

ELING, MARTHA

INTERVIEW

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

#8045

FLING, MARTHA.

INTERVIEW

Field Worker's name Amelia F. Harris.

This report made on (date) July 26, 1937

1. Name Martha Fling.

2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 116 East 13th Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 23 Year 1867

5. Place of birth Love Valley, Indian Territory.

6. Name of Father Dr. F. M. Savage Place of birth Illinois.

Other information about father One-eighth Choctaw Indian.

7. Name of Mother Katherine Savage Place of birth Illinois.

Other information about mother One sixty-fourth Choctaw Indian.

Grandmother on father's side was Martha Lee Dauble, cousin of Robert E. Lee.

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: _____

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Amelia F. Harris,
Interviewer.
July 26, 1937.

Interview with Martha Fling
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
Born July 23, 1867
Father-Dr. F. M. Savage.
Mother-Kathrine Savage

My father was a Government Physician sent here from Illinois to administer to the Indians. Mother traveled a great deal with father and acted as a practical nurse. About a month before I was expected they moved from Arkansas over into the Choctaw Nation and stopped at Loves Valley. This was fifteen miles southeast of Tusahoma. All of this fine land belonged to Judge Love, a Choctaw. He had an empty log cabin which they fitted up very comfortably for mother and in this cabin I was born; we lived here for three months and moved into Hartshorne. Our home here was a double log house with a hall between and a front porch across the front. Our bed-room had a big rock chimney. Here we would roast sweet potatoes. There was a movable rod where we hung a pot. Sometimes we cooked hominy, beans or black-eyed peas in the winter time. There was usually something brewing in this iron pot.

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As our family increased we built another log bedroom onto the back of our main bedroom and enclosed our hall, and built a fireplace here, with built-in back shelves on each side of the mantle. We girls entertained our company here. This was the parlor.

About two hundred feet from our house was a fine spring of water, we had our milk house here where the water ran through a trough and kept the milk nice and cold. Mother always had a flour sack hanging up with clabber milk whey dripping from it, making "cottage cheese" as it is called today. We kept a big iron pot down at the spring which answered many purposes. Every week we used it to boil our clothes in it and every two or three months we used it for making lye soap. Again, we would make a big pot of Tom Fuller and in the winter when we butchered and cleaned hogs it was used to heat water and then for rendering lard and making hog's head cheese in.

We used all the ashes that accumulated under this pot to make lye. We had an ash hopper (the hopper looked

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similar to what a plasterer carries mortar in) stood on crossed pole legs with a half of a barrel under it to catch the lye as it dripped through. This lye was made by pouring water over the ashes.

We had lots of hogs that ran out on the open range and fattened off on nuts and roots of all kinds. We never fattened one in a pen, nor beeves, either; they would fatten on the range for killing or market. When movers passing through would camp at our springs, they would want to buy a hog but father always gave them one. The pay was half of the spare ribs, back bones and one ham. He had lots of cattle and horses, too.

We children learned to ride a horse and shoot a gun when we were very small. We girls always rode a side saddle with long black calico skirts and mother always made a deep pocket in our riding skirts for us to carry our pistols in. The country was sparsely settled and we girls never rode by ourselves. There would always be two together.

Once we were taking corn to mill which was forty miles from home and we had left home early in the morning. This

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old grist mill was called the half-way mill and it was on Mountain Fork Stream. It was also a combination cotton gin and sawmill. We were galloping along within fifteen miles of the mill when a man came out from the bushes and stopped in the middle of the road. He stretched out both hands as if to stop us. My sister and I both ran our hands in our pockets, and didn't take time to get the pistols out of our pockets but shot through our riding skirts at the ground in front of him. He yelled and started running for the brush; we took two more shots in his direction. We could have killed him but Father had drilled it into our minds not to shoot to kill unless we were forced to do so. The mill hands heard the shots from our pistols and said "I bet that is the Savage girls," and they jumped on their horses and met us. We told what had happened but that we didn't try to hit him.

We went hunting often but Dad wouldn't let us kill but one deer or two turkeys. He always said it was a wilful waste to kill more than we could use.

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We girls went to school at Tuskahoma when Peter Hudson, a fullblood Choctaw, was superintendent. Then we went to Little Rock to school, also Peabody University at Nashville, Tennessee. We all went to good schools.

Father established the first post office at Harts-horne. We girls worked in the post office until we married. My sister Jennie was the first woman notary public in Indian Territory. She got her commission under Judge Parker of Fort Smith.

Our social entertainment was very limited. At Christmas time we would have a social at our house where we played, "We Are Marching Around the Levy," "The Old Brass Wagon," "Go In and Out the Windows," "Clap-in, Clap-out," "Post Office" and many other similar games. About once a year we would have a square dance; Virginia Reel, waltz and Schottische. This was usually held in some of the lodge halls. In the summer time we went to Indian Cries which were held near a good spring or river. These cries lasted for four or five days. The Indians would come in their wagons and bring all their dogs. Everyone would bring different kinds of Indian dishes. Sour bread, shuck bread, which was made of meal, and would

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have brown beans in it, Paschofa, Tom Fuller, hickory nut, hominy, and some dish they cooked with hog jowl, chopped up, and hickory nuts, too, just a little sour. All these foods were good. These were full blood Choctaws.

We "washed out" Indians, as they called us, would bring pies, cakes, pickles, light bread, jellies, jams, and salads. Just the things that are always carried to picnics. There would be plenty of barbecue of all kinds of meats. We had a long plank table and while we ate it kept two big boys busy knocking the dogs away that came with the Indians. I will not go in detail relative to these cries.

After finishing school I married Dr. Perry Fling. He was from Virginia and was sent to Goodland School, by the Government as Indian physician.

Silas Bacon, Choctaw, was Superintendent at that time and a Mrs. Gibson was sent by the Presbyterian Missionary Board as teacher. She became secretary and is still at Goodland School to day. Dr. Fling became so enthused over this school and tried so hard to take in every Indian who applied for admittance, that he and Silas Brown went in

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debt to the Paris Wholesale Grocery Company to the amount of \$4,000.00. Dr. Fling put up our property as security. He was good to the full bloods and they all loved him.

There is one incident I shall never forget. While Dr. Fling was living, some neighbors came after Dr. Fling late one evening to go over to a full blood Choctaw's home. The wife was going to be confined (will not give name now) they lived on Harvetubby Creek, north of Hugo. I often went with Dr. Fling on confinement cases, so I went this time. This woman had been sick all day and every indication was that the baby would soon be born. But Minnie shook her head when Dr. Fling came near. Finally she said to me, "Minta Subunna", and that meant, "Come with me", and she started out the back door towards the creek with a pair of scissors in her hand. I followed her to the creek bank and very soon she gave birth to her baby there on ^{the} creek bank. She cut the navel cord herself and tied it. She then bathed the baby in the creek water, wrapped it in a small blanket and handed it to me.

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She then bathed herself and we went back to the house. I was so dumbfounded I was very little help. As we drove home in our buggy I told Dr. Fling all about it. We had heard of some of the full bloods waiting on themselves; but this was the only one I ever witnessed. I went back to see them and both mother and baby were getting along all right.

We lived near Hugo and Goodland School for forty years.

Dr. Fling died in 1917 and one hundred or more full blood Choctaws came and were deeply grieved. Their beloved doctor had passed on to the "Happy Hunting Ground". He had been kind; he had lived among them and died among them; and they felt the loss.

He was given an Indian burial. I had a vault built. There was a small tree, a sapling, at the head of his grave. One man bent this down across the grave and held it. The Indians marched around the grave and each pulled off a leaf and threw in the grave. They did this until the last leaf was pulled and with bowed heads they put the lid on the coffin. They then preached a short sermon in Choctaw and sang a sweet song and stood back for the top

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to be sealed. They said they put the leaves in the grave with a prayer so that he would be forgiven of any sin.

After Dr. Fling's death, Silas Bacon saw that the \$4,000.00 debt to the Paris Wholesale Grocery Company was paid in full, thus releasing the doctor's estate of the mortgage and closing the last chapter of Dr. Fling's life.