

ROSS, S. W. TWENTY FIRST INTERVIEW 13521 283

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~~Elizabeth Ross,~~
Investigator, 3-149.
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The Catron Spring.

A short distance west of the boundary line between Cherokee and Adair counties, within the bounds of Cherokee County, is one of the large springs of the Cherokee hills. This spring is situated in a portion of what was once the old Tablecreek district, and its surplus waters flow into Casey Creek. The name by which the spring is now known is Catron spring. For many years there lived in this vicinity Lafayette Catron, who was usually referred to as "Lay" Catron, and also as "Uncle Lay" Catron. The Catron home, an old fashioned one-story building with chimneys, stood, for a long time, near one of the narrow roads leading through woodlands and valleys. In front of the home stood a row of cedar trees of many years growth, large, tall and symmetrical. These trees had been planted when quite small, probably soon after Lafayette Catron selected the site for his home.

It in sight of the Catron home, beneath the forest trees, was a spot where Cherokee citizens living

in a portion of Tahlequah District assembled for the purpose of voting in elections. The Catron spring precinct was one of several situated in various sections of the district. Elections were held, every two years, on the first Monday in August. On such occasions many voters traveled over the roads and trails in order to vote for the candidates of the two adjacent parties. There are yet living a few persons who as young men rode horseback or walked to the precinct near the Catron spring.

Lafayette Catron cultivated a tract of agricultural land near his home, and like most of the residents of his neighborhood, raised some livestock, cattle, horses and hogs. He did not often go far away from home, but occasionally he visited the leguash, some twelve miles distant. He usually traveled in a two-horse wagon, accompanied by one or more of his family.

After driving to a spot beneath the trees along the Tahlequah ranch, he would un hitch his team, feed them and after awhile would stroll up town. After purchasing such articles as he desired in the stores he would load his wagon and drive home.

Being fond of dancing Mr. Catron's home was

often the scene of dances. Food was prepared, fiddlers employed and any and all who desired to dance were invited to be present. Oftentimes the dancers remained until near daybreak. There were times, too, when he was well advanced in age, that Lafayette Catron attended dances some miles from his home. At such times he has been represented as dancing gayly and with alacrity. He was a large and rather tall man, with white hair and a white beard in his later lifetime. At one hilarious dance someone is related to have shouted: "Cut the pigeon-wing, Uncle Lay," which he did to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Having spent practically all his lifetime in the same locality, Mr. Catron was thoroughly familiar with the history of the old settlements along Caney Creek. He had known a number of the pioneer settlers, members of the Western Cherokee Nation, as well as Eastern Cherokees. Also he recalled the periods when large portions of the hill country were unbroken and well filled with wild game, including many deer. He was familiar with the varied occurrences of many years. There were persons who sometimes remarked that "Lay" Catron was a rather peculiar individual, and mention was made, among other things, that he was never known to have vot-

ed in the elections, though living nearer the precinct than any other of the voters of the locality.

Following an old custom, late Judge Catron's coffin was buried more than forty years ago, was buried near his home. Eventually the home was destroyed by fire, but the heavy granite monument at the grave, a short distance from the site of the former home, may still be seen.

Note: Mr. S. W. Ross, who gave this interview, is a resident of Tallcreek, Oklahoma.