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Alfred Hicks,
Investigator,
Aug. 13, 1937.

Interview With Rufus Riley,
Nowata, Oklahoma.

THE FIRST MAIL ROUTE INTO
THE INDIAN TERRITORY.

The first mail route we had into the Territory was established by a man named Jess Morgan who took a contract from the Government to carry mail from Coffeyville, Kansas, to what is now Claremore; this man had a relay station at Coodys Bluff, which was the first post office in this district. It was run by a man named Henry Armstrong, a full blood Delaware Indian. Mr. Morgan had a team of horses at Coodys Bluff and when he came in from Coffeyville he always changed teams and stayed all night at this place and the next morning he would start out for Claremore; it took two days to make the trip from Coffeyville to Claremore.

Mr. Morgan had three drivers whose names were Bill Jesson, Frank Berrian and Jess Hart. Berrian has a store now here in Nowata.

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This man Morgan had a ferry boat put in on the Verdigris River; he did not operate the ferry but he furnished my uncle, John Riley, all the material to build the ferry and he gave my Uncle all that he made out of it for ferrying Mr. Morgan's teams across free. They named this ferry the Riley Ford and it was operated for years after the mail route was discontinued. My uncle would charge 50¢ for a team of horses, 25¢ for a single horse and 10¢ for a person afoot. This ford is located in Section 22, Township 26, Range 16 East in Nowata County, two miles north and two and one-half miles east of the town of Nowata.

Mr. Morgan would have the ferry take his teams across
when all the rest of the people would be driving across, for he did not want to take any chances of the mail getting wet.

This mail route was discontinued to Claremore when the Frisco Railroad went into Claremore, but from Coffeyville to Coodys Bluff it was continued until the Missouri Pacific Railroad came into Nowata.

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The post office at Coodys Bluff was named for a man named Coody who came to the Indian Territory and settled his claim. He was a one-half blood Cherokee Indian and today part of one of the log houses he first built is still standing at the place. There is a large bluff near the post office which is located five miles east and one and one-half miles north of Nowata.