

ELKINS, MARGARET

INTERVIEW

#7793

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Hummingbird & Bigby,
Investigators,
October 12, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Elkins,
Westville, Oklahoma.

Margaret Elkins was born in Goingsnake District July 3, 1863. Her father was Marshall Wagon, a white man. Her mother was Margaret Woodall, a Cherokee. Margaret Woodall was born in Marietta, Georgia. She was married in Georgia to a man named Scott, a part Cherokee. They had a child Nancy Scott.

After the death of said Scott she was again married to a man named Wagon. To this union there were only two children born namely: Margaret and Thomas Wagon. Later she was married to another man named Brown. She and Brown had two children, Willard and Franklin.

Mrs. Elkins still lives on the same farm that the family settled when they came to the Cherokee Nation from Georgia in 1837.

Early Life

Most of the early life of Mrs. Elkins was spent on the farm that her father operated about three miles northwest of the present town of Westville. At first she

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remembers this farm was small, containing about ten acres. Her father and grandfather worked and cleared more land until now the farm contains about one hundred acres.

The Woodall family was a well-to-do family in the early times. They owned slaves before the Civil War. They kept a few slaves after the war. But they were slaves no more.

Indian Cooking

The family of the Woodalls that came from Georgia were all full blood Cherokees. They knew cooking the old Cherokee way. They ate the simplest of food. The food that could be found on most of the tables would be wild meats, corn and bean bread, pumpkins and dried fruit. At that time fruit was plentiful in the woods. But fruit jars were not known so most of the fruit was dried. The way they dried fruit was by the sun method.

They built a scaffold of poles out in the yard. The fruit was peeled and cut in small pieces and placed on the scaffold until dry. This was sacked and stored up in the lofts of their homes.

Sweet potatoes was another common food in those days. Many sweet potatoes were raised by the Cherokees. They also

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knew how to take care of them better than they do now.

Plenty of wild meat was stored away in the winter. Hogs ran wild over the hills in this part of the Cherokee Nation and hundreds of them were killed every year. There was no law to prohibit anyone from killing as many as his family could make use of. But they had to have a claim in the woods in order to do this. These hogs stayed fat all the year. There was plenty of meat.

Soldier Sixkiller was the greatest hog raiser in this part of the country. He owned several hundred.

Indian Medicine

There was not as much sickness in the nation at that time. Communicable diseases were almost unknown. The only diseases that bothered among the Cherokees was Summer Chills, headaches and colds. These were treated with herbs and different kinds of bark by the Cherokees themselves.

Consumption among the Cherokees was also common. Many died from this disease. Some few among the Cherokees thought that this could be cured.

They were good doctors for gun wounds. They knew the

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method where they could draw lead out of a shot. But nowadays this old way of doctoring is almost a thing of the past. They did not teach the younger Cherokees their way of doctoring. When they did teach anyone they would leave enough out of the necessary knowledge so the person taught would not surpass the teacher.

She stopped fevers by a method they called "Sweating Fever". This was done by placing several kettles of hot water in the bed with the patient. Placing these pots of water under the covers with the sick would cause the person to sweat. This sweating caused the fever to stop immediately. She has witnessed this process on several occasions. Among the best Cherokee doctors whom she knew was an old lady named Cha-wa-Yeu, this lady lived on Ballard Creek near old Fort Wayne, now Watts. She was the mother of George and Fred Dunningose who was hung in 1891.

Education

The earliest school in this part of the Coingsnake District was the Baptist Mission school. She lived just a mile south of this school. She finished the eighth grade and also attended the Orphan Asylum at Tahlequah when Watt Duncan was superintendent.

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Afterwards she taught school at Timberlake which was a community near where the Morris School is now. Carrie Qualls and Nan McNair were her favorite teachers.

Church

The Baptist Mission which they attended was the only church in this part of the Cherokee Nation. The old timers say that this mission started before the Civil War. Some say this was established soon after the coming of the immigrants. But the first missionary at this place was Reverend Upton as told by the old timers. Afterwards John Jones was stationed at this place. Besides the old log mission house there was erected a brick house to house Reverend John Jones.

Post Office

Several years afterwards this Baptist Mission was allowed a post office which was called the Baptist Post Office. Mrs. Carrie Qualls was the first post-mistress. A printing shop was also established at this place.

Civil War

When the Civil War broke out in the Cherokee Nation

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her father joined the Confederate Army. He served through the War until the last year. He was killed in the battle of Fayetteville.

Courts

Goingsnake District Courthouse was located on Peacheater Branch, west of the present Westville. Abe Woodall was the judge for one term.

Trading and Milling Points

Tahlequah was their main trading point at that time. This was about twenty-five miles away. But they did all their milling at Moore's Mill over in Arkansas.