

DAWSON, MAUDE

INTERVIEW

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Investigator, Nannie Lee Burns,
November 23, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Maude Dawson,
Villa Apartments,
Miami, Oklahoma.
Cherokee Indian.

My grandparents were Robert and Jane Howell of Tennessee.

My father, William Howell, was born in Tennessee. June 17,
1848. My mother was also born in that state.

I, Maude Dawson nee Howell, was born near Mayesville,
May 16, 1876. In the year of 1849, Grandfather started with
his wife and two children, William, and his small sister,
Tennessee, then one year old, to the Indian Territory.

They were traveling overland by wagon and on the way
his wife sickened and died, leaving him to continue his
journey with his young son and small daughter.

Grandfather settled near Mayesville where many of my
father's boyhood days were spent and where he attended
school part of the time. His first teacher here was
Miss Eliza Daniels and afterward she became Mrs. Hill and was
his neighbor when we lived at Oseuma. Grandfather Howell for
some time before the Civil War was engaged in the mercantile

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business in Mayesville and had for a partner, Thomas Mayes who was a brother of Ex-chief Mayes.

Civil War Days.

Grandfather married, for the second time, after coming to the Indian country, Mrs. Lucy Ann Coultier nee Ward. As Father grew up he began to go around and work at various things, taking a great interest in cattle and he liked to be out of doors.

Grandfather served under General Stand Watie in the First Cherokee Regiment. He was captured and later was exchanged and after returning to his regiment was again captured and this time he was sent to a Federal prison where he died.

Father, at the beginning of the war, like other young men, was here and there at the homes of his friends and was at the home of Mr. Audrain east of Fairland when the Audrain family were forced to leave their home quickly and they gathered together a few things and came to their friends here near Mayesville. The Audrain family moved on across the State line into Texas and attempted to make a crop.

Uncle Bob Audrain and his wife, together with my father, started to return home when they were captured by the Union

forces and carried around through Kansas and through the North before they secured their release.

Father served two years in Company A, which was the Cherokee Regiment under General Stand Watie.

He was wounded twice, shot both times in the same leg and had two horses shot from under him but managed to remain in the army until the close of the war. One of the horses was shot while he was taking part in the Shelby Raid.

Later experiences.

After the war and after the men returned to their homes, most of them found that the houses had been destroyed, families separated and nothing left to start again. His father had been taken prisoner and had died, leaving my father, William Howell, without a home; so until he married in 1869, he had no settled home but lived here and there and did different things for a livelihood.

The thing that I have heard most about was when in 1868, Mr. Churchill engaged my father to take five thousand head of cattle from this country to Colorado for him.

The Cattle Drive.

The cattle were divided into four different herds and father hired nine cow-men to assist him in the the drive.

They started with the cattle in June and did not reach Colorado until September, but then they did not try to see how quickly they could make the trip and the cattle were allowed to graze along the way and they did not travel many miles per day. Then, too, the distance traveled was fixed largely by the water supply. The several herds could not travel the same way for want of grass, but had to be spread out so that the cattle in the rear would get their share of grass. A wagon in charge of a cook went along and furnished the men with food. Also, extra horses were taken along.

The trip had many difficulties and their first difficulty came when they started to drive the large herd across the Osage Nation. Of course, the Osages did not want the cattle to cross the Nation as the cattle would eat so much of the grass and would disturb the wild game in the path of the drive.

Father was well acquainted with the Osage chief and as he backed his friendship with the gift of a few fat cattle the herd was allowed to cross into Kansas, but when the Cheyenne Nation was reached more trouble arose and this time Father did not have the friendship to back him which he had in the Osage country. So, it was only by the use of diplomacy and

by the gifts of cattle and other things that they were allowed at last to cross the Cheyenne country.

In September Father delivered the herds as he was expected to do in Colorado and received for his trip 5.00 per day and his expenses.

Leaving Colorado, Father came back as far as the place where Winfield, Kansas, now stands, where he hired out as a herder to Phelps & Company, who then were in the cattle business. Father remained with them until the following February when he returned to his friends in eastern Indian Territory.

Marriage.

Here on February 12, 1869, he was married to Miss Eliza Ballard, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Ballard.

My parents settled near and here we children, six of us, three boys and three girls, were born.

Father continued to give much of his time to the cattle business and was away from home a great part of the time. He would buy cattle in Texas and bring them here. First, he had a large ranch near the present town of Bluejacket.

Being away from home so much he hired "Spider" Brown and

his wife, Mariah, who were elderly people, to stay with Mother and look after things in his absence.

I lived for a time near Southwest City and here I attended my first term of school.

Oseuma.

When I was about six years old, Father bought out the claim where Oseuma was. This was at a switch on the Frisco, half-way between Afton and Fairland.

At that time the house building consisted of a very large, log room with a fireplace and three native lumber rooms attached and some small out-buildings.

When Father moved the family here from near Southwest City, there was not another house within miles of us.

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In a couple of years, he built a large two-story, frame house; tore down the log room and moved the other three rooms back in the yard for the hired help to sleep in and he then built "Spider" and his wife a one-room house, south of us towards the creek.

Soon after we came here Father built a small school building in the pasture south of the house and here Miss Ione

Harlan taught the first school at the place called Oseuma. We had to go through the pasture full of cattle to the school building. The teachers, for years, boarded with us.

The section man's family lived in a box-car; however, Father soon secured a station there and they sent a man named Wrightsman from Springfield, Missouri, to be the agent. Father also built a store building and had a store here and secured a post office here and was the first post master.

The other early improvements which he made consisted of a large hay-barn and the scales and office, together with the lots and shutes for loading the cattle. Later, a few dwellings were built here by men who were connected with my father.

Some brothers, Scotchmen, came each summer from Neosho to Oseuma and bought the prairie hay. They lived during the time that they were in Oseuma in a box-car.

Since all of our family have been gone from there, all of the buildings, except the old frame house and the big farm barn and a few of the smaller buildings, have been either torn down or moved away. The name of the station has been changed twice and now there is only a post at the switch with the name of Fullbright on it at the cross-roads.

' Home life.

With as many cowboys and as much help as Father was compelled to keep around him, it meant lots of work to provide something to eat but most of what we ate was raised at home. We had our orchard which supplied the needed fruit, and potatoes, cabbage, beets, turnips and apples were hilled up in the ground for winter use and fruit, pickles and kraut were put up in ten and twenty gallon stone jars, in kegs and in barrels.

During his entire life, Father continued to be a busy man and he and Mother continued to make this their home during his life time, though they would spend much of the winter with me in Afton.

Father was always interested in the welfare of those around him and he was the first white man to be a member of the Cherokee Council.

Conclusion.

I first married William Nelson and later my present husband, Wig Dawson, who was one of the Pioneers of Afton and who was connected with the Dawson Drug Store there in the early days.