

FRAZIER, JOHN ALEXANDER.

INTERVIEW

4528

121

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

122

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Field Worker's name Ethel Mae Yates

This report made on (date) June 21, 1937

1. Name John Alexander Frazier

2. Post Office Address Elk City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Route #2

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 7 Year 1865

5. Place of birth Missouri

6. Name of Father Thomas Frazier Place of birth Tennessee.

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Lorisann Frazier Place of birth Tennessee.

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 \_\_\_\_\_

An Interview with John Alexander Frazier, Elk City.

By - Ethel Mae Yates, Investigator.

June 21, 1937.

I came to the Indian Territory with my brother-in-law in 1881, from Missouri, to a little place named Bartles Mill. This place was named for Mr. John Bartel who owned the water mill there. We stayed there and worked during that winter. We came in covered wagons.

We left Bartles Mill in the Spring and went to the Capital of the Creek Nation, Okmulgee, but we did not stay there long. Then we went to the Capital of the Seminole Nation, Newoka. At that time the Seminoles had their own laws and executed their own criminals. The Seminole Indians at that time, had a force of twelve men who were called Lighthorsemen, who had jurisdiction only over the Indians. The way the Seminole Indians punished a man who had stolen a cow or horse was to tie the thief to a whipping post and then each one of the Lighthorsemen would whip him. This whipping was repeated if the man stole again and if he stole the third time or was found guilty of murder he was shot to death.

The Seminoles would gather up in little bunches and live in little log houses; they called these little settlements

towns and they would have their Tom Fuller patches.

I was just a boy when we moved in there and the Indians were holding court at the Council House which was made of stone and is still standing.

My brother-in-law's name was George Berry and one day he and I noticed a bunch of Indians standing around a fire. I was anxious to know what was going on so I went down where I could watch them. They brought out an Indian and took his shirt off, then they tied his hands and feet together with ropes. Then these Indians took a long lariat rope and tied him to a rail and took him to a log cabin, the roof of which had almost rotted off, and threw the rope over one end of a log that was sticking out. Then two men got on the rail and five or six men got hold of the rope and stretched the criminal up in the air. Then the Indian Chief ordered the Lighthorsemen all to fall in line and walk up to the criminal. Each Lighthorseman had a hickory stick three or four feet long in his hand. There were ten Lighthorsemen in line and the Indian Chief gave orders that they should stimp up one at a time and each should

give the culprit ten licks. If a Lighthorseman dropped his whip he had to fall out of line. One Lighthorseman dropped his whip so he was obliged to drop out of line and the thief got ninety licks instead of a hundred. This whipping was a punishment for a thief.

In about fifteen minutes after they got through with this Indian they came out with another who had been condemned for murder and they started down a trail with him. I was the only white person there but I wanted to know what they were going to do with this murderer so I followed along. The Lighthorsemen took the murderer a little way from town, out into a little grove, and there they all stopped at a place where there was a little blackjack tree. They put a rail through the forks of this tree and made the condemned murderer sit down on it, tied him to the tree and put a black cap over his face. Then they all went back about sixty feet and knelt down and a preacher began to pray. Then that guilty Indian began to weep and take on and when they got through praying three Lighthorsemen walked out with guns. They put a piece of paper over the murderer's heart and the Captain walked

FRAZIER, JOHN ALEXANDER.

INTERVIEW.

#4528

4

out, gave the signal and they all fired at once and killed him. The coffin was a box that they had made out of old lumber and he was put in it before he quit kicking.

In the Spring of 1882 my brother-in-law and I went back to Missouri and my brother-in-law stayed there until 1889 at which time he made the run and got a claim five miles east of Oklahoma City out on the North Canadian River in Crouch's Flat.

In the Fall of 1889 I came back to Oklahoma and found my brother-in-law and my sister with their nine children living at their new home, a dugout, 18 X 20 feet, dug back in a bank and covered with logs and dirt. There I made my home until I was married.

The Run occurred in April and nothing was raised on the land that year so we decided that we would go down into the Seminole Nation and dig wells for the Indians and in this way we got enough money to live on. We had to board with the Indians; my brother-in-law had lived among the Indians so long that he could talk their language. The Seminoles would take 'Sofka', this is what they called corn,

and soak it in water until it was sour, and that and corn bread and dried beef is what we had to eat. The Indians would take sour water off the Sofks and make bread with it and we would eat these things and they did really taste good.

By doing these things my brother-in-law got by and held his claim down until he could prove up on it and he finally got enough money to build a house; then his wife, who was my oldest sister, died. After her death my brother-in-law became discouraged and sold out and went back to the town of Seminole and took a claim. There were not many white people there at that time but after this they came in and took leases. They would make out these leases for five and ten years at a time and take them to the Indian Agent to sign, and if he thought a lease was all right he would sign it and then a settler could live on a lease from five to ten years for making improvements on it.

This was a free range country in those days and people could have all of the cattle and hogs they wanted and could let them loose in the woods.

The Seminole Indians came together once a year; they

FRAZIER, JOHN ALEXANDER.

INTERVIEW.

#4528

6

would gather roots and herbs and boil them and then they would fast for several hours and then they would drink this medicine to ward off sickness. They would follow this with their Green Corn Dance.

The Seminole Indians had a peculiar way of playing ball; they would take a hickory limb and bend the little end of it back and tie it in the shape of a spoon and leave a handle about three feet long and take one of these hickory limbs in each hand and use them for bats for they never touched the ball with their hands. They would make a large ring and put a tall pole right in the middle of it with a horse's head tied on it, and the man who could hit the horse's head was considered a real ball player.

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My niece, the oldest daughter of the brother-in-law of whom I have told you so much, was married to Mr. Bill Blevins and they took a claim that is now Capitol Hill.

Myrtle Frazier was born in Jewel City, Kansas in 1879. My father, John Blevins, was born in Kentucky. My mother, America Jane Blevins was born in Iowa.

I came to the Indian Territory with my parents in 1894.

FRAZIER, JOHN ALEXANDER.

INTERVIEW.

#4528

7

We came in covered wagons; camped out nights and cooked on campfires. We crossed the North Canadian River and came through the Creek and Seminole Nations and that Spring rented twenty acres of land and planted it in corn. We lived in a tent the first year we were there and after that first year my father took a lease from an Indian, and then he bought another tent which we set off to one side and used for a kitchen. We bought a cook stove later and the following Spring my father cut and hauled logs and built a house. While we were building our house one of our tents caught on fire and burned with everything we had in the kitchen. Some people in old Oklahoma sent us a few things. My brother slept in the kitchen on a cot and all of the bedding was burned.

I was married in 1898 to John A. Frazier and we lived for almost a year with my parents, then they went to Colorado in 1900 but came back later and took a lease and lived in a log house.

Father and Mother had two small children and when Father was away from home one afternoon, two Indian boys came

along and wanted something to eat which my mother gave them. After the Indians left my mother took the two babies and went over to the house of a neighbor who also had two small children. The husband of the neighbor woman was gone also. Mother and the other woman made their beds out in the yard and after they had put the children to bed they heard these Indians coming, whooping and hollering. The women decided to take their children and go down on the creek but before they got away the Indians rode up and asked for water which the women got them. The Indians talked among themselves in their own language and then rode off. After the Indians had gone the two women took their children and went down on the creek and slept that night.

The next morning when my mother went home she found that these two Indians had been there and had ransacked the house and had taken everything in the house to eat and had killed chickens and had taken her skillet. A little later on Mother found her cooking utensils in a thicket not far from the house. When the Indians came the first

FRAZIER, JOHN ALEXANDER.

INTERVIEW.

#4528

9

time my mother took notice of a dog they had with them and thought it was such a beautiful dog and when she found these cooking vessels she found traces to show that these Indians had killed this dog.