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Hazel B. Greene,
Journalist.
February 3, 1938.

Interview with W. H. Byrne
Fort Towson, Oklahoma
Born 1868.
Father-R. K. Byrne

Immediately after being honorably discharged from the United States Army, I received word that my father was dangerously ill in the Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory, near Antlers. I hastened to his side and was with him when he died on the Jeff Sharp farm on the Kiamichi River about a half mile from Antlers, at a place that was called Sharp's Bend on the river. About three quarters of a mile southwest of the Courthouse in Antlers, there is an old, old Choctaw Cemetery. That was where I had my father buried. Mother was buried in Texas twenty odd years prior to his death. He had never re-married.

The day that my father was buried, some Choctaws came to the cemetery and waited until he was buried in order to get the same help to bury the dead they had with them. It was one big pine box with two bodies of Choctaw men in it. I helped to bury them as the blood dripped from the crevices in the box. That was awful.

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"I know not what the truth may be, I tell it to you as it was told to me." The story goes that these two Indians were some of the many who were engaged in a feud between the Cedar County Indians and Kiamichi County Indians. Kiamichi River was the boundary line between the two counties. Each clan and its members did everything that they could think of to annoy the other and they killed each other at the "drop of a hat." They told me that one of these dead Indians I helped to bury was named Forbes Tooley and the other one a Reubens, both Kiamichi County Indians, and that they went over into Cedar County and rounded up about 200 head of cattle and brought them over across Kiamichi River into Kiamichi County. The Cedar County Indians said these Kiamichi County Indians were stealing their cattle and followed them and shot them to death. One had 36 bullet holes in him and the other one was completely riddled with bullets. Dick Locke sent a wagon out after them and had them brought into Antlers. I was told that that big pine box was made that night and they were put in it and lay out in the wagon all night without anybody watching them.

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This was really a wild place in those days of the country's development. I remember once when I was working at a little sawmill up northeast of Hamden, an old man, just a drifter, came there and worked awhile. He called Paris, Texas, his home and when he had a little money saved he decided to return home. He had a good wagon and team, so he started out. A young man, another drifter, named Eugene Vaught, I believe, asked the old man to let him go along. The old man consented and they started. As they rode along the young man would get out of the wagon and walk along. Once when he got out he got a pine knot and got back in the wagon and beat the old man on the head until he killed him; then he robbed him and threw his body away out in the post oak runners; and he went on with the team, wagon and money, and all of the old man's belongings. Nobody thought anything about not hearing from either of them because, as I said, they were both just drifters, and nobody corresponded with others then as much as they do now anyway. Post offices were usually far apart, and frequently very far from those little sawmills. That was in March, and that fall when some fellows were quail hunting out there in the woods

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they found the skeleton. The woods had been burned and the most of his clothes were burned, but his shoes were not completely ruined and were identified as belonging to him, and the buttons of his old army overcoat were other clues to his identity, and the general appearance of the size of the skeleton. Then the hunt began for the young man. He was traced to where he had sold the team and wagon. He was afraid to take this team and wagon back to Paris so he sold them in the Indian Territory, and went on to his home in Paris.

When he was arrested he was tried and hanged in Paris, Texas. It was said that when he was hanged, some negroes were also. Their shoes were taken away from them and they said that on the scaffold, he joked about how hot it would be to walk over coals of fire where they were going.

Another skeleton was found on Lost Lake up on Rock Creek and was identified as that of ^aTexan by the name of Eph Jones who had disappeared nine years before. He had come over here on a cattle buying trip, and had brought his money with him but none of it was with the skeleton when found. It was gold money that he had brought, so the story goes. His lodge

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emblems and gun served as clues of identification of him. Then the lodges to which he belonged got busy and had a couple of prominent men over here indicted for his murder, but they got out of it some way.

One of those same men was accused of murdering a young man who had worked for him a year and had accumulated \$500.00. He started to walk from the place where he had worked to Hamden to take the train for his home. He had his \$500.00 with him but he never reached the railroad station nor his home. He just disappeared. His body was found a way later, but his murderer was never brought to justice.

I had lots of experiences pioneering. I am a natural woodsman and love working in the woods. I put in a sawmill for Bob Short down on Red River at the mouth of Waterfall Slough. We had just gotten the mill up and the decking down when we got warning to get out, that a rise was coming down the river. We sent the men out with teams. Eight of us stayed to make a boat to help get some marooned families out. The rise was coming down so fast that they could not get out. It took us until midnight to get the boat made of cotton wood

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planking, by that time we could hear lots of signals for help, guns shooting and people whooping.

When the men went out with the teams they had taken some of the people and meant to return for more, but the water rose too fast, they could not get back. People came from further down in the bottom and came to the place of an old darkey who had built his cabin on a high place. There were about four acres there that were not submerged, and there must have been about 75 people there, where they had taken refuge and that old darkey was praying for the water to recede, so "Dem white folks" could get back home". We went up that slough with our boat to help anybody that we could. We had pine knot flares to light our way; we could see and hear chickens and guineas and turkeys in the tree tops, while cattle, hogs and houses, such as smoke houses and chicken coops, were floating past us. We had to keep a sharp lookout to keep from running into submerged trees, stumps, fence posts, etc. Miraculously, no lives were lost.

There was a time when nearly every Indian's word was as good as his bond; they would borrow money away ahead of the

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annuity or per capita payments, and give no security, except their word. I know Dick Locke of Antlers (his name was Victor but the Indians corrupted it into "Dick") used to loan them lots of money; then when a payment was due to be made, he would be at the place when it was made and do a lot of collecting. Once a payment was to be made at Doaksville, and a fellow by the name of Henry Allman was transporting the gold from Antlers to Doaksville in a buckboard. It was in a package and he put it under the seat. Dick Locke was with him, and they got to talking and forgot about the gold until they got to White Sulphur Court ground. The money was gone. They immediately turned around and whipped up the mule team and drove back as rapidly as they could, and when they had driven about four miles they found it in the road intact. Nobody had happened to come along that way since they had passed.

I saw a couple of fellows splinter some door facings in Antlers once. They had been gunning for each other for a long time. One came down the street in his shirt sleeves. The other saw him and thought he surely would not have a gun and that then would be a good time to kill him. He begun

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shooting, the other one dodged into a doorway and pulled a gun from out of his boot top and splintered the door facing behind which the first fellow was ambushed.

I have been told that the holes in the old courthouse at Antlers were bullet holes, but some people say they were made by woodpeckers. I do know that there were lots of holes in that old building. Another story I have heard is that one Dr. Nash built it out of his private funds and rented it to the County for years and years.