

REMINISCENCES BY PETER J. HUDSON

Trails, Roads, Locations, Settlements, Names, Mountains and Streams, Lead and Zinc Mining, and Happenings.

In the early days of the Choctaw Nation in the Indian Territory the trailways played an important part.

The Kiamitia Mountains, extending from east to west for approximately seventy miles, impassable as to wagons and vehicles, except two roads north and south. The "line road" approximately followed the boundary line between the Choctaw Nation and the State of Arkansas from the vicinity of Ultima Thule through Cove and Dallas, passing the east end of the mountains into Fort Smith. The other wagon road from Fort Towson north passing the west end of the mountains, thence turning eastward across the valley into Fort Smith, was constructed as a Military Road.

Another wagon road called the Fort Towson-Hot Springs (Arkansas) road extended from Fort Towson in a northeasterly direction, passing the home place of Simon P. Willis, a full blood Choctaw Indian who, in youth, attended the Choctaw Academy in Scott County, Kentucky, and for a number of years was District Trustee of the Second District, Choctaw Nation, and also a member of the Choctaw National Council. This road continued from his place about ten miles, passing the home of Toshawatvbbi across Glover River by the home of Solomon Williams, Sylvester Williams and Morris Williams, sons of Alemvhtvbbi and Polly. Solomon, served as Sheriff of Nashoba County for several years. Sylvester, a polished and well educated Indian, at one time was District Judge of the Second Judicial District. The Rev. Alexanders S. Williams, a college bred Indian, having attended colleges in the states, was an ordained itinerant Methodist Preacher serving in that capacity as a member of the Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He also served the Choctaw Nation as a member of the Commission which treated with the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, known as the Dawes Commission, in the framing of the Atoka Agreement. He was born December 2, 1868, and died January 31, 1925, buried between Golden and Broken Bow.

Morris, another brother also served as Sheriff of Nashoba County and as a member of the National Council. Said road continued east by the home of Felikavtbbi, where Bethel, Oklahoma, is now located to about one-half mile west of the "Narrows" ("Tali-Oka-hikiya", meaning "rock standing in water"). The "Narrows" was the south end of a high mountain known as Little River Mountain composed of solid rock 300 yards wide which extended at an angle of about 45 degrees to the edge of the mouth of Boktuklo Creek, emptying into Mountain Fort River. William McKinney, brother of Thompson McKinney (Principal Chief of the Choctaws 1886-1888, born in Buffalo Creek settlement), secured from the Choctaw Council a charter for a turnpike road through the "Narrows" with the privilege of collecting tolls. After blasting the rock and constructing the road he abandoned the toll project, people then passing through it with their vehicles without paying toll. For the distance of about 300 yards only one vehicle could pass. (A State Highway has been constructed over the route). Thence eastward crossing Mountain Fork and following Buffalo Creek to a settlement known as Buffalo Creek Settlement, and thence in an easterly direction to Cove, Arkansas, crossing the "Line Road" through Dallas into Hot Springs, Arkansas.

From Ultima Thule, Arkansas, to Fort Towson, a distance of about fifty miles, the Fort Towson-Little Rock Military Road, passed through Eagletown, Lukfatah, Wheelock and Fort Towson on west to Boggy Depot.

Many of the Choctaw emigrants from Mississippi located at points on this military road. Later a number of them who liked to hunt drifted northward into the mountainous district where wild game, deer, bear, turkeys, etc. abounded. Numbers of the mixed bloods, especially those who owned slaves, moved west to the prairie country, where they put farms in cultivation and raised cattle, and south to the Red River bottoms, where they cultivated the rich bottom lands. Many families and friends having become separated, in order to visit each other, attend funerals, camp meetings, and temperance assemblies, and traveled the trailways. Members of Council, missionaries, preachers, and explorers also used these trailways.

*Vol. 10 Chronicles of Oklahoma p. 514

*Vol. 10 Chronicles of Oklahoma p-514

Many of the Choctaws who located at Eagletown and to the south on Little River, removed further north settling on Buffalo Creek, where Smithville is now located, and on Eagle Fork River, near Octavia. The only wagon road leading to these settlements being the "Line Road" on account of the scarcity of vehicles, and also to save distance, most of the travel was on horseback or foot over the more direct trailways.

Ipalvmmi Trailway was traveled by those going from Eagletown to the country called Buffalo Creek settlement north of Eagletown in the direction of what is now Smithville, Oklahoma, Ipalvmmi, an old Choctaw for whom this trailway was named, was a great hunter, wearing mocassins and a turban. He had a son, Adam, and a daughter, Mary.

From Eagletown a trailway led to Hochatown, a distance of fifteen miles, which extended north along Mountain Fork River for six miles. In that distance the trail crossed Mountain Fork River six times, the last crossing being to the north side at the confluence of Surprise Creek; thence along the course of Surprise Creek northwest, gradually reaching the top of a small mountain, after which the trailway led off in a northwest direction through an open wooded flat, at Felikatvbbi's place (now Bethel). On an occasion whilst traveling this trailway to Hochatown, on reaching the flat wooded country herein described, a little before sundown, seeing three deer and killing two of them I placed them on my horse's back and continued towards Hochatown, fording Mountain Fork River six times. Meeting Pierce Homa, a full blood who had hunted all day without killing any game, I gave him one of my deer. Pierce Homa was a brother of Cornelius, Silas and Wallace Homa, and had lived at my father's home, which was the old Cyrus Byington place. He and I had played together as boys. He was named for President Franklin Pierce and was the son of Filitahoma, a Creek Indian captured by the Choctaws during the war of 1812. He also had a brother named Folehoma, meaning "red stick", who had been chief of one of the Creek clans and was also in the war of 1812. My brother-in-law, Thomas Amos, was a nephew of Filitahoma and Folehoma. These two Creek Indians, after being captured, having been adopted by the Choctaws accompanied them in their migration to the west.

Another trailway which was unusually rough extended from

the point where the Ipalvmmi trailway leaves Mountain Fork River, following that river for eight miles until it reached the "Narrows".

Pine Mountain is located between Hochatown⁴ and the "Narrows". The State of Oklahoma has a game preserve of about 15,000 acres just south of Pine Mountain, located at a point where Surprise Creek empties into Mountain Fork River.

Some of the Eagletown emigrants drifted still further north, settling along Little River from its source to what is now Nashoba Post Office. Farm land being scarce families located a mile or two apart along the river which flowed between Little River Mountain and Kiamitia Mountain. As they moved to the north they built a wagon road through these valleys following the river. Ox teams were used almost exclusively for transportation purposes.

A few of the Eagletown Choctaws drifted to the north side of Kiamitia Mountain to the vicinity of the then Wade Settlement, some also settling near where Nashoba post office is now located.

Some of the Choctaws who settled around Lukfatah⁴ (near Broken Bow) moved to the north about thirty miles in the vicinity of Bethel, traveling the trailway which followed the water shed between Glover and Mountain Fork Rivers, over which Williams Highway (Highway No. 21) has been constructed, a modern highway named for the Hon. Robert L. Williams, under whose administration as Governor the road's construction was planned and initiated.

Some of the Choctaws who settled around Wheelock moved to the north about thirty miles to what became known as Mt. Zion settlement. Mt. Zion Church being organized in 1848 some of the membership of Wheelock Church were transferred to that church. The trailway over which these people traveled was over the water shed between Little River and Glover River. Mt. Zion⁴ Church was about two miles north of Ida (now Battiest post office, named for a Choctaw family of that name who lived there.)

⁴Vol. 10, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, p. 505.

⁴Vol. 10 *Chronicles of Oklahoma* p. 514.

⁴Vol. 10 *Chronicles of Oklahoma* p-514

Sam Williams Mountain was named for a white man of that name. He lived at the east end of the mountain, and was noted as a bear hunter.

A church located on the north side of Kiamitia Mountain at the source of Kiamitia River, called Good Spring Church, was under the pastorate of William McKinney. The Choctaws living in Buffalo Creek settlements, around what is now Smithville, in going to Good Spring Church used a trailway which followed Eagle Fork to its source on top of Kiamitia mountain and then down the north side of the mountain to the church.

Another trailway followed the wagon road from Octavia in a northeasterly direction until it reached the first settlement on Little River, where it turned to the north and down Little River which it crossed and then due north to the top of Kiamitia Mountain; thence along said mountain top for six miles or more until the top of the main Kiamitia Mountain was reached; the north side of the mountain at that point being steep the trail followed it to the bottom where it passed the home of Rev. Ben Woods, (an ordained Presbyterian Preacher), and then in a northerly direction until it reached Lenox, a distance of three miles. He preached at Lenox and also at Big Lick Church at Smithville. He was a son of Horace Woods, a white man, his grandfather being Stephen Woods, originally from Massachusetts, and who it is said fought in the Revolutionary War. Ben Woods married a sister of Gov. Gilbert Dukes. Governor Dukes, at the death of his first wife, Angelina Wade, daughter of Governor Alfred Wade, married Isabel Woods, sister of Ben Woods. Ben Wood's sister, Sophia, married Washington Thompson, and after his death married Billy King, a well to do half-breed living ten miles north of Tuskahoma. Another sister of Ben Woods, Margaret, married Samuel H. Bohanan of the well known half-breed Bohanan family, my wife, Amanda Bohanan Hudson, being one of their daughters. Joshua Bohanan, youngest of several brothers of the half-breed Bohanan family, lived about a mile south of the Cyrus Byington place, southeast of Eagletown. His first wife was a full blood Choctaw woman. After her marriage to Bohanan her brother assumed the name of Julius Bohanan. Long afterwards he located at Buffalo Creek settlement and many descendants bearing the name of

Bohanan reside in the country around Smithville, but are not related to the half-breed Bohanan family.

Governor Thompson McKinney, Principal Chief of the Choctaws, and his brother William McKinney were sons of Judge Mitantvbbi, who had three brothers Hotvbbi, Tahvbbi and Hopaii. Judge Mitantvbbi's field was on the east side of Eagle Fork but he lived on the west side in Buffalo Creek Settlement. His son William McKinney, who was educated at Yale College, lived on the west side. The first post office established at that place was called Hotvbbi for a brother of Judge Mitantvbbi. When the Choctaws reorganized their government they added the Leased District to the three districts already formed and called it Hotvbbi District in his honor. This place after the post office was discontinued was re-established as Octavia. William Bryant lived at Octavia when he was elected Principal Chief of the Choctaws in 1870. When he came from Mississippi he and his people settled in Red River County near Waterhole Church. After William Bryant was elected chief he moved further north to a point near where Wilburton is now located and whilst there was appointed and acted as postmaster, at the same time being chief. After he retired from office he moved to a point near what is now Tuskahoma. At his death he was buried at this place two miles east of Tuskahoma. The Ft. Smith-Ft. Towson Military road passed his home.

Another trailway over which Rev. John Edwards traveled from Mt. Zion to Lenox, when leaving the Indian Territory at the beginning of the Civil War, led east for two miles over a ridge to the main channel of Glover Creek and then following the creek towards its source for ten miles practically on top of Little River Mountain, thence down the north side of Little River Mountain to its foot where it crossed Little River, near the home of Judge Miashintvbbi, at one time judge of Wade County. Little River was the boundary line between Nashoba and Wade Counties. He had a fine farm of made land adjoining said river. His brother was killed by a man named Stephens, part negro and part Choctaw, who lived near Mt. Zion. Later Miashintvbbi said he was going to Mt. Zion to get revenge by killing the man who killed his brother or that he would never return. He returned to his home later and it developed that he had killed Stephens. He was following the ancient rule *lex*

talionis under which a member of a family or tribe was justified in killing the slayer of a member of the family or tribe'. Rev. John Edwards,⁷ a missionary at Wheelock Mission School, at the beginning of the Civil War left to return to the North, being given a passport by George Hudson, then Principal Chief. He was escorted from Wheelock to Mt. Zion by several armed Choctaws. From Mt. Zion he was guided by a Choctaw named Jonas Watson (Iyahokatvbbi) over the trailway to Lenox. The Rev. John Edwards gave to Jonas Watson a Choctaw testament and hymn book on this trip as a testimonial of his respect for him and his fidelity, which Jonas Watson ever afterwards prized highly.

Later a wagon road was built which started in the neighborhood a Buffalo Creek settlement, following Eagle Fork on the west side for four miles, thence turning in a northwesterly direction until it struck the source of Little River following it to Miashintvbbi's place, where it left the river going over Kiamitia Mountain in the direction of what is now Talihina. This road was not used very much as the mountain was very steep.

These two trailways were traveled by people residing in the vicinity of what is now Smithville.

Another trailway started at Mt. Zion going northwest about four miles to the last house in the neighborhood of where Johnson Noah lived, and from there due north over the open country for about four miles until it reached the source of Watson Creek, crossing the creek due north to and crossing Little River; thence due north about half a mile where it crossed the wagon road at Watson LeFlore Creek, thence following that creek about two miles to its source at the foot of a high mountain; thence turning to the left of the creek up the mountain, following the top of its ridge until it reached the main mountain where for about 100 yards it was so steep that it was necessary to dismount and lead the ponies. Reaching the top of the mountain, the distance from Watson LeFlore Creek to Tuskahoma by this trailway was about 9 miles but by wagon road about 30 miles.

⁷Trial of Oshkosh before Judge James D. Doty, Michigan Territory American Bar Association Journal, March 1933 p-145; Indian Justice, a Cherokee murder trial at Tahlequah, 1840, as reported by John Howard Payne (Grant Foreman p-66)

⁸Vol. 10 p. 392 *Chronicles of Oklahoma*

Reaching the top of the mountain traveling was easy for about two miles until it started down the mountain which is not very high.

At the foot of the mountain at that point the trailway touches Black Fork Creek. Down stream for about a mile the trail passed the home of Col. Burgoyne, a white man, who located there long after the establishing of the trailway, crossing the creek in front of the house. A little further on it crossed again to the west side, then turning due north up Kiamitia Mountain passing the home of John Morris. Upon reaching the top of the mountain on this trailway you can see for miles in every direction. Then the trail goes straight north down the north side of the mountain where it ends at Kiamitia River.

Spring Station, old time stopping place for stages traveling over the Ft. Smith-Ft. Towson Military road, was about half a mile north from the end of the trail. Nanih Way, old Choctaw Council House, was only two miles from Spring Station. This trailway was traveled by Council members from Smithville, Eagletown and Bethel.

The Mt. Zion people later built a wagon road practically paralleling this trailway to Tuskahoma. Its course over Little River Mountain, on reaching Little River bottom, turned to the left, crossing Little River, then turning north up the mountain until it reached its top, then to the foot where it struck Black Fork Creek at the Nashoba settlement, then following Black Fork Creek for about two miles to the mouth of a creek which empties into it from the north and then followed that creek to its source up part of the Kiamitia Mountain; on reaching its top it turned to the left, gradually winding to the highest point of another ridge; thence on the north side following the backbone for two miles to the foot of the mountain to a creek, then following it for about a mile where it empties into Kiamitia River at a point of contact with the Ft. Smith-Ft. Towson military road.

Among those who settled near where Nashoba post office now is were Hikiya, Wallace Benn, James Hoka and William Ward. After leaving other members of the family, Towantali and Tilhatabi, at Eagletown. James Hoka and Wallace Benn were brothers. William Ward had been a student at Choctaw

Academy in Scott County, Kentucky. James Hoka married Tilhatabi's daughter and at the time of James Hoka's death he left one son named John Wilkin or Haksi, meaning "he can't hear." He was deaf and almost dumb. He lived to be eighty years of age leaving several descendants. Just before the election of 1892, when Wilson Jones and Jacob Jackson were candidates for Principal Chief, the latter as a member of the National or Buzzard Party and the former as a member of the Progressive or Eagle Party, it being on the first Wednesday in August, I met at Nashoba three Choctaws, William Garland, Watson Leflore and John Wilkin or Haksi. John Wilkin had been drinking, the others had not. Upon meeting, John Wilkin walked up to the left side of my horse and began to talk to me about politics, accusing me of being an Eagle (which I was) and then bantering me for a fight. The more he talked the worse he got and finally grabbed my winchester which I had in a scabbard on the left side of my horse, pulling it out with his left hand and throwing it into right hand position as if to shoot, when his two companions came to my rescue, one grabbing the point of the gun and the other the trigger, and held him. They persuaded him to give my gun to me, which he finally did, putting it in the scabbard himself.

When I was a boy I heard it said that a nephew of Tawantabi and Tilhatabi, named Stocker, was tried, convicted and sentenced to be shot for murder, at the Eagle County Circuit Court, but escaping before his execution, drifted to the vicinity of Nashoba, where his kindred had moved, and joined a band of horse thieves headed by a mixed blood Choctaw named Stephen Anderson, who operated between the Chickasha Nation and the State of Arkansas. They traveled at night and the people in the neighborhood of now Tuskahoma got together and drove Stocker and Anderson out of the country and they were never heard of afterwards.

Stemen Bohanan, a full blood, hunted in those mountains. He was a bear hunter and told me that he had six or seven caves located where bears hibernated, and when winter came all he had to do in order to kill a bear was to visit these caves. Sometimes he would get one bear and sometimes more. However, he once walked up to a cave expecting to find a bear but found a panther. He told me that he had seen many large snakes:

that one time he left his pony at the foot of a mountain just a little north of the "Narrows", climbing the mountain afoot. When almost on top of the mountain he noticed that something had gone over the grass pressing it down, and wondering about it, followed it to a deep gulch, and looking over the gulch he saw the largest black snake he had ever seen. He said he didn't stop to measure it but turned and ran down the mountain to his pony and went home.

The Labor family in the Choctaw Nation are of Mexican extraction, originating with Houston Labor, a full blood Mexican. He married a full blood Choctaw girl, Mary Impvlummi. They had three sons, Houston, Willie and John Labor, who later settled around Bennington. A daughter of Houston Labor, Sr., who was half Choctaw married James Dyer, a prominent and leading member of the Six Town Clan, who was a Presbyterian preacher and who held many offices under the Choctaw government.

Mrs. Nancy Watson, the wife of George Watson (Indian name Nalishvbbi), oldest daughter of my uncle George Hudson, former Principal Chief, and her husband lived in Buffalo Creek Settlement. About a mile east of their home on Buffalo Creek was where George Hudson with two white men from New Orleans attempted to mine zinc and lead. A shaft about twenty feet deep was sunk. The Mexican Houston Labor made brick with which to build a furnace in which to smelt ore¹⁰. Lead, zinc and silver ores having been placed in the furnace without favorable result, the furnace was destroyed. Another shaft located about 400 yards from the first probably fifty feet deep was sunk. The same kind of ore being found it was abandoned, such explorations being unprofitable. One of the white men returned to New Orleans where he died. The abandoned project was afterwards known as Hudson's mine. It was attempted to be rehabilitated just before the Civil War, the company being formed composed of leading Choctaws, of which the Rev. Allen Wright, afterwards Principal Chief, was secretary, but without results. The ore appeared to be rich but when tested showed to be unprofitable. The heirs of Governor George Hudson claimed the land where this mine was located, which was allotted by

¹⁰Vol. 10, *Chronicles of Oklahoma* (Conser slate mine) p. 504.

John McClure, of Page, Oklahoma, an intermarried citizen, the allotment being contested by George Hudson's heirs but McClure was successful on the ground of abandonment, no improvements being on it. Afterwards McClure attempted to mine it, sinking a shaft 60 feet deep near the old Hudson mine, but finding the same kind of ore without profit.