

INDEX CARDS

Schools--Choctaw Nation
Turnbull, John P.
Law enforcement--Federal
Texas Trail
Mercantile establishments--Choctaw Nation
Toll bridges--Choctaw Nation
Cherokee Town
Political parties--Choctaw
Political Parties--Chickasaw
Burial Customs--Choctaw
Food--Choctaw
Pushmataha
Government--Chickasaw

KREBS, ROBERT C. INTERVIEW.

Interview with
Robert C. Krebs

by H. L. Ramage, Field Worker

5-1-37
422

Mr. Robert C. Krebs, Muskogee, Oklahoma, born at Skelleyville, Oklahoma, March 1, 1868. One-quarter Choctaw and one-quarter Chickasaw.

FATHER:

Samual F. Krebs, born in Mississippi (don't remember date) died at Skelleyville, Oklahoma in 1891.

MOTHER:

Maiden name was Elizabeth Guy, (don't remember when or where born) died at Berwyn, Oklahoma, May 8, 1908.

SCHOOL:

I was about 10 years of age when I first attended school. Had to go about three miles to school, walked part of the time, but most of the time I rode a horse. There were no such things as grades; we went to school until we began reading in the history. When we got that far along, Mr. John P. Turnbull, superintendent of the Choctaw Tribe, would visit the school and if a pupil was advancing fast enough, Mr. Turnbull would then send him to college. When I was eighteen years old, Mr. Turnbull sent me to Roanoak College at Salem, West Virginia. My father took me there. We went by rail by way of Louisville, Kentucky to visit some relatives. I stayed at Roanoak almost two terms but I got homesick and started for home. I came back by way of Memphis, Tennessee. At that time there was no bridge at Memphis and the train had to ferry the Mississippi river. When we arrived at the ferry, the river was so high that we had to stay there all night as it was impossible to ferry the river. We got across the next day, but for several miles men went ahead

of the train sticking sticks down into the water to determine the condition of the track and to make sure if it was safe ⁴²³ for the train to pass over. From my actual experience in attending school, where whites and Indians went to school together, I do not agree with the Indian Commissioner as to having separate schools for the Indians, his claim is, the Indians and whites cannot get along together in school. I went to schools with both, Indians and whites, we got along fine, the Choctaw learned to speak English, and the whites learned to speak the Choctaw language. We were great friends, it is an expense to the Government and that is all bunk.

After arriving at home, I worked on the ranch for my father who at that time was an Indian police. In 1881, when I was twenty-one years of age, I got tired of working on the ranch and decided to be a United States Marshal. As father was engaged in this sort of work under the administration of Robert Owens, I was well acquainted with Judge Parker at Fort Smith and Mr. Clayton, prosecuting attorney. I went to see Judge Parker and

424
told him that I wanted to be a United States Marshal. He asked me if I thought I could make a good one and I answered that I thought I could. He then asked if my father and mother would consent to me being a marshal, I told him that I could handle my mother alright but didn't know whether I could handle my father. The judge told me to talk it over with my mother and he would talk to my father. I went home and had a talk with mother. She refused but after pleading for a while she at last consented. Judge Parker took it up with my father. Father thought it over for a while, telling the judge that I attended all the dances anyway and that if I was made marshal I could probably keep peace while at the dances. I was sworn in as United States Marshal. Shortly after I was appointed, Deputy Marshal Erwin was killed. Erwin had arrested Felix Griffin for horse stealing and as he was taking Griffin to Fort Smith, Jack Spannard, a pal of Griffin's, shot and killed Erwin from ambush. Spannard made his get away. A bench warrant was issued for Spannard's dog. The dog was the main witness in the case. Then Harris and I was given the warrant and ordered to go after the dog, we spent some time looking for the dog. We at last located him in Mrs. Griffin's yard, about ten miles northeast of Webbers Falls. I was acquainted with

Mrs. Griffin but she did not know I was a marshal. It was about noon and I asked Mrs. Griffin if dinner⁴²⁵ was ready, she answered that it would not be long and for us to come in. When dinner was ready Wes just ate a few bites, excused himself, went out and got a chain from the saddle bag and caught the dog. I gave him what I thought was enough time, then I left the table. Mrs. Griffin came to the door with me. Seeing that Wes had the dog, she asked "what the hell are you doing with my dog?" I told her we were U. S. Marshals and had a warrant for the dog. She ran back into the house, got a Winchester rifle, but we were out of sight when she returned. Spannard was later caught and convicted for the crime.

TEXAS ROAD:

When I was a boy in about 1871, the towns were a great distance apart. There were only two roads through this section of the country. The old Texas Road went from San Antonio, Texas to Kansas and on, beginning where Spiro is now located. Going south was the old Texas Road and was known as the left branch. First passing by the Krebs ranch which was located on the Skelleyville prairie about five miles west of Skelleyville.

Then the Brazel store was next, owned by Bob Welch, Mr. 426 Welch married a halfbreed, who was the daughter, of Turner Daniels, Mr. Welch was a good man, and had many friends, he only had one arm. The following creeks were from five to eight miles apart, starting at the Krebs Ranch, going south the creeks were as follows: Coosum Creek, on Judge Tram's place; next was Peach Orchard Creek, next Dog Creek, next was Brizel Creek, but the road did not cross Brizel Creek, next was Red Oak Creek, Thomas Edward, had a store there, married a Hardaway who was Choctaw, it was about 35 miles to the next store, which was Riddle Station, the store was owned by George Riddle, who was a Choctaw. Next was Stringtown. Then you come to Lime Stone Gap, Uncle Charley Le Flora run a Toll Bridge, Uncle Charley, lived about one and one-half miles south of Lime Stone Gap. He did not charge the Indians to cross, but the whites were charged, a wagon fifty cents, horse back, twenty-five cents, and ten cents a head for stock. Uncle Charley operated the bridge about thirty or thirty-five years. The bridge was over Lime Stone Creek. Next was a little store, located at a coal mine, about ten miles northeast of Savannah; next store was at Colbert, owned by Mr. Culbert, he also owned the Colbert Ferry crossing Red River. There were no towns between Ft. Smith and McAlester which was a distance of 90 miles. Beginning where the road branched off of the Old Texas Road, about where Spiro, is now located, leading west; the only store between Ft. Smith and McAlester was located on Sam Boy Creek, owned by Charlie Newberry, a Choctaw; next store was at McAlester; Next was at Stonewall, owned by Governor, W. L. Bird, a Choctaw; next was at Mill Creek, this

this store was owned by Jennie Davison; going northwest from Mill Creek, it was 65 miles, to Cherokee Town; the next place ⁴²⁷ Erwin Springs, Al Murray, owned a big cattle ranch and run the store at Erwin Springs, he was a white man, married a McCoy who was a Chickasaw. The next stop was Ft. Sill.

CHOCTAW & CHICKASAW POLITICS

Choctaw: There were no parties, as there are now. For example: if Jones and Smith were running for Chief, the voters made their own ballots, by writing the name of person they were voting for.

Chickasaw: They had a progressive party, they did their voting by voice, and a number of times there were plenty of crooked work, during their election.

CHOCTAW "CRIES"

When one of the Tribe died, a date was set for the "cries" and at the appointed time, Indians for miles around would attend. White people who were neighbors and friends, also attended, some of the Indians would go real early, and do the cooking which consisted of Pashashofa (corn & pork cooked together) Bonahana (different kinds of meat cooked together) and kettle pies which were cooked similar to the cooler pie, we now cook. They would all gather around the grave and cry. If it should be a man that died, his wife would belong to the tribe from the time of his death until the "cries" were over, then she would be set free or could remain with the tribe, whichever she may choose. At a man's death, his personal belongings, such as, his hat, boots, pants, and sixshooter, were buried with him, salt and pepper was also placed in the coffin. The salt and pepper was put there, so, when he arrived

at the Happy Hunting Ground, he would have it to use, when he killed something to eat. If he owned a saddle horse, it would be turned loose, never to be rode again.

CHOCTAW CHIEFS

The Choctaws had great respect for their chiefs. For instance, there was the great Chief Pushamataha, he was the Great Chief, that had no mother or father. Just after a big rain on the Mississippi River, the sun came out real bright, and a band of Choctaws went hunting, after crossing the river, they came to a clearing, this is where they found their Great Chief, it was their belief that he was handed down by the Great God, no one ever knew anything about his people.

Over a hundred years ago, when the Choctaws were emigrated from Mississippi over the Trail of Blood, when they settled in this country, Pushamataha was made Ruler of the Choctaw Nation, he was sent to Washington, as a delegate from his tribe. This was during the administration of Andrew Jackson. He and Jackson had fought together a lot times for both the Choctaw and white people, while in Washington Chief Pushamataha, taken sick and died, before he died, he asked Andrew Jackson, if he would have lots of big guns fired over his body, Jackson granted him this wish. The Choctaw checota never rebelled against the Government. The only time they ever disagreed with the Government was over the freedom of the slaves.

MARRIAGE & POLITICS

In 1892 I married Leila Smith, a white woman that was raised by the Checota Tribe, in 1896 I was elected county clerk in Tishomingo County, served until 1889. In 1889 I was elected

as Representative of Tishomingo, county, served two terms, was then elected Senator. Served as Senator until, our ⁴²³ Tribal form of Government ended in 1912. I also practiced law in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations, trying the rights of citizenships. The Dawes Commission made a ruling that no one would be issued a license to practice law, that had not been before the United States court; that ended my law career.

Just before the World War my wife and I separated, I went to West Virginia and went to work in a powder house, was check clerk. After the war was over I went to Cincinnati stayed there eighteen months, then come to Muskogee, short time later, married Letty, who is my present wife.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Herbert Moore, who is now bailiff, in Federal Court for Judge Robert L. Williams, was borned and raised at Skullyville, he and I grew up together and were great friends. Mr. Moore's father was Lymon Moore and married Fannie McClain, whose father was native of Alabama. Herbert married old Governor Green McCurtain's daughter. He was proclaimed Chief of Choctaw Nation (Green McCurtain). The Moore's, McClain's, and McCurtain's were all great people and well known for their straight dealing and honesty.