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BAGG, TOOKAH TURNER.

INTERVIEW

#12725

BAGG, TOOKAH TURNER INTERVIEW 12725

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743 North 7th, Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Subject Clarence William Turner

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Clarence William Turner was born June 18, 1857, in Cleveland, Ohio, the elder son of John E. and Julia Ayers Turner. The family is of English descent, natives of New York state. William Turner, grandfather of Clarence W. was the first white child to be born in his county in New York state.

In the spring of 1867 Clarence W. Turner moved with his parents to Fort Smith, Arkansas, coming by railroad as far as Rolla, Missouri. The remaining distance of about three hundred miles was made by stage coach. From the time of his arrival until 1871 Clarence W. Turner attended the schools in Fort Smith.

In 1874 Mr. Turner entered the Jones College in St. Louis, Missouri, where he received business training, during which time he was also buyer for his father's mercantile business in Okmulgee. Upon returning home he remained with and assisted his father

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until the fall of 1875 when he and William Harv-
ison bought the business from Mr. John E. Turner
and continued in partnership until 1881 when they
sold their holdings to James Parkinson of Okmal-
gee.

In 1882 after several months travel and
study of business in the East, Mr. Turner purchased
the J. S. Atkinson Hardware Company in Muskogee.
The following year he formed a partnership with P.
J. Byrne, a man very prominent in the history of
the Creek and Cherokee Nations. In 1887 almost
the entire business portion of Muskogee was des-
troyed by fire, including the store of Turner &
Byrne. In rebuilding, they erected a two story
brick building on the northeast corner of Broad-
way and Main streets, which was at that time the
only brick building and the largest business
building in Muskogee.

In 1889 Mr. Turner purchased Mr. Byrne's
interests and shortly thereafter established a
wholesale business in addition to his retail de-
partment which soon developed into the largest

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wholesale hardware business in the Indian territory. In the years that followed Mr. Turner's business interests grew, and he added to his building until the structure covered the greater part of the block on the northeast corner of Broadway and Main streets. This block contained the Turner Hardware Co., the Turner Furniture Co., the Turner Lumber Co., and the Turner Opera House, also the Masonic Lodge rooms. North of this building was the Turner Plumbing and Tin Shop.

Other of Mr. Turner's business interests were the Choska Trading Company of Choska, Indian Territory, Claremore Flour Mills at Claremore, Butler Mercantile Company at Fort Gibson, Muskogee Ice & Power Plant at Muskogee and the Tablequah Electric Plant and Telephone Company at Tablequah. He also organized the Commercial National Bank of Muskogee and owned and operated the Turkey Creek Coal Mine. This mine was situated a short distance east of McAlester on the Choctaw Oklahoma & Gulf Railroad, which is now the Rock Island.

Mr. Turner was also extensively interested

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and had large holdings in the cattle industry of the Indian Territory. He owned the "C. A. Bar" ranch which was situated a little south and west of Oktaha, the "B Bar" ranch situated where the town of Wainwright now stands and on the east the "Hearts Cross" ranch where the town of Inola now stands. The gate at the main entrance of the ranch was where the railroad station of Inola is situated.

Mr. Turner was a member of the first city council of Muskogee; the other four members were F. B. Severs, P. N. Blackstone, W. S. Harsha and Andrew Robb. P. J. Byrne was the mayor of Muskogee at that time. Mr. Turner was later one of the five members of the Board of Aldermen of Muskogee.

Mr. Turner was especially interested in schools and churches and was a close friend of Alvin C. Bacone, founder of Bacone College, and of the Honorable Theodore F. Brewer of Barrell Institute, later Chaplain of the University of Oklahoma. Father Ketchum of the early Catholic Church of Muskogee also found a friend in Mr. Turner. To

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Mr. Turner and his close friend, the late Chief Pleasant Porter, the University of Tulsa probably owes its existence.

Both Mr. Turner and Chief Porter were ardent supporters of the late Miss Alice Robertson. Because of family affiliations with the First Presbyterian Church of Muskogee, Mr. Turner was especially interested in the School for Girls that was established by Miss Alice Robertson in Muskogee and was connected with the Presbyterian Board. This school was given much financial assistance by the late Mrs. Henry Kendall Thaw, of New York. About 1896 the school received a donation from Mrs. Thaw and the institution was given the name of the Henry Kendall College in honor of the deceased husband of Mrs. Thaw. Mr. Turner and Chief Pleasant Porter gave thirteen acres of land to the college to be used as the grounds for a school of higher learning with the understanding that this land was to be used for school purposes only. The college was established on the beautiful location in the west side of Muskogee and was very successful for a number of years;


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then it became involved in financial difficulty and was eventually moved to Tulsa and the out-growth is the splendid Tulsa University. The college site of thirteen acres in Muskogee that was given for that purpose by Mr. Turner and Chief Pleasant Porter was platted as a residential district and sold, netting the funds necessary to form a firm foundation for what is now the University of Tulsa. 

Mr. Turner rendered many services to the Creek and Cherokee Nations, spending much time in Washington and New York on various missions.

He was loved by his Indian friends and returned their esteem.

In 1889 Mr. Turner built the first Federal Court building in the Indian territory. It was a brick and stone building situated on the corner of Court and 2nd streets where the Railway Exchange building now stands. 

He was largely responsible for the location of the Dawes Commission in Muskogee, for the sale of the Cherokee Strip and for the pay-

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ment of the proceeds from same to the Cherokees. He recognized the advantage of making the Arkansas river navigable again and was one of the original group to promote interest in that movement.

In 1877 he was married to Miss Nannie Murray of Cherokee descent. To them were born one son, William Dee in 1878. Mrs. Nannie Turner died in 1879.

September 6, 1883 Mr. Turner was married to Miss Tookah Butler, of Cherokee descent, the daughter of Captain Edward and Elizabeth Bell Butler of North Fork Town, Indian Territory. To this union were born three children, Tookah, Clarence and Marion, all now living.

Mr. Turner passed on from this life April 21, 1931, in St. Louis, Missouri where he had spent several months seeking treatment.

Mr. Turner was a charter member of the Muskogee Masonic Lodge, a 32nd degree Mason, a member of the Elks Lodge, and of many local clubs and civic organizations.

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*This may be an error as the Thaw family who had Miss Alice Robertscn as their guest on several occasions was the William K. Thaw family who resided in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. There was a son in this family, named Harry K. Thaw. Mrs. William K. Thaw was for many years very interested in Miss Alice's activities and rejoiced at her success.