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Jefferson Berryhill

Interviewer:

September 2, 1937.

Creek Indian Bad Man.

Interview with Mrs. Katie Harrison.

Mrs. Katie Harrison was born in the Town of Eufaula, in Eufaula County in the year of 1859, and now lives one mile north, one mile west and half a mile north of Okmulgee, in Okmulgee County.

She is one-fourth Choctaw and colored. She is seventy eight years old. Although a freed man she did not receive any allotment of land. Her father's name was William Stewart, age unknown, buried at Eufaula. Mother's name was Millie, last name unknown, also age. Grandfather and Grandmother's names unknown.

She has lived among the Creek Indians all her life, and is able to speak the Creek language.

Among the outlaws, killers, and bad men of the Creek Indian Tribe during the Territorial days, and the most dangerous and feared man was a full blood Creek Indian by the name of Wesley Barnett.

Wesley Barnett was forced to become a killer by his stepfather. Wesley Barnett had been sent to school

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at Haskell Institute at Lawrence, Kansas, which the school is for the Indians only. While he was there attending school, his step-father who had been separated with his wife returned, and wanted to take her back as a wife again, but she knowing him to be a cruel man refused to go back to him as a wife again. This refusal made him so angry, he shot her with a pistol, killing her instantly. After he had killed her he went to his home.

Her son, Wesley Barnett, who was now at school was told to come home to attend his mother's funeral and burying. When he came home to see his beloved mother dead it is said he wept and cried out aloud that he would never be satisfied till he had avenged his mother's death. He went armed with a rifle to the home of the man who had killed his mother. Knowing that he was marked for death the man also armed with guns, stayed in the house.

To the custom of the Lighthorse, Wesley Barnett waited around the man's house day and night for a week

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until his step-father came out of the house. Then as he had said he would kill his man, Barnett shot his step-father again and again after he was already dead. Knowing the man was cruel, Barnett was never apprehended. Thus he lived the life of a man of sorrow for twelve years always thinking of his mother.

After wandering around for twelve years, he had married an Indian woman. One day an Indian Stomp dance was to be held at Eufaula. He decided to attend the dance; as he was about to leave on a horse his wife also wanted to go to the dance. He told her to stay home and a heated argument ensued, but being the husband he left his wife at home and went to dance. As he had arrived at the dance ground and was talking to his friends, his brother and his wife came up in a wagon; seeing this made him very angry.

After attending to the horses his brother went to the well or spring nearby to drink, Barnett came up behind and shot him dead. He knew now that he could not beat the Indian and white law^s who were after him for murder. He came into Okmulgee and bought a coffin

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for his now dead brother and one coffin for himself. He took his coffin home expecting to be killed as he would never give up or be taken alive.

He wandered around and among the Indians for two years after the killing of his brother. One night he rode in Okmulgee; as he was riding by the Creek Council House he saw the eagle that is perched on top of the building, shining in the moonlight, he shot at it with a gun, hitting it once in the wing. He joined a gang of train robbers. While counting money one day, west of Preston, the law surprised them; one of the gang was captured, others and himself getting away on his trained horse.

His horse was trained to warn his master at the least noise of approaching danger. His horse warned him by stamping its front feet. Before the gang was aware of danger, he was speeding away on his horse. Fast as his horse was, he was pursued by three white laws. He turned around on his horse and shot and

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killed the three laws dead with a Winchester rifle. Then he went to Arkansas as trying to escape from the laws.

The laws in Arkansas were notified of his being there in Arkansas. He somehow escaped capture and returned to his home near or about three miles southwest of Eram. The laws although anxious to capture him could not learn of his hiding place. He was now staying with his wife at the place just mentioned above. His wife being afraid he would kill her, told another Indian of his return. The Indian waited for him at his home as he had gone out. After midnight he came back home; as he entered the house the Indian was hiding behind a barrel; as he came a few feet away the Indian shot him in the face with a shotgun. He whoop and ran to his horse; he mounted his horse; said "You got me"; he fell to the ground dead. His horse could not save

him.

Editors Note:

The first Indian to file for an allotment on the rolls of the Five Civilized Tribes at the Indian Agency in Muskogee was Suzanne, a daughter of Wesley Barnett.

Suzanne was adopted later by Miss Alice Robertson, and later married Charles E. Strouvelle.

Miss Robertson was Oklahoma's first Congresswoman and Postmaster at Muskogee for a number of years.

Jefferson Berryhill, a fullblood, so naively expresses the thoughts and ideas of the one interviewed, no change to better English is attempted.

Editor.