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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Hazel B. Greene

This report made on (date) June 10 1937

1. Name Mrs. Frances Jane Ferrier

2. Post Office Address Hugo, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 207 East Bluff Street

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

5. Place of birth About 20 miles from Ft. Smith, in Arkansas.

Mrs. Ferrier is 82 years old and has been blind for twenty years. She is a frail little thing, weighs about 80 pounds. She is no Indian.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____.

INTERVIEW WITH FRANCES JANE SHACKELFORD FERRIER
Hazel B. Greene, Field Worker, Hugo, Okla.
Indian-Pioneer History Project S-149
June 10, 1937

EARLY DAYS IN INDIAN TERRITORY; CHEROKEE NATION

Frances Jane Shackelford Ferrier, and her husband, T.

J. Ferrier, both white, were born and raised in Arkansas about 20 miles from Ft. Smith. They moved over into the Indian Territory in Sequoyah County in about 1882. They were farm people and liked the Indian Territory, except for the fact that it was marshy and swampy, and mosquitoes were so bad that they had to use mosquito bars all the time and they had chills and fever. They returned to Arkansas in 1884, but they kept thinking about some advantages that the Indian country had over Arkansas. And in 1889 they came back to this country. To quote Mrs. Ferrier.

"We lived in a little log, one room house with a lean-to, no windows, and of course, a stick and dirt chimney. The swamps and marshes were terrible, but when we learned that the lands were being cleared up and that we would have churches and schools for our children, we just moved back. We hadn't those when we first moved over here. But when we came back in 1889, it was only seven miles to a church. Sometimes we would go to a Cherokee Indian meeting, but could not understand anything they said, so didn't get much out of them.

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Next we had a subscription school. We paid \$1.50 per scholar for the term of three months.

We moved to the Payne farm in 1895, where the toll bridge used to be across the Arkansas River. It was there then. That bridge was a half mile long. They had to keep a watchman at each end to keep traffic off at train times, because the bridge was so narrow that wagons and teams had to travel along over the railroad tracks. A footpath ran alongside the railroad tracks. That was Houston Payne's farm. He was an inter-married citizen. The railroad that is now the Missouri Pacific paid the Paynes a large sum of money for the right of way to approach this bridge, besides free transportation for the family over a period of 25 years.

Free transportation and free freighting privileges over this railroad was for Houston Payne and his brother. They were prominent and wealthy.

For years we lived on a farm two miles south of Fort Smith, neighbors to Hugh Mitchell, a one-eighth Cherokee Indian. We were so fond of these neighbors that when he died, my husband did not want to live there any more. That was when we came to Hugo, and this farm that we lived on became the allotment of Hugh Mitchell's daughter, Della, who afterward married my son, S. S. Ferrier, with whom I

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live in Hugo. They were playmates from babyhood, always claiming each other. They sold 60 acres of this farm for \$1500.00 in order to get to better schools with the children. (Hugh Mitchell sold it.)

Irish potatoes were the main crops that we raised there. Old Joe Alexander, 'The Irish Potato King', lived adjoining this farm so he bought it. He was an Indian. (Cherokee)

We liked the Indian Territory better than Arkansas, except for the fact that we had chills all the time. But we had a sort of a 'pilledoctor'. He was an inter-married citizen too.

In 1892 an overflow came, ^{and} we had to be taken to safety in wagons-had to stay away a day and night. It damaged our crops a lot, but it was not so bad as the one which came in the spring of 1897. We had to take our stock out and stay two days and nights. I remember once when a cyclone hit Fort Smith. It was January 11, 1898. I had been to Fort Smith, horseback that day, and it was terribly hot, and mind you it was January. The air smelled like sulphur. It hurt our eyes and throats. It was still hot that night when the storm struck at about eleven o'clock.

It began pouring rain and we took the children and

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went into the storm cellar. After the most of the wind was over we went to the house, and put our children to bed. The lightning was so vivid and frequent that it was almost like day. We sat beside the open door and watched the cloud as it went on down the river. We were about a mile and a half from Fort Smith, but we could hear the cries of the injured and dying. We saw ten or twelve burning houses that had been struck by lightning. There were about seventy-four people killed in Fort Smith in that storm. Several of our neighbors were injured, and one negro boy out there was killed. Dr. Bell's house was a perfect hospital. Pallets were all over the floors, upstairs and down. It was awful.

In 1901, we made fifteen hundred bushels of irish potatoes on our second crop. That was nothing unusual for a first crop, but was fine for a second one. Our neighbor, Hugh Mitchell, had died and Mr. Ferrier was so fond of him that he didn't want to stay there any more, so we just started out rambling, and even went over into Texas in our covered wagons. We landed at Goodland, stayed there a week, and Hugo had just begun being built, so we came on down there and our men folks helped to build the dump for the Arkansas and Choctaw Railroad, which was then being constructed from Ardmore to Hope Arkansas.

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Then we bought property here, and made it our home. Husband died here and is buried in Spring Chapel Cemetery, south of town.

It was pretty tough here, too, in those days. It was no uncommon thing for men to fight and kill each other. Our houses were mere shacks. One night when a man was killed near our house, someone ran through our house and we always thought it was the escaping murderer. It was dark.

The fullblood Indians are very religious. At their meetings nobody talks except the preacher. They just sit like stumps. And if one is ever killed in one of their church houses, they abandon it. Never again will they ever hold a meeting in it.

Each family usually keeps a lot of dogs, and of course they follow wherever the family goes, and that includes church. Hence an official dog pelter is a necessity. One is stationed at each side of the meeting house door to keep the dogs out. Each has a stick. When they would invite white people to their services, the husband and wife were escorted to separate seats, usually on opposite sides of the house. The men and women were nearly always seated on opposite sides of the house. I mean the Indians.

They never had choirs either, just everybody sang, and

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it seemed slow and draggy too, because they never had a musical instrument. They might have musical instruments in the full-blood Indian meeting houses nowadays, but they did not thirty or forty years ago.

The fullblood women usually wanted to get off down on the branch alone when they were confined. Sometimes they would make a pallet out on their porch, but mostly took a quilt or blanket down to the creek or branch. They would care for the babies themselves, bathe them and return to the house unaided."