

SIXKILLER, EMMA J. INTERVIEW.

46 6468

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64-68 47

An interview with Mrs. Emma J. Sixkiller
nee Blythe, a Cherokee Indian.

I, Emma J. Sixkiller, nee Blythe, was born in
the Kansas Strip near the small town of Enterprise,
October 13, 1855. My mother was Mary Jane Blythe
nee Millsap. My father was Absalom Ellis Blythe.

My father's parents were William (Billie)
Blythe and Nancy Blythe, nee Fields, and her father
was Dick Fields, who was one of the principals in
the Texas Land Grant made to the Cherokees by the
Governor of Texas.

My mother's parents were Zubia Meen, a white
woman, who first married William Millsap and after
his death married McCoy. Grandfather came as an
immigrant.

CHILDHOOD

I had two brothers, Willie and Napoleon.

I do not remember my father as he died when
I was very small and when I was three years old, my
mother moved to Tahlequah where she supported us
children by sewing. She was a seamstress and made
men's coats, in addition to fancy dresses for women.

I only have one memory of my very young child-

2

hood days. I was playing in the spring branch near home and had a string tied to a salmon can for a wagon and was pulling it through the water when I decided that my wagon needed wheels so I took it to the blacksmith and asked him to put wheels on my wagon and he asked me to see the wagon and when I showed it to him he told me that he was busy and to run home that when he got through he would fix my wagon; but on my road home I fell down. Here Mrs. Sixkiller pointed to a deep scar under her chin and said, "You see that, Well it was sometime before I was able to go back, and, when I was able, I never thought of the wagon again."

As near as I can tell you the first home I remember was in the northeast part of Tahlequah near the Hendrix Springs and I have heard mother say that it was a Mission home before we lived there. It was a double log house with an entry between and an ell back from the entry and had a stack chimney. It had a long front porch and three stone steps. I have heard Aunt Martha Vann say that when we were immigrants, my grandfather was the first to put a boat across the Mississippi and that she crossed in his boat.

CIVIL WAR PERIOD

The first time that our home was robbed, we had been told that the bushwhackers were coming and some of the neighbors, thinking that, as there was no man at our home, they would not molest us, had packed and boxed much of their goods and had brought the boxes to our home. My brother, Willie, and Tom Reese were in the timber near, trying to get some wood for the home when we heard a shot and mother said that is the bushwhackers now; so she put a new shawl over her head and started to the timber to warn the boys and had reached the door when she saw the men coming, so was afraid to go on and stopped at the door and was standing there when they rode up. They asked her if there were any menfolks there and she said, "No, I am a widow." They started in the house and when they began to pile things up she tried to persuade them not to take the things from her children but they told her that they needed them, too; and gathered up the quilts and blankets and were preparing to rip open the feather beds when one of the men opened the door where the boxes were stored and when he saw them he told the others, "Here is all we can take already packed so we will leave the

4

beds till next time." I happened to put on a new pair of shoes that morning so I did have good shoes that winter. It was cold weather and there was a light snow on the ground at this time. One of the men jerked the shawl from mother's head and they took it with them. Not being able to take as much as they found, they poured our sugar in the snow and with their feet rubbed it into the snow and dirt to keep it from being used and all the covers we had left were some of the quilts that they dropped and which we gathered up after they left. I remember watching them load up the things as I stood on the porch and looked over the banisters at them while they were loading up our things.

We were robbed three times, once they took our horse from the plough. This made mother sick for it meant so much to us. On ~~the~~ trip they killed four men in Tahlequah--Nick Hair, Waitie Robinson; (here she paused and studied and finally said, "I can't remember the names of the others now.") The daughter of Robinson came and lived with us and she felt so badly over it and would cry when they talked of it. The third time that they came there were several women in the gang and mother said to them, "I know

who you are. (They were painted and dressed so as to try to disguise themselves) I have never done you any harm and I have these children here to feed," etc. But they told her that they needed the things too so just went about helping themselves to anything that they found that they wanted and destroying what they thought we could use that they did not want.

GIRLHOOD

Our home was much the same as those of these days. At first we cooked on the fire in the fireplace and I was quite a good sized girl when we had our first stove.

Mother and Grandmother McCoy both spun and wove. I have seen my mother weave pretty counterpanes. She would take a pencil and paper and draw her own patterns. I could spin and grandmother taught me to make sewing thread and the cotton bats. One day when we had company and they were not noticing me I went into the room where the loom was and where there was a counterpane started, and decided I would weave some and of course I didn't know how to make my colors hit so they had to take out all I had done. Mother used to weave our riding skirts. The tops were of dark blue and the bottoms were stripped

6

and checked with different bright colors. We had good horses and grandmother, mother and I all had our saddles. They were good ones and cost quite a lot.

Two things were impressed on me by mother when I was growing. They were, never to take anything and always to make my word good, and I still do that.

Mother died when I was thirteen so I made my home with grandmother after that, but it was mother's request that I be sent to the Moravian Mission near Mayesville and here I remained two years. H. T. Reese was the administrator for us.

MARRIAGE

Grandmother was thrown from a horse and they did not think that she could get well, so I was sent for and went home and, still thinking that she would not recover, it was decided best that I get married. I really did not want to marry, I was young and still liked my dolls but anyway I married Lucas Sixkiller March 18, 1871. We were married at

Grandmother's bedside on Pecan Creek by Judge Vann.

However, she did not die but later became blind and

7

deaf and lived with us for seven years before her death. The children and I used to have to lead her around.

The New Home

We came to Locust Grove and lived for a year on his father's (Redbird Sixkiller) place. Here we had a small log house. From there we purchased the Bob Knight place of about sixty acres and later, purchased the Tom Knight place, but not until after we had lived three years in Vinita to send the children to school and had returned to our farm. This was the location on Horse Creek of the old Military Stand, known as the Trott place that had been kept by Bill and Hardin Trott. Nan Knight, the wife of Tom Knight, was a sister of Bill Trott. I am told that the old buildings are still standing. The old Trott Stand was a double log house with an ell between and back of the entry and a long shed for the horses. The Trott Spring was about 300 yards south and Lewis Moore lived there.

We started the Sixkiller Cemetery on this place when our son Louis died. The river was up and we could not get to where two of our other children were buried and I suggested to my husband that we bury him

8

beside two small trees on a knoll on the place.

Afterwards several more from the neighborhood were buried there and this was the beginning of the cemetery, though it did not get its name until the allotment took place.

When we were allotted, Neal England hurried to get there first as he wanted to file on part of the land we were holding and in the allotment he did get that part of our place that had the old Trott buildings and I think still owns the place. We were in the allotment room when the cemetery question came up and we gave an acre and they said that that was not enough so they compelled Neal England to give an acre and this made two acres and when they wanted a name one of the men said, "Why not call it the Six-Killer Cemetery."

Before I leave the old days, there is one memory I might mention. My grandparents were slave holders and when the slaves were taken from them and run off, an old colored woman who had been given to Aung Nancy Blythe by her father and who we all called "Aunt Nervie" was taken with another man named Louis to Texas, she came back when the War was over and tried to find some of us, and located grandmother and was

-9-

so glad to find some of us that she lived many years with us and was a great help in caring for grandmother, and I think I loved her.

Later Life

We had six children; Mary Mamie, Mattie Bell, Allie, Louie B., Henry and Myrtle, of whom only Mamie and Mattie are now living.

To Mrs. Sixkiller is due the credit of establishing and maintaining the first Sunday School at the Beck schoolhouse. A missionary came to that neighborhood to establish a Sunday School and called on her and asked for her help and she told him that she would be glad to help but felt that it was the place of one of the men of the neighborhood to take the lead. He made the rounds of the neighborhood and came back to her and told her that he felt that she was the one to take charge of it so she consented and he ordered the Bibles, and the necessary literature to start it.

In those days we got our mail at Vinita so after I received the Bibles, charts and other supplies, Mary England, who had married Ben Helms, came by one day, and I showed her the supplies and told her to tell all that she saw that we were going to have Sunday School at the

schoolhouse the next Sunday. I got Mr. Noah Fouts to make the announcements for me and during the twenty-five years that I had charge, his wife and Mr. Jim Wymer and wife stood by me.

After the announcements were made, Ben Helms arose and said "We don't take part in anything like this. Our children should be taught what is in the Blue Back Spelling book. This is the Devil's work." I replied, "If you can find anything in these tracts and literature that is not in the Bible, etc." Then I raised my hand and said, "By the Help of God, we are going to have a Sunday School here." We had many obstacles placed in our way but we were able to keep the Sunday School going. Those were happy days and often yet I meet some one whom I do not even remember who will recall our Sunday School. Only about three months ago here at a funeral, an old grayhaired woman who was setting beside me, told me that she still remembered the Sunday School and I do not yet know who she is.

We sold the farm and lived in Vinita where I ran the Sixkiller Hotel till we sold and came to Fairland

about 1915.

In 1912, when her husband was failing in health Mrs. Sixkiller decided that she would go to California and look around as she had been told that women made good money there. Not knowing anyone in that state, she decided it would be well to take along some recommendations. First, she called on Charles Livingston at his store in Afton and when she told him what she wanted, he wrote the following and handed it to her; "I have known Mrs. Sixkiller since I was seven years old and her word is as good as her bond." She received on request similar recommendations from both the banks in that city. She said she mortgaged some cows to have some extra money in case she needed it and had her daughter, Mattie, fasten it on her body together with other information concerning herself. She went first to Los Angeles then to San Francisco and farther north and obtained work in a doctor's home. They wrote from home that her husband was not well and would like for her to come home so she replied if he wanted her bad enough to send her a ticket she would come. By return mail the ticket came and she returned home with the money she had borrowed un-

touched besides what she had earned.

After a protracted illness her husband died October 30, 1925, at the home in Fairland. The expenses of his illness took their earnings and so since then till within the last few months she has earned her living by laundry work and fancy ironing.