

Ella M. Robinson,
Interviewer,
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Pioneer Creek Indian Woman
Mrs. Muskogee Yargee Ross
by
Susie Ross Martin

My mother, Mrs. Muskogee Yargee Ross, was born near the Canadian River fifteen miles southwest of old North Fork Town in the Creek Nation, about 1844, (exact date not known).

She was the daughter of Captain Checartah Yargee and Millie McQueen. Her grandfather, Peter McQueen, was the son of James McQueen, a Scotchman, who lived among the Muskogeese for ninety years and died at the age of one hundred and twenty-eight.

Peter McQueen married Betsy, daughter of Colonel Ben Durant and Sophia McGillivray. They had three daughters, Millie, Nancy and Tallassee. Millie was my grandmother. Yargee, son of Big Warrior, married all the McQueen sisters.

Mother was the grand-niece of the noted Alexander McGillivray of the Muskogee, Creek, Seminole and Chickamauga Cherokees. He was known as the "Great Alexander," and was said by authorities to be the most brilliant

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man ever born on Alabama soil. He married Sehoy Marchand of Hickory Town, who belonged to the Wind Clan.

The McGillivray name was introduced into the Muskogee Country by a Scotch lad, Lachlan McGillivray, about 1736. The McGillivray family belonged exclusively to the Muskogees of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Country of Alabama and was in no way connected with the Creeks in Georgia.

Lachlan McGillivray opened a trading business and became quite wealthy. They had three daughters. Sophia married Ben Durant; Jeanette married LeClerce Milfort, a noted Frenchman; and Sehoy married Colonel Tait of the British Army. One son, Alexander, who became noted, married Vicey Cornells, daughter of Joseph Cornells of South Carolina, a French Huguenot.

Captain Checartah Yargee and his wife lived in the Muskogee Nation in Alabama until the Indians were forcibly removed from their homes in 1838. My grandfather, Checartah Yargee, was a man of wealth and when he came west to their new home, brought his stock and slaves to the new country and settled on the Canadian River near old North Fork Town. They, too, belonged to the Wind Clan and Hickory ground

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Town as did all their people in the old Nation. One of their little boys died on the route westward. They buried him by a big river of which they did not know the name (Misissippi). As they were bringing their horses, they rode a greater part of the way on horseback. One little boy, John, made the entire trip on horseback.

My grandfather Yargee was one of the largest slave owners among the Muskogees. As his rule was never to sell or part with a slave he became the largest slave owner among his tribe.

It is said that his negro quarters had the appearance of a small town. He erected a church house for their exclusive use and always gave them Saturdays and Sundays to spend as they chose, but expected all to attend church. He was a devout Baptist.

His family consisted of himself, his wife, two daughters, Muskogee and Louise, and one son, John. As he was a full blood and his wife a half-breed, little or no English was spoken in the home. My mother said the only English words she heard her father speak were, "Damn nigger" when his personal servant failed to do as he was told. They lived in a large commodious house built entirely of logs as

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were all the negro cabins. Each girl was given a personal maid as soon as they passed young childhood and ceased to require the services of a nurse.

Rose Ceaser, a big black woman who lived west of Muskogee for many years, was my mother's maid and came occasionally to see her in after years.

Mother attended the little neighborhood school and learned to read and write in English. She spoke English quite well but never forgot her native language.

During the Civil War a large number of the Muskogees or Creeks, as the tribe became known in their western home, moved to Fort Gibson in the Cherokee Nation for protection from the ravages of war. It was there my mother met and married my father, Mr. Joshua Ross, a member of a prominent Cherokee family.

As was the custom of the Indians for the parents to select a husband or wife for their children, he was their choice as a husband for her. As it was equally agreeable to both of them, they were married in 1864 and lived happily together until her death in 1913.

My father was employed in the Suttler's store in Fort Gibson and they lived there until 1867 when they moved to Grand Saline and lived on a farm. Their first

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child, Joseph, was born and died in Fort Gibson. My oldest sister, Rosalee, and myself were born at Grand Saline.

In 1871 when the MK&T Railroad was building through the Indian Territory, my father moved to the little village on the prairie that had been named Muskogee in honor of the tribe in whose territory it was located. On coming here, father opened a general mercantile store on the east side of the railroad at the intersection of what is now Cherokee Street and East Broadway. It was known as the Red Front Store. As mother was, by right of blood, entitled to all the land she wanted, they selected a strip lying directly east of the Katy Railroad to where the Frisco tracks now are; extending north as far as Callahan Street and south to Okmulgee Avenue. They enclosed it with a rail fence. The streets were mere roads leading to the country. Mother said she spent the first night in a little shack built of odd pieces of lumber and dry goods boxes that answered for a hotel. Mr. and Mrs. James Mitchell operated it as a boarding house. It was located on the Katy Railroad just east of the tracks. Later, Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell

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moved across the tracks and ran a large hotel where the Katy Station now stands, known as the Mitchell House. It was known throughout the southwest for its good food.

My father built a little two room boxed house with a shed room for a kitchen, on what is now East Broadway in the six hundred block, and into that they moved with their two little girls.

The prairie grass was so high that mother kept us close at home for fear we might get lost. I remember we could only see the tops of the mover's wagons as they trekked across the prairie on their way to Texas.

My grandparents died soon after the close of the Civil War and we children never knew them. My Uncle John Yargee married and had five daughters. They still live on Canadian River. Two of his daughters, Rose and Jennie, attended school at Northfield, Massachusetts, in 1880. After moving to Muskogee, my older brother was born and mother's time was chiefly taken up with the care of her children. As she was young and inexperienced, father thought a book on child rearing might be of benefit to her and he bought one. The only thing I remember her saying she learned from it was "never to punish a child when

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you were angry," and she never did. Often making us wait for hours before deciding just what to do, greatly to our discomfort.

After the death of her sister, Louise, she took her two children, a boy and girl, and they lived with us until the girl was married and the boy died in young manhood.

Mother knew all the Indian remedies used in sickness. Ginseng and Ball Willow were used in pneumonia or winter fever as they called it. Life Everlasting was also used for colds. Peach leaves pounded up were made into poultices; Slippery Elm bark was used as poultices to reduce inflammation and the water from it was used as a drink for fevers. Soot, taken from the chimney, would stop the flow of blood in case of accidents. Mother knew a secret way to cure Jaundice and successfully cured a case on myself. She did not touch you or do anything that you could detect but all of a sudden I was over it. She said the secret could be known to only one in the family but promised to tell me, but never did. She had learned to cook when a young girl in her mother's home and knew all the ways to prepare Indian dishes. She made blue dumplings in berry and wild grape seasons. Puska was parched corn reduced to a powder that made a refreshing

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drink and the Indians all carried it when they went on journeys, as it also served as a food. Sofka was always on hand. Bean and crackling bread was her favorite kind of bread. As all Indians are, she was extremely fond of fish and we had it often. She often told us many Indian customs; one, the old burial custom of placing as many belongings as possible in the casket with the person, of dropping a spray of evergreen in the grave and always every member of the family dropped a clod of dirt on the casket. Mother had the Indian fondness of pretty clothes and was always well dressed when going out. As a housekeeper and a mother of nine children, she was kept busy but always had time to attend church. She was one of the three charter members of First Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

My father being a Cherokee and connected with several prominent Cherokee families, mother became acquainted with them and regarded them as much her relation as her own people. She possessed the characteristic trait of the Indians, that of hospitality, and guests at our house were always welcome no matter how numerous. She was generous to a fault and no hungry man was turned from her door unfed,

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even if she had to cook an entire meal for him. Mother had an unusual aptness for caring for the sick and was constantly called upon in cases of illness as trained nurses and hospitals were unheard of in that time in this country.

When we children were old enough to care for ourselves, she devoted more time to her church duties, always attending missionary meetings and contributing generously.

She had a profound respect for my father and his fine intellect and education. She regarded him as the head of the household as did all Indian families regard the husband and father, always giving her support to anything he became interested in.

We lived at the same location in Muskogee from 1871 until 1913 when my mother died. The children were all born there. After her death, father went to live with my sister, Rosalee, Mrs. William M. Miles at 116 North D Street, Muskogee, where he died February 15, 1928.

Father and mother began housekeeping in a little two room house with a shed kitchen and as the family

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grew, a room was added as needed until we had an eight room house with three long porches that made a delightful place in which to live. A large grove of beautiful shade trees surrounded the house. After the property was disposed of, the house that had fallen into decay, was moved off and nothing remains to us but a pleasant memory of our childhood home. A three story brick apartment house, number 615 East Broadway, occupies part of the lot.

Mrs. Ross was a descendant of three of the most prominent families of the Muskogee Tribe in Alabama. With intermarriage of the McGillivray, Yargee and McQueen families, three of the most noted families of the tribe, were linked together, without whose records in war and peace the history of the Muskogee Tribe in Alabama would be sadly incomplete.

McGillivray Family

Peter McQueen, son of Old James McQueen, the Scotchman who lived ninety years among the Muskogees and lived to be one hundred and twenty-eight years of age, married Betsy the daughter of Col. Ben Durant and Sophia McGillivray.

Daughters:

Millie
Nancy
Tallassee

Yargee, son of Big Warrior, Chief of the Muskogees, married all of the McQueen sisters.

Muskogee Yargee, the daughter of Millie married Joshua Ross.

CONCLUSION:

Muskogee (Yargee) Ross, is therefore a great-grand-niece of General Alexander McGillivray.

The McGillivray family belongs exclusively to the Muskogees of the Coosa and Tallapoosa country of Alabama. In no way connected with the Creeks of Georgia.

The following families are related to the McGillivray-Sehoy union:

McGillivrays	Minters
Durants	Gibsons
Weatherfords	Smiths
LeClere Milfort	Yargees
Monac	Walkers
McGirts	Lewis
Cornells	Meagher
Simpsons	Gouges
Washingtons	Stewarts
McQueens	Stiggins

Opuithli Yahola, Oseola, Tuckabatchee Micco, Tuckabatchee Harjo and other men of note were connected with this noted family.

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Queen Ann, the daughter of the Old Scotchman, James McQueen, married Mr. Copinger a white trader at Kan-hutki Town on the Tallaposa, and had a daughter, Polly Copinger, who married Billy Powell, the little Englishman, and became the mother of Assi Yahola of Oseola. Oseola left the Muskogee country upon reaching manhood, going to Florida and becoming War Chief for the Seminoles. Oseola was $\frac{1}{4}$ Muskogee, $\frac{3}{4}$ Scotch-English.

NOTE:

For more information on McGillivray, refer to Pickett's History of Alabama, Hallibut's Creek War, Woodward's Reminiscences, Garriers' History of Louisiana, Jones' History of Georgia, Stiggins' History of the Muskogees and Dr. John Swanton's History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors.

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The son, Alexander:

Married Vacey Cornells, the daughter of Joseph Cornells from South Carolina, a French Huguenot. On the death of Chief McGillivray, Vacey married Zack McGirth of the Tory-English family.

Vacey Cornells: Had three brothers: George
James (Noted
U. S. Scout)
Dave (Ifa
Tustunnugee)
Had two sisters: Lucy (Mrs. Jno.
Kean)
Sapoya (Mrs. Mad
Dog's Son)
Sapoya (Mrs. Capt.
Walker)

George Cornells:
Was the father of Alexander Cornells,
Ass't. U. S. Agent and National In-
terpreter.

Dave Cornells or Ifa Tustunnugee, was the father of
the noted Opuithli Yahola.

Alexander Cornells:
Married the Big Woman, daughter of
Big Warrior of the Tuckabatchee
tribe and head chief of the Muskogeese.

Yargee: Son of Big Warrior married Millie
McQueen.

Muskogee Yargee:
Daughter of Yargee and Millie McQueen
married Joahua Ross.

McGillivray Family

Sehoy: Daughter of Capt. Marchand of the French Garrison at Fort Alabama, married Lachlan McGillivray, young Scotchman.

Children: Sehoy, married Col. Tait of the British Army. Sohia, married Col. Benj. Durant of South Carolina.
Sehoy's second husband - Charles Weatherford, English trader.
Jeanet, married LeClerc Milfort, Napoleonic Frenchman.

McGillivray Family

McGillivray, as a family name was introduced among the Muskogees of the Tallapoosa and Coosa river country, by a run-away Scotch lad from Scotland, about the year 1736. He found his way to the Muskogee country, met pretty little Sehoy, daughter of French Captain Marchand and his full blood Muskogee wife (call her squaw, if it makes you feel better). He married the girl, opened a trade among the Muskogees and became wealthy.

Lachlan McGillivray and Sehoy had three daughters and one son, the Great Alexander of the Muskogees, Creeks, Seminoles and the Chicamauga-Cherokees.

The Daughters: Sophia, married Col. Ben Durant.
Jeanet, married Le Clerc Milfort, noted Frenchman.
Sehoy, married Col. Tait of the British Army.
Sehoy, married a second time to Col. Charles Weatherford, an Englishman, who was the father of William Weatherford or Red Eagle of Creek War note.