



McCLURE, BIVA

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Gomer Gower, Interviewer.  
September 20, 1937

Interview with Mrs. Biva McClure  
Poteau, Oklahoma.  
Born October 17, 1873, Choctaw Nation  
Father-Thomas Jefferson Wall  
Mother- Elizabeth Laura Wall

Biva McClure was born at what was known as Wallsburg, near what is now Rock Island, Le Flore County, Oklahoma, on October 17th, 1873.

Her father was Thomas Jefferson Wall, a son of Thomas Wall, who emigrated from Mississippi to the Indian Territory in 1831 and, according to a press obituary, settled on land on the banks of both the Arkansas and Poteau Rivers, immediately opposite Fort Smith.

Her mother, before her marriage to Thomas Jefferson Wall, was Elizabeth Laura Riddle, the daughter of Jesse Riddle who settled near the foot of Backbone Mountain on the old Fort Smith-Fort Towson road and who installed a ~~fall~~ gate on that road at the top of the mountain.

Mrs. McClure, in her young womanhood, attended the New Hope Female Academy for a period of three years,

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during which a Doctor Griffith served as superintendent and a Mrs. Hartshorn as Matron of that institution.

While yet in her teens she was united in marriage to William McClure with whom she lives in the town of Poteau.

Mrs. McClure relates of her father that he was a very progressive and industrious Indian and that upon the outbreak of the Civil War he disregarded the action of the Choctaw Tribe and enlisted in the Federal Army where he attained the rank of Colonel and served for three years. Like many other members of the Choctaw tribe, he felt he owed allegiance to the Federal Government with which treaty relationships existed, rather than to the Confederates who had nothing to offer but promises of more liberal treaties and the retention of the comparatively few slaves, which were held as such in the Indian Territory.

After the close of the war the wisdom of the course pursued by her father was realized by those who had

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espoused the cause of the Confederacy, but his failure to stand by the edicts of the tribal authorities, who had taken into their own hands the destiny of the tribe, met with resentment as did that of many others who held to the same views as he did. As time wore on that antagonistic feeling gave way to at least a feeling of respect for when it was fully realized by his neighbors what an onerous penalty had been imposed by the Federal Government upon the Choctaw people in the making of the post-war treaty, 1866, the wisdom of his course was recognized. In the interim, however, he felt that the safety of himself and family was in constant danger. Regardless of this situation he was united in marriage to Elizabeth Laura, the daughter of Jess Riddle, in 1867, and in time it was shown he had not only won the love of the girl of his choice, but had also the confidence and trust of those who but a short time since had regarded him as being disloyal to his tribe and he

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thus became a leader in all ways for his people.

As an Indian citizen he had improved three good farms which he rented to white settlers from across the nearby Arkansas state line. He also operated a general store where merchandise of all kinds was sold. This store occupied one corner of the enclosure surrounding the home. In this connection, Mrs. McClure relates that her mother, the former Elizabeth Laura Riddle, would be the first one of the family to rise in the morning. It was her custom to go to the nearby well and draw a fresh bucket of water immediately after rising. On one occasion while thus engaged she noticed several Indians headed by Tachubbee, a Choctaw whose American name was John Kirschell, were hidden behind the store building and behind trees and stumps, all having guns. The justly alarmed woman quickly made her way into the house and aroused her husband who still was in bed. Upon rising he barricaded the doors and

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then sent her mother out to ascertain the cause of this seemingly hostile showing. In doing this, her father well knew that the armed Indians would not injure her mother and if he went himself any one of the armed Indians might precipitate a battle. It developed that Tachubbee had taken umbrage at the action of her father in having some land fenced in an area which encroached upon the prescribed limits, four hundred and forty yards, of Tachubbee's holdings. This information was conveyed by her mother to her father who still remained in the house. After parleying in this manner for some time, it was proposed that Tachubbee should leave his armed companions where they were and that he alone could come in and discuss the matter with her father. Upon the adoption of this wise course the misunderstanding was quickly adjusted and the band, which had come to kill, all mounted their ponies which had been tied out of sight of the house and went galloping

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off shooting their firearms and yelling with delight at the peaceful ending of the question at issue.

On another occasion her father had failed to collect the annual permits of those to whom he had his farm land rented, nor had he paid the permit fee, five dollars for each head of a family, for them. For this noncompliance with the Tribal law, it was decreed that he should present himself before the Tribal Court where he would be given fifty lashes upon his bare back at the whipping post. The District Court of the Choctaw Nation at that time was held at Talihina and it was at that place that her father presented himself, presumably to atone to the offended law, but being stimulated to an importance exceeding that of the court through the imbibing of a few drinks of wildcat whiskey while he awaited the hour of humiliation and pain, he informed the court attaches that since he did not at any time permit his wife to dictate

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his comings and goings, he d----d sure was not letting the court do it. He then calmly boarded the north-bound Frisco train, which at that time had just begun to be operated on the new railway, and thus avoided receiving not only a very painful lashing, but, what was far worse, a lowering of his dignity in the most degrading manner. Seemingly, the dignity of the court was not easily offended, as there was never any more ado about the affair.

The Fort Smith-Fort Towson road passed immediately in front of the home and store and before the advent of the Frisco Railway through that area in 1886, freight wagons laden with merchandise could be seen passing at all hours of the day. Other covered wagons would pass with such announcements as **TEXAS BOUND** or **TEXAS OR BOST** daubed in some manner upon the wagon sheets. These wagons would invariably have from one to three dogs tied to the rear of the wagon bed. Quite often a cow with

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the calf riding unafraid and comfortable within the wagon surrounded by children of varying ages all oblivious to the unmerciful jolting over the rough roads and exceedingly happy in anticipation of joys which they had been led to believe would be forthcoming on arrival in the Lone Star State.

These daily, and sometimes hourly, passings of these wagons afforded relief from the irksome monotony suffered by those living at a distance from this busy thoroughfare and a visit to the store at Wallsburg was often made for no other purpose than that of witnessing the passing by of those who heeded the advice of Horace Greeley and were westward bound.

The home life in this community, being within three miles of the State line of Arkansas, was quite similar to that of the people of that state. In fact, the whites from that state predominated in numbers and largely fixed the social standards of the area.