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Billie Byrd,
Journalist
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Interview with Dave Lewis,
Henryetta Oklahoma.

"Grandma," as this old woman was known, was only one of the old Indian women from the old country and was among the number who came through days of sorrow and tears, beginning almost with the first steps taken from their homes and leading them to the crudely built stockades where other Indians were kept, until the real journey was taken up when the time came. I have heard old Jennetta Jacobs tell some of "Grandma's" stories. "Grandma" enjoyed telling them after she had made her home in the new country, but she was never without the things that had become dear to her heart in the old country, she said.

That was why it was the custom for "Grandma" to make her life no different from that she had always lived before her move and she tried to make her new home and life just as she had lived back in the old country. She could not forget her early life and the everyday tasks always brought memories of the old home.

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Each morning, "Grandma", before doing anything else, would go to the corn crib and get an apronful of corn, return to the house and sit on the porch of her house and shell the corn to feed her flock of chickens. She never failed to do this and while the chickens would crowd around her feet, waiting for the first handful of corn to be thrown to them, "Grandma" would talk and murmur to them as though they were children and would fuss around as if in answer to her questions of how they spent the night, if they slept well, if they had been cold and she called them each by name. Each of the chickens was known to "Grandma" and the feeding would not start or be complete unless each one was accounted for. "Grandma" always told that this daily duty which was never neglected brought memories of her old home, as that was the way she had done and the way she had lived; and she could never change her way, even after she had come to a new country.. The memory of those chickens with that old home life remained with her and always brought tears to her eyes as she told of it and that she could never forget it.

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I have in my possession a pot of about a quart capacity and although like any regular old pot, it is small and has the usual three small legs. It is one object that was used and owned by older Indians prior to the Civil War, although I do not know its origin as to whether it was brought from Alabama or not. Jennetta Jacobs has related the story of the service it gave to one Indian man, whose name is unknown, in the Civil War time. The Indian wife fixed up a bundle for the man when he was going to enlist, with provisions consisting of cured beef, dried in the sun which would keep for months at a time, corn pounded real fine for making bread, corn pounded into different sizes to be cooked in different ways. All these things, including the little pot were tied up into a bundle.

When the man returned after the war, he came walking home with the little pot under his arm. He was worn out from loss of sleep and fatigue but he was putting on in the same spirit as when he had left his home. He told that he had seen the real life of a man but that the pot and provisions given to him had done him a third of the service in the war, stating

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that if that hadn't been done he would probably never ^{have} returned. He told of how he had been forced at times to cook his meals with the use of the little pot and the provisions. The pounded corn would be doughed in it and shaped flat to be cooked on the coals, making bread for him and sometimes others. There is a small piece that has been chipped off at the rim of the small pot and he told of how that pot had saved his life by being the target of a shell intended for him. So many of the Indian men who enlisted in the army did not leave their homes unprepared and without provisions. It was at the risk of life if any man or Indian youth was found at home so they felt safer doing service as a soldier.

I have never heard of an Indian having operated a steamboat on a river, although they have built and been in charge of bridges and ferries, but my grandfather of Kufaula town, Jackson Lewis, used to tell of having operated a steamboat on the Arkansas River to haul supplies from Fort Smith to Fort Gibson while in service for the Confederates. He would tell of how his boat received hails of bullets from either side of the river from

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the guns of the scattered men of the Union. He said they would sometimes go through with their boat or they would sometimes return to Fort Smith, where more men would board for protection to the boat. Jackson Lewis had come from Alabama as a small boy.