

PORTER, SUSAN BREEDLOVE

INTERVIEW

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Susan Breedlove Porter, an aged Choctaw woman, native of the state of Oklahoma, has in her possession one square bowl or meat dish and one quart pitcher which she treasures very highly and of her historical collection, she states;

Eliza Carney, a woman of my own race, who was a young woman in her teens during the Civil War was married to a man and lived until she died in what is now Pontotoc County. She died a very old lady.

During the smallpox epidemic which swept the country, the first time that this epidemic was ever noticed, several deaths were caused by this disease throughout the country. It was known as the "Black Smallpox". When one contracted this disease, the scent or odor of this disease was so strong that no one dared or cared to be in the same room where the patient was. Eliza Carney contracted this malady and her condition was so serious that her husband could not stand her so he built a shed some distance from the house and took her to this shed and this

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was where she lay with no one to wait on her only at times when they brought food to her.

Thinking that she was going to die, she sent for me and when I responded, she talked to me for some time and finally told me of the dishes that she possessed which she treasured very highly and said that she would make me a present of those dishes provided I would take care of them.

Knowing her condition, and having sympathy with her, I accepted these dishes that she offered me and they have been in my possession ever since. This woman finally recovered of this disease and lived several years before she died but was separated from her husband since he could not stand her during her illness.

#### AS TOLD BY AGED PEOPLES

When I was still a small girl, the older people used to talk about the death of one of the members of the family. They told that the houses that most of them lived in at that time were made out of logs as there was no saw mill where one could buy lumber, and these houses usually had no floors but people used the bare ground for the floor. This was the condition of the house and when

one member of the house would die, a grave would be dug in one corner of the house. When the grave was dug to about two or three feet deep, <sup>from there down</sup> a smaller place would be dug to about two feet deep or deep enough to place the body in this place and a few pieces of board or planks would be placed over the body and covered up with dirt.

After the corpse was buried, the widowed husband or wife, as the case may be, would build a small cot over the grave and would sleep there every night for a month which was a tradition that they followed in those days. Although I was born in 1870, yet I never did witness any of the incidents that ever happened during my young days.

When they moved they did not set any markings over the graves of the deceased and at present there are farms, buildings and other improvements that have been built or constructed over the graves which are now unknown.

NOTE--This interview is <sup>by</sup> an Indian and his interviews are expressed exactly as his talk. No effort is made to change his manuscripts to correct English. Ed.-