

INTERVIEW WITH TYRUS WASHINGTON
(THREE QUARTERS DELAWARE INDIAN)
PACKING HOUSE ROAD, S. E. MIAMI, OKLA
FIELD WORKER NANNIE LEE BURNS
April 28, 1937

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S NAMESPACE.

My Grandfather lived at Sandusky Ohio, but I do not know his name, I only know that he was in Washington, D. C. once and talking to President Washington, told him that he had a son and when being asked his name, he told him that he did not have a name and Washington told him to name him (the child) for him, so he did and my father was named George Washington. Later, the president sent my father a small suit of clothes.

After my people's removal to ~~Kansas~~ and from the time that I can remember, we lived at Fort Leavenworth, where my father owned and ran a big hotel. Many of the soldiers stayed with him. My father was a Government Interpreter and spoke and understood all languages except the Cherokee, which he said was the hardest to learn. The Government paid him \$200.00 per month in gold. In the Seminole War in Florida he was with General Taylor and the Indians would not shoot him for he wore a shawl over his head. They could see him and knew that he was Indian.

2.

John C.?

He accompanied (James) Fremont on his exploration of California in 1848. Fremont had seventy-five Indians with him and they suffered many hardships, lack of water, and at one time they were forced to kill their horses and mules and eat them and were at the last forced to eat even the leather skirts of their saddles. This hard trip, together with the strain on the eyes, caused my father to go blind shortly after, so after his return to Leavenworth, he made no more long trips, but he had lots of money. He had a shot sack full of gold pieces, fives, two and a half, tens, twenties, fifties. It was heavy. Also he had great stacks of greenbacks, tied in bundles so high (here Mr. Washington measured about three or four inches between his hands).

My father had two wives. My mother was a fullblood and there were six of us children by her, . My sister Sarah (married Rogers), Frank, John, Albert, Jim and myself. My mother's name was Quantidia. The children by the other were, Bill, Charley, Riley, Ed, and Julia.

We all lived in the big hotel.

LIFE AT THE FORT.

When I was little, the soldiers used to put up nickels and dimes on weeds or sticks for me to shoot at with an arrow.

The Fort was a big brick building surrounded by high rock fence and four gates in the fence. Sometimes the soldiers would tie blankets together and help each other over the fence, get out and steal geese, turkeys, lambs and pigs. Sometimes when the soldiers' time had come to quit, the officers would set barrels of whiskey in the halls and let them have a lot to drink and while they were drunk get them to sign again and in this way keep them.

Major Price was killed here. They opened the gates and when they were close they shot from the fort and killed him and many of them with him. They just dug a big round hole and put all that were killed in it. They gave my father Major Price's horse. It was a big black with three white legs and was shot through the nose. Later you could hear him breathe as he made a noise because of this hole.

Mr. Pratt was the Government agent and he gave my father much money, one day I saw him give him \$400.00 in gold.

MILITARY STAGS.

My father's hotel was where the hack started from on its trip to Fort Gibson. The horses were kept at our place and I was always around, watching them get ready to start

4

and watching to see them come in. They drove big mules to a long bodied hack rather than wagon and two soldiers always went, one to drive and the other sat in the hack with a musket and six-shooter. The mail was carried in big leather pouches with great locks and was just behind the driver. There were seats for passengers and they usually had some, seldom more than four.

I knew all the drivers and wanted to go with them, so one day, I got a chance, slipped away and went with them for one trip. We came across first to Fort Scott, Kansas, then to Baxter Springs, south of Baxter Springs we crossed Spring River, and the Neosho at the Mose Pooler Ford about two miles mostly east and a little south of Miami and at Trott Place, run by Bill and Harden, we changed horses again. In fact we changed at every stop. The horses were harnessed and ready for us and as soon as we drove up the men began to unhitch, the other horses were waiting and quickly hitched to our hack. While this was being done, the mail sack for that place was thrown out, more taken on, if any, and we were off on a run again. We drove all night. No stops to sleep. The Trott place

was just a long shed of a place and east of Afton, six miles south and east on Horse Creek.

From here to Fort Gibson, where our trip was ended, we rested and got the mail that had come in from Fort Smith and south and started homeward. The hack had a top on it and curtains that could be let down.

One thing before I leave the old Fort life! We had blacksmith shops and I remember the blacksmith here. His name was Mundy. I played around his shop. One day he was out hunting and he set his gun down, the trigger caught and it went off and shot his whole head off. Just nothing left of it.

REMOVAL TO INDIAN TERRITORY.

I was ten or eleven years old when we started here. We came in Government wagons and brought lots of stock with us. My father gave, I remember, \$400.00 for a big bay team before we started, paid for them in gold. We did not keep them long for after we settled on Grand River, they got into the lake and were both drowned. My father brought with him two yolks of steers, thirty-five horses and eighteen head of cattle. There were seventy-five of us and the agent Mr. Pratt came

6

with us. We had to stay at Humboldt, Kansas, a month because of the ice, which was breaking up-dangerous to cross, so we came here to Miami in the early spring. I do not know why we were brought to Grand River to live as most of the Delawares were settled around Bartlesville and Caney. I am a registered Delaware, whatever that means, and I am told that a sister and myself and perhaps one other are all the registered Delawares that are still living. We brought stoves, things for the houses, and implement to farm with. My father bought from Moses Alberty, land three miles south and four miles east of Fairland. There was an old field here about one-hundred acres, the fence had been burned and there were the skeletons of negroes laying around over it that had been killed in the war, I think by Standletie.

The bones did not have any flesh but were all still together. There were a lot more in a cave near by. Just a cave that forked this way (here he spread two fingers apart). We lead my father around and he picked up the bones and as he did not want the stock to get to them, he had a big hole dug and we put all of the bones in and covered them up.

My father built two log houses with fireplaces about

four hundred yards apart for his families. The one where he lived had a large room, two side rooms and an attic. Ours had a large room, one side room and attic and building in the yard that we used as a smoke-house and afterwards to cook in. I went to school very little, we did not think it necessary. Father had plenty of money, we did not think that it could ever give out. We began to farm, raising corn, Indian corn and wheat. The wheat was threshed by piling it out on sheets (They were big Government ones), then we would ride the horses round and round over it. The white Indian corn was called "Flour corn" and was ground into flour; also we would plait the stalks and leaves of this into great long strings. Ever see any? It also made fine roasting ears.

Having lots of horses and not much to do, we had a good time—would go to and have races near home, and fished with a government seine given my father by Mr. Pratt. Sometimes spiked them with an arrow. About four o'clock was the best time to fish as then you could see their backs in the water as they came up to feed. Later, we had fish traps. I have caught the sturgeon fish that weighed 150 pounds in trap.

At first, we would take a team and go to Baxter Springs and bring home a wagon load of food and supplies. We also got our mail there. Later, we sometimes went to Chetopa Kansas, and after Seneca, Missouri, was there we went there. We had our wheat ground at the grist mill nearby.

We had government doctors when I was small; however, after we came here our mother made a part of our medicine from roots and herbs that she would gather and fix.

Having no churches, we went to Caney to our stomp dance which was our way of worshipping. We danced around a big fire and had music made on drums and deer rattles around the legs, and sang. We had logs for seats.

The first church built near us was the Baptist Church in Sulphur Bend.

There were five white men who came with our tribe but they had families and were settled near us.

Mr. Pratt, the Agent often stayed with us for weeks at a time. Journeycake who lived on Lightning Creek was the first Chief and my father was the second Chief.

My mother and father's other wife died only about a year apart, so father moved us all to his house and got an Indian

woman to keep house for us. We only had her a year when father married a white woman named Julia Hall. She is still living or was a couple of years ago near Skiatook. I think she has married a Mexican.

My half-sister Julia I think is still living. She is 83 years old.

In the fall of 1880, I married Rachel Bowsman, a white woman who had come to Indian Territory when she was six years old, which would be in 1870. They had lived around Vinita and Afton. We were married by T. J. McGhee Sr., Clerk of the Cherokee Tribe, at his home on Cowskin Prairie at Dodge. His home burned before I got my marriage certificate so we have never had any. We went to live on a part of the old place on Grand River and had twelve children, eight of them grew up and seven are still living. We farmed and things went all right for a long time, then when I needed money, they told me to put mortgage on home, that it would not hurt it. I did and lost it, so I moved to Miami about fifteen years ago.

When they were building the railroad from Miami to Afton in 1900, I had three big mule teams and hauled supplies from Miami to Afton for the men. They had two camps, one on Coal Creek and one at the Sulphur Spring on Horse Creek.

I hauled potatoes, bacon, flour etc. One day at Miami, the banks of the Neosho were slick, and as I had a load with bacon on top of the load, I had to give a man 35.00 to pull me up the bank.

LATER DAYS.

My father died when he was 77 years old and is buried in a grave yard in a pasture known as the Washington Graveyard. He has a big stone and on it a picture of him driving a buffalo. The Alberty Graveyard near has several soldier graves in it. Lowell Black now lives on our old home place.

Mr. Washington still has a good memory and is very active for one of his age. He has a large and good garden, a nice flock of white leghorn chickens and a good Jersey Cow and lives in a small very modest house which he owns. Thus he and his wife are passing their days brightened by visits from some of their children each day.

His most prized possession is a very handsome beaded pouch that his mother made for his father and he wore it on his trip to California. It consists of a broad band eight or ten inches wide and reaches from the waist over the shoulder and down to the waist in front and the tobacco pouch is under the arm between the two ends. The work is beautiful and in an excellent state

-11

of preservation. He also had a gourd rattle wrapped up with it.