

HARPER, JOHN

SECOND INTERVIEW #6459
SAM BAKER Biography

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Carl R. Sherwood,
Research Field Worker,
June 29, 1937.

Story of Sam Baker
Given by
John Harper, Checotah

Sam Baker, one of the oldest white settlers of Checotah, McIntosh County, has lived a life of daring adventure. His career in the Indian Territory was full of action and thrilling experiences.

For many years he devoted his time to farming and cattle raising in the vicinity of Brush Hill, about eight miles southwest of Checotah.

Sam Baker received a limited education in Alabama schools. In 1879 he came to the Indian Territory and located in what is now McIntosh County. The population of the Creek Nation at that time was almost all Indians and Negroes; there were very few white people.

Desperadoes of all kinds were frequently seen, some were the James brothers and the Dalton brothers, who made this part of the country a resting place and a hideout from the law of other states. The outlaws did not interfere with the people living there at that time. Mr. Baker was well acquainted with the early day outlaws.

On one occasion Mr. Baker was lined up at the town

of Checotah by Bill Cook and Cherokee Bill while they robbed the general store of Lafayette Brothers. He walked the line without even once thinking of leaving or trying to break away.

For many years Mr. Baker assisted Captain John C. West who was, at that time, Captain of the Indian Police for the Five Civilized Tribes. Mr. West had a certain number of deputies out of each tribe. They captured the Buck gang which consisted of five men who were ~~Bachee~~ and Creek Indians. The gang was taken overland in a three seated hack and placed in the Fort Smith jail and were later hanged by Judge Parker.

In 1898 the first bank in Checotah opened. Mose Miller, a Cherokee, sent word into Checotah that they were going to rob this new bank. The afternoon of the day before the opening, Captain John West of Muskogee was sent to Checotah and soon organized a posse of men. Some of the possemen were as follows: Sam Baker, Bob Gentry and N. G. Turk.

The night before they were to rob the bank, a man living at the west edge of Gap Prairie, about eight miles east of Checotah, in the Cherokee Nation, located the hideout in a thicket of the Mose Miller gang. He rode

his horse full speed into Checotah and notified Mr. West and his men where the gang ~~were~~ camped that night. The ~~posse~~ arrived at the camp just before daybreak. All of the gang were sound asleep on the ground. When Captain West yelled to them to "wake up," they arose with their guns smoking in their hands. Many shots were fired and two of the gang were shot. One received a scalp wound and the other was shot in the abdomen. The two wounded men were rushed to Checotah and unloaded in the back room of the McKinney Drug Store. (Carl R. Sherwood, the youngest son of J. K. Sherwood, a merchant of Checotah, was about twelve years of age and was working at the soda fountain in this store). Dr. Stewart soon arrived and called on Carl to assist him in dressing the wounds of the two wounded outlaws. After this was done, Bob Gentry walked into the store with a loaded Winchester shot gun and told Carl he would have to guard these men until the posse got back. After the battle, every man that could go was called out on the trail of the rest of the gang.

When some desperadoes held up the Missouri-Kansas and Texas Railroad passenger train in Texas. one time, Sam Baker was shot ten times. Later, in Checotah, he was shot through

the right lung by Frank Jones. Then at a Green Corn Stomp Dance, southwest of Checotah, Sam and his wife were sitting in a buggy watching the dance when a shot was fired and the bullet pierced his shoulder and went into his wife's arm. Both were flesh wounds. The fatal shot that killed Mr. Baker was fired by a school boy, Willie Torrence, as Sam was entering a hardware store.