

GARDNER, ELSIE.

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Lula Austin

This report made on (date) March 21, 1938

1. Name Elsie Gardner (colored)

2. Post Office Address Bokchito, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) R.F.D. 5 miles S.E.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

5. Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name of Father Benjamin James Place of birth Mississippi

7. Name of Mother Malvinia Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

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 2.

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Lula Austin.  
Investigator,  
March 21, 1938.

An Interview with Elsie Gardner,  
Bokchito, Oklahoma.

I do not know my exact age, but I was about as tall as a thirteen year old girl the first year of the Civil War. Davis Frazier owned my parents but I was sold to John Spring when only four years old, and stayed with him until I was freed. My brother came for me and took me to my parents who were in Jackson County. My father met me and said, " Lord bless my soul, I didn't think I would ever see you again." My parents had twenty-four children and Father was one hundred and twelve when he died. During the War I was supposed to guard my mistress' clothing and when I heard soldiers coming I would carry everything to a hide-out in the swamps and remain with them until the soldiers were gone. About two hundred soldiers came about noon one day. They rode up to the corn crib and opened the door, letting the corn fall to the ground for their horses. They killed our turkeys and raided our smoke house and took skillets from the kitchen to prepare their meal.

My father's master's son Randolph Gardner, still lives near Bennington. He used to operate a grocery store and we

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children called him Uncle Gardner. My father would say, go tell your Uncle Gardner to send me some groceries, and he would send them.

I used to play hiding corn with Will Hampton. We would shell the corn and try to guess how many grains in our hand.

## Elsie Sure of Homestead Exemption

COUNTY Assessor G. L. Castleberry is inclined to place his stamp of approval on the application for homestead exemption filed this week by Elsie Gardner, who says her age is 108 and that she has owned and lived on the place for which she is seeking tax exemption for the last 68 years.

Elsie Gardner, a stooped, wrinkled but very active Negro woman, owns 50 acres of land two miles southeast of Bokchito, on which she has reared a large family.

Elsie, a Freedman Choctaw, received the land as her allotment in 1904.

She was born in Choctaw county and came to what is now Bryan county when her son, Noah Gardner, was two years old. He is now 65. Elsie's oldest child is 76 years old.

Castleberry is convinced that Elsie could qualify for an old-age pension, but since she only wishes homestead tax exemption he will recommend that her application be approved. She values her farm at \$250.