

DAVIS, SUSANNA ADAIR

SECOND INTERVIEW

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My father was Wm. M. Johnson. He was born in Kentucky on June 18, 1818.

My mother was Jollah Asible Johnson and was born in Missouri on May 6, 1829.

My father and mother met in Missouri but settled later in Crawford County, Western Arkansas. I was born in the Cherokee Nation, near Dripping Spring, on December 18, 1870.

My early life was spent as most all other early settlers. My mother taught me to read and write as, not being an Indian, I was not allowed to attend school in the Territory, as only Indians were eligible to attend the schools provided in that day and nation. However, one in a while where and when there were enough whites, they would have a subscription school. However, there were no such schools near me. In 1882, when I attend school. They stayed there two years and I attended school. So that, with the instructions given me by my mother, constituted my schooling.

When my parents first came to the territory, they settled in the northern part of the Cherokee Nation, but later, and before I was born, they moved to the Flint District, Cherokee Nation, near Tahlequah. We were living here when I met Mr. Adair and that is where we were married, in 1887.

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To our union four children were born, three girls and one boy. A girl and boy died in infancy. My oldest child, Estella, and youngest, Nora Lee, are still living. Estella, Mrs. Vandergriff, now 49 years old, lives at Picher, Oklahoma. Nora Lee, now Mrs. Bryant, lives at 431 E. Oklahoma Place, Tulsa. I had no other children, tho married two times after the death of Mr. Adair.

My husband was killed in 1894, seven years after our marriage, so I was left with a family to support. In 1894, I secured a job as matron at the Cherokee Orphans Home, near Salina, and worked at that job for four years. I had charge of 46 boys ranging in age from 6 to 10 years. This orphanage burned after I left there and a while before statehood.

Along about 1894, or before, a white man by the name of Whitaker built and operated an orphanage. He secured funds for the operation of this home thru subscription of funds, ranging from 10 cents up. He spent practically all of his time and effort in this cause. So, when the Cherokee Orphanage burned, the Indian children were transferred over to the Whitaker home, which had been enlarged from time to

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time, and were cared for there. Through some action, I don't know the details, this Whitaker Home became what was known as a National Home and remained so until Statehood.

After my work at the orphanage, I went back to the farm and spent some time there. Then, in order for my daughter to go to school, I moved to Wagoner and ran a boarding house for two years and sent my girls to school. From there I moved to Tahlequah where I worked among the squaw men in connection with the land office. I acted as interpreter as I knew and could speak the Cherokee language. When the Cherokee were allotted land I assisted them in leasing their land to ranchers. You could select your land most anywhere you wanted to provided it wasn't already allotted, so that was one reason I left the hills in order to get in better country so I could select better allotments for my children. This land, or a lot of it, was already grazed but after allotment, the ranchers had to and were anxious to lease from allottees so they would not have to move their herds. So I acted as a go-between for ranchers and Indians. I sent my daughter Estella to the Cherokee Female Seminary at Tahlequah.

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This seminary I understand is now Northeastern Oklahoma State Teachers College.

Tahlequah during these times before statehood was a great and lively place. During my husband's lifetime I went there often as he was a member of the Council and, of course, always attended their meetings. A lot of amusing incidents came up during the meetings. They had guards that patrolled the streets when the Council was in session. These were Indians of course and paid by the government. These councilman were guarded just like they guard a murder jury now. No one but those with particular business or with passes were allowed to approach a councilman. One reason for guarding them was to keep them from getting whiskey, which was brought in by white bootleggers and especially during the meeting of the Council. If and when liquor had been allowed the Indian Council as well as the many other Indians in town, there would have been a wild time. But all the bad people in those days were not men. I remember two rather notorious women who lived and operated in and about Tahlequah. One was an out-and-out bootlegger and a two gun lady, carried her guns on her hip like a man, and she was one that had a run in with a guard while the

Council was in session. Rather amusing, but I wont tell the details. There was also another woman, while not directly connected with the selling of liquor, was a go-between for them. That is, she always kept a lookout for Federal men and has often ridden fast and furiously to warn the gang of the approach of the government men.

I can think of other things which might be of interest and sometimes when they are fresh on my mind I will write them down.

Churches and Missions.

Regarding old churches or missions, the oldest I remember was Dwite Mission, located on Sallisaw Creek below where the old Flint Courthouse used to stand. Flint was in Flint District. The District then was similar to our Counties now. This is now in Delaware County. I am told the ruins of the Court House can still be seen. This mission, I understand, was run by the Missionary Baptist Church and was educational as well as spiritual. They acquired a lot of land and required the boys and girls to work. They were self-supporting, as plenty of provisions were raised on the farm to provide for the students and if

any surplus was left, it was traded or sold for big things they couldn't raise,. In this way the young Indians were taught, not only farming, stock raising and trades, but studied English and were instructed in the Bible.