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The GOINGSNAKE MESSENGER

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Published by

The Goingsnake District Heritage Association

The Search for History Never Ends

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Contents

THE GOINGSNAKE MESSENGER

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Published twice a year by the Goingsnake District Heritage Association (GDHA),
PO Box 180, Westville OK 74965

Editor: Harry Styron (editor@goingsnake.com)

Our Mission

Established in 1979, the Goingsnake District Heritage Association exists for the purpose of researching, preserving and disseminating knowledge of Cherokee history, culture and lineage for the Goingsnake District, as well as for all the historic Cherokee Nation.

GDHA is an organization described in Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3), and any contributions (excluding membership dues) are tax-deductible. Please consider making a contribution to support the mission of GDHA.

Membership

Membership is open to anyone interested in Cherokee history and people. Cherokee citizenship or heritage is not required. Annual membership dues include two issues of the The Goingsnake Messenger which will be sent by email.

Membership Dues

Membership is free during 2026. Beginning January 1, 2027, membership dues will be $20 per year for regular membership with the Messenger sent by email.

- Regular membership that includes the printed Messenger is $30 per year.
- Sustaining membership dues with the Messenger mailed or emailed at the Sustaining Member's preference is $40 per year.
- Single printed copies of the Messenger (to non-members) are $15 per issue.

Meetings

Regular membership meetings are held on the third Saturday of January, April, June, September and December at 10 a.m. The June meeting will be held at the Talbot Library and Museum in Colcord, Oklahoma, and the December meeting is traditionally held at the Proctor, Oklahoma, community center. Other meetings are held at the John F. Henderson Library, 116 North Williams Avenue, Westville, Oklahoma.

GDHA Executive Board:

President: Shawn Wright, president@goingsnake.com
Vice President: Jeffrey Bowers, vicepresident@goingsnake.com
Secretary: Amanda Sweet, secretary@goingsnake.com
Treasurer: Jacqueline Bustin, treasurer@goingsnake.com
Editor: Harry Styron, editor@goingsnake.com

Opinions expressed in The Goingsnake Messenger are those of the contributing authors. Genealogical information is based on the knowledge of the authors, which may be different than knowledge of others. The content does not necessarily represent the positions or opinions of the GDHA board. Neither the GDHA nor its members can accept responsibility for errors of fact; however, corrections are welcomed and will be acknowledged if verified.

President's Message

As the new president of the Goingsnake District Historical Association, I wish to welcome readers of the Messenger and all members and prospective members of GDHA.

The board elected in January 2026 is excited to revitalize this organization by increasing membership, offering more resources, and taking advantage of technology to provide opportunities for learning about our heritage as Cherokees and satisfying our curiosity about the history of Goingsnake District and its residents.

In the past few months, our vice president Jeffrey Bowers has created a new website, Goingsnake.com, and set up email accounts for each board member. Social media specialist Katherine Sweet has breathed new life into our Facebook page and has posted information about our organization, along with historical tidbits of Cherokee life. Our website Goingsnake.com and our Facebook page will always provide dates and times of meetings and links for connecting to our meetings via Zoom or another videoconference service.

Our treasurer Jacqueline Bustin has updated our IRS filings to preserve our status as an entity that can receive tax-deductible contributions. Messenger editor Harry Styron is presenting his ideas and request for contributions in his message on the next page.

I have appointed a committee to review and proposed revisions to the GDHA bylaws and expect that this committee will have recommendations for consideration by the membership by the date of the December meeting.

As ever, GDHA is grateful to the John F. Henderson Library for the use of its meeting room. In addition, we appreciate the relationships we maintain with the Adair County Historical & Genealogical Association in Stilwell and the Talbot Library and Museum in Colcord, which will host our annual meeting and luncheon on June 20, 2026.

Shawn Wright, President (president@goingsnake.com)

Editor's Message

In this issue, Regina Philpott McLemore gives us a look at Captain Jack and Susie Ellis, who had a big influence on life in the Cherokee Nation before and after Oklahoma statehood, in which violence seemed to be a part of everyday life for some people, Captain Jack as a courageous lawman and Susie Ellis as a midwife.

My article is about railroads coming into the Goingsnake District, which connected residents to the whole continent, previously relying on the modes of transportation that had existed for centuries.

I'm enjoying digging into the history of the Goingsnake District and its people. In this and future issues, I hope to make the Messenger more like a magazine, with more photos, more about life in the Goingsnake District since statehood, without neglecting the pre-statehood history and the genealogical information that many people crave.

In addition to the Messenger, our new website, Goingsnake.com, is a repository of resources, some available only to members, with back issues of the Messenger (to be added), links to Cherokee genealogical sites, and a surname registry. I'm hoping that GDHA members will add surname information.

We're always interested in photographs of Goingsnake people, past and present, and photographs of their homes, churches, livestock, guns, pets, and social and sporting activities (ball games, marbles, dances, ice cream socials, coon hunts, fishing trips, quilting bees, kenuche making, horse races, etc.). Send these things to me and post them on our Facebook page.

If there is a topic that you would like to write about, or you would like for someone else to write about, please let me know.

Harry Styron, editor@goingsnake.com

Jack and Susie Ellis, Unsung Heroes of the Cherokee Nation

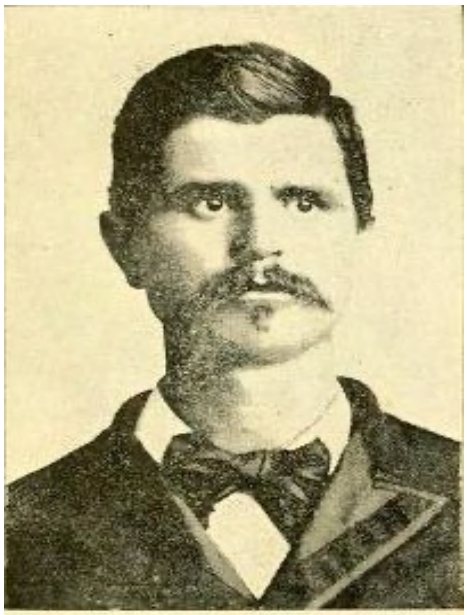
By Regina Philpott McLemore

After researching his family tree, it can be ascertained that the Cherokee lawman, Jackson (Jack) Ellis, the son of Edward (Big) Long-Foot Ellis and Catherine McGammon Ellis, was born and raised in Sweet Town in the Saline District of Indian Territory in 1859. There is no historical information on a place called Sweet Town, but the Cherokees called the place which would become Akins, Oklahoma, Sweet Town first.

After his father was killed accidentally while corralling his company's horses at Fort Gibson during the Civil War, young Jack grew up fatherless, living with his mother in Sweet Town.

Figure 1, Cherokee Marshals, c. 1890. Jackson Ellis is second from left, with light colored hat and dark coat. Sam Sixkiller is seated in the front row center holding a double-barreled shotgun.

When Ellis was sixteen, he began hiring out as a farm hand, but farming did not appeal to him. Living about a day's ride from Fort Smith, Arkansas, he soon found himself drawn to the adventurous lives of Judge Parker's marshals. (See Figure 1). Likely they recognized a kindred spirit in young Jack because they permitted him to ride as a posse man when he was still in his teens. He probably knew many marshals personally, such as Bass Reeves and Sam Sixkiller[1].



JACKSON W. ELLIS.

Having proven himself to the lawmen and to his tribe, by age 21, Jack was working as a deputy sheriff and assistant warden of the Cherokee National Penitentiary in Tahlequah under Cherokee High Sheriff and Warden, Sam Sixkiller.

The complete opposite of the short, heavy-set warden, his young deputy was slender and towered over him at a height of well over six feet. Nevertheless, they complemented each other and were good friends. Due to a dispute with the Tahlequah townspeople and Cherokee Nation over an accidental shooting, Sam left Tahlequah in 1880 to take on the task of cleaning up Muskogee, a haven for outlaws and criminals.

After a brief stint as a merchant, Jack Ellis returned to law enforcement in 1885. Ellis was appointed Deputy United States Marshal for the Western District of Arkansas under Judge Parker. He also rode with the Indian Police of the Five Tribes, a tribal police force, stationed in Muskogee, Oklahoma, which was then considered to be a lawless, wicked city. He found himself again working with his former boss, Captain Sam Sixkiller, the Captain of the Indian Police. Ellis rode with the Indian Police for over twenty-five years, at some point becoming Captain Jack.

[1] Editor's note: Regina Philpott McLemore described notable incidents in Sam Sixkiller's career in the Goingsnake Messenger last year, Volume XLII, No. 1, 2025.

Unfortunately, Captain Sam was not so blessed. He had made many enemies in his long years in law enforcement, and one in particular, Dick Vann, had vowed to get vengeance. The story of Vann's run-in was related by John G. Hannan, who grew up in Indian Territory, in a 1939 interview for the University of Oklahoma's Indian-Pioneer Papers.

Hannan stated that after a hot argument, Sixkiller finally allowed Vann to enter the gate to the Muskogee Fair. But when he pushed him in at the door, he kicked him. According to Hannan, Vann said, "Sixkiller, that kick will cost you your life."

Vann got his opportunity for vengeance on Christmas Eve in 1886. Dick Vann and his brother-in-law Alf Cunningham had been drinking heavily and brawling in Muskogee all day. Later on, forty-four-year-old Sixkiller, who was off-duty and ill, walked out of a drug store they were approaching.

The pair called out, "Sam!"

When Captain Sixkiller stepped toward them, Vann was heard to say, "You'll never do that to me again!"

Cunningham leveled his shotgun at Sixkiller, but the Captain's quick reflexes allowed him to knock the gun from Cunningham's hands. Unfortunately, at the same time, Vann, who was positively identified by an eyewitness, fired four shots into Sixkiller with a pistol. He staggered and fell on his hands and knees on the steps. Then to make sure of his work, Vann fired another shot into the body. The two men ran down Main Street, past the billiard hall, and on out of town.

Figure 2, Sam Sixkiller, legendary Cherokee lawman

A crowd of over two thousand people attended Sam Sixkiller's funeral. Ellis was likely there, along with Sixkiller's fellow deputy marshals, the forty men he commanded in the Indian Police, and his many Native and White relatives and friends.

Jack Ellis was hit hard by the loss of his friend and mentor. He likely vowed to bring the murderers to justice. Less than a year later, September 1887, Ellis found Dick Vann and attempted to arrest him. Vann resisted arrested, and Ellis killed him in a gun fight.

On March 3, 1898, after recounting the story of Sixkiller's life and death, the Weekly Chieftain reported, "Jackson W. Ellis was the avenger. While acting deputy US Marshal, he shot Vann, who lingered a few days and died."

Jack Ellis may have played a part in bringing about justice, albeit too late, for fellow Cherokee Ned Christie, who was accused of shooting U.S. Marshal Dan Maples. Christie, who had barricaded himself in a small fort in the woods near his home at Wauhillau, was gunned down by a posse, led by marshals in 1892, fleeing from his burning fort where he had been under siege for several days.

Figure 3, Ned Christie

As a lawman, Ellis would have heard that Bud Trainor, a well-known whiskey peddler, had at one time been a suspect in Maple's murder before Christie was charged. Ellis would have known about Christie's death at the hands of a posse, led by marshals Paden Tolbert, Captain G. S. White, and Heck Bruner in 1892. He would have seen the gruesome pictures that the posse took with Christie's corpse.[2] As a fellow Cherokee, he could have questioned the actions of the posse and longed to obtain justice for Ned Christie.

According to Ellis's obituary of 1927, Ellis, in an act of self-defense, shot and killed Bud Trainor in a gunfight on the streets of Tahlequah.

[2] Editor's note: My mother told me that her father, Richard Henry Crittenden (son of John Ross "Dullhoe" Crittenden) as a teenager, saw Ned Christie's body at the Summers, Arkansas store, as it was hauled from Wauhillau to Fort Smith in a wagon. Cristie's corpse was strapped to a door or plank and guns were placed in his cold, dead hands for souvenir photographs. Dullhoe Crittenden's mother, Sukey Wolf Crittenden, was a relative of Christie. Ned Christie has been oft characterized as an outlaw in lurid literature about law west of Fort Smith, but in reality was a respected Cherokee citizen and member of the Cherokee Council.

Author/historian Art Burton offers more insight into what happened. According to Burton, one day a drunken Trainor and his gang were terrorizing the citizens of Tahlequah by riding down the main street, shooting at anything that moved. Jackson Ellis, who had been squirrel hunting nearby, landed in the scene when he rode into town. He ordered Trainor to stop, but Trainor told him to "get his gun."

They met in the middle of the street for a gun duel, and both got off three shots before Trainor was struck through his teeth and into the back of his throat. If Ellis's gun had been loaded with real bullets instead of squirrel shot, he would have killed him. Some bystanders kept him from drowning in his own blood. Burton claims that Trainor survived but was killed by black cowboys near Nowata in 1896.

Regardless of how Trainor died, some years after his death, he was identified by an eyewitness as the man who shot and killed Dan Maples in 1887, proving Ned's innocence.

Law enforcement took Ellis beyond the borders of what would become Sequoyah, Adair, Cherokee, and Muskogee counties in northeast Oklahoma as well as western Arkansas. At one time, he also rode with the Indian Police of Choctaw near Atoka. This clipping from The Sunday Morning Sayings newspaper from Wagoner, Oklahoma, May 1, 1898, illustrates the versatility of Ellis: "Captain Jackson Ellis, of the Indian Police…who is well-known in Tahlequah and throughout the Cherokee Nation, will organize a troop of cavalry in South McAlester this week."

The writer went on to express his confidence in Ellis by saying, "The company which Capt. Ellis offers to Uncle Sam will be without superior from Maine to California. He knows his business."

By 1890, Ellis was practicing law as well as working for the Indian Police. During this time, he publicly defended Cherokee rights. In the March 27, 1898, Fort Smith News Record, he stated, "There are thousands of cattle up in Sequoyah district in the Cherokee Nation on which a revenue of $1 per head should be collected, but the constables are powerless. There is not much hope that the cattlemen will be compelled to pay one cent."

In 1901, Ellis did more than speak against the cattlemen. The October 24, 1901, edition of The Davis News, in an article titled "Putting Them Out," the

writer asked Ellis if a rumor was true about the Indian police removing non-citizens from San Bois County, Choctaw Nation.

Ellis replied, "Yes, it is true. We have put out four or five so far and there are more to follow unless the cattlemen comply with the law regarding their cattle and permits."

The men and their cattle were rounded-up and put over the line in Arkansas.

There were many incidents in which Jackson Ellis ended the lives of dangerous criminals. Yet his obituary stated, "In all these instances Officer Ellis never out stepped the bounds of duty; such is the public verdict, and all law-abiding citizens feel themselves indebted to this fearless officer for clearing the country of so many terrors to society."

In his personal life, the tough lawman experienced a life filled with tragedy. Besides growing up without a father, he bore the loss of his first wife and their two children, who preceded him in death when he was in his early 20's. He married his second wife, Cordelia Smith, in 1883. The couple had five children before Cordelia passed away in 1901 in McAlester, where they were living at the time.

On November 5, 1905, he married Sue Ella (Susie) Crawford, who was working as a nurse in Muskogee. Ellis returned to his roots and was living with Susie and his children in Marble City, not far from Sweet Town, in July of 1909.

By 1913, Jack and Susie Ellis and the children were living in the small community of Bunch, Oklahoma, in Adair County. There, Ellis retired to a mostly quiet life of farming and selling real estate. However, he continued to speak out on tribal and political issues.

His wife, a trained nurse who came to be known locally as Miss Ellis, embarked on a long career of midwifery. Her 1967 obituary in the Stilwell

Figure 4, Susie Ellis, midwife

Democrat Journal, related, "Mrs. Ellis had compiled records of more than 4,000 babies and other medical data of her services…"

Even today, many people living in Adair County say they were delivered by Miss Ellis or know of relatives and friends that came into the world by her hands. Jack and Sue Ella Ellis rest under a large stone tower in the Bunch Cemetery. Their grave marker reads:

ELLIS

CAPT. JACKSON SUE ELLA

MARCH 12, 1856— MAY 25, 1928 MARCH 14, 1878—OCT. 2, 1967

It commemorates two lives that made a positive impact on life in Indian Territory, Adair County, and Oklahoma.

Railroads in the Goingsnake District

By Harry Styron

Railroad-building in the Nineteenth Century played a major part of unifying the territory of the United States into a national economy, but at the same time the railroads divided the Cherokee Nation. In the Goingsnake District, the coming of railroads after the Civil War was a divisive issue for Cherokees who were already divided by long-festering issues related to the loss of traditional Cherokee culture arising out of the presence of non-Cherokee intruders and permitted residents (in the East and in Indian Territory), some of whom were married to Cherokee women.

By the end of the 1800s, the adult sons and grandsons of white traders who had married Cherokee women decades earlier, had become powerful in Cherokee government and positioned themselves for entrepreneurial opportunities that would follow railroads and statehood.

In an interview conducted in 1937,[3] Fred Palone, a Cherokee who lived near Westville, made this cryptic remark about the railroad proposed to enter the Goingsnake District near Siloam Springs, Arkansas and go southward west of the Arkansas border before turning back into Arkansas in the Choctaw Nation, "To hear the old-timers talk in those days [the 1890s], *this* was the cause of the separation that existed within that tribe. That separation still exists, and it will continue to exist as long as this world stands. The old Cherokees claim this caused the Railroads to come through the Cherokee Nation. Politics and this separation caused the Allotment."

What is "this" that Palone spoke of? It seems to be the eternal conflict between those who prefer economic development over conserving traditional ways of life. Palone continues, talking about the question of the extension of the Kansas City Southern railroad into Goingsnake:

> When this question arose, the old Cherokee strongly opposed it. But this question was left to the National Council to decide. The election

[3] Palone, Fred, Interview, August 12, 1837. Gus Hummingbird, Interviewer. Pioneer Papers. Fred Palone was born in 1875 and was buried in Baptist Mission cemetery in 1969.

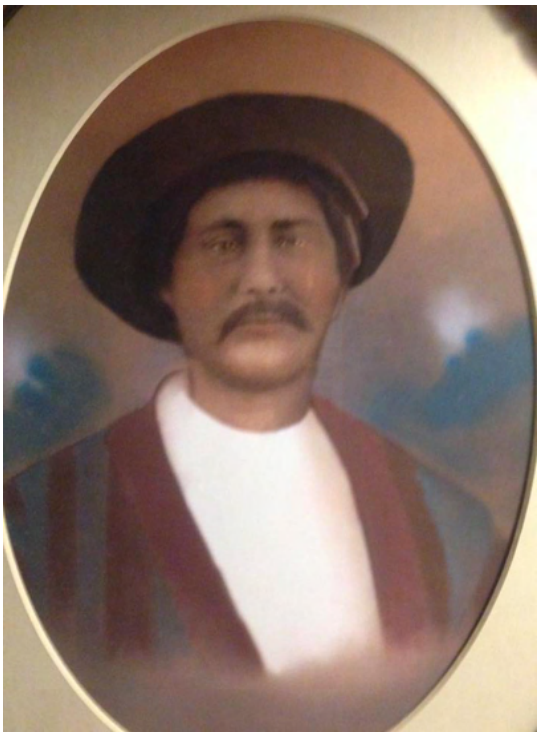


Figure 5, John Ross (Dullhoe) Crittenden, Council Member and Goingsnake District Judge (1894-1896). Editor's family photo of a tinted photograph.

of 1892 was one of the hottest elections that [Palone] ever voted in. Dullhoe Crittenden[4] had been a Councilman before this; in this election he ran for the same place on the issues that he was not in favor of the said railroad, which had been held at Siloam then for a year. Jonathan Whitmire ran on the Downing Ticket favoring the railroad. It has been said Whitmire was furnished money by the railroad company with which to make the race. In this election Crittenden was defeated. Richard Wolfe was not in favor of the railroads before the election, but as soon as he got elected, he voted for them.

In the mid-1800s, the federal government had shifted its subsidies and priorities from canal-building and river transportation to construction of railroads. The area of the United States that lies west of the tiers of states bordering the Mississippi River lacked rivers suitable for steamboat commerce. The development of cattle-ranching and grain farming on the Great Plains and the discovery of gold and other riches in California and the Rocky Mountains, along with the thirst of the population for homesteading opportunities, were a powerful impetus for extension of railroads from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and with northern, central and southern routes to the Pacific Ocean.

The Civil War caused a brief pause in railroad building, but after 1865 railroads were poised to conquer the continent. Under Article 11 of the

[4] John Ross ("Dullhoe") Crittenden was born on Talking Rock Creek in the Cherokee Nation East in 1838, the son of Henry Clay Crittenden and Susie Wolf. His son Martin was the father of GDHA co-founder John Ross Crittenden (1911-2000). All four are buried in the Crittenden Cemetery east of Westville.

Treaty of July 19, 1866 between the United States and the Cherokee Nation,[5] the Cherokee Nation granted "a right of way not exceeding two hundred feet wide…to any company or corporation which shall be duly authorized by Congress to construct a railroad from any point north to any point south, and from any point east to any point west of, and which may pass through the Cherokee Nation."

In 1870, the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad (the "Katy") was allowed to cross into the Cherokee Nation, generally following the old Texas Road, which is approximately the present route of US 69. The Katy entered the Cherokee Nation south of Parsons, Kansas, came through Vinita, Adair, Pryor, Wagoner, and Muskogee, reaching Denison, Texas by 1872. The Atlantic & Pacific Railroad (in 1876 becoming the St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad, or the "Frisco"), was extended from Rolla, Missouri reaching Vinita, in the Cooweeskoowee District of the Cherokee Nation, in 1871.

The Railroad Comes to Goingsnake

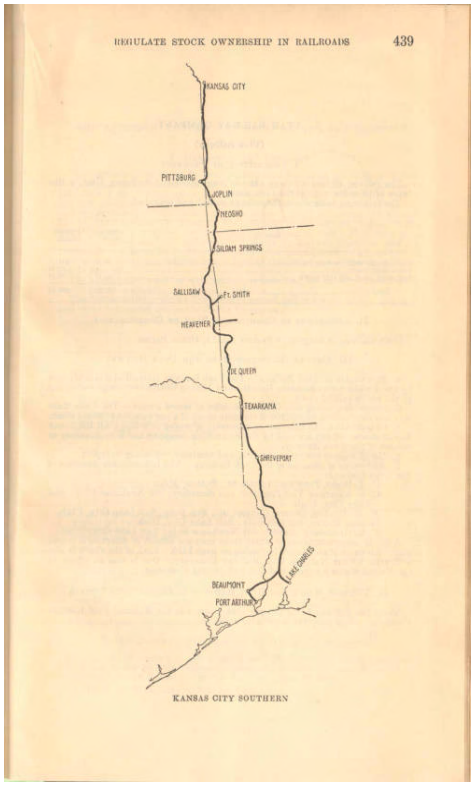
Transportation in the Goingsnake District prior to railroads involved walking by foot, on horses and mules, and by wagons and buggies pulled by horses, mules and oxen. The road network was essentially trails along streams until crossing a ridge was required, other than on the prairies where muddy ruts marked the road. Prior to railroads, the two incorporated towns—Westville and Stilwell—did not exist, though there were several small communities.

After the great controversy in Goingsnake in the National Council election of 1892, the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf Railroad (later the Kansas City Southern) extended its lines from Siloam Springs, Arkansas (near the northeast corner of Goingsnake District), through Watts, Westville, Baron, Stilwell, Flint, Bunch, Marble, Sallisaw and points southward before veering eastward toward Mena, Arkansas, from what is now LeFlore County, Oklahoma, eventually reaching the Gulf of Mexico. The loop of this railroad

[5] This was the treaty negotiated by Stand Watie and others to signify the end of the Confederate Cherokees involvement in the Civil War, which was punitive in some respects, with the Cherokee Nation giving up what is now the Osage Nation and Osage County, Oklahoma.

through a relatively flat part of the Cherokee Nation Territory allowed the railroad to avoid construction through the rugged Boston Mountains.

Westville



Prior to the coming of the railroad and the growth of Westville, residents of the area traded in the Arkansas border towns of Cincinnati, Summers, Dutch Mills, Cane Hill, and Evansville. Baptist Mission was an important community center, with a church, a store and a school.

With the arrival of the railroad in 1894, the Westville depot was built, followed by a lumber yard, stores, a hotel, an opera house, banks and a school. Westville's post office was established in 1895, and the original town plat overed 175 acres, with the federal government selling townsite lots to Cherokee citizens for half the appraised value to Cherokee citizens and full value for non-Cherokee citizens.

In 1902, the Ozark & Cherokee Central (the O&CC became a part of the Frisco system) line from Fayetteville, Arkansas, entered Goingsnake just north of what is now US 62. On the following excerpt from an allotment map, the railroad is shown as a single line, running through the farm of Henry C. Crittenden (brother of John Ross Crittenden, by then deceased) angling toward the northeast corner of Westville, where it crossed the Kansas City Southern rail line.

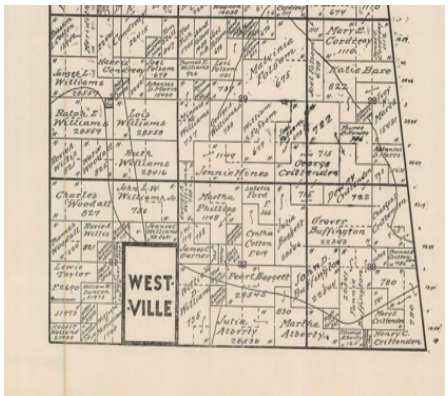


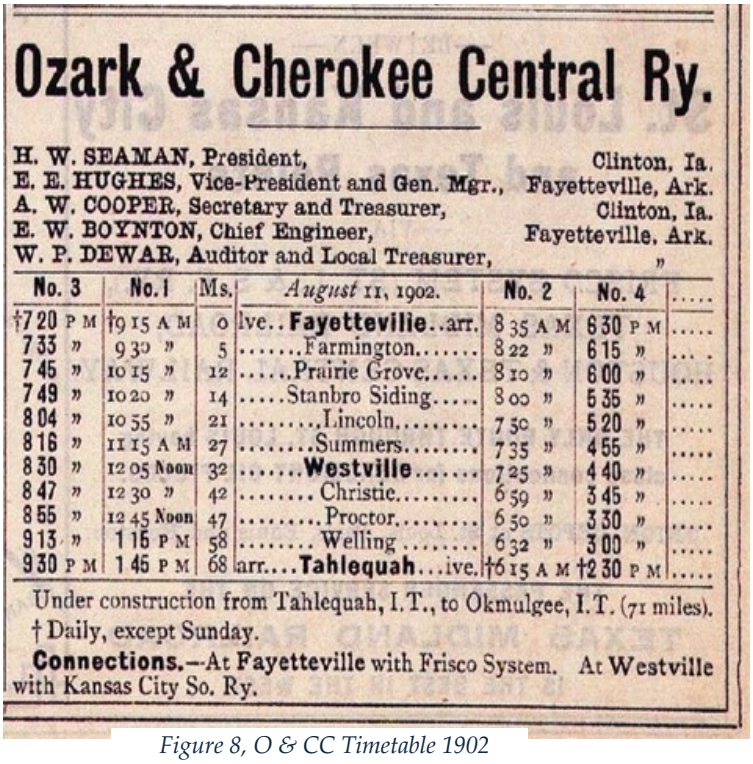
Figure 5, Allotment map showing O&CC running through Westville from east and Kansas City Southern line from north.

From 296 in 1900, the population of Westville reached 956 in 1920. After statehood arrived in 1907, Westville became the county seat of Adair County, but only until 1910, after the Oklahoma Supreme Court ordered a new vote and Stilwell emerged as the winner.

The O&CC line was extended through Westville from Fayetteville, Arkansas, to Okmulgee in 1903. From Westville, the line mostly paralleled the route of US 62 to Christie, from there running through the valley of Barren Fork Creek on the north bank.

Figure 7, The Ozark & Cherokee Central's first train to Westville

Avoiding the Eldon hill, the line followed the north and west bank of Barren Fork southward through Welling. Just north of the confluence of the Barren Fork and the Illinois River, this line bridged the Illinois (Figure 6), crossed the road to Park Hill and pointed northwestward to Tahlequah.



Ozark & Cherokee Central Ry.

H. W. SEAMAN, President, Clinton, Ia.
E. E. HUGHES, Vice-President and Gen. Mgr., Fayetteville, Ark.
A. W. COOPER, Secretary and Treasurer, Clinton, Ia.
E. W. BOYNTON, Chief Engineer, Fayetteville, Ark.
W. P. DEWAR, Auditor and Local Treasurer, "

No. 3	No. 1	Ms.	*August* 11, 1902.	No. 2	No. 4	.....
†7 20 P M	†9 15 A M	0	lve.. **Fayetteville** ..arr.	8 35 A M	6 30 P M	.....
7 33 "	9 30 "	5	.....Farmington.....	8 22 "	6 15 "	.....
7 45 "	10 15 "	12	.....Prairie Grove.....	8 10 "	6 00 "	.....
7 49 "	10 20 "	14	.....Stanbro Siding.....	8 00 "	5 35 "	.....
8 04 "	10 55 "	21	.....Lincoln.....	7 50 "	5 20 "	.....
8 16 "	11 15 A M	27	.....Summers.....	7 35 "	4 55 "	.....
8 30 "	12 05 Noon	32	..... **Westville**	7 25 "	4 40 "	.....
8 47 "	12 30 "	42	..... Christie.....	6 59 "	3 45 "	.....
8 55 "	12 45 Noon	47	.....Proctor.....	6 50 "	3 30 "	.....
9 13 "	1 15 P M	58	..... Welling	6 32 "	3 00 "	.....
9 30 P M	1 45 P M	68	arr.... **Tahlequah** ...ive.	†6 15 A M	†2 30 P M	.....

Under construction from Tahlequah, I. T., to Okmulgee, I. T. (71 miles).
† Daily, except Sunday.
Connections.—At **Fayetteville** with Frisco System. At **Westville** with Kansas City So. Ry.

Figure 8, O & CC Timetable 1902

With two trains each way daily, Goingsnake residents could travel from Proctor to Fayetteville in less than two hours, or from Westville to Tahlequah in under an hour. Whether for work, school, traveling to the Cherokee capital at Park Hill (just south of Tahlequah), visiting friends and relatives, or shipping goods. The availability of the Frisco line at a time when roads were poor,

the terrain difficult and few people had motor vehicles, was a huge improvement.

Figure 9, Picture postcard of the bridge crossing the Illinois River, south of Welling

The building of the railroads generated jobs, such as cutting timber and hacking the logs into crossties. Once built, the railroads allowed import and export of all kinds of goods, including lumber, as depicted in this photograph (Figure 6) showing the main line and a sidetrack in Proctor, alongside stacks of lumber.

Figure 10, O&CC railyard at Proctor

Power from machinery was relatively rare in Goingsnake prior to the railroads. There were water-powered mills for sawing logs and grinding grain and probably some steam-powered farm equipment. But the train whistles and roar of the locomotives pulling a train that had connections to the continent was no doubt extremely exciting for a while. The growth of towns along the rail lines was also a departure from the quiet clusters of cabins in the hollows, giving way to a new kind of social activity, hanging out in town, as shown in this photo labeled, "Dickie Gang."

Figure 11, the Dickie Gang, hanging out in Westville, c. 1900. This photo was given to me by John Crittenden, who could only identify his father Martin, son of Dullhoe Crittenden, third from left. Is that the Buffington Hotel in the background?

Muskogee's connection to the Cherokee Nation by rail was important because the federal district court and Department of Interior offices were there, which together had jurisdiction of over the restrictions on land ownership and conveyance upon Cherokees and other citizens of the Five Civilized Tribes.[6] For many Cherokees, trains offered a quick way to get to

[6] Angie Debo's book *And Still the Waters Run,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022, completed in 1936 and first published in 1940, is the classic history of how the land allotments granted to citizens of the Five Civilized Tribes were taken away through possibly

Muskogee for court proceedings from many parts of the Cherokee Nation, at a time when roads were few and unpaved.

Initially, under the terms of "agreements" with each tribe under the Allotment Act, citizens of these tribes of whose blood quantum was one-half or more as shown on the Dawes Roll could not convey their homestead allotments without a removal of restrictions by the Secretary of Interior's Commissioner for the Five Civilized Tribes, whose office was in Muskogee.[7]

Reception of the Railroads by Goingsnake Cherokees

The railroads were a curse for some as well as a blessing. Troy Littledeer of Stilwell recently described this duality eloquently:

> [T]he Kansas City Southern Railway etched a north–south line through the county's heart. From the station stop at Westville to the 1915 Mission-style depot in Stilwell, and south to Bunch—named for Cherokee Nation assistant chief Rabbit Bunch—the railroad tied the county to national markets. Timber moved out. Livestock followed. Schedules replaced seasons. The rails did not replace earlier paths of movement they hardened them. In doing so, they fixed land into uses it could no longer escape... Land that could no longer be farmed, buried in, or returned to.[8]

The Walkingstick family had a particularly tragic relationship with the railroad. According to Michael Gregory, the tracks of the Kansas City, Pittsburgh & Gulf railroad (which became the Kansas City Southern) went through the middle of the Tickaneeskey cemetery between Barren Fork Creek and Downing Cemetery, which might have provided the basis for a grudge against the railroad. Members of the Walkingstick family were

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thousands of bogus guardianship proceedings and other legal mechanisms under the supervision of the federal district court in Muskogee in the years following allotment.

[7] The rules regarding removal of restrictions for homestead and surplus allotments were often amended and are highly technical and beyond the scope of this article. The legal treatise by Joseph F. Rarick of the University of Oklahoma College of Law, entitled Cases and Materials on Problems in Lands Allotted to American Indians, First Revised Edition, 1980 and 1982, is a reliable online source of detailed information on this topic.

[8] Kituwah Punk (Troy Littledeer), December 20, 2025, Facebook Page.

buried in that cemetery, and the graves lying in the path of the railroad were not moved.

Cecil Walkingstick was jailed in Fort Smith in 1896 for interfering with the new railroad by placing timbers on the rails near Baron. He was later sentenced to a five-term in the federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas for other crimes. A couple of years after his release, Cecil Walkingstick was fatally shot at the Frisco depot in Westville by Jim Crittenden in a fight apparently involving whiskey and perhaps a woman.

Benjamin Walkingstick was killed by a train near Baron on April 9, 1910, leaving a wife and four children. According to newspaper reports, "he was alone at the time and no one knows the circumstances."[9]

According to the Adair County Democrat's September 30, 1910 edition, Ed Walkingstick (Cecil's brother, both sons of Flint Walkingstick) and Tom Downing "were killed by a northbound freight train near Baron. Tom was struck on the head and had an ear gone and other bruises. Walkingstick was cut all to pieces, his head being severed from his body and his limbs badly cut, in fact they pick him up for a mile along the track."

Stilwell

Located near the border of the Goingsnake and Flint districts of the pre-statehood Cherokee Nation, Stilwell was incorporated in 1897 with the extension of the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf railroad (later the Kansas City Southern) southward from Westville through Baron. By 1900, Stilwell's population had grown to 779 and grew slowly after that to 1,588 in the 1940 census.

[9] Muldrow Press, May 6, 1910, page 7.

Figure 12, the Stilwell Depot.

Constructed in 1915 and restored in 2004, the Kansas City Southern depot in Stilwell is the home of the Adair County Historical & Genealogical Association's Museum, and also serves as a meeting place for those interested in local history and for other community events.

Many residents of the former Goingsnake District had reason to travel to Stilwell, which was the county seat with a courthouse and government offices. The railroad has supported Stilwell in its years as a major exporter of strawberries, as well as its several manufacturing industries which continue

The Decline of Rail Travel

According to one source,[10] in its last few years the Frisco line between Fayetteville and Okmulgee passenger service was provided by "motor cars," sometimes called "dinkies" or "doodlebugs," which were small self-propelled (gasoline-electric hybrid vehicles that rode the rails and could have

[10] Condrenrails.com, Ozark & Cherokee Central, Frisco Muskogee Branch.

carried a few passengers or pulled a small passenger coach. These cars also carried an RPO (railway post office compartment) where mail could be handled for pickup and distribution along the way. Passenger service terminated on the Frisco line in 1940 between Fayetteville and Okmulgee,

Figure 13, A Frisco motor car

though freight service continued until the early 1950s, when the Fort Gibson reservoir project began to inundate portions of the line between Muskogee and Fort Gibson. The line from Fort Gibson to Muskogee and beyond was modernized and continued to operate, though the Muskogee to Okmulgee branch was abandoned in 1973.

Again, Troy Littledeer aptly described the end of passenger service on the Kansas City Southern and ruminates on what it may have meant:

> The Flying Crow represented the mid-century peak of that system, a passenger train that suggested permanence through repetition and routine. But permanence was already eroding. Highways spread. Automobiles rewrote distance. By the time the Flying Crow made its final run in 1968, followed in November 1969 by the Southern Belle, the passenger era on KCS rails was already ending.
>
> Adair County has repeatedly absorbed systems built on movement, only to be left with their absence. Removal

routes dissolved. Passenger service vanished. Each departure left behind infrastructure, memory, and a lingering question that never quite goes away: who benefited from the coming, and who paid the cost of the going?

The land remains. It always has. And it remembers every form of movement that crossed it whether anyone thought to ask permission, or stayed long enough to say goodbye.

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