

INDEX CARDS:

Creek Nation
Tallahassee Mission
Ranching
C. n. Turner
Negro Freedman
Creek Pasture Law
Creek Legislature
Dawes Commission
International Council
Tams Bixby
Allotment

PHILIP A. LEWIS
Route 1, Box 58
Muskogee, Oklahoma
2nd. Interview - June 29, 37.
Jas. S. Buchanan, Field worker
Indian-Pioneer History.

At the age of 18 I left the Tullahassee mission and went to work for a prominent cattle buyer of the Indian Territory in those days by the name of Col. Moore. I bought cattle for Col. Moore and delivered them to the Sims Miller ranch on Mingo Creek near Tulsa.

* There were no banks in the Territory in those days to handle the financial business for the cattle men, and I have ridden on cattle buying trips with Col. Moore when he would have as much as \$5.000 in his saddle pockets. I worked for Col. Moore two years. Leaving Col. Moore, I went to buying cattle for C. W. Turner of Muskogee. I worked for Mr. Turner one year.

During the three years I was buying cattle for Col. Moore and Mr. Turner I saved my money and invested it in young cattle when I could get them at a good price and soon established a fair

(2)

size herd which I kept on my mother's place which was situated west of where the town of Porter now stands. In 1890 there was a very severe winter in the Indian Territory which caused the loss of the most of my herd.

In 1889 I was married to Elzora Fulson, the daughter of Lewis and Bettie Fulson. Two children were born to us as follows;

Edna (Lewis) Fuller, born February 7, 1891.

Melvina (Lewis) Ward, born October 24, 1893.

Our daughters have been given every educational advantage we could give them. They attended the Lincoln University at Jefferson City, Mo. Western University, Quindoro, Kans. Howard University, Washington, D. C., and post courses at Columbia University, New York City, N. Y. Melvina, the younger daughter, attended the Conservatory of Music at Chicago, finishing in that school.

We lived on a farm until after the girls were of age, and when they were not in school, they were

(3)

taught to work on the farm. They have helped me break wheat land, making a hand at the plow as well as performing the work of a harvest hand at harvest time or any other work that was to be done.

CREEK PASTURE LAW.

In the early 90s the Creek Council passed a law which was known as the "pasture law" which permitted the leasing and fencing of large tracts of pasture land by large cattle companies and made it prohibitive for a citizen to take a claim on any land that was held under a pasture lease without the consent of the cattle companies. The rank and file of the Creek people resented this condition and there was much dissatisfaction.

In 1895 I was elected to the Creek legislature on the platform of opposing the pasture law. The influence of the cattle companies prevented the repeal of the pasture law in that session of the legislature. However, there was such a protest made against the control of the nation by a few wealthy

(4)

cattlemen that the then newly originated Dawes commission gave this matter their first attention. Due to previous treaties, it was necessary for the Dawes Commission to make a superseding treaty for the abolition of the Creek government, make a complete roll of Creeks and freedmen to determine their citizenship and make allotments of land which would automatically destroy the land monopoly by the cattlemen.

June 26, 1895, the International Council of the Five Civilized Tribes met at Eufaula to exchange views upon the proposition of the Dawes Commission to allot the lands of the Indians to the individual members of the different tribes. The Cherokee Nation was represented by L. B. Bell, G. W. Benge, W. A. Duncan and Jacob Jackson; the Chickasaw Nation was represented by R. H. McLish; the Creek delegates were Roley McIntosh, John R. Goat, Esparhechee, Robert Stewart and A. L. Posey; the Seminole representatives were J. F. Brown,

(5)

Okohan Harjo and J. N. Kinkekee. This council unanimously rejected the idea of the Dawes Commission determining citizenship for the tribes. Isparhechar, Principal Chief of the Creeks, contended that the Creek Council had the only right to determine citizenship of the tribe; therefore the Creeks refused to recognize the authority of the Dawes Commission to act on such cases.

In 1897 President Wm. McKinley appointed Tans Bixby as Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes. It was his duty with the Commission to make a treaty with the Indians for the purpose of abolishing tribal governments, establishing their citizenship and arranging for the allotment of lands. Mr. Bixby made several efforts to meet the Creek Council but they would not grant him a conference, or in any way give him a chance to explain the plans of the Commission.

I felt, through courtesy to the government, the Commission should be heard. I wrote a resolution recommending a joint session of both houses

(6)

of the legislature in order that the commission be heard. This resolution was passed, conference arranged and the commission was heard and terminated with gratifying results. During this session a committee was appointed to meet and negotiate a treaty with the government for the purpose in question.

The Dawes Commission was given power to make a tribal roll of all citizens of the Creek Nation. Knowing that many of the citizens were illiterate, I gave my service as council for the Creeks at the Commission headquarters during their registration in order that they might be properly identified to enter their names on the roll.

There was a faction of the Creeks that resented the action of the committee and the agreement with the Commission and were reluctant in registration and through such action many citizens were left off the roll. It was for this reason that I gave my services that all my people would be enrolled. The time spent in this service gave me a fair knowledge

(7)

of all Freedmen that were entitled to enrollment.

After months of such service, Philip Hopkins, chief law clerk of the commission, asked me by whom was I employed. I informed him that I was not employed by anyone and that I was giving my service in the interest of my people. Mr. Hopkins took the matter up with Mr. Bixby and had me employed by the government and placed me in full charge of the Colored roll. At the completion of the roll I issued identification cards to each Freedman for their allotment, which completed that service.

Due to the resignation of the superintendent of the Creek orphanage I was appointed to finish his term in 1901. After I was assigned to that position and served about six months, I was transferred to the Tallahassee Mission and placed in charge of the Creek Freedmen boarding school.

After serving three years at the Tallahassee

(8)

Freedman school I was called to Okmulgee to use my influence with the Creek council in an effort for the ratification of a supplemental treaty with the tribe, which was successfully passed. I then retired to private life.

Phillip A. Lewis.