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Indian-Pioneer History Project

Grant Foreman, Director.

211 Federal Building, Muskogee, Okla.

An Interview with James Mashaya,
Finley, Oklahoma.

By Johnson H. Hampton, Field Worker.

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I was born near Rufe, Oklahoma, in McCurtain County, Oklahoma, April 7th 1888. At that time there was no Rufe----it was a wilderness----in fact, there was no town or village in that part of the country until the A. & C. Railroad came through there. This place Rufe is an inland village out about 12 miles north of Fort Townson, Oklahoma.

My father's name was Hick Mashaya, and my mother's name was Mary Mashaya, both of them were full blood Indians and they lived around Rufe until their death. I was a small boy when my father and mother died. I have been told that my father was not in the Civil War as he was too young when the war broke out so he did not enlist, though his sympathy was with the South, and if he had lived a few years longer I might have found out about the war through him.

My father was a farmer and lived on the farm until his death. After his death, my mother lived on the place until she

she died. Then some of my kinfolks lived on the place and took care of the stock that my father left. We had cattle, hogs, and ponies when my father and mother died. I don't know what became of the stock after that. I was a small boy then so I don't know who got them.

I went to school at Armstrong Academy, an Indian school, supported by the Choctaw Government. This school was for orphan children. At the time I was in that school there were a good many full blood Indian boys attended. It was located in the woods away from any town, in fact, Caddo was the closest town. But after the railroad went through that country then Bokchite was the nearest town. It was about three miles from Bokchite, Oklehoma, in Blue County, Choctaw Nation. This school was kept up by the Choctaw Nation and was expressly for Indian Orphan children and only for full bloods, but after a while they let any Indian boy go to it. This building burned and the school closed. It was never built up again.

I am an Indian Preacher - Methodist Church. I have attended lots of Indian Camp Meetings and I have

preached a good many memorials --- the white people call it an Indian Cry, of course they cry, but it is a memorial and not an Indian Cry. When the Indians would have one of those memorials, the white people would gather around and poke fun at them, when it was a serious thing with the Indians. Of course, they did not understand the ceremony that was going on but it seemed to me that they would have the respect for themselves as well as the Indians to stay at home. The Indians no longer have these 'crys, and I don't think that they ever will, because the white people make a show out of it.

The folks that I lived with after I came home from school would make shuck bread (banaha) and hominy, (Holh-poni) (Tanchilobona) This was a dish that was made by corn and fresh hog bones cooked together. I wish I had some now. That is a preacher's favorite dish instead of chicken. They sure could make some fine corn meal out of the corn by putting it in a mortar and beating it until it was ground fine and just as white as flour. They called it Tanchi Pulaska, corn bread, and it was fine eating.

I am a young man about 49 years old, so I am not able to give much of a history and I don't think that there are

any old Indians in the country that can give you much history. The thing we can tell is what we have heard other people say.

I am now living at Finley, Oklahoma.

Although my home is at Rufe, my preaching circuit is mostly in this country so I moved into Pushmataha County so I could be close to my work. Our churches are not what they used to be. The Indians are about to die out. I see in the papers where Collier says that Indians are increasing, If he would come down to the southeastern country he would not make that statement.

Okla Nana anoli banna keyu ha tok o pulumi
fihna chi a hobaiske.
