

ROSS, S. W.

INTERVIEW
HORSESHOE BEND

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Elizabeth Ross,
Investigator,
Nov., 25, 1937.

An interview with S. W. Ross,
Park Hill, Oklahoma.

HORSESHOE BEND.

There is a "Horseshoe Bend" on the Illinois River of the Cherokee Hills. The name has been in use for so many years that no one now recalls hearing when the term was first in use, or by whom. The "bend" is south of the rugged hills which lie south of the Park Hill neighborhood.

Rocky cliffs overlook a portion of the river where it flows in the great curve which constitutes the bend, similar in appearance to a huge horseshoe.

In years past the bend was greatly isolated, reached by a narrow path over the big hills on the west side of the river, or by similar paths on the east side. The timber grew densely in the low-lying bottom lands and upon the crests of the heights. There was an abundance of wild game in the almost untrodden woodlands, but for many years the only hunters in the region were full-blood Cherokees and an occasional Creek Indian from a Creek settlement along the river north of the bend. Deer and wild turkeys were plentiful and small game was abundant.

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There has always been deep water in the river below the bluffs which overlook the bend, and in past years the fish in the deep stretches of water were very numerous. Fishermen in past years often spoke of the many fish they had slain with gigs when the water was crystal clear in the chilly nights of the fall time.

As is usual in many sections of the former Cherokee Nation there is a narrative concerning valuable mineralogical deposits in connection with the bend. At the base of one of the rugged bluffs, it is said, there is a small cave in which may be seen a deposit of bismuth. This visible deposit is only the outer portion of a vast and unknown quantity of the substance, according to what has been said and believed.

In Territorial days there were men who related interesting accounts concerning spots from which they claimed silver and lead had been procured, and some related that gold had been found in instances. But so far as is known, the only deposit of bismuth was that existing in the cave in the bluff overlooking the deep water in the Illinois River at the Horseshoe bend. Those who once claimed to know the location of valuable minerals or metals sometimes

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remarked that when a state government prevailed, conditions would be different and mining could then be profitably engaged in. The laws of the Cherokees forbade prospecting or mining for gold, silver, copper and other minerals or metals of value. But although Oklahoma has long been a state, the location of rich deposits concerning which there was much talk some years ago, has never been revealed.

The "bismuth mine" at the base of the bluff overlooking a portion of the Horseshoe Bend would prove of much value, but at the present time (1930) there are no efforts being made to find the spot. Good rates, it used to be said, had gnawed portions of the bismuth from the "main vein" and the small fragments lay scattered about the floor of the cave.