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INTERVIEW WITH ELIAS PARISH
a full blood Choctaw Indian who
was one of the number against
Indian Territory to become as a
single state. He lives at Darwin, Okla.

THE STRUGGLE FOR STATEHOOD.

"Single statehood" as we understood was that the two territories should become as one state. "Separate statehood" for Oklahoma Territory alone was advocated for Oklahoma Territory by many of its citizens because of the determined stand of the Five Civilized tribes against the question of statehood in any form.

After all of the Indians migrated from the State of Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana to this country, the treaty or treaties, made with the Choctaws and the Chickasaws mostly, provided that this land should belong to the Indians for all time to come and that no other people should disturb them or deprive them of their hunting ground. They came to their new home with that expectation. Upon their landing here the

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Choctaw Indians at once set to work to build new homes, and in most cases they cleared off a few acres for a tomfulla patch, about ten or fifteen acres at first, but this acreage was increased every year until the Indian had several acres enclosed with a rail fence about eight or ten rails high, staked and ridged. As time rolled on, the Choctaws, who had formed their own government were independent. When the territorial government of Oklahoma was being established, the newspapers in the Territory began to print articles favoring statehood, partly due to the fact that most of the territorial officers were appointed from other states by the President of the United States. Most of the people of Oklahoma wanted statehood so that they themselves could elect their own citizens to hold office.

The first Convention was held at Oklahoma City in December, 1891, when delegates from all

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the Oklahoma counties and also from some parts of the Indian Territory were present. The convention favored one state from the two territories. This was called "single statehood." The bill did not pass, nor did the second bill when presented by Delegate Flynn in 1893.

Members of the Five Civilized Tribes were against the bill because they included the Indian Territory in the organization of the proposed state. Several grew tired of arguing "single statehood" with the Indians and their friends, so they began to favor statehood for Oklahoma Territory alone which was termed "separate statehood." For the next few years the question was before Congress, but no definite action was ever taken.

The chief argument was that the Indian Territory contained many lawless white people, who could not be reached by law; therefore, both territories should be organized under one state government. Roley McIntosh, a leader of the full-

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A Senator from Connecticut presented his side of the argument before the Senate in 1894 when he said. The Indians had broken their treaties by letting white people come into their nation; therefore the United States did not have to keep the treaties. He claims the Indian governments were being run by adopted white citizens and mixed bloods for their own benefit, the fullblood being pushed aside. He further stated that the Indians had not attained real civilization and that their governments did not give protection to "life, liberty, or property."

As to which of these two arguments was right it might be well for us to remember that Roley McIntosh could not talk or speak a word of English, that he lived in Indian Territory and the senator lived in Connecticut. It must be remembered that politics played an important part in this case. As the Choctaws were not ready for statehood they fought against this measure until it went through.

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blood Creeks, answered this charge in a speech in 1892 which he said that the Indian Territory was not a lawless community. He said some white people had been given permission by the Indians to remain in their country but many white persons who had no respect for the tribal laws were intruders in the nations, because the United States Government had not kept them out according to the treaties. He stated that there were so many deputy marshals and Indian police, appointed by the Federal Government in the Indian Territory, that they hardly had enough

"criminals to catch"; with reference to the courts, he added, "Texas wants to take us down to Paris; Kansas wants to take us to Wichita and Arkansas wants to take us to Fort Smith; and now here is Oklahoma holding us on this side. But I feel safe. I think that justice and honesty will prevail and I am not much afraid." He asked that the nations be let alone to their own free government.

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The fight for statehood was a strong one during these years. The railroads had brought about wonderful progress in the West. Oklahoma Territory wanted statehood. The Choctaw Indians knew that a change was coming. They sought to adopt the best policy in protecting their people in the new government. The Government offered to pave the way for a state. It met the argument of lawlessness in the territory by establishing courts here. It appointed a special commission to deal with the Five Civilized Tribes.

The first United States court of the Indian Territory was established at Muskogee, under the act of Congress which was passed in 1889. The laws of the State of Arkansas were used as the basis of law. The Federal judge, district attorney, and the marshal were appointed by the Government.

The Indian Territory was now organized into three Federal court districts, namely, the Northern District,

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consisting of the Cherokee Nation and the Quapaw Agency; the Central District, consisting of the Creek and Seminole Nations; the Southern District, consisting of the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. Three Federal judges were appointed to preside over these courts, which were held at Muskogee, McAlester and Ardmore.

The Indians are not, as a class, lawless people, however much an outsider might think they were, from the fact that besides their own tribal laws, they were under rules of the Secretary of Interior, Acts of Congress, treaties with the Governments; of United States Commissioners, and Federal courts of the Indian Territory.

The breaking up of the tribal government of the Five Civilized Tribes and the allotment of land in severalty to each Indian citizen are two of the most important steps in the history of Oklahoma. The leading Indians were against this movement yet handicapped and powerless to persuade the

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followers of "Statehood." These Choctaw leaders knew that in each instance when an agreement of treaty was signed with the Government that the Choctaws were binding themselves to instruments that would not be carried out as understood. For instance they did not know that after the agreement was signed that additional provisions governing all the Five Tribes was combined in the bill, called the Curtis Act, which was passed by Congress in 1898, Such additional provisions being the abolition of tribal courts, (2) a roll of Indian citizens to be prepared by the Dawes Commission and each individual given an allotment of land; (3) tribal governments to be continued for eight years longer. At the same time Congress provided for placing the schools of the Indian Territory under the control of a Federal Superintendent and assistant Supervisors.

The Choctaws and Chickasaws, who held their lands under joint ownership, were the largest property

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owners of any of the Five Civilized Tribes. The country owned by them was in the southern and southeastern portions of Oklahoma. Under the terms of a supplemental agreement, 950 acres of coal and asphalt lands belonging to the Choctaws and Chickasaw were reserved from allotment, to be sold and proceeds divided equally among the citizens of the two nations. The land, located in south eastern Oklahoma is now owned by large lumber companies, but the segregated coal lands are still in the hands of the United States Government.

When the tribal rolls were open, persons from many parts of the United States presented themselves claiming to belong to one or another of the Five Civilized Tribes, and wanted to obtain the right to share in the division of the tribal lands and money. Out of more than 200,000 the Dawes Commission found that 90,000 were Indian citizens, Each of these citizens was allotted a certain amount of land in this respective nation according to an appraised

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value that had been made under the supervision of the Commission. The Freedmen and their descendants, (i.e. former negro slaves belonging to the Indians of the Five Tribes) each were given a holding of land in fulfillment of the terms of the 1866 agreement. This was the only way that the Choctaws and the Chickasaws were allotted lands.

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Joe Southern, Interviewer
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Interview with Elias Parish,
Darwin, Oklahoma. Choctaw Indian.

On the Civil War and its effect in the Choctaw
Territory.

During the Civil War William C. Quantrill's Confederate Guerilla Band became notorious throughout the Indian Territory. Quantrill posed as a colonel of his band, but he was considered a desperado by the people of the Indian Territory. Quantrill and his men would rob the farm homes and drive the stock away as far as the border of Texas; then he robbed others by making them pay high prices for this stock. This Quantrill band robbed, burned and pillaged the farm homes and by 1864 many families of the Confederacy were compelled to seek safety in camps. So with C. B. Hester, their captain, they gathered themselves together from far and near and brought what livestock they had left, what supplies they could get, and stationed their camp at Boggy Depot. They were about 1500 in number. (Boggy Depot is located fifteen miles southwest of Atoka) For protection of the camp, Captain Hester gathered

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firearms and ammunition and also five cannon.

The men and women farmed the surrounding land; they herded their stock for safety. There was a make shift hospital erected at this place and the sick were taken care of there. Their physician was Dr. Allen Wright, Choctaw man. Doctor and Reverend Allen Wright attended the tribal schools in 1848; he completed his education for the ministry in New York City Seminary in 1855 and a few months later he was ordained as a Presbyterian minister. Another high honor conferred upon him by his people was when they nominated and elected him principal chief while in Washington as a delegate to make the Treaty of 1866.

He was recognized as a great scholar in other languages besides his own.

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