

INDEX CARDS

Transportation--journey to Oklahoma  
Ferries--Arkansas River  
Ferries--Poteau River  
Jenkins, Robert  
Postoffices--Pawpaw  
Houses--Choctaw Nation  
Mercantile establishments--Choctaw Nation  
Cotton gins--Choctaw Nation  
Indians--Choctaw  
Game--Choctaw Nation  
Hogs--Choctaw Nation  
Orchards--Choctaw Nation  
Intoxicants--Choctaw Nation  
Family life--Choctaw Nation

(As told by Mrs. Elizabeth Scruggs Jenkins)-to Miss Robinson  
(Jan. 25, 1937)

47

588

508

## REMINISCENCES OF EARLY LIFE IN THE INDIAN TERRITORY

Mrs. Jenkins was born in Bells Tennessee in 1859. Was married to Robert Jenkins in 1879. Hearing of the wonderful opportunities of the West, they started for the Indian Territory. They traveled by train and crossed the Mississippi River on a Ferry Boat that took the train on board. When they reached the Arkansas River at Fort Smith it was frozen over and they crossed over, walking on the ice. The Ferry was owned and operated by Marion Watts, a brother of the well known Jess Watts of Indian Territory days. They traveled on and crossed the Poteau River on the ice. There was a ferry there also, owned by George Scruggs, Mrs. Jenkins Uncle. They stayed there several months, Mr. Jenkins operating a ferry, then they moved near a little village called Pawpaw, about where the site of Spiro is at present. They had a one room cabin in the cane-break. The cane was as tall as the cabin and so dense that it afforded shelter for stock throughout the winter without additional food. The little village of Pawpaw consisted of a Post-office, two stores and a few small houses. Mr. Watts was the Postmaster. He owned one of the stores and a cotton gin. The other store was owned by David Lang. Mrs. Jenkins not being accustomed to Indians, did not understand their peculiar ways. When they walked into the cabin unannounced, she was somewhat alarmed. Sometimes in bad weather, they would come and stay for several days, before resuming their journey. They preferred sleeping on the

48  
floor rolled up in a blanket. Mrs. Jenkins gradually found out they had only friendliest feeling for their white friends and were ready to extend the same hospitality to them, however that never became necessary. Food was no cause for worry. Wild turkeys came into the yard and ate with the chickens and deer could be seen any time, as they went to the streams for water, as they always followed a beaten path. When any one wanted venison, they took their position near a deer trail and waited in the woods for them to come by, as they always traveled in groups of several in a group. The hunter could take his choice as to the one he wanted.

The cane-break was full of wild hogs who had strayed away from home and forgot to go back. In the fall after mast had fallen and the young shoates were fattened they were often killed by any one who wanted fresh pork. They were common property and anyone was free to kill them who wanted fresh pork, however the meat was soft and was not used for curing for the coming year. Sugar sold for eight and ten pounds to the dollar. Flour was six dollars per hundred. At that, no one failed to have an abundance of food, as the virgin land was productive to an amazing degree and crop failures were unknown. Each little home had a small orchard set with good fruit. The seeds having been brought West by the Indians. Wild honey was plentiful and could be obtained by robbing a bee tree. When the Indians came by on a return trip from Fort Smith and had been drinking, Mrs. Jenkins never failed to hide the axe and all the knives. They added other cabins to their house to accomodate their young growing

family. They were the parents of twelve children, eight of whom are living. Mrs. Jenkins often wondered how she cared for her large family in such limited house room, however, they all thrived and did well. They lived in that locality for five years and moved to Muldrow, where Mr. Jenkins owned and operated a grocery store. Later, they moved to Sallisaw where Mr. Jenkins died in 1907.

In this day of modern conveniences Mrs. Jenkins says, that the worries of the early days are not to be compared with the present days.

Mrs. Jenkins is living in Muskogee.