

An Interview with Mrs. G. A. Hancock, Caddo.

By - Lula Austin, Field Worker.

May 23, 1937.

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Who of us who attended the first school in Caddo can ever forget the little 24X36 foot school house where our first school days were spent? It was a box house and stood about 200 yards north of the Jasper Freaney place in the Harlan field. It stood on bois 'd arc blocks about three feet high with one step to enter the door, which faced east. This was in the seventies and some of the most notable men and women of the country learned their first lessons in this little building. A man by the name of Jones was the first teacher. He was a Mississippi man, and had a large family that were at starvation's door most of the time. I do not know whether he was a good teacher or not, but I do know that some of the things learned there have never been forgotten; namely, that reading, writing, and arithmetic taught to the tune of the hickory stick were the order of the day. His wife was a music teacher, but there was not an instrument in the town, so we learned to pitch the tunes by note. We also held Sunday School and church in this building. The writer can never forget

how proud she felt when she was called on to pitch the tunes, for she was the youngest child in school.

The first lodge, called the Grangers, held their meetings there and the mysteries of the order never failed to subdue us with awe and terror.

The wild Indians sent the children to the loft many a time, they would surround the building, peer in the windows, give an unearthly yell that rings clearly down to the present day.

I do not know what became of this man Jones, but a few years later his wife came through town in a covered wagon bound for West Texas.

The next teacher was a Mr. Allen. He married Miss Beek, a sister of Mrs. W. G. Ward. He and his wife were afterward drowned in the Arkansas River.

F. C. Meadows, a Georgian, was the next teacher. He was afterward postmaster. He died here and is buried in the Caddo Cemetery. Then we had our first woman teacher, a Miss Dona Shook, of Bonham, Texas. Romance and Miss Dona were mutual friends. She wore her hair in curls, would sit on the banks of a mill pond gazing into

the water and quote poetry for hours. A single pea was too large for her little mouth for she always cut it in two. She afterward became City Clerk of Bonham, Texas. She remained single until she was sixty-five years old, then migrated to California where she married. I have learned lately she was an old sweetheart of Jack Moores.

The next teacher was named Stewart, a man from the North who was an advanced teacher. He married soon after coming to Caddo and left the country. Some of the men and women who went to school in this little school house were Tandy Folsom, afterward a noted desperado; Willie Jones, son of Governor Wilson Jones; Clem Hancock, one time leading merchant of Caddo; Tom Hunter, who later ran for Governor; Mrs. E. Watters, first president of the Century Club; Mrs. C. A. Bilbo, prime mover of so many of the good things of Caddo, and many others. I do not want to forget to mention that the first cemetery was in front of this school <sup>which</sup> was old English style. This school building stood in Mrs. Harland's field and the Fort Sill road ran by it.

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About this time Mrs. Harlan decided she would fence up so she put up a stake and rider fence and the people would tear it down. It ended in the parents finding some where else for their children to go to school. They settled on the Methodist Church which had been built in 1879. There a man by the name of Cook taught. He was the meanest teacher that ever taught in Caddo. In the meantime, a school had been started in South Caddo by a missionary lady named Hotchkins. She was one of the prettiest women in Caddo, and bore herself like a queen. She was assisted by Miss Bell Sims who was loved by all, Ella and Lena McCoy, Emma and Dausie Sims, Sampo Adams and Forbis Manning attended this school. The pupils had formed the habit of fighting troubles out on the way to school and Miss Sims always ended it by saying she was going to tell their fathers.

Mrs. Hotchkins had a son by the name of Ebb, who was afterward the President of the Presbyterian College in Durent, and Mrs. Bilbo caused him to get the hardest whipping he ever got in his life.

There was also a girl who went to this school who married the man for whom the town of Duncan, Oklahoma, was named.

Lena McCoy (now Mrs. G. A. Bilbo) was the only girl the boys would allow to play ball with them, and that was because she could make a home-run.

This school was located where Charley Semple lives now. Mr. Semple is a brother of Mrs. Hotchkins.

A rivalry sprang up between the two schools, and the war waged warm and bitter. It was carried to the extent that Father Grayson would go around with a hack and gather up the children for the South Caddo school. He would rap the horses across the back and say: "Pay down for what you get", and this has been his motto through life, "Pay down for what you get".

About this time a man by the name of Patch took the town school. He was a strict disciplinarian. You closed your book, folded your hands, and recited at the tolling of the bell. He tolled the bell so much that the citizens threatened to run him out of town if the tolling wasn't stopped.

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He married a beautiful widow, but fed her on corn meal mush so much that she quit him.

The next teacher was a Mr. Hudgins who taught school in a smoke house. He was mixed up with the killing of an old time Indian, Silas Hunter, so he left the country.

Dr. Manning built a school house around the track about where the Grayson home now stands. It was afterwards sold to the darkies for a church.