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Gomer Gower,
Field Worker.
Sept. 16, 1937.

An Interview With Mrs. Joe LeFlore,
Route #2, Spiro, Oklahoma.

Joe LeFlore, (feminine) was born at Scullyville, in the old Indian Agency building, on January 3rd, 1872, and was the daughter of David Joe and Rebecka McCurtain.

Her father, David Joe McCurtain, died when she was but two years of age.

Her mother, Rebecka McCurtain, nee Krebbs, sometime after the death of her husband, David McCurtain, married Edward Lanier, a member of a very prominent Indian family which was identified with the history of the old Indian Territory.

As a girl, the young woman, now Mrs. LeFlore, attended the New Hope Female Academy over a period of years. She also attended college at Quitman, near Conway, Arkansas.

The New Hope Female Academy was established by an act of the Choctaw General Council, passed in 1842, in which it was designated as the Female Branch of the Fort Coffee Academy at Fort Coffee, and "to be located in the same vicinity, by a committee to be appointed for that purpose by the General Council".

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In compliance with the terms of that act, the committee selected as the site of the Fankle Academy, a point about three-fourths of a mile northeast of Scullyville and about five miles distant from Fort Coffee, the site of the Fort Coffee Academy for boys.

In the main, both these academies were supported by tribal funds; however, it appears, that when these funds were not sufficient to meet the demands of the schools, the Board of Missions for the Methodist Church supplemented them with contributions. They thus became to be known as joint Choctaw-Methodist institutions.

Little, if anything, can be learned from ex-scholars, now living, regarding the first years of the existence of the New Hope Academy. However, it is well authenticated that at the outbreak of the Civil War and for several years prior thereto, the Academy was in charge of a Mr. James McKinney, a Methodist Missionary and preacher. It was closed soon after the commencement of hostilities and the buildings were used by the Federal forces as quarters for the officers and ⁰men during the period of the war. It did not reopen for students until the early seventies,

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when a Mr. Methvin became its superintendent. It then remained in continuous operation until the Fall of 1896, at which time it burned to the ground and was not rebuilt. However, a new academy was established at Tuskahoma to take its place.

The establishment of the academy near Scullyville in that early period, 1842, no doubt met the demands and conveniences of a majority of the people at that time, but, as the years passed, the center of population moved westward and southward with the ultimate result that a more centrally located point than that of Scullyville, which was in almost the extreme northeast corner of the Choctaw Nation, was selected as the site for the new school. Hence its establishment at Tuskahoma.

During its most prosperous years at Scullyville the enrollment of scholars averaged around one hundred and fifty. All scholars residing at a distance were provided with books, tuition and board free of cost to the parents, and every consideration was given the matter of religious as well as secular training of those who were thus parted from the parental roof.

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The establishment of this and six other splendid schools and their maintenance over a long period of years, reflects great credit upon those composing the General Council at that time and attests their desire to give coming generations of Choctaws better scholastic advantages than those which they themselves had enjoyed.

The old site of the school is now ornamented by a neat stucco bungalow facing Highway 271.

It is not often that people are permitted to live their entire lives within comparatively hailing distance of the site of the school which they attended in their youth, as the subject of this sketch has done since her marriage to Felix LeFlore in 1897. A sense of regret at its abandonment was discerned in her features while she recounted the many happy days she passed under its benign influence.