

ROSS, ELIZABETH

APPLES AND PRODUCE

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Elizabeth Ross, Field Worker
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Apples and Produce

For many years apples, and in some instances other products, were hauled from points in Arkansas into, and through the districts of the Cherokee Nation. Covered wagons drawn by horses or mules were often to be seen along the roads leading through the rugged regions, the woodlands and prairies. The wagons were more numerous in the fall and early winter seasons than at other times. Sometimes only a few wagons moved along the roads but usually they were more numerous, from ten to twenty. The apple sellers visited the several towns; such as, Tahlequah, Fort Gibson and Muskogee (Creek Nation) after its establishment, besides various rural sections where the fruit might be sold. Orchards were not numerous and the apples usually found ready sale.

The apple sellers carried provisions with them, as of necessity they must be away from their homes for some days. They camped at evening in the vicinity of springs or near the home of some acquaintance, and were ready to resume their travels early the following day. Some of the men occasionally made long drives, passing Fort Gibson and following the old Texas road to distant localities.

Besides the men who engaged in the sale of apples there were others who hauled flour to various sections in the Cherokee country. There were several flour mills at no great distance east of the boundary line between the State of Arkansas and the Indian Territory, and as there were few mills in the Cherokee Nation during a lengthy period, the flour sellers found numerous customers. Besides flour some had bacon, onions, and dried peaches and apples for sale, and during the course of a year experienced satisfactory returns.

There are now living a number of persons who recall that as boys and girls they often saw the large white-topped wagons as they made their way along the narrow and often winding roads through the valleys and over the hills of the eastern sections of the Cherokee Nation. There were no railroads in many miles and the wagon men with their loads of various products continued their trips and journeys during a considerable period.

Today (1937) an occasional old man may be found who recalls that in his more youthful days he drove his two-horse wagon through portions of the Cherokee country, carrying apples, flour, or other articles of food for sale in localities or towns.

Cincinnati, an old western Arkansas town, a few miles across the "line" from the present town of Westville, was the starting point of some of the men who sold from their covered wagons in days gone by. Others were from the vicinity of Cane Hill and other points.

In course of time conditions changed. Railroads were built through several sections of the Cherokee Nation, new towns arose and sellers ceased to make their visits.

Authority: "Uncle Bob" White, who once drove a flour wagon from Arkansas. Still living southeast of Park Hill, Oklahoma. Personal recollection.
