

FRANKLIN, RICHARD.

INTERVIEW

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

FRANKLIN, RICHARD

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Field Worker's name R. B. Thomas,

This report made on (date) January 26, 1938

1. Name Richard Franklin,

2. Post Office Address 544 South 4th Street, Muskogee, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 544 South 4th Street,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 1 Year 1856

5. Place of birth Creek Nation, Muskogee County.

6. Name of Father Fred Franklin, Place of birth Creek Nation,

Other information about father He was a slave of Jim Yargee.

7. Name of Mother Thamore Franklin, Place of birth Creek Nation

Other information about mother My mother was one-fourth Creek

Indian and three-fourths Negro.

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 6

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R. B. Thomas,
Interviewer,
January 26, 1938.

Interview with Richard Franklin,
544 South Fourth Street,
Muskogee, Oklahoma.

I was born in the Creek Nation, March 1, 1856. My mother was named Thamore Franklin, she was one-fourth Creek Indian and was married to a negro slave, Fred Franklin, who was a slave of James Yargee of the Creek Nation. I am one-eighth Creek Indian and seven-eighths negro. My father was born in the Creek Nation and he, with nine other slaves, worked on the farm of Jim Yargee in the Creek Nation until 1867 when the Civil War was over.

My mother was allotted one hundred and sixty acres of land near Canadian and moved on it with me when I was eleven years old. My mother drew Indian money under the Creek Treaty of 1866, when the Government agreed to pay the Creeks for all damage done in the War and also allot them land. I worked with my father until I was twenty years old and applied to the Government for an allotment

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and they gave me one hundred and sixty acres of land in the Creek Nation.

I was married to Fannie Franklin in 1876 and moved on my farm and we had seven children, two are now living, Edd and Jess, who live in Muskogee County; they are farmers.

Father died in 1916, in Muskogee at the age of ninety-nine years. My mother died so long ago I don't remember what year.

I was five years of age when the Civil War broke out, and when Lincoln freed the slaves, some went to Kansas, some went to the army and some hid out in woods and lived in hollow trees. The Government tried to make some go to war and did make some but we moved about one-half mile from Fort Gibson until after the War. We were afraid the soldiers would burn our house and steal everything and the soldiers at Fort Gibson said if we moved there it would be safer, so we did. Lots of negroes left their masters and ran away but a great many stayed with them. My master was good to me and I wanted to stay with him. My mistress was good to

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me, too. I ran errands, brought in wood and scratched my master's back until I was thirteen years old. I really did not wish to leave but I got married and the Government settled me on one hundred and sixty acres of land in Muskogee County where I lived until 1936, when I came to Muskogee to live with my nephew, Ross Franklin.

When I was fourteen, my master told me to hitch up one ox and plow ground. I broke ground and plowed corn with one ox and then I drove two when I was sixteen years old. We used oxen more than we did horses. We hauled logs with them to build houses. We even rode them to town.

We made hominy out of corn and used lye in it to take the husks off. We made soap out of ashes made into lye.

My mother spun our own clothes and knit them. She was a hard worker and worked in the field also but my master was good to her. We always had plenty to eat and a warm house to live in and I was very happy until the

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Civil War broke us up and we moved to Fort Gibson, then I had to work hard and endure hardships.

In 1864, my father and I started to Fort Gibson after a load of hay to feed the oxen; the Government furnished the Indians hay to feed the stock on. We were driving two oxen to a wagon and just as we reached the hill above Fort Gibson we heard the cannon roaring and saw tree tops being shot off; we did not know that there were any Yankee soldiers in Fort Gibson but they had slipped in that night and attacked next morning about dawn. My father turned his oxen around and laid the whip on them. They ran as fast as they could back home and we could hear shots until about 2:30 P.M., when the battle ceased. I was eight years old and I was sure scared. I thought I was going to be shot. I helped my father whip the old oxen and they did some good running. I think my father was scared as bad as I was. We reached home and locked the doors and my mother and the other members of my family were so scared they got under the bed and some

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got under the quilts and covered up. We were only one-half mile from the battle field and shells were popping all around us, I shall never forget that day. I was afraid to get out of the house until the next day. I went down there and found lead bullets and saw big trees with the tops shot off by cannons. I also saw blood on the ground but did not see any dead men. I went back home for I thought the Yankees would kill me, because my master had told me the Yankees were bad people. After the War, we moved back to the farm about twenty miles west of Muskogee, and I made money raising stock and cotton and corn but I lost my farm under a mortgage in 1936. I am now eighty-two years of age and too old to work.

In 1883, Checote was the Principal Chief of the Creek Nation and had a great many followers but Isparhechar wanted to be Chief and was afterwards Chief but Checote beat him in the War and remained Chief a long time. Isparhechar persuaded a lot of Creek Indians to follow him and he organized them into a big army and I joined him. We were not trained to fight and did not have a leader to train us and

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when we would find any of Checote's men who were trying to elect him or keep him we would fight them. Sometimes there would be a running battle which would last two days and we fought as far up as the Ponca Reservation. Sometimes Isparhechar's men would shoot their own comrades in the running war when they would get excited, but finally Checote whipped us and we quit fighting. I was sure glad, I wanted to come home and rest for I was tired of war. I don't know why people want to make war and shoot women and children and kill people for nothing.

I have a book on this war. I have been offered \$10.00 for it but there are only two out and I won't sell it, but I will loan it.