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Cherokee Nation
Coo-Wee-Scoo-Wee District
Baptist Academy
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Goingsnake Courthouse

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

Field Worker's name W.J.B. Bigby

This report made on (date) June 14, 1937

1. Name Tom Finley

2. Post Office Address Proctor, Oklahoma. Route 2.

3. Residence address (or location) Se-se-se.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March 1, 1875 Day 1 Year 1875

5. Place of birth Coo-Wee-Scoo-Wee, District, Cherokee Nation.

6. Name of Father George Finley Place of birth Cherokee Nation

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Emma Harlan Place of birth Cherokee Nation.

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 4.

INTERVIEW WITH TOM FINLEY

FIELD WORKER W.J.B. BIGBY.

JUNE 14, 1937

Tom Finley, a Cherokee citizen, was born in Coo-Wee-Scoo-Wee District, March 1, 1875. His parents were George Finley and Emma Harlen, both natives of the Cherokee Nation.

To this union there were four children born namely: Jean, Camp, Tom and Anna. Tom and Anna are still living.

Jean Finley was a teacher in the Male and Female Seminaries.

(EARLY LIFE)

Tom's early life was spent mostly in the Coo-Wee-Scoo-Wee district. His father was a cattle man at that time. Tom was taught at an early age to take care of cattle and he has lived up to his training. He now owns a fine stock farm near Chewey, Oklahoma. He did not go to school very much when he was a boy but he finished the sixth grade in the schools of the Cherokee Nation.

The family moved to the Tahlequah District after Tom was a large boy and here he attended the Baptist Academy in the town of Tahlequah.

When a young man he was given a part time employment in

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a printing shop that was owned by William C. Boudinot, who published the Cherokee Advocate. Mr. Finley still possesses some of the old time issues of this paper.

Mr. Finley, after finding employment in the printing trade, did not go back to his parents afterwards. He married a Cherokee girl at Tahlequah when still a young man and later he moved to a farm in the country and went into the cattle business.

CATTLE AND CATTLEMEN:

Mr. Finley does not remember any cattle men in the district where he was born but after moving to the Tahlequah District, he became acquainted with several.

Finley moved to the Goingsnake District and settled where he now lives. His father is buried near the Honey Hill school house in this county. His mother and grandmother on his mother's side are both buried at Tahlequah. His grandmother lived to be one hundred years old.

POLITICS.

Tom Finley never was elected to any public office in the Cherokee Nation. He belonged to the Downing Party during the Territorial days.

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ALLOTMENT.

Tom was in favor of the Allotment because he believed that every Cherokee should have his share of the land that was owned in common. That way of owning property did not encourage people to make better homes.

The Cherokees owned all the land and did not give anyone a chance to fix a place up to where he could live. Any Cherokee could stake a claim to a piece of land and for a quarter of a mile around the said land no other Cherokee could come if the claimer was not willing for him to do so.

Many Cherokees fought this law when it was discussed and introduced in the legislature. The full-bloods fought this by telling the uneducated that the Cherokee with intermarriages would soon be over-run by the white people and that the idea that the legislators had about not allowing the Cherokees to sell this land, that it would be restricted always, was not so.

He was present when the Allotment law was passed. The Cherokees who fought this bill, under the leadership of Wolfe Coon protested this law as a fraud. The majority of the

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Cherokees that were more than half-bloods were not in favor of such law. These Cherokees protesting caused the president of the United States to call an election of all Cherokees that were over the age of twenty-one. In this election the Cherokees that were protesting were defeated and the land was allotted in severalty.

Finley was acquainted with several U. S. Marshals during Territory days among which were Heck Bruner, who he sometimes helped in catching some Cherokee outlaw.

He attended every term of Court at the Goingsnake Court House. He has heard many famous trials at this place.

He was there when Isaac Walkingstick, Goingsnake Sheriff, was killed by Johnson Corntassel. Corntassel was also killed in this duel. The Corntassels operated a store at this place. Bill West operated a hotel at that time. W. W. Hastings plead his first case at this place. He prosecuted Walker Bark for murder.