

INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM JONES

FIELD WORKER GUS HUMMINGBIRD

April 27, 1937

William Jones, a full blood Cherokee Indian, was born in Flint District Cherokee Nation, which is now the southern part of Adair County, Oklahoma, December 2, 1878. He was the fifth child of a family of ten of Reed Jones and Rose Jones, natives of the Cherokee Nation.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION.

William, better known as Bill, was raised in poverty. His father operated a small farm on Little Lee's Creek near Salem school house which is now Belle school.

Bill spent most of his boyhood days as other Indians did, hunting and fishing with other Indians. There were plenty of game to be found—deer, turkey and wild pigeons were abundant. Fish filled the creeks—no game laws to prohibit from hunting.

Bill went to school at Salem for a few months to an old teacher named Gott, He did not learn anything, his father did not encourage him to go much for his older brother died and he was needed to help to make a living at home. The school building was of log construction, wooden benches, and no windows—only wooden shutters, which were thrown open in order to get light. It was a very uncomfortable place in the cold days.

However, Bill learned to read and write.

FARMING AND CUSTOMS.

They farmed each year- raised a few acres of corn, beans and pumpkins, which were the main crops among the fullbloods at that time. They raised these three crops more than others because they could be used for food in so many different ways.

The older Cherokees were believers in signs. They usually watched the first twelve days of the year, which they said represented the twelve months of the year. They knew from these days when to break land and how deep and when to plant corn and to fertilize it. They usually broke land with a homemade plow, laying the rows cross-ways or checked.

TRADING POINTS AND MILLS.

The nearest trading point was Evansville, Ark, which was eleven miles away. The merchant's name was Jim Willis and he also owned a grist mill.

The Cherokees went to mill horseback. In case of bad weather bread was made at home on pestle bowls.

MEDICINE.

Mr. Jones has been told that immediately after the Civil War all kinds of communicable diseases spread throughout the Indian country. White doctors were scarce-the only white

doctor during that time was a Doctor Johnson who lived at Greersburg, Ark, a small village about two miles north of the present town of Evansville Ark.

Black smallpox, as the Cherokees called the disease, spread about 1835. Many people died from this disease,. So many people being sick of this disease was what started so many small graveyards. Mr. Jones has helped bury as many as four persons per day. Dr. Johnson played the good Samaritan among the Cherokees during these times- it has been said by many old people that he served the public without any pay.

He was loved by all who knew him and he never lost any money by his kindness.

Doctor Johnson was aided in his care of the sick during these times by several Indian doctors. Among these was Matt Bird, a fullblood.

GOVERNMENT.

The Cherokee Nation was divided into districts -nine in all. Each district elected its own officers every two years. A chief was also elected. This was usually the most important face, for he had much power. He was the only man who could

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save a man's life after he was convicted to hang.

The acts of a certain chief and the officers of a certain district were the main cause of the Indian Territory being governed by the laws of the state of Arkansas, for several years.

POLITICS.

Political Parties were organized in the Cherokee Nation immediately after the Civil War. The main parties at that time were the National and the Downing Party.

The National Party was the group of Cherokees that remained loyal with the Union during the Civil War.

The Downing Party were those Cherokees that favored the south. It was this division of Cherokees that caused the treaty of 1866, near Gore, in the Illinois District.