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INDEX CARDS

Nation-Cherokee  
Church-Mervin  
Physician-Henry Bonds  
Negro School  
Pryor  
Tribe-Creek

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

Field Worker's name Wylie Thornton

This report made on (date) July 19 1932

1. Name John Luther Branchcomb

2. Post Office Address Tablequah, Oklahoma, P.O. Route

3. Residence address (or location) 5 1/2 N.W. of Tablequah

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month Feb. Day 4 Year 1871

5. Place of birth Mount Vernon, Ill.

6. Name of Father Daniel Branchcomb Place of birth Mount Vernon, Ill.

Other information about father Too young to enter Civil War

7. Name of Mother Mary Gentles before marriage Place of birth Mount Vernon, Ill.

Other information about mother Died in Choctaw Nation

Indian Territory 1883

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

Experiences of John Luther Branchcomb  
Pioneer of Oklahoma

I came to Oklahoma quite awhile before statehood, I came to the Indian Territory when I was only twenty years of age, getting here in July, 1891. I rented the old Mike Mayfield place near Gideon, and found that I had landed right in the middle of an Indian settlement. There were about three white families anywhere near me and these were Eli, John and Henry Fanbush, out there on Fourteen Mile Creek and Arch Hill.

About the first thing I did was to pitch in making some kind of a crop such as I could plant away late like that, but I raised a few things that year; and the next spring I saw I needed help out here alone, so I married Nancy Ann Hill in the month of June. She was the daughter of Arch Hill. We have six children living today and two of our children died within three years of each other.

The first church my family had the privilege of attending was the old Mervin church down there near the Bill Ballintine place, near the Male seminary just south of Tahlequah. The only preacher we had at that time was named Wright and he lived near that church on a farm.

The first Doctor I remember was Dr. Henry Bonds there in Tahlequah. He used to come out to see the sick folks on a horse because I tell you we didn't have any roads in this country back there in 1891 and up to away after 1910, and we haven't got too good a road out here yet but in that time all we had were trails through the woods. This present road

wasn't here. The road going north out of Tahlequah passed on east of us here. It went down a bad hill away in this direction (pointing in the northeast direction); it went down by Gideon and Peggs and on to Locust Grove and Pryor.

The first school out this way was an old colored seminary at Seminary Springs, just about two miles west of me here, and I judge those springs are about six miles from town, pretty near due north. I guess that big spring is one of the best known springs in Oklahoma.

Field worker's note:

I saw the spring and it certainly is a wonder spring, coming right up out of the earth in a flat and smooth location. It is flowing with a great force and causing a large branch to start down through the country. This spring should be noted in Oklahoma History in some way. Here is the location of the First Negro Educational Institution in Oklahoma, I suppose, not too sure of that.

After leaving the Mayfield place, Mr. Branchcomb moved out on Black-bird creek, north of here, where he took a lease from Gordon Watkins for four years. Watkins sold this place to John Hicks (that was still before the allotments) and then John Hicks gave this farm to his stepson, George Houston. George Houston wanted Mr. Branchcomb to stay with him and Mr. Branchcomb says, "I remained with <sup>him</sup> six years making a total of ten years on this same place."

I found a real friend in this Indian, George Houston, I had been deceived by several men here in this Indian Territory just where a man needed a real friend so badly. After I had begun to believe I had a real friend he would do something to hurt me and my family, but this man, George Houston, remained a true friend through every trial and a near friend in time of sickness and death. This Indian had something good about him.

After we left the Houston place, we moved to Pryor and lived one year on Widow Cole's place just six miles east of Pryor. We didn't like the community here. We got lonesome and the next year we come right back to our old acquainted neighborhood just a few miles north of here, and I bought forty acres from Charles Riles. We lived there for twelve years and there is where I got a start. By this time we began to have some church services and the country began to put on a little community life, and a few more whites moved in. I sold this forty acres just two years ago. I had this place in my name several years ago so when I sold this other place, we just moved here. My first wife died and I married this full blood Indian woman Sept 4, 1935. She is a greek.

The biggest change I recall in this country is the roads and wild game. Why, I have seen wild deer running in droves, right out in a field over here across that creek. I have seen wild game of every kind here. I have killed game of every kind but deer in this country. I never was able to kill a deer.

I have considered W.W. Hastings a fair friend of mine up here at town, but of course I never have called on him to represent me or any thing of that kind, and yes, I have known Mike Shormley and his two brothers, Dave and Scott Shormley, but I think Scott Shormley is Mike's half brother; however I am not sure of that.

I have been on this place here now sev nteen years and expect to die right here.

Another thing that is also noticeably different from those old time days is the crop failures. Now would you believe it if I told you I have made \$600 on six acres of land and my boy has made \$400 on four acres, when we planted it in cotton. I used to make money so easy, not half as much worry and work as now. I am not blaming the Government, or any thing else but crop failures, for the farmers' plight. The biggest change is all of these, roads, game, schools, and settlement, loss of open stock range, and of course, taxation burden.

Yes I am glad to tell you anything I can, and hope I have helped you some at least.