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Interview with John S. Harper,  
Checotah, Oklahoma.  
Field worker, Carl R. Sherwood,  
June 23, 1937.

My father's name was Nelson Harper, one-sixteenth Cherokee, born in Tennessee in 1831.

My mother's name was Elizabeth Moore, born in Tennessee. To this union were born four children, three boys and one girl.

I was born in Stoddard County, Missouri, in 1865, and came to the Indian Territory in 1887, locating at Webbers Falls where, at that time, there were three stores and a blacksmith shop.

I went to work for Irvin Vann on his ranch which was about four miles west of town. He handled native cattle for about two years, and we rode to Muskogee, gathering up strays. I moved to Checotah and took a job hauling water to run the W. E. Gentry Cotton Gin and supplied the few residences with water at twenty-five cents a barrel. From Jack Green's brother I rented a house which had a good well.

In 1898 I was running a gambling hall on what was known at that time as "Shot Gun Corner" which was west of the La Fayette Brothers store.

One day Tom Lacy, George Lucas and Bill Spears came into my place and disturbed the boys that were in the various kinds of games. The boys left and later came back up looking

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for trouble and I handed Jack Green my pistol, telling him to attend to my business; that I was going to take John Mursey (a boy) home. I saw these men coming back to the gambling house so I stopped a few minutes and heard four shots fired. One hit Jack Green in the thigh and the other bullet struck Tom Lacy in the lower part of the neck killing him instantly. After this fight I sold the gambling hall and bought out a livery stable and did a thriving business with the travelling salesmen who got off the Katy train and made all inland points as far as Featherston, in the Choctaw Nation east, and to Okmulgee west.

In 1899 I married the widow of Doctor West. She was a Creek Indian and her allotment was at the west edge of the city limits. Shortly after this I became engaged in night watching, which kept me busy in the early days.

I saw nine good men killed here on the streets of Checotah over horse races and whisky; following are some of the names: Lee Atkins, Bob Gentry, Carey Keyes, Racehorse Moore, Sam Baker, Tom Lacey, Lonnie Hughes; and General Dunlap was killed by Ed Julian in the county seat fight at Muskogee.

I now live in Checotah and at the age of seventy-two, am enjoying good health.

Checotah is located on the prairie midway between Parsons, Kansas, and Demison, Texas, on the main line of the Missouri,

Kansas, and Texas Railroad. It was named in honor of Samuel Checote, one of the most noted chiefs of the Creek Nation. The founder of the town was Robert Burton, who erected the first store building early in 1888. Mrs. Delila Drew, with her family, resided about one and one-fourth miles northeast of where the city is now located, and was the first actual settler in this neighborhood. Her son-in-law, Captain James M. Scott, later erected a residence on the eastern border of the village. The buildings still stand on the premises of his son, George Scott. The first white child born in Checotah was Fay Frasier. The first Indian child was Owa M. Audd, a son of R. Y. and Flora B. Audd, born September 1, 1891.

J. B. West was the first physician. The first death of an adult was Chris Sanson, who was buried in the cemetery one mile west of town.

Amos McIntosh, a Creek Indian, built the first residence in Checotah.

Amos McIntosh was the first attorney located in Checotah and was chosen prosecuting attorney of the Muskogee district, and later resigned and was elected Judge of Bufaula district, occupying a seat upon the bench until Indian court was abolished

by the passage in Congress of the Curtis bill. The village blacksmith shop was erected by Amos McIntosh and W. W. Bray, in 1890.

Three of the largest general merchandise stores in the Creek Nation were as follows: La Fayette and Brothers, Sherwood and Avery, Spaulding and Hutchinson. These merchants financed the farmers as they came into the territory from other states.

The greatest historical event in Checotah at that time was the first meeting of the Dawes Commission with the representatives of the Five Civilized Tribes in 1893. This meeting lasted a week and was held in the Lerblanes Hall. Colonel D. H. McIntosh acted as spokesman for the delegation.

Checotah is located almost on the site of one of the early battle grounds between the Creeks and the Little Osages. A battle was fought by them on the north bank of the creek that skirts the northern boundary of the town in which a band of Osages (numbering about fifty), was completely annihilated. North of the town stands Chimney Mountain ~~REBUTEN~~ (now Summit), the disputed point between Confederates and Federals. Just north and south of the mountain were the race tracks of both armies. This

mountain furnished the rock from which the "pipe of peace" was made by the different tribes of Indians who were often molested by wild tribes from the West. Under the sod can yet be found this rock that can be cemented into pipes.

Checotah was one of the most prominent shipping points in the Territory and is surrounded by an exceedingly fertile soil that produces corn, wheat, cotton, fruits, and vegetables.

Checotah in the early days was a supply point of all the surrounding country.