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INTERVIEW.

7111.

Effie S. Jackson, Interviewer.  
July 5, 1937.

Ghost Towns, Sennett and Dixie.

Interviews:

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According to R. S. Lewis and W. J. Nicholson, both of whom knew Bill Sennett in the '90's, he was an enterprising, rough, western character, a white man and very resourceful. Bill Sennett came to Indian Territory ready for business - two wagons, mule teams, plenty of supplies, even some race horses. He started the first horse racing in Tulsa, made it profitable, built his home on North Peoria about where it crosses Pine today, and established a regular race track. Dr. Bland and other followers of the sport aided him. His sons, John, Jim, and Lew, were handy jockeys in those days. As time went on Sennett saw possibilities with the opening of the "Strip".

Taking up a claim in the fork of the Cimarron and Arkansas he founded a "wet spot" where he could supply intoxicants to a neighboring dry territory. This location became the little town of Sennett. He established a general store, blacksmith shop and, most important to him, a saloon, known as the Coyote Saloon. Later, a post office

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was established, a few box houses were put up and a school and church built. As Mr. Lewis recalls, there was a population of only 150 to 200. It was not only a trading place for surrounding farmers but according to Mr. Nicholson (who was working for Bill Blair in that vicinity in the '90's, feeding 6000 cattle south of the Cimarron) a good place to buy supplies, especially corn for the cattle. The Coyote Saloon was the natural meeting place, and always Bill Sennett's invitation was "Step up, boys, and have one on the house." Mr. Lewis says it was also a place for political gatherings in that part of the country. Wagons in front of the saloon served as platforms.

As in their youth his sons were of first aid to him, so now older in years they served him in another capacity. They were "freighters", with their wagons drawn by six horse teams. These freighters followed what was known as the "Old Cherokee Trail" to the outlet. Starting at Tulsa the wagon road followed along the north side of the Arkansas River through what is now Sand Springs (Adams' settlement of Creek Indians at that time) west around "the Narrows," (a place so narrow between the bluff and the river that Lew Sennett could hardly make it with his six-horse team) then on to Wakiwa, to the Eli Ball place, north of the next stopping place (where you turn north to go to Platt)

was the ranch house of William Gooden. Gooden was a mixed blood, member of the Creek House of Warriors. Mr. Lewis thinks his wife, Sortie Gooden, is still living on the same allotment. Next the trail passed through Appalachia; north to Pulare and then northwest to an Indian trail crossing the Arkansas at what is now Prue. Sennett was just south of this ford, 12 miles southwest of the present town of Cleveland. The Katy followed this trail, blasting away part of the bluff at "The Narrows" to make railway passage possible.

With his accustomed foresight, Sennett sold out to Tom Jordan, knowing that statehood would end his activities. So Sennett as a little "boom town" gradually disappeared. Only the old church remains today according to Stella Chastain McElwaine, who grew up in that vicinity.

Sennett's sons were well and favorably known. Later one of them, John, became a deputy marshal and in some way was killed at one of the Shawnee stomp dances held near Sperry.

W. G. Nicholson recalls a story typical of Sennett's type. It seems that an old fellow named Gabe Walden had a large ranch upon Salt Creek. He had been employed by an Englishman and it seems the Englishman mysteriously

disappeared. Rumor spread that Walden had made away with him. Walden heard the report; to his satisfaction traced it to Bill Sennett, and loudly proclaimed that he was going to "get" Bill Sennett. In fact, according to the story, he went into the Coyote, threw the gun in front of Sennett and told him he had come to kill him. Sennett took the gun away from him and gave him such a beating that, according to Nicholson, Walden did not appear again in that vicinity.

Stella Chastain McElwaine recalls that her father took up his claim  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles south of Sennett, and remembers that in her girlhood days it was a little "boom" town. She always thinks of "Uncle Bill" as a kindly soul. She said they always traded at uncle Bill's store and of course passed Uncle Bill's saloon. She recalls that her mother did not let her go to school there but sent the children to Dixie. This is only a school house today, but in the '90's it was a small village.

Mrs. McElwaine described the former location of this little place of Dixie as five miles south of Cleveland, on Highway 64, to Bear Creek. A country road leads northwest from this point. A mile up this road is what is left of Dixie, a school house, once a post office, general store,

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church and a few houses. The families who lived in that vicinity still bury their dead in the old Sennett cemetery. This is the cemetery adjoining Sherman Aekley's place on the east, 3 miles north of Keystone on Highway 64.