

WALKER, HENRY J. INTERVIEW.

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INTERVIEW WITH HENRY J. WALKER
Welch, Oklahoma, Star Route
James R. Carseloway, Field Worker

My name is Henry J. Walker, and I live at Welch, Oklahoma, Star Route. I live on the farm my father settled on, when the Kansas line was re-established, located on Big Cabin Creek.

My father's name was George Washington Walker. My mother's name was Mary Jane (Harlow) Walker.

My grandfather was Timothy Migs Walker, and my grandmother was Elizabeth Neely (Adair) Walker.

My father was born in Tennessee in 1823 and came to the Indian Territory when a boy 12 years old with his parents, brothers and sisters, along with the eastern emigrants, from Georgia about 1838.

MEN AND BOYS WALKED

My father told me that all the men and boys walked all the way from Georgia, and the women and children were allowed to ride in the ox wagons. It was a long hard journey and many took sick and died on the road. It took so long to make the trip, longer than the government had figured, that about all the money the Cherokees were given to live on after they arrived was used up on the way.

My father said each head of a family was given \$100. 00 in money to live on until they could get started up in their

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new homes, and that the soldiers in charge of the movement were given feed and food enough to carry them through. It ran out long before the journey's end was reached and the government officers had to borrow from the Indians to buy food and feed to continue the trip. By the time the Territory was reached about all the Indians' money was used up, many of their families were reduced by death, and they were here without a thing to live on.

My father said the Government men in charge of the "Trail of Tears" promised to turn in their claims and pay back the money they borrowed from the Cherokees on the way over here, but they never did. I am told that the Cherokees now have in a claim against the government for this money with 5 per cent interest from 1838.

My grandfather, Timothy Walker, was a fullblood Cherokee and settled with his family near Tahlequah in 1868, where he lived until his death several years later.

My father, George W. Walker, was almost a fullblood Cherokee, and spoke both languages fluently.

Sometime before the Civil War, after the death of his first wife, (he was married three times) he left Tahlequah and went to the northern part of the Indian Territory, and

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settled near Chetopa, now a part of Kansas. While there he helped Dr. Leslie survey a plot of ground, along the M. K. & T. Railway, which he sold in town lots to make the town of Oswego, Kansas.

CIVIL WAR BREAKS OUT

My father was living on a farm, with his family when the Civil War broke out. There were several other Indian families living in that vicinity, and when the Northern soldiers made their drive down into the Indian Territory to set the slaves free, they raided his farm, but he saw them coming and ran and got away in the brush, on the Neosho River. They took his wife and six children, and everything he had back to Fort Scott, and kept them there all during the War.

After my father found out that the soldiers had taken all of his stock, family and everything he had, he went south and joined the Southern Army, where he stayed for the period of the war.

After the war was over he went to Fort Scott and hunted up his family. The children were small when they left and did not know him when he found them. He said they had been taught to fear a Southern soldier, and ran when he came to the house where they were staying. He took his family back to his former home, and started all over again.

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Sometime after the war a new boundry line was made between Kansas and the Indian Territory, and the Indians were once more "pushed out". They again left their well improved farms and moved further south. Most of them settled on the headwater of Cabin Creek, southwest of Chetopa, Kansas. My father settled on the place where I am now living about 40 years ago. Coal was discovered on most all of the land in this section, and fuel has been handy and easy to get.

Back in the 80's my father would lease those large tracts of prairie land to white settlers. He would give them a lease for five or ten years, giving them all they could make during that time, and at the end of the time the farm and all the improvements they had made reverted back to him. In this way he had an improved farm for each one of his children, when allotment came. A lot of the land had reverted back to him in time to pay him rent for several years.

My father, Louis Rogers, and Lark McGhee, three of the Indians who had moved down from Kansas, established the Rogers Indian School, shortly after the war. It has run constantly until this time, without missing a term.

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It was a National school and the teachers were paid by the Cherokee Nation. White children could go to school by paying tuition.

My father was elected as councilman from Cooweescoowee in 1887, and served until 1891. He served again from 1897 to 1899.

Henry J. Walker was born March, 24, 1883, on his father's farm in Cooweescoowee district, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory. He married Laura Fanning, a white woman, and to this union four children were born.

Field Worker's Note.

I boarded with George W. Walker in 1897 and taught my first school at the Rogers School. I took him to be a fullblood Cherokee, but he talked both languages, and was a very intelligent old Indian. He was 74 years old at that time.

He told me of many hardships the Indians went through before they left the state of Georgia. He said the Indian was practically disfranchised before he left there, and that the state legislature had passed a law, that an Indian could not be taken as a witness in any of the courts of Georgia. Their land was taken from them and put up for settlement, and nothing was paid the Cherokees for it. Lots

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would be drawn for their land, and the man who drew the number of their land would move in and the officers would see that he got peaceable possession. In many instances he said they would take all of the personal property belonging to the Indians, such as plows, hogs, cattle, chickens and anything else that they could get their hands on, without paying a cent for them.

The average notice to vacate a farm would only give the Indian fifteen days to get off, he said. Life was made so miserable for the Indian, that he thinks it would have been impossible to stay any longer.