

An Interview with Tom Foster, Cherokee Indian.
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My grandfather's many meetings with the Osage Indians finally resulted in a permanent peace with them. I can remember when they would come in bands and grandfather would let them camp on his land. He would kill a steer, or more, depending on the number in the party. There would be barbecues, and a general good time would prevail.

It seems the Osage Indians didn't farm as extensively as the Cherokees. I know, my grandfather, John Chambers, always raised plenty of corn and had it to spare, so when the visitors were ready to go, he gave them corn, all they wanted. They didn't have any wagons or vehicles of any kind but always came on ponies, so the only thing they had to carry the corn in was their blankets or buffalo robes. It was amusing to me to watch them tie up the ears in their blankets and load it on their ponies. Sometimes the ponies didn't like it so we would see plenty of bucking. They, however, succeeded in getting away with several bushels that way. Sacks were unknown to them then. Corn was used almost

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solely for the family, and not much was fed to the stock. Bread and grits and whole grain hominy were made by hand from corn.

I remember Grandfather Foster got the first hand grist mill I ever saw. It was an iron or steel affair, and he kept it outside the house, bolted to a tree in the yard. It was made so you could adjust it to grind fine or coarse. While not as fast as a power mill, still it didn't take long to grind enough meal to make bread.

Grandfather Foster was a slave owner before the War, and some of his former slaves remained with him after they were freed. I especially remember Aunt Martha. She was quite a doctor in her young and middle life, acting as mid-wife to most all families in that community. She was present at my birth, so she told me.

About all the medicine used then was herbs, different herbs for different ailments. I recall that butterfly root was used in pneumonia cases. Tea was made from this powdered root and given the patient. In case of typhoid fever, horsemint tea was used and it generally reduced the fever after a few doses. For summer complaint

tea, made from the leaves of a palecat bush, was used. They had great faith in these remedies and that faith was based on cure, for in most cases the patient would recover.

Cupping or bleeding was resorted to in some sickness, rheumatism was one. The doctor would puncture a place where the pain was most severe, twist some paper, light it, place it in the cup, and attach the cup to the ailing part. This would draw out a quantity of blood. This was repeated until the sick man got relief.

I remember being in Muskegee one day where two men were brought in, suffering with spinal meningitis. I was asked to help the doctor treat them, which he did by bleeding. He took his knife and punctured the skin at the base of the skull until it bled freely. Then he attached his cup with the burning paper in it and drew two cups of blood each, from the sick men. They, I know, got well.

I don't know whether I mentioned it or not, but my grandfather was a delegate to Washington on several occasions for the Cherokee Nation. He was councilman and member of the Senate several terms. This was my

grandpa, John Chambers.

My father, Jim Foster, was a farmer. We lived near the Verdigris River, near the railroad at Verdigris Switch. He had all the land he wanted, because ^{before} the land was allotted, everyone was forbidden to settle closer than one quarter of a mile to his nearest neighbor. A lot of Indians would go out a quarter of a mile from their homes, and put down the foundations for another building. They held all land within a quarter for six months. Before the time expired ^{they} would work maybe a day in the house and hold it another six months. In that way they could branch out about as far as they wanted to, or until they ran into some one else. I know my father had one hundred and sixty acres of land for each of us children.

My father and John Scripps of Claremore were cousins. We knew all of the early settlers in that section. Glen Rogers was a prominent citizen of that section out near the "Mound". He and Bill Halsell organized and opened the first bank in Claremore. It was the First National Bank and was chartered before Statehood.

Miss Ida Collins was one of the early teachers up there. This was after the Cherokees established schools and paid teachers out of the treasury. I went to school here and two years at the Male Seminary in Tahlequah.

Mr. Webb of Claremore now has a roll of all Cherokees at the time of allotment.

Life was simple and easy then. I have known my father to go out and kill a deer before breakfast. Game of all kinds was plentiful. Wolves were also numerous.

We heard the cows bawling one evening in the winter and went out to investigate. We found that wolves, a pack of them, had chased a bull buffalo into our herd of cattle, and had about killed him. We ran them off finally, but they were a hungry and vicious lot. Farmers had to keep cows and young calves and mares and colts up to protect them from the wolves. Sometimes they would get hungry enough to attack cattle and buffaloes.
