

WELLS, THOMAS

INTERVIEW

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Interviewer
September 22, 1937

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Interview with
Thomas Wells,
Checotah, Oklahoma.

Frank P. Wells, one of the oldest settlers in McIntosh County, was born in Greene County, Illinois. My father was William L. Wells and my mother was Martha L. Phillips. To this union were born Frank P., Samuel, Mary and John.

My father was born in Greene County, in Ohio. William L. Wells was a farmer. He served in Company H, Ninety First Illinois Infantry, as Sergeant of the Company. He took part in many engagements in the southeastern part of the United States and was captured during the first battle in which he participated, being held a prisoner for some time. He also had a brother in the Union Army, Captain Joseph Wells.

Soon after the War Mr. Wells moved to Texas where his wife died in 1871 near Denton. He remained there one year and moved with his family to the Indian Territory. He settled first at Webbers Falls, and in 1873 came to what is now McIntosh County.

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Frank P. Wells was educated in Greene County public schools, and went to Texas with his father and from there to the Indian Territory and remained some time. He then engaged in farming about eight miles southeast of Checotah on a creek which later was called Wells Creek and empties into Carr Creek east of Onapa.

At the time he first came to this community there were very few white men. The land was almost entirely settled by full-blood Creek Indians. The land was taken up with horse and cattle ranches, and the wild game was plentiful, such as deer, turkey and prairie chicken. Sometimes a bear or panther was seen in that vicinity. Mr. Wells was among the first to set out an orchard on his place which consisted of apple, peach, and pear trees, which were bought from a nursery in Tennessee. Some of the fruit he placed on the market at Checotah and what he didn't consume at home he gave to his neighbors.

Farming was carried on only on a small scale and the inhabitants in most settlements were honest peaceable citizens and but little whiskey was "boot-legged"

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into the territory. When the old timers thought they needed a drink they had the following variety to choose from, Jamaica Ginger, Peruna, Hostetter Bitters, Beef Wine and Iron, lemon and vanilla extracts which were all about ninety-five per cent alcohol and could be purchased at any drug store.

For many years twenty-five acres was a large tract to cultivate and most of the people did not raise enough corn to feed their teams; but stock did not suffer as there was plenty to eat on the range, green cane and grass in the bottom lands almost all winter.

The houses were built of logs with dirt and stick chimneys, puncheon floors and clapboard roofs.

In April 1873 Mr. Wells married Liddie H. Davis, daughter of William and Sallie Holt Davis. Mr. Davis was a fullblood Creek Indian and his wife was white.