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ADAIR, JOHN MARTIN

INTERVIEW

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Feb. 28, 1938
Investigator
Jas. S. Buchanan.

Interview with John Martin Aдай
Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

I was born June 3rd, 1858, in the town of Fort Gibson,
Cherokee Nation, at the old John Lafayette Aдай place,
later known as the Dennis Bushyhead place, which was origi-
nally an old log barrack building which stood near the bank
of the Grand River.

My father was John Lafayette Aдай, Cherokee, born
in Georgia, who came to the Cherokee Nation during the early
'50's. He was of the Protestant faith and was a mason.

My mother was Elizabeth Alabama Schrimacher of Chero-
kee descent, daughter of Martin and Elizabeth Schrimacher,
born in the old Cherokee Nation, who came west with her
parents in the movement of the Cherokees over the "Trail of
Tears."

My grandfather Schrimacher settled immediately after
coming to the Indian Territory in 1838 on a claim which he
improved and made his home until the Civil War broke out.
Then due to the conditions in the Cherokee Nation caused by

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the war he moved his family to the Choctaw Nation where he and his daughter Sarah Catherine both died in 1865 and were buried near the vicinity of Bristown on the eve of their return to the Cherokee Nation.

Their son, John G. Schrimacher, married a Juliet Gandy. Their oldest daughter, Elizabeth Alabama, married my father in 1856 and after the death of my father in 1859, she was married to Dennis Bushyhead who was later Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Their second daughter, Mary Schrimacher, was married to C. V. Rogers, one of their children being Will Rogers the humorist. Their other daughter, Martha, married Fredrick W. Gulager. After the war the daughter, Martha, and her husband, Fredrick W. Gulager, acquired ownership of the old Martin Schrimacher home and since that time it has been known as the Gulager place. This old place is situated about eight miles southwest of Tahlequah on the old stage line trail between Tahlequah and Fort Gibson and during the days of the stage line there was a stage stand at the place and it was also used as a team changing station for the stage in bad weather. There is a wonderful water spring about fifty yards south of the old house site.

That was a noted watering place during the days of the stage line. The old spring yet has the old moss covered stone wall around it that was placed there by Frederick Guibauer when he improved the place after the Civil War. The original house that was built by Martin Schrimacher was a massive two story double log house with a colonial type porch on the front with massive cedar posts extending high enough to support the porch of the second story. This building was destroyed by fire in 1920.

My grandfather Martin Schrimacher led the life of the average pioneer. The only public work I ever knew of his performing was the driving of the mail-hack between Tahlequah and Fayetteville, Kansas, in the early days. I was the only child born to my mother and John Lafayette Aдай, but to the union of my mother and Dennis Bushhead, whom she married after the Civil War, there were four children born, as follows: Jesse C. Bushhead, who is now a practicing physician at Claremore; Lizzie, married to Tom Tripard of Tahlequah; Sarah, deceased, who was unmarried, and Dennis W. Bushhead, Jr., now living at Tahlequah. After

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the marriage of Dennis Bushyhead to my mother he served eight years as Treasurer of the Cherokee Nation, then for two years as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.

I was reared at the place of my birth in Fort Gibson and attended the Cherokee National School at that place where I received my common school education and later attended the Shurtleff College, a Baptist institution at Alton, Illinois. After returning from school I devoted my time for several years to looking after the cattle business of my mother and step-father as they had extensive herds on the open range of the Cherokee Nation until the death of my mother in 1882.

After the death of my mother, never having an own brother, I took a great interest in my oldest step-brother, Jesse Bushyhead, as he was a very studious boy and had a great ambition to be a doctor. I assisted him through school and medical college. He attended the Bellevue Medical College in New York City at the same time that Dr. R. B. Fite attended that college. Our cousin, Will Rogers, later sent Dennis through a two year post graduate course in

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After he completed his education he located at Claremore, where he continued his practice very successfully until the present time.

In 1898 I enlisted in the service of the country in the Spanish-American war and served in that campaign in Cuba under Col. Theodore Roosevelt in what was known as Roosevelt's Rough Riders. I was in the service one year, returning home after the Spanish-American war I went to work for F. H. Nash at Fort Gibson in his mercantile store.

Leaving F. H. Nash I returned to the old homestead where I have lived for the past thirty-six years. In 1903 I married Stephanie Terrill, Cherokee, the daughter of Aaron and Annie Terrill. No children were born to us.

After my marriage I engaged in farming and raising stock here on the old homestead. My wife died in March, 1935.

I have spent almost eighty years in the Indian Territory and Oklahoma. I saw this country in its undeveloped state, a real man's paradise. I have seen a great change,

many things come and go, mostly good, for I have seen what is called the progress of modern civilization ruin a really

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good country. The opportunities of the frontier days are long past and we find ourselves settled down in the midst of a hum-drum life of an over-populated country with all the natural resources that we enjoyed in the early days gone forever. There is yet too much in life for me to conform to such a do-nothing situation. Therefore I am leaving out my old homestead and preparing to start for the gold fields of ARIZONA on a prospecting trip about the middle of March. I am not dreaming of making any great gold strike, but I will at least feel the thrill of adventure again.

The sutler store at Fort Gibson was first established by a retired army captain named John Hammer about 1870. He operated the store until about 1873, when he transferred his business to a man named Skinner and Captain Hammer went to Fort Smith, Arkansas, where he purchased an interest in a coal mine and a steamboat. The coal mine and steamboat project was a failure when the steamboat sank near Fort Smith.

Captain Hammer returned to Fort Gibson and went back into the sutler store in partnership with Tom French in the same old sutler store building and made a success of the business again.

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They continued the business until about 1880 when they

sold the business to Captain Jackson, an ex-confederate

officer from Texas who had married a Cherokee woman. Cap-

tain Hammer was then appointed United States Marshal. Cap-

tain Jackson operated the sutler store for about two years

then sold out the business to the Lafayette brothers, Ben

and Mose, who operated the sutler store until it was discontinued

about 1890 and the Lafayette brothers went to Tulsa and

went into business.

The house in which I was born was originally an old

barrack building. It was a large double log structure, two

large rooms with a hall through the center, a long room on

the east end that extended past the north wall to the edge

of the porch on the side next to the river that served as a

dining room and a room east of that room which was used as a

kitchen, a porch along the entire south side and a porch on

the north next to the river that extended from the west end to

the dining room wall. There were three fireplaces in the

house, one at the west end, one in the first large room east

of the hall next to the dining room and one in the room that

was used for a kitchen on the east end.

This building, like many other old log barrack buildings, was sold to private individuals when the new stone barrack buildings were built in the new barracks on top of the hill in the late '40's. This old building that my father bought has been used as an office building and as the first post office of Fort Gibson. I remember there was a slot cut in a window in the west room on the north side next to the river that served as a letter drop and I was told when I was a boy that that room was the first post office at Fort Gibson.

My mother retained this property after the death of my father, and after her marriage to Dennis Bushyhead, several years later, the place was then known thereafter as the Bushyhead place. This was a beautiful old place, with stately porches on both sides, in the early days as it fronted the river and also fronted the barrack road that passed on the opposite side of the house from the river.