

GRIFFIN, GEORGE.

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Elizabeth Ross,
Investigator,
March 15, 1938.

An Interview With George Griffin,
Hubert, Oklahoma.

George Griffin was born in the city of Nashville, Tennessee, on the 4th day of March, 1861, the day upon which Abraham Lincoln was sworn in as president of the United States, and he was twenty years of age when he decided to journey to the Indian Territory. He reached Fort Gibson, Cherokee Nation, in 1881. While engaged in ascertaining the name of some person who might wish to employ a young man for farm labor Mr. Griffin met former Principal Chief William P. Ross, who owned a large farm in the Fort Gibson bottoms. After conversing awhile, Mr. Ross engaged Mr. Griffin as one of his farmers. The services of Mr. Griffin proved so satisfactory to his employer that he remained as principal farmer for a period of three years.

After leaving the employ of Mr. Ross, Mr. Griffin remained at Fort Gibson for awhile, continuing to engage in

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agricultural pursuits, but finally removed to that portion of the Tahlequah district which is now included in the Hulbert township. In course of time Mr. Griffin became able to purchase a large tract of highly fertile land not distant from the Grand River. This tract was acquired after the allotment of Cherokee lands, and Mr. Griffin engaged in raising corn, grain and alfalfa. Until within recent years he spent a large portion of his time about the farm and meadow.

When Mr. Griffin reached Fort Gibson 57 years ago, large portions of the low-lying bottom lands were covered with an extensive growth of timber. There were huge sycamore, cottonwood, black walnut, and oak trees, much undergrowth, and large canebreaks. The lakes and sloughs in the midst of the timbered tracts were filled with fish, and in the fall and winter seasons wild ducks in countless numbers alighted upon the water.

Hidden away in the depths of the woodlands and canebreaks were a number of small cabins in which lived whites and negroes, besides some Indians. When the Grand and the Arkansas Rivers overflowed their banks and the muddy waters

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spread afar, there was hurried exodus of the cabin dwellers to higher ground. In old two-horse wagons, horseback, on foot, carrying portions of household goods, these people emerged from the bottoms and remained temporarily about the town of Fort Gibson until the streams resumed their normal state again.

Mr. Griffin knew most of the people of Fort Gibson, which was quite a small town more than fifty years ago. The military post was yet occupied and blue-coated soldiers were to be seen each day. There was no railroad in the early eighties, but occasionally a fair-sized steamboat came up the Arkansas, entered the Grand River and steamed to the landing place in vicinity of the present railway bridge. The iron ring used to secure such crafts at the land is still to be seen imbedded in the rock under the present railroad bridge . (1938).

Much of the mail for Fort Gibson was carried by men on horseback, and mail sent out from Fort Gibson to other points was carried in similar manner. When streams were swollen from heavy rainfall the mail riders experienced delay. There were no bridges throughout the country, and

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until the waters subsided there was no way of crossing the streams. Occasionally, though, a mail carrier rode far from the trail and went around the source of the swollen stream and reached his destination.