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Field Worker: Billie Byrd  
April 12, 1937

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Interview with Ben Cochran (White)  
Constable  
Okemah, Oklahoma

-PIONEER STORES.

I left Georgia about forty years ago with my parents and went to Texas. I live to hunt and trap so made my living in this way.

I had often heard of the Indian Territory and decided to seek my fortune in that country. I arrived in Wetumka in company with some others. We had made the trip from Texas by freight. I had come with the purpose of obtaining work and with no destination in view I finally arrived at a small settlement then called Sand Bar, but later known as Fentress. Its location was on the north side of the North Canadian river, section 9, township 10 north, range 10 east.

The settlement consisted of a saw mill, three grocery stores, and a drug store, Dr. Hoover in charge. John Alexander, Lon Owens, and Mr. Finks, all deceased, each owned the stores.

The North Canadian river had to be crossed by ferry at this place. Charley Litzie was in charge of the ferry. The charges for crossing were ten cents for a person on foot, fifteen cents for persons on horseback, and twenty-five cents for a person with a team and wagon. Today there is no sign of the ferry crossing, the stores, or the original river stream at this exact spot. Nature took it into her hand to move the course of the river a little to the south. There is a school house bearing the name of Fentress in that community.

The mail out of Wetumka was brought in by the best method, or any available way, but there was a mail carrier out of Shawnee that passed the Fentress community to points East.

Farther north, sixteen miles away, was a more thriving store, known as the Norburg store, section 18, township 12 north, range 10 east.

Mr. Norburg, from New York, had established the first store there. It was a large store and was a busy place. People from Holdenville, Keokuk Falls, thirty-five miles southwest, or people within the radius of that distance came to do their trading at this store.

Mr. Norburg often supervised the wagon freight personally. He obtained his supplies from Muskogee or Holdenville.

This store was located on the Keokuk Cattle Trail. This trail was a branch trail that began at Keokuk Falls on the North Canadian river. It branched off into two or three other trails as it neared the Kansas line. Many cattle have been driven over this trail. Since Texas ranked first in the production of cattle and Iowa second, many cattle were driven between these two points, not only on this particular trail, but on the other few trails that were existing at the time.

Although business at the Norburg store was good and the store was firmly established, Norburg sold out to the Patterson Mercantile Store of Muskogee. Such men as George Harvison, George Ralston acted as clerks and John Phillips, an Indian, now deceased, clerked and acted as the community interpreter.

At the addition of a postoffice Norburg became Morse, and, in 1897, George D. Harvison was appointed the first postmaster of Morse. John Bacon was the first mail carrier. Dr. Kennedy, with offices now in Okemah, Oklahoma, acted as community doctor. The Morse postoffice ceased to exist a short while after the rural delivery out of Okemah

It was in 1902 that the town of Okemah, south of Morse, was started. The Patterson store at Morse then moved their goods to Okemah, leaving a branch store at Morse. There is today a little store known as Morse, although it is a mile west of the original site.

I served as a marshal two years before statehood and have worked in the interests of law and order for the state ever since. I have served as field deputy and was the first sheriff of Okfuskee County, jailer, policeman, and am a constable at the present time of Okfuskee County.

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