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BURNEY, PAUL

INTERVIEW

12895

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BURNLEY, PAUL.

INTERVIEW.

12895.

Effie S. Jackson,  
Journalist,  
February 4, 1938.

An Interview With Paul Burney,  
Tulsa, Oklahoma.

THE BURNEYS.

I am a full blood Chickasaw. My grandfather, David Burney, and his wife, Margaret, were full blood Chickasaws from Mississippi. They left their Mississippi home for the "new land" in 1844. They came voluntarily. My father, Ben C., was born on the way here. He was born on the boat at Shreveport as they were coming up the Red River. My grandfather and his people took up unlimited land in the valley of the Red River. The town of Burneyville in their vicinity was named for them. It is in the southern part of what is today Love County. They carried on cattle grazing on a large scale.

My father attended school at Chickasaw Male Academy at Lebanon. My father ran away and joined the Confederate Army in the Civil War. He was returned as too young, but was old enough to serve in 1864-5. He was under General Cooper. He was always a natural leader among his people.

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He realized that a knowledge of politics was necessary for leadership so he went to Tishomingo and became a janitor at the courthouse. In this way he got first-hand training and information that was of value to him later on.

In 1870 he married Louisa Love, a Chickasaw. She was a widow, a daughter of Jimmie Gaines. Of this marriage there were four children, two boys and two girls. My sister Rebecca married the well-known James McAlester of McAlester, Oklahoma. My sister Susan married Dr. Wm Burk of Pauls Valley. My sisters are both deceased. I have a brother, Ben Burney, living in Oklahoma City.

My father, Benjamin G. Burney, was Governor of the Chickasaws 1879-1880. From that time until his death, in 1892, he was a representative of his people in Washington. I do not remember much about my father, I was eight years old when he died. I went to school at the Harley Institute, academy for Chickasaw boys. This institute was about three miles northwest of Tishomingo. I went there during 1900. A.B. Honnold, attorney, World Building, Tulsa, was one of my teachers. Then I attended Rock Academy for four years.

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These schools were under the direct control of the Chickasaw Government. They usually employed white teachers, sometimes Indians if they were qualified. We Indian boys did not think we had very good teachers. As a rule they were incompetent. In five years of work as a pupil I recall only four teachers whose teaching had lasting influence. One of these teachers was A. B. Honnold of Harley Institute, the other three were J. F. Newsom, J.C. Woodson and Ben Harrison, a Choctaw. I feel the work of these men should be praised. My chief interest in school was baseball. Rock Academy and Harley Institute had competitive games each year. Every spring we met for a week's game on Blue River across from Reagan. It was sort of a stomp ground but was used only for baseball. We played regulation baseball, not the usual savage Indian baseball.

As for stomp dances, I never saw but one in my life. That was held in Tishomingo when I was a little fellow. It was more a jollification. There was a picnic and barbecue, then the stomp dance started. The Chickasaws were in civilian clothes, in fact, my people always wore their

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civilian clothes. Their homes, food, manners and customs were like the whites not only according to my memory but from stories my father told. From my earliest memory there was a grand piano in our home. My sisters were finished musicians; I was taught classical music from the time I could sit on a stool.

I took my allotment south of Cumberland. In 1913 I married Myrtle Watterson. I lived on my farm until 1920. I have five children, Paul, Jr., teacher; Pierre, South Dakota; Ben, Marine Corps, Shanghai, China; Sam, Junior at Stillwater A. & M., and twins in Horace Mann Jr. High, Tulsa. I am employed in the office of the Court Clerk, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Father of B. C. Franklin, 210 North Greenwood, Tulsa, colored attorney, was a slave in the family of my uncle. My uncle, Wesley C. Burney, was my father's brother. They all lived near Burneyville.