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Ella Robinson,
Investigator,
January 18, 1938.

An Interview with Elizabeth Ballard Sanders,
423 North J Street, Muskogee, Okla.

My grandparents on my mother's side were right
Romine and Betsy Riley, Grandfather was an Irishman who
came into the old Cherokee Nation in the early days and
married my grandmother, a half-breed Cherokee. They
started westward with the first colony of Cherokees known
as "old settlers" in 1834. As they were crossing the
Mississippi River on a ferry boat my grandmother died.

My mother was a small child and never had any very
distinct recollection of her mother but said she well
remembered after her mother's death that they opened a
large chest that contained her clothes and she saw a lot
of gold money in the chest. They halted on their journey
and buried her beside the river. Her sister, Mrs. David
Carter and her husband who were in the party took charge
of my mother and reared her. When they reached their
destination they located in the vicinity that was
afterward known as Park Hill, near Tahlequah.

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Grandfather was a large slave owner and had brought his slaves with him. With the help of the negroes they erected comfortable log houses in which to live and house the negroes. When the Cherokee Female Seminary was established in 1846, Mother was enrolled in the first class. Her name was Caroline but she was usually called Carrie. Mrs. Jane Ross, niece of Chief John Ross, was one of the teachers. Martha Schrimsher, mother of Mr. William Gulager, was a classmate.

I have heard my mother relate many amusing and unusual incidents that occurred during her childhood in a new country. One was when the children killed a sheep. Her uncle David Carter raised sheep as did many of the Cherokees. In the herd was a ram that would chase the children whenever he saw them and they had been warned against him. One day he attacked them and my mother did not run and when the ram came in reach she grabbed him by the horns and gave his neck a twist and he fell to the ground. Another child ran for the axe and they chopped his head off.

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at the beginning of the Civil war, all of the slaves owned by her uncle ran away one night and as that left them entirely without servants much of the heavy work devolved upon her. As she was not accustomed to it, it was very distasteful. Later her uncle's family ~~preferred~~ moved to Texas as did many of the Cherokees. Mother did not go but preferred to stay with friends and other relatives.

My father, Thomas Ballard, a three-fourths Cherokee Indian, joined the Confederate army at the age of seventeen and served under General Stand Watie. His captain's name was White Catcher. He participated in the battle of Pea Ridge and all the skirmishes in that section of the country.

after the war was over he met and married my mother.

They established their new home in the Cookson Hills two

miles from the Illinois Courthouse. I was born there

January 19, 1868. Jack Cookson for whom the community

was named was one of our neighbors, a highly respected

man and a leader in the community. Mr. Cookson operated

a general mercantile store and cotton gin at Garfield.

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His son Levi Cookson served several years as a member of the Cherokee Council. Tom Madden who married my sister was a partner in business with Mr. Cookson. My father engaged in farming and stock raising. The chief source of his income was the cattle which were no great expense to raise as the range was fine and free. I entered school at the Cherokee Female Seminary at the age of sixteen and was there when the building burned in 1836. Miss Belle Cobb, afterwards Dr. Cobb ofagoner and Miss Ada Archer of Pryor were teachers there. Miss Florence Wilson was the Principal.

In 1829 I was married to Samuel S. Sanders, a Cherokee, and we located on a farm near Braggs. We were the parents of four children, all living. They are William Sanders of Braggs, Sam of Muskogee, Mrs. Jacqueline Starr Benge of Fayetteville, Arkansas, and Mrs. Katie Combs of Haskell.

My husband attended the Cherokee Male Seminary and received his business training at Sedalia, Missouri. He served several terms as a member of the Cherokee Council and was always interested in the political life of his people. He engaged in cattle raising and farming as that

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was the chief industry at that time. During the first Oklahoma State Legislature he served as Journal Clerk, at Guthrie, which was then the capital. Ex-Governor Murray was one of his most intimate friends. Mr Sanders died in 1910.

Once when the Cherokee rolls were to be copied, I with several other Cherokee girls was given the work at Tahlequah. This was the first time a woman had ever been employed in clerical work in the Cherokee Nation.

I recall that while we lived in the Cookson Hills, among our neighbors were the Pettit and Ratcliffe families well known in the Cherokee Nation. We often had full blood Indian preachers who came to the school house and preached. One day I had a girl friend who was white visiting and asked her to go with me to hear the Indian preacher. She went but got dreadfully frightened

~~as she did not understand anything the preacher said fearing~~
that he might be planning to massacre the whites.

The Cookson Hills community was a respectable, quiet place with none but the most desirable citizens living

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there. A few years later some bad characters found they could take refuge in the inaccessible country and did so. Then with a lot of advertising from the United States officers the community became one of the bad sections of the country by reputation. For that reason perhaps it was taken over by the Federal Government and will be converted into a public playground.

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