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W. T. Holland,  
Research Field Worker,  
May 14, 1937.

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Interview with William Anthony Cummins  
1021 West Twentieth Street  
West Tulsa, Oklahoma

"After my marriage in 1881 to a Cherokee girl, I picked out a lot in Muskogee and built a small house out of rough lumber I had obtained from a saw mill west of town. This mill was run by steam. The boiler was hauled in on an ox wagon. I bought what furniture we had to have, and could pay for, from Clarence Turner, hardware dealer. I bought two bedsteads, a small cook stove and a chair or two. You couldn't get a title to land then, so all you had to do was just pick out a lot and go ahead with your building. We lived pretty well even on a small salary of \$45.00 per month.

White men in the Creek Nation had to pay 50¢ per month for permit and the Creek Government had a special officer to collect this fee.

J. A. Patterson, another merchant in Muskogee in the early days, came to Indian Territory as a pack peddler, carrying his load of dry goods on his back, but before long he had his own store and it grew until his was the main store in Muskogee.

In 1888 Muskogee had a bad fire and it burned about

every business house except one and I was instrumental in saving this store. I happened to have on a pair of rubber boots and could stand on the roof, so got up on the roof and the men passed what water they could get up to me and with that and a lot of salt, I succeeded in putting out the fire.

Clarence Turner, hardware merchant, brought the first repeating rifles into Muskogee. This was about 1880. These were sold to Indians, which was legal at that time. I've seen young Indians come into town on a \$10.00 pony and with \$1.00 worth of clothes on and wearing a \$15.00 pistol. They were proud of their guns. The first cartridge pistol I ever saw was in 1875. Tom France sent to Massachusetts and got them, a "brace of pistols." They were nickle plated and had ivory handles.

People continued to come into the Territory and in and around Muskogee until it became quite a trading center. Major John A. Foreman, who owned the cotton gin and grist mill, in order to encourage farming, sent to Texas and bought a car load of cotton seed and this seed was given to all who would promise to plant and raise cotton. He would allow them to take  $\frac{1}{2}$  bushel of seed for every acre

to plant in cotton. This was in 1873 and in 1874 there was a good crop. Helping to run the gin, I was in a position to know. He gave seed to all Creek Freedmen and all "permit" men, who would promise to plant and cultivate the cotton.

However, all workers on the MK&T Railroad were exempt from payment of permit as the railroad company made a deal with the Indians to that effect. The railroad also had an understanding with the Indians through the government, that they were to receive the right of way and every other section of land where the road ran, but when they finally got the railroad through, the only land they were allowed to hold was the right of way and in addition a plot of land 80 x 440 ft. every ten miles. This was for future depots and sidings.

I was living at Muskogee when the Creek Indians had their Civil War in 1888. Sam Checotah, half-breed and Chief of the Creek Nation, was leader of one faction and Espieticha, full-blood, was the leader of the other side. The trouble started over the election of a Chief for the Creeks. These two leaders were candidates, Checotah for re-election and Espieticha claimed he was cheated out of

the place through fraud in the election. Pleasant Porter commanded Checotah men and Espieticha his own forces. Their major battle, or fight, took place on Deep Fork Creek and, at this fight, 15 or 20 men were killed. Checotah ordered a lot of rifles and ammunition and these came through Clarence Turner, who ordered them for the Chief. I was station agent when these rifles came into Muskogee. There were 25 boxes of them and it was my duty to guard these until Checotah's men came to get them, which they did, and the boxes were hauled away in wagons.

Espieticha started a move into Okmulgee but was stopped by U. S. Troops which had been brought in to put down the trouble. Colonel Armstrong was sent in from Washington to handle the situation and he did in a short time. He told me he scared them into submission by telling them that too much trouble by them would be considered by the Government as an overt act and would cause the troops to be sent in to take charge. They settled down but didn't feel very good toward each other.