

**MARTHA
ELIZABETH
JACOBS QUINTON
1825-1941**



**A TOWN
IN
HER
NAME**

Located on Highway 31 northeast of McAlester is a town once known as Alexander Gap. The name referred to the community's placement in a pass between the foothills of the Ozarks and the Sans Bois Mountains. In 1902, the arrival of the Fort Smith and Western Railroad brought an increase in settlement.

Jess Wallace, the town's first citizen, sent three town names to Washington DC for the Post Office Department to review. They selected Quinton, honoring Martha Quinton, a prominent local Choctaw woman. In March 1902, the Post Office was opened.

Martha Elizabeth Jacobs was born in Tchula, Mississippi, Choctaw Nation in November 1825. She came west with her parents during the Choctaw emigration. Her first settlement was at Fort Smith in 1839, where she was sent to the girls' school New Hope Mission. She received the equivalent of a tenth-grade education.

Jacobs married Confederate Army Captain Beverly Young in 1858. He served with the First Choctaw-Chickasaw Mounted Rifles. Beverly and Elizabeth had a son before Beverly was killed during the Civil War. In 1868, she married Samuel Quinton and had six more children. She raised her own tobacco and only ate boiled food. When it stormed, she would read the Bible.

The exact date she came to Indian Territory is unclear. Nevertheless, her long journey brought her into surroundings of dry soil stretched miles on an empty wilderness. Her family set up a tent for their home. This spot is where Quinton High School now stands. In those days, the Choctaw Indians had to file with the government for land property, so she made her claim. Not too long after that, she called her piece of land 'Quinton'.

In 1904 the Quinton Pioneer became the first newspaper. The rival newspaper Quinton Times, founded in 1912, absorbed the Pioneer in 1916. Quinton was a small farming community of 700 residents, with a few coal mines northwest of town. In February 1914, the region changed with the discovery of natural gas.

Soon the Quinton area was producing more than five hundred million cubic feet per day. People came to work in the oil fields. The Quinton facility smelted zinc ore shipped from the Joplin Field and elsewhere in the United States grew to include a five-block-long physical plant and three hundred employees. By 1930 the population was 1,804.

By 1936 there were grocery stores, general stores, dry goods stores, drugstores, cafés, service stations, lumber company, bakery, hotel, motor companies, and ice company, among other small businesses. When the Fort Smith and Western Railway was abandoned in 1939, the Smelter and the few nearby coal mines closed down. The population was soon only about 950 residents.

In 1938, 113-year-old Elizabeth stated that she wanted to live to be 125 "if God is willing" but said she was ready to go at any time. She died in April 1941, at the age of 115. At the time of her death, she was the oldest living person in Oklahoma.