

THURMAN, SAMUEL

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An Interview with Samuel Thurman
1604 North Birmingham, Tulsa, Okla.
W. T. Holland, Interviewer.
August 18, 1937.

AN OLD TIMER

I was born in the territory, near old Fort Gibson, on September 28, 1872. My father, Henry Gibson Thurman, was employed at the Fort and worked there several years and at his death was buried in the National Cemetery there.

Our home, a log house, was out from the Fort north on what was known as the Military Road. This road ran north from Fort Gibson to Vinita. My father died when I was young, so my mother moved up near Vinita, where I grew up and where I was better known and knew more people.

My early life, beginning about 1887, was spent on ranches and in cutting hay. The greatest fields, or the best grass, was down around Big Cabin Switch on the M. K. & T. Railroad. A Mr. Shearer, a rancher up north of us, came down and hired about all the hands he could get to help him cut and stack his prairie grass. It was the bluestem and ranged from twelve to thirty inches tall and was thick. Mr. Shearer had eight or ten mowing machines running on his hay field which was eight miles north of Big Cabin

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and as many rakes and teams; raking and hauling and stacking this hay. This hay field extended six miles along the M. K. & T. Railway on both sides of the track, and ran back two and a half miles on both sides, so there was a tract of thirty square miles or around twenty thousand acres which we cut. It was a sight too, when all was stacked. Mr. Shearer employed Bill Meyers, a German farmer there, to bale and ship the hay out. Of course the bulk of it was shipped to St. Louis and Chicago. That year Meyers baled two thousand tons of this hay.

Some of the early cattle men of that section were Joe Allen and Jim Hall. Joe Allen who handled quite a large number of cattle had bad luck in the severe winter of 1881. He lost practically all his cattle and went broke. He was a good man in prosperous as well as in adverse times. He was loved and respected by all. After his loss in the cattle business he became a Methodist minister and served the rural people as their preacher. He and Reverend Mr. Bill Pippin were the early Methodist preachers of the Vinita section. Pippin was pastor at Vinita along about 1880 and, too, he would go out and preach to the people about the country. He and Allen would preach in school buildings where

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there were any. If there was no public building, people would open their homes to them and services would be held through the communities in the various homes. During the summer and fall, they would conduct revival meetings under brush arbors erected by the people for that purpose. The ministers visited the sick, performed marriage ceremonies and were great factors in the community.

Back to the ranches. Jim Hall had a big ranch; first it was four miles southeast of Vinita. Along in the eighties he was beginning to be crowded here so he moved down on Rock Creek where there was more range. He not only ran around five thousand cattle, but did a general farming business. He employed from thirty to forty men all the time. He cut lots of hay too, but he fed most of his hay from the stacks to his own cattle. His ranch covered several thousand acres, so it took several hands to handle all the work. Some were roustabouts, some range riders, some farmers.

I have just thought of the Reverend Mr. Williams. He, too, was an early preacher and a good man. He taught in the first Sunday School I ever attended. He, in fact, organized the first Sunday School out our way. He taught in the homes

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where they were close enough together for the neighbors to congregate.

I, of course, knew a lot of the early and prominent Cherokee men of the Vinita and Claremore section. I knew and voted for Judge Charles Rogers for Judge of the Coo-~~nee-Scoo-~~ee District. I also voted for W. C. Rogers when he was elected Chief of the Cherokee. I also knew Joel B. Mayes and S. H. Mayes who were prominent men in the Cherokee Nation. I remember going to and seeing the old Court House of our district, at Kipheart Springs. That was before Claremore was founded. I remember when they moved the court house from Kipheart Springs to Claremore. Another thing I remember and which impressed me when a boy, was the old whipping post on the Court House grounds, at Kipheart Springs. This was used to whip first offenders and those guilty of petty crimes, especially of stealing.

After the removal of the court house to Claremore, the old grounds continued to be used as a meeting place for our people and for social and political gatherings. The people used to meet there in convention and stay as long as three days. They would nominate candidates for the various offices of the district at those conventions.