

CONWAY, ALICE

INTERVIEW

#13155

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Charline M. Culbertson,
Investigator,
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An Interview with Mrs. Alice Conway,
A & Chickasaw, McAlester, Okla.

I was born at Caddo in the year 1874. My parents were John Jackson and Lucy (Adams) Edwards. Father is buried at Caddo while Mother is buried in McAlester.

The place where I was born was located one-fourth of a mile east of Caddo. The house was a two-room round leg house with split out puncheon floor and shutters instead of windows and a chink and daub chimney.

I was nine months old when my parents moved from there so what I know of Caddo I was told later. The only store there was run by a Mr. Ainsworth. The school and church were in the same building. Mrs. Kate Knight was teacher.

When Father moved from Caddo we located in North McAlester in a little two-room box house on the east side of the MK & T tracks.

Father was a United States Marshal. He was known by all his friends as "Lucky Jack" because of his ability of

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always catching the bad men. Other marshals I remember were John Kay, George Shoate, J. J. McAlester and a negro of the name of Johnson. Father captured the man who murdered Charley Pusley. Father carried the warrant and this man was captured in the mountains near Wilburton. Father was also noted for being an expert shot with his left hand as well as his right. He was also given much credit for capturing Jack McCurtain at Canadian. Father's faithful horse was named "Mike". This horse seemed to sense danger and would stand on his hind legs at such times. He has saved Father from being shot many times by his quickness in action.

The only business houses in McAlester at this time were a store operated by J.J. McAlester, a restaurant operated by Uncle Billy Yates and a blacksmith shop run by Henry Angley. The school was southwest of the McAlester store. It was a little white frame building. Services of the Baptist ^{faith} were also held in this building. Frank Ross was the school teacher. The next school I attended was called Singleton Fennell. It was north of the MK & T tracks. I also attended one term of school at Caddo where I boarded.

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The teacher there was Mrs. Kate Knight. I was ten years of age at this time. I was in possession of my father's badge and quirt until recently when they were destroyed in a house fire. I attended many of the Indian affairs since I am one-quarter Choctaw Indian.

Our principal Indian foods were Tom Fuller, Tonsy and cabbage cooked on an open fire. I have attended the Indian picnics. The Indians would meet at some spring and hold church services. One of the meetings was held at the Godfrey Spring. There were log cabins in which to camp. Everyone donated something to eat such as beef, corn and cabbage. Some came in wagons, some on horseback, and some on foot. Men had their bows and arrows. The women wore lots of beads and trinkets of different kinds and they would make lots of noise with bells and tin pans.

The Choctaw Indians had big fish fries on Moss Lake near Red River. The fish were caught by hand after the Indians had made them drunk with the shoe string weed they put along the water edge. The fish were then fried in large wash pots.

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I attended the Stamp Dances on Gaines Creek north of McAlester. It could be described as a place to gather and have a good time. Some times when the Indians thought trouble was coming they would make their plans at these meetings. They would dance in a stamping way around a big fire, then eat and go back and dance some more. The women wore lots of rings, bells, bracelets or anything they could make noise with.

At the Fire Dances the Indians had small fires in different places and would dance around these. They would take the first Indian who got drunk out to the side.

The Choctaw ball games were played between the teams of McAlester and Shoate prairie. The games were rough and someone would always be knocked out. They had a regular Indian doctor for these who were knocked out. The doctor there was known as Dr. Crow.

The only ferry I knew of was one on the South Canadian River between Canadian and Hannah. A Mr. Byrd operated it. A Mr. Toob ran a ferry on Red River between South Jackson and Honey Grove road which was twenty miles from the Red River bridge today.

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I recall a scrimmage at Tishomingo when Governor Byrd came there and settled it. It was a dispute over the Choctaw and Chickasaw payment. The Choctaws drew \$120.00 more than the Chickasaws. The Governor had a speaking at the courthouse and got it settled. They had the speech interpreted to the Indians. The only trail I knew of was one from North McAlester north to the upper crossing of Gaines Creek, which then led to Pawhuska and south into Texas across the Moffet Crossing on Red River.

The Indian women washed their clothes by beating them on tree stumps with paddles. They also rubbed sand over them. Dyes were made from tree bark.

Father was guide for a group of Choctaw Indians who were transferred from Mississippi. Father said that many times they ran out of food and would go for days before they could get their rations. These Choctaws could be tracked by the blood from their feet. They carried many little children.