

ROGERS, ONIE WARD.

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Hazel B. Greene,
Journalist,
October 16, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Onie Ward-Rogers,
1300 South K. Street, Hugo, Oklahoma.

My mother was a full blood Choctaw Indian, born and raised in the Choctaw Nation in Mississippi, where she remained until she was fifteen years old, when the Indians were transported by the United States Government to the Choctaw Nation in the Indian Territory. They came by boat and were landed at Fort Coffee in Skullyville County, and they took up their residence in the town of Oak Lodge. She had been here one year when she met my father and married him. His name was Jerry Ward, an Irishman who had been raised in the Indian Territory. He was a lot older than she. Mother said they had no trouble coming from Mississippi to this country, that they came by boat, had plenty to eat, and after they landed at Fort Coffee, the United States Government built houses for them, and furnished them enough to live on, until they got a crop made. Mother said too, that her family had a much easier time from the time the Government took charge of them than they ever had in Mississippi.

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She said that they raised good crops here, that there was lots of game and fish, and there were wild cattle and horses on the range, which was theirs for the taking. So all in all they had a pretty easy time of it.

Mother was a close relative of Greenwood LeFlore in Mississippi. She said that she had been to his mansion many times and that he called his mansion by a Choctaw name. It sounded like it should be spelled Killi-hote. She said it was palatial for that day and time.

After she married, she and my father lived in the former home of the first Indian Agent for the Choctaw people. Father was a blacksmith in the town of Oak Lodge. When the Civil War began, he ran off to Fort Smith, Arkansas, to keep from going to the War and left Mother with four children and the United States Government helped her to take care of her four children, just like they are doing people now. They issued commodities to them, for them to live on. Then when she learned that Father was in Fort Smith, the Government transported Mother and the children to Fort Smith, and found them a place to stay. Then the Government put Father to work in a blacksmith shop, supervising a number of other men, to make tools and shoe horses for

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the army, and those stationed at the Fort. Father and Mother finally separated, He is buried at Bokoshe and she at Spiro, in Skullyville County, (now LeFlore County).

I remember another thing that my mother told me about the Civil War. There was a school for boys at Fort Coffee, and when the War broke out, the school was discontinued and the store of clothing and other supplies were hauled to my mother's house and hidden in the attic for safe keeping. But the soldiers came and ransacked the house and took just any of the supplies that they wanted. They climbed up in the attic and Mother said she could hear them talking up there about who would take which. Those were Union soldiers. They cleaned that attic out. There were no clothes or other supplies left when the soldiers got through up there. Mother said the school building with the furniture in it was burned. But whether it was burned by the Union soldiers or others I do not know. The family stayed in Fort Smith, Arkansas, until the War was over, when they all returned to Skullyville County. I was born in 1871. Father and Mother had been separated for many years when they died.

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My brother, Robert Ward, was one of the members of the Choctaw National Council and was a member of it when the brick Council house at Tuskahoma was built. I have a picture of the new building and the members who met in it the first time. My brother is standing in the front door of the building.

I am one-half Choctaw Indian, but never learned to read or write or spell the Choctaw language. I went to school at New Hope, a school for girls, Indian girls, up close to Fort Smith, Arkansas.