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Hazel B. Greene,
Journalist,
April 18, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. Asbury Brannan,
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born in Arkansas, just over the line from the Indian Territory, in 1884. We were close enough that we would come over to the Territory visiting and to the Indian ball games. I remember one particularly. Towson and Wolf Counties were opposing teams, and they wore breech clouts and tails fastened on the backs of those tails of some animal. I don't recall what particular animal tail Towson County fellows wore, but it seems to me that Wolf County men wore wolf tails. Towson County won that time, but they just beat the devil out of each other with those Indian ball sticks. They had a spoon-like end in which to catch the balls and those edges were sharp, and would split a fellow's scalp open. They just carried them off the field like there had been a battle. A physician was in attendance. I remember this one so well because it was a particularly bloody game. I saw others where the participants wore squirrel tails, mule tails and many other kinds.

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We would come over into the Indian Territory lots of times, sometimes just visiting and sometimes folks over here would come over there to visit us. I distinctly remember one old Hunter and trapper, named Max Jacobs. He was a white man and just lived like an Indian, in camps, and dressed like an Indian. He wore buckskin suits which he made himself. He laced them up with buckskin thongs. I can't remember when I didn't know him, and I remember him so well because of his peculiarity of dress. A son of his got to be game warden up in our country, and all of us being mountaineers, we just got along fine. We thought him a fine fellow.

About 1889 we moved over into the Indian Nation, about three and a half miles east of the first Eagletown. I mean the Eagletown where Governor Jefferson Gardner lived. We lived east of where the Eagletown cemetery is now. That used to be called the Brannan cemetery, because my baby sister and my grandfather were the first ones to be buried there. There was the Howell cemetery on the old Howell place and then another one somewhere over on the west side of Mountain Fork River.

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I will never forget the house we lived in. It was a big hewed log house, two story, with a stack chimney in the middle, with two fireplaces below stairs and only one above. I thought that was so odd. I wondered why they didn't make two above also. The floors were of puncheons. What I mean by puncheons, were logs split and then dressed down almost as smooth as if planed. That house was called the Pitchlynn house, because a Pitchlynn had built it. He was murdered in that house and when he was shot, so the story goes, everybody went off and left him and he crawled around on that puncheon floor until he bled to death, and those blood stains never came off, no matter how hard my mother scrubbed on them and she used ashes on them. Ashes contained so much lye, she thought they would remove the stains. That old Pitchlynn house was said to be haunted. There were the ruins of some old building over east of us, which was said to have been a boarding school for girls.

One thing which I thought so queer was that full-blood Indians would not meet a white man in the road if they could avoid it. I have been going along the road and seen one coming.

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When he would sight me he would halt, throw his head up and ride off in the bushes just like a wild animal. Of course the women did that, too; they seemed shyer than the men.

My father was about one-eighth Choctaw Indian, but they were pretty well-fixed back in Mississippi, and would not come when the Choctaws were moved here by the Government and never tried to get a "right" here when they finally did move out here. My father's father was R. R. Brannan, and he married a sister of Joel and Alex Nail, prominent Choctaw Indians. My mother was a white woman. She was Florida Goss of Georgia. Her father was General Goss in the Union Army. We crossed the state line of Arkansas and Indian Territory on January 1, 1889. We were in wagons drawn by oxen. That was when we moved to Eagletown. We moved to Doaksville about four years later and drove four oxen to one wagon and a team of mules to another. We boys used oxen to plow with. They were slow and sure.

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I remember a Mr. Pinkard owned a store and sawmill at East Eagletown. We attended school in a one-room log cabin, with window shutters on wooden hinges, before Mr. Pinkard put up his sawmill, then they built a plank one. We thought that was fine. Of course our school was a subscription school, even after we moved to Doaksville, where we had a big frame building for school and church.

There were two creeks close to Eagletown, I believe one was called Kullituklo Creek and the other Boktuklo and on one of those creeks Cal Howell had a water mill, where they ground corn. I remember going to mill there when I was only about eight years old. They would put the corn on a good old gentle mule and then set me up there. If the corn fell off, it was just too bad, I would have to wait until somebody came along to put it back for me. If hogs didn't come along and eat it up I would be lucky. At the mill some man would always take it off for me, and put the meal on the mule. There was a big family of us and they always sent a couple of bushels of corn to be ground. I remember how my mother used to "scrape" enough new Irish potatoes for all of us, especially on Sunday when we would have a lot of company. She would simply put the

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required amount in a large dish pan or small wash tub and scrub them with a piece of "croker" sack. That reminds me, too, of the way we washed quilts. She made her soap with "drip" lye. That is lye dripped from ashes, so she would soak the quilts in some of that lye in lots of water, or the lye soap and water in large tubs and we children would get in there with our bare feet and tramp out the dirt. We generally just washed quilts twice each year, in the Spring and in the Fall. Then every quilt and blanket would get washed up. We didn't mind it. We thought it was fun and we got them clean. Everybody on our place worked. My daddy was a worker and he demanded it of everybody who ate at his house. And somehow I cannot get out of the habit, though my children have not had to work hard. We always have farmed and raised stock. I live away out in the hills, twenty-two miles from town. I have a nice home and it is modern, as it can be made. I have a Delco lighting system in my house. We also have a telephone. I am reminded of the difference in the way I live now and the way I was

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raised. I never heard of a telephone or electric lights until I was grown.

It was pretty tough in this country when I was growing up. I remember once when a negro named Si Walker and some more Indian-negroes got into a drunken brawl and Walker killed three of them. Nothing was ever done with him about it. He was not even arrested.

A big fine boiling spring supplies Fort Townson with water and before the town was built there was a negro church up there on the hill, just south of the spring. It was a beautiful spot and they used to have some of the biggest meetings there. Negroes would go there and camp for weeks and hold meetings. Once when such a meeting was going, Si Walker was there, and so were Calvin and Joe Willis, Indian-negroes. First thing anybody knew Si had mounted his horse to ride off and he took a shot or two at Calvin and Joe Willis, who then opened fire on Si and shot him to death. Nothing was ever done about that either. Calvin and Joe and Henry were brothers and plenty smart negroes too. Henry Willis became Superintendent of a negro Academy. It was a pity that even negroes that smart couldn't stay out of trouble. Joe finally had to do time in the penitentiary for murder, but that was after Statehood.