

SPRINGSTON, W. B.

INTERVIEW

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Effie S. Jackson,
Journalist.

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Interview with W. B. Springston,
2747 East Fifth Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The history of my father, John L. Springston, is allied closely with the history of the Cherokee Nation from 1859 to 1886. My father was born nine miles east of the present site of Spavinaw at Lynch's Mill, in 1845. He was the son of John Anderson Springston whose father was John Springston, a French Tory who married Nancy, a full blood Cherokee woman. John Anderson Springston was born at Gunter's Ferry on the Tennessee River in 1814. Before he came to the Territory in the '30's he practiced law, was Prosecuting Attorney in his district and was a member of the Legislature.

My father attended the Delaware County schools for eleven years. His father was really his teacher, taking him on business trips, teaching him law and politics. Father's father began working for the Government when he was fourteen although he had not learned the English language until he was seven. The first early service he

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rendered his people was to revive and strengthen the power of the Kee-too-wah Society. The old unrest between the Full Bloods and Half Breeds had cropped out again during the period of the Removal. Under Whitecatcher, a full blood Cherokee who was later Captain of Springston's Company during the war, an assembly was called on the banks of the Illinois River in September, 1858, to bring about a reorganization of the old group.

After much ceremonial debate the two factions buried their grievances and the Kee-too-wah was in power once more. Springston followed in the footsteps of his father and joined the reorganized group.

My father joined the Union Army in 1863 as a member of Company I, Third Indian Home Guards; his fighting was within a radius of a hundred miles of his home, Spavinaw. This Company was part of the Western Division under the command of Captain Whitecatcher, Colonel W. A. Phillips, and Major General Schofield. My father fought in the

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battles of Cabin Creek near Vinita and at Honey Springs south of Muskogee.

My father spent most of his time during Civil War at the old homestead of President Zachary Taylor in Fort Gibson. This house, built in 1823, my father believed to be one of the first houses built in Indian Territory. It was used as a Provost Guard house during the war where Father was employed as an interpreter between prisoners and captors and between the Cherokee officers and their white superiors.

His next important service was from 1879 to 1886. He was translator and associate editor of the Cherokee Advocate, a weekly newspaper published at Tahlequah and devoted chiefly to legal affairs of the Federal Court. Also during this time he was connected with the Executive Department of the Cherokee Nation as Secretary and chief translator. He was personally concerned with transactions between his nation and Federal authorities at Washington during this period.

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His last official position was interpreter in the Federal Court of Judge Isaac I. Parker at Fort Smith. My father always considered Judge Parker a stern but just judge. The remaining years of his life were spent at Sallisaw and later at Vian until his removal to my home in Tulsa where he passed away on January 7, 1929.

I have many relics of his day. One I prize especially is his picture of Charles Thompson - Ochelata. This I plan to give to the State Historical Society. I have an interesting account of "Early Day Spavinaw" history as Father recalled it.