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FRANK WOFFORD, Informant

Jas. S. Buchanan

I was born March 15th, 1867 on my father's old Indian claim on the bank of the Grand River near Ft. Gibson. My parents were both Cherokee. Farming and stock raising was our only pursuit. After the death of my father in 1872 the family remained on the old place for many years and I lived in this vicinity all my past life. This is my native country and my home and I love the hills and the prairie, but it was a much more desirable country in the earlier days of my life than it is at the present time. Back in years gone by it was not such a problem for a man to make a living and support a family as it is in later years. In those days we had unlimited range for our stock, unclaimed prairie land from which to cut our hay for winter feed for cattle. Plenty of game of all kind, deer, turkey, prairie chicken and wild pegeon. I have seen prairie chicken and wild pegeon so plentiful in this country that people now would not believe me if I tried to describe their abundance in those days.

The first public work I remember in this country which offered the settlers a chance to earn money other than through farming, trapping and hunting was when the Katy railroad was building in the year of 1871. Every settler in this country that had timber on his claim was hewing cross ties and hauling them out to the right-of-way where the construction gangs could get them in the building of the road, and the money received for this work was a great benefit to the settlers.

The only principal road through this part of the territory that I first remember was the old Texas Trail. Its general direction, north and south and over which the cattlemen of Texas would drive their cattle north to market before the railroads were built. Marks of the old trail can yet be seen where it passed through just east of Okay and on a little east of south for a distance

about three miles from Okay where a road branched off that led to Ft. Gibson and then the main trail on to Texas bore a little west of south passing a little east of where Muskogee now stands. The road that branched off to Ft. Gibson crossed the Grand River at the French ferry and connected with the old Military road south from Ft. Gibson. The Texas trail crossed the Arkansas river just above the mouth of Grand river at the Nevins ferry, owned and operated by Mose Nevins until his death and then it was operated by Mrs. Nevins with hired help for several years. 444

I remember when the soldiers were stationed at Ft. Gibson and the incident that lingers most vividly in my memory was how the Indians managed to get whisky from the soldiers. At that time of course there were no whiskey permitted in the Indian territory and it was a very dangerous thing for anyone to take the chance of bringing whiskey into the territory and sell to the Indians. But there was whiskey legally sold within the barracks to and for use of the soldiers only, but some of the soldiers were good fellows and they would buy whiskey in the barracks and slip it out and meet us out in the brush and we would pay them a good price for it and they would drink and visit with us and we would all have a good time.

I can remember when there was hundreds of acres of the river bottomland in the vicinity of Ft. Gibson covered with canebrakes. I recall an old road through the low land northeast of Ft. Gibson and that we traveled going between where we lived and Ft. Gibson that the cane was so tall and of such a dense growth that it would be impossible for a man on foot to get off the roadway through the cane. The canebrakes afforded wonderful winter range for stock as people could drive a herd of cattle into those brakes in the fall and they would stay all winter and come ^{out} in the spring fat and in good shape, as the green blades on the switch cane was good feed for the stock all winter. The brakes also afforded a wonderful refuge for all kind of game, but now there is no cane in this part of the country, like many other things the Indians use to have, gone, gone forever.