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BLACKSTON, ALEX.

INTERVIEW

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Wilson, L. W. - Investigator.
Indian Pioneer History- S-149.
October 14, 1937.

Interview with Alex Blackston,
Route 3 - Box 26 - Porter, Oklahoma.

I was born September 28th, 1869, near the present town of Tallahassee, and am now living at Clarksville, an inland town some five miles south of Porter, Oklahoma.

My mother's name was Hannah and Father's name was Edward. Both were slaves before the Civil War, belonging to a man named Blackston. After the Civil War they assumed the name of their old master. They had no other name than Hannah and Edward until the War was over.

After the War they were married according to the Creek Indian laws and settled down to live about four miles south of Tallahassee, where I was born.

After the Civil War.
1869 to 1882.

In my boyhood days, after arriving at an age where I could help my parents, I did so by working in the fields, and I did a great deal of hunting for hide and fur animals, because from these we secured the greater part of our food and clothing.

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Traders would come by, trading merchandise for hides and furs. Sometimes we took our furs to the village across the Arkansas River to the old Creek Agency on the south side of Fern Mountain which is five miles northwest of Muskogee.. Our farming was done with a deer tongue and a hoe. We raised corn, sweet potatoes and rice. We used all of these for home consumption. The corn was raised for bread and not for feed for stock.

Wild hogs were in the cane brakes along the rivers and when we wanted meat other than wild game, we went out and killed them like any other game.

Our home was a little one-room log cabin that my father built. It had a large fireplace and in the fireplace Mother did all the cooking with pots, pans and skillets which had been traded for, with these peddlers or traders coming through the country.

I used to go to Stomp Dances and have a good time. Every year, usually in July, the Stomp Dances were held for three or four days at a time and every one for miles around would come. At these Stomp Dances the Indians would tie shells around their ankles, beat on the tom-toms and all would dance and sing. Medicine men were always on hand and

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would give the Indians medicine to make them vomit and after this they would eat their fill of green corn and barbecued birds and wild game. The Creek Indians and the negroes like myself, all mixed, mingled and danced together.

Period 1882 to 1898.

I was now out of my shirt tail days and began wearing clothes like a man. All boys used to wear only long shirts until they were twelve years old. By hunting and fishing along the Arkansas River, I loved to be on the river, and I began to work on first one ferry and then the other. I worked on every ferry from Pleasant Porter's place at Wealaka, now Leonard, to the Nivens Ferry at Fort Gibson. Also during this period I worked at saw-mills and did a little farming.

Green Peach War - 1882.

In 1882 an election was held in the Creek Nation to elect a Principal Chief and other officers. The election centered on the Principal Chief. Esparhechar ran against Sam Checote. The Checote party defeated the Esparhechar faction who would not accept defeat and started a rebellion.

Esparhechar enlisted all the Indians that he could

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and then sought to enlist the colored people. I was too young to fight but I was old enough to listen to what was said.

With Esparhechar was one of his leaders "Sitting Rabbit". They met the Checotah army in skirmishes on Pecan Creek and Sugar Creek. After these skirmishes a partial treaty was made with Esparhechar to quit fighting but that fall the trouble all flared up again; this time near the Creek Capital at Okmulgee and in that battle old Sitting Rabbit was killed, also many other men and Esparhechar retreated into the Sac and Fox country and the Sac-Fox people would not allow fighting there, and they retreated to the Cheyenne Country and while there the United States Soldiers took all of them captive and marched them to Fort Gibson and held them prisoners. Esparhechar saw that there was no use to go farther and he signed a treaty agreeing to quit fighting. They released all of them and they came home.

I guess the reason I heard so much of this war was because one of the voting places in the Creek Nation was at Tallahassee and I lived so near this town. Other voting places were Coweta, Zufaula and Okmulgee. I went to school

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some but my education is not much.

Schools.

I went to Tallahassee Mission. This was a Creek school and was built of brick which were made by hand. The Superintendent was Mr. Robertson, the father of Alice Robertson ex-Congresswoman from Oklahoma. After Mr. Robertson died Miss Alice ran the school. This school burned down.

I also attended a little subscription school. It was a little frame one-room school named Pleasant Grove. The Healakka school was a Creek school, built of brick and was located near the present town of Leonard. Legus Perryman and Pleasant Porter were in charge of this school.

Pecan Creek Mission was a school for colored children on Pecan Creek and Buzz Hawkins was in charge.

Dawes Commission.

Before the Dawes Commission started operation a man named Gus Clark opened a little store and built a home at the site of the present town of Clarksville. Thus the town Clarksville was named after Gus Clark.

The Dawes Commission sent surveyors over the country to lay off townsites and it was then that they laid out the

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townsite of Clarksville.

Gus Clark was the first storekeeper and postmaster at Clarksville. The mail came from Wagoner, brought by a man on horse back. The mail carrier's name was Richard Teatters.

Soon after the townsite was laid off, building started and three white men, each, started a store. Their names were Jim Welch, Chas. Lumanas, Baxter Hammonds, and there was one colored man of the name of Scott Johnson.

The village started to grow and did grow until there were at least six hundred people.

The first mayor was a white man named Gene Rye and a white man named Jack McCullough was town marshal. Many traveling salesmen came to the village and as travel was slow by horse back or with a horse and buggy, many of these men had to remain overnight and they usually stopped with a man named Step Colbert who was part Creek Indian or with Jim Bruner another half breed Creek.

During the Dawes Commission I was enrolled and I received my allotment of one hundred and sixty acres up near Indianola.

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The town of Porter was not in existence when Clarksville was at its best. The people wanted a railroad and tried to get the Midland Valley to build through the town but failed. Many surveys were made and after each survey, for some reason, building did not start again for years.

Period 1898 to 1907.

I have been farming ever since I left the ferry work and I have lived around Tallahassee and Clarksville all my life. I used to think Clarksville would be a city and it would have been if the railroad had built through, and the reason they did not, I have learned, is because Step Colbert and a man named B. Daniels received allotments. These men were half breed Creeks and the Creeks did not want any more railroads than they already had in the Creek Nation and the Midland Valley Railroad built on the south side of the Arkansas River in 1904.

The M.K. & T. Railroad built a spur track at the present town of Porter where cars were set out loaded with all kinds of freight which was then hauled to Clarksville.

Many people left Clarksville and went to the railroad and started a town and named it after Pleasant Porter, the

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Creek Chief, and that is the way Porter got started and the way it was named.

Today you can see Clarksville is practically nothing. The white people are all gone except one or two families and the rest are all negroes. If it was not for so many cotton pickers bunked up in these shacks now, you could not find more than seventy-five or eighty people around here.

Stores gone, doctors gone, no post office, our mail comes on the rural route. Clarksville is just one of those ghost towns I have read about.