

SCOTT, WALTER

INTERVIEW

13116

173

SCOTT, WALTER.

INTERVIEW.

13116.

Jas. S. Buchanan,
Investigator.
Feb. 24, 1933.

An Interview With Walter Scott,
Route 2, Ft. Gibson, Oklahoma.

I was born August 14, 1872, in the old town of Ft. Gibson. My father was John S. Scott of Irish and Scotch descent, a native of Ohio. My mother was Margaret Coody Scott, Cherokee, the daughter of Daniel Coody, a native of the Cherokee Nation.

My father was born in Jefferson County, Ohio, in 1807, the son of a merchant named Scott of Scotch descent. His mother was Mary Stringer, of Irish descent. Father attended the public schools in Ohio during his early life and moved with his family to Humboldt, Kansas, in 1857.

Three years later he commenced business on his own account, and continued it until the town was burned by Confederate bushwhackers, after which he immediately recruited a company of Indians and entered the Federal service in May, 1862, as first lieutenant. In June of the same year he was captured and incarcerated at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and in August following he was exchanged at Cassville, Missouri, and returned to his regiment.

SCOTT, WALTER.

INTERVIEW.

13113.

-2-

In October, 1862, he was mustered out by Major Van Antwerp, General Blount's adjutant-general. In the same year he commenced the butler business at Bentonville, Arkansas, for the Second Indian Regiment and moved with them to Fort Gibson in the spring of 1863, continuing in that department until 1865, when he was mustered out. After the War he went to Kansas and returned to Fort Gibson in 1871 and there established a small store with a limited stock of general merchandise. In the same year he was married to my mother, Margaret Cuddy. In August, 1872, I was born and in the latter part of 1873 my mother died. Soon thereafter father was married to Belle Harnage, daughter of John G. Harnage, a noted Cherokee. By this marriage there were four children born.

I was reared in Fort Gibson and attended the public school at that place; this was a Cherokee National School. Later, I attended the Bacone University at Muskogee. My first recollection of my father was when he was in the mercantile business in a one story frame building in the original old town of Fort Gibson. Later, he acquired

SCOTT, WALTER.

INTERVIEW.

13116.

-3-

ownership of a two story brick business house formerly owned by F. H. Nash and moved his business into this more spacious quarters about 1884. He continued and enlarged his business in this location,--carrying a general line of merchandise, hardware, farm machinery, wagons, etc, until 1893 when the place was destroyed by fire. He then re-established his business in a frame building which he owned and in which he had established an undertaking business. He continued in business in that place until his death which occurred in 1895.

In addition to his mercantile business, Father established the first cotton gin in Fort Gibson. It was a horse power affair with a capacity of two bales per day. That was in 1879 and Father was highly elated over the success of the adventure. Later he installed a steam gin and press with a capacity of six bales per day, at that time, the last word in cotton gins and the six bales per day capacity of this new gin was the talk and marvel of the community. Later, as more cotton was raised and the conditions demanded it, he increased the power and facilities of the gin to a capacity of thirty bales per

SCOTT, WALTER.

INTERVIEW.

L3116.

-4-

day. This gin was burned about 1889. Early in 1891 Father purchased the old steam cotton gin and grist mill from John Adir and Anton Schlweigast which was situated on the old sawmill site on the bank of Grand River about a hundred and fifty yards up the river from the Missouri Pacific bridge on what was known as the old Dennis Bushyhead place. He improved this gin and operated it until a short time before his death.

Before the Missouri Pacific Railroad was built through the Cherokee Nation Father shipped all his cotton and cotton seed out by steamboat except when the water was too low, then he would freight it by wagons to Gibson station and load it on cars and ship it over the Katy Railroad from that place. He also received the greater part of his shipments of goods, wagons, farm implements, etc., over the Katy to Gibson station and would haul it by wagons from there to Fort Gibson crossing Grand River at that Tom French ferry.

I can remember when Father would have a large shipment of cotton and cotton seed that the seed would be packed in two hundred pound sacks, for shipment by steam-

SCOTT, WALTER:

INTERVIEW#.

13116.

-5-

boat and it was generally understood by everyone who worked for Father, regardless of what his duties were, that when a steamboat whistled for the landing, everyone would discontinue whatever he was doing, meet the steamboat and assist in loading the cotton and cotton seed on board.

The mercantile business never did appeal to me when I was growing up, regardless of my father's earnest efforts to teach and start me into the business. The great outdoors appealed to me and my greatest ambition was to be a cattleman. When I was only a boy I found myself trading anything I got my hands on for a calf, and in this small way I found myself starting in the business on a small scale when very young.

Father, realizing my only ambition, encouraged me with his assistance, and as I grew into manhood, with Father's aid, I grew into the cattle business which I followed all of my active life and, like many other cattlemen of the Territory in those days, I made money in the business and lost it in the same business. The Cherokee Nation in the early days was a cattleman's paradise; it

SCOTT, WALTER.

INTERVIEW.

13116.

-6-

was mostly all open range, with hardly any of the country under fence. The prairie range was covered with blue stem prairie grass, tall as a horses back, and all the low timber land was covered with dense cane-brakes which afforded wonderful winter range and shelter for the stock.

In 1896 I was married to Nannie Ratley McCracken, daughter of William and Martha Ratley, both Cherokees. Nannie Ratley, when she was very young, was married to Tom French and three children, girls, were born to that union before it ended in a separation. Later, she was married to a man named McCracken, by whom she had one son. This marriage also resulted in a separation. To our marriage there were no children born, but we reared her three daughters by Tom French and her son by McCracken, all wonderful children.

After having her faithful companionship for a period of forty years, I lost her when she passed on in 1936.

There is a town here today in the name of Fort Gibson but it is not the Fort Gibson that we knew in the early days down by the Grand River, which was then the trading center of the Territory, where everyone was prosperous and happy.