

INDEX CARDS

Chickasaw Nation  
Aylesworth  
Indian School  
Outlaws  
Hunting and Fishing  
Wild Horses  
Ben Burney  
Cumberland

DARROW, CHARLES R.

INTERVIEW

7397

Interview with Charles R. Darrow  
50 years ago  
By Etta D. Mason, Interviewer  
August 24, 1937.

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I lived in the Chickasaw Nation near where the town of Aylesworth is now located. My father was Frank Darrow and my mother was Emma Hulse.

We were farmers and lived on rented land. We had very few white neighbors; not enough, in fact, to have a white school.

We attended the Indian school near our home, my father paying tuition. The teachers were white people and always came from one of the states. They were very efficient and strict and much better prepared to teach than the ones who came later and taught white subscription schools.

I grew up with the Indians, played their games, attended their schools and churches, also their parties, and we visited together. Many of us grew to manhood together and we still esteem each others friendship.

DARROW, CHARLES R.

INTERVIEW

2

The country was unsettled and some very lawless men passed through the Chickasaw Nation and committed crimes, but they were almost always white men.

The James Boys, the Studimers and the Daltons all flourished in the Chickasaw, Cherokee and Creek Nations at that time.

And there was Belle Starr, the woman outlaw. My father and mother knew her personally. The outlaws came and went as they pleased for no one dared to cross them or tell of their whereabouts or that person would be found in the woods, dead. So no one molested them and when they were hungry and stopped at a house to eat, they ate whether the occupants were home or not, but they always paid for their food. If they needed a horse they took it but they paid for it.

I remember one day, father was working in the field and my mother and we children were gathering grapes in the bottom. We were away all the afternoon and on arriving home the first place we ran for was the pantry, but everything was gone and the empty dishes were sitting on the

3

table, also there was a note and a silver ~~dollar~~. The note said that they were hungry and they had eaten all they wanted and were leaving pay for some. The note was signed by four of the noted outlaws of that time.

There were dances in our community and always plenty of whiskey. My father and mother did not attend these dances for we always knew when there was a dance, there would be a killing.

Sometime during the night of the dance my father would be called to the place where the dance was going on, to help take care of a dead or dying man.

We had churches, singings and many nice places to go and the best people, Indians and whites, kept themselves away from the bad.

Fish were plentiful in the Washita River. When I was about ten years of age I was sent horseback to the river to see if we had caught any fish on our hooks that my father had put out the night before. I pulled on a line and found we had a big fish. After tying the line to a tree

DARROW, CHARLES R.

INTERVIEW

7397

I worked till I got the fish out on the bank. I then pulled its head up to the horn of the saddle and tied it. I went proudly home, the fish's tail dragging the ground. It was a cat fish and weighed seventy-five pounds.

There was game, too, as well as wolves and panthers. Anytime we wanted wild meat, my father would get up early in the morning, take his gun and go hunting. He would always bring back a grouse or two or the hindquarters of a deer.

The panthers were numerous at that time. My father was out one morning early hunting his horses. He heard a panther scream and as he did not have his gun he crawled behind a rock ledge to watch. In a short time the panther came in sight and while he stood there seven passed by him. They were traveling northeast, probably going to the mountains. Fortunately the wind was from the right direction and the panthers did not catch his scent.

DARROW, CHARLES R.

INTERVIEW

7397

5

There were wild horses, too. I have seen droves of them pass our house on the way to the river to drink or going back to the prairies.

My father caught a yellow mare about two years old and she became as gentle as our work horses and would work to the plow or could be used to ride.

Ben Burney, a half-breed Chickasaw, was governor of the Chickasaws for a time. We lived on his land and while he stood by his own people he liked the white man's way of living the best and taught his children the white man's methods. He was always considerate of his renters and did everything possible for their comfort. He and my father were great friends.

The only fences we had in those days were made of rail. Most of the stock in our community were the long horn cattle and there were no fences strong enough to keep them from breaking into the field.

I have seen Burney take his shot gun and start for his fields intent on shooting everything he found in his fields

DARROW, CHARLES R.

INTERVIEW

7397

6

but as he had to pass our house and<sup>o</sup> field he would stop and talk to my father. After they had talked awhile he would set the gun against a tree and proceed on to the field, drive the stock out and mend the fence; all would be well till the next time.

At other times when he was terribly angry with some one he would take his bible and sit out under a tree and read till he could control himself.

Each year he made a trip to Washington and on two of these trips he took his daughter, Ada, with him.

He has one son, Paul Burney, now living at Tulsa. Burney is buried in the Old Burney Cemetery near Aylesworth, Oklahoma.

As I grew older the county became more settled. Cattle ranches were established and the cattle industry became profitable. There was a ranch at Cumberland, four miles north of Aylesworth, that belonged to Bud Durham. There were real cowboys at the ranch and many tales were told of the wild life at the ranch. Cattle were shipped to Kansas by driving them to Caddo or Atoka to be loaded at

DARROW, CHARLES R.

INTERVIEW

7897.

7

these places. Another ranchman was John McGlothlin.

But the ranches gave way to farms and when I was seventeen years of age my father leased the Durham ranch and turned it into a farm.

Gumberland became a country village with a school, post office, and churches.