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INDEX CARDS

Choctaw Nation  
Tribe-Choctaw  
Indian Removal  
District Government  
Doakville  
Choctaw Constitution  
Indian Traders  
School-Goodland  
Spencer Academy  
Witch Killing  
Federal Court, Paris, Texas

Hazel B. Greenes.  
Field Worker.

417

Interview with O. L. Blanche  
Field Clerk U. S. Indian Service.  
Hugo, Oklahoma.

My father, I'm not sure just what his name was, El or LeBlanchois. His signature was hard to read.

Lyman G. LeBlanchois (Missionary) was about one half Choctaw and half French. He was born in Mississippi in 1800. He attended a college in Kentucky first, then went to Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. While he was still there his people (the Choctaws) were removed from Mississippi to the Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory. A friend, Joseph P. Folsom, also from Dartmouth College followed. I don't know exactly how they came, but they tell me they walked the most of the way. Then he went back to Mississippi. He didn't like it here. He was in Mississippi when <sup>the</sup> Civil War started, serving in Confederate Army as a Lieutenant under General Cooper, who, they tell me, had been an Indian Agent. I don't remember his first name.

When the Choctaws came to this country, the Choctaw Nation was divided into three Districts. This district right here at Hugo was Pushmataha, and the chief was named Stephen Hobart. He was chief ever since I know anything, elected again and again, till he died. Then Johnson Baker served as chief till tribal laws went out. East of Kiamishi river was

- 2 -

Apukshinubbi District, Captain Nonnemontubbee was chief. He was a temperance leader, and good man.

Then they had a Principal Chief, elected from time to time. Each district was separate government, Chiefs and Lighthorseman. No capital, no certain places to meet for council, just from time to time meet at different place.

I don't know what year it was they begun to discuss the abolishment of District government and put under new form of government. And did, and wrote the Skulleyville constitution for one government to provide for officers just like now. Then came two factions, These chiefs file budget to pay their salaries. Government refused and request settlement among themselves. Chiefs refuse to give up old set-up. The other crowd refused the old way. So that started trouble. I don't know by what authority, but one Tandy Walker called a Constitutional Convention. The Majority favored to meet at Doakville. They quarreled and fussed over the constitution.

When Joseph P. Folsom saw trouble was brewing, he sent for his friend, my father in Mississippi. He came and was at this convention at Doakville. Father dictated and Joseph P. Folsom wrote ~~the constitution of the Choctaw Nation~~ like we have for Oklahoma today. Father didn't get credit for it. He didn't want any credit for it.

After we were all whipped, Choctaws had lost their country and were at the mercy of the United States government, the Choctaw Council met and decided to confer with the U. S. Government and settle at any cost, if we can just save homes. The Choctaws ceded seven million acres of land to settle war debts. That is the Wichita National park. And some other parks in the state. And they wrote a new treaty of 1866. That one provided for allotment of land. Also provided to either adopt slaves as citizen and give each 40 acres of land or pay each one \$1000.00. So we adopted the negroes as citizens and gave him 40 acres of land.

Suit started soon after arrival. Settlement or payment was made in 1889. Individual Choctaws sued the U. S. Government for losses and damage done them and property lost by them by being brought from Mississippi. Some didn't sue because, "He didn't lost nothing". They called it the "net proceed payment" Total amount paid to Choctaws about two and one half million dollars, after cost of attorneys and other expenses of suits had been deducted. They always sued for twice the amount of losses.

- 4 -

Julius Hass was a fur, hide and snake root dealer at Atoka. I don't know why he cashed the checks for them but he did. Maybe he charged a per cent, but anyway he had a room, with a fenced off place, and behind that fence he had tables with sacks of gold coins and gold coins poured out on them, Mostly twenty dollar coins. Men with guns guarded that gold. And a man to cash the checks was behind the fence, at a window.

I was about two months old when my father died. We lived on his home place somewhere on Long Creek, northeast of Goodland station, somewhere. I just can't locate that place. Father had gone on a trip. I was a young baby. Mother did not hear from him for a long time. No post office nor telephone those days. No way to hear except by messenger. Finally he came home. He had been in Fort Smith, sick with pneumonia, and soon as he got better he rode horseback from Fort Smith to our home. He took relapse and died in few days. He was 77 years old.

I was my mother's only child. She married again years after father's death, but no children. I think my father had been married before, and maybe other children. I don't know. White folks corrupt my name into Blanche instead of what my father, signed, La, or El Blanche.

When I was seven I stayed with some folks close to the Goodland Mission School and walked the two miles to school one term. We moved to Atoka, stayed there two years, then to Bennington. When I was ten I went to Spencer Academy which was about two miles of what is now Kent, one-half term. Then our funds expired. I went home and didn't return the next fall, but did the first of the year, but sometime in the Spring I went home. I was sick.

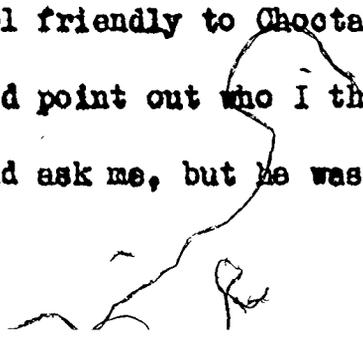
Spencer Academy burned in about 1900 the second time, and was not rebuilt. A student, Pat Springs, was burned to death in the fire.

The summer I left Spencer I was about eleven years old. I was so eager for education that I left home and left the Choctaw Nation. I got with some white folks named Shaw four miles from Dannison, did farm work in exchange for board and laundry and walked four miles with the children of the family to town to school. I graduated at fifteen. Then I went to Austin College at Sherman but quit in 1896, when I went to Paris, Texas, where I worked around the Courts as an Interpreter for Choctaws who had cases in the

- 5 -

courts. It was while I was still working around the courts in Paris, that Solomon Hotema was arrested and charged with murder in connection with the famous "Witch Killing". He was a distant cousin of mine and first and last I guess I spent \$10,000.00 trying to save him. He was arrested and thrown in jail about two weeks before Court was to convene at Atoka. His case was first to come up and he was convicted, and sentenced to be hanged. We made appeal, We, Choctaw friends of his, hired Craven and Coon of Ft. Smith to defend him. We tried every scheme to gain time. We had the case re-argued, and re-tried a half dozen times or more, and every time he was stuck. Then we asked for change of venue and the case was carried to Paris, Texas, to United States Federal Court, and all this time he was in jail at one place or another, without bond.

I had lived around Paris long time. And knew lots of people, but I just traveled all 'round to the little towns in surrounding country getting acquainted with more. I wanted people to feel friendly to Choctaws. I tried to select the jury. I'd point out who I thought would be all right when they would ask me, but he was stuck again. The sentence was upheld.



- 7 -

Another cousin of ours had been in Spanish-American War with President Roosevelt. So two of us Choctaws went to see him to appeal personally to commute the sentence to life imprisonment. The President would not commit himself till after we went back to home to wait. And in meantime he was to be hanged at 2:30. Then the word came just in time to wire to Paris to save his neck.

About two years later he died in Atlanta, Georgia, penitentiary and was buried there.

Note by field worker: I have reproduced the language and statements of Mr. O. L. Blanche as nearly as possible.