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INTERVIEW WITH Mr. Sam Todd

By
L. W. Wilson, Field Worker.

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

I was born in Anderson County Tennessee, came to the Indian Territory forty five years ago by train and first settled at Muskogee, Indian Territory and in late years moved to my present address at Porter, Oklahoma.

FATHER- Wesley Todd, was born and died in Tennessee.

MOTHER- Mary Spaulding - Todd was born in Tennessee and died in McAlester at the age of 90 years.

LIFE AND CUSTOMS

The houses and School houses were principally of log construction with large native stone fire-places. The floors were what we called puncheon floors. The seats in the school's were split logs with holes bored in each end and then small limbs were cut to fit the holes to make the legs for the seats or benches.

Some of these houses and school's were built also of rough native lumber, with the ordinary stone fire-places.

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The principal farm product consisted of cotton, and corn, however the raising of cattle and hogs was the principal money producing industry at this time.

Throughout the area wild game was in abundance according to the locality whether it be in the timbered section or on the prairie's. We had squirrel, rabbits, deer, turkey, quail, wild pigeons, prairie chickens, coyotes, fox, mink, muskrats, O-possum, raccoon, and a few black bear.

We had plenty of wild berries and fruits, namely blackberries, dewberries, huckleberries, strawberries, plums, and grapes. We also had no trouble in securing wild honey. In riding along if we found a tree in which there was a bee gum and we desired to go back at a later date to secure the honey we would usually mark the tree with the brand symbol that we used on our cattle, and that designated that, that particular tree belonged to some one, and no one else if they came along would cut the tree, and rob the bees of the honey.

I mentioned that we raised considerable amount of hogs, and this was accomplished by turning two or three gilts, and boar loose in the woods in your mark, and of

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course these would multiply, and you would always have plenty of meat. These hogs ran loose and lived principally on the mass. (acorns, nuts, roots, grass, and herbs)

BURIAL GROUNDS

I do not recall in my travels over the territory any old burial ground. On each ranch or home place every one had their own individual cemetery.

I do recall that at about the present location of the Baptist Hospital at sixth and Fondulac Street, in Muskogee, Oklahoma, was a cemetery and the graves were dug up and the bodies moved to the present Green Hill cemetery in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

FORD AND FERRIES

The Rabbit ford was across the Arkansas river at about the present location of the Frisco bridge east of the city of Muskogee, Oklahoma. We had fords at nearly all the streams where we would ford our cattle but if they had any name of any significance I do not recall it.

The Nevins ferry was located on the Arkansas river, the east landing being on the east side of the Arkansas near the mouth of Grand River, and the west

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landing was near the present Muskogee pump station just north of Hyde Park. This ferry was controlled, owned and operated by Mose Nevins, and his wife Julia Nevins. This ferry was used for all stages operating between Muskogee, Fort Gibson, and Tahlequah, Indian Territory.

The Rogers ferry was located about two miles down stream from the Nevins ferry or at about the present location of the Muskogee Electric Traction Company bridge east of the village of River Side. This ferry was controlled, owned, and operated by the Roger's brothers, Connell, Andrew, Hugh, and Alex Rogers.

The McMakin ferry was located a short ways down stream from the Roger's ferry, and was operated by John McMakin and his brother.

The Choski ferry was across the Arkansas river about a mile and a quarter east of the present town of Haskell, Oklahoma, at about the present location of the highway bridge on the Haskell to Porter highway. This was a pole ferry but I cannot recall at this time who owned it but our ferryman who ran it was about a half breed Creek Indian.

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The Lynch ferry was across the Arkansas river at about the present highway bridge at Webbers Falls, Indian Territory. This ferry was controlled, owned, and operated by Joe Lynch and Dr. Campbell.

TRADING POSTS

There was a trading post about one mile south and a mile west of the present town of Haskell, Oklahoma. The name of this trading post was SawOkla.

This trading post consisted of just the one store, a frame building twenty-five feet wide, and fifty feet long. This was a United States Postoffice and of course handled all kinds of merchandise. Mr. E. B. Harris was the Postmaster and merchant. This trading post no longer exists because when the Midland Valley Railroad built through that section of the country, the town of Haskell, Oklahoma, sprang up and the Postoffice within a short time was moved to Haskell. Mr. E. B. Harris, the old Postmaster at Sawokla is still in the mercantile business and is located at Haskell, Oklahoma.

The Concharty trading post was located about four miles west and one and a half miles north of the present town of Haskell, Oklahoma. This trading post consisted of one building of log construction with a large fire-

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place and also was a United States Postoffice. The Postmaster was an old colored man, he may have been part Creek Indian as the Creek's were hard to distinguish due to their marrying into colored families.

The Lee trading post was located on Cane Creek about three miles, possibly four, south and east of the present town of Boynton, Oklahoma. There was no Postoffice at this post however there was an old log cabin in which the Creek Indians held their Courts.

ROADS AND TRAILS

The old Muskogee Indian Territory to Okmulgee Indian Territory road. Come out of Muskogee at the present west Okmulgee Street in the town of Muskogee, Oklahoma and go due west to the old Pecan Creek Mission, on Pecan Creek, thence in a southwest direction across Cloud Creek, thence west to the trading post at Lee, and continuing in a westerly direction to Okmulgee. There was at Lee a stage stand run by a Dr. Barnett who would serve meals and care for the horses of the stage drivers. This was known as the half way stage stand. The mail was carried by horse back from this stage stand on in to Okmulgee. The old Muskogee to Fort Gibson road. Go east out of Muskogee at about the present Gibson Street in

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Muskogee, Oklahoma, due east until you intersected the old Texas road on the ridge which is about three quarters of a mile east of the present Oklahoma School for the blind and thence in a northeast direction to the Nevins ferry continuing northeast near the east bank of the Grand River until you came to a point about one-quarter of a mile west of the present Frisco depot in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma and thence east into Fort Gibson.

I never traveled this road farther, however I knew that it continued on to the Cherokee Capitol at Tahlequah.

The old Checotah, Indian Territory, to Okmulgee, Indian Territory, road. Go out of the present town of Checotah, Oklahoma, in a northwest direction fording all creeks including Elk Creek until you came to the trading post at Lee and thence west to Okmulgee.

RANCHES

The Spaulding ranch was located on Cloud Creek and they handled about ten thousand head of cattle yearly. This was known as the Lazy S. Ranch because they branded their cattle with the Lazy S on the right hip and loin. The foreman of this ranch at one time was Jim Garrett, and also my brother J. A. Todd, commonly known as Al

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Todd was foreman. Some of our cow-punchers and horse wranglers were Bud Hall, Pleas Townsend, Green McCloskey and our celebrated and well known bronco buster the man who could sit in the saddle all day long, and never grow tired was (Jim Miller" and myself Sam Todd I worked on this ranch seven years at one stretch.

The C. W. Turner ranch was located on the head of Pecan Creek and handled about five thousand head yearly. This ranch joined the Lazy S ranch about five miles on the east. This was known as the Three Bar ranch because they branded their cattle with three bars on the thigh. The foreman of this ranch was Tom Johnson and I remember one of the cow punchers being Joe Pickford.

The Severs ranch was located about thirty miles west of Muskogee at the foot of Concharty Mountain. This was known as the S. F. Ranch because they branded their cattle with the letters S. F. on the right hip. S. F. was also the initial of Mr. Severs, they handled about fifteen thousand head of cattle yearly on this ranch. The foreman of the ranch was Edd Hart. At this time it was possible to ride a horse from the Lazy S. Ranch to the S. F. Ranch, a distance of fifteen or twenty miles and never cross a fence. The grass on these two ranches were up to a horses

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side in height, and there were times that the green head flies were so bad that a horse would be covered with blood from the fly bites, and this was particularly more noticeable on a white horse. The cattle on the Lazy S. and the S. F. in the day time would take refuge in the timber along the creeks to stay away as much as possible, from these green heads, and they were mighty hard to handle during the day on this account, but as the sun crept down behind the Mountain the cattle would emerge back into the open and would do their greater part of their grazing at night.

The Bluford Miller ranch was west of the Conchartry Mountain and handled ten thousand head of cattle yearly. I cannot remember the name of the foreman or the brand that they used.

The Half Moon ranch was located nine miles southeast of Okmulgee, Indian Territory. This was a small ranch and only handled two or three thousand cattle yearly. I do not remember the owner of this ranch but it was called the Half Moon because that was the brand of their cattle. The foreman of this ranch was Frank Selfridge.

The Nip Blackstone ranch was located southeast of the present town of Keefton, Oklahoma; on Georgie Fork Creek

and handled about five thousand head of cattle yearly. This was known as the N. B. Ranch, due to the cattle being branded with an N. B.

The George Zufall Ranch was located southeast of Muskogee on Rattlesnake Mountain, and handled only two or three thousand head of cattle yearly, this was known as the Bar Z Ranch because their cattle was branded with the letter Z and a bar.

The Lewis Jobe Ranch was located near the present town of Summit, Oklahoma, at Chimney Mountain, and was known as the Ox Ranch, due to their branding their cattle with O.X. This was a small ranch and handled only a few thousand head yearly. I remember one time that I went over to see Mr. Jobe at Chimney Mountain and bought a few hundred head of cattle. Mr. Jobe now lives about two miles north of Muskogee, Oklahoma.

The Edd Halsell Ranch was located on Cedar Creek and handled about five thousand head of cattle yearly. I cannot recall the owner of this ranch but they branded their cattle with a spike S. On each of these ranches was constructed a bunk house, cook shack, stables, several sheds with a corral. The buildings were usually built out of logs, and rough lumber, and corral usually

fenced with split rail. Some of the larger ranches had cottages in which the superintendent and foreman and their families lived. The organization consisted of : superintendent, in the event the owner did not live there, foreman, cook, horse wrangler, and range riders, which we usually referred to as cow boys or cattle punchers.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS.

Our social affairs consisted of dances, barbecue, stomp dances, ball game, camp meetings, horse racing, foot racing, and church.

Over on the far side of the S. F. Ranch, the Creek Indians each year would have a stomp dance, and barbecue. They usually barbecued cattle, and the meat after it was barbecued was anything but wholesome or sanitary, because they used no discretion in the preparation of their meat and didn't care much whether it was cooked or not, and I have seen them gnawing on a piece of meat with the blood trickling down their arm. A stomp dance usually lasted three days and during one of these days, there was a day designated as medicine day, and the men and not the women would drink the medicine until they would

vomit. I do not know whether or not this was part of their religious ceremony or not. On this particular medicine day they would make a long line out of ashes and should any of them cross this line of ashes they were subjected to a fine.

The Creek Indian ball game was often played and they usually would paint themselves and wear only a breech cloth. The color of the paint was the ordinary red and yellow.

The white people usually had their camp meetings separate and distinct from the Creek Indian's camp meetings, and then of course at times they would have joint meetings and everyone would participate. These camp meetings usually lasted for two or three weeks, and were held under brush arbors.

MARRIAGES

I do not know all of the necessary preparations required by the Creek's in order for white people or colored people to inter-marry with them. I knew lots of them who say they were married, and lived together without any ceremony. Common law wives and husbands were more frequent I believe among the Creek Indians than any of the other tribes, due to their mixing with the Negro race.

SCHOOLS

I never went to school in the Indian Territory, but I do remember one time of taking up a subscription to build a school on Tom Mary's place near Fern Mountain. The school was finally constructed and it was given the name of Gam Spring School. Children attending this school were required to pay one dollar a month. This school no longer exists.

The Pecan Mission was located west of Muskogee, Indian Territory, on Pecan Creek and was built principally for the negroes by the Creek school funds. Buzz Hawkins was the superintendent of this school and also held church and Sunday school. I remember one time, on a Sunday morning, on my return to the Lee trading post on horse back, as I had driven cattle the day before to Muskogee, that I noticed before reaching the Pecan Mission a number of coyotes in the herd of cattle near the mission, and I knew that Buzz owned a number of wolf hounds (greyhounds) and I stopped at the Mission and told him of the incident even though he was having Sunday school, and he immediately dismissed the Sunday school, called his hounds, and the coyote hunt started. We caught two of them that morning.

The Tallahassee Mission was located in the present town of Tallahassee and Miss Alice Robinson was in charge of this mission. Miss Robinson was well known to all the people in Eastern Oklahoma at her death for she had a few years previously been elected as lady Congress woman to the United States Congress.

The Creek Orphan Asylum was located just outside of the present city limits of Okmulgee Oklahoma, and a little northeast of the city. I cannot state the year in which it was rebuilt because the original asylum was partly burned at one time and was rebuilt by Mr. Henry Vogel, who now lives some place in Muskogee, Oklahoma. (See the report that I, L. W. Wilson, made regarding the interview with Mr. Vogel).

CREEK LAWS AND CREEK CHIEFS

Some of the Creek Chiefs were: Moty Tiger, Perryman, Ischarapche Childers, and Pleas Porter. I became very well acquainted with Chief Porter, and participated many times with him in a deer hunt.

The Creeks had an organization to suppress lawlessness known as the Light Horse Organization and Ronnie Murphy was the principal character in this organization. They had a whipping post located near the trading post of Lee. Court was held in a log cabin by an old Negro judge whom we cow hands called Sugar George. The light horse would usually catch all people stealing and try them before Sugar George, and when sentences were pronounced the judge would advise how many licks they were to get. After they had been whipped they would release them to go their way, but should this severe punishment not break them from stealing, the next time that they were brought before old Sugar George, the judge, he would sentence them to be shot. If I recall right, John West, who at one time was United States Marshal, usually did the whipping at this post. I understand that John West has a relative named Dick West, who is on the Muskogee police force in the city of Muskogee, Oklahoma, at this time.

I remember one day I rode in to Lee, and noticed a crowd over around the log cabin. I tied

my horse and went over. They were trying some minor offenses; as I stepped in the door I never thought of taking off my hat, and old man George requested I be arrested and they did arrest me. An officer then asked them to confer with me and they did because I went in to see what was going on.

The Indians over the Territory began to organize and the laws were concerned that they should become a state. In 1895 the tribes called for a constitutional convention and went about electing delegates to the convention to be held in Muskogee in the Territory on August 1st of that year. If I recall correctly, nearly all the delegates met, which were about a hundred and fifty. Four

of the tribes I can't remember the time which

tribe didn't participate. They were not elected.

John Porter was elected as their president and

Alex Casey, another Creek, for secretary of the

convention. They went into session and wanted to

change the name of the territory to the name of a

state to be called Sequoyah. This name was left to the

vote of the convention and it carried. It was finally

submitted to Congress, but it was never acted upon.

ALLOTMENTS, PAYMENTS, ANNUITIES.

The Creek Nation, I suppose as far as land value was concerned, was about the same price per acre because I know that each Creek received a hundred and sixty acres of land.

The Freedman payment was made to the negro, which came under the Freedman act, in 1897 at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory. I do not know what amount any of them drew.

After the allotments were made in the Creek Nation and being a cow man, as I was, it became necessary to go about to get the consent from the owner or the allottee as it was, for the permission to graze our cattle on their ground, and of course we tried to get a large acreage altogether. For this permission we sometimes traded the Indian a pony with no time limit or in some instances if we were compelled to do so, in order to get the acreage we would pay them fifteen cents an acre yearly.

On the Tulsa branch of the P.O.S. railroad
arrange up the tower center, the place
and it secured its name from the Creek Chief
Porter.

The first passenger train that ran over the
Tulsa branch railroad was in August 1904.

MISCELLANEOUS

I have a remembrance of the Green Beach
I wish to make a statement regarding
this one, may be terrible mistaken and would rather
that you interview others regarding same. I do
remember that Captain John had a large telescope
on the top of Fern Mountain which is northwest of
Muskogee, Oklahoma, which he used in locating other
operating mines.

COMMENTS

It appears to the interviewer to
be a hard and hearty one and is none the worse for his
activities in the making of Oklahoma the great state
that it is today. He has always been considered honest,

industrious, home loving and an ideal elderly gentleman.

Having served a greater part of his life in the saddle working as a rancher and a cow boy, his life was devoted principally to the cattle industry.

He has always been influential in his community as a criterion of good schools, good roads, and good government, and in his late years his friends and neighbors so loved and cherished him that they elevated him to the office of county commissioner, in Wagnor County, which place he served for three

consecutive terms; doing for them and giving to them, all that was humanly possible for their benefits to enable them to market their farm products, not only with main artery roads, but with feeder roads throughout the county. In short he blotted out the old cow trails

that was so fond to his memory as well as the old

fords that he crossed and swam his cattle, into roads and bridges, that today, can be traveled by the latest transportation facilities-the automobile.