

Mary J. Stockton,
Field Worker,
7-9-37.

Interview with
Mrs. Tom Rattling Gourd,
Claremore, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Rattling Gourd answered the questions asked and volunteered the following information.

I am seventy-nine years old and was born in Claremore, Indian Territory, in 1859. I was born two years before the Civil War and was reared about five miles northeast of Claremore, where Claremore Lake now stands.

Mother----- My mother's name before she married was Elmari Gardenhire. She was a white woman. She was born in the old Cherokee Nation in east Tennessee.

Father---- My father's name was George McPherson. He was also born in the old Cherokee Nation in east Tennessee. He was three-fourths Cherokee and one-fourth white blood.

Grandparents-----My grandparents on my mother's side were Gardenhires. They were also reared in the old Indian Territory. My mother told me that they were very rich. My grandfather was the Treasurer of the Capitol. He was a poor man when he married my grandmother. He had a few hogs, a team of horses and a cow to start with. They cleared some farm land and built a log house. They raised their

crops and each year things became a little better, until they were in possession of one of the richest farms in the country. He had always worked hard and even when he became treasurer he made his boys and girls work hard for their living. My grandfather had a big chest full of gold and silver which he kept in a room that was always locked. He would never let anyone come into the room except his wife. There is a story about their family affairs.

My grandfather and grandmother reared six children. All were fine children except one, who was the black sheep of the family. He had always been lazy and grandfather told him to leave if he would not work like the rest of the boys. He left but would come back every time his father was not at home. Mother would feel sorry for him and feed him. Father told his wife that he thought his son would never make good. One day the boy came home all dirty and badly in need of a shave. Mother felt so sorry that she went into the room and filled the boy's big cowboy hat full of gold and silver. The boy went to town and bought new clothes and got a shave. He went down the street swinging

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a cane. His father met him and congratulated him on his change. He thought he had secured a good job. He went home and told his wife that his boy had finally "come out of it."

My father and mother were both born and reared in the old Cherokee Nation in east Tennessee. My mother was a white woman and father was an Indian. They married in Tennessee. They came to the Indian Territory when the Cherokees were driven out of east Tennessee. They settled about five miles northeast of Claremore, where Lake Claremore now is. They had a small farm and there they reared their family. I was born there. I can remember well the very spot where we lived. I can remember seeing my mother spin and weave. Father made her a loom and spinning wheel and she made the most beautiful things a person ever saw. She made rugs, sheets, blankets, clothes, stockings and almost everything we needed.

Father took the boys and farmed. We raised corn, oats, wheat, and garden vegetables. He had cows, horses, chickens and a few sheep. My father was a good hunter and fisherman. He and the boys would go to the Verdigris River and stay a

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a week at a time and bring back many large fish which they caught on trout lines. When my father died my brother, Jack McPherson, became one of the best hunters and trappers in the country around. Everyone knew him for his skill. ~~Jack would take his skill.~~ Jack would take his skins to Coffeyville and trade them for food that we needed.

My father was killed in the Civil War and was never buried. Mother looked for his bones for a long time after the war but never could find them. From then on everything was carried on by my brothers.

When I was twenty I met Tom Rattling Gourd who came to my house every Sunday to see my brother. He really came to see me. We were married in 1879 at Coker Hollow and Springs, in a little log cabin by a candle light. I can remember how pretty the little cabin was. It had a pretty walnut floor, which I later bought and put into our own cabin. We were married by Dense Coker, nephew to Judge Schrimsher, who was Judge here then.

We used to attend large Indian Camp meetings, where my mother sang in Cherokee with the Indians.

My husband and I settled northeast of Claremore, close to my mother's place. We used to go to the square dances and candy pulls. People would come from miles around to a dance. It would last all night sometimes. They would make sorghum taffy and have taffy pulls. People then could come from a long ways because there was no stealing going on. Honesty was at its best then. If someone lost something the finder would travel for miles till he found the person that lost it.

Husband----My husband, Tom Rattling Gourd, was a Cherokee Indian. He was born at Tahlequah, in 1855. His grandparents and father and mother came from the old Indian Territory in Tennessee.

FIRST STORES.

The first store which I can remember was the Cobbs store, located in the Sweetwater Hills on Watt Starr's place. It was a trading post. The Joe and Teese Chambers store, located east of Verdigris, was also a trading post. The Chambers store later moved to Claremore and was one of the first stores here. Jack McPherson was city marshal then.

FORDS AND FERRIES.

The only ford and ferry which I can remember was the

Ed Sanders ford and ferry, located seven miles northwest of Claremore. Later there was a bridge put in there. There was another ford located about fifteen miles down the river but I can not remember the name.

FIRST TRAIN.

I remember when I saw the first train come to Claremore, Indian Territory. It was in 1872. I was fifteen years old and I ran two miles to see the big train come in. I was really excited and everyone was shouting. Later the Frisco Railroad came through. The other railroad was the Missouri Pacific, then called the Iron Mountain.

EARLY DOCTORS.

The earliest doctors which I can remember were Doctor Norton and Doctor Lane. Doctor Lane lived with Major Lipe, who was the first County Clerk of Rogers County. Doctor Lane ran away from his wife and came to Indian Territory and she followed him here. He then left Indian Territory and went to Texas. She followed him to Texas.

IMMIGRANT CARDS.

I and my son, Daniel Rattling Gourd, still have

some of the Immigrant Cards which were issued for money by the Department of Interior or Office of Indian Affairs. We also received land from the Government. My husband's allotment is seven miles southeast of Claremore. The old Rattling Gourd house is still standing. We lived there for years. All our children were born and reared there.

MISCELLANEOUS

The McClaim Cemetery, located five miles northeast of Claremore, is near where we lived and our folks were the first ones to be buried there. After we moved away McClaim claimed the cemetery. We have about thirty-five relatives buried there. I want to be buried there when I die.

My husband was buried in the Woodlawn Cemetery, not long ago, in Claremore with his father and brothers. My mother was buried in the McClaim Cemetery and I still have a lock of her hair. She died with tuberculosis.

There were eight children born in our family, four of whom are living. The other four are buried in

the McClaim and Woodlawn Cemeteries. The other children live in and around Claremore now. We had only one daughter.

KINFOLKS AND OLD TIMERS.

Old timers here when we came were Ed Sunday, Ed Sanders, Watt Crittenden, Watt Starr, Joe Miller, Judge Schrimsher, Major Lipe, Joe and Teese Chambers, Dense Coker, McClaims, Charlie Rogers, Cobbs, Bushyheads, Dr. Norton, Dr. Lane, and others. Henry Starr, the outlaw, was my second cousin. McClaims, were my husband's kinfolks. Breedens, Johnsons, Starrs, Chambers, were all kin.

COMMENTS.

My full name before I was married was Paralee McPherson. I married Tom Rattling Gourd and lived in and around Claremore all my life. I am in good health now except I cannot hear any too well. I am near eighty years old and was here before Claremore was a town or before there were any railroads. It was just a big cattle range full of prairie chickens. I was very glad to give this information to the writer, and hope it will be sufficient to make a good story of the early pioneer history of the Indian Territory.