

Now, Even If You Have Been Thin For Years, You Can

GAIN UP TO 5, 10, 15 POUNDS

without dangerous drugs, without exercise,
without unpleasant tasting medicines,
MEN—an impressive manly body,
WOMEN—a curvier, glamorous figure.

If you had started this amazing method just a few short weeks ago, right now you could be up to 5, 10, even 15 pounds heavier or more!

At last, no matter what you have tried, no matter what you have done, if you are a normally healthy person, you can gain up to 5, 10, 15 pounds or more safely, surely, pleasantly, and that's a guaranteed money-back fact.

Yes now, even if you have been thin for years, you can have the fuller, more attractive body you have always wanted without dangerous drugs, without heart-straining exercise, without unpleasant tasting medicines!

This exciting method is easy, pleasant, and medically sound beyond a shadow of a doubt, and your own Doctor could tell you the same thing.

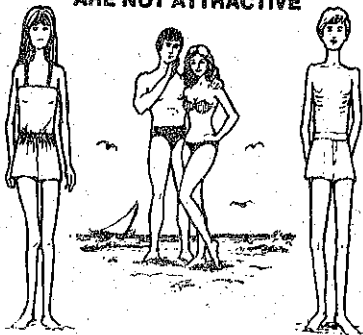
HERE'S ALL YOU DO

Before meals, or whenever you feel like it, you take delicious, chewable, nutritionally fortified GAIN tablets and that's it! No other medication to take. Nothing difficult or unpleasant to do, and without even being aware of it, a wonderfully exciting change takes place.

Those high-calorie GAIN tablets are rich in body-building materials! They not only add weight themselves, but they sharpen your appetite! You look forward to meal-times, and without even realizing it, you start to eat more and almost immediately the weight gaining process begins!

As you follow your GAIN Plan which includes nutritional high calorie menus. You add pounds and inches to your arms, legs, chest, hips, everywhere. You'll be amazed at the fantastic transformation that occurs . . . as thin, unattractive areas start to develop into new magnetic appeal. You'll be

SKINNY MEN AND WOMEN ARE NOT ATTRACTIVE



. . . a skinny, scrawny body is no asset in social or business life. Give the GAIN Plan a chance to help build you up and put firm flesh on you.

thrilled to discover that as you gain weight you will have more pep and energy for all the wonderful things in life!

THINK OF WHAT THIS CAN MEAN TO YOU

If you are one of those unfortunate people who can't wear all the new high style clothes you want to wear . . . if you are ashamed of the way you look in a bathing suit . . . embarrassed because your legs are too thin and spindly . . . your chest is too flat . . . your arms aren't full, rounded limbs they were meant to be . . . if you long for a more attractive-looking body, the safe, pleasant GAIN Plan can be the answer to your prayers!

Yes, now, with the GAIN Plan to help, it's so easy, so pleasant to add pounds and inches of firm, attractive flesh . . . so full-filling to feel better, stronger, more vital and alive! But don't take our word for it. Prove it to yourself at our risk!

If you sincerely want to gain weight, and to look better and feel better as a result,

HERE IS OUR OFFER . . .

We honestly believe the GAIN Plan to be the finest and most effective product of its type sold anywhere in the world today, and to prove our confidence, we are backing that statement up with this honest, straight-forward offer . . .

Try the fabulous new GAIN Plan in your

GAIN IS SAFE

GAIN is not a dangerous drug, medicine or a fishy-tasting oil. It is made of safe, pure ingredients, contains nothing which could possibly harm you and may even be taken with complete safety by children.

100% MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE

Simply buy one GAIN Plan. Try it for 30 days. If you don't like it, return it for a full refund. If you do like it, you haven't lost anything. You've gained 5, 10, or 15 pounds. You've gained a better body. You've gained a better life. You've gained the GAIN Plan. You've gained the way to a better life. Return the same money and get your money back immediately. No questions asked!

NOTE

Special 15-day trial. Famous. In the U.S. only. On a 30-day trial. Controlled. 100% money-back. 5,000. Men. Women. Being. Gained.

When you gain weight, you gain confidence. You gain a better body. You gain a better life. You gain the GAIN Plan. You gain the way to a better life. Return the same money and get your money back immediately. No questions asked!

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1981

REAL WEST ANNUAL

By The Editors Of Real West

REAL WEST ADVENTURES

- 6/The West's Recycled Towns by Matt Dodge
- 14/A Texas Gunfighter And The Kansas Murder Family by Chuck Parsons
- 17/The Railroad Scramble by Sam Bloom
- 20/A Homestead On The Cimarron by R.T. Collingwood as told to B. Paul Chicoline
- 24/Facts About Gunfights And Gunfighters by Bill O'Neal
- 27/High Flying Castle by Don Miller
- 30/The Old Edwards' Trading Post by Stoney Hardcastle
- 34/Conflict At The Cascades by William J. Betts
- 38/The Last Indian Raid In Kansas by Roy Bird
- 42/Johnson County War — Final Test of Cattleman Supremacy by Wayne T. Walker
- 46/Ben Thorn, California Lawman by Samuel Stanley
- 50/The Reign Of The Boys by Phillip J. Rasch
- 54/The Battle Of Centralia by Carl W. Bréihan
- 58/The First Texas Rangers by Oscar Dolch, Jr.
- 60/A Busy Season: Virgil Earp In Prescott, 1877 by Robert E. Palmquist



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THE OLD EDWARDS' TRADING POST

by Stoney Hardcastle

Some eight miles northeast of Red Oak, Oklahoma, nestled in the green Brazil Creek Valley with the rugged San Bois Mountains as a backdrop and the nature-painted Kiamichi Range as a front porch stands one of the true pioneers of the Old Indian Territory and the Old West — The Edwards' Red Oak Store, Post Office, and Trading Post.

After 130 years of defying man, wars, elements, time, and progress, the old frontier landmark still stands in its original structure and with its memories of a romantic and sometimes violent past. A friendly well-kept old fellow, the old pioneer seems anxious to tell his story.

Born in England in 1818, Thomas Edwards went to sea at an early age. But in a short time he gave up the life of a sailor, did some rambling in Australia and New Zealand, then sailed for America. He landed in New Orleans in the late 1840s. After a few weeks in New Orleans, he worked his way up the Mississippi and Arkansas rivers to Fort Smith,

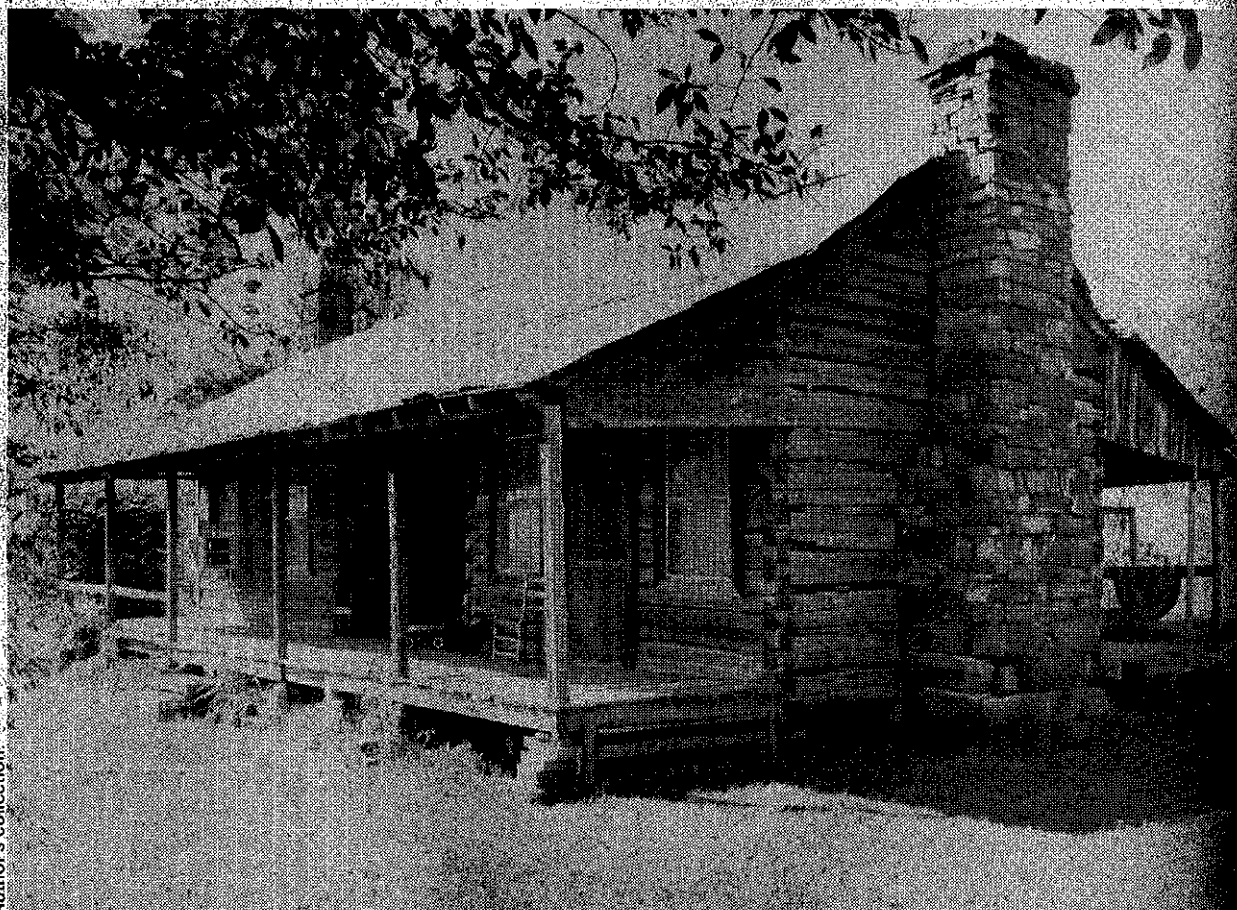
Arkansas.

In Fort Smith, Edwards heard stories of enterprising young Choctaw Nation just to the west. From traders he learned that the Choctaws were farmers and ranchers growing corn, cotton, livestock, and sorghum cane for making molasses and that much of the work was done by black slaves.

According to the talk, the Choctaw Nation was a trader's bonanza. The tales of thriving commerce excited the young Englishman. He was tired of roaming and was looking for something to settle into. Without a craft, becoming a trader and merchant seemed the best opportunity.

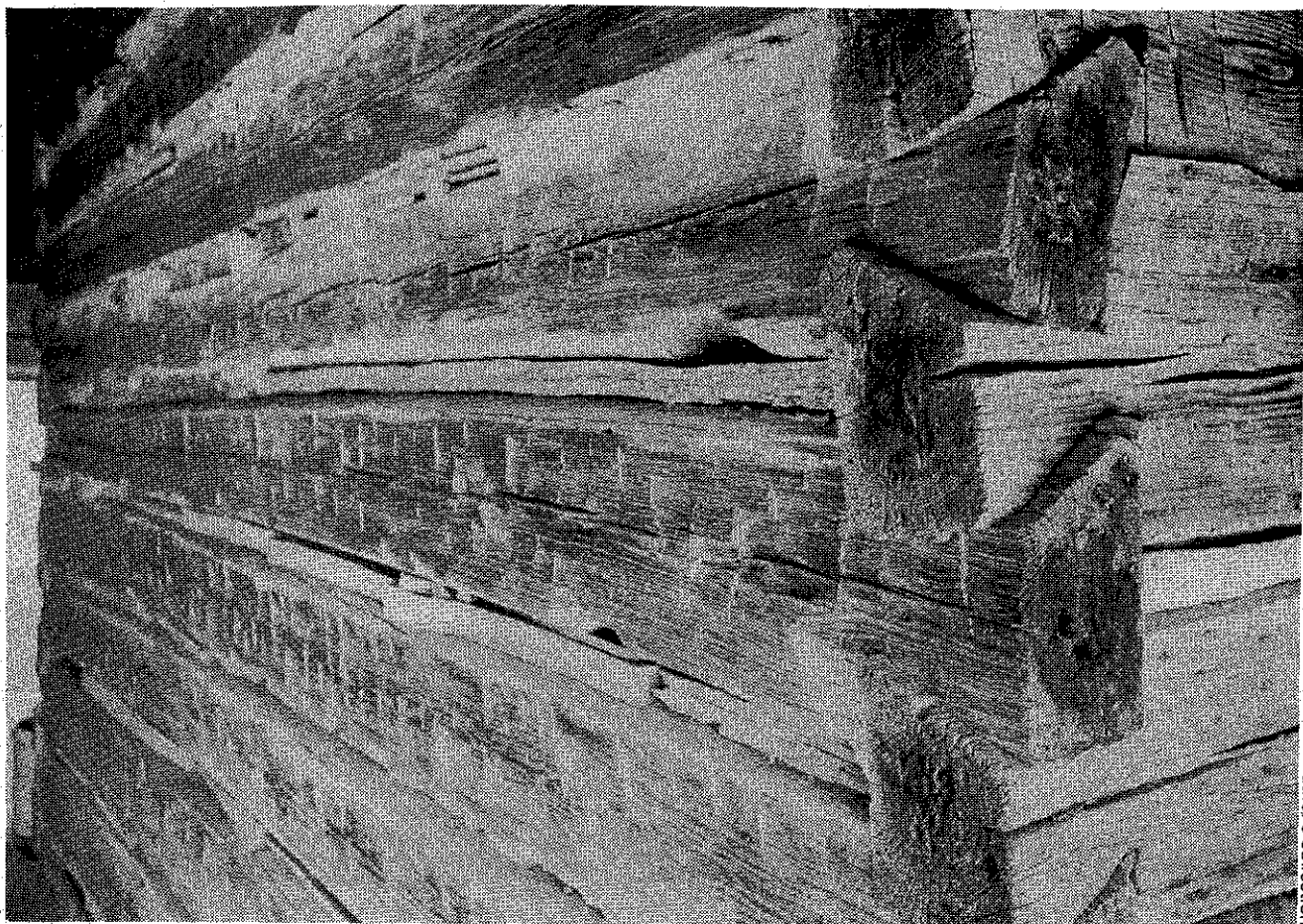
A logical and practical young man, Edwards knew he needed to have experience to enter the business. To gain this experience he found a job as a clerk with a trading post near Poteau in the Choctaw Nation.

He worked hard at learning the frontier merchandising business and making friends with



Author's collection.

Edwards' Trading Post, Butterfield Stage Shop and Red Oak Post Office built in 1850. Located about six miles southeast of Red Oak, Oklahoma, the over-a-century-old building is still in good repair.



Author's collection

Southeast corner of the original Edwards' home built in 1850. Note condition of logs and the fitting which was done with axes.

Choctaw customers. Edwards took a particular interest in one Choctaw, a beautiful young lady named Nancy Hardaway. Her family was one of the more prominent in the Choctaw Nation. Soon the friendship blossomed into a courtship. After a year, Thomas Edwards and Nancy Hardaway were married in 1850.

The marriage opened the door of opportunity for Edwards. He became an intermarried citizen of the Choctaw Nation, which gave him the legal right to operate a business within the nation. Non-citizens had to go through the long drawn-out legalities of obtaining a permit.

Ambitious and with the needed experience, Edwards began searching for a location to open his own trading post.

After much scouting he decided on a site on the Skullyville-Boggy Depot Road. He chose well. Located in the fertile Brazil Creek Valley, the site was a natural. The Skullyville-Boggy Depot Road was the main route from the interior of the nation to Skullyville Town, where the United States Agency dispensed money and supplies to the Choctaws. And it was also the main route to Fort Smith, the main supply point and jumping-off spot to the west.

Not only did the location guarantee Edwards a steady stream of traffic, but the valley was one of the heaviest populated regions in the Choctaw Nation. There were many prosperous farmers and ranchers in the vicinity, assuring a heavy trade in farm produce and livestock.

Rumors circulating that the Skullyville-Boggy Depot Road would soon become a link in a cross-country stage route probably had some influence in Edwards' selection of that location.

With financial assistance from his wife's family, Edwards started to work on his new venture. First he built a home for himself and his new bride. The house was constructed in the architectural design of most houses in region. Two hewed-log, ten-foot-square rooms were built about ten feet apart. Then the rooms were connected by a breezeway, and a front porch was added. The structure was roofed with hand-split oak clapboards. Flooring was from rough-sawed lumber. At the end of each room, a fireplace and chimney was built for heat and cooking. One room served as a bedroom, the other for living room, dining room, and kitchen.

Since community house-raising were customary, labor for the construction cost Edwards nothing.

After completing his home, Edwards constructed a store building about forty feet southeast of the house. The building was fifteen feet square. Like the house, the store was constructed from hewed logs with a fireplace. Across the back of the main store building, a side room was built for storage.

The entire construction project took about a month. With his buildings complete, Edwards drove a team and wagon to Fort Smith and bought his opening inventory of goods: flour, sugar, coffee, salt, tobacco, patent medicines, cloth, and other frontier staples.

So by the fall of 1850, just in time for the fall harvest, the Edwards' Store and Trading Post opened for business. With his merchandise displayed on crude rough-lumber counters and in open barrels, the new business boomed from the start. Little money changed hands. Most business was conducted by the barter system. Produce, cotton, corn molasses, and livestock were traded for store goods.

At first Edwards sold his trade-ins to traveling traders who sold the goods in Fort Smith. But soon freight lines began calling on him. For a fee the freighters would haul Edwards' goods to Fort Smith and sell them for a better price for him. Then, on a return trip, they would haul in needed merchandise. This system was much more profitable. According to old records, A.H. Hummel was one of the more active freighters in the region at the time.

Soon the Edwards' Trading Post became a prominent social and trade center. Customers would travel fifty miles or more to market and buy goods.

There was no official mail service in the Choctaw Nation. All incoming and outgoing mail was

handled in a haphazard manner. Some traveler would usually pick up mail along the route and carry it to Skullyville or Fort Smith. On his return trip he would deliver incoming mail. Several efforts were made by express riders to establish mail service, but the cost was too high. So due to this crude mail system, Edwards' place soon became a mail center.

In the autumn of 1858, the rumor of the Skullyville-Boggy Depot Road becoming a stage route became a reality. Butterfield Overland Stage Company signed a contract with the United States Government for a twice-a-week, 2800-mile mail run from St. Louis to San Francisco.

The selected route split the Choctaw Nation and followed much of the Skullyville-Boggy Depot Road. Thomas Edwards had guessed right: the stage would go right by his place. And more luck was with him. The timetable had the coaches passing Edwards' place at exactly high noon.

Being one to take advantage of every opportunity, Edwards contacted John Butterfield, operator of the stage line, and worked out an agreement allowing the coaches a one-hour lunch and

rest stop at his place.

The stage stop proved to be a profit windfall for Edwards. His wife Nancy opened a food service for the passengers and drivers. The menu consisted of venison, wild turkey, pork, vegetables in season, grits and homemade bread, and coffee. The price was forty-five cents for all they could eat.

Soon the fame of Edwards' food spread. Freighters, traders, and other travelers made the trading post a meal stop. In the summer, meals were served in the cool breezeway and on the front porch. In the winter, the diners ate in the kitchen.

Another business sideline developed from the stage stop. Mostly from the east, the stage passengers were looking for memoirs of their journey. To accommodate them, Edwards stocked a large inventory of trinkets. Unlike some Indian tribes, the Choctaws weren't trinket people. So it became a humorous pastime for them to meet the stage and watch the travelers buy fake beads supposedly made by Choctaws.

Nancy Edwards, speaking perfect English and with white mannerisms, was another oddity



Hide storage shed built in the 1850s. Old Edwards' Trading Post near Red Oak, Oklahoma.

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Nancy Edwards, speaking perfect English and with white mannerisms, was another oddity

to the easterners who thought of all Indians as uncivilized.

There is an old folk tale about the first stage that made a run by Edwards' store. There are no records to verify that the incident happened, but through the generations the tale has been passed along as the truth. The story goes that during the lunch stop at the Edwards Store and Trading Post, the driver bought a bottle of moonshine from a bootlegger who was hanging around. (It is a fact that illegal whiskey peddlers hung around most of the old Indian Territory trading posts.)

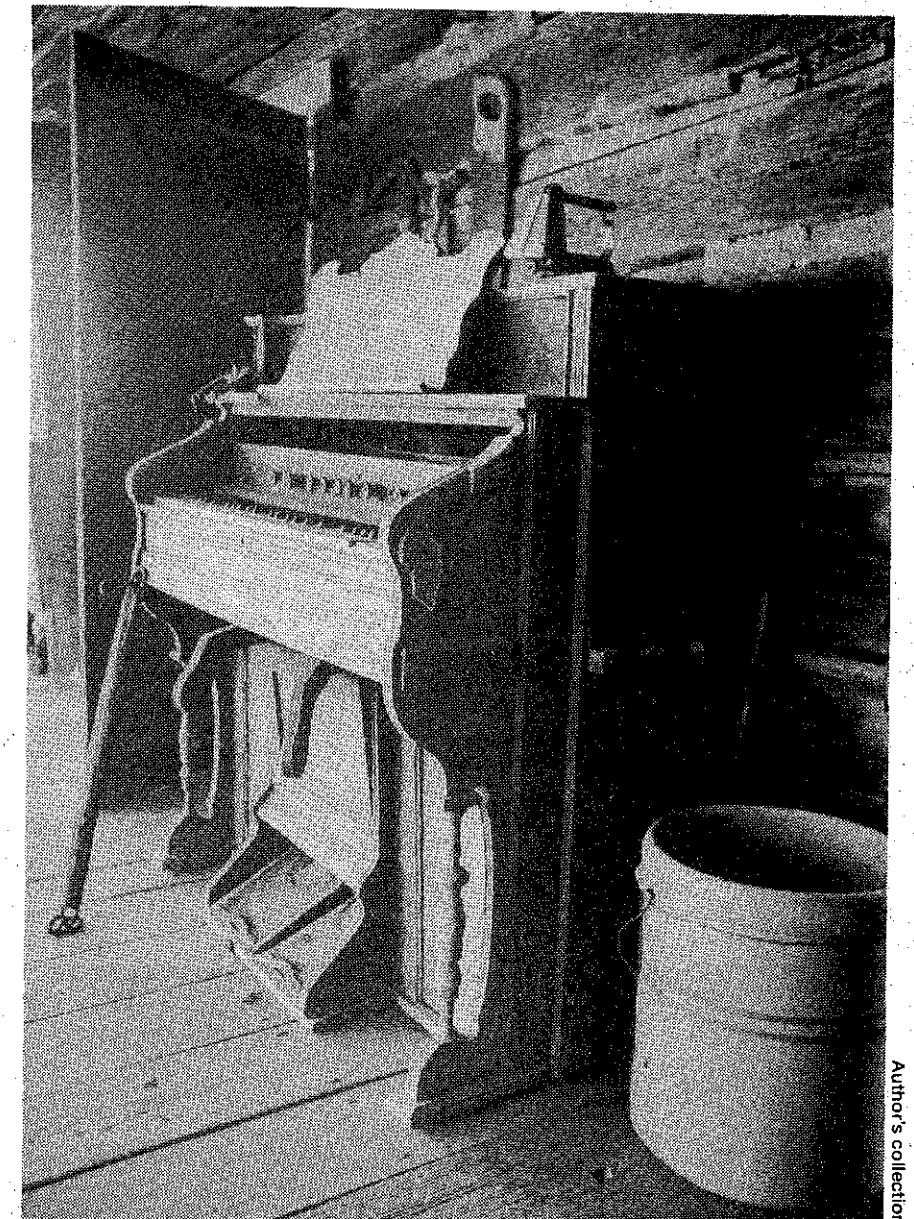
Hitting the bottle heavy a few miles after leaving Edwards, the driver became very drunk and whipped the team into a run. The speeding coach hit a pothole in the road, throwing the drunken driver from his seat. He landed under the wheels, was run over, and his neck broken. The shotgun guard pulled up the team, loaded the dead driver up, and hauled him to Riddle Station where he was buried.

More and more the Edwards Trading Post prospered. Then came 1861 and the Civil War. The Choctaws, being slave owners, were deep sympathizers of the southern cause and aligned with the Confederacy.

But Edwards and a few other Choctaws openly proclaimed their allegiance to the Union. Soon the region was occupied by Confederate troops. For safety, Edwards took his wife and young daughter and fled to Fort Smith which was then occupied by the Union.

For the next four years, like most of the rest of the border country, the Choctaw Nation became a savage battlefield. Both Union and Confederate troops prowled the region around the trading post, burning and foraging. Also, bushwacker bands from across the border in Arkansas raided and robbed in the area.

Countless skirmishes between the Union and Confederate troops were fought near Edwards' Store and Trading Post. Homes and outposts were burned, crops destroyed, and livestock driven off. How such a prize as the trading post escaped being looted and burned is a mystery. While he was in exile, one of Edwards' wife's relatives looked after their property. (It



Fruitwood pump organ, a gift from Thomas Edwards to his bride, Nancy Hardaway, in 1850. Note old singletree leaning against the organ.

seems feasible to believe Edwards sold out his inventory and drove his livestock to Fort Smith when he fled.)

When the war ended, Edwards was more fortunate than most in the Choctaw Nation: his home and business was intact, and he had also saved some money.

When he reopened his business, the barter system was used even more than before. No one had any money. Like the rest of the South, the Choctaw Nation was caught in the depths of the post-war depression.

To accommodate the heavy trading, Edwards built more storage sheds and livestock pens.

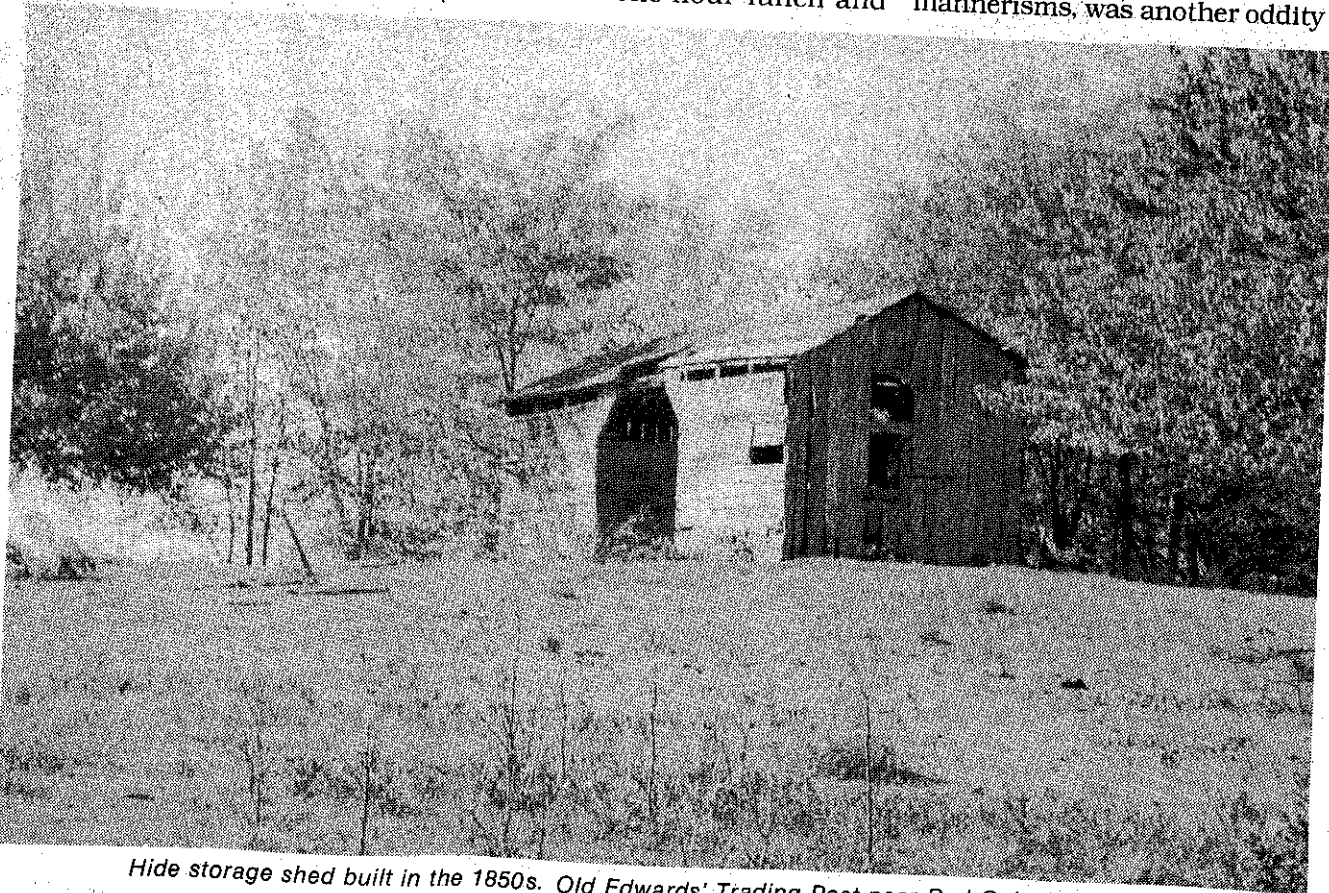
As all good businessmen he kept a good set of books. Some of the old records reflect some in-

teresting prices and trades. Pork was bought at 4¢ per pound. Cattle were traded to a wholesale company for flour. The flour cost \$3.50 per hundred weight and was shipped in barrels.

Since Edwards had been a Union sympathizer during the war and was a strong Republican, he had much political influence with the federal government. On March 11, 1869, he was named postmaster, and his trading post was officially designated a United States Post Office.

The post office was registered as Red Oak Post Office, Skullyville County, Choctaw Nation. Edwards chose the name after several giant oaks standing a-

(continued on page 65)



Hide storage shed built in the 1850s. Old Edwards' Trading Post near Red Oak, Oklahoma.

Author's collection.

Author's collection.

TRADING POST

(continued from page 33)

round his trading post. He also envisioned his place growing into a town and thought Red Oak would be a more appropriate name than Edwards. Yet few accepted the name change, and the trading post continued to be called Edwards' Store.

At the time the post office was established, hundreds of whites were settling in the region. These immigrants, mostly from the South, were fleeing the Reconstruction Depression. The Choctaws allowed the whites to farm their tribal lands for a rental fee. The new settlers brought more business to Edwards' Trading Post.

But not all whites who moved into the nation were honest farmers. Many were of the lawless element. With the U.S. Marshals from Fort Smith being the only law-enforcement agency for whites, the nation became a hide-out and stomping grounds for countless outlaws. The Choctaw Lighthorsemen had no authority with whites unless Indians were involved.

The James boys, the Youngers, Jim Reed, Jim French, and many other notorious badmen at various times hid out in the region. Robbery, rustling, and murder were common in the region. Yet the Edwards' Store continued to lead its charmed life and was never robbed, even though it was widely known Edwards always kept considerable cash on hand.

Probably the reason Edwards wasn't robbed was the presence of U.S. Marshals and Lighthorsemen always around the trading post. After the post officially became a federal post office, lawmen used it as an unofficial headquarters. On their way to the federal court in Fort Smith with prisoners, lawmen stopped at the post for meals and a rest. If the prisoners were violent, they were usually chained to the hitching rail and fed.

The notorious Outlaw Queen, Belle Starr was a frequent visitor at the trading post. Since she was an arch enemy of the federal government and a political ally of many of the Choctaw leaders, she was always on her best behavior when visiting in their nation. She

not only was considered an untouchable by the Lighthorsemen, but had their protection as well.

Edwards became engaged in another interesting business sideline. The lawmen would recover stolen livestock from rustlers. In many cases the true owners of the animals were unknown. So the lawmen would drive the stock to the trading post and pen them. A description of the stock was then posted for a period of thirty days. If not claimed by the rightful owner, the livestock was then sold.

From the sale price, Edwards was paid a penning and feed bill. The balance was pocketed by the lawmen. Records show good horses sold for \$50 each, mules brought \$35, and cows went for \$20 to \$30.

As his business grew and flourished, Thomas Edwards became more prominent and powerful. Even though he took no part in the Choctaw government, he had great influence with their leaders and with the federal government. At the peak of his power Edwards died, on October 16, 1883. He was buried in the family plot a short distance from his home, next to his two daughter's graves. Both of the Edwards' children, daughters, died at very young ages.

Edwards' death wasn't the end of his trading post. His wife continued to operate the business. She turned the management over to a nephew, Jesse Hardaway, who had been an employee of Edwards for three years and was well trained in the business. Under Hardaway's management, the business continued to grow and prosper. In 1888, Nancy Edwards died and left the entire estate to her nephew.

The same year of Mrs. Edwards' death, another misfortune hit the old trading post. The Choctaw Coal and Railroad Company (now the Rock Island Line) was granted a charter to build a railroad a few miles to the south.

A townsite was laid out on the railroad a few miles southwest of the Edwards' Red Oak Store and Trading Post. Since the trains brought daily mail, the founders of the new town petitioned the federal government to move the post office from the trading post to their new town. The request was granted. Not only was the post office moved, but the name 'Red Oak' as well.

(It isn't difficult to believe that had Thomas Edwards been alive, with his political influence, he would have put up a fight. Especially over the name of his trading post being stolen.)

Hardaway apparently didn't file a protest, probably thinking it was useless and not believing the transfer of the post office would effect his well-established business. He was wrong.

Soon a thriving town sprang up around the new Red Oak Post Office on the railroad. The Old Edwards' Store and Trading Post was doomed. Progress had won.

After a year of seeing his business dwindle to practically nothing, Hardaway closed the old trading post forever and turned his full attention to farming and ranching. He cleaned out the main-store building and used it as a blacksmith shop. But he kept the old landmark in excellent repair.

The old Edwards' Store and Trading Post is still owned by the Hardaway family. Now in the sixth generation of ownership, the Hardaways have kept the old frontier post well maintained.

Lulu Hardaway, who lives near the old trading post, in the summer opens it to visitors, no charge. She is very friendly and delights in giving a guided tour of the old landmark. The buildings are still just about as original as they were 130 years ago when they were built. And many of the original home furnishings Thomas Edwards bought for his bride Nancy are still just as they were placed.

In a recent interview, when asked why her family spent all the money and time in maintaining the old trading post, Mrs. Hardaway replied, "Pride and sentimental reasons. These old buildings and grounds seem to talk — tell their experiences."

After several hours of browsing around the old trading post, we agreed. The old pioneer does have a story to tell. And maybe it does talk if one will listen. We did. **RW**

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