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Billie Byrd
Field Worker
May 17, 1937

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Interview with Will Etherton,
Okemah, Oklahoma.
Aged 90.

It was the time in and about the years of 1867 to 1874 that many outbreaks of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians occurred. The Cheyenne and the Arapaho tribes did not like for the white people to settle in their country or kill many of the buffalo. The buffalo was rapidly decreasing in number as the country was being rapidly settled by the whites, and the Indians wanted to drive the whites away from their homes as far as was possible.

There were only two things that a white man could do if he chanced to be within or near an Indian encampment or settlement. He could either outrun the Indians and get clear out of sight or be killed by them. The Cheyennes never took any white people alive at any time.

The travelers, freighters, and other people traveling on the Chisholm trail through the southwest and especially in the Cheyenne and Arapaho country were ever on the lookout for trouble from the Indians. The lone travelers and the traders were constantly warned by the people who knew the feelings of the Cheyennes or Arapaho towards the whites.

There had been several treaties completed with these tribes but that didn't seem to do any good.

It was when the Cheyennes were on one of their war-paths in 1874 that a Pat Hennessey, a freighter from Wichita, Kansas, and two companions were on their way to Fort Sill, Indian Territory, and they were supposedly killed by Indians.

At that time I was working on the T5 ranch on Eagle Chief Creek, near what is now Hennessey, Oklahoma, as a ranch hand. Word came that Pat Hennessey and his companions had been killed and when others went to the scene I also went. The wagon was still in smoke when we reached the scene of the killing. The wagon in those days were called the lynched pin wagons because the wagons did not have the present form of screw on the wagon hub but a sort of a wooden pin was used to keep the wagon hub in place.

Before the Cheyenne reservation was opened to the settlers, I was appointed as territorial U. S. Deputy Marshal. It was upon the recommendation of Bill Dalton, once notorious outlaw that obtained this appointment. Dalton and I had known each other for a

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long time and were very good friends. He knew me at a time when I held a reputation as the best shot in four counties of Kansas. I had to practice a lot to hold this reputation but I did become an expert at handling guns. There was an advertisement sent out from Kingfisher for a man who was fearless and a good shooter. I never felt that I had any record as a fearless man, but Dalton, himself, told the proper officials that I was a fearless man and a straight shooter as well.

After my appointment as peace officer, Dalton's and my friendship gradually lessened. I never saw him again until I was arresting him for horse stealing. I had never thought that I would arrest Bill Dalton. I took him as a prisoner at a saloon in Stillwater and took him to Guthrie where he was placed in jail for trial. He later made his escape by overpowering the jailer. That was his last escape from the law as he was later killed.

When the reservations were opened to the settlers, the people rushed in and staked out their claims here and there. The people first lived in tents or underbrush arbors

on their claims. The construction of sod houses was begun

There was a law that prohibited the settlers from cutting trees and using the logs to build their homes. As a peace officer, I warned the people about this but there were some of my friends and relatives in the poorer class who couldn't do anything else to make homes, so I gave up my commission to Pete Langley. I was arrested by Pete Langley when I was getting logs to construct me a home, but was later released.

As a U. S. Deputy Marshal, I was constantly on the go and often went without sleep, or food all day. It was on one such day as this that I chanced to come onto an Indian encampment. Some Indians were very friendly and some were not. I tried to talk to one of the Indian men but all he could do was grunt, but he invited me into a tepee and I could tell by his actions that he was really trying to be friendly as he was smiling and rubbing his hands together.

This Indian was feady for supper and had invited me in to eat with him. There was plenty to eat, too. There

was one thing that really fitted my appetite and that was a sort of meat that had been barbecued until tender. . I was so hungry that I didn't eat much of anything else but the barbecue.

After supper as I prepared to leave I shook hands with the Indian and all he could still do was to grunt. My horse had strayed off and I saw him at the back of the tepee so I started after him. I happened to look on the grounds in the back of the tepee and saw four legs of a dog freshly cut off at the joints. I stood there and looked at the legs and then realized what the delicious barbecue had been. I could not do anything about it as I had already eaten. I can still remember eating that barbecue.

I found out later that the Cheyennes and Arapahoes paid as much for a dog as they paid for a yearling for meat.