

LOFTIN, CHARLES W.

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W. T. Holland,
Interviewer.

September 28, 1937

An Interview With Charles W. Loftin,
Part Cherokee Indian.

Nogales Avenue and W. Archer Streets, Tulsa.

My father, Harris A. Loftin, was born in Randolph
County, North Carolina, November 8th, 1840.

He enlisted in the Confederate Army at the
beginning of the Civil War in 1861, at Point Lookout,
Maryland, and served throughout the War, under General
"Stonewall" Jackson until General Jackson's death, May
10, 1863. Father was in the battles near Richmond, in
1862, Mechanicsville, Malvern Hill, Cedar Mountain, the
first and second battle of Bull Run, and the battles at
Antietam and Fredericksburg.

At the close of the War, Father was mustered out
at Point Lookout, Maryland, where he had enlisted, and
immediately came West to St. Louis where he was employed
with a railroad, working long enough to get a pass, the
thing he wanted most, as he wanted to see more of the West.

He came to Checotah and soon rented some land from
Olem Hayden, a Cherokee Indian, upon which he built a
one room log house, and there he lived for some three or
four years. He farmed and worked at the carpenter's trade.

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He was married to Rebecca J. Dial July 25, 1874. She was born 1852, September 7th, in the Territory, and was part Cherokee. Her father, my grandfather, M. W. Dial, owned and operated a flour mill at Flint, on the Illinois River, west of Siloam Springs, for several years beginning in 1870.

This mill, known as the Hilderbrand Mill, was run by water power. It was a roller mill and ground wheat and corn, and in addition had a saw mill, all operated by water power.

Grandfather had a big trade in flour, which he sold for miles around, as the closest mill was at Boonville, Arkansas, twenty-five or thirty miles away.

Farmers then usually stored their wheat at the mill, and had it ground as needed. If they had a surplus over their needs, they sold it. All grinding, wheat and corn, was done for "toll", a part taken out of each bushel for grinding. The farmer then got the flour, shorts and bran from his wheat.

They sold and delivered flour over a large territory. I think this mill is still in operation, and still operated by water power. They sold flour as far as Okmulgee and

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Muskogee. Flour in those days was sold by the barrel.

We rarely ever saw any flour shipped in any other way except in wooden barrels.

After my father and mother were married, according to the Cherokee law, by the Reverend Mr. Ester, a Baptist minister, they lived near Flint, in Goingsnake District as it was known then.

Father built a nice frame house, so our home was comfortable and we had plenty of everything we needed; however, a lot of work was required on the part of my parents.

In my early life I recollect that my mother did all her cooking in the fireplace; she did not have a cook stove for several years after she was married, probably not until 1880.

My grandmother did a lot of weaving of all kinds of woollen cloth, such as blankets and "linsey" jeans for men's clothes. And by the way, I have a pair ^{of} pants, hand-made, from the home woven jeans dyed with walnut hulls dye that belonged to my great-grandfather back

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in North Carolina. I also have a cast iron pot, a small one for cooking, which is a hundred years old.

My mother did the spinning of yarn thread and knitted stockings and socks for the family.

When we wanted a bit of fresh meat, Father went out, and without difficulty, killed a deer and brought it in. We had other game and fish was in abundance in all the streams,

Living then was easy, and a lot more satisfactory than now, I think.

I walked three miles to school, which usually lasted five months of the year. Black Ankle School, west of Siloam Springs, in the Territory, was my first school in 1881 and Mr. Healing was my teacher.

Later on, Father boarded three of us children at Maysville, Arkansas, and we attended school there.

When a boy I used to gather up the eggs and I have known us to have a wash tub full of eggs. We would take them to the country store, and sell or exchange them for such things as we might need. Eggs brought only four cents per dozen.

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I remember our first sugar was light brown. In fact, I did not see any granulated sugar for a long time, not until I was a big boy. Green coffee was roasted at home in the Dutch oven. The coffee mill was attached to the wall where coffee was ground early in the morning and which served as an alarm clock to awaken me. These and lots of other things remind me of other, earlier and very pleasant times.

While my father farmed every year, in the Fall and Winter he would work at the carpenter trade, and I learned the trade under him. He and I built several hundred buildings in Delaware, Cherokee and Mayes Counties, especially at Pryor, for we virtually built that place.

About farming, I remember when a boy of six or seven, in 1881 and 1882, Father bought a "Champion" dropper. This was a machine that would cut wheat or oats, and drop it in bunches, enough for a bundle. Men would follow it and tie the bundles, then others would follow them and shock it. This machine was a sensation in its day. Father could fence just any amount of land he wanted then and farm or graze it, and not be made to vacate.

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I could speak the Cherokee language.

I lived at Claremore in 1899-1900. Father, at that time, operated the "2 Heart" ranch northeast of Collinsville five miles, so I used to ride with Will Rogers over the range near Oogolah.

In 1897 and part of 1898, I drove a stage coach and carried a Star Mail Route from Muskogee to Okmulgee. My grandfather and I had the contract which called for six trips each week I drove the stage from Muskogee half way where I met Grandpa, who drove from Okmulgee. We met at Lee's post office, the half way point, the distance was forty miles in all where we would transfer passengers and mail, feed and water our horses and make the return trip. I worked out of Muskogee and Grandpa out of Okmulgee.

The postmaster at Okmulgee was a negro (Creek) and Lee, at Lee's post office, half way point, was also a negro, and believe me, Okmulgee at that time was plenty tough. Some of these Creek negroes were hard "nuts".

This contract paid \$1800.00 per year. We had to deliver and take up mail on the route, too.

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However, we made pretty good money on parcels and passengers as we charged \$2.00 per trip. A one way ticket for passengers cost two dollars. I had an extra team or two that I would use to rest up the others.

I never was held up, or otherwise bothered, while driving the stage, but the man before me was held up. My coach was a typical coach, with two seats facing each other for passengers.

Trunks were strapped on behind or put on top. The body of the coach was suspended on springs and was comfortable to ride in, taking the roads into consideration.