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W. T. Holland
Investigator
October 19, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Callie B. McNiece
24 N. Quannah, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

I first saw the light of day in Tahlequah on July 12, 1882. My father, George A. Wofford was a printer by trade, and was for several years engaged in that business and in publishing the "Cherokee Advocate" of Tahlequah. My mother, Sarah J. (Williams) Wofford, was part Cherokee as well as my father who had enough Cherokee blood for us to get an allotment.

I grew up in Tahlequah and attended public school there. Our school was financed by the government. Later on I attended the Baptist Mission school at Tahlequah. In 1890, we school children attended the laying of the cornerstone of the Female Seminary at Tahlequah. We marched to the site of the building in a body.

Tahlequah, the seat of the Cherokee Government, was active during my life there. The Cherokees occupied offices there in the Cherokee capitol building and the Cherokee Council met at regular intervals. I remember some very exciting times during the political conventions there. There were two major parties there, the National party and the

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Downing party. Each party had a candidate for Chief, their candidates being nominated at these conventions. Great crowds of Indians would attend these conventions and sometimes, especially when drunk, they would cause a lot of trouble.

During one of these conventions my uncle, Eli Wofford, who was chief of police got killed and another uncle, Leonard Williams, was wounded in the same fight. They were arresting a drunk Indian when some of this Indian's political allies took up the matter and a free for all fight followed with the above mentioned result.

There was always a big celebration when a new chief was sworn in. My father acted as Interpreter during these times and interpreted the new chief's address to the Indians who could not understand English. The chief usually spoke in English. My father was well educated for a man of his time.

We children surely enjoyed these inaugural ceremonies. Crowds of Indians came to town bringing whole families and spent two or three days. There would be dancing at night. My mother used to board the Councilmen when they were in

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town attending the meeting of that body. Fireworks would be shot off at night, including the shooting of the anvils. My father added quite a lot of noise to the celebration one night when he shot off a stick of dynamite. The old printing shop of my father, a brick building, now stands near the old Capitol building there in Tahlequah.

I remember when they had public hangings there. Indians would come in from miles around to witness these executions. However, I never saw a public hanging as my parents never attended one and always saw to it that we children were kept safely at home during these executions. For lesser crimes, whipping was administered, the criminal being tied to a tree and the lashing given him while thus tied.

It was also a practice among the Cherokees to tie up drunken men when they became troublesome. My uncle, Than T. Wofford, was United States Marshal for quite a long time for Tahlequah and that district. The time my Uncle Eli Wofford was killed was to be the last convention held by the National and Downing parties.

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We had a good time socially and all the time was not spent in political matters. One of the social events most looked forward to and most enjoyed was what was known then as The Fish Poisoning. These fish poisonings were held on the Illinois River. A party of men would gather up a lot of "Buckeyes", a kind of nut. These would be beaten up then taken up the river above our camping site and thrown into the stream. Soon the fish would appear on the surface of the water and by the time they reached our camping place other men would wade in and throw them out on the bank. The poison did not affect the meat of the fish in the least. The women then began frying and boiling fish. They also had big kettles in which they would cook the fish heads and made a soup out of them. This soup as well as the fish was good.

White families would also attend these fish poisonings and then, too, others came just to get some fish to take home. These people were given all the fish they wanted. As night approached the men would gather pine knots which were lighted. These afforded light for our crowd for their night celebrations and dances. We were taught English and always spoke it.

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One thrilling sight to me, along about 1888 . until later years, was the going and coming of the stage. We got our mail from Fort Gibson and the stage drawn by six horses left Tahlequah in the morning, made the trip to Fort Gibson and returned in the evening to Tahlequah, bringing the mail and some passengers. There was always a crowd present to welcome the coming of the stage.