

DEAN, WESLEY

INTERVIEW

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Investigator.
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Interview with Wesley Dean,
East Delaware, McAlester, Okla.

I was born in Decatur County, Iowa, in 1862.

My parents were Benjamin and Mary Dean. Both were buried at Greenfield, Missouri.

I came to the Indian Territory in the year of 1888 and located in now what is known as LeFlore County, in a little Indian village called Kullychaha, which was eight or nine miles from Poteau.

I came direct from Missouri to the Territory, bringing my wife and one child in a covered wagon. My mother-in-law was living in the Territory, which was the reason for our locating here. We came from Missouri to the Territory alone.

Our first home was a little log hut with shutters and a fireplace at one end. It was known as the old John Anderson place; John Anderson was a white man. I also farmed some land belonging to John McClure, who was a U. S. Marshal.

We did most of our trading at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and some at Kullychaha and Cameron.

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There was one general store at Kullychaha, operated by Emmitt Cradit. School and church were held in one box building.

There was very little game near this little village, as it was down between two mountains and most of the game had been killed. We often heard the panthers, though, from our place.

We ferried across the Poteau River at the Stanley Turney crossing and the John Anderson crossing. John Anderson also had a big cattle ranch, as did Toll Field and George Battles.

After living at Kullychaha for three or four years I moved nearer Poteau to a district called Tarby Prairie, which was six or seven miles from Poteau. At Poteau at this time there was the Will Welch store and Captain McKinney had a store there and the Fleener hotel was there, too.

We had a school at Tarby Prairie where my daughter, Cleve, went to school. Jim Bagwell was the school teacher. This was a subscription school, parents paying one dollar and a half a month for each scholar. The school was a fair sized frame building having log benches and box desks. They used the McGuffey Readers.

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Some of the Indian children who went to school there were the James, Willis and Harris children.

A few miles from Tarby Prairie they laid out the Kansas City Southern Railroad and built a depot and a few stores and the settlement was called Shady Point. I helped lay this railroad, getting three dollars and fifty cents a day with my team. The building of this railroad was a great help to the farmers in this district as they could sell most all their produce to the workmen and get a good price for it.

Some of these stores still stand at Shady Point; Johnnie Leopard's and Bill Lewis' mercantile stores are still standing.

Our personal friends among the full bloods were the Bohannon and Willis families. We always attended the camp meetings which were conducted by the Baptist Church.

I raised cattle on "the Halves" for a full blood Choctaw named Jess Strickland, who lived up the mountain from our place. He would come each week to see his cattle and would spend the night with us. He always brought his blankets and would roll up in them in the yard or sometimes on the porch. He always told us he

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had his money buried and whether it was found after he was killed I do know.

One notorious outlaw who was feared in this district was Belle Starr. She stole good horses as that was what she wanted mostly.