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Interview with Mrs. Julia (Sleeper) Fields,
by O. C. Davidson,
Field Worker.

Feb. 23, 1937.

My grandmother, Martha Harris, came to the Cherokee Nation in 1857 during the removal of the Indians. She was 1/32 Cherokee but she did not come on the Trail of Tears. She was about 16 or 17 years of age when she came here. A short time after she came here she met William Jackson, an Englishman, and they were married.

When the Civil war broke out in 1861 grandfather enlisted in the Confederate army and served as Captain during the war.

After the Civil war was over he took grandmother to old Mexico where they lived for 5 or 6 years. He was in the service of the United States government.

About 1870 or 1871 they came back to the Indian Territory and settled on a farm on Grand River, six miles south of Wagoner in the Cherokee Nation.

Grandfather had the picture of an English home in his mind which he had planned to build in England so in 1872 he built him a home. It was built English style. Two story and of native lumber, in its natural shade. The panels were of native walnut in its natural finish. It was considered the finest house in the whole country and today, if it was still standing, it would be a very fine house. While they were building the house they were expecting the arrival of a new baby and rushed work on the house

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in order that the baby might be born in their new home. That baby was Minnie Jackson who is my mother. They named the home Tanglewood Farm. In 1895 Tanglewood was destroyed by fire.

Grandfather Jackson was the man who laid out the town of Wagoner and was the first Mayor of Wagoner. The Cobb-Clingon and Norman families were also pioneers of Wagoner and were all very prominent people in the development of the town and community. They were all from Georgia. They came here about the same time. They used to call each other uncle and aunt, etc, but they were really not related.

In the year of 1872 or 1873 the I. K. & T. railroad was built. It was the first railroad to be built through here. My mother, Minnie Jackson was educated in the Indian Female Seminary at Tahlequah. She attended both the old and the new. When the old seminary burned mother was at home. Her trunk and clothes were at the seminary. The only thing of hers that was saved was her trunk and all that it contained was old love letters. She had taken all of her clothes out. The other students, of course, got those letters and they had a grand time reading her love letters and kidding her about them.

When she would go from Tanglewood to Tahlequah, it would take her all day to make the trip. She went by stage coach.

During the army post days at Fort Gibson, grandfather had

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the commissary there. I have often heard mother talk of the way the soldiers were treated and of the rigid discipline they were under. I have heard her tell of an officer, I can't recall his name, but he was officer of the day. He had two little boys. His wife took the two little boys on a trip to New York and while they were away one of the little boys became critically ill. They sent for the father but he couldn't get permission to go and the little boy died. His mother brought the body back here and he was buried without his father getting to see him. A private wasn't even permitted to even speak to his superiors. The soldiers would come to the fence to look at the officer and express their sympathy as best they could by their looks but they couldn't speak one word to him.

My father, Old Sleeper, was born in Mississippi. His people came from New England about 1700. When he first came west he stopped at Carthage, Missouri. He was quite young then and was considered very lucky at cards but he was not a professional gambler. He had some money and he established the first street car line from Carthage to Joplin. The street car had no motor but was drawn by a mule. He operated this street car line for awhile and prospered but through some misfortune he lost it and was broke. He then decided to try and win him another start and

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did some money but he got into some trouble there with a man and he left and came to Wagoner and went to work for John Gibson. Mr. Gibson was President of the First National Bank at Wagoner. He was a very wealthy man. The home he built in Wagoner 43 years ago, still stands and is a very fine house today.

Father worked for Mr. Gibson until he had saved enough money so that he could start out for himself again. When he started trading and buying cattle and hogs from the Indians. The Creek and Cherokee Indians had been having trouble for years. I don't know what their trouble was but any one from the Cherokee Nation had to be careful when he got over in Creek Territory or the Creeks had to be careful when they came over on the Cherokee side. But some way father managed to make friends with the Creeks and was one of the first to begin trading with the Creeks around Wagoner.

In 1893 he and my mother were married and being married to an Indian he was treated as one of them. He always carried money with him to pay for the stock he bought. He would sometimes carry \$2,000 or \$3,000 with him. The Indians each had his or her own property and did their business separately. Sometimes the man would sell him some hogs and then the wife would sell him some more and maybe the children would sell him some more, but each one dealt separately and he paid them separately. They had to

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have the cash too. They wouldn't accept a check.

After Tanglewood mansion burned father bought the ranch from my grandparents and built a typical ranch house on it. It was divided into two parts. The front was a two story frame structure built in an L shape. This was the family living quarters. Then back of this and separated from it by a wide hall was the dining room, kitchen, and the sleeping quarters for the cowboys. (which we called bunk house). We still called the place Tanglewood.

Ed Close, an Irishman, was our ranch foreman. He was a fine cowboy and a very high class gentleman. He now lives in Texas. He has a ranch there of his own and is doing good.

Tanglewood ranch was known far and near as the ranch of hospitality. Father always delighted in feeding every one that came there. Cattlemen from everywhere would visit the ranch and they were always either prospective buyers or sellers when they came.

Our kitchen range was never cold, day or night. We kept two cooks. One worked days and the other worked nights. There was always hot food if anyone came. Our ranch was also noted for the barbecues father would give. The old barbecue pits can still be seen there around where the ranch house stood.

Every month or two father would give a big barbecue and people would come for miles to those barbecues and to trade. He would make a kind of a stew that was rather noted too. He used the livers, necks,

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and all the trimmings of beef. Put it into a big wash pot and cook it. We used lots of sage and spices in it and we ate it red hot with pepper and it was a real dish. They called it Sun-of-a-gun.

In 1895 the year I was born, my father sold all his cattle for \$200,000.00 and re-invested that money in cattle and the winter of 1900 we had a big sleet and the coldest weather, perhaps, that was ever known in this country. Almost all of his cattle froze to death. He lost hundreds of head in that freeze.

Our family consisted of--

-Julia--which is myself.

Cid Junior.

alter--who is assistant of the First National Bank
at Wagoner.

Martha.

Finnie.

We all got allotments but Finnie. We used to tease her and call her the Little White Trash.

My grandmother died in 1901 and my grandfather died in 1911. They are both buried in the Wagoner cemetery.

My father was also noted for the wonderful cured hams he always had. He was the man that promoted the building of the packing plant at North Muskogee or at what is now Okay, Oklahoma. He made a deal with Swift and Company to stock and operate the plant and after he

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had erected the building and they had opened the plant the Katy Railroad Company wanted so much to build a spur up to the plant that they decided it wouldn't pay and abandoned it. When our ranch house burned we moved to Wagoner.

My father promoted and helped to build the levees and to straighten the Verdigris river to keep it from overflowing. I remember he worked almost day and night for a long time on that river project.

About 1906 father drilled one among the first oil wells ever to be drilled around Okay. It turned out to be a salt water well and it is still flowing.

My father died August 7, 1916. He is buried in the Wagoner cemetery.

I got my first schooling in a little schoolhouse my grandfather built. He built it so he could send his children to school and also for the benefit of the neighbor children. Later I attended Spaulding College at Muskogee and Tidley College, a school for girls at Sherman, Texas.

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