

GARLAND, JOSIAH - INTERVIEW.

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Wilson, L. W. - Investigator.
Indian Pioneer History - S-149.
January 24, 1938.

Interview with Mr. Josiah Garland.
Choctaw Reservation
Wilburton, Oklahoma.

I was born on San Bois Creek in the Indian Territory in 1876 and will be sixty-two years of age February 10th.

I am a fullblood Choctaw and I live on the Choctaw Reservation near the town of Wilburton.

My place of birth could be located today as being in Haskell County, near the town of Spiro or the old town of Skulleyville.

My parents were Peter and Margaret Garland who came first from Mississippi to Arkansas and then to the Indian Territory before the Civil War.

Peter Garland, my father, fought with the Southern army. My mother, Margaret, during the war refuged to Red River. They were reunited after the Civil War at the old steam-boat landing on the Arkansas River, known as Skulleyville.

My parents were just poor Indians farmers who had been moved from state to state and then to the Indian Territory, and then Father had to go to the white man's war, and

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at the time I was born, and when I was large enough to go to school, my chances of getting an education were very poor. I did learn the war Father was in with the white men was to free the negroes from slavery and they were freed and on account of my being unable to get an education I am here on this reservation and I am a slave instead of the negroes.

I was about eight years old when I first attended a little log school on Sans Bois Creek. I had to go four miles to school. Part of the time I walked and sometimes I rode horseback on a little pony which Father had caught on the Wild Horse Prairie in the Sugar Loaf Mountain and had broken to ride.

I learned to read and write some. We had no grades like Beatrice, my daughter, talks about these days. Some of the children went to school until they could read in a book called a history. When they got so they could read in this book the Superintendent of the Choctaw Tribe would send them back east to the states to College. Just children of the better to do people got to go and get an education.

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tion. I never went to any other school and not to that one much because Father died and Mother and we kids had to work to make a living.

I was never out of the Choctaw Nation but I have associated with the Cherokees and the Chickasaws who came into our neighborhood and we lived about as they did in the early days.

People with money and an education lived better than we did. They had nice board houses, cook stoves, store bought clothes that were the best, lots of horses and cattle but we had a log cabin with a fireplace. We cooked in the fireplace with pots and iron skillets. Sometimes we had pans to eat out of and sometimes we just ate out of the pots and skillets.

We raised a little corn and ground it up in a mortar and made meal and skinned corn or hominy grits. Our meats were wild game of nearly all kinds and there was lots of it as well as wild hogs.

Our horses were wild horses that were caught and broken to ride and work. Our farm tool was a plow with just one shovel like a Georgia Stock today. We made the stock and ..

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handles. All we had to buy was a long iron rod and the iron shovel. We dragged brush over the ground for a harrow at first and finally made an A-harrow from the fork of a tree. The teeth for this harrow were bought at Tamaha. We caught lots of varmints and animals, skinned them and traded the pelts for sugar and coffee and wearing apparel.

A ferry crossed the Arkansas River at Tamaha. It was first a cable ferry and later a steam ferry. The railroad used to carry the mail to Vian and then a man drove a stage, carrying passengers and mail from Vian to Tamaha and had to cross on this ferry.

In the Blaine bottom down stream from Tamaha there was a ferry that crossed the Arkansas River, which was run by a man named Foreman. If I remember he was part Cherokee Indian. The first steel bridge I ever saw I helped to build. It was across the Sans Bois Creek on the old road from Skulleyville to McAlester.

Through this part of the country, when I was a boy, there were only two main roads, of importance. All other roads were just trails from neighbor to neighbor. These two main roads were the Texas road to Texas and the road going to McAlester.

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Towns in those days were miles and miles apart. I know of the road south to Texas but I lived near the road to McAlester. This road branched off the Texas Road out of Skulleyville about five miles and ran west across Sans Bois Creek. A good old friend of mine of the name of Charlie Newberry, a fullblood Choctaw, ran a store on Sans Bois Creek. The bridge I helped to build was near his store. This road went on to Fort Sill but I never went farther than McAlester. Mr. McAlester ran the store at McAlester.

I have seen lots of steamboats on the Arkansas River and remember when we would hear them whistle how we would all go to the river to see them go past. After I grew up I used to go down to Tamaha and watch the steamboats unload. I remember the names of some of them, the Jennie Mae, Lucy Walker and the Border City. There were others but I have forgotten their names.

They say Indians are funny and I guess we are. I am not so bad as I used to be. I used to just see things and never ask questions and that's why I can't tell you more about the steamboats.

The Kansas City Southern railroad built through the Choctaw Nation in 1894. It was first called the Split Log

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Railroad. The Choctaw, Oklahoma, and Gulf Railroad, now the Rock Island, was built about the same year. The Midland Valley was built in 1904 or at least it was before statehood.

I grew up to do nothing but work, hard work, and when the coal mines began to open up throughout the country, I thought I would like to work in them. My first job was water-boy, on a strip pit at a place which is now Krebs. Strip pits gave way to underground work and I got a job pushing little cars back under the ground, to be loaded with coal by the miners, then taken to the "lift" or elevator. Then as mines began to develop more and more I became a full fledged miner and worked at McAlester, Krebs, Alderson, Haileyville, Hartshorne and Wilburton.

The mines, in the last few years, do not operate enough for one to make a living at the business and beside my age is against me and I can't do the work as I used to. I got so I could not provide food, clothing and shelter for myself and family and applied to the Indian Agency for help and they moved me here on the reservation three years ago.*

We have plenty to eat, a good house to live in, but the bedding and clothing given us has been worn out by the United States Army and the C.C.C. boys.

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My old lady there gets all the clothes she has from selling eggs and a chicken now and then and wearing what men's clothes she can. My wife is ashamed to go to town and my daughter is ashamed to go to the town school because she has no clothes and I don't blame her. She is through school here at the reservation and I guess this ends her learning.

*Note: Not an Indian Reservation but a number of homes built on Choctaw lands from funds secured through the IECW for worthy full-bloods. -Ed.