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Elizabeth Ross, Interviewer.  
September 27, 1957

Menard Store - Post Office

During a portion of the decade of the eighties of the last century, and for some years later, there was a general store situated near the banks of the Bayou Menard, some seven miles east of the town of Fort Gibson. The store was on the west bank of the bayou not far distant from a ford. The road which passed immediately in front of the store led from Tahlequah to Fort Gibson and was situated at an excellent trading point. The proprietor of the store was William H. Hendricks, a Cherokee citizen of some prominence, having served as a member of the Cherokee National Senate, and also as superintendent in charge of the National Asylum for the blind, indigent and insane. Hendricks owned a large farm near the store, and when a post office was established under the name of the Menard post office, received appointment

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as postmaster, a position he occupied for a number of years.

The hacks and buggies in which passengers traveled between Tahlequah and Fort Gibson often stopped briefly at the Hendricks Store, meals being procurable in a dining room nearby; and at a somewhat later date, in the decade of the nineties, the stage coach which had been placed upon the road made stops at the store. Before the opening of the dining room travelers often made their meals from canned goods and crackers which were purchased in the store.

In course of time Hendricks, becoming advanced in years, retired from business and others operated the store and dining room. Large numbers of people traveled over the old road for some years after Hendricks ceased to operate the store, but finally a railroad (a branch line of the Frisco) was built and

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connected Tahlequah and Fort Gibson, and after 1802 there was little travel over the winding road which had been laid out in early and eventful days of the past. Yet later came allotment of Cherokee lands and eventually the admission of Oklahoma as a State. New roads were laid out and the pioneer road, as it may be designated, fell into permanent disuse throughout most of its distance. Today the site of the Hendricks Store and of the former Menard post office is approximately one mile north of the highway leading from Tahlequah to Muskogee.

Many persons who in bygone years traveled by hack or stage coach over the old dirt road are yet living and retain recollections of having passed by or stopped at the Hendricks Store, in which was to be found a variety of merchandise and groceries.

Hendricks raised many hogs and was adept in curing hams and bacon and his big log smoke house usually

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contained an ample supply of cured meat, some of which was placed on sale.

In the period of 1894 - '95 the mail stage was held up by ice a few times in a lonely spot in the woodlands - comparatively short distance from the Kenard Post Office, but conditions were usually quiet along the route.

Mr. A. L. Estep, who gave the information in this manuscript, was a stage driver in the early days written about, and now lives at Tablequah.