

·MITCHELL, QUINCY

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Interview with Quincy Mitchell, Durant, Oklahoma
by Field Worker, Lula Austin
August 12, 1937.

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A VISIT TO THE RUINS OF ARMSTRONG ACADEMY

One beautiful morning in the autumn of 1932, in company with several friends I started for a visit to the ruins of Armstrong Academy which are to be found a few miles north of Bokchito in Bryan County; one of our party desired to visit the place to get data for a thesis she was writing in Bryan County history for her Master's degree at the Oklahoma State University. As for myself I had recently been asked by the Oklahoma Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy to serve on a committee to help locate and mark graves of Confederate soldiers. It being an authentic and established fact that Armstrong Academy, abandoned as a school during the war between the States, was used as a hospital for Confederate soldiers, I thought possibly I could find the cemetery where it was said about two hundred and fifty Confederates were buried.

The ruins of the old school are in a rather remote and out of way place, not close to the highway nor even on a well traveled country road. We stopped at Bokchito to inquire for the road. We also asked who might be able to give us information regarding

the history of the place. We were told that Mr. John Hampton, a Choctaw and a former student of the Academy, was just the person to give us the desired information.

We went by Mr. Hampton's home and he obligingly entered the car with us and directed us over the rambling, rough and badly washed road that led to the ruins.

The spot where the Academy stood was surrounded by a heavy and dense growth of native trees and the ruins were over-run by vines and brush, presenting a scene of desolation and loneliness, which once was teeming with life and activity.

Mr. Hampton designated to us the area where the main building stood. It had been of brick of ample proportions judging by the outline of debris and partially standing walls. The grim blackness of the bricks in the gaping and empty doors and windows showed by what fate the building had fallen-fire. Wild birds twittered unmolested in the trees and numerous autumn butterflies swarmed about the flowers and bushes.

To the west of the ruins is a neighborhood cemetery, now seemingly little used. Here are to be found

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many stone markers and monuments bearing the names of families one time prominent in that community. All lots are now overgrown with briars and bushes, making it difficult to get about among the graves.

I asked Mr. Hampton if he knew where the Confederate soldiers were buried, who died at Armstrong during the war. He pointed to a field quite a distance further to the west and north and said he remembered when a small boy of hearing that the farmer who cultivated that land occasionally turned up human bones with his plow. These were supposed to be the remains of soldiers. No trace of graves could now be found, so it would be impossible as well as impracticable to make an effort to mark them. Thus these heroes of that regrettable and fratricidal war will, with legions of others, have to remain unsung and unhonored even though making the supreme sacrifice to the God of war, Mars.