

POSTON, GEORGE LLOYD

INTERVIEW

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An interview with George Lloyd Poston,
Cherokee Indian.

I am a native of Indian Territory. I first saw the light of day about two miles north of Tahlequah on Fourteen Mile Creek, August 13, 1857.

My father, Campbell Poston, was a white man and a native of Indiana, born near South Bend. Well, my father said he was part Indian of the Buckskin tribe but he was mostly white.

My mother, a three-fourth Cherokee, came here from the "old country" in 1836, one hundred years ago last April. She said she was born on the "Jackson Trail". I suppose in Tennessee. (I guess it was the Natchez Trail, built as a military road by General Andrew Jackson).

My mother's name was Elizabeth Conner; her father and my grandfather, was Chief of the Cherokees when they came west or were sent here by the government. My mother was just a child when they came west, and I have heard her tell of the trip on many an occasion. My grandfather Conner lived to be 118, and my grandmother Conner was 118 when she died.

I will tell something of the details of this journey later, but now I will tell how they traveled.

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They carried, or hauled, their bedding on tepee poles or shafts. They would cut long green poles, attach rope or hides to them and tie them to horses one on each side, like buggy shafts. These reached above the horses backs when first attached, but after traveling and wearing off the ends they would be retied and moved back until worn short, when new poles would be cut. Back of the horses these poles would be held together by blankets and in these blankets we children would ride. The bedding was also carried in this manner. The men rode other ponies or walked if ponies were scarce.

Their first stop was at Fort Gibson, and from there they were sent out and located by the government. This was in 1836.

Most of the houses were log houses. I don't remember the exact date, but my father built a really good house for that time. He went into the hills and cut only cedar trees. These were hewn to a thickness of about six inches and in sixteen or eighteen foot lengths. These were "snaked" in; that is, dragged with horses to the location of the house. The logs were all prepared for erection

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when the neighbors would be called in and help "raise" the logs. This house consisted of two rooms, two stories high, with an opening between these. These rooms were 16 x 18 feet. I think stone chimneys were built at each end of the house and holes cut for windows. Floors were of rough lumber from over in Arkansas. This house is still standing and is occupied. The roof now on the house is the second one ever to be put on the building. The house is now in a good state of preservation.

My early life was like that of other Indian boys, hunting and fishing and not much work. We had to attend school. The school was about two miles north of Tahlequah. It was maintained and operated by the government. The teachers were white men, employed by the government and paid by them. The school had a term of three or four months.

Our studies were reading, spelling, arithmetic, and the dictionary. We wrote in the Cherokee language and that was the language spoken. I remember the first green coffee I ever saw was on the road to school. There were about three thousand soldiers camped along the road

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for quite a while. They had been sent in there to run out General Price. These soldiers who were camped there were Union soldiers. It was along about the last year of the Civil War and I was about seven years old. Well, of course, the army had quite a lot of supplies with them and for some reason when they left rather suddenly they left sacks of green coffee and navy beans. They evidently were about to be attacked or they would have taken their food supplies with them. Well, we children told our folks about it and they went out and got a good supply of green coffee and navy beans. Before this, my parents used parched corn or wheat for making coffee, and until this time had never had real coffee.

The government supported our people. I remember going to Fort Gibson with my parents each month to get our money allowance. It was six dollars per head and there were nine of us children and our father and mother making eleven, so we drew sixty-six dollars per month and in those days that bought quite a lot of things. Later on the amount varied and the pay station or disbursing station was transferred to Tablequah.