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W. T. Holland, Interviewer
Indian-Pioneer History
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An interview with Eli S. Clouse,
Old Timer, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

I was born in Putman County, Tennessee, on
July 13, 1864.

My father, Thomas Clouse, was born in
Virginia in 1801. My mother, Margaret (Ellens)
Clouse was born in east Tennessee. I can't re-
member the date, but I know she was much younger
than my father and that her father came here from
Germany.

My father died just after the close of the
Civil War, when I was only about four years old. My
mother married again, and I was reared by a step-
father and my mother.

Like a lot of other people in that day, after
the Civil War, my folks decided to try their fortunes
in the West. So in 1882 we made our way to Nashville,
Tennessee, where we boarded a river steamer for
Cairo, Illinois. At Cairo we took a train to St. Louis,
then from St. Louis to Newport, Arkansas, and from
Newport, Arkansas, to Marshall, Arkansas, our destination,
by wagon.

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We didn't stay long in Arkansas, just two years, when we moved to Oswego, Kansas.

I stayed around there with my parents for two years or until 1886 when I decided to go out for myself. A lot of people in Kansas were coming into the Indian Territory at that time so I headed south. This was in January, 1886. I had no particular point in view but kept on until I reached Claremore, which at that time was a pretty good town and here I stopped. I inquired about for a place to work and after a while I met John Shrimshire, a full-blood Cherokee Indian, and a man of means. He and Clem Rogers, Will Rogers' father, were brothers-in-law, Rogers having married
/ a sister of Shrimshire.

I used to see Will Rogers most every day while he was a small boy and also later on, up until he was about grown. He, at an early age, was fond of horses and was always on a pony and usually had his rope with him, often twirling it and otherwise amusing himself and others. He often visited his uncle John while I worked there. He and his folks

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would visit us and the Shrimpsnires would visit them.

Shrimpshire while having the appearance of a full-blood, had the business ability of a white man. He was a successful farmer and rancher and while I worked for him/^{he} was a Councilman of the Cherokee Nation and went often to Tahlequah, their capital, to the meetings of the council. He stood high with the whites and of course was high in the esteem of the Cherokees. He served as councilman for years, and while I was employed by him, he was sent to Washington as a delegate to a meeting there concerning the Cherokees and the whole of the Five Civilized Tribes.

Their habits and customs were the same as other civilized people as they were civilized. They had their own laws and administered them.

Henry and John Chambers were also well known and prominent Indians of Claremore. They were also delegates to Washington at the same time Shrimpshire was sent.

At this time, Claremore had about six general stores, a hotel, post office and blacksmith shop. There were no schools for whites there then; in fact, there

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were very few white families in this part of the country, not enough to support a school or a church. The one and only church and school was about two miles south of Claremore. A young man teacher and preacher by the name of Kelly, came in there from Arkansas and taught and preached at the church and school. It was a mission school and was the social and religious center, as well as the seat of learning for the Indians.

Only Indian children were allowed to attend this school; however, the religious services were open to all.

They had preaching there regularly and, in the fall, revival meeting would last for days and sometimes two or three weeks. I went pretty often, and attended every service when Shrimpshire was away at Tahlequah or Washington as I drove the "hack" for the family.

This "hack" was a two-seated spring wagon, drawn by two horses. They kept good horses and harness and this outfit was considered the "tops" there.

These Cherokeees, Shrimpshire, Chambers and Clem Rogers, lived well. They all had good houses to live in and other improvements on their places.

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Their homes were well furnished for the time.

This was a cattle country then. The railroad had its terminal at Sapulpa at that time; and from that point on up the road nothing but cattle was shipped out then, or hardly anything, but car after car of cattle.

Shrimshire raised cattle, hogs and horses, just general farming, raising wheat, oats and cotton and corn. While he grazed some cattle, not as many as Clem Rogers. Mr. Rogers had a horse ranch on Tabb Creek northwest of Claremore and had a big cattle ranch on Big Caney Creek (or River). He operated more extensively, perhaps, than Shrimshire; both were shrewd business men.

Life then was real pleasant, and peaceful. I don't recall any especially unpleasant happenings then. Like I said, these families were known to me and the most prominent lived well, and at peace with all. I thought it a good place and time to enjoy life.

I worked for therisco railway after leaving the farm. You have heard of the game of that time,

well there was plenty of it from deer to prairie chickens and quail. Now, the prairie chickens were here by the thousands. I knew one man who made a good business of killing them for the market. He would kill as many as one hundred in a day with the assistance of his son and a couple of bird dogs. He shipped these out to St. Louis. This, of course, was in the winter time.

I lived near the railroad, up near Claremore, and the telegraph line ran overhead, so one morning I went out and picked up seven dead prairie chickens. These chickens roosted in or on the prairie and early in the morning would rise and fly to some cornfield. At this time, they came over before it was light enough to see the wires and some hit the wires hard enough to kill them. Deer could easily be found.

In 1907 I moved to Caddo County where I leased 160 acres of land, farmed here for twenty years, raising cotton, wheat and some corn. It seemed to me, as the years went on the rains became scarcer until the seasons are not now what I remember them to have been then. I retired from farming and came to Tulsa in 1927.

I was married to Birdie Brooks of Arkansas in 1892.