., for

their share and to provide for their campers. They were punished if they came without their game. They usually played baseball in the afternoons, and had their dances at night. They cooked and slept in the mornings.

I have seen the old Indian doctors give medicine and some folks would get very sick and become crazy. They still do that up near Vinita. I know, because I know an old Indian who came down here not long ago and doctored one of my Cherokee neighbors for a bad disease and he nearly lost his mind. He might have cured him if he could have taken all the medicine required and got the entire results.

Stampedes.

I have witnessed many stampedes of the cattle near Bushyhead. They were usually frightened by a coyote or storms or panthers. Occasionally a dog (mean dog) would start a stampede. Once I had a terrible experience with them. A bunch of us young folks were on an outing. We took our lunch and went to the woods on a private picnic. We went early and had to go right through the range or pasture where all those cattle were grazing. It was a pretty day and they paid no attention to us; however a storm came up quickly, a very bad storm, indeed. We started running towards home right through the cattle, which were already acting up as they were afraid of the

approaching storm, Several long-horned steers began to paw the earth and stamp the ground bellowing and bawling. There were six in our party. We were so scared we started crying, and all of us prayed earnestly. We then began to sing as loud as we possibly could. This seemed to bewilder the startled cattle, and they began to mill out and we passed through. I have been a firm believer in God from that day to this.

My Husband.

Albert Henry, son of Patrick Henry, was born January 7, 1874, at Guntersville, Alabama. He came with his father to Coowescoowee District in 1886 and located in Chelsea, Indian Territory. He helped his father in the store and rode the range with him to round up their cattle. He would come with him to our home when they wanted to see the crops on their land that my father was farming. We first met out in old Alabama when we were children. We fell in love at a revival meeting which was held at Catala up north of Chelsea. We got married five years after he came to this nation. We were married by Reverend Allen, an Evangelist preacher from Vinita. We married August 16, 1891.

We lived with my parents for a while, about four months. After our log-cabin was built we started farming, about six miles from them on the same land (the Henry claim). In our spare time we would have family prayer meetings in our home,

and my husband built a shed joining our cabin so we could have Sunday School at our house. People began to move in to the newly opened country and we were beginning to have neighbors. We had a nice crowd to come to Sunday School. They came for miles and miles.

Albert Henry was later in life a road-builder. While blasting out a piece of ground for a new road which was to be built near Sequoyah he was instantly killed. He was the overseer. That was in 1918.

Cemeteries.

My husband, mother, and father are all buried in the beautiful Ward Grover Cemetery west of Foyil. I have other relatives buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Claremore, Oklahoma.

Heirlooms.

Mother brought a fine bed-spread from Georgia which her mother spun and wove herself. It is a hundred years old. My sister, Mrs. Charlie Ross, at Foyil is the present owner. It is in good condition, but faded from old age. I have some white wool stockings that my mother knitted when she lived in Georgia. No one has ever worn them. I also have my father's saw, hammer, and square with which he built his cotton gin when he came to Coowescoowee District. I have in my possession several old dishes that were my mother's, an old salt cellar and old glasses.

Miscellaneous

Bushyhead was just a wide place in the road, nothing there but a section house and a train switch. After the train had started through there cattle were shipped to all points in the territory. The railroad had just been in a short time when we came here.

A man called Charlie McCellen owned thousands of cattle on the range where we located. Those ranches and ranges overlapped each other. There was no Tulsa then. Claremore was very small, just a few shacks; about four stores, one of them being F. A. Neilson's store and a post office.

The Indians usually ate hominy, corn-bread, pork and wild game, such as wild turkey, deer, and prairie chickens. And we ate about what they did.

A true Story about Panthers.

The very first night we moved into our new log cabin we were frightened almost out of our wits. I don't know who screamed the loudest the panther or I. My father had butchered and brought us a nice ham. We laid it up on a shelf just below the window. Imagine our surprise when just as we dozed off to sleep we were awakened by a noise of prowling. When we sat up in bed and took notice, there was a big panther reaching his paws down for the ham. He was right in the window. My husband grabbed his 45 and shot, but when the panther saw him move for the gun, he tore

out and of all the screaming a person ever heard. In my fancy I can still hear that awful crying. The animal ran and got on our shed and disturbed us most of the night, just kept on screaming. The next day my father had a battle with it. It jumped upon one of his young yearlings and killed it. The folks finally made it so hot for it that it beat it on down to Pryor Creek and some one down in there shot it. We were frightened by panthers and coyotes many times in our young married life. I was only seventeen years old then.

The Run.

Patrick Henry made (or rather tried to make the Run) in 1889. He got thrown out. They were too much for him. It was awful.