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Field Worker
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Life of a fullblood Chickasaw
Woman told in an interview by
Dinah Lewis Frazier, Mill Creek,
Oklahoma.

My father was Jim Lewis. He was born in Mississippi, but I don't know my mother's maiden name. She was born in Mississippi. Father was a stockman. There were four children.

I was born in 1856, at Gum Springs on Oil Creek, near Sulphur, Chickasaw Nation.

The Comanche and Kiowa Indians used to make raids on us. They would steal from us the same as from white people. I remember, when a small child prowling through the woods and finding ashes of camp fires where they had camped, one day I found an arrow point. It was made of hard steel. We didn't dare leave a cross-cut saw outside. They liked to get hold of them for arrow points. They weren't inclined to fight with us, unless we tried to catch them if they had stolen something. Then they would kill and scalp us.

Father went hunting each fall. His favorite hunting ground was north of Sulphur. He brought home deer and turkeys. We hung the deer high in a tree, and used

the meat as we wanted it. We dried beef for winter use. We built a scaffold on which the meat was laid. A fire was built under this and the meat was slowly dried over the heat. When we got ready to use this dried beef we sliced it and put it in lukewarm water, until it was soft, then we pounded it on the mortar block with a pestle until it was beaten into a hash. This we fried. We raised and dried pumpkin. We sliced the pumpkin into rings and strung it on a pole in the smoke house to dry. One of our favorite dishes was cold flour. This was made of green corn in the roasting ear stage.

The corn was parched and shelled, then beaten on the mortar block with a pestle until it was beaten to meal. It was ready to serve. We ate it with water and sugar over it. This was our cereal. Another dish which we liked was Blue Bread. We put white corn on the mortar block and beat it until the husks came off. We burned the hulls of peas to ashes and mixed this with the corn and boiled until tender. We cooked on the fireplace with a skillet and lid. We made coffee out of parched okra seed.

Mother didn't make our clothes. We bought them from W. L. Byrd at Stonewall and Tishomingo. We paid

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five and ten cents per yard for calico. One dollar and fifty cents per pair for shoes. Our blankets cost from seventy-five cents to ten dollars. We sold cows for five to ten dollars per head.

I have a firewheel, with which we started fires. It is made as follows: The stick is made of bois d'arc. There is a round block about one inch thick through which this stick passes. There is another stick of pine slipped over the top of the stick and a cord is attached to each end of this and to the top of the upright or bois d'arc stick. When the pine stick is pulled up and down, it makes the wheel turn rapidly which produces a fire on the bottom of the upright stick which is on a soft pine board. The wheel looks like this:



I don't remember the year I was married. My husband was a Methodist Circuit Rider. He preached to the Choctaws from Atoka on east.

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He was a legislator under Governor Douglas Johnson, during his second term. He represented Tishomingo county. There were only four counties in the Chickasaw Nation. These were Tishomingo, Pickens, Pontotoc and Panola.

Mill Creek was called Cherokee Creek, because the Cherokees camped on it when they were brought to the Territory. After Governor Harris built his mill there, it was called Mill Creek. In like manner Delaware Creek received its name from the Delawares who camped along its banks.

~~My father, mother and husband are buried in our family graveyard, here on our farm.~~