

COLLINS, WILKIE · INTERVIEW

#7907

397

COLLINS, WILKIE

INTERVIEW

7907

Hazel B. Greene,  
Interviewer,  
October 22, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. Wilkie Collins,  
Hugo, Oklahoma.

My father was a Cumberland Presbyterian preacher. He was employed by the Presbyterian Synod as a Missionary to the Choctaw Indians in the southeast part of the Choctaw Nation. He came over here when we lived at Chicota and Paris, Texas, for years before we moved over here, and went over his regular itinerancy or circuit. It extended as far east in McCurtain County as Kullituklo. All west of Grant to Gay, or Cold Springs, and to all of those country churches west of Grant, as far as Bokchito is now, and some north of Bokchito. He was said to have made more miles with his team and buggy than any other preacher employed by the Presbyterian Synod in this country. He was on the board of governors of Goodland school and church, for years.

My father, J.Y. Collins, had the distinction of having been the second County Judge of Lamar County, Texas.

COLLINS, WILKIE

INTERVIEW

7907

- 2 -

In 1901, we moved from Paris, Texas, to Grant, Indian Territory. It was a thriving little place, and looked like, and has been, a splendid place in which to live. I moved to Hugo, only a couple of years ago.

After we moved to Grant, Father taught school there in the school building over on the hill in the south part of town on Captain Joe Everidge's place. That building has just recently been demolished. That was before statehood, and Father had to go to Jones Academy, Dwight Post Office, to take a teacher's examination. He came out third best of any and lots were there. Two nuns from the north beat him in the examination.

Father was a surveyor too. He surveyed the west part of the original townsite of Hugo. That comprises the Second Ward only, now.

Father organized many lodges too. In fact he organized nearly every Woodman of the World Lodge in what is now Choctaw County.

Grant has the distinction of having the oldest

COLLINS, WILKIE

INTERVIEW

7907

- 3 -

continued Masonic Lodge in Oklahoma, Doaksville Masonic Lodge #2. Oak Lodge in the northern part of the Choctaw Nation was #1, but it was discontinued long years ago.

I believe the railroad came to Grant about 1885, and I also believe that Basil Gooding operated the first store in Grant. About 1904 we had Grant incorporated so that we could vote bonds and build a school house. When statehood came in, the State took over the school district and enlarged it. We had probably retired those bonds, anyway we did not bother about voting any more school bonds. But the incorporation of the town was not dissolved nor has it ever been, unless it has been in the last few weeks. I know nothing about it. They are wanting and trying to get a new school house at Grant now, and are having a lot of trouble about it, I understand.

I don't know where the city records of Grant are. But so far as I know I am still town Justice, as I was elected to that position at the last city election, and served as such until I moved to Hugo, a couple of years

COLLINS, VILKIE

INTERVIEW 7907

- 4 -

ago. That election was about twenty years ago, and there has been no other Town Justice or Mayor elected to the city of Grant since then. I cannot understand why Mrs. Kate Oakes Smith said what she did about her father refusing to perform marriage ceremonies after the town was not incorporated. But I imagine she just misunderstood him. I think he was Justice of the Peace.

Lack of interest in town affairs and government was one reason elections were not held in recent years. Then too, a lot of the most interested ones moved away and some died.

I was a member of the first petit jury of Choctaw County. I have the first combination safe that was ever shipped to this part of the Choctaw Nation. It was common to hear folks say, "Joel Spring has a safe that needs no key to lock or unlock it" It was a wonder, when it was brought here away back about 1890.