

FISHERTOWN

By Carolyn Thomas Foreman

Several villages that sprang up along the Texas Road in the Creek Nation gradually vanished after the railroad was built and became ghost towns. This was the case during the gold rush when the road was crowded with men eager to reach the gold fields. Many of them never realized the fortunes they expected to reap, but canny men along the routes made much money in furnishing supplies for men and beast; in repairing wagons and other equipment. Since all the adventurers traveled with horses, mules or oxen, progress was slow and small towns were settled every few miles in the Indian Territory.

North Fork Town became a thriving village with many prosperous citizens, and finally, an educational center with the establishment of Asbury Mission, but like other places it was deserted in a short time when it was learned that the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad was going to pass it by a few miles to the west and all of the merchants removed to a point on the road and established their stores and homes at what became known as Eufaula.

A few miles north of North Fork Town a small village grew up named Fishertown from the principal family that settled there. No trace of it remains and few citizens of the present Oklahoma have ever heard of it.

Just when the first settlers arrived is not definitely known but Cobray Hill of Beggs, Oklahoma was born in Fishertown in 1840. He related that William and George Fisher maintained trading posts there and the firm prospered but George lost his place giving too much credit to people.¹

According to E. F. Vann of Muskogee, Fishertown was east of the present town of Eufaula; one of the Fisher brothers operated a store while the other ran a blacksmith shop.²

According to Annie V. Noble of Checotah, Oklahoma the place was established in 1847 by her grand father, Samuel Fisher. He was born in Alabama and served in the Creek War of 1812 which became known as the Red Stick War. When he removed to the West in 1847 he brought his family with him. Among them was his son, William who married Sarah P. Lampkin in 1850; both were of Creek blood and they had nine children five of whom lived, Henry Clay, Emma, Martha, Samuel, and Annie.

¹ Grant Foreman, *Indian-Pioneer History* (Oklahoma Historical Society), Vol. 85, pp. 8, 9.

² *Ibid.*, Vol., pp. 95, 73.

William Fisher was born in Alabama where he received his early education. After coming to the western Creek Nation in 1847 he was sent to school at the Shawnee Mission in Kansas for two years.

When Samuel Fisher came from Alabama, two young men accompanied him who became prominent in the Creek Nation: They were the substantial citizens, William E. Gentry and Elijah H. LeBlanche.

The biography of William E. Gentry in *The Indian Territory* by H. F. and E. S. O'Beirne, states that he came to the Creek Nation with his parents in 1855. Elijah Hermigine Lerblance, born in March, 1836, removed to the Creek Nation with his parents at the age of twelve years. Fisher also brought many slaves and with their labor he engaged in farming on a large scale until the Civil War. Mr. Fisher died soon after that conflict and his slaves were freed; some of them moved away, but several faithful ones remained on the old plantation for a number of years.

William Fisher started his store at Fishertown in 1855 and by the time the Civil War commenced he had accumulated a large stock of goods and was rated as a rich man. He joined the Confederate army, serving under Col. Chilly McIntosh as sergeant major and first lieutenant. When he returned at the end of the war his property had been dissipated and he was obliged to start again in a store which he was able to build up to its former prosperous state. In 1892 Mr. Fisher moved his business to Checotah where he continued to operate for three years; at that time he retired to his old home at Fishertown and remained there until his death in 1902. He served the Creek Nation in the National Council for eight years and he was Supreme Judge of the courts.

When William Fisher had reestablished his business after his return from the war, he resumed his farming activities, acquired more land and engaged in the cattle business on his ranch which was about fifteen miles west of Fishertown. He built the first cotton gin in that section of the Indian Territory and he was also the owner of a saw mill.

The Reverend Thomas B. Ruble wrote an account of his travels through a portion of the Indian country and it was published in the *Fort Smith Herald*, June 6, 1867. He left Fort Smith on May 6 for North Fork Town by way of Skullyville and crossed the Canadian at a deep ford, which was dangerous because of quicksand. On entering the Cherokee Nation he found many new houses, and fields in a better state of cultivation than he had seen in the Choctaw country.

After crossing the mountains he entered the rich valley of the North Fork River where the Creek element began to show.

There lived the Fishers who returned to find all but one of their buildings intact after the war. There was one small store and with plenty of corn and fodder that would have done well that year except for a plague of grasshoppers. The Fife family was settled close by—they were descendants of old Captain Fife of Creek War fame—and they were industrious farmers who always had plenty of food.

Principal Chief Samuel Checote issued a warrant dated May 20, 1871 to William Fisher in the sum of \$150.00 for services rendered as public blacksmith at Fishertown.³

Henry Clay Fisher was born at Fishertown, in the Creek Nation, March 16, 1862; he was a son of William and Sarah Lampkin Fisher of Fishertown. Henry attended the public schools in the Creek Nation until he was fourteen years of age when he was entered in the Franklin High School at Clinton, Missouri. After two years he matriculated in Drury College, at Springfield, Missouri, from which he was graduated in the scientific course in 1881. He then joined his father in his mercantile establishment in Fishertown until 1892 when he removed to Checotah.

Fisher was married to Miss Lucy B. Willison, a daughter of James D. Willison of the Creek Nation, on February 23, 1882. Mrs. Willison was Hettie McIntosh, a daughter of the celebrated General William McIntosh. Through her McIntosh ancestors, who were related to Martha Washington, she received knee buckles and a punch spoon once owned by the first president. Mrs. Fisher taught for four years in the Creek schools before her marriage. She was the mother of Carrie, Ollie, and Martha Belle Fisher.

Between the years 1890 and 1894 Fisher was coal weigher for the nation; he was elected a member of the House of Warriors in 1895 and was appointed auditor to fill the unexpired term of William Whitlow, deceased.⁴

When Henry Clay Fisher moved to Eufaula he built a small slab side house and opened the first store. In the beginning his supplies were brought by wagon train from Fort Smith, Arkansas, until the railroad commenced hauling freight. The second store was owned and operated by John Wadsworth.⁵

Henry C. Fisher was the first postmaster of Fishertown. The office was established July 10, 1883 and he served until succeeded

³ *Creek-Blacksmiths*, No. 24713, Indian Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society.

⁴ D. C. Gideon, *Indian Territory* (New York and Chicago, 1901), pp. 453-54; Indian Archives, *Creek Records*, Nos. 24664, 33293; *Creek National Council*, Dec. 5, 1895, No. 32321, *loc. cit.* Interview with H. C. Fisher, *Indian-Pioneer History*, Vol. 3, p. 488.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 81, pp. 239-242, interview with Mrs. Sarah Odom, Muskogee, Oklahoma.

by George Grayson. Among other citizens on the place were the Carrs, and Wells families, the Butlers and Stidhams.

Bose Scott of Muskogee, related an interesting account of his life at Fishertown where he lived many years. He was born in the Muskogee District of the Creek Nation and shortly after the Civil War his parents moved to Fishertown where his first recollection of life began. His father established a claim through the tribal right of his wife, improved it, and built a double log house with a stone fireplace at the north end. In that home they reared two daughters and two sons.

At the time the Scott children attended the Creek National School at Fishertown it was housed in a one room log building. This burned about 1880, and it was replaced by a frame building which was used for church and school. The pupils studied in the Third Reader, the "Blue Back" Speller and they were instructed in simple mathematics.

When Bose Scott was a lad he went to work for Mr. Fisher as a general work hand about the mill, the cotton gin or ranch. He remained with him for several years and he fell in love with Fisher's young daughter Martha. While she was at home in 1884, on vacation from the boarding school she attended at Springfield, Missouri, the young people decided to get married.

As the end of her holiday drew near, young Scott asked Mr. Fisher's permission to marry his daughter; after thinking the matter over very seriously Mr. Fisher told the young man that his only objection was that he and Martha were too young and he wished his daughter to attend school another year.

The day Martha left for school at Springfield her family saw her aboard the train at Eufaula. In the meantime young Scott mounted his pony and flagged down the train at Bond Switch, north of Eufaula; he and Martha rode as far as Gibson Station, drove to Fort Gibson where they were united in marriage under the Cherokee laws.⁶

Mrs. Annie Fisher Noble was born at Fishertown May 30, 1875 and her schooling commenced in that village in the Creek public school.⁷

Andrew Jackson Berryhill, a son of Jeff and Nancy Berryhill, was born in Fishertown September 15, 1856. His father was a Creek and his mother a white woman. Like other citizens of the place the Berryhill family went south to Red River at the beginning of the Civil War and they did not return to their homes until 1867.⁸

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 69, pp. 188-192.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 39, pp. 108-10, interview with Annie V. Noble, Checotah, Oklahoma; H. F. & E. S. O'Beirne, *The Indian Territory* (St. Louis, 1892), pp. 214-16.

⁸ *Indian-Pioneer History*, Vol. 77, p. 186.

Woods Buckner Rogers, born in Fort Smith in 1836, was a white man who married a Creek wife at Webbers Falls in 1869. They made their home at Honey Springs where their son, Buck Rogers was born. Shortly thereafter the family moved to North Fork Town where Mr. Rogers operated the cotton gin belonging to William Fisher for one year before removing to Eufaula.⁹

A post office was established at Fishertown July 10, 1883. with Henry Clay Fisher as postmaster.¹⁰

A letter in the file of *Creek Courts, Eufaula District*, in the Oklahoma Historical Society, depicts conditions in the neighborhood of Fishertown. The letter, written May 14, 1883, by William Fisher was addressed to:

"Hon. Saml. Chekotle, Okmulgee, I. T.

"Dear Sir I have been thinking for some time doant you think it would be well for you to issue your proclamation for Eufaula District to lay down the carrying of fierarms I do See no use for Eufaula District to be allowed to be carrying fierarms into all publick gatherings & at religious meetings & at Sunday Schools Now we have a Sunday School here at Fishertown & this practice of bringing fierarms rite into the house is a grate annoyance to the welfare of the good intention that it is intended for & just so long as young people is allowed to carry fierarms just as thay pleas we will never have any law & order it may be well for the verry out side District to be allowed the carrying of fierarms a while longer but I see no use of Eufaula District of carrying them only to do devilment with & it will be so untill stoped by law now as there is others that has requested me to write you on this question pleas let me hear from you soon & mutch oblige your friend."

At the Creek election held September 3, 1883, William and George Fisher voted for J. M. Perryman for principal chief and Coweta Misso as second chief. This election was held at Cheyarher Town but "Taskagee" was written opposite the names of the two voters, showing that they were from the latter town, but voted at Cheyarher Town.¹¹

Mrs. Pearl Call, Bixby, Oklahoma, was only seven years old when her family arrived in the Indian Territory, in 1884. They settled at Fishertown which she described as "quite a lively little village." It became very active before her father died in 1889, because many people stopped there enroute to the opening of the Oklahoma Lands that year. There were two stores, a blacksmith shop, post office, and a small church. The blacksmith did the most business as the emigrants stopped to have their horses shod and their wagons repaired.¹²

In December, 1891 William Fisher and Henry Clay Fisher were bondsmen for Samuel Grayson when he became treasurer of the

⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 52, pp. 428-33.

¹⁰ Grant Foreman, "Early Post Offices of Oklahoma," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (March, 1928), p. 23.

¹¹ *Creek-Election*, No. 29390, *loc. cit.*

¹² *Indian-Pioneer History*, Vol. 104, pp. 199, 200.

Creek Nation. Each of the men filed an itemized statement showing the worth of their resources and liabilities. William Fisher listed:¹³

RESOURCES

"1600 Head of Cattle, mostly 2,3,&4 year old steers at \$12.00	\$19200.	
Located in Muscogee Dist. on what is known as Wm. Fisher Ranch		
Store House, Contents and Fixtures &c		8000.
Cotton Gin, Mill & Machinery		1200.
1 mile Square Pasture, 5 wires		500.
Dwelling House, 50 acres in cultivation, and other improvements at Ranch		1500.
All of my Horses on ranch		1200.
Dwelling House here at home, Farms &c		3500.
		<hr/>
		\$35100.

LIABILITIES

Note on Cattle, Payable 15th July, 1892	\$1250.00	
Total due on Mdse.	1200.00	2450.
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		\$32650.

RESOURCES

"An Itemized statement, showing the Net Worth of H. C. Fisher of Fishertown, I. T.		
600 Head of Cattle, mostly 2 and 3 year old steers at 11.00		\$6600.00
in Muscogee Dist. in what is known as Henry Fisher's ranch		
1 Wire Pasture, 5 wires, 1 mile square		500.00
Improvements at Ranch, 15 acres in cultivation, Lots, &c		
and 5000 New Walnut Rails, good well &c		500.00
A Farm right at the town of Checotah, new and substantial buildings, good wells of water, &c		2000.00
Dwelling House and Improvements here at Home		1500.00
Horses, colt &c		450.00
		<hr/>
		\$11,550.00

LIABILITIES

I owe the following amount on my cattle payable the 15th of July 1892		500.00
		<hr/>
	Net Worth	\$11,050.00

An election was held at Tuskegee Town on September 1, 1891 and G. W. Fisher and William Fisher voted for John Reed as principal chief and W. A. Palmer as second chief. Henry Clay Fisher was a clerk of this election.¹⁴

From the following law suit it appears that William Fisher did not forgive his daughter for eloping and marrying Bose Scott:¹⁵

¹³ Indian Archives, *Creek-Treasurer*, No. 39350, *loc. cit.*

¹⁴ Indian Archives, *Creek-Elections*, No. 29535, *loc. cit.* L. C. Perryman and Hotulke Emarthla were reelected in 1891 over Isparhecher and Tulwa Fixico, John Reed and James Colbert. Hotulke Emarthla was elected by a plurality of 250 over Palmer. Palmer was selected for another term as national auditor.—Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance* (Norman, 1941), p. 325.

¹⁵ Indian Archives, *loc. cit.*, *Creek-Courts-Supreme*, No. 29006.

WM. FISHER

vs

Bosie Scott

The plaintiff William Fisher, by his attorney hereby files complaint in the will case of George W. Fisher, now deceased, against Bosie Scott, who represents the interests of his wife Martha Scott, and who, it is claimed by defendant, is the true and only beneficiary of said estate. The plaintiff William Fisher, represents the interests of his son Samuel W. Fisher, and his daughter, Annie Noble, who the plaintiff claims, and proposes to prove, are the real and true beneficiaries by the desires of the said George W. Fisher, according to the last will and testament of the deceased. The plaintiff hereby states that this complaint is based upon an appeal taken by him, from a decision from the Judge of Eufaula District, who rendered a verdict in favor of said Bosie Scott's wife, without any form or trial, and without hearing any evidence on the part of plaintiff, Now therefore, he prays for the fixing of an early date by which he may substantiate his claims for a reversal of the decision of the Eufaula District Judge. His witnesses are Mrs. Melissa Thomas H. C. Fisher and Caddo Wadsworth.

Respe.

William Fisher.

Attached to the above is the following:

Eufaula, Jan. 25, 1896

Hon. T. J. Adams
Chief Justice.

You are hereby notified by this court that Wm. Fisher and Bossie Scott, both were compromise the suit on Estate of G. W. Fisher last term of Supreme Court. Fisher and Scott was here before this office on 13 day of Jan. 1896 and settle the matter before me.

Very Respectfully

Larfe Manly

Judge Eufaula Dist.

According to the archives in the Oklahoma Historical Society the Fishertown school was taught from February 13, 1871 to February 20 1875 by Miss Amanda Davis, Martha Lynch, Cheesie McIntosh, and Wade R. West.

William Fisher, Cad Wadsworth and Tobe Alexander sent a report of the Fisher Town School to David Yargee, superintendent of Creek Schools, on March 18, 1875, saying that the term had commenced February 11 and closed March 15 owing to the illness of the teacher Mr. W. H. Campbell. On April 22 the three trustees again reported to David Yargee that Mr. Thomas Grayson commenced to teach the school on April 5; "The children or schollars seem to be doing tolerable well but you will see from Teachers report that we have not yet an average school on the account of the children not yet coming in on account of having to help their parents get in their crops but we are in hopes now to soon have a full school and we cheerfully recommend that Mr. Grayson be paid for services from the first of the month because he had to use his time from then in procuring books for this school."¹⁶

¹⁶ *Creek-Schools, Neighborhood*, Nos. 37842, 37843, 47843 (warrants to Thomas Grayson for teaching Fisher Town school), *loc. cit.*

J. M. Sloan was the teacher who reported to the trustees for the 1875-76 term of the school. The aggregate number of pupils was eighteen. Reading, writing, spelling and defining, grammar, geography, vocal music arithmetic and morals were taught. In a letter dated November 22, 1875, from William Fisher and Cad Wadsworth to Superintendent of Schools William McCombs, attached to the above report, it is stated that the cause of the low attendance was due to illness, but as the sickly season was passing they hoped to show a better report thereafter. "Our teacher . . . has lost no time since he commenced and he has given general satisfaction as a teacher."¹⁷

June 29, 1877

Fishertown School closed on the 22nd of June. This school reports an average attendance of twelve pupils. The ages of the children range from four to ten years. They deserve the commendation of their teacher, and of all their friends for regularity of their attendance, their diligence in study and their rapid progress.

J. M. Sloan . . . teacher.

Wm. Fisher, Caddo Wadsworth, Trustees.¹⁸

Henry Clay Earnest appears to have taught the school from September 2, 1878 through 1880 and Mrs. R. Weldon was the teacher for four quarters in 1880-81. During that period William McCombs and Samuel Brown were superintendents of public instruction and Ward Coachman and Samuel Checote were the principal chiefs of the Creek Nation.¹⁹

The number of students in Fisher Town school had increased to thirty-nine by November, 1881 when E. M. Corner made his report to William Fisher and Tom Fife, the board of directors. There were seventy books on hand, ten of which were in good condition, forty were bad and twenty worthless. They had nineteen copy books and four slates. John McIntosh superintendent sent an order with this report asking Chief Checote to issue a warrant for Mr. Corner for \$100 for his services as teacher for the first quarter 1881-82.²⁰

Mrs. J. D. Willison²¹ taught the school from January 1, 1882 through the second quarter of 1883. She reported that twenty-five of the pupils out of the whole number of twenty-eight, understood and spoke the English language. In the following years the school was taught by Miss Hattie Simpson, Stella B. Wadsworth, Catherine J. Rector (later Mrs. William M. Patterson of Muskogee), Irving Brodie, J. T. Turpin, and Miss Ethel Fair of Checotah.²²

¹⁷ *Creek-Schools, Neighborhood*, No. 37844, *loc. cit.* Commencing January 10, 1876 and ending April 15 the Fisher Town school was taught by Thomas Grayson with an average attendance of 15 (*Ibid.*, No. 37845).

¹⁸ *Indian Journal*, Eufaula, Creek Nation, Thursday, July 5, 1877, p. 2, Col. 4.

¹⁹ *Creek-Schools, Neighborhood*, Nos. 37846, 37847, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 37848.

²¹ Mrs. James Dandridge Willison was Mary Mackey, daughter of W. T. Mackey, auditor of the Cherokee Nation. She and Mr. Willison were married in June, 1879 (*O'Beirne, op. cit.*, p. 225).

²² *Creek-Schools, Neighborhood*, Nos. 37849-37853, 37855-37861, *loc. cit.*