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BREWER, O. H.

INTERVIEW.

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Indian-Pioneer History,
Grant Foreman, Director,
211 Federal Building,
Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Ruth Lee Gamblin,
Field Worker,
May 10th, 1937.

An interview with Mr. O. H. Brewer,
North 7th, Street,
Frederick, Oklahoma.

"CAVE-IN OF FREDERICK'S FIRST WATER WELL"

One of the most fatal tragedies that ever visited Tillman County was on the morning of October 31, 1913, when the city well, which was being dug a half mile west of town, suddenly caved in, killing five and injuring many others.

Yes, I was a workman on the well and I received a broken collar bone and left leg, also my abdomen was bruised; but I am glad to relate the story.

I do not know whether my injuries were caused from being knobked to the bottom of the well or from something that fell upon me afterwards.

I never felt a bit of uneasiness about the well until the day before the tragedy. I noticed the hole underneath had fallen out too much, by quicksand being sucked out, but I didn't say anything.

George Wells, Mont Dean and myself were on the lower platform filling up the hole behind the walls.

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John Waggoner was on the east side under the platform. M. A. Dean had just started out of the well when I noticed the well cave in from the bottom on the north-side. It happened before I could bat an eye. The next thing I knew I was in the water over my head. I slipped off my rubber boots so they would not weigh me down. Then I climbed out of the water onto some timber and made me a seat out of some rubbish. I did not have room to stand up.

I was in kind of an open place - the beams and timbers protected me and I could see over where the Dean boy was about six feet away. It was darker where he was. I talked to him and cheered him up the best I could.

I called for a saw and someone came and handed it to me and I passed it on to young Dean. I got cold from being in the water and asked for a coat and someone handed me a coat.

Young Dean was climbing out when the stuff caught him but I don't think he went under the water like I did. Some heavy beams caught him and pinned him down. He broke down and cried two or three times and I did what I could to cheer him up.

I will never forget two men who came down at the risk of their own lives and took away some brick around me, and were the first to help me out. A rope was put about my waist, and I was kind of pulled up the ladder but I could feel someone from behind pushing me. I helped myself also and kept my nerve until I got close to the top, when I went all to pieces. I never was excited while down in the well. I did not have the faintest idea where the remainder of my fellow workmen were. I thought perhaps they all were killed.

A rope was placed around my body and with the help of men at top of well I was hoisted up the ladder to the top. My clothing and body were wringing wet, in fact my body was almost paralyzed from the shock.

They had two doctors there to work with us. It was very cold and men had to carry wood to make fires with. The ladies all over the County made hot coffee and sandwiches and kept a good supply there for the workmen all the time.