

HILL, DAVIS

INTERVIEW

12121

292

HILL, DAVIS

INTERVIEW

12121

James R. Carselowey,  
Interviewer,  
November 15, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. Davis Hill,  
Vinita, Oklahoma.

My name is Davis Hill. I now live at 1005 West Canadian Avenue, Vinita, Craig County. I was born September 21, 1863, at McElmore's Cove, Walker County, Georgia. I received my education at Ringold and Cedar Grove, Georgia.

My mother's name was Rachel Davis Hill. My grandfather's name was Daniel Davis. Our Cherokee blood came from the Davis side of the house.

#### Chief Ross House Still Standing

Chief John Ross had a reservation near Chattanooga, Tennessee, on which was built one of the famous old log houses of the early day type. I have been in it and it still stands on the same spot where John Ross lived before leaving Tennessee for the Cherokee Nation.

#### The Cherokees Left Georgia as Late as 1872

The United States Government never did "let up" on the Indians back in Georgia. They kept right on trying to get all of them to remove to the Cherokee Nation and while

HILL, DAVIS

INTERVIEW

12121

- 2 -

they did not molest the white men who had married Indian wives they, nevertheless, treated with them and moved them if they wished to go.

It was in 1872 when my father, George .. Hill, signed up with the Government and moved his family to the Indian Territory. He settled on White Oak Creek about three miles south of Vinita where he built a farmhouse. His health was bad and he lost one child while there and after six months he returned to Georgia and stayed until 1887 when he returned to Vinita and lived there during the remainder of his life.

Other Cherokees who left Georgia and came to the Cherokee Nation from 1868 to 1881 were J.C. Hall, ..C. Patton, Sam Davis, W. E. Little, Mr. Connelly and others. All who had families brought them as they left Georgia. Some of these stopped on the way and went into business for awhile coming on to Vinita at different times.

The Government paid the transportation of this group of Cherokees and allowed them subsistence for one year as

HILL, DAVIS

INTERVIEW

12121

- 3 -

they did all the other Cherokees who had removed here from Georgia and Tennessee.

Married in 1888

I was married at Vinita on November 29, 1888, to Fannie Elizabeth Parks. She was born at Elk Mills, Missouri, January 9, 1871.

My wife is a daughter of Thomas Jefferson Parks and Thompson Anna Parks. She was educated at the Cherokee Orphan Asylum and at Howard Payne College, in Fayette, Missouri.

Were Successful in Business

Most of the men who came here from Georgia with our party were successful business men. They all established their rights with the Citizenship Court about the first thing they did after arriving here and each one selected a farm in the new nation. My father went into business in Vinita and in later years I was connected with the Vinita National Bank as its cashier.

W. E. Little and W. C. Patton went into the mercantile business and later both got into the cattle business and were very successful.

Two of W. C. Patton's daughters married men from Muskogee who were also very successful cattlemen. Julia was married to Dr. F. B. Fite and Pauline was married to

HILL, DAVIS

INTERVIEW

12121

- 4 -

Ed Halsell. Both of these two men have had much to do with both civic and the business affairs of Muskogee.

Cattle Business Starts in 1883-4

The cattle business started in the Cherokee Nation in a big way about 1883-4 when the Texas cattlemen were faced with a drought that drove them to seek new pastures and feed outside the state of Texas.

It was at that time that Wingfield Scott, one of the largest cattlemen in Texas, came to Vinita and sold thousands of Texas cattle to any who had feed to carry them through the winter. Some of the men who got in on that deal were Dave Allen, Nat Skinner, Frank Billingslea, W. E. Little, a man named Wetsell and many others. J. C. Hall took the remnant of the herd under conditions that he was only to pay for the cattle that were living at shipping time.

Mr. Hall had a good sized bunch of cattle of his own with just about enough feed to carry them through but he decided as the Texas cattle were already acclimated and in fairly good shape to start the winter,

HILL, DAVIS

INTERVIEW

12121

- 5 -

that he would turn his own cattle on the range and risk making some additional money on the Texas cattle.

The winter was long and cold and thousands of head of the Texas cattle froze to death, or died, and Mr. Hall lost most of his native cattle.

I saw a stack of bones piled as high as a good-sized house on Jim Hall's place, south of Vinita, in 1890. I tried to buy these bones to ship for fertilizer but Mr. Hall told me he wanted to keep them as a monument to his folly. His wife, however, wanted to get rid of them and so I finally got them.

Notwithstanding the set-back these men received in their first attempt at the cattle business, some of them kept right on going and were rated as successful cattlemen in a few years.

J. O. Hall was one of them. He served for many years as Vice-President of the First National Bank of Vinita, which office he held at the time of his death.

HILL, DAVIS

INTERVIEW

12121

- 6 -

He was succeeded as director of that bank by his daughter, Mrs. Ludie Owens, of Oklahoma City.

William E. Little served in the same capacity with the Vinita National Bank which office he held at the time of his death.

From 1883 on the cattle business was one of the chief industries of the territory adjacent to Vinita and owing to the fact that two railroads came through the territory as early as 1872, Vinita became the shipping point for all the cattle, both outgoing and incoming. Thousands of head of cattle were loaded in and out of Vinita each year and many of our early day citizens grew rich in the cattle business.