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BIGBY, WALTER.

INTERVIEW

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INTERVIEW

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Elizabeth Ross
Investigator
January 13, 1938.

Interview with Walter Bigby
Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

John A. Parris was born in the year 1865, in the old Tahlequah District. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Green Parris. His mother was a Miss Parker.

Mr. Parris is the oldest living former printer and pressman once employed in the office of the Cherokee Advocate. He spent several years in the national printing office. In 1884, he was among other young men who worked in the mechanical department of the Cherokee Advocate. The office was then in an old red brick building, probably the oldest building of its kind in Tahlequah. Originally used as a courthouse, it was built some years before the beginning of the Civil War, but it was not used as a printing office until after the completion of the brick capitol building ⁱⁿ 1870.

The Cherokee Advocate, when Mr. Parris worked in the office, was a large newspaper, four pages of eight columns each. There were news items, articles, and comment in both the English and Cherokee languages. A large space was devoted to descriptions of marks and brands appearing upon stray livestock, such as cattle and horses. In each of the nine districts

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of the Cherokee Nation there were horses, cattle, hogs and in some instances, sheep and goats for which no owner could be found. The sheriffs of the districts were required by law to make lists of such animals, accurately describing their ear marks and their brands. Such lists were then furnished the editor of the Cherokee Advocate, who had them set up in type and printed in the columns of the national newspaper. Owners, upon proving the advertised animals were their property, received them from the sheriff of the district in which the owner resided. But upon failure of any person to claim or prove claim to livestock, the animals described were sold to the highest bidder by the sheriff. The lists of estray property often filled a page of the Cherokee Advocate. The lists were set in minion type, which being rather small, was a size greatly disliked by the printers, who schemed and planned to have the setting up of the lists performed by some rather new printer, or by one who was learning the art of setting type. A new "devil" or apprentice, for instance, often found himself engaged in setting the minion type while the other printers set type of a different size.

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John A. Parris was a strong and active young man in the eighties of the last century. Beside his typesetting duties he often served as pressman. The "Country Campbell printing press" was equipped with a large power wheel in the side of which had been set a wooden handle. There was no steam, gas, or electric power, of course, in the old printing office, and Mr. Parris turned the big wheel by hand. Without pause he turned the wheel until an entire edition had been printed, after which the papers were folded by hand and made ready for mailing.

After leaving the office of the Cherokee Advocate many years ago, Mr. Parris lived in various sections, but within recent time returned to Tahlequah where he now resides. He is my brother-in-law.