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ELI. INTERVIEW.
Jesse Chisholm,
Field Worker,
Feb. 15, 1937.

Thomas F. Meagher, Supervisor,
Indian-Pioneer History
Project S-149.

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Interview with Eli Ellis
whose Shawnee name is Wa-she-ge-ba-ska
meaning "dog ready to start".

Eli Ellis has lived most of his life in the Spybuck Shawnee settlement on Bird Creek, Tulsa County, Oklahoma. Eli carries in his veins the blood of the Muskogee, Pico-wetha-Shawnee and Cherokee and is a Cherokee citizen on the official Indian rolls. He comes of the so-called Texas Cherokees, those amalgamated bands of Texans led by Fields, the Bowl and Mush.

When his people were run out of Texas in 1836, his Shawnee-Muskogee-Cherokee parents took refuge in the Muskogee country about Edwards trading post at the mouth of Little River, some on the south side of the Canadian river and others along Little River. Here they remained until the outbreak of the Civil war, when they went north to Kansas at the same time of the Muskogee exodus.

Eli was born near the Kansas line in the Cherokee Strip while his parents were en route to the Kansas refuge. As near as he can figure he was born in the fall of 1861, and is now about 76 years of age. Upon the return of his parents from Kansas after the Civil war they settled on Bird Creek, Tulsa County. He says that one band of Shawnees under Old Big Jim, who was born in 1836, in Texas, settled on Quapaw Creek over in what is now Osage County, just west of Skiatook, where Opuithli Yahela had his last fight in his flight to

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Kansas in the fall of 1861. Another band of Shawnees after returning from Kansas settled for a number of years on the north side of the Arkansas river near Sand Springs near the Osage Trail crossing at the mouth of Uchee Creek.

After some years the Shawnees of Big Jim's band and those of the Arkansas near Sand Springs all moved and settled the village of Tecumseh, now Tecumseh, Oklahoma. Eli's parents went along but within a year or so returned to the Spybuck Shawnee Settlement on Bird Creek, Tulsa County, where he has lived for 60 years.

Eli's father was Tom Ellis and his grand-father was Joe Ellis and both because of their tribal parentage were able to interpret in either the Muskogee or Shawnee languages. Both resided 15 years in Texas with the Cape Girardeau bands of Shawnees and Delawares to which band they belonged. Eli says that when his parents arrived in Johnson county Texas the Mexicans or Spaniards received them with open arms and gave them a grant of land 40 miles square. Later in years the Texas war against Mexico broke out and the Texans told the Indians if they would move their wives and children north into the Indian Territory and then the warriors came back and help them whip the Mexicans then the Texans would give them the land on which they then lived, which they did. But later the Texans drove them out.

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BAD WHITE MEN

He remembers an occasion when three white ruffians, regegades, visited the Spybuck stomp dance on Hominy Creek, Spybuck-Shawnee Settlement, now in Tulsa County. These drunken ruffians attacked him, burned and destroyed his tent and camp outfit, bedding and all. His family flew to safety in the woods. All the Shawnees ran away from these fierce ruffians except Henry Spybuck, who with the aid of his wife, beat off the ruffians.

Eli is the last of the old men of this Spybuck Settlement and holds the tribal drum and rattling gourd. There remains only two old time women, Mrs. Bill Chisholm and Mrs. Rattie Walker.

Eli says to come back and may be he will think of something more to say. At the present time he is trying to get up an Indian Resettlement project with Indian Commissioner Collier for the benefit of the landless Shawnee children. He says the young men are all out of work and the Indian lands needs drainage ditches and he is trying to get some relief work - a lasting benefit to both the jobless Indians and the land.