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# ACKLEY, SHERMAN. INTERVIEW.

Effie S. Jackson  
Field Worker  
Feb 25, 1937

Forwarded by---  
Thomas F. Meagher, Supp.  
Indian Pioneer History 142

## WHAT AN OLD PIONEER TOLD. by Sherman Ackley

"I was born in the Alleghany Mountains- Greeg County, Pa., to be exact- Feb. 28, 1860. When I was seven years old, my parents loaded us on a boat at Wheeling W. Va., The 'go west young man' fever had them. My father know there was plenty of land for the taking - if we went to the new frontier. So down the Ohio to the Mississippi, up the Mississippi to St. Louis by steamboat, then by train across Missouri to Kansas City, a small trading post in those days. There was no bridge across the Missouri, so we ferried across in a 'bus'. We waited for our possissions- just bedding and clothing- to arrive.

"Then began our slow trip through Kansas- ten years to make it- 1868-78. We would stop in some likely spot for a couple ye ars, make a crop, move on, get mired down, stay there another year or two. We had our wagons and three yoke of oxen. We slowly paid our way by 'breaking prairie'- three yoke of oxen and large prairie plow, breaking virgin soil. For this we reveived \$3.00 an acre.

"Always there was the lure of the Indian land across the Kansas line. I had five brothers and two disters and we planned to take our father's advice, 'you boys go down into the territory, marry a squaw and get all the land you want; you girls find you a buck'- but nary one of us married an injun.

" Our first stopping place in the territory was at Choteau-1878- sparsely settled; one store occupied, one unoccupied, two dwellings, a blacksmith shop and a small depot- very few farm houses in the whole district. Land was held by the Cherokee Indians in common and they in turn leased it to the whites if they would break so much ground (usually 20 acres) and add simple

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improvements. These leases were usually for ten years. I ranched ten mile north of Muskogee for ten years, then in 1889 I took a ten year lease from a Creek Indian, Alice Payne. All the land I wanted on condition I improve twenty acres.

"This land was just across the river east of Keystone. There we lived- (I had married) for five years- I ran a ferry boat across the Cimarron at its mouth. We charged according to the stage of the water- from 50¢ to \$2.50 per wagon. Then in 1893 I took up this 80 and have lived here ever since. I gave that plot of land adjoining me to the old timers for a cemetery- all whites.

"I remember the opening of the strip here. It was amusing, you know where that little stone filling station is now right at the bend of the hill as you come west into Keystone- well, that was neutral ground- so two old maids, Frances and Salina Cox, took up their stand there and at the stroke of the hour, they ran for a claim- all of three hundred feet west- and that gave them most of what is to-day Keystone (that is the land on the south side of the road) and their descendents still own most of it.

"In the meantime Fr. Philander Reeder, Dr. "Charlie's" daddy and Frank Chesley, bought out a claim and put up the first store and doctors office in 1893 in Keystone.

"The most exciting time was the war of saloons between Keystone south of the Cimarron and the 'ghost' town of Appalachia across the swinging bridge, north of the Cimarron- but thats another story."

NOTE BY INTERVIEWER: I found Sherman Ackley and his sprightly wife very hospitable and loquacious. Mr. Ackley, very hale and hearty, was taking a little time off at noon to hear a very up-to-date radio galk telling arguments pro and con as to what should be done with the 'nine old men'. His memory was keen, descriptions good and manner gracious. His home is on U. S. 64-three miles north of Keystone and as he said 'it is easy to find me, just watch for the cemetery'.

Little S. Jackson,  
Field Worker  
Feb 26, 1937

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APPALACHIA-A GHOST TOWN.

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If "Mr. Ghost came to Town" to hunt or haunt the former location of Appalachia he would find only a raised strip of broken concrete walk and a few shattered descending steps along the highway. This walk and others like it were once merry promenades in front of the rollicking saloons in the thirsty pre-statehood days.

Keystone, nineteen miles west of Tulsa, at the intersection of National Highway 64 and state highway number one, had been settled in 1893- rather sparsely- but enough to give the Monarch Investment Company of Kansas City an idea- why not a new town, boom town on the Oklahoma Territory side to satisfy the thirst of the growing population across in the Indian Territory where traffic in liquor was taboo.

So in 1903- the Monarch Investment Company bought two farms near the junction of the Cimarron and Arkansas rivers and converted them into town lots- they paid at the rate of \$6000.00 per quarter section, and peddled them out at \$20.00 per lot- or tried to. "Possibly twenty lots were sold", Sherman Ackley said. A great barbecue was held, gaudily dressed salesmen mingled with the merry-makers- but luck was not so good; homes at the best were not much more than shacks and most frequently tents. Not so the saloon, soon there were seven of them flourishing, some rather makeshift, some only in tents. So Appalachia was born, a name given in honor of the hills surrounding the district, which reminded some of the old timers of their native eastern mountains. Since it was in Oklahoma Territory, its saloons could flourish while a few hundred feet east and south of the new city was Indian Territory, where prohibition ruled. So when the thirsty throng heard of saloons so near at hand, they greeted the news with a stampede to Appalachia. Some came by horseback, others joited overland in wagons and the more prosperous arrived

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in buckboards drawn by spirited teams. The roads of the territory at that time were no thing more than trails.

Long wagon trains hauled supplies for the saloons from Pawnee, fifty miles away, but the nearest point on a railroad. More than a day and a half were required to make the trip of fifty miles.

With business booming, Appalachia confidently constructed a swinging bridge acrosss the Cimarron- two cables stretched across then boarded for a foothold. Most of the men from the Indian Territory came from the south- Red Fork and Sapulpa, leading cities of the district supplied most of the business. Parking their horses, buckboards and wagons on the south side of the Cimarron, the riders had a dizzy journey across the shakey bridge, and oftener a dizzier journey back, if the cold waters of the river could tell the tale.

The most prosperous saloon on the Appalachia side was owned by Lee McAfee, formerly a sheriff in Paris Texas. Then came Joe Wierman, a deputy U. S. Marshal on the scene to keep law and order in Appalachia. He looked the situation over and decided to open a saloon. Since most of the business came from south of the river he decided it would be wise to locate on that side and thus eliminate the risky trip across the swinging bridge.

Ira Yarbrough, who also wanted to open a saloon, believed Wierman was right, located on the south side as did Fritz Espig-wholesale agent for the Blatz Brewing Company. This was the swan song for the Saloons on the north side of the river, they could not stand the pressure of the competition, handicapped as they were by the swinging bridge.

Saloons in those days were not pretentious structures, usually small frame buildings with high, false fronts. Some of them only bars set up in

tents. Bars were made of rough planking and tables and chairs were of the simplest construction. Smoky gasoline and kerosene torches supplied light. Windows were painted over with advertisements of wares offered within. Free lunch counters offered a surprisingly large choice of food. Various kinds of cheese with the inevitable rye bread was most popular, and always the handy dish of cloves for killing whiskey breath. On certain festive occasions, the saloon keepers offered special dinners to their customers free of charge. 'Possum dinner, especially cooked by old German woman who lived near Keystone, found great favor.

According to Wierman the crowds that thronged the streets were fairly well behaved. Cowboys who wanted to shoot up the town were soon quieted; outlaws caused the most trouble. On one occasion, when Wierman was still deputy U. S. Marshal, a tough rode into town and got drunk. He proceeded to shoot up the town- especially calling for Wierman- he stood for the "Law". The drunk hid between two buildings, yet pointing his gun to get Wierman. Wierman cautiously approached, seized him and put him in the haphazard structure that composed the Keystone jail. The prisoner promptly set it afire. Before they could tear the door off to release him he had received a good scorching- and probably a good lesson.

Statehood in (1901) brought a quietus to the flourishing saloons on the south side of the river and finished the straggling remnants on the north side. Appalachia slipped away into the hills from which it sprang and only the crumbling concrete is left for the "Ghost walk".

INTERVIEW- Feb., 25th 1937 with Sherman Ackley- three miles north of Keystone on Highway 64- Joe Wierman and "Aunt Lou" Wierman at their hospitable lunch room which faces north on the highway- in the center of the main block of what is today- Keystone.