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(Interview given by Mr. Richard Wilkerson- Hulbert, Oklahoma to Angie Debo-February 11, 1937), Muskogee, Okla 42

REMINISCENCES

Mr. Wilkerson is a full-blood Cherokee who lived in the Canadian district of the old Cherokee Nation. He was born on the Red River, August 26, 1876. His father served in the Southern Army, during the Civil War but as he died when Mr. Wilkerson was six months old, he was unable to give no details of his military services. He knows however, that his Mother was a refugee during the war and was still living on the Red River at the time of his birth. His parents had lived around Stilwell before the war but he was able to give no details of their life there. After the close of the war, his Mother returned to the Cherokee country with her three small children and established a home at Porum, just over the Cherokee line. Mr. Wilkerson's father was a Baptist preacher but he was not able to give any details of his work.

Mr. Wilkerson attended a Cherokee neighborhood school at Texanna, Oklahoma. The building was a hewed log cabin with split log benches with no backs. The school house which was formerly a mile south of Texanna has since been moved to town and is still standing there. At that time, Mr. Wilkerson was staying with a prominent Cherokee, named Porum Davis, a member of the tribal senate, who also served the Cherokees as a delegate to Washington. Mr. Davis afterward moved up to Brush Mountain and secured Wilkersons' appointment to the Male Seminary at

ahlequah, where he attended school for three years. He entered in 1877. He was in about the third grade when he quit. He believes now, that he entered the seminary too young and that it would have been more profitable if he could have had these advantages later. After that he attended a neighborhood school at the Monroe School house about five miles west of Keefeton. Here he attended about three years, then enrolled in the Indian University (now Bacone), which was then at Tahlequah. He attended the Indian University only about three months and it is a matter of lasting regret to him that he "missed it" by not continuing his education.

He spoke only the Cherokee language until he started school but his Mother had already taught him to read and write in that language. Although he is modest about his educational attendance, he uses cultured, even elegant English and gives the impression of being an educated man. He stated that most of his education had been secured by reading, after he had left school. He mentioned the old Cherokee Advocate as a strong cultural force among the people and regrets that it has been discontinued, for he finds the young people are forgetting their own language. He stated however, in answer to a question, that a few even of the young people can still read the Cherokee. He has the last issue of the Cherokee Advocate which was published March 3, 1906.

Mr. Wilkerson married Annie Hendricks also a full-blood

She attended the Cherokee public schools. The

Building, about three miles east of Hulbert on the Frisco, still standing. Mrs. Wilkerson also gained most of her education by reading, in which she still keeps up her interest. The old couple speak Cherokee exclusively in their home and their youngest son could speak only the Cherokee language until he was six years old. He has now forgotten the Cherokee language, however, much to his father's regret. When Mr. Wilkerson was twenty four years old, he moved out to the Cherokee Outlet and when this land was sold he was one of seventy Cherokee citizens who took allotments there. Each Cherokee who had settled here and made substantial improvements, was allowed to purchase eighty acres at \$1.25 an acre, for each member of his family. The payment was deducted from the per capita share, to which each Cherokee citizen was entitled in the distribution of the Outlet payment. Mr. Wilkerson's land is seven miles southwest of Cleveland. He sold it in 1894 to Robert L. Owen at a substantial profit. (Smilingly he said--that he did not care to keep the land, because there were "too many white people there.") Dennis Bushyhead also took an allotment in this region.

Mr. Wilkerson stated that most of the Cherokees were in favor of selling the Outlet, that they believed that the land was too far away from home to be a profitable possession.

Mr. Wilkerson began to operate a farm near the present town of Bartlesville in the spring of 1894 and continued to live there about forty years, twenty five of which he

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spent on the same place. He was satisfied with farming on a small scale. Had fifteen or twenty acres in cultivation when he lived in the Cherokee Outlet and sixty acres in his farm near Bartlesville. He raised a few hogs and cattle and always produced enough feed for his stock.

With regard to the allotment of the land and the abolition of the tribal government, Mr. Wilkerson would have preferred "that things remain just the way they were". He believes that the full-blood Cherokees were happier in tribal days than at the present time, because they hesitate to mix with white people and the land is now checkerboarded with white settlements. Most full-bloods were more prosperous under the tribal regime than they are at present, because so many have not been able to realize the benefit from their allotments. "The best thing the Government could have done, was never to remove restrictions from the full-bloods". Mr. Wilkerson himself, thought he was "pretty smart", had his restrictions removed, sold the land, and spent the money. But he was able to educate and provide for all of his children.

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Mr. Wilkerson has one son who is president of the Indian Council Fire at Chicago and goes around lecturing on Indian life. Another son is teaching in the Government School at Santa Fe.

Mr. Wilkerson has never lived outside the Cherokee country and has been out of the state of Oklahoma only once, when he went to Lawrence, Kansas. He is, he states, "as bad as the people in Arkansas about staying in one place".

Mr. Wilkerson remembers that his Mother pounded the meal for corn bread in a wooden mortar. The mortar was made of a sawed length of log, about two and a half feet high and eighteen inches in diameter. In the top, was a hole chiseled out, six or seven inches deep, in which to place the corn. It was ground with a pole, about six feet long. This method was used partly because the meal had a better taste and partly because it was so far to carry corn to mill, that the supply sometimes run out.

Mr. Wilkerson had taken no active part in Cherokee politics, had no vivid remembrances of

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family traditions, regarding the removal, the Civil War, ect., and he knew of no outlawry in the Cherokee country. The society which he described, was uneventful but contented.