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Etta D. Mason, Interviewer
9-25-37

Interview with Charles Stewart Lewis,
Tushka, Oklahoma.

The period following the Civil War in the Indian Territory found the people to some extent prosperous. There were no slaves and the people had to depend on their own labor and resources; therefore, the ranges were restocked with cattle, sheep and hogs. The fields were planted with grain and farming began to be profitable.

White settlers came in increasing numbers, some as tenants, some as mixed-blood citizens and with the coming of the whites, cotton began to be one of the leading crops.

Also all the religious denominations resumed their work; churches and missions were established and with the establishment of religious activities, the establishment of schools and seminaries followed.

In 1883, the Court Jurisdiction was divided between Fort Smith, Arkansas; Wichita, Kansas; and Paris, Texas.

Many of the outlaws were going under assumed names and many of them were executed without ever making themselves known.

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The newspapers of that time carried columns of advertising from ranchmen who used this method to make known their respective brands. The news reflected the life of the period. The editorials were frank and outspoken denouncing politics and practices in the conduct of tribal affairs which did not meet the approval of the editors.

Editors were not usually friendly to an opponent's paper. At times these editors became very sarcastic towards each other in their editorials. Many arguments were carried on through the papers under assumed names. I remember two of these names, "Sleeping Rabbit" and "Woodpecker". These arguments were very beneficial, causing the readers to think as well as giving them entertainment.

In the schools there was always a round of entertainment. During the winter there were school exhibitions, theatricals, and parties. During the summer there were picnics, camping-out parties, hunting and fishing. These entertainments brought the Indians of the different tribes and the white settlers together on friendly terms and made the relations between all the Indians and all the whites more endurable.

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But in spite of the churches and missions, there was much outlawry in the Indian Territory at that time. The illicit whisky peddler was the principal cause of the lawlessness and then, too, renegades, outlaws and fugitives from justice from other states regarded the Indian Territory as a place of refuge. These outlaws rode over the country armed and this practice caused other men to arm themselves because usually if two enemies met only one rode away.

There were no courts in Indian Territory till 1889; so all white criminals and Indians charged with offences against the government were tried before the United States District Court at Fort Smith, Arkansas.