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INTERVIEW WITH JOHN J. HANNON

Given by C. C. Davidson

Field worker.

I came to the Indian Territory from Missouri with my father, mother and brother, W. E. Hannon in 1881, when I was about ten years old. We came in a covered wagon and followed the old Texas Trail down through the Cherokee Nation, crossed the Arkansas River at the Sullivan Ferry just above the mouth of the Grand River between the Grand and the Verdigris and on across the Creek Nation and settled in the South Canadian district of the Choctaw Nation. We stayed there and made a little crop and worked at different jobs until the fall of 1882. Then we loaded our wagon again and headed back up the Trail, north again. When we reached Muskogee we stopped. Aunt Bet Kirk ran a boarding house in an old frame building just south of the Evens Livery Barn which stood at the corner of Cherokee and Broadway. We boarded there with Aunt Bet for about a week and staked out horses on the west side of Cherokee Street, between Broadway and Okmulgee to graze. The prairie grass was about knee high there.

~~Leaving there we went to the Arkansas River bottoms and picked cotton until the cotton picking was over. We then moved to the John Nivens farm where the Muskogee Town and Country Club is now. We made rails and fenced a lot of the farm. We farmed there during the years of 1883 and 1884.~~

We raised a little cotton and corn and grazed cattle. I have seen the prairie grass higher than a man's head on the prairie between

Muskogee and the Arkansas River.

Mrs. Mary Elliott, a widow, owned the farm south of the Levins' farm. She kept a lot of corrals which she rented to cattlemen on the Trail who camped and didn't want to herd their cattle all night.

In the fall of 1884, my father, James Hannon died. That same fall they started building Bacone College. I tried to get a job but was too young. The contractor would not hire me then but later I got a job helping some ranchers drive a big herd of cattle through to the Cherokee Strip (No Man's Land). The first day we made it to Pecan Creek west of Muskogee. Buzz Hawkins, an old negro, owned a big sheep ranch just east of Pecan Creek. When we got there it was raining cold and stormy. The boss rode up to Hawkins' house and asked him if he could rent corrals for the cattle so we wouldn't have to herd them all night in the rain. Old Buzz said, "Yes Sah, you sure can. I got sheep in all of them but I crowd the sheep up and we'll get them all in," so he worked for two or three hours. He moved hundreds of sheep and we finally got the cattle corralled. He took us all to the house and gave us a hot supper and one room for our bunks in the house. Next morning when we got ready to leave the Boss asked him what he owed him. He said, "I don't know Suh, I guess twenty five cents'll be 'bout right."

The old Hawkins ranch house, a two story frame building still stands. The next town we passed was Red Fork, what is now a part of West Tulsa. On this trip I saw the ~~most~~ deer I ever saw in one

bunch. They were in a small canyon in the Cherokee Strip. There must have been at least fifty in the drove.

I worked for a cattle company in the Strip for one year.

I heard the conversation that caused Dick Vann to kill Sam Sixkiller. Sixkiller was an Indian Police. Vann was a Cherokee Indian. It started during the fair. The fair grounds then were about where the city hospital now stands. Sixkiller was keeping the gate at the fair grounds and Vann started to ride in. He was drinking a little and Sixkiller stopped him and says, "Vann, you will have to behave if you go in there." Vann replied very nicely, "well I'm going to behave." Sixkiller said, "well I am just telling you that if you don't I'll put you in the calaboose." From that they started arguing and Sixkiller did throw him in but when he pushed him in at the door he kicked him Vann said, "Sixkiller, that kick will cost you your life," and sure enough on Christmas Eve night they met. Sixkiller was looking for another man but when they met Vann warned Sixkiller to go for his gun and he shot him dead. Vann scouted around the country for a while but they never captured him but he was finally shot through the hips accidentally and died from the wound.

Sam McWilliams, known as the Verdigris Kid, started his outlaw career by stealing three cows from my brother, N. E. Hannon, who swore out a warrant for him. He sent word that if he didn't withdraw charges against him he would kill him. He didn't kill him but joined the Cook brothers gang and was soon killed at Braggs.

It was a little later Jim and Bill Cook and Bill Golby (Cherokee Bill) got into some kind of a scrape over in the Cherokee Nation and Jim Cook was wounded. They forded the Arkansas River at Rabbit Ford, rode right by our place and stopped and left Jim at Mary Elliott's to be cared for until he recovered from his wound.

Bill Cook and Cherokee Bill went up on top of Kaler Hill, unsaddled their horses, stretched some blankets on some poles for a shade and lay down to rest while their horses grazed and rested. Pretty soon a Deputy U. S. Marshal came and spied them up there. Cherokee Bill's horse had grazed off down the hillside quite a way from them. The Marshal crawled in the grass up to the horse and got him started down to a house where a man named Addington lived. Before he got there, though, Bill saw him, grabbed his winchester and started after him. The Marshal ran in and told Addington what was up and deputized him to help him. Mr. Addington's folks were sick so he said, "We can't fight here, let's go to the barn." They slipped out and got behind the barn, and as Bill came by the Marshal commanded him to put up his hands. Bill dropped to one knee, fired several shots into the corner of the barn, right at them, then ran for his horse. The Marshal, instead of shooting him, shot the horse. When Bill saw the horse fall, he turned and went after the Marshal who fled. Cherokee Bill and Bill Cook then got the other horse, went down to a farm house, took a horse and rode on. They met a neighbor of the farmers and told him that they had borrowed the horse and to tell the owner that he would come

home in a few days. Sure enough, in about two days the horse was back home.

A Negro named Rogers, who was deputy U. S. Marshal, finally betrayed Bill. He invited him into his home as a friend, entertained him in his home until he got his confidence, then knocked him in the head with a fire poker and captured him.

He was hanged at Fort Smith, Arkansas. His brother, Clarence Golby, later shot and killed Robison at Fort Gibson.

In the fall of 1887, Sullivan, the man who ran the Sullivan ferry shot and killed one of his tenants there on his farm. The trouble came up over the division of the crop. Sullivan was sent to the Penitentiary for twenty-five years, served his time and came back to his farm. At one time he attempted to commit suicide but when the time did come for him to die he prayed to live. I heard him say just a short time before he died, "If I die, for God's sake don't bury me near the man I killed."

After Mr. Sullivan was sent to the Penitentiary John Nevins bought the ferry and ran it. It was known as the upper Nevins ferry and the one below the mouth of the Grand River was known as the lower Nevins ferry.
