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Interview with Ollie England, a Cherokee Indian, born in Adair County, Oklahoma, February 18, 1844

W. J. B. Bigby, Field Worker,
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OLLIE (ENGLAND) FALLING

Ollie England, a Cherokee Indian, was born in Goingsnake District, now Adair County, Oklahoma, February 18, 1844. She was the daughter of Jesse and Nancy Falling, who came from North Carolina in 1838. She grew to womanhood just as many other Indian children, and did not attend school on account of poverty, and the Civil War.

When the Civil War broke out Ollie and her parents left the Indian Territory, starting to Texas and on their way her father died in Choctaw Nation; but she and others continued on their journey and remained in Texas two years, coming back to Indian Territory in 1862. They were living six miles northwest of Stilwell, or near Peavine School, when the battle of Eli Scott's was fought, about two miles northwest of Stilwell. Several hundred Federal soldiers routed a small number of Confederates, this being the only battle fought in Adair County during the Civil War.

After the war, churches were established, Antioch Baptist Church, earlier called Big Shed was built by Cherokees themselves, six miles north of Stilwell on Peavine Creek. Stilwell at that time was only a thorn thicket, except a small clearing in the center where the Indians shot corn stalks. The said church was the only one in the Cherokee Nation for many years. It was a large four room house with

chimney in the center; at last it became so inconvenient for all Indians to attend, they built churches in their own communities but this Big Shed was the Mother church which at present is the Antioch Baptist Church, or better known as Peavine.

Among the earlier converts were the Smallwoods, Hitchers, Coons and Cornsilke.

The nearest trading post was Dutch Mills, Arkansas which was operated by a man named Mr. Evans. The Cherokees would go horseback a distance of about twenty miles. They did their milling at a mill operated by a Mr. Stephens on Caney Creek located about where the lower dam is on Caney or at the old Hummingbird place.

The game being plentiful and by making small crops, the Cherokees made a good living after the war. Deer, turkey, and wild pigeons were to be found everywhere. The family dried beans, pumpkins and made baskets to exchange for merchandise. The means of travel at that time was mostly horseback, the main road being what the Cherokees called the Ft. Smith road which led from Stilwell down Lees Creek by Uniontown to Van Buren.

Indians would drive cattle through the country to Van Buren, would receive money and bring it overland to Indian country. There being no banks here, large sums of money were kept at home.

There was much sickness among the Cherokees after the war. Smallpox and other diseases were treated with medicine made out of herbs, there being no doctors among the Cherokees at that time.

There were no ferry boat crossings except at Muskogee Agency, which Ollie crossed once when she was about twenty-five years old.

Peace officers were selected by election every two years, a sheriff being elected in every district. The Government appointed the U. S. Marshals that were sometimes called upon to capture some Indian outlaws. The Cherokees who committed crime at that time were afraid of the U. S. Court at Fort Smith, and that caused many to become outlaws. The laws at that time were severe; only one name was given for a killing, that was MURDER. A man convicted was hanged; therefore, if an Indian committed murder he usually scouted and there was great difficulty in apprehending him.

The dread of the U. S. Court at Fort Smith has caused such men as Ned Christie, Stand Rowe, and Waco Hampton to die with their boots on.

The Commissioners for the Indians were appointed at Washington. The oldest one she remembers is Co-wee-scoo-wee Ross, then later R. L. Owen.

Amusements that interested the Cherokees was Corn stalk shooting and horse racing. The most important horse race she ever witnessed was a run matched by an Arkansas white man and an Indian named John Walkingstick who lived on Walkingstick mountain west of Levine school house. Merchandise, worth hundreds of dollars were won by Walkingstick. The race was run in an old field north of what is now Geneva School house or near Paden Springs, in the year 1867.

The nearest Indian agency was Tallequah, also the Capital of the Cherokee Nation. Here the National Council met to make laws. The voting precincts were scattered throughout the Cherokee Nation. Each district had a court house.

Strict laws were passed by the legislature, hangings were frequent--she witnessed three hangings. Terrapin Leach, a full blood who lived in which is now Leach Hollow, was hung for murdering a fifteen year old girl, sister of Dave Hatcher. She also witnessed the hanging of Henry Wolfe, and an eighteen year old boy named John Vanus, both for murder.

She voted in the last election of the Cherokee Nation. Cast her vote for Rabbit Bunch for Principal Chief, but he was defeated by Joel B. Hayes. The main issue of that campaign being the allotment of land, great real estate companies, and oil companies furnished money in the election of Joel B. Hayes for Chief.

The first newspaper or printed matter she saw was when she was about thirty years of age. This paper had been printed in the East.

Her nearest neighbors at that time were Alkin Blackwood, Nancy Spade and Louis Blackwood.