

## **Fort Towson in the Early Thirties Interesting Reminiscences of Pioneer Days neglected by the Historians**

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The historian has dealt unkindly with old Fort Towson. He has compiled volumes about the deeds of outlawry perpetrated in Indian Territory in years gone by, but the most important part this country's history in an early day, when the Indians were brought here, has never been written. Perhaps there never will be comprehensive and accurate information published in regard to old Fort Towson, because few of the citizens who lived when the federal troops were garrisoned here are alive.

Fort Towson was not only a unique but a prominent fortification, being the first one established on the western frontier and west of the Mississippi River by the federal government. It was constructed in the early 30s and federal troops were stationed here to protect the Choctaw Indians and the Indian Territory from invasion by hordes of Mexican greasers who held high carnival just across the line in Texas - then Mexican territory. When the Choctaws began to immigrate from Mississippi and other points to this country they come [sic] slowly and in small bands, and it was deemed necessary by the government to protect them when they landed at the mouth of the Kiamichi River at the threshold of their new domain- hence Fort Towson and her interesting history. The fortifications were built of wood on heavy walls of limestone masonry, which fire and crumbling time have almost totally destroyed. When things were "doing" at the old fort in the thirties one could look from the high eminence upon a beautiful stretch of country for many miles, and no enemy, not even the nervy little Japs, could have gained access to the federal troops without complete annihilation. Now the ruins lie in a heavy growth of timber, stately oak trees that measure a foot thro' have grown up in the cellars of the old buildings, and the old cemetery where many of Uncle Sam's brave soldiers were buried is completely hidden in a dense forest. But there are no soldiers graves here now, as they were removed to the national cemetery at Fort Gibson soon after the federal troops left, and this old cemetery would be almost extinct and nearly forgotten, save for a few graves upon which thoughtful old citizens have placed tombstones in memory of loved ones departed long ago. Since the soldiers graves were removed the burying ground for a large scope of country has been at Doaksville, an old town about a mile distant, which was quite prominent in early days as a wholesale point for northern Texas and all this immediate frontier country. All the merchandise sold at Paris, Texas, at that time was hauled by freighters from Doaksville under shelter of federal troops. Between this pioneer town and Scullyville, near Ft. Smith, Ark., is a chance for dispute as to which may justly claim the distinction of being the oldest town in the Choctaw Nation. Doaksville,

except its old cemetery, has been depopulated, while Scullyville still maintains its prominence and many of its old structures are standing.

However, old Fort Towson was used by the federal soldiers during the civil war and it was supposed that confederate spies set fire to the wooden structures and burned them. Since that time all that was left of the old fortifications have been crumbling away and there is but little left except the heavy masonry of its old walls.

Many prominent persons visited Fort Towson in the early days. Among them were Generals U.S. Grant and George B. McClelland. Here the latter met and won the affection of a lovely lady who was attending school at the Fort, and who afterwards became his wife, the mother of George B. McClelland, Jr., who became a conspicuous figure in political life a short time ago when he was elected mayor of New York City.

Truly, "time and tide wait for no man," so many intensely interesting reminiscences of pioneer days around Fort Towson will be lost in the whirlpool of twentieth century commercialism as she dawns upon this fair Indian soil. Again we say the historian has dealt unkindly and unjustly with old Fort Towson.