

SANDERS, GEORGE

INTERVIEW

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Gus Hummingbird S-149,
July 20, 1937.

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(Interview with George Sanders)

George Sanders, a fullblood Cherokee, was born in Goingsnake District, December 17, 1860. His parents were Calvin Sanders, a fullblood Cherokee, and Peggie Harnage, a Cherokee. His parents both came from North Carolina about 1838. After coming to the Cherokee Nation, they settled in what is now known as Baron community.

No one knows who Peggie Harnage's parents were nor where they settled when they came to the Indian Territory. Calvin Sanders was related to the present day Sanders ^{family} who now live in what is the Proctor community.

Calvin is buried at Proctor Cemetery.

Peggie is buried at the old Ta-Cha-Nee-Skee Cemetery, which is located on what is now the Fred ilsey's farm about a mile south of Baron.

After the death of Calvin Sanders, the father of George, Peggie married Dick Ta-Cha-Nee-Skee. To this union there were three children born; namely, Neel, Susie and Lizzie. George now lives about two miles southwest of Baron.

Early Life.

Most of George's early life was spent on the farm of Fred ilsey, which at that time was operated by Dick Ta-Cha-

Nee-Skee, his step-father. His father, Calvin Sanders, deserted George and his mother when George was about six years of age.

The Ta-Cha-Nee-Skee family was considered wealthy. They owned a farm on both Baron Fork and Leavine Creeks. They farmed about forty acres and usually owned plenty of stock.

George, at an early age was taught how to do all kinds of work that goes with farming. Most of the farming at that time was done by ox teams and most of the implements were home-made.

Every fall and winter they would clear fresh land and continued to do so until the farm consisted of about forty acres. Corn was the principal crop at that time. Winter corn was not raised much, there was lots of trouble in harvesting the crop. The milling was very difficult in those days. The only wheat mills were located in Arkansas. Most of the work was done by the women on the farm. Most of the children were lazy but George was made to work.

Education.

George was not kept out of school all of the time by his step-father. He received a fair education in the Cherokee schools. There were very few schools in the Cherokee Nation. The nearest school to his home was what was called Starr Chapel

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which was located across the Laron Creek on what is now the farm of Elizabeth Duncan. The other school was the old Peavine school which was located about three miles south of where George lived. He attended both of these schools.

George Sanders went to Starr Chapel about three years.

He finished the third grade at this place. At that time he was about twelve years old. He had some half-brothers

and sisters. They did not get along very well at home.

His mother let him stay with a family of Cherokees by the name of Ebster on Peavine Creek. He was sent to school at Peavine Creek and finished the sixth grade at this place, which was considered a fair education for that time.

He went to only one teacher at Peavine Creek during the three years that he attended that school. This was Charlotte Whitmire, a daughter of Johnson Whitmire, an early day politician. The Whitmires at that time were wealthy people. They operated a large plantation just west of the present Peavine Store. The plantation consisted of about one section. They owned slaves before the war. When George grew large enough to remember anything the Whitmires still owned a large part of this place.

Among the old timers that George went to school with are : Stute Walkingstick, Joshua and Isaac Hummingbird, Ellis Ketcher, Peter Hider and Bill Jones.

Bill Jones and Ellis Ketcher are the only two, who are now living, of Bill's old school mates. Bill is a Creek Indian who was raised by John Walkingstick.

Church Activities.

The only church that the Webster family attended was the Big Shed Baptist Church. This was the only church that was near their home. This church was located about five miles north of Stilwell. For many years this was the only church in the Cherokee Nation. George Sanders has been told by many old timers that this was the first Cherokee Church that was established after the Cherokees came to this country. The exact date of the founding of this church is not known but it was founded sometime before the Civil War. George Saunders knows this to be a fact for Dick Ta-Cha-Nec-Skee, his step-father, has told him that the representatives of both the North and the South could come to this place to make treaties with the Cherokees.

Immediately after the establishing of this church there were what were called Circuit Riders; these men

were what we would now call missionaries and were sent in here from the East.

John Jones was one of those early day preachers.

Immediately after the establishing of the Big Shed Church they ordained a few preachers among the Cherokees.

Among the earliest preachers among these Cherokees were those named Co-Hah-Ska-Mod, Old Terrapin and another named Coo-Nec-Teoo-ee. These were preachers among the Cherokees before the Civil War. Duncan G. Bryant was another missionary sent here to preach to the Old Settler Cherokees. He was taken sick and died in the Piney Community. This man, Duncan G. Bryant has a marker to his grave, which is located on the farm of Frank Adair.

George Sanders remembers among the preachers; Johnson Spade; Mose Ridge, a descendant of the Ridges who signed the treaty back in the old country; Nelson Terrapin; wife Coon and John Gritts.

Trading and Milling Points.

The earliest trading point among the Cherokees was Dutchtown, Arkansas. This town was a town as far back as

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Mr. Sanders can remember. He remembers going to this place immediately after the war. He drove a team of oxen to this town before he left the Sa-Cha-Nee-see family. He left this family when he was twelve years old. This was between 1830 and 1872. He has been told by his folks that a colony of Dutch people settled this place. That was why it was called Dutchtown. These people traded much with the Cherokees. Mr. Sanders does not remember the first merchant whom he saw at this place. But he does know one whom the Cherokees called Evening. His real name was Evans. Dutchtown was also a milling point at that time. All of the Cherokees from the Coingsnake District went to this place to do their milling. There was only one store at Dutchtown when George first went there.

There were several grist mills in the Cherokee Nation at that time. The one nearest George's home was the one located on the banks of what we now call Shell Branch about half mile west of Baron. This was operated by some of the Duncans who lived on the farm that is now owned by Elizabeth Duncan.

The mill was located about where the spring-house is now located. Later the mill was operated by Joe Starr.

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The Starr Chapel School was established here at the time Joe Starr operated the mill here. The school was built just north of the mill.

Eli Wright operated a water mill on Laron Creek about four miles. The mill was located about one hundred yards west of where the Dutch Mills and Mansville Creeks form the Laron Fork.

There was another mill at the Dr. Liddings place. This was west of the old Rabbit Trap school house. This mill was operated by Dr. Liddings, a permitted white man.

They sometimes would go to this mill. There was another mill on Coney Creek. This mill was operated by a man named Stevens.

Missions.

There was a mission located in the community in which George Sanders lived. He never saw it in operation but he has seen the old buildings which are parts of this mission. This mission was located just across the railroad track from where he now lives and he has been told that the mission was abolished about 1855. He saw the buildings that quartered the employees. They were located about a half mile south of the mission just across the highway from the Peavine Bridge on the Kansas City and Southern Railroad.

Politics

The Cherokees were not interested in politics for a long time. Webster, the man with whom George Sanders made his home must have been what we would nowadays term a politician. He was elected sheriff for several terms. Then he was always making a campaign for some of his friends. The Cherokees did not begin to learn the ways of white man politics for a long time.

When they did start they formed two major parties; namely, the National and the Downing parties. These two parties never have been friendly to each other and never will. Many do not know what is behind these two parties. George has been told by the people who lived when he was a boy that because of the division that existed the two parties would never be united as they were before they left the East. The old timers taught their children to like this division.

George Sanders when a boy has listened to stories told by old timers; among them Arch Scrapper, Hyder Downing and Joe Crittenden. These three came from North Carolina together and also served in the Civil War together.

Sanders says that these three belonged to a secret organization back East that later was called the Kee-Too-tah. The Co-Ne-3qua-tee was a portion of the Ke-Too-tah. This interpreted means Pen (Pin).

Allotment.

The Cherokees for several hundred years had everything in common; that is, they believed that the property should be controlled by the government. They lived that way in the East and they wished to live that way after they came here. But educated people at last were elected to the Cherokee legislature and passed laws that caused the removal. The same thing happened in the New Cherokee Nation west of the Mississippi.

The poorer class of Cherokees elected too many mixed breeds to their legislature and passed the Allotment law without approval of the poorer class. The common class of Cherokees was never in favor of the Allotment.