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Elizabeth Ross,
Investigator,
October 15, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. James Clay,

Indian Storekeeper.

During part of the '80's of the last century, there lived in the vicinity of the site of the present small town of Welling, a Creek Indian who was usually referred to as "Creek Cucumber", though he called himself "Cucumber". He was a small man who understood the English language quite well and could speak English to some extent, though he preferred to speak the Cherokee language with which he was fairly familiar.

Like other Creeks who lived down at Creek Town, south of the confluence of the Barren Fork with the Illinois River, Cucumber had a claim of some kind against the Government of the United States and finally the claim was adjusted and the claimants received sums of money. Cucumber was said to have received \$700.00 which was a considerable sum at the period. Cucumber immediately purchased for himself a tall and large bay horse upon which he rode about the country and made trips to Tahlequah, but soon decided to become the

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proprietor of a store. Near his home at the border of a small woodland a small building was erected and soon Cucumber's store was opened for business, but the venture did not prove lucrative. Knowing nothing about business methods, Cucumber sold without worth while profit to himself and within a short period quit the occupation of storekeeper. Coffee was then sold in bulk, (green or unparched) and when a customer called for coffee, Cucumber, instead of weighing the commodity, sold it by measure, using a tin cup. Sugar was sold after the same manner, and upon depletion of his stock of groceries and articles of merchandise, Cucumber had no profits, nothing to pay for more goods. Consequently there was nothing to do but quit which Cucumber did cheerfully.

Cucumber was once tried in the Cherokee court at Tahlequah for some infraction of the law, but the jury in the case found the evidence insufficient to warrant conviction and acquitted the defendant. Cucumber was greatly pleased. He gained the impression that the jury liberated him because of personal friendship and remained the staunch friend of each of the jurymen as long as they lived.

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When Cucumber was becoming somewhat advanced in years he decided to give himself a surname and called himself Cucumber Ross. By that name he had himself enrolled when the final rolls of Indian citizens were being prepared by the United States Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes several years before the admission of Oklahoma to statehood.

Eventually Cucumber removed to the old Illinois District several miles distant from the town of Braggs. There he lived until his death some years ago, being then probably eighty-five years of age.