FIELD WORKER HAZEL B. GREENE
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INTERVIEW WITH BILLIE FULLEN
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Hugo, Oklahoma.

My father, Fred Fox, was raised close to Clarksville, Texas, and from the time he was big enough to drive a yoke of oxen, he freighted goods from Clarksville, Texas, to Goodwater, Indian Territory, to the store of Mr. Charlie Whiteman, who ran a store there about forty-seven years and died in 1935. Mr. Whiteman was postmaster, too, long years ago. My father and his father made regular trips freighting to Mr. Whiteman's store at Goodwater, in McCurtain County, and they went to Kullituklo, too,

When leaving on one of these trips, my father and grandfather would have the women to pack enough food to last them some days longer than it would take them to make the freighting trip so they could hunt some game. They knew of a deer lick, somewhere up in McCurtain County and they would camp a long

way off from it and slip up there and climb trees and wait for the deer to come to this lick for salt. Sometimes they would have to wait for hours, cramped up in a tree, before they would get a chance to get a deer, and sometimes they would not get a deer the first trip and would have to return to camp and try again but they would nearly always return home laden with game. Father and grandfather spent about as much time in the Choctaw Country as they did in Texas, even before they moved over here.

I was born about two miles west of Hugo, in Choctaw County. on the Ed Combs place. Our neighbors were full blood Choctaws. When there would be big camp meetings in the summer time , our parents would take us children. Sometimes we would stay at a camp meeting two or three weeks. Each family whom we knew and went with always took along a negro cook and sometimes they would take a small cook stove. They always took along yearlings, hogs and chickens.

The Indians seldom ever raised any chickens.

The yearlings would be barbecued in a pit or cooked in a big wash pots. Sometimes a whole hog would be barbecued. They would make Tom Fuller, too, by pounding corn with a pestle in a mortar until it looked like chops to me. Then they would cook the corn and red beans separately. When both were done they put beans in the corn. They would put in only a few beans for decoration; they would mold balls of the Tom Fuller and beans and drop those balls into the pots of gravy where a hog or beef had been cooked and would cook them a long time, let them simmer and serve by pouring some of the gravy over the balls. They were really good. Sometimes one negro cook would put in a whole morning making old fashioned egg custards. That was when the stove would come into use. Green apple pies were another favorite dish.

The meetings I attended were out on Salt creek, about seven miles north of Hugo, out near Speer.

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The church is now called Salt Creek church but when I was a child they called it 'Hope-a- bah'. Of course the church belonged to the community but the dozen or more cabins surrounding it belonged to individuals. They were built of logs, some had only one room and some had a side room. All the cabins had sheds beside them with long tables under them, which were never taken away; they stayed there from year to year. Then back of the cabins was where they cooked; sometimes under another shed and sometimes just out under the trees. But sometimes we children would think that the sermon would never end and the odor of that cooking food was very tantalizing. Most of the women just took care of the children and went to the services and brought cooks along just so they could be free from cooking for that time. Services were hardly ever held inside the church in the summer, but an arbor was built out where it would be cooler.

A Choctaw Indian would preach in Choctaw and sometimes a white preacher would interpret the sermon. The Robert Pisachubbi family was the family with whom we usually went.

We enjoyed living among the Indians, as most of them were nice and made good neighbors. I remember one old Choctaw who would go to town nearly every Saturday and get drunk. As he would make his way home, after dark, he would shoot at every light he saw in a house, after he got out of town. He did not dare do that in town. We would hear him coming down the road whooping and the grown folks would put out the lights and put the children under the bed for fear that he would shoot at the lights and hit one of the children.

A little Indian boy who lived near us died and they buried him out in the corner of the garden; not a tear was shed when they buried him. Even his mother did not even cry. Three

months later, on July Fourth, they built an arbor, barbecued a beef, made up a lot of pies and cakes, invited a lot of their friends. The yard and house were full. The service lasted all morning and consisted of a sermon, songs and prayers. Then they spread the big dinner on tables out in the yard; it was a splendid dinner, and after everybody had eaten they returned to the arbor and formed a line and marched around and around that little grave, with the preacher praying and some of them making sounds which were more like chanting, more than singing. Everyone had an American flag in his or her hand. Everybody cried when they knelt at the grave, and as they marched around the final time everybody cried. Then they went home.

The "cry" held was at the Harrison Pisachubbi place, about one mile south of Speer, on the section line. That was the first grave to be made there. Since then, the father and mother of this little Indian boy and several other people have been buried there.

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I remember an amusing incident which occurred when an old full blood woman got her first wood stove. She was so afraid of it, that when she had the first fire made in it she made the children go out in the yard. She thought it would blow up and she wanted the children to be safe. She had always cooked on the fireplace.

Our Indian neighbors had ash-hoppers, out behind the smoke houses usually, and dripped their lye in those. They would extract the lye by running water over the ashes into a trough and into a wooden tub or bucket and then they made their own soap with cracklings or other scraps of meat or tallow. They had no rub boards for so long. and the younger Choctaws were slow to take up the white folks' way of washing. A lot of Indian women had puncheon wash benches at their wash places down at the spring or branch, and had a battling stick with which to beat out the dirt from the wet, soapy clothes.

In the summer time, when the children were going barefooted they would tramp the clothes in warm soapy water to remove the dirt and especially did quilts get this treatment.

Frequently the soapy water was used to scrub the kitchen floor after the home made hickory chairs had been scrubbed white.

Every yard was kept swept clean. No Choctaw Indian woman ever permitted her yard to be littered with trash and they were usually immaculate housekeepers.