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O. Moore, Supervisor
Pioneer History, S-149

March 16, 1937

Holland
Worker

Interview: Lafayette Teel
1113 West 1st St.
Tulsa, Oklahoma

My name is Lafayette Teel. I was born in Indian Territory May 25th, 1834. I am a Cherokee Indian of 1/16 blood. The place or location of my birth is about 18 miles east of Vinita, Oklahoma.

My father, John Teel, was born in Missouri, but I don't remember the

My mother's name was Manerva Fleetwood Teel.

My mother's father, or my grandfather, as well as my father's people, were from North Carolina. They were moved in the 1834, when the Cherokees were removed by the government. My grandmother Fleetwood was educated at Jones Mission in North Carolina. This was an Indian school. Their journey west, which ended at Fort Gibson, was commenced at Chattanooga, Tennessee. They were on boats on the Tennessee river and journeyed down this river to the Ohio then down the Ohio river to the Mississippi river, down this river to the Arkansas river, thence up the Arkansas to "Burtcuddy". They, with their belongings, were crowded on the flat boats and suffered quite a lot. Their experience was at Burtcuddy, a landing on the Arkansas river in Arkansas, when cholera broke out among the company and before long a majority of them died. My parents escaped, however, and finally reached Fort Gibson. This was in 1834.

The government being informed of the plight of the Indians, sent wagons, food and clothing down and cleaned up the camp, burned all bed clothes and clothing and put those who were still alive into wagons, and after a few days, they reached Fort Gibson, their future home.

My grandfather on my mother's side was named Fleetwood, an Englishman
and my grandmother was the daughter of Cicie Morgan, Cherokee Indian of
North Carolina.

I was born, as I said, east of Vinita about 18 miles and in the Cherokee
Nation. My early life, as well as practically all my life, was spent on the
farm and in farming, such as it was in the early days. My father and I later
built log houses from timber on the land but some of the Indians would go into
the pine forests and get out pine logs, hew them and build their houses. This
wood worked easily and they could build nice houses out of it, some would be
two stories.

The principal crop or crops was corn which was easily raised, as the
land was fresh and fertile and good seasons prevailed. We usually raised enough
to last us from one crop to another and sometimes put in some wheat. I
remember the first wheat crop was cut with reaping-hooks and they threshed out the
wheat by "tramping" it out with horses. We led or rode the horses around and
around and when finally we thought it tramped enough, the women of the family
would remove the straw and chaff and gather up the grain and pour it out from
an elevation and the wind would carry away the chaff and the grain would fall
and be gathered up. Later they had what was known as a "ground hog" or horse
power thresher. The power was furnished by horses treading a walk, which turned,
a shaft from this ran the thresher but then the wheat would have to be
cleaned by a hand machine.

There was plenty of game of all sorts as well as fish, deer, buffalo,
beavers, otters, turkey, prairie chickens and quail. People would kill deer,
some of it and the hind quarters were hung up to dry. You could almost al-
ways see dried venison hanging up in every home. We hardly ever had to feed our
deer. They would fatten on the "mast" acorns, hickory nuts and all the meat
would be tender and sweet.

So, in the fall and early winter when we wanted hog meat, we would go ³⁶⁵ into the woods, kill a hog or hogs, as the case might be, and dress it. They are always fat at that season of the year.

I was interpreter in Judge Parker's court at Fort Smith in 1893. They had an interpreter for each of the five civilized tribes. I acted for the Cherokee. I didn't act in this capacity but one year, as it didn't pay enough. You were only paid for the days they actually used you altho you had to be there all the time, even tho they didn't use you, so I quit after one year's service.

I was present in Judge Parker's court in 1893 when Henry Starr and "Billy, the Aid" were tried for the robbery of a bank in Arkansas. They were convicted and sent to prison, my recollection is that they were sent to Sing-Sing Prison. This "Billy, the Aid" was not the famous outlaw by that name but this man went by that name.

97 men were hanged during the term of Judge Parker, however, he was considered a just Judge but he had to deal with a tough element and only carried out the edict of the law when the prisoner was found guilty.

I was ordained a minister on the 13th of April, 1901 and have been more or less active in the ministry until a few years ago when I suffered an "attack". I served Chelsea, Oil Springs, Tywa and Harmony Star Churches of the General Incorporated Church of God.

I have known and still know a number of the older people prominent in the affairs of the early days in Oklahoma and Indian Territory. I received an allotment of land, as well as my children, but have since sold it.

My Church wanted me to act as a missionary and I tried it a while but my pay was so small and the territory so great, I felt that I couldn't do it and provide for my family. They paid only \$100.00 per year and you can see this is not very much to pay for your entire time and services.

I operated a ferry across the Grand river between Vinita and Clare-
ns for about 5 years. It was known as the Steve Edward Ferry and was above
the bridge now is that crosses the Grand River near Strang, Oklahoma.