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Outlaws--Foreman, Return

Chauncey O. Moore, Supervisor
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149

January 27th, 1937

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Frank J. Still
Field Worker

Interview: Walter Bigby

"I was born in Cherokee County near Hungry Mountain in 1852. My father's name was Wily Bigby, my mother's Elnora Bigby, nee Nicholson. My father came from Georgia in an ox wagon. He got stuck in a river on his way here.

"My mother cooked for the hands that built the court house. The war was so bad we had to move to town in 1862.

"The Pin Indians would steal so much, we hid everything in hollow logs.

"I served as jailer under Sam Downing when he was sheriff and one year under Cale Starr. I helped Zeke Farris hang one man and take him down. I saw three hanging gallows built in my time. I saw the one on which an Indian was hung. He rode on his coffin in a wagon to the gallows.

"We searched the jail three times a week. Blue Foreman brought two prisoners out to exercise. One of them slipped the shackles and started to run away. Foreman shot him in the leg. He had filed the chain in two.

"I worked a long time at the Cherokee Advocate. I ran the press. It took me a day and a half to run the paper off. Frank Pack worked before I did. I also carried the mail out east and I would meet the mail carrier from Cincinnati, Ark. The carrier before me robbed the mail. I carried it horseback and later in a buggy.

"I was deputized with 15 other men to hunt Cherokee Bill. I saw where he and his gang had been practicing shooting. The tree was shot to pieces.

"One time there were 18 of us on a long porch at Ft. Gibson looking for Cherokee Bill. The sheriff gave us orders to stop any one passing. Dennis Hendrix and I saw some one coming horseback. We started to stop him and the sheriff said, "Let him go" and we found out later that it was Cherokee Bill.

"Return Foreman came to town one day and killed five men. My mother helped some other women bury them. He always killed one or two men when he came to town. He finally was killed on Main Street. Alex Colson killed him. I was standing just across the street when he was killed.