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Effie S. Jackson,  
Journalist.  
January 7, 1938.

Interview with William Porter.

William Adair Porter, more than six feet tall husky, square shouldered, white-haired, with skin of an Indian tinge, looks the part of an Indian Chief's son. He is the only living son of Chief Pleasant Porter and says that were tribal law and customs still in use, he would be happy as a leader of his people. The Indian blood in his veins is predominant over the white and has led his inclinations to the Creeks, to their language, manners and customs. But he says white civilization decreed otherwise and he found that he must conform to a routine manner of making a living. He seems to typify the best of the Indian mixed blood still striving against odds to uphold the traditions of his people.

My father, Chief Pleasant Porter, was born near Clarksville in the Creek Nation in 1841. This place is called Porter now and is about ten miles northwest

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of Muskogee. My grandfather was Benjamin J. Porter, a white man of Scotch-Irish descent, his father was John Snodgrass Porter, born in Norristown, Pennsylvania. John Snodgrass Porter, always adventuresome, went to Tennessee in his early youth and joined the militia to be under General Andrew Jackson. He served under him in his war on the Creeks and strange to say became in sympathy with them. Later he joined the Creeks in the Old Nation and was adopted by them. He married a white woman from the Tennessee mountains and came in the Removal along with the Perryman and Winslett families who were to contribute much to the history of the Creek nation in their new home.

My great-grandfather, John S. Porter settled in the vicinity of what was then Clarksville, took up all the land he wished but was of a restless spirit. He joined Sam Houston on his Texas expedition, only instead of fighting his mind turned to civil engineering. He brought back trunks full of written material covering his early survey of east Texas. His daughter, Betsy

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was a Medicine woman among the Indians; she brewed herbs and resorted to a magic in which she believed and which had much influence over the Indians. She was white but had been adopted and had grown up with the Creek Indians. She was sincere in her teachings. She believed these trunks of pamphlet surveys which her brother John Snodgrass Porter brought back from Texas were forms of witchcraft and promptly burned them. Betsy was married a number of times. One husband was Tom Crowell. Crowell addition east of Tulsa is a part of her allotment and some of her descendants still live there.

John Snodgrass Porter was the father of Benjamin (my grandfather), Betsy (the Medicine woman) and Jack. When John departed with Houston on his Texas ventures (his wife having died) he left his children to the Creek Indians. Like himself, these full blood white children were adopted by the Creeks and knew no other nationality. Benjamin was married to Phoebe Perryman. Phoebe was the daughter of Lydia Perryman and Tah-lo-

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pec Tust-a-nuk-Kee, a town chief. Lydia Perryman was the daughter of Benjamin Perryman Steek-cha-ko-me-co or the Great King. Benjamin had been a tribal chief of prominence among the Creeks back in Alabama and was an adherent of the McIntosh faction. He was a signer of the treaty of February 24, 1833 at Fort Gibson. A celebrated painting of Benjamin Perryman was made at Fort Gibson in 1836 by George Catlin, the noted painter of Indian pictures. It now hangs in the United States National Museum.

So my father, Pleasant Porter, was the son of a full blood white father and a full blood Creek Mother, each representative of his and her race, that is my heritage and the heritage of my six sons and three daughters, all living.

Benjamin and Phoebe lived in the Clarksville area where their children were born. My father, Pleasant, born in 1841, was named for Pleasant Berryhill who came in the removal. The other children were John, Daniel, Benjamin, Matilda, (mother of Lillie who married

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Lincoln Postoak) and Nancy who married John Yargee. Pleasant went to school at Tallahassee. During the Civil War, though very young he served with the Confederate Army under Col. D. N. McIntosh, and was promoted to be first lieutenant. After the war he returned to the old plantation home near Clarksville to find it in ashes. The father was dead so young Pleasant took his mother and younger brothers and sisters and went to the North Fork of the Canadian River near Eufaula. One crop here was enough and after scouting around he chose the fertile land in the Arkansas about half a mile northwest of where Leonard is today. There was only one other Indian in the vicinity. In the course of time, he had a ranch of three thousand acres under his control. We all took our allotments in this vicinity and considered this community sort of an ancestral home. That is where I live today.

My father was later married to Mary Ellen Keyes, Cherokee mixed blood, daughter of Judge Riley

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Keyes, chief justice of the Cherokee Nation before the Civil War. This marriage took place in 1872. The Keyes home was on Barren Fork, nine miles southeast of Tahlequah. The old family homestead is still there at Coffin Springs near Well-  
ing. It is the home of some of the Keyes descendants at the present time. My mother taught the neighborhood school of "Euchee town" five or six miles south of my father's home. My father was superintendent of schools for the Creek Nation. He reorganized the educational system which had ceased to exist during the war. His marriage with the neighboring "school ma'am" was natural. Of this marriage there were three children - I was the oldest, born in 1874, Pleasant Jr. accidentally killed when he was sixteen and Mary Anita, now deceased. Mary Anita was married to Jay P. Farnsworth. She died in 1921. One son, Porter Farnsworth, survived his mother by only a few years. Later, my father married my mother's cousin, Mattie Burtholf, a Cherokee. By that marriage one daughter, Lenora, now Mrs. E. C. Bothwell, Edgewood, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was born. We are the only living children.

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My father served as a representative and spokes man for his people from 1872 to 1900. He spent the greater part of his time in Washington and I was born in Washington. I remember as a little fellow going to school there at Franklin Square. I had as a classmate, Carolyn Thomas, whose father Judge Thomas was in Washington a great part of the time on official business. She is now the wife of Grant Foreman.

When Congress was not in session we returned to our ranch on the Arkansas. I remember the first store and post office in our vicinity. The old trail or wagon road from Old Broken Arrow to Muskogee crossed the southwestern corner of our land. The old road is still there. The pole ferry across the Arkansas run by "Grube" Childers was a quarter of a mile north down the hill. The legal description of our land may help this- locate the Northwest quarter of the southeast quarter of section 21, Township 17, Range 14,

Soon after the war a man named Jeff Davis took up a bit of land southwest of us facing the trail on the



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height a quarter of a mile south of the ferry. Here he had his home and a little store. The Euchee community was five miles south and with other settlers coming in a post office seemed necessary. So my father named the place Fairview; it was a commanding site with low valleys to the south and east the Concharta Mountains in the distance. The post office was established in the store of Jeff Davis.

In 1880 when Tallahassee Mission burned, the Creek Nation felt the need of a new and larger mission in the growing community to the west and plans under Dr. Loughridge had already been made even before the destruction of Tallahassee.

The commanding site of the Davis' little store was chosen by the Creeks. Jeff Davis was given \$600.00 for his location and Captain Sam Brown paid him a lump sum for his store. With this money Jeff bought a good home a few miles south. Thus Fairview became Wealaka, and the large mission school was constructed where once the little store and post office of Fairview thrived.

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A quarter of a mile southeast of Jeff Davis' store was a large neighborhood school for the Creeks. Mrs. Turner, a Creek and Cherokee mixed blood, taught there and it was often called "Mrs. Turner's school", with the coming of Wealaka mission, this school was no longer needed, so the astute Capt. Sam Brown having bought the store privilege from Jeff Davis proceeded to buy the old neighborhood school building for his store.

This was good business. The wagon road to Muskogee described above, ran in front of this building facing east. All Captain Brown did was to put a new square front on to the building add a large lean-to porch on the south and he had a commanding store and two story home. The store played an important part in the history of the community. Captain Sam Brown was Chief of the Euchees. The Euchees had quite a settlement a few miles south called "Euchee Town". The story goes that these <sup>Indians</sup> settled purposely north and west of Muskogee in the early days to form a sort of protection from the wilder Plains Indians.

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Captain Sam Brown was also treasurer of the Euchee Nation. I remember while I was in my early teens the robbery of his store occurred. As treasurer he had \$6000.00 of the Nation's money in his care. One day two fellows looking like cowboys fastened their horses to the rack out in front-walked in and demanded the money. Brown and his half-brother, William Frederick, both protested. The robbers knocked William Frederick down with their guns and departed with the loot. The story goes the two robbers were Sam Starr and a companion and that the robbery was planned by Belle - the wife of Sam Starr. Neither the robbers nor money were found. This old building is still in good condition and is now being used as a granary by the Sand Springs Home Interests who own the hundred and sixty acres.

I went to Mrs. Turner's school, later went to school at Wealaka, and when I was thirteen my father sent me to Drury College at Springfield Missouri. It was my father's hope to make at least an Admiral of

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me. He hoped that I would live up to the standard of the former Admiral Porter. He had fond hopes and plans of my at least going to Annapolis. I did not, I got married. I was married in 1895 to Mildred Fears of Muskogee, we went to live on the old family ranch and live adjoining it today. We have nine children, six boys and three daughters; Pleasant, William Adair Jr., Stockton; Mildred (Mrs. R. S. Harrison, Tulsa), James D., Mary Ellen (Mrs. Chris Lane, Kansas), Patrick and Portia. Three sons live at home.

My father, Pleasant Porter, though spending much of his time in Washington, kept in touch with his ranch life. He was especially interested in breeding fine horses, especially trotting and running horses. He was associated with Clarence Turner in the Three Bar (~~====~~)

Ranch eleven miles west of Muskogee. His plan was to raise the standard of stock in the Territory. He allowed free use of his stables, sold thorough breeds at cost and often if he fancied an individual freely gave him a horse.

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He also stressed cattle breeding. The hip brand of his horses and cattle was the double-triangle ( $\Delta\Delta$ ), also (P). At the time of the trouble with Isparhechar in 1882-3, Pleasant Porter was given command of the administration military force, a duty which demanded great judgement and tact. During the later years of his life he occupied the position of principal Chief of the Creek Nation. Even after statehood by the express wish of President Theodore Roosevelt he served as such until his death in Vinita in 1907. He was on his way to Washington on official business at the time of his death.

He was a leader of his people. Maybe that is the reason that I always wanted to go the way of the "red mah". My father was so ambitious for me that he kept me away from all Indian influences; did not allow me to even hear the Creek language spoken. He sent me to schools where I would absorb the training of the whites. In every way tried to prepare me for white leadership.

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**Note:**

Mr. William Porter is now employed at the Mid Continent Refinery in West Tulsa. His home is at the old Wealaka Mission site, seventy-five miles southeast of Tulsa, one-half mile northwest of Leonard, mail being addressed to Bixby, R.F.D.---Journalist.