

KEYS, GEORGE

INTERVIEW

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Interviewer, Elizabeth Koss,  
October 28, 1937.

Interview with George Keys,  
Welling, Oklahoma.

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A fine and unfailing spring is that which is known as the Keys Spring, situated a short distance from the railway station of Welling in Cherokee County. In the vicinity lived several members of the Keys family, the original members having arrived in the present Cherokee County in early years at the time the Western Cherokees removed from down in Arkansas Territory to the Western or Indian Territory. The spring was named for one of the sons of an old settler Cherokee as the Western land was sometimes called.

The spring, which sends forth a powerful volume of water, has flown in undiminished quantity during the usual heated periods of the year and even in times of protracted drouth has not failed to appreciable extent, according to the testimony of the many persons who have lived in the locality and made use of the water. The spring is enclosed between

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natural walls of gray limestone which are of oblong shape likened by many persons as being coffin shaped." Nearby is one of the old and winding roads which lead from eastern sections of the hills which extend for miles east, northeast and southeast from the locality in which is the spring. The road has been greatly improved in recent years and numbers of travelers halt when the spring is reached and procure water.

The surplus waters of the spring flow in a small stream and enter the Barre Fork River a short distance away. During the years of the past several homes have stood on the high ground above the spring, but all the older buildings have long since disappeared and those who once occupied them are dead or have removed to distant sections with few exceptions. The old home of Judge Riley Keys was destroyed by fire some years ago, long after the death of himself and wife and a new house was built on the site by descendants of Judge Keys.

In the years when travel was in wagons and on horseback it was necessary that nights must be spent in the out-of-doors, under the light of the stars, and in winter in vicinity of camp fires. There was plenty of fuel for cooking purposes

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or for securing bodily heat near the spring, and many people on their way to western or eastern points have encamped near the spring.

During a notable overflow of the Barren Fork a number of years ago, the Keys Spring was buried beneath several feet of muddy water for several hours. The swollen stream sent its waters over extensive sections adjacent to the spring and only the roof of the spring house was visible when the stream was at its highest. So far as anyone knows, the Barren Fork reached its highest stage. A "high water mark" was affixed to the spring house and never again has the mark been reached, though the "creek" as the Barren Fork is often called, has attained high stage on several occasions in somewhat recent years.