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L. W. Wilson
Journalist
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Interview with Mrs. Euline Dotson
R#2, Vian, Oklahoma.

I will be eighty-two years old my next birthday. I was born April 10, 1856, near Atlanta, Georgia. My parents never came to the Indian Territory as they accepted citizenship with the United States and not the Cherokees due to their possessing white blood. Mother and Father were part Cherokee. I came with my husband to the Indian Territory forty-eight years ago in the year 1889.

Removal from Georgia to the Indian Territory.

Having only been married for a few years and possessing Cherokee blood and knowing as we did that by the treaties made between the United States Government and the Cherokees after the Civil War, the land was owned not individually and one could farm all the land he desired, so long as he did not encroach on anybody else's land, were our reasons for coming to the Territory.

After we had fully decided to come, we disposed of all our personal property, except that needed for a camp outfit along the way, and such little things as an axe, saw and some few little tools to garden or farm with after our arrival. We stocked up with provisions, bedding, guns and ammunition and "hit the trail". Our

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team was one yoke of oxen and our travel was slow and tedious. I would say we averaged about ten miles per day, and as I remember it took us three months or more to make the trip.

Our trip started in the spring and since we were driving oxen our feed for them was practically nothing as the oxen would graze at night. The grass was good and the farther we travelled and as the summer advanced the grass became better and better.

Our route was by Memphis, Tennessee, Little Rock, Arkansas, and Fort Smith, Arkansas. We started alone from our home near Atlanta, but before we got to Memphis we struck up with others along the road, some going one place and some another. Each day about sunset we kept a close lookout for a suitable camp for that night. We usually struck camp near a good stream of water. If other travelers were with us we camped together, and really got acquainted and I always felt better to be with other campers than by ourselves, just felt a little more protected but we were never molested.

We cooked all our meals on open fires. Other than bread stuff, lard, coffee and sugar, we had nothing to buy, as there were all kinds of game, birds, and even wild strawberries and blackberries were ripe before we got to Fort Smith. We ate quail, prairie chickens, squirrels, venison and even pork. Hogs and pigs

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were wild, no one owned them and if you ran across a wild pig all you had to do was to shoot it. We never even had to buy lard after we left Memphis.

There were no roads like there are today through Arkansas. Many times we had to follow blazed trails but we never got off our course. Through the swamps and lowlands of East Arkansas, I feel that we could not have gotten through with any kind of teams other than oxen. We crossed streams and rivers usually on pole ferries and in some instances we would have to wait at creeks until the water went down so we could ford them. After we left Little Rock our travel became more pleasant. There were more people on the road, the roads were better because we were getting out of the swamps into the hill country. We really had slow going for about a hundred and forty miles between Memphis and Little Rock. In those swamps there were all kinds of wild animals, bears, wild cats, panthers, coyotes and animals that would attack you on the least provocation. We would keep our campfire burning all night as this would keep them their distance.

After arriving at Fort Smith, we made inquiry there as to the location of the Cherokees and learned that to cross the Arkansas River would put us in the Cherokee Nation of the Indian Territory. We were glad that we were near our journey's end and that we would

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soon be among the Cherokees. We also learned that the Iron Mountain Railroad had hardly been completed through the Cherokee Nation from Fort Smith to Coffeyville, Kansas. After breaking camp at Fort Smith we crossed the Arkansas River on a pole ferry and followed the road known as the old Military Road and that night found us camped nine miles out of Fort Smith at Bowers Inn, known as the Nine Mile Road-house. From the Bower Inn we next came to the Childers Stage Stand. I am told that parts of the old building still stand and that they are tenanted at the present by sharecrop farmers. From the Cushenberry place we continued westward, intending to go to Webbers Falls, but we came across Drake Prairie which is about five miles west of the present town of Sallisaw and camped at the Drake Store. We never reached Webbers Falls but located on the extreme end of Drake Prairie near the present town of McKey. Mr. Drake moved his store from its old location, where we camped, down to McKey as the railroad put in a spur track and telegraph station there, so Mr. Drake moved down to the railroad and started his store. He finally built a gin and grist mill and was also the postmaster. Mrs. Drake is still living at Sallisaw.

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We found a place where we wished to farm and settled down. We had no trouble in doing this on account of our Cherokee blood. We could talk the Cherokee language but besides instruction in the Cherokee language received in the Cherokee schools of Georgia when a little girl, I never got an education. The English language I have spoken all my life. My father and mother also talked Cherokee and English. Talking the Cherokee language made it all in our favor in the Territory, for no one questioned our rights. We felt that we had as much right as any other Cherokee even though our parents did not come to the Territory.

Life and Customs

As soon as trees could be felled and logs could be cut, we built for ourselves a one-room log cabin with a large fireplace.

We did our cooking on the fireplace, and really had a comfortable little cabin that winter. We cleared some land and the next Spring planted about five acres of corn and a good garden of beans, potatoes, pumpkins and sweet

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potatoes. Wild game, fruit and berries were plentiful. Enough fur-bearing animals, such as coon, opossum, fox and deer were killed to buy provisions and clothing to get through the winter. We traded and sold our furs at Webbers Falls. Our crop, for three years, was made with the oxen which we drove through from Georgia. We acquired more land, by clearing it, until we had almost twenty acres, then I came into possession of a team and some cows and began to accumulate and have a comfortable living.

At the instance of the Dawes Commission lands were surveyed, townsites laid out, school sites set apart, the Indians enrolled and finally allotments made.

I enrolled and received my allotment and have lived at or near the place where we located ever since 1889.

Miscellaneous.

The first schoolhouse I saw in the Territory was one room made of hewed logs, with puncheon floor and split-log seats. Church was held in this schoolhouse and an Indian did the preaching. I don't remember the name of the preacher nor the school. I went to church there only the one time. This Indian preached in the English language.

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The first fair I ever attended in my life was at Vian. People were prouder of that fair and had a better time than at the Oklahoma State Fair. There were no auto races or airplanes then. Some of the neighbors had a few old cow ponies and raced them. The exhibits of farm products were good. Everybody knew everybody and it was a chance to see your friends and neighbors, whom you had almost forgotten, as you could not visit far off neighbors then as you can now with autos.

There were no cemeteries other than just family cemeteries in our community. People would bury their dead on their home places. These old cemeteries still dot the hillsides here and I have attended many funerals of my friends who lie in unmarked graves.