

MORRIS, AMANDA MELVIN.

INTERVIEW.

12946.

W. T. Holland,
Investigator,
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An Interview with Mrs. Amanda Melvin-
Morris, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Prior to the Civil War my parents, James and Martha Roles, came to Lawrence County, Missouri, and settled. My father was a native of Kentucky while my mother, Martha Woods, was a native of Tennessee. They came in a covered wagon, as it was before the day of railroads even in Missouri. Missouri was very sparsely settled then and still not so thickly settled where I was born in 1853, January 28th.

Like a lot of pioneer families, my people were inclined to move to newer fields, so chose Arkansas. It was in Washington County, Arkansas, that I met and was married to David A. Morris, January 29th, the day after I was eighteen. Our lives were uneventful. Mr. Morris was a carpenter and farmer, always making a good living. After crops were finished he worked at his trade.

We lived near the Indian Territory line but didn't become permanent residents until 1878, when we moved to "The Baptist" as it was called then. This was west of

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Westville some three miles. The main thing at "The Baptist" was a school building and parsonage. We moved into the parsonage and stayed there for some time. At that time it wasn't being used and we were allowed the use of it, to look after the property. There were very few white families in that section, and the Indians all lived in log or pole houses. Several families could come into the territory when we did, but most of them moved on west or south and I never knew where they went, that is the most of them.

The Baptists had a seminary at "Baptist", an Indian school, and at one time a large school. There is a cemetery near in which are buried some prominent Cherokee Indians. Uncle Mose Dutton was an early Methodist preacher. Bill and Salvimores Blackburn were Freewill Baptist preachers. They preached to the Indians and whites.

Our main camping ground was called Macedonia Camp Ground. We had a large log meeting house, and around were log houses as camps for people to live in during the meetings. We would stay from ten days to three weeks, just as long as interest was shown. When food got short, the men

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would go home and get a fresh supply. Usually three to five families ate together. The Cherokee Indians attended these services with the whites. They were orderly and easy to get along with, as long as they trusted you but if you betrayed their trust they were through with you. We traded for the little we needed at Westville. P. V. Craig and George Gibson owned and operated a general store there. Bill Calvin was the postmaster there for years, fifty years ago. Dr. Barnes and Son and Dr. Ellis were early Westville doctors and well posted men for the time.

We bought green coffee, sugar, pepper, etc., from the store.

I got a new pair of shoes in the spring and the se were worn only on Sundays. My girl friends and I went barefooted until we got near the church, then we stopped and put on our shoes. After services and when we were away from the crowd we pulled off our shoes and carried them. We did this where we had beas, or boy friends along. Nothing was thought of it as lots of people did this. These shoes were worn that winter and had to last

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until the next spring when we got our new shoes. This seems odd now but then it didn't, just a matter of economy. We had plenty to eat and wear, even though we had to make our own clothes and spin the thread and knit our stockings. We were busy but contented.

You rarely ever heard of a divorce then. That is among the better folk. Of course, there were then as now, some people ^{who} thought little of an obligation. Marriage in the Territory was easy, for that matter, and separation just as easy, but few availed themselves of it.

When I married in Arkansas, you weren't required to get a license, just take the vows before a preacher.

Calvin Evans performed our ceremony when we were married.

I knew a number of prominent Indians. Chief Bushy-head, I don't know his given name, is buried at "The Baptist" cemetery as are a number of other Indians.

The Cherokee Indians in what is now Adair County lived pretty much as their white neighbors. They farmed, traded, had their schools, businesses, and their own form of government and were in every sense civilized. I never had an occasion to fear Indians; they treated you just as well as you treated them. If they did not trust or like you they simply let you alone.