

Mary Jane Stockton,
Field Worker.
May 25, 1937.

An Interview With Ras Foster, white,
An old-time resident of Claremore.

Ras Foster, old-time resident of Claremore,
answered questions and volunteered the following in-
formation:

I was born September 5th, 1865, near the town of
Lacygne, in Lynn County, Kansas. This village was
located on the banks of the Meritizene River; we lived
in a two-room log cabin near the river bank.

Our home was a typical cabin of the-pioneer type,
being an "all-at-home" product; the walls were of logs,
the floors of native lumber, the roof of clap-boards,
rived from native oaks which grew nearby and with a
chimney of the proverbial "stick and clay" type. Small
pieces of timber of the proper length were rived (or
split) from trees that had grown nearby, these were
built up like an ordinary pen and the structure was
lined with clay mud. When properly built this kind of
chimney did as good service as those of brick and stone.
The fire place proper was made of flat stones with a
broad hearth.

-2-

In the summer of 1890 we moved to the Indian Territory--to the village of Claremore, Cooweescoowee District, Cherokee Nation--now Rogers County. I was twenty-five years old then; we settled on the prairie in what is now Lone Elm precinct near the Verdigris River. Two years later I met Miss Core Offutt and we were married, in 1892.

While living in Kansas we kept hearing about the fertile lands and fine climate down in the Indian Territory; my father contemplated coming here for several years and finally did. We located on what was then known as the "Nancy Silk Farm", four miles west of Claremore and near the Verdigris River--it was just a broad prairie then--no improvements to speak of--just sandstone rocks and prairie grass. I and my brother, Dick, have been here ever since and will stay it out. The lumber for our first house in what is now Rogers County was hauled from a saw mill operated by Jessie Mayberry, father of John and Charley and Cal Mayberry, well known citizens of Claremore, and of Mrs. Crutchfield of Inola. We used an ox team to do the hauling on what was known as a "log wagon". It had low wheels

FOSTER, RAS.

INTERVIEW.

5966.

-3-

so loading heavy logs onto it was not difficult. The oxen we harnessed up by means of a yoke, made of timber with "bows" around the animal's neck; a chain connected the yoke with the wagon tongue by means of which the load was drawn. That was forty-seven years ago, and there were not many white folks here then; it was Indian country-- owned and inhabited by Cherokees, many of them high-class folks with considerable Caucasian blood in their veins.

When I arrived here the Iron Mountain, the Missouri Pacific Railroad had but recently been built. It extended from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Coffeyville, Kansas, and most of the trains were "Extras" carrying freight, hay, grain, hogs, cattle and other live stock. There was only one passenger train here each day and it was a "mixed train", or a "local freight" with a passenger coach tied on behind. It stopped at all stations while extras ran right through unless they stopped to pick cars up of freight, take orders or fill the tenders with water.

Claremore was a mere village--not more than one hundred and fifty or two hundred people here, and no streets--just dirt roads that got really muddy in wet

-4-

weather. Hogs ran wild and cows grazed on the streets while deer and other game, especially prairie chickens, were common. Members of local train crews used to leave their trains standing while they bagged a few prairie chickens. There was no paving and the sidewalks were primitive. Some sidewalks were made of flag stones but a narrow board walk extended from Frank Rucker's store, where the Mason Hotel now stands, to the Cherokee District Court House, which was located at the southwest corner of Claremore Street and Catalach Avenue, about where the Lang (negro) Hotel was later erected, one block west and one block south of the present (New) County Court house.

There were very few negroes here then; I remember distinctly one colored family; it was that of George Ross. George was the "City Dray" man, hauling freight to and from the two depots and for the four stores which made up the business section of Claremore. He has one son living here now, Ed Ross, who lives on North Cowala Avenue in Wood Addition and not far from Lincoln High School and the city light plant.

-5-

OLD COURT HOUSE.

The Cherokee Court House was originally located at Kephart Springs, near the head of Lake Claremore. Jerome Kephart and his wife, "Aunt Ruth", grandparents of Oliver Hause, present County Clerk of Rogers County, owned the land adjacent and enjoyed a "concession" to serve meals to those attending court. No whisky or other intoxicants were allowed on the premises. Of course some whisky was smuggled in but it was under a severe penalty when the vendor got caught and the man found intoxicated was tied up to a tree until he "sobered off." The court house was moved to Claremore in 1889, and served its purpose until the Cherokee courts were abolished ^{by} the Curtis Bill and Cherokee Treaty, about 1898.

When I came here the court was presided over by Judge John Schrimsher, father of Mrs. Dyke Robinson, wife of the present post master at Claremore. He was killed by lightning at his farm four miles south of Claremore before statehood.

-6-

GRANDFATHER

My grandfather, John Foster, died here in 1893, at the age of ninety-four and was buried at Lone Elm cemetery, four miles west of Claremore. A simple slab of native stone marks his last resting place, a hand-cut inscription serves to identify it. My father died just before Thanksgiving in 1911, and was also buried at Lone Elm.

HEIRLOOMS.

I have in my possession an old clock, more than a hundred years old. I also have some old-fashioned pieced quilts made by my mother, as well a collection of old pictures, daguerrotypes, tintypes, crayon enlargements. I have an old-time "reap-hook" used in cutting grain grown in small fields and in rough places. In the early days, grain was cut by hand and picked up and placed in a buckskin pouch suspended from the shoulders.