

INDEX CARDS

Choate family
Schools--Cherokee Nation
Government--Cherokee
Arkansas--Cherokee relations
Mail routes
Flint
Bunch

Chauncey O. Moore, Supervisor
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149

March 19, 1937

E. F. Dodson
Field Worker

Interview: Robert B. Choate

THE CHOATE FAMILY

Silas Choate is one of the oldest of the Choate family that we have any history of that has lived in this country. He came with the first old settlers and only stayed a short time and went back to the East, then returned with the Immigrants and settled down on a place near the present site of Greenwood Junction, near the present state line of Arkansas and Oklahoma. That was when Sanders Choate, the father of Robert B. Choate, was about twelve years old. Silas Choate, the grandfather, lived there until his death which occurred sometime before the Civil War. When Sanders Choate grew to manhood he married Miss Jane Rily. They only had one child, George Washington Choate. They lived near the site of old Flint Court House. He later married Miss Eliza Childers. They had six children, Emma, a daughter who was married to John Adair of Sallisaw, Oklahoma, the next child, Joshua, a son, Isabell, the wife of Houston Payne of Ft. Smith, Arkansas, Mary Alma, a daughter who married Dr. R. L. Rye of Ft. Smith, Arkansas, now of Porter, Oklahoma, John C. a son who married Miss Fannie Foreman, Robert B. Choate, a son was married to Miss Lydia Striker, a full blood Cherokee, who was educated in the Cherokee Orphans Asylum. They are the parents of two children, Emma E, a daughter, and Robert M., a son.

ROBERT B. CHOATE

Robert B. Choate is a native of the Cherokee Nation and a resident of Bunch, Oklahoma, Adair County, since his boyhood. Mr. Choate has been actively identified in official affairs for many years. He was educated in the common schools and the National Male Seminary, became a teacher, taught his first school

at Skin Bayou School in Skin Bayou District (later Sequoyah District), next at Sallisaw at Round Springs School, near Bunch and still other places, becoming very prominent and successful in the educational work. He was a member of the National Council of the Cherokee Nation, becoming Chief of that body, then District Clerk, District Judge, Assistant Indian Agent, being Judge when Tribal Government was abolished. He was always faithful to duty.

Politically Mr. Choate is a Republican. He was defeated as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention but was a delegate to the convention that nominated Frank Frantz for Governor.

Mr. Choate is a Cherokee, 3/4 blood, and is proud of that fact.

He has been a very successful farmer, specializing in good pure bred stock. He was a very successful merchant for a number of years. He has a nice home in Bunch, Oklahoma. He is 74 years old and is held in high esteem and love by all who know him.

Mr. Choate says that when he was a young man that their Post Office was Evansville, Arkansas, some 25 miles distant. When asked if that was not a little inconvenient, he replied "Well, Yes, but we all in that neighborhood went there to mill and of course there was someone going there every two or three days and that way they would bring the mail for us if we were not going soon".

Sometime later there was a Post Office established at what is the northwest corner of the present town of Stilwell, Oklahoma and soon afterward there was one established at Bunch. At that time the mail was carried on horseback from VanBuren, Arkansas to Evansville from there to Flint P. O. (now Stilwell) from there to Bunch and on to Dwight Mission. At first and for some time the mail was only delivered to Bunch three times each week but was later delivered every day. Joshua Choate was the first mail carrier to the Bunch P. O., then

Henry Bradley carried it. He carried it on to Dwight Mission, making the round trip on horseback each day. 37

Their nearest doctor at that time was at Evansville, Arkansas. Two of the first doctors that Mr. Choate remembers were, Dr. Bryant and Dr. Littlejohn, both of Evansville. In those days there were no roads as we think of roads. There were only wagon trails and bridlepaths.

Mr. Choate says that there were somethings that they had then that we do not have, such things as good timber, fertile virgin soil, an abundance of game, fish and good range.