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Game--Cherokee Nation

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Field WorkerInterview: Robert B. Choate
Bunch, Oklahoma.HUNTING EXPERIENCES

Mr. Robert B. Choate of Bunch, Oklahoma is now seventy-four years old. He is man who appears to be several years younger than he really is. He is highly educated, very entertaining, sociable and is a good story teller, having had wide and varied experiences in public and private life, such as; farming, teaching school, traveling, holding public offices, etc. However, his main sport and hobby was, at intervals when he could find time and at least twice each year, in the early summer a turkey hunt and in the autumn a big deer hunt. These hunts were always of several days duration and what is commonly called a "camp hunt".

He had two favorite camps, one near what is now Crystal Cave, in what is now southwest Adair County, Oklahoma, where the deer and turkeys were plentiful and a fine spring of water made life more pleasant. Here he had a substantial cabin made of logs and large enough to accommodate several men and take care of the provisions. The other camp was several miles farther southwest in Cherokee County near what is now known as Pipe Springs. Here he also had a cabin and camp, similar to the one above.

He always wished his friends to share these big hunts with him, for they were big hunts. The writer at Mr. Choate's home saw many pictures which were made at camp and in the forest while they were on these trips, several pictures of large bucks with fine antlers with several points, several of the pictures being of fine specimens of wild turkeys, as many as half a dozen

When arranging for the hunt and considering his pals, Mr. Choate's first thought was his friend, D. T. Merwin, Division Superintendent of Wells Fargo Express Company, who lived at Kansas City at that time. Choate and Merwin both being good shots always insisted on U. S. Marshal Charles Copeland accompanying them, then they would add others. Some came from as far away as Vermont and the company of hunters usually consisted of from six to twelve men.

Mr. Choate relates one story in detail. The hounds started a deer just south of what is Bunch, Oklahoma now and that deer went south down the creek to near Dwight Mission and then turned back north up the creek, bringing the deer right by us. When it was evident that the deer could come so near them, Mr. Choate placed Mr. Merwin where he could get a good shot at the deer and when the deer, a large buck, came by it was forced to pass between them and a high cliff, giving all a good opportunity to kill it but he thought to give Mr. Merwin the first shot but he kept on waiting until the others were forced to kill the deer or allow it to pass on, so they fired and killed it while Merwin stood and looked on, explaining later that he just could not kill a deer that was so pretty and that had such fine antlers. They all had a good laugh and later a good supper.

While on one of these hunts, they were camped at the camp near Crystal Cave on the evening of the second day and by some means, Copeland had failed to join them but they were fixing to go kill some turkeys as a boy who lived near camp had come over and offered to pilot them to a turkey roost where they could kill some. They started and had only gone a short distance when they met Copeland who had only been temporarily detained and had followed on after them, knowing as he did about where he would find them, but to their great surprise he had been very fortunate and had bagged two fine gobblers and was carrying them

with him to camp. The boys all being so glad to see their old friend and there then being no need to go on for more turkeys, they just postponed the trip that night and returned to camp and had a good visit with Copeland. Of course, they stayed several days and killed much game and had a general good time.