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Elizabeth Ross,
Investigator,
March 4, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. S. W. Ross,
Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Concerning a Surname

In connection with Charles Thompson, a principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, the story has been related that the surname was adopted. Known only as Ochelata during a large part of his lifetime, this man, upon being elected to the chieftaincy of the Cherokees is represented as taking upon himself the name, Charles Thompson, the surname being that of a friend. This friend was Dr. J. L. Thompson, who at the time of Ochelata's election in 1874, was also living in the Delaware District.

Usually, Charles Thompson, the chief, has been considered a full blood Indian. His mind, habits, and actions were largely those of the native. But persons who were once well acquainted with Ochelata or Charles Thompson, have asserted that his mother was a white woman raised among the Cherokees from childhood. She could speak only the Cherokee language

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and according to the same authority, the father of Ochelata was a Full Blood. But within rather recent time it has been said that Ochelata's father was white and his mother a Full Blood.

After being elected in August, 1875, Ochelata, during his four years tenure of office, signed the name Charles Thompson, to official documents. He had not been thought of in connection with the chieftancy until within a short time before the beginning of the political campaign of 1875.

At that period the once long dominant party was weakened when numbers of the natives, then in the majority, joined the opposite party. As a result Ochelata or Charles Thomp-

son was elected and served one term of four years. It was during this administration that a white man was said to have been the chief executive of the Cherokee party except in name. This man, Dr. William G. Miller, acted as private secretary. Dr. Miller's wife was a Cherokee, and for several years he was a familiar figure about Tahlequah, a man

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of checkered and strange career- considerably a person of mystery.

Many years have passed since Ochelata or Charles Thompson served as principal chief, and several decades have elapsed since his death. Those who have referred to him in historical writings have adhered to the belief that his mother was a white woman. Ochelata himself was probably authority for this statement. But in these present times (1930) the story has been heard that a white man, George Thompson, who spent a brief while among the Cherokeees, was the father of Ochelata. Some years ago quite a number of persons from various sections of what was once the old Cherokee Nation east of the Mississippi River, arrived in Tahlequah and appeared before the commission on citizenship. All who presented satisfactory proof of Cherokee blood were admitted to citizenship in the Nation. A number of those so admitted bore the surname of Thompson, and it has been related that the man now said to have been the father of Ochelata was a near relative to these persons, a number of whom now reside in sections of northeastern

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Oklahoma. In the event that Ochelata's mother was not a white woman it would seem that there might be a possibility that Ochelata was entitled to bear the ancestral name of Thompson. But the fact that he adopted that surname seems proof that he believed himself to be the son of a native Cherokee father, and consequently was given the Indian name of Ochelata. Portrait of all the ten principal chiefs who served from 1839 until the dissolution of the Cherokee government, are preserved at Tahlequah. Of these officials Ochelata or Charles Thompson is the only one shown wearing his hat.