

MEIGS, K. R.

LOG H USLS.

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MEIGS, R. R. INTERVIEW.

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Interviewer, Elizabeth Ross,
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Interview with R. R. Meigs,
Park Hill, Okla.

LOG HOUSES.

In the hill country of the old Cherokee districts log houses are yet quite often seen. Long ago, in the early days of the Cherokee Nation, in what is now Oklahoma, log houses were far more numerous than those built of pine lumber. In the pioneer period sawmills were few and far apart for a number of years, and as a consequence the houses, large and small, were largely built of logs.

The best and most durable of the houses were those which were constructed of logs of large size, which had been skillfully hewed to required dimensions. The logs were usually of white oak, red oak or yellow pine. When the necessary number of logs had been hewn, the walls of the house were built, horses sometimes being used to draw the heavy logs into position, with aid of heavy ropes. Some of the larger houses were two-stories high and contained several rooms. Usually they were equipped

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with massive stone chimneys. The chimneys were sometimes built at both ends of the house and sometimes in the center with a wide fireplace on either side. These chimneys were referred to as "stack chimneys." The fireplaces were sometimes four feet in width. Houses so built were cozily comfortable in winter time and much cooler in warm weather than those built of lighter material. The durability of houses built of the heavy oak or pine logs is evidenced by the fact that in some localities such a house is found in sound condition after withstanding the changes of more than one hundred years.

The smaller log houses were often built of comparatively smaller sized logs, with the bark adhering. The interstices between the logs were filled with split pieces of wood, called chinking, and over this chinking red clay instead of mortar was often spread. The chimneys of such houses were usually composed of sections of timber and were generally called "stick chimneys." The fireplace was built of stone, and the interior of the wooden chimneys plastered with clay. There was danger that the wooden chimneys would become ignited in case large fires were built below in the fireplace, but nevertheless, they were largely in use and fewer houses were destroyed by fire than would be thought possible.

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The smaller houses were often well crowded, as families of considerable sizes often lived in one-roomed houses ~~in many instances~~. Small side rooms were attached to some of the "round log" houses, the small room being utilized as kitchen and dining room.

After sawmills became more numerous, small box houses became somewhat numerous and in course of time the larger sized houses of well-hewn logs were not as often built. Some of them were torn down and frame houses erected instead, but there were some of the people who preferred to preserve the pioneer houses in which their grandparents or parents had lived during many years. Consequently, some of the oldest houses yet remain.

House "raisings" drew many of the people of a settlement together in the years of long ago. The men assisting in placing the heavy logs in place, while the women prepared bounteous quantities of food in great variety for dinner for those engaging in labor.

Some of the leading and prominent citizens and officials occupied log houses in the early days of the Cherokee Nation in the Indian Territory, as well as in later years.