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Interview with William Rex Howland,
Cherokee Indian, Warner, Oklahoma.

I, William R. Howland, was born September 5, 1882, at the old Howland homestead, three miles east and one mile south of Warner.

My father was Major Erastis J. Howland, a white man, and my mother was Susan (Rider) Howland, Cherokee.

My father, Erastis J. Howland, was born May 23, 1834, in the state of Massachusetts and reared in Pennsylvania. In 1852, at the age of eighteen he came west and after much travel and adventure he landed in the Indian Territory. I know nothing of his activities during his early life in the Territory.

In the beginning of the Civil War he enlisted in the Confederate Army. During the first year in the service he was promoted to the rank of captain under General Stan Watie. Soon thereafter he was promoted to the rank of major, in which position he served the remainder of the war, stationed near Eufaula.

Well do I remember my father telling of one of his most hazardous adventures during the Civil War. He took a scout squad and rode horseback to the Arkansas River near Ft. Gibson, hid his men and

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horses in the brush near the river and swam across with a federal uniform tied on his head. When across, he dressed in the uniform of a northern soldier and made his way into the Federal camp at Ft. Gibson, there learned of the Federals' plans and preparations for an attack upon the Confederates. He made his way back to his men and they rapidly conveyed the news to General Stan Watie at the Confederate headquarters, with the result that the Confederates met them with a surprise attack at Flat Rock Ford where a bloody battle was fought and Major Howland was wounded in one foot when his horse was shot from under him. He hid himself in the weeds and brush for four days suffering the pains of his wound and without food before he was found by his men and taken to the base hospital where he soon recovered and returned to service.

After Major Howland's recovery from the wound received in the battle at Flat Rock Ford and his return to service, he took part in the bloodiest battle of the Civil War that was fought in the Indian Territory, the battle of Honey Springs.

It was on July 17, 1863, when the Federal forces under the command of General James Blunt made their drive against the Confederate Indians under the Command of General Stan Watie. It was at the Elk Creek toll bridge that the Federals met with the most stubborn resistance by the Confederates and paid the greatest price for victory, for it was there they found Major Howland with his loyal Indian Command well fortified at the south approach of the bridge, many of his men hidden in a ravine just west of the south approach, a cannon barricaded in the roadway near the south approach commanding the passage of the bridge. It was there where the most severe fighting of the battle of Honey Springs took place, as the Federals made several attempts to take the bridge, each time meeting the deadly fire of Major Howland's Indian riflemen which blocked the bridge with Federal dead and made Elk Creek run red with their blood. The Confederates held the bridge against superior numbers until the Federals almost enveloped his command by crossing Elk Creek, both east and west of the bridge.

Realizing the perilous position of his men,

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Major Howland retreated to the south where he joined forces with the main Confederate body that climaxed the battle of Honey Springs.

Had the Federals suffered the loss throughout the battle of Honey Springs as they did at the beginning at Elk Creek, it would have never been a Federal victory.

During the war my father was married to Susan E. (Rider) Howland. They were married by an Indian preacher at Caney, Choctaw Nation, and returned to a place near Webbers Falls where they settled on an Indian claim. In 1868, they were remarried by Judge Vann of the Canadian District. There were nine children born to them. In 1875, they moved to a claim three miles east and one mile south of where the town of Warner now stands and spent the remainder of their lives together in the home they established there. Their deaths occurred in 1886.

My father, being a carpenter, did a great deal of carpenter work during the reconstruction days after the war. He did lots of work at Ft. Gibson. He made most of the tools he worked with.

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I was very young when my parents died and my boyhood days were spent at, and in the vicinity, of my birth place and my schooling was in the Cherokee schools.

When I was seventeen years of age I began working for Cicero Davis on his ranch and worked for him seven years. Leaving the Cicero Davis ranch, I worked for Campbell Russell on his farm which was located where the town of Warner is now situated.

In later years I engaged in farming and have followed that vocation to the present time.

In 1916, I was married to Mary Porter, the daughter of Squire Thomas Porter and Ellen V. (Joyner) Porter of near Warner, Oklahoma.

Four children have been born to us, three now living; Ellen Sue, born September 11, 1918; Billy Rex, born September 22, 1922, died August 19, 1923; Rosemary, born November 22, 1925 and Gene Porter, born February 28, 1928.