

CONNOR, CRAWFORD

INTERVIEW

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Interviewer, Nannie Lee Burns,
July 14, 1937.

Interview with Crawford Connor.
503 A SW, Miami.
Cherokee.

Civil War Stories as Told in the Family.

The father of the late Brak Weir of the Hudson Creek neighborhood was home on a furlough. The news of his presence reached Quantrell and he and some associates went to the home, captured him and killed him, and two women, Aunt Mary Weir, nee Moore, and Nancy Briggs, buried him near on Hudson Creek. Caleb Conner, Tom Monroe and one other person, whose name I do not recall, were the parties selected to engage the attention of the Quantrell men and draw them down into the Indian Territory for a battle where it was planned a local force would meet them. So the three men started out riding the best horses obtainable. In reality these horses were race horses and the three men contacted the Quantrell Band at Rock Creek south of Laxter Springs and from there to Caney's Ferry they engaged in a running fight. The three men ahead, stopping occasionally and exchanging a few shot from a safe

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distance but drawing the Quantrell men on till the three men crossed the river at the ferry. Here two of them held the men from crossing till the third could reach the local force, gathered a short distance away, and this fight was known as the Battle of Buzzard's Springs.

Once, Grandfather William Conner was home on a furlough when my father was fourteen. His presence was discovered and when they learned that men were coming to the house for him he and my father left the house at night in such a hurry that they went sans trousers and lived three days in the woods on berries. This happened at our home near Watts. Grandfather was, I think, in the main army but Caleb was under Stand Watie.

Father's Early Life.

When quite young, Father's parents moved from Chitwood, Missouri, to near Watts where they lived but Father, when a young man, came to Northeastern Oklahoma to the present site of Carey's Ferry where his sister had married Foss Carey and lived for a while. Father ran the Carey Ferry and later ran the Pooler Ferry farther north on the old Military Road. While here ^{he} formed a friendship with Richard (Dick) Williams

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who had settled three miles west of Miami and who was interested in the cattle business. Later, when father married and was considering a location to settle, Dick Williams urged Father to settle at the site of the present Charlie Williams home just south of Miami but Father, with an eye on the cattle business, chose the old home site on the south side of the Neosho, two miles east and three and a half miles north of the present town of Fairland.

The First Home.

Here on the top of the hill, and at the edge of the prairie, Father built their first home about sixty-one years ago. It was a log house about a quarter of a mile southeast of the site of the house which is now standing. There is a large spring near this house.

Later, Father hauled pine lumber from Spavinaw and built a two-room structure with an upstairs, four rooms in all, and he added to this as the years went by till we had a very large house, large barns, good improvements and a very pretty yard as my mother was very fond of flowers. There were roses everywhere.

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This house burned after Father left the farm and today there is a neat one-story frame house at the same place at the top of the hill just south of the bridge across the river. This was named the Conner Bridge. Then, our crossing was a ferry north and east of the house known as the Berry Ferry. It was named after our neighbor on the east.

The Berry Cemetery, which was the burying ground for the neighborhood then was given by Mr. Berry. This cemetery grew till I should say that there are now between two and three hundred graves there. However, since the founding of the Fairland Cemetery few bodies of the dead have been placed there.

My Early Life.

Life in our home in those days was similar to the life in many homes. We helped with the farm work and rode the range after the cattle but we went to school more than the most of the children did for Father took an interest in education and did much towards securing schools, not only for us but the rest of the children of the neighborhood.

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My first school was a Subscription school, taught on Hudson Creek in a small, frame building built by the people of the neighborhood and called Community Center and taught by Miss Hulda McCoy.

The next year we attended school at Prairie City, now Ogeechee, and from there I was sent to Wooster Academy at Vinita and in the fall of 1897 was sent to Webb City, Missouri. The following spring I was sent to Racine College in Muskogee, where I remained three years, and from there was sent to the Central Business College at Sedalia, Missouri.

Old Prairie City.

Old Prairie City, the first station on the Frisco in those days, was a thriving little village.

Mr. Audrain had a General Store and was the Post Master with his son-in-law, Percy Walker as Postal Clerk. McSpadden's had a store; Lem Long had a marble shop and sold monuments; Bob and Jim Crockett had a blacksmith shop and there were several residences in Old Prairie City.

Marriage.

July 10, 1901, I married Anna M. Ballard, the daughter of William and Charlotte Ballard, who was a Cherokee like

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myself and who had been raised a short distance south of us.

She was born July 4, 1877, and I was born October 31, 1881. Since leaving school I had been clerking in a hardware store in Fairland but after marrying we moved to the farm two miles east of Bernice.

I farmed till 1925 when I sold out and moved to Miami where I have lived since, and where my wife has died, and where I have done various things for a livelihood.