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INTERVIEW WITH MR. E. B. HARRIS

By

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Historical Indian Research Work.

Mr. Harris has answered questions asked and volunteered the following information:

I am 64 years old and came to the Indian Territory with a surveying party to the Creek Nation in 1902 having hired out for this work in the state of Kansas. I remained with this party only a short time and purchased the store at Sawokla, Indian Territory. I was made postmaster and the location of the postoffice was in my store.

My parents never participated in the affairs of the Indian Territory.

LIFE AND CUSTOMS

The houses and school houses were of log construction and quite a few of rough lumber.

There was some corn raised and a few of the Creek Indians had small gardens.

Sawokla was on the prairie country and the people for miles each was interested in stock raising. (Cattle, horses and some hogs).

Wild game such as prairie chickens, rabbits, coyotes,

~~and prairie wolves were plentiful.~~ Along the streams or that portion which was timbered were many opossum, racoon, squirrels, wild turkeys, and some deer.

Such wild fruits and berries; as blackberries, dew-berries, strawberries, grapes and plums were in abundance.

Along the streams were hickory nut, walnut and few pecan trees.

All clothing at this time could be purchased at the trading posts. Cloth of all kinds was purchased from the bolts of cloth and the cloth made into garments at home. All shoes and boots were handled in the stores.

I handled saddles, saddle blankets, bridles, cow boy boots and hats, spurs, etc., along with my general merchandise.

English language was taught in the schools.

BURIAL GROUNDS

Nearly every ranchman had his own individual burial ground for his family along with any cow hands that might die while employed by him. I cannot recall the location of but one at this time. The Gentry Cemetery which is located about one and one fourth miles east of the present town of Haskell, Oklahoma.

Scott Gentry and his wife Abbie were buried there in

1902 & 1903 (The interviewer located this cemetery and there is one tomb stone on which is inscribed as follows:

Abbie B.
Wife of
Scott Gentry
born
July 26, 1847
Died
June 20, 1902.

FERRIES

I recall the Gentry Ferry across the Arkansas, one mile east of the present town of Haskell, Oklahoma. It was owned by Scott Gentry, Steve and Prince Lowery cared for and operated this ferry for Scott Gentry.

The Nevins ferry was located across the Arkansas River, the east landing being at the mouth of Grand river and the west landing near the present Muskogee, Pump Station.

The Googy Sockey ferry was at the mouth of Cedar Creek across the Arkansas river, which was almost due south of the present town of Coweta, Oklahoma.

RANCHES

I knew of lots of ranches for the cowboys used to gang up around the store and swap yarns with each other. I can't tell you the location, the Superintendents or Foremen of these ranches, but remember them only by names.

There were the F. S. ranch, Three Bar ranch, Bluford Miller ranch, Lazy S ranch and many now I can't recall. (He referred me to Jim Spencer an old cowman who could give me all the details. See Spencer's interview).

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Our social affairs were limited to dances, camp meeting, horse racing, rabbit races with grey hounds, etc. Of course we had Church. Church was held in the school houses.

SCHOOL & MISSIONS

The old Tallahassee Mission at now Tallahassee, Okla. Alice Robertson was in charge. It was in the early 1900's the Creek Nation took on a school building program or Missions as you may call them. They built the Pecan Mission on Pecan Creek west of the now Muskogee Indian Territory. The Creek Orphanage at Okmulgee, Indian Territory. There was an old mission there years before but it had burned down and this program called for its being reconstructed.

Creek School at Coweta, Indian Territory, together with Creek school at Sapulpa, Indian Territory, and others were built throughout the Creek Nation.

We had subscription schools for the whites. The school houses were built by subscription and were maintained by each scholar paying one dollar per month.

TRADING POSTS

Sawokla was located one mile south and one and one fourth miles west of the present town of Haskell, Oklahoma. It consisted of one store in which was the postoffice and I owned some as I told you. I would get my merchandise usually from Muskogee Indian Territory, as that was the nearest railroad station.

The merchandise would come by rail to Muskogee, Indian Territory and freight wagons would haul it to my store. The mail would come by stage to the stage stand on Cow Creek and then by horse back to my place. The stage stand was about three miles north of the present town of Boynton, Oklahoma.

RAILROADS

The Midland Valley railroad built through about two miles north and one mile east of Sawokla, Indian Territory, in 1904 and the town of Haskell, Indian Territory, sprang up. Soon the postoffice was moved to the railroad and at this instance I reigned as postmaster and moved my stock to Haskell, Indian Territory, and I have remained here in the mercantile business until this day. The first passenger train ran through Haskell August 31, 1904.

COMMENTS

Mr. Harris could not reveal very much information due to his short time in the Territory.