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INTERVIEW

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J. R. Carselowey,
Field Worker.
June 9, 1937.

Interview with Sol C. Ketchum.
Vinita, Oklahoma.
Born January 22, 1861.
Father-Louis Ketchum.

My name is Sol C. Ketchum. I was born January 22, 1861, in Wyandotte County, Kansas. I now live at Vinita, R.F.D.3.

My father's name was Louis Ketchum. He was born in 1808 on the Delaware Reservation in Ohio, near Sandusky.

My grandfather's name was George Ketchum. He also lived on the Delaware Reservation in Pennsylvania, but died among the Delawares on the Caney River near Bartlesville,

at the age of 100 years.

My father lived to be 96 years old, and died on his allotment ten miles southeast of Vinita, Craig County, in 1904.

My mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Zeigles, half Delaware and half German.

While my father was growing up he lived near Sandusky, Ohio; from there he moved to White River, near Springfield, Missouri; and from there to Wyandotte, Kansas.

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A GREATER HUNTER AND TRAPPER

My father, a three-quarter blood Delaware Indian, could talk very little English in his younger days, and talked brokenly up to the time of his death. I believe he was the greatest hunter and trapper that the United States has ever produced. He was very venturesome in his young days and started out selling furs to the famous Choteau brothers at St. Louis when but a mere boy. He began learning the use of traps and guns early in the nineteenth century, and made it his life's study. His most valuable fur was the beaver, and he made a specialt of trapping beavers.

CHOTEAUS MOVE WESTWARD

The Choteaus later established a trading post at West Port, Missouri, about six miles south of the present site of Kansas City, but years before there was any town there, and later moved south to the present site of Salina, Oklahoma, where a stone marker was recently placed commemorating the establishment of the first trading post in the Indian Territory.

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FOLLOWS TRADING POSTS

Nothing could suit my father more than the exploring of new territory, and all alone he followed the trading posts down into the Indian Territory long before he came here to settle years afterward. Mustering a herd of five pack ponies at Salina, he set out to the southwest, exploring all the small rivers and streams, and finally winding up at Fort Worth, Texas, but finding very few beaver. He had just about made up his mind that he was too far south for this kind of game, and was fixing to start back to Salina when the unexpected happened.

CAPTURED BY GOV. SOLDIERS.

It was about 1848 and General Winfield Scott, with a large army of government soldiers, was marching from the north, down the "Old Military Trail" into Mexico, where the United States was at war with Mexico. They captured my father and against his protest made a government scout of him and sent him on ahead of the army as one of the government scouts. He remained with them five days, but on the night of the fifth day out he slipped away and came back to where the Grand

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River empties into the Arkansas. It was here he decided to find out where that big river went, and he set out to the northwest, following the Arkansas River, and trapping as he went.

ENCOUNTERS WILD TRIBES

On his trip to the northwest, my father encountered many wild tribes of Indians. He tried to evade them, they would take after him in great droves but being armed with a good rifle my father said they would quit chasing him after he had shot one or two of them, as they were armed with only bows and arrows.

Others of the tribes tried to be friendly, but were very treacherous and mean. He stayed among them for nearly two years, and learned to talk some of their languages. One tribe offered to bet him a pony that he could not throw their champion wrestler, whom they called the "devil." He bet them and threw the devil, and won their pony. Then they wanted to bet him three ponies he could not out-run their champion foot-racer. "How far?" asked father. Three

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miles," replied the Indians." Horse can't run that far. I run two hundred yards- 5 horses," my father told them, and they bet him, and lost their five ponies.

This made them so mad that they tried to slip up on him that night and kill him, but he saw them and slipped away, and went to a government post several miles away and reported the loss of his guns, traps and furs. The soldiers went with him the next day and got his things, and told him he had better get out of there as those were bad Indians and would kill anyone not a member of their tribe. They sent soldiers to accompany my father out of the danger zone. He went back to Wvandotte, Kansas, where he organized a company of twenty Delaware Indians and went back to where he had been, thinking with twenty men armed with rifles, the whole Indian tribes could be whipped.

WAYLAID AND BUSHWHACKED.

The Indians seemed to be friendly when they got back and my father and his party trapped for some time and entered into all kinds of jests with the Indian tribes. They

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measured their great men by acts of bravery, and it was possibly this that brought on more trouble with the Indians. To beat them at their own game my father slipped up on ^a buffalo while it was asleep, and cut the buffalo's tail off. He showed the Indians the tail as evidence that he had performed the feat. They seemed to be very jealous of this feat, and that night they attacked my father's camp and bushwhacked and killed every man in his party. He escaped by crawling on his stomach until he was out of their reach and the next day made his way back to West Port, Kansas, where the Choteaus were still located, and retired to a farm in Wyandotte, Kansas, where he lived until 1880.

In 1880 he went before the National Council at Tahlequah and paid \$287.00 per head for an equal right with the Cherokees, and the following year, in 1881, he settled on a farm ten miles southeast of Vinita, near the town of Ketchum, where two of his brothers were living. They were James and George Ketchum, and it was from these three brothers that the town of Ketchum received its name.

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ONCE A HUNTER ALWAYS A HUNTER.

When my father was hunting and trapping in the west he kept three buffalo robes with him, with which he made his bed at night, and he said that no matter how cold the weather he could keep warm.

When he settled in Craig County, then Delaware district, Indian Territory, there was plenty of game, and he kept right on hunting. His principal meat while hunting ⁱⁿ the west was buffalo, but since moving to the Territory he had to content himself with deer, turkey, prairie chicken and the smaller game. However he said that he had tasted every kind of meat there was, but the worst meat he ever tried was wolf.

As amusement for his old days he got himself a pack of fox hounds and chased deer, fox and wolves. He loved the music that a pack of dogs made and usually kept one small dog with a fine voice that, he said, was his "tenor" singer.

To catch a deer quickly, he got himself two big wolf hounds (greyhounds). These two dogs would catch the deer on short run, and bay him until the old hunter and his fox hounds caught up, when the deer would either be shot or the dogs would kill him.

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My father had an old mule that he rode during his last hunting days, that could swim any stream and if the deer plunged into the river and swam across, his dogs and the old mule with its rider would plunge right in after him. Like the hounds, he would run clean out of the country to get a deer and carry the deer back behind his saddle.

On the day he died, he made a date with Dr. B. F. Fortner, of Vinita, to go squirrel hunting with him as soon as he got well. He is now sleeping in the happy hunting ground where there is no wild tribe to disturb him. He is buried on the old homestead where he settled in 1881, ten miles southeast of Vinita.

SOL C. KETCHUM

When my father sold our homestead in Kansas and came to the Indian Territory I was just 22 years old, and decided I would sow a few wild oats before settling down in a new country. We got \$50 an acre for our land in Wyandotte County, Kansas, and I took my part and went to Kansas City where I trained for a prize fighter. I got good enough that a promoter took me up, and after a little more training ^{he} became my manager and we began matching fights.

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FIRST MATCH FELL THROUGH

My manager's name was Billie Morris, of Kansas City and he matched me first with John P. Clow of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Our managers got into a squabble and this fight was called off. My next match was with Paddy Dunn, Champion heavyweight of Kansas. He weighed in at 185 pounds and I weighed in at 156, which put me in the middle weight class. The fight was staged at Vinita and I won in the eighth round and was declared the heavyweight champion of Kansas.

My next match was with Billie McCarty of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. This fight was staged at the Ola Fair grounds in Vinita, and I won it in 15 rounds.

My next match was with Ed Burk, champion middleweight of Arkansas. While in training for this fight, Burk married a rich woman at Fort Smith where the fight was to be staged and she induced him to call off the fight and retire from the ring.

My manager then matched me with Billie Cohn, the champion prize fighter of Old Mexico. We fought this battle

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at Choctaw Park, Fort Smith, Arkansas. It was the hardest fight I ever had in my life. That man nearly broke my neck before I got my Indian up enough to hold my own against him. He was a real fighter, and had set in to K.O. me in the first few rounds. I soon had both of his eyes bunged up so that he couldn't see very well, and in the sixth round I broke his nose and massed his mouth so badly that he was a mass of blood at the end of the round. I knocked him out in the seventh round.

A reporter for the St. Louis Republic was present and had me issue a challenge, through his paper, to any Indian in America, and when none appeared I was declared the champion Indian fighter of the world, and retired.

EXHIBITION BOUT AT MUSKOGEE

Cockie Brown, a Cherokee fighter from Pueblo, Colorado, ~~and I decided to put on an exhibition fight at Muskogee, but~~ as both of us were Indians we had to get the permission of Leo E. Bennett, then Indian Agent for the Five Civilized Tribes. Bennett told us we could fight all right, but if either one of us got to hitting too hard, he was going to shoot us. We

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fought a few rounds and soon forgot all about Bennett's caution and were soon pecking away like a rivet welder, when Old Leo raised up from a ring side seat, drew a big old .45 from his holster and I thought sure he was going to make his word good, but it was only a gentle reminder.

COMMENTS BY FIELD WORKER

When I called on this man, Sol C. Ketchum, now 76 years old I found him plowing corn on the old homestead where his father settled in 1881. He is the only child left living out of five. He had two grown boys living with him. One was hoeing out in the orchard and the other was sitting around the house.

I asked his wife if this grown boy sitting in the house could go and plow for him, and let him give me his story. She said that they couldn't plow to please him, and that he never let them plow corn for him; but he did, long enough to give me this story.

Sol Ketchum has been a powerful man, physically, all of his life, and in a way has kept up his athletics. I had a young man, who was very strong, and looked to be much of a

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man, tell me a short time ago that he would just as soon a mule would kick him as to have Sol Ketchum hit him one good lick.

His father lived to be 96 years old and his grandfather was 100 when he died.

His aunt, Mrs. James Ketchum, lived to be 111 years old and died in 1926 near the town of Ketchum in Mayes County.