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INDEX CARDS

Cherokee Nation
Tribe-Cherokee
School-Baptist Mission
Teachers
Indian Food
Dyes and Paints
Trading Post-Cincinnati, Ark.
Toll Bridges
United States Marshals
Ferries
Allotment

INTERVIEWER W.J.B. BIGBY
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INTERVIEW WITH JOHN H. BRIGHT
Westville, Oklahoma.

John H. Bright, a three-eighths Cherokee, was born in the Cherokee Nation near the present town of Westville, Oklahoma, November 2, 1873.

He was the son of William Bright and Sallie Morton, both Cherokees and natives of the Cherokee Nation. The Bright family consisted of five children namely: Eliza, Gatsy, Marion, John and Thomas Bright.

The grandfather of John H. Bright came with the old settlers to the Indian country in 1829. His mother's people came with the Immigrants.

EARLY LIFE

Most of John's early life was spent on a small farm on Ballard Creek, that his father operated. The farm consisted of about forty acres, a large farm in those days. The principal crops of that day were corn, oats and wheat. The teams used then were oxen. Each family usually owned a yoke

2

of oxen. The farm implements as we now have^{them} were unknown. The grain crops such as wheat and oats were cut by cradles, and bundled by hand. Thrashing machines were unknown. Most of the wheat was thrashed by beating. Later there were a few thrashers which were operated by horsepower. The first thrasher of such type was purchased by Wash Lee.

EDUCATION

The earliest school that Bright attended was the Old Baptist Mission School, which was established long before Bright was born - the date he does not remember. He thinks that the Baptist Mission was the earliest school in this part of the Cherokee Nation.

Some of the old teachers that taught this school were Jim Bates, a permitted white man in the Cherokee Nation, and Mary Lassley. Miss Lassley was a Cherokee. John's old schoolmates are Felix Lee, Henry Downing, Fred Palone, Lee Folsom, Lizzie Triplett, Pug Bushyhead, Mae Garner and Ella Glenn.

INDIAN FOOD

The principal things used for food among the Cherokees was corn prepared in several ways. Bright's

3

folks, not being full-bloods, did not live on the same foods as did the full-bloods. But he has visited in so many homes among the full-bloods that he knows just what they used for food, and knows how some of it was prepared.

The food that could be found in almost every home was cornbread, bean-bread, beans, pumpkins and wild meats. These that I have named were the principal foods in this part of the Cherokee Nation.

Bean-bread was prepared by cooking the beans until done, then by mixing these beans with the meal and baking. It made a kind of brownish-colored bread, but it was the main food for the full-bloods. When a sick person ate bean-bread and home-made hominy he was considered getting better.

The hominy that the full-bloods made was not like what we now call hominy. The hominy that we now have is what they called "Skinned corn". Hominy that they made was called Ga-gnaw-han. This was made by skinning the corn with lye. Then they took this corn to an old

4

mortar and beat it into grits. They cooked these grits and let them set until soured. This was Hominy. This was considered a good dish for the sick. Some Cherokees called this food "Appetite Builder."

Wild meats were also found on almost every table in the Going-Snake District. There was plenty of game. Most of this meat was dried by means of fire. They usually built a scaffold and barbecued this meat. When dry they took it off the fire and hung it up.

The Cherokees were fond of soups, and most of this dried meat was made into soup.

DYE

Dye was made by some of the Cherokees. Most of the dye that was to be found in the Cherokee Nation was made from the bark of trees. This was done by boiling the roots and bark of trees.

Dark purple dye was made by boiling the berries of sumac bushes. Yellow dye was made from hickory

bark. Light purple was made from red oak bark. These dyes were used in dyeing yarn and home-spun cloth.

PAINTS

Paint was not used in the Cherokee Nation as it was in other places. Mr. Bright does not remember how this was made. The Cherokees after coming to this country did not paint their faces or bodies as did other Indians. So if they used paint he does not know for what purpose. They did not paint their houses. They all lived in log huts. Usually no windows. Dirt floors and no furniture.

TRADING AND MILLING POINTS

The early trading point for the Cherokees in this part of the Going-Snake District was Cincinnati, Arkansas. This old town was only six miles from the Bright home. This was already a town when Bright grew old enough to recollect anything.

Two brothers by the name of Moore operated the mill for a long time at this place. People from all parts of

6

the Cherokee Nation came to this mill to do their milling.

P. V. Craig was the merchant. He now operates a store at Westville. Bill Shea was the produce dealer. He also bought hides.

CIVIL WAR

Mr. Bright was not living during the Civil War but he had two uncles that served in the Union Army during this war. These two uncles of Mr. Brights' were Bill and Lock Morton. They have told him there was only one battle fought in this part of the Cherokee Nation. This was the battle of Ballard Creek. It was fought in the summer of 1862. The Union Army was stationed at old Fort Wayne, near the present town of Watts, Oklahoma. According to the Morton brothers there was a small army of Confederates sent into the Cherokee Nation to do some stealing.

Word was received at Fort Wayne that this army was marching from somewhere in the neighborhood, moving toward Going-Snake District.

7

Scouts were placed around Evansville. Three days after the word was received that this army was on the march they came across the Arkansas line near Cincinnati. They were met by the Union Army on Ballard Creek, commanded by a man named Anderson. He does not know the first name of this captain. But it shows on the discharge of the said Lock Morton.

This Confederate Army was driven out of the District southward. It is said that this same army met another defeat southeast of Stilwell about three days afterwards. This battle was fought by some Federal Scout and this Confederate Army that was defeated at Ballard Creek.

TOLL BRIDGES

There were no tollbridges in this part of the Cherokee Nation. There was one tollgate located in this part of the country. This gate was located at Long Prairie and operated by a blind man named Iron Beck.

This gate was located on a high ridge just north of Long Prairie. There was no way to go around this place and the fee was twenty-five cents.

CATTLEMEN

The only cattleman in this part of the Going-Snake District was Soldier Sixkiller, a Cherokee. He usually handled several head of cattle and sheep. This man was a well-to-do man in his time. He marketed most of his stuff at home. The buyers from other states were allowed to buy in the Cherokee Country.

CAMP MEETINGS

There was a camp meeting held each summer at the old Baptist Mission. This was an annual affair. Many people from all over the Cherokee Nation came to this place.

Among the early-day church workers was Adam Lacie, a full-blood, who later became a minister. John Jones was the early-day, white minister or missionary among the Cherokees. He published some kind of a denominational paper at this place for a long time. Mr. Bright does not know the name of the paper. Some think the "Cherokee Advocate" was the first published at this place; but it was not, so it was some church paper.

Baptist Mission at that time was on the spot of ground where Nelson Crowder's house now stands. Later it was moved

9

to its present location. Not so many people lived around the Mission at that time. These meetings usually started in the fall after the crops were gathered. Thousands came, bringing along the food that they had donated for the meeting. A big barbecue usually accompanied these meetings. Bright has seen many baptized on Ballard Creek-the result of these meetings.

POST OFFICE

The post office for the Cherokees in the Going-Snake District was at Cincinnati for a long time. Several years afterwards a post office was established at Baptist Mission. This office was named Baptist, I.T.

George Qualls was the first postmaster. This office remained here for several years. The next post office to be established in this part of the Indian country was at Oil Springs. Mr. Bright does not remember the postmaster at this place.

UNITED STATES MARSHAL

Mr. Bright was personally acquainted with only two United States Marshals in this part of the country. They

10

were George Morris and Tom Johnson. Morris was stationed at Westville, Oklahoma, and Tom Johnson at Siloam Springs, Arkansas. These officers did not visit the Cherokee country unless they had a warrant for some Cherokee that had violated the law by bringing whiskey into the Indian Territory. There were no outlaws in this part of the Going-Snake District.

FERRIES

There was only one ferry located in the Going-Snake District. That was the Fisher Ferry which was located near the Arkansas Line on the Illinois River up the river from the present town of Watts, Oklahoma

Other ferries that Mr. Bright has crossed are the ferries located near Webbers Falls in Muskogee County. He does not know the name of the operators of these two ferries.

DISEASES

There was not much as we now call communicable diseases in the Cherokee country at that time. The only

11

diseases that were common with the Cherokees was smallpox in the summer and chills in the summer. These were usually treated with herbs. Old-time consumption which we now call Tuberculosis, was the most dreaded disease in the Indian country. The Cherokees claimed that there was no cure for this disease.

Many died of this disease each year. The Cherokees or even the white doctors did not know how to treat this disease at that time.

Scarlet fever was also a dreaded disease at that time. This disease killed more children than ^{any} other ^{disease} Bright has been told by the older people that this was what started so many family cemeteries during the Civil War. Scarlet fever struck the Cherokee Nation in the summer of 1863. The weather was very hot and the dead was buried the quickest way possible. There was no way known to embalm the dead at that time.

12

HORSE-RACING

Horse racing was a famous sport in those days. Every community in this part of the Going-Snake District had a race track. But the most important race track was located about four miles northeast of the present town of Westville, Oklahoma.

The most important race held at this track was in 1880. This race was run between Ned Still and Zeke Proctor. Hundreds of dollars were bet on this race. The Proctor horse won. Sam Bright, a cousin of the informant, rode the Still horse.

The track was just a little north of the Parris Cemetery.

ALLOTMENT

The Brights never were in favor of the Allotment but this law was passed by the National Council. The Bright family was not full-blood but they were not in favor of this law anyway ^{although} most of the mixed-breeds and the younger Cherokees were in favor of this law.

13

This was a great issue in the election preceding this law. Jonathan Whitmire was elected Councilman from this District.

Wolfe Coon and Richard Wolfe were elected Senators. Coon was elected Chairman of that body.