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INTERVIEW

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INTERVIEW.

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Billie Byrd,
Investigator,
Apr. 23, 1938.

Interview with Daniel Barnett,
Age 63. Thiopthlocco Town,
(Tulwa), Okemah, Oklahoma.

Around the vicinity of the present Okemah in Cfuskee County, before any trading post of any kind had ever been established and before there was a mill of any kind in the neighborhood to grind corn for bread, many out of the way miles were traveled by some people to obtain this necessity.

Before the town of Okemah was started, in 1902, there was a man of the name of Pickler who settled about four hundred yards south of the present Fort Smith and Western depot in Okemah and started a mill; he had settled on the spot following the tribal law of the territory under the Muskogee-Creek laws.

Any person, whether they be doctors or followers of any other profession, were required to pay so much a year for the settling on land owned by the tribe. According to Article 12, under the tribal government laws, any settler was required to pay rent for spot settled, so Mr. Pickler paid \$50.00 a

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year but was not permitted to cultivate any of the ground even for garden use.

He set up a mill and the Indians and others came to his place to have corn ground but even then they couldn't receive service all the time, they had to wait until a certain time to have the corn ground and that was only when a strong wind was blowing to turn the wheels of the windmill then used. Sometimes people would wait around until the wind was blowing. Maybe the wind would be blowing when they started out but did not keep up all the time.

The tribal government permitted people to settle on tribal lands only when they seemed as if they would in some way help the Indians. People of different trades were sought out and placed in different parts of the Indian land to do some work for the Indians that they themselves could not do. These different workers would make a report at the different council meetings and if the reports were approved, payment to the traders was made out of the tribal funds. Doctors, blacksmiths and followers of other professions who could come to the aid of the Indians were placed in the different districts of the Territory among the Muskogee-Creeks.

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There was one freedman, mulatto, who was able to speak fluently the Muskogee-Creek language. His name was Culley Johnson and he was hired to be the blacksmith for the Muskogee-Creek people. His shop was about two miles from the present Clearview, which is now a small negro settlement. His work was the usual work of a skilled blacksmith and he had much business with the Indians who were trying to farm their small clearings.