

INDEX CARDS:

Choctaw Nation
Stage Line
Tanning Hides

Interview with William L. LaRue (Frenchman)
West Madison St., McAlester, Oklahoma.
By field worker, Dovey P. Heady
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352

Mr. LaRue was born in 1853 in Harden County, Kentucky, and came to Oklahoma by railway in 1909, settling at McAlester, Oklahoma, where he has lived since.

He did not live in this State prior to 1900, but has learned a lot of the territorial days from talking to pioneers of Oklahoma.

He states as follows:

When I came to Oklahoma it had been a state only two years and was pretty well settled. However, much land was still not in cultivation. Game was plentiful, such as wild turkey, deer, squirrels, coon, opossum, minks, prairie chickens, and many others. A bear was killed near Krebs, Oklahoma.

There was still unallotted land in Oklahoma. Railroads were completed east and west, north and south, through Oklahoma.

Good roads were taking the place of old trails and wagon roads.

I had a long talk with Mr. W. B. McAlester (Choctaw Indian) about five months ago. These are a few of the facts he told me about Indian Territory.

Burial grounds

Mr. McAlester stated that there is an old Indian burial ground at Chambers Station, about three miles south and a mile and quarter west of McAlester. A pioneer (Bill Cambron) lives close to this cemetery and could probably give very valuable information of this cemetery and Indian territory days.

Another old Indian burial ground is located in Little Onion school district about six miles southwest of Blocker (name of burial ground and exact location not known to Mr. LaRue).

Another Indian burial ground is located near North Canadian River about three miles west and north of Indianola. These graves have no markings other than pieces of old pottery, arrow heads, and such that were placed on the graves by the Indians. Mr. McAlester stated that often bones were found on this ground after heavy rains.

Another Indian cemetery is located about two and a half miles west of Ulm. These graves have a few sandstone markers.

Stage line

Mr. McAlester stated that there was, in Indian territory days, a stage line from McAlester to Stringtown. He

could not give any information about this line but referred to Judge Bill Hailey and Bill Cambron as pioneers who could give information concerning the stage line.

Tanning hides

Mr. McAlester told as near as he could how the Indians tanned hides. They stripped off the outer layer of wood from White Oak trees, placed this in a home made vat with a layer of wood and a layer of hides, continuing this process until the vat was filled with in a few inches of the top, then filled the vat with water and let this stand for many months, at least five months or until the hair would slip off the hides. They then took the hides out and stretched them tight over some flat surface and scraped them clean with a sharp edged flint rock or a piece of pottery, anything with a sharp edge. After the hides were dried they were rubbed and worked until soft; then returned to the vats for another soaking. This was done many times before they were tanned good. It took about a year to tan a hide for good leather.

The tanning vats were made by cutting down a large hollow tree, cutting off about six or eight foot of the largest part of the body, closing both ends and then placing

4

the vats on legs by crossing two poles at each end.

There was an old tanning vat close to the North Canadian River, about three miles northeast of Canadian. He did not know the tanner's name, or the exact location of the vat.