

TIGER, R. M. (MRS.)

INTERVIEW

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BILLY BYRD  
Investigator  
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Interview with Mrs. R. M. Tiger, aged 79, Okemah.  
North 11th Street.  
(Mrs. Rebecca M.)

I was a young white girl of about fourteen years of age when I first came into what is now Oklahoma but it was then the Indian Territory and that must have been sixty-five years ago.

The movement for peace was carried on in the Indian country. I remember instances when the events took place or the most important steps the early people took in making the advancement of civilization in the Territory and that was both of whites and Indians. The majority of the people were working towards the giving of equal rights to all and privileges to none, giving satisfaction to all so there could be peace.

Some of the Indians would just pass away the time lying around and taking no interest in the moves of the councils held by the older Indians in the interest and on the behalf of the younger generation. It was those who had seen and known what had come to

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pass who were spending their lives in speaking for and working for the good of the race.

My husband, G. W. Tiger, was a full-blood Creek. His interest also was in the betterment of his people; he spoke for and lived for what he thought was right. He and I seemed to have the same attitude, same mind, took interest in the same things and cherished the same ideals. It was still while he was alive that he saw many of the things he had worked towards and fought for, take shape and materialize.

It seemed that there were as many cattle men as there were cattle in those days. They didn't seem to do any good for anyone except for themselves. They gave a lot of the people some trouble and inconvenienced them. The children's school life was hindered, checking the progress of the people. The schools were far apart and the distance for the children was often so far they missed a great part of the school term. The reason was because the cattlemen took up such a large area of land they fenced for their cattle and

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other people were not allowed to cross the pastures and many of the people were forced to make a trip many miles out of the way and were forced to go around the fenced property of the cattlemen.

For many miles the children walked around the pastures in the cold or rainy season, some few rode horses. Every child could not attend regularly. The cattlemen forbade anyone to cross the pastures as there were some of the cattle that were dangerous. Such men as McIntosh and O. U. Henry were owners of large pastures and lots of cattle. They were the ones permitting other ranchers outside of the Territory to bring in cattle and pasture on their places. These outsiders were from Texas and other places.

Mr. F. B. Severs of Muskogee and another by the name of Turner are only two more of the men that I can remember now but there were too many cattlemen to remember all their names. O. U. Henry and Tom Adams, a freedman, were cattlemen who were always on the lookout for a chance to buy and sell cattle.

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They were not too much of business men at that. These two men were told to undertake the task of returning with some of the Seminoles who were living in Mexico. Some of the Seminoles were brought back by them, others could not be persuaded to return. Those who returned to the Territory were given allotments as that was why they were wanted back.

From 1893 up to statehood in 1907, there was some body watching all the movements the cattlemen were making and the hindrances they were throwing in the progress which the early people were trying to make. The transportation of goods and trips to and from the trading posts and other points were made difficult by the fenced pastures. People had to go way out of the way to reach some distant point. Seeing these things, some of the far-seeing people thought they would some day stand up for the rights of the people.

G. W. Tiger attended the Asbury Mission School and went as far as the eighth grade. The end of his

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school days came when that school burned down. All at that time, of both whites or Indians, they were respected just as highly as a man would be respected if he had finished or was graduated from a university or college. My husband, G. W. Tiger, was that respected.

He did what he could for his race. He practiced law under the national law until the law of the United States took effect, serving as a judge at one time, served in the legislature fourteen years. It was during the time he served in the legislature that he remembered all the hard times of the early days and during one of the sessions, he spoke the word "equalization" along with the idea of cutting up land into equal parts. These words and thoughts brought much debate and was met with strong opposition.

Wash Grayson, one time Creek Chief, aided him in his stand and explained it to others. G. W. Tiger was well-known and never brought anything into the

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legislature that he thought or knew would not be carried out. When he brought up any question he wanted it to be settled or acted upon right at the time. His knowledge and explanation of anything he suggested never ended.

He talked for and was in favor of the establishment of the institutions. Such schools as those at Eufaula, Chilocco, one of the most noted of Indian schools in Kay County, several of the western Oklahoma Indian Schools are some that began from this move. He took a staunch stand for the sectionizing of the land and was an interpreter during the time the Dawes Commission was at work enrolling the Indians. He was an influential and good speaker for any cause he thought right, any cause which he thought would be of benefit to his people.

There was only one man he could not win over to his side nor change his mind on the subject- Chitto Harjo. The Dawes commission sent him on the mission to see what he could do with Chitto Harjo and this

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group but he reported that he could not do anything with them.

The schools were much different than they are now. Right now there are too many kinds of games to take a child's mind off his study. The early school didn't know of and have the many different kinds of amusements or allow the recesses. The schools were maintained for studying and learning what could be taught from inadequate material. The schools were poor as were the people.

The climate of those days was altogether different from now. Four or five months ago we should have had snow. Those things happened right at cotton picking time and the heavy snows and ice would cover the fields. People waited for the snow and ice to disappear and that in turn, as the snow and ice melted, was mud. It would be late in the winter or sometime early Spring before the work in the cotton fields could be completed. There were no strong and high winds as there are now.

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The streams were always full of clear sparkling water all the year round and those waters were just as healthful as any spring water. The men or the women would take their buckets and go after the water with everything so peaceful around them. They lived and followed a simple home life.

The deer could be found and would appear in herds.. Hogs were plentiful but there was a difference in the way a white and Indian hunted. The whites wouldn't and didn't kill one or two hogs at a time but they wanted as many as fifteen. They would just salt the meat and put it away for future use. The Indians would kill only one or two hogs at a time and never more. As they had a desire for meat they would go out and kill one. They preferred their meat fresh.

The deer was the greatest enemy to the people who planted gardens and planted corn both to whites and Indians. If the fence rails were not constructed high enough, it was no trouble for the deer to jump over the fence and into the fields for they could

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jump high. One place and the same place jumped over was always used by the deer and when this certain place was plugged or made higher, they would go along the railing fence until another place was found. It was not strange for people to drive out large herds from a corn field.

Once I had the experience of getting close to a herd of deer as I was going to a spring for water. Their water holes were near the spring where we obtained our drinking water. The deer happened to be standing near the spring as I reached it. They didn't run but stood around watching me intently as I dipped water from the spring. It seemed as if the deer would gaze in fascination at any woman who happened to be wearing a brightly colored kerchief on her head.