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CARSELOWAY, JAMES R.

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James R. Carselowey, Field Worker
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AN OLD BATTLE GROUND

I was born and raised within two and a half miles of the old battle ground on Cabin Creek, where the battle of Cabin Creek was fought on September 18, 1864. I have visited the site many times, and have heard my father tell of the things he had found before I was old enough to know about the battle. The ground is located in the center of section 12, range 20 east, township 23 north, Mayes County, Oklahoma.

Two thousand Confederate soldiers, composed of a combined force of General Stan Watie's Indian Brigade and General Cano's troops marched from the Creek Agency, located at Okmulgee, in a northeastern direction, up past where the present town of Pryor Creek is now located, where they encountered a Federal haying crew. The crew were taken prisoners and the hay, about three thousand tons, was burned. They marched east from there, some six or eight miles, and struck the Old Military Trail, and followed this for a distance of ten or twelve miles to Cabin Creek, where they lay in wait for a Federal supply train. They had

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information that this train would be along soon on the way from Fort Scott to Fort Gibson, making the trip over the Old Military Trail. When the train arrived it had an escort of about six hundred men, and the battle started on the banks of Cabin Creek. The Confederate forces were all on the south side of the Creek, stationed along the present boundaries of the old Hooley Bell place. The six hundred Federal soldiers made a stubborn resistance to the Confederate attack, but had no artillery. The Confederates had six pieces of artillery, and after six hours of stubborn fighting, in dense timbered land, the Federals were driven back to the northeast. The Gano army followed them for about one mile, as shown by the bullets found in the trees long years afterwards.

Plenty of evidence that a battle had been fought was left. My father and other neighbors in the vicinity found swords, cannon balls, old pistols, and old rifles. One woman now living near the battle ground, by the name of Mrs. Claude Nugent, Vinita, Route 3, declares that she found an old cannon in Cabin Creek and that she has felt all over it, although it is under water, and she knows that it is an old time cannon.

About 1920 some man put a sawmill on the Creek, near

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the old battle ground, and attempted to cut some of the big old trees which had grown up after the battle. They were so full of lead that they could not be sawed. After the second attempt the plan had to be abandoned.

NICK THOMAS A TEAMSTER

Nick Thomas, a Cherokee Indian, who died without issue, was a teamster under General Gano in the Battle of Cabin Creek. Nick grew up in our neighborhood, and died in Vinita a few years back. Nick told my father that while the battle was raging some of the government teams stampeded and ran off with their loaded wagons, and jumped off a high bluff, killing some of the teams and wrecking the wagons and their cargo. My father found this to be a fact, when years afterward he found a large tree growing on the inside of one of the wagon tires, under the bluff. Nick Thomas also said they captured so much stuff that they could not get away with all of it. He said the roads were very muddy, there having been a lot of rain previous to the battle. Barrels of sugar, salt, and rice had burst ^{were} and scattered over the ground so they could not be picked up. Every thing that would burn, including a lot of the wagons, was burned, to keep the Federals from retrieving them.

Thomas said it took them two days to bury their dead, and get everything ready to move. They had captured an enormous amount of food, three hundred wagons and eight hundred horses and mules. He says they only took about eight hundred horses and mules and one hundred twenty-nine wagons. History gives the captured horses as thirteen hundred.

RE ENFORCEMENTS REACH FEDERALS

Thomas says before they were able to get away from the battle ground, and within forty-eight hours, re-enforcements arrived from Fort Gibson, and they were attacked from the south and they had another six hour battle with the Federals, who had come to meet the wagon train. There was little loss to the Confederate army, and when night came General Gano took his army, and captured cargo and left in a northwestern direction, blazing a trail that went under the name of the "Gano Trail" for years afterward, or until the section lines did away with the old trails.

He said they camped the first night after leaving near the town of Oolagah, now in Rogers County, and the old home town of Will Rogers. From there they circled back by way of Tulsa, to the Choctaw Nation, where the Southern Army had headquarters for the Indian Territory.

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ISSUED NEW SUITS

This old teamster, driving one of General Gano's wagons, said when they got back to camp, in the Choctaw Nation, that General Gano had captured enough suits to issue a new suit to two thousand soldiers, and that they certainly did need them, as they were about all naked and winter was coming on. He said this was the largest capture that had been made during the entire War period in the Territory, and that the Southern army had made several attempts to capture the Federals' supply over this very trail; but never had ^{had} enough men to carry the plan out. It was estimated the booty was worth \$1, 500,000.

NORTHERN SOLDIERS BURIED AT VINITA

When I was making a list of the graves in the Fairview Cemetery at Vinita a short time ago the sexton told me there were a number of graves in that cemetery that were said to have been ^{those of} Federal soldiers who were killed in the battle of Cabin Creek. He said that Billie Simms, a Spanish-American War veteran of Vinita, Oklahoma, was having the Government erect a monument to them, as fast as he could find out their names. This cemetery is located about twelve miles northeast of the battle ground.

LAST BATTLE FOUGHT

The battle of Cabin Creek was the last battle to be fought in the Cherokee Nation, before the War ended. A recent session of the state legislature appropriated money to erect a monument at this site so that its location may not be lost.