

RABURN, SAPHRONIA CATHARINE. SIXTH INTERVIEW. 13618

52

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Interview with Saphronia Catharine Raburn,
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Seven years on House Creek.

My husband and I moved up on House Creek close to Enterprise in 1893 or thereabout. It was the year my son Tom was born, and he is now forty-five. At that time, of course, we were in the Choctaw Nation. The community around House Creek was made up of farmers and cattle ranchers and was typical of other such communities of the times.

My husband and I lived at three different places while we were in the community that centered around House Creek; altogether we stayed there seven years. A white man could rent land from an Indian then and he could improve it for the privilege of staying on it. That is the way we did,

most of the time.

Our first place in that community, though, was already leased from the Indians by a man named Hen Loudermilk; and we sub-leased from him. The place had a one-room log cabin on it and my husband built a side room to

2

it. We had a well drilled, too; it was the first drilled well I ever saw. The contraption that did the drilling was run by horsepower; I mean, horses were hitched to the thing and driven around and around.

We were farmers; we raised cotton, corn and feed for our stock and vegetables for ourselves. We had forty acres on that place. The grass, on the pasture land, was knee high. I remember that my husband used oxen to plow with though he had horses too. We stayed on that place two years and then sold out to a man named Jess Adams.

That first place was between Enterprise and McAlester about seven miles from the former. The second place was two miles from the first, closer to the creek. It was still about seven miles to Enterprise. This second place was a two roomed box house; one sixteen by eighteen room and a sideroom about ten by eighteen. There was a wet-weather well on the bank of the creek but my husband dug another well so that we could have water all the year around.

We were renting from an intermarried citizen named Goldsberg. We had thirty acres of land, all under fence. We raised cotton and corn, of course, and some of the best

potatoes I ever saw. We had a big patch of oats.

We used to go to McAlester about four times a year with produce to trade for groceries and supplies. We would take whatever we had in season. In the fall, we would take cotton and fall potatoes. Other times we might take onions, or butter, or eggs. Sometimes we took chickens. I remember taking forty pounds of butter at a time... I would put butter in a jar and cover it with salt; then I'd bury the butter in a cool place so it wouldn't spoil. It would keep a long time that way. We treated eggs the same way.

Sometimes we took our cotton to Fort Smith to sell it, sometimes to McAlester; but mostly to Canadian. I remember that the last cotton we sold at Canadian brought 4 cents a pound.

We bought most of our supplies at McAlester; but we could get things at Enterprise, too. Enterprise was a sort of village, with a post office, blacksmith shop, a grist mill, a gin and a few general stores.

There were two doctors in the town. One was named Cox and the other was named Smith. Young doctors just

starting out in the profession often came to the Territory in those days to get experience.

Dr. Lonnie Smith was a young fellow. He was from Arkansas ^{and} had his diploma. He opened an office in Enterprise, but later moved the office to Jess Adams' house four miles from town so that he would be nearer his rural patients.

Dr Smith had known us in Arkansas and he often came and visited with us; he seemed to like my cooking. He went back to Arkansas and married and then brought his bride back to Enterprise. I have heard him tell th t he and his wife once ate all the food they had in the house for breakfast and didn't have any money to buy more. But before noon a patient came to be treated and paid a good fee. The last

I heard of Dr. Smith he was pretty well-to-do.

When we lived on the Goldsberg place we were right on the bank of House Creek and right on the highway from Fort Smith to McAlester. Lots of wagons, buggies, hacks and saddle horses went over that road.

The creek stood in holes in dry weather; it was just a narrow stream. But in wet weather it often got out of

RABURN. SAPHRONIA CATHARINE. . SIXTH INTERVIEW. 13618

5

its banks and washed all through the bottoms. I remember one year that we had an old sow with nine pigs that made a bed in the creek bed. A flood came and washed them all away. I saw one of the pigs floating down the creek.

We stayed on the Goldsberg place two years, and then we moved about a mile up the creek to the Jim Wilkerson place. It was a one-room, a sixteen by sixteen hewed log house. We added a hallway and a ten by sixteen plank side-room.

A fourth of a mile from us was a Methodist Church, and three miles further on was a Baptist Church. Sometimes school was held in the Baptist Church building.

The schools were subscription affairs. School would last for three months during the summer and then maybe take up for three more months in winter. There was a Mrs. McCulley who taught school in her own house.

In the summertime we sometimes had singing schools for ten days. These singing schools would be held at the church houses, schoolhouses or sometimes even in private homes. You had to pay \$1.00 to attend the school for ten days.

6

Sometimes we would have writing schools during the summer time. I remember going to one and watching the students put on a sort of program for the closing of the school. They sang to the tune of "Wait 'Till Jesus Comes" a song that went like this:

"The pen, the pen, the brave old pen
That stamps the thoughts of yore;
By the bold tracing of the pen,
Its thoughts refresh the poor."

Chorus

"We'll write and improvements make,
We'll write and improvements make,
We'll write and improvements make,
And then we will still write on."

People were settled in communities in those days. Your nearest neighbor might be a quarter of a mile away. I remember about fourteen neighbors, there on House Creek. There was John Blackard, Mr. Watterson, Mr. Hook, a man named Hayes, Ginty Morris, Matt Loudermilk, Nath Forester (a Baptist preacher), Jimmy Collins, Joe Farrel, Jim Wilkerson, Buck Fulgum, the Joldsbergs and Ben Foreman, and the Dixons and Henrys, Choctaws.

This Ben Foreman was a white man, a cowman from Texas. He was a rough-and-ready, two-fisted sort of man. He had come to the vicinity of House Creek and had married an Indian wife. He had lots of land and cattle. I think Mrs. Foreman was a

Henry before her marriage.

There was a family named Marlowe in our community, too. Mr. Marlowe and his wife were both in their late fifties, but they decided to separate. Each one married again. She married a white boy about twenty-two years old; he married an Indian girl about eighteen, one of the Dixon girls.

I'll never forget the first time I saw the Mrs. Marlowe and her second husband together; that was just before their marriage though. His name was Willie Farrell. I was working in my garden, and they came riding upon one horse, the boy in the saddle and the old lady behind him. She had on a dark dress and a big bonnet. She was short and plump and her hair was getting gray. She was a good looking woman.

Her young man was good looking too; tall and dark and pleasant. They rode up and asked me if I could make dresses. I made clothes for all my neighbors then; I was the community seamstress. So I admitted that I could make dresses. Then they asked me how much I would charge and I told them 50 cents a dress.

They got down and tied their horse and I invited them into the cabin. I took the woman's measure. Then I got out my cutting chart; I could take anyone's measure and cut out a dress

8

by my chart that would fit the first time. I had a Singer sewing machine, one I had bought from an agent down close to Potesu. You know the first Singers were a "low-arm" kind that could sew only thin cloth; you couldn't use them to quilt with. My machine, though was one of the newer models, a "high-arm type.

The woman had brought her own cloth. They stayed for dinner and I had the dress done by the middle of the afternoon. That was to be her wedding dress. They took the dress and went on to Mr. McCulley's house and got him to marry them. He was a Baptist preacher. They didn't have any license; you didn't have to have a marriage license in the Indian Territory then.

One day, a year or two later, Mr. Marlowe and his Indian bride came to my house. He wanted to swap a place closer to McAlester for the one where we were living. My husband went with him to look at the other place, and the wife stayed all night with me while they were gone. She had one child, a little girl. She told me she had gone out in the woods by herself when the baby came. Then she had walked back to the house with the baby in her apron.

I couldn't help thinking of that when she had her second child. This time she stayed in bed and had a doctor with her but she took pneumonia and died.

That is the story of the Marlowes and of their marriages. After Mrs. Marlowe married Willie Farrell, the two of them did well. They moved out to the western part of the state. But old man Marlowe didn't do so well. He had a cancer, and when he died he left two grown boys and the little girl.

I remember that for a time people used to have to pay \$5.00 a year for a "permit" to stay in the Territory; that is, white people did unless they were intermarried citizens. At one time the Choctaws taxed white people's cattle, too. If a white man owned over ten cattle he had to pay \$1.00 a year for every cow more than the first ten. This tax didn't last long though.

Life on House Creek, forty years ago, was slower than now. We were pioneers in a new country, and some of our customs and conveniences were rather primitive. But we gave our children plenty to eat and wear, and raised them up to fear the Lord.