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(Miss) Charline M. Culbertson
Field Worker
May 25, 1937.

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Interview with Mrs. C. E. Culbertson
1 mile east Kiowa, Oklahoma.
Father-E. H. Culbertson.
Mother-Helen H. Culbertson.

I came with my father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Culbertson, from Texas to the Indian Territory in June 1868. I was just five years old. We located at the old Sulphur Springs where Stringtown is now. My father being a blacksmith and carpenter he selected this place to put up a shop, it being about one-half mile below the forks of the Ft. Smith and Texas and the Kansas and Texas road. Another reason why he selected this locality was because, before the Civil War father moved from Missouri to Texas, and in passing through this section he met up with a prominent full-blood Indian, Col. James Riley, and he prevailed on father to stop here and put up a shop and my father promised he would return some time.

Our first home I remember quite well was a double log cabin with a hall between and about five acres of land fenced with poles. It was near the Sulphur Spring and about one-fourth mile from the main wagon road. The first thing my father did was to build a shop down by the side of the road, which afterwards became the main street of the little town which they named Stringtown because it was strung up and down the road. Our

nearest neighbors were from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 miles apart and not very many at that. Then after a short while, he built a home down near the shop. During the next year Capt. Watkins and Capt. Desmuke put in a little store. They hauled their goods one hundred and twenty miles by wagon from Ft. Smith, Arkansas. We paid twenty five cents a yard for very common calico and twenty five cents for a spool of thread. Father hauled all his supplies for the shop from the same place. The next thing they had to have was a little school house and church.

Where I went to school about half of the children were full-blood Indians. My father and mother boarded some Indian children living about twenty five miles away.

If an Indian wanted his wagon fixed, his plow or pony shod he could always get it done whether he had the money right then or not. If my father ever lost a dollar I never heard of it. The Indian would say, "well, I pay you Friday two weeks", and when the time came, if he didn't happen to have the money, he would wait till the next Friday but he would always come on Friday.

In those days most all the Indians had some ponies, and a few cattle and hogs. They were never fed any and lots of them would go wild. I knew of one old Indian

who had quite a herd of cattle and ponies in the summer season; when these ponies would get fat and begin to act wild, he would round them up and bring them home and pen them in a large corral built high out of poles and he would keep them in this corral and feed them nothing but brush until they quit acting wild and then turn them out. When he sold his beef steers he would want them to pay him in gold or silver, He said, "no no licem paper money, mouse he eat em up". One day he was over on the Ft. Smith, Arkansas, road and he met a white man moving in a new wagon with a good span of mules and new harness. He took a liking to the outfit and bought them from the man and gave him \$300.00 for them. He tied his pony behind the wagon, got in, started home and when he came to where his road turned off going home he ran against a tree, breaking the tongue out of the wagon. He just unhitched from it, taking the mules on home, pulled the harness off, turned them out with his ponies and never harnessed them up again. The wagon stayed where he left it and it rotted down.

In those days the full-blood Indian never farmed any, but nearly all had their Tom Fuller and Sweet Potato patches, what we would call a roasting ear patch and the

women worked that. The old time full-blood Choctaw and Chickasaw were good honest law-abiding citizens, and harmed no one. Once in a while they would have a little trouble among themselves. One man would kill another and they would take him up and try him in their Indian Courts. They would sentence him to be shot at a certain time, turn him loose and tell him to come back at that time, and he would always be there. That is something more than the white man would do.

Whiskey has gotten more Indians in trouble than any other thing. When under the influence of liquor he gets mean. I remember one time I went to see an Indian on some business. When I rode up to the house, his wife came out and I asked her if her husband was at home, she said, "yes but he drunk, I wish you leave him along". I took her at her word.

When I was growing up at home my father would load all the children in the wagon and go ten to twenty five miles to Indian Camp Meetings. There is one place I can say, no one ever went to Indian Meetings and came away hungry for when meal time came they would come hunt you up. "Tah Impa", (come eat). The Indian women would

cook great pots full of Tom Fuller and Poshofa.

Some of my father's best friends were full-blood Indians and lots of them would call him, Tulla Bolo Culbertson, meaning blacksmith Culbertson.

I can remember the first dollar I ever made when I was a boy. It was for taking care of the mules for an old Missionary preacher among the Indians, Rev. Jesse W. Walker who lived at Goodland, Indian Territory. He always stopped at my father's when in this part of his work and he paid me this dollar all in dimes that had been given him at meetings. He always carried corn to feed his mules but nothing for himself as there was but little corn raised in the country and that for food. I have heard him say that many times he would get water bound and could not get to a house. He would stay on the bank of a creek for a day and night with nothing but parched corn to eat. I have known my father to take the preacher in his home and board him free for six months to a year, that the people might have preaching.

I remember as a boy going to Indian Fish Fries. They would dig sacks full of some kind of roots and they would scatter all up and down the hole of water. They

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would beat these roots up and rinse in the water until they made the fish drunk. When the fish would come to the top of the water they would shoot them with bow and arrow. Mostly buffalo weighing from ten to twenty-five pounds. There was lots of fish in those days and all kinds of game. I have counted as many as twenty-five deer in one bunch and turkeys by the hundred.

We used to play Indian Ball when I went to school. I had several pair of ball sticks but gave them all away.

My first job after getting out of school was when I was employed by a local merchant to go to a saw-mill, located about ten miles southeast of where Haileyville and Hartshorne now are, to bill out the lumber, which was being hauled by ox teams to the mines near North McAlester. That was in April or May, 1881. While here I sold the lumber to Rev. Closotuby and Mr. Worcester, fullblood Indians, to build what was known as the Brushy Baptist Church, being one of the oldest rural churches now in Pittsburg County.

The last of June, 1881, I came from Stringtown to Kiowa, Indian Territory, to work at another saw-mill, keeping books and billing out lumber. The mill was about

fifteen miles east of Kiowa in the mountains. I helped build the first church and school-house in Kiowa. In 1883 I put in a little store and took the post office. In the twenty seven years in which I was in business I have done a good deal of trading with the Indians, buying their furs, venison hams, hogs, cattle or anything they had to sell. The two good old Indians, to whom I sold the lumber to build the Brushy Baptist church when I was but a boy of eighteen, became quite good friends of mine in after years. About ten years after, when I got married to a one-fourth blood Indian girl of a good Baptist family with whom old Bro. Olosotuby was well acquainted, the old man remarked to one of my friends, he (Charley Culbertson) is a pretty good man," he half Baptist."

Indian girls in those days, 1892, were pretty expensive as the license to marry one cost you one hundred dollars and as mine was an extra good one, they charged me one hundred dollars and ten cents and I had to ride twenty-five miles back in the mountains on horse back to the Indian Court house where you filed your application for license.