

Gus Hummingbird, S-149,  
Field Worker.  
May 11, 1937.

Interview with  
William Wolfe.

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William Wolfe, a full blood Cherokee, was born in Goingsnake District, March 10, 1850. He was the son of Alex and Polly Wolfe, who came from North Carolina in 1838. William's grandfather on his father's side was Big Wolfe, who died in the east before the Removal. His grandfather on his mother's side was John Hueing.

William was the fifth child of Alex Wolfe, the family consisting of sixteen children. Wyly, Henry, Dave, William, Rachel, Quatie, Jennie, Jackson, George, Lucy, John, Lincoln, Jim, Nancy, and Charley.

William, Rachel, and Lucy are still living. Quatie, Jennie, Dave, Nancy, and Wyly died of disease.

Henry was hung with one of the boys for murdering Jim Walker near Goat Hill about 1860 or a little later.

Jack was killed in a fight by Jim and Lincoln, brothers. Jackson Wolfe was killed by Joe Proctor in 1900 in a gun fight on Rabbit Trap Creek. Jackson and his nephew Dick, Jack's oldest boy were drinking with Proctor and his half brother, Henry Walkingstick; a difficulty arose between Proctor and Dick. Proctor not wanting any trouble rode away on a horse. Henry also went. About a mile down the road they were overtaken by Jackson and Dick. Shooting started and Jackson was killed in this fight.

George Wolfe committed suicide by hanging. John Wolfe was killed by a night watchman at Tahlequah about 1883.

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Lincoln was killed by Dan Smith in 1910 at an election.

Jim Wolfe was killed by Frank Batt in 1915. Charley Wolfe was killed by Ben Sanders. William Wolfe now lives just two miles from where his parents settled in 1838. Alex Wolfe, their father, died in 1896.

(Early Life)

William's early life was spent on Rabbit Trap Creek on a small farm his father cleared immediately after they came. Here Alex raised his family of sixteen surrounded by a few neighbors who came from the same neighborhood back in North Carolina.

The virgin soil produced about five or six crops a year. Mr. Wolfe cleared more land every year until the farm increased in acres to about thirty. Corn was the principal crop, although beans, pumpkins and potatoes were raised. Mr. Wolfe was considered a large farmer of that time.

There were no schools organized in this part of the country before the Civil War. So most of Bill's early life was spent on the farm. After the Civil War or when Bill was about fourteen years old there was a school house built not far from his home. Here the Wolfe boys attended school a few months. Their father was not interested in education and the boys did not get much encouragement to attend school.

William did not learn anything thereby and is an illiterate. Later this school was moved over in the Mulberry Hollow and was called Mulberry school. William Thompson was one of the old time

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teachers. The old Rabbit Trap school was located just north of the present home of Wily Wolfe, a grandson of Alex Wolfe.

#### (Churches)

Churches were not established immediately after the coming of the Cherokees. Mr. Wolfe did not have a church to go to before the Civil War, but Coo-wee-scoo-wee, an Indian preacher, would sometimes come through the country and hold services at people's homes.

After the Civil War a Sunday School and Church was organized in Mulberry Hollow. Among the early organizers of this church and Sunday School was a Cherokee preacher named Qu-Tha-oca-Woad and John Jones, a white man, who was sent to the Indian country as a missionary.

The Big Shed on Levens Creek was the first strong church that was organized in the Cherokee Nation. The Gritts, Coons, Smallwoods, and Hogners were the early converts. For a long time every church in the Cherokee Nation had to meet at Big Shed once a year.

#### (Camp Meetings).

Camp Meetings were held each year throughout the Indian country and from these Camp Meetings, the Cherokee Baptist Association was organized. Mr. Wolfe has attended camp meeting at Long Prairie in Delaware, Round Spring, Standing Rock, and many other places.

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Cherokees from all parts of the Nation would come to these meetings. Each church would send a delegation. The food was donated and expenses were paid by the several churches. Usually these meetings would last from four to ten days.

Some of the early ministers he knew were Johnson Spade, Wolfe Coon, J. B. Gritts, and Mose Ridge.

(Cattle and Stockmen)

Cale Starr of near Evansville, Tom Horn and Jim Walkingstick were the early day stockmen. Wolfe never worked for any of these men. He was personally acquainted with all of them. The Walkingsticks usually drove their cattle to Fort Smith to market.

(Civil War)

When the Civil War broke out in 1860, William was just ten years old. He remembers well three of their neighbors coming over to have a talk with his father as to the causes of the conflict which was sure to come, and the sides they should favor in case they were drawn into it.

The old walnut tree is still standing where these old timers had their conversation. When war really came, Mr. Wolfe favored the North and almost all the neighbors did the same. Arch Scrapper was placed in command of a company of Home Guards that were stationed throughout the Indian country to keep out the Confederate scouts. In the summer of 1863 he saw a battle fought just two miles south of his home. Mr. Wolfe thinks it

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must have been in July because the corn was in roasting ears.

Word came to the people the day before the battle that a company of the Confederate army was in the Cherokee Nation pillaging, stealing, and carrying away all the provisions they could find.

The next day they heard the guns of the battle that was fought about three miles southeast of the present city of Stilwell, Okla. This company of Confederates met a small garrison of Union soldiers on a prairie. Several men were killed in this battle. The next day when told that the Confederate company was moving west, the women and children all left and went to the Opade Mountain, which was about a mile and a half from the farm.

In the afternoon from the mountain they saw a large number of men marching south. They stationed themselves in a thicket on what is now Pete Bean's farm. About an hour before sundown they saw a large number of men coming on the other side of the prairie, driving cattle and everything before them. When they were about a hundred yards apart, the Home Guards opened fire. The Confederates returned the fire several times. The battle lasted about thirty minutes. The Southern army retreated and went over the mountain just west of this farm. There are no graves at this place. Later they learned that only sixteen men were wounded in this battle. But at the other battle fought by this same company, there were several killed and a monument marks the place.

(Epidemics and Family Cemetery)

During the later years of the Civil War, smallpox and some kind of fever broke out in the Cherokee Nation. This disease

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killed many people. Deaths were so numerous that people could not be buried as they should. Hot weather made it that more difficult for there were no undertakers to take care of the dead.

Bill remembers helping a bunch of women bury six in one day, three of these belonged to the same family, the Leacheater family. They lived just east of the Mulberry Hollow. Each family started a grave-yard of their own. They usually looked for the best digging. That was the cause of so many cemeteries in the woods.

(Frontier Towns & Trading Post)

Fort Smith, Siloam and Evansville, Arkansas were the frontier towns. Evansville was the chief trading post. Dutch Mills was also a trading post, a little further to the north.

The Rabbit Trap Agency had its post of their trading at Evansville. They did their milling at a mill on Cane Creek, owned by a Mr. Stephens. This mill was located at the same place where the W. P. A. built the lower dam on Cane Creek.

(Furs and Hides)

Plenty of game was to be found during these times in the country. Wolves, opossum, coons, skunks, and otter were hunted for furs, but the price was small, from ten cents to two dollars. Otter brought the best price. This animal was seldom found. He remembers an Indian killing one at a ford on Baron Fork Creek near Christie, Okla. The boy did not know what it was but anyhow he took it along to his home at Tahlequah. The next morning he sold it to a white man for two dollars.

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## (Game and Fish)

Game such as squirrels, rabbits, and wild pigeons were abundant. They migrate every two or three years at that time. There would be so many squirrels they would eat up crops such as corn. He has killed as many as fifty a day, and sold them at Siloam for Two Dollars a dozen.

Wild pigeons would come in the fall and make "Roosts", as they were called. At these places thousands were killed. Many white men came from Arkansas to buy them. They sold for three dollars a dozen. One of the most famous "Roosts" was near Chance, about six miles northwest of the present town of Nashville, Kansas.

## (Ball Game)

The "Night Hawk" ball game was the most interesting game of that time. This game was played just before the "Ston Dance". This was a game between the men and women. The ball that they used was made of mushroom, yarn, and leather. It was the custom of the old timers that just everybody did not make this ball. Very few knew how they were made.

They used the stomp ground for a ball ground. A pole was driven in the ground about forty feet high and on top of this, a ball about six inches in diameter was placed. When the ball was tossed in the air, both sides tried to get it, and whichever side hit the ball on top of the pole was awarded three points. The women were allowed to catch the ball with their hands but the men were not allowed to do so. They had to catch it with the spoons

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they used for that purpose. Mr. Wolfe has seen teams from other places play. The teams at that time were the Stony Point, Chewey, Sugar Mound, Redbird, and Flute Springs.

(Secret Societies)

The Night Hawk Society was once a secret society.

Keo-toc-wah was an Indian society. It also was a secret society back in the east. Mr. Wolfe is positive that no one is now living who knows the purpose of this organization. He says he has been contacted several times by teachers from Illinois for an explanation. Although there are a few people living who would try to explain this they do not know.

List of old timers, ... , ... , ... , Fritchett, Nancy Falling, Judge Noisewater, ... , ... , John Allingstick, Daniel Webster, George Blackwood, ... , ... , and Tom Swimmer.