

CHUPCO, ANNIE.

INTERVIEW

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ESTABLISHING TRADING PLACES

An interview of Annie Chupco, age
65, Weleetka, Oklahoma.

Billie Byrd, interviewer
Indian-pioneer History
10-19-37

Siah Barnett and Jim Barnett, brothers, lived in the old fashioned log house that set back in the hills near Bryant and northeast of Weleetka, Oklahoma.

There was an Indian settlement in the hills that lie north of Weleetka and range all along down to the Dustin vicinity. This settlement was in existence long before the neighboring, small towns of Weleetka, Henryetta or Okemah were ever established.

The known existence of trading posts were of such great distance that many of the Indians knew the Proctor and McDermott stores--one about 12 miles away and the other perhaps thirty-five miles back towards the east.

Since the natives had to travel so far away, Siah and Jim Barnett decided to establish a store so they turned a part of their log home to a trading place which was operated a number of years after its establishment.

This trading place was called the Barnett store but it wasn't anything like our present country stores. Those early country stores were often operated by the whites or Indians. The buildings would oftentimes be without adequate windows and lacked a counter. That was the condition of the Barnett store.

All the Indians near the Barnett store would come to the store to make their few purchases while some often came to visit with one another in the course of the buying. They gathered around the store just when it was established for they thought it strange to have a store in their vicinity. There was some one there all the time either trading, sitting around and exchanging talks and smoking. It was especially on Saturdays that the Indians would gather at the trading place.

It was during the days of the country store of Barnetts that I used to see a boy around the place all the time. I never paid any special attention to him except to know that he had on ragged clothes. From all appearances, he seemed to have been neglected

but then most of the Indian boys and girls were not too clean then anyway. I saw him often around the store so that I asked who he was. I was told that it was Siah Barnett's boy and I believed him to be such even when he had become a grown man. I saw him only occasionally but I remembered who he was, even though I didn't know him too well.

By and by this same boy grew up until he was spoken of as the richest Indian--Jackson Barnett. He didn't seem to have many relatives when he was young but after his death, it seems that every Barnett in the country is some near blood relation. Even those that are not relations, be they negro, halfbreed or fullblood Indians are claiming some right to the vast estate.