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Pete W. Cole
Investigator
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Interview with Meton Ludlow,
Honobia, Oklahoma.

I am a full-blood Choctaw Indian, born in this country in 1885, being fifty-three years of age. I live in the neighborhood of Rock Creek Church, of which I am a member.

I did not come from Mississippi but, undoubtedly, my grandparents came from that state when the United States Government compelled all of the Choctaws to move to this country then called the Indian Territory.)

Upon their arrival they selected and settled in a location of their choice and I am a descendant of one of the families who settled near the community where I am living at the present time.

There are some people who do not care to live in a rough, hilly or mountainous country, which is the condition of this portion of country where I now live. There was no white settlement until in the last twenty years, neither were there any roads, sawmills, or machinery at

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that time. The nearest railroad was the St. Louis and San Francisco Railway and Talihina and Tuskahoma were the only trading towns on the road at that time.

Tuskahoma, Choctaw Capitol, and the Choctaw Indian Girl School known as Tuskahoma Academy, now abolished, were operated by the United States Government and were located near the old town.

There were no schools in the community in those days and, of course, the use of the English language was unknown to the Indians, nor did we care to see any white men because we did not know their language enough to carry on a conversation with them.

We spent most of our time hunting and fishing as there were fine fishing streams and plenty of wild deer and turkeys and in the Spring of the year we planted corn and garden vegetables such as beans, sweet potatoes, onions and pumpkins, which were our chief daily diet. Blackberries were picked and canned when ripe and wild huckleberries which grow on shrubs of the heath family and when ripe are of a dark blue color, were abundant

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on the hills and on the mountain side. Apples and peaches, when ripe were cut in strips, dried and put away in dry places until ready for table use. String beans were strung and put away in a dark place to be cured. When cured they looked black and musty but by treating in a solution of warm water and some preparation known only to housewives, retained their natural color and when thoroughly cooked, no one could notice the difference in the taste from the fresh garden-grown.

Pop corn was considered a great prize amongst the women, more so of the aged ladies. At harvest or at crop gathering time, these women graded out any amount of the best grade corn in ears for seed, strung it and stored it away in a dry place, or I have seen it hanging on the wall in a room and no sum of money could buy it as it was not for sale. The women took great pride in this and for ages this custom of saving seeds of pop corn was practiced and followed.

Meat of wild game and beef were cured and stored

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away and was never known to spoil; when cooked properly it had a delicious flavor and tasted as fresh and wholesome as if just killed. This meat was usually cut up in thin slices and sun-dried or cured by being left on top of houses. To realize good results it had to be attended to every few hours during the day and at sundown it had to be heaped up in one pile and covered to keep dew off or carried to a dry place, in case of rain during the night or at daytime, then spread out again the next day after the sun was about two hours high. If neglected, if dew should get on it, or rain fall on it during the night it was sure to spoil. This process of curing was continued until cured dry, then was stored away for future use. Meat left on bones was barbecued, seasoned with black or red pepper or both, mustarded and thoroughly cooked then put away in a dry place. Venison and bear meat were given special attention by the women, who usually cut it up in chunks about the size of a man's hand, barbecued or roasted it until done, strung it with strong cord or wire, or stuck a dry, stout stick through each piece and stored

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them away. When ready for table use, the cook washed the meat clean and cooked it according to taste, or in a scientific way that was known to them. Often a certain number or pieces, enough for one meal, were placed by the cook in a mortar which was owned by all women in the settlement and was used in beating corn, beat the meat preparation with the corn pestle, then cooked it in hominy corn or grit and other preparations known only to women, and when placed on the table is a great dish.

Household finishing, wall paper and paint were unknown in those days and when a housewife wished to live in a nice comfortable house, --- after having everything in the house in order, empty smoking tobacco sacks or used-up thread spools which had been saved were strung and hung in the room, which very often reached two and three times around the room. These articles were all bought and the tobacco sacks and spools were all saved. It took time but now and then a good heavy quilt was made out of the savings of the tobacco sacks.

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Very often, I have seen the head of the family dig a hole under the floor in the house about three to four feet in diameter and about four feet deep, with straw for bedding, and store away sweet potatoes and canned fruits during the Winter to keep them from freezing. This dugout was similar to cellars, which were common in those days. These are some of the ways of how the Choctaws lived in the Territorial days under their tribal laws.