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Interview with John E. McGee.  
R.F.D.1., Wilburton, Oklahoma.  
Born May 7, 1867.  
Father-John William McGee.  
Mother-Mary Lou McGee.

My father's name was John William McGee. He was a white man and his birth place was near Fayetteville Arkansas.

I left Arkansas and came to the Indian Territory when I was about 10 years of age and have been living around here in what is now Latimer County all my life, I might say something like 60 years.

The settlers who lived in the territory were very scattered. I met my wife, Mary Lou Ennis McGee, and traveling all the way to Fort Smith, we were married.

We came back to the territory and I had already picked out a reasonable plot to land and we built us a house out of logs. The nearest neighbor, both white and Indian, was about 10 miles away.

When any of the settlers had sickness in the family, we had to travel 12 miles, the nearest way, to find any medical aid. There were no fences in the country in those days. So when we had to go for medical aid, we rode horseback in the straightest way we could across hills and creek bottoms till we reached the nearest doctor who was available.

There were no roads or anything to follow. We had to just keep the right direction.

When I came into this country, you could go to any member of the Choctaw Tribe; and for in the neighborhood of \$5.00 you could obtain possession of a large place or a small one.

Any time a white settler did anything that was dishonest or crooked, the Choctaw Indian government would pronounce him an undesirable citizen and take measure to move him out of the territory.

I personally know a full-blood Choctaw Indian who could speak nothing but the Choctaw language. He was a prosperous stock raiser and stock dealer. I have seen this Indian riding horse-back through the country, dealing in stock with either white man or Indian and he always carried a ducking sack tied to his saddle horn. The Indians in those days in this country refused to accept paper money, and a check in payment of stock was not thought of.

I have been along where the city of Wilburton is now located along about 1890, if I remember correctly, when the first coal was discovered and there was only one store and trading post in this place. I used to carry venison and wild turkey to this trading point and swap it for other necessities needed in the family. The merchant in those days then dis-

posed of this wild game to the coal mining people who had come in here to work in the mine.

I have raised lots of hogs in this country in those days. We would not have to raise feed to feed those hogs. They would feed in the woods on acorns and nuts. I used to drive a bunch up as close to my house as possible and kill as many as I needed, and haul them to the trading post which is now the city of Wilburton. I have sold several wagon loads to that trader for 4cents per lb.

There were no crops raised in this country in the early day to make money. We as settlers just tried to make a living. I have had what cattle that belonged to me just running loose anywhere they chose to do their grazing. Of course I always had them marked and branded.

I have seen my stock and many others come out of the cane brakes on the creeks and the flat land between the mountains. They would be in good shape in the spring.

Then when more coal was located and two railroads were put through this country, people began to come to this country pretty fast and such towns as Red Oak and Wilburton began to grow pretty fast.