

ROGERS, BUCK. INTERVIEW.

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 Indian-Pioneer History
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An interview with Buck Rogers,
 Checotah, Oklahoma

My father was Woods Buckner Rogers, (white) born in Fort Smith, Arkansas, in 1836. Father fought in the Civil War under General Cooper. My mother's name was Katie Dunn, a Cherokee, and she was born on the Illinois River, south of Tablequah. My father's family moved to Texas when I was quite a child.

My father married my mother at Lebbers Falls in 1869 and to this union were born eight children, four of whom lived to be grown.

After the Civil War we lived at Honey Springs where I was born.

We moved to old Fisher Town and my father operated the cotton gin for William Fisher for one year and then moved to Bufaula and bought cotton for C. A. Foley for one year. After this we moved back to Checotah on the farm at the north edge of the city limits.

In 1897 my brother and I had the contract with the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad for the unloading of Texas cattle from McAlester to Vinita. The largest shipments of cattle were unloaded at Reams, Checotah, Oktaha, and Summit. I have worked right here at the Checotah yards for thirty-six hours as one long train

after another would block the Katy passenger trains, sometimes for several hours. One year we loaded four hundred and eighty cars out of the Checotah yards within three weeks. This took about twenty trains. I left Muskogee with five men to unload cattle at Checotah and we were on the road for twenty-six hours and only a distance of twenty-one miles. Cattle trains had the right-of-way over passenger trains sometimes. One train crew was sixty hours going from Muskogee to Dennison, Texas. (see history).

Woods Euckner Rogers, the pioneer settler of Checotah, McIntosh County, has resided in the present limits of Oklahoma for more than forty years, being one of the first white children born in the state of Arkansas. His father was the founder of Fort Smith. Woods E. Rogers received his education in Fort Smith and finished at the State University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. After leaving school for a number of years he was employed on river boats. His route was from Fort Smith to Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1859 he left that employment to enter the Colorado Gold Rush. His brother Hickory had settled in the locality of the present site of Denver sometime before.

After the War, Mr. Rogers located in business at Hilaby, in the Creek Nation and sometime afterward engaged

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in farming at Honey Springs, on the old Texas Trail. In 1880 he ran a gin for about four years, then later he went into the hotel business at Muskogee (when the population was about eight hundred people). In 1899 he moved to his farm at Checotah. This farm consisted of six hundred acres. His father sent his brother to a fullblood Creek Indian near where Okmulgee now stands, to buy five hundred five-year old steers at six dollars per head. Mr. Rogers left for Okmulgee with a negro interpreter and a saddle bag containing most of the gold and silver money to purchase the cattle. Upon their arrival at the Indian's hut they threw the bag of money down on the porch and went in to supper, at this time Mr. Rogers stated his business.

After supper the Creek Indian said he could furnish five hundred cattle at that price.

~~In a few days the cattle were delivered to Mr. Rogers's ranch on North Fork.~~

Eufaula was located in 1872, by George W. Stidham, Captain Sam Grayson, G. L. Scales, D. D. Whitlow and J. D. Coody. They paid from their own pockets one thousand dollars to F. S. Stevens, the manager of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad at the time of its building to locate the station where it now is instead of at "Fifetown"

across the river. The latter place was more desirable as a townsite to these men who had extensive land interests south of North Fork, so the expenditure of their money for the location of Eufaula has been returned many times. Old Eufaula, or North Fork town, was several miles away from the new railroad and at that time there was a considerable settlement in that vicinity. It was one of the early Creek locations after reaching their new possessions, and many of the most noted families settled there. The first building erected was a store, and the first merchants were D. B. Whitlow and Joe Coady. The building occupied the site where Tully's store now stands.

About the same time Scales and Captain Sam Grayson built a store on the east side of the railroad.

A postoffice was established in 1872, and Whitney, the station agent, was appointed postmaster. The office was in the railroad station for a long while.

John A. Law and Joseph McAlvey erected a blacksmith shop and wagon shop.

Dr. W. H. Bailey, a man of note in his profession, was the first physician and also the druggist. William Bertram erected the first hotel, opposite the station.

It was destroyed by fire in 1898, on the east side of the track. J. T. Ingram erected the Forest House at an early day. This was a favorite stopping place for Indian politicians, who were leaders from the different tribes and held their concourses in perfecting plans for future political campaigns.

Among the noted Indian warriors and statesmen who frequently gathered around this festive board were: Colonel D. N. McIntosh and Hotulka Amarthla, of the Creeks; William F. Ross and William Boudinot, of the Cherokees; Captain Stanley, Jack Edmond, and Green McCurtain, of the Choctaws; William Byrd and Joe Brown of the Chickasaws; and Colonel Jumper and John Brown of the Seminoles. All of these men made that popular hotel their head quarters while arranging for their international councils, which were held every year. At these dates

representatives of other tribes on the west were present.

The first minister was a missionary Baptist, although D. Buckner, a Presbyterian, had been preaching in the vicinity since 1885.

The first school house was a log structure built by Mr. Ingram near his hotel, and his wife Elizabeth was the first teacher. She was a daughter of Judge George

W. Stidham, and was one of the early teachers of the Creek Nation. Her first school was taught at the old Creek Agency near the Arkansaw River, prior to the Civil War. She was later placed in charge of the National School.

Rev. R. C. McGee, a Presbyterian Minister, was one of the first to come to Eufaula. His home was a noted place for the lovelorn couples who eluded parental observations and objections. At this time marriage license laws, now in force, were not in effect. He has married couples on horseback, standing in wagons and under trees. One of his first ceremonies was the marriage of Ben Porter to Miss Nina Butler.