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Ella M. Robinson,  
Interviewer,  
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Life and Experiences of a Pioneer Cherokee  
Frederick A. Kerr  
Warner, Oklahoma.

I was born eight miles east of Fort Gibson in the Cherokee Nation, September 9, 1853. My parents were Frederick Augustus Kerr, who came to the Cherokee Nation from Pennsylvania, and Louise Coodey, sister of William Shorey Coodey and a niece of Chief John Ross of the Cherokee Nation. Mother, with her parents came to the Indian Territory in 1834. They were known as "Old Settlers."

Father and mother were married in 1840. They were the parents of ten children, six boys and four girls. The boys were: Frank, Neville, John, Wirt, Fred and Charles. The girls were: Flora, Minerva, Ann and Mary. They were living on a farm when I was born and when I was four years old we moved to Fort Gibson, where my father was employed in the United States Commissary Department. We lived down in what is now called "Old Town" on the river. My father held this position until the close of the Civil War when we moved across the river to what was called the Shaw place.

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My chief delight, as a boy, was fishing. We caught them on lines or speared them at night. My mother would not cook fish that was caught on Sunday.

I attended school at Fort Gibson and when I was sixteen years old, my parents decided that I should go to the states to school and made arrangements for my going. As I was sixteen years old and considered myself a grown man, I said I was old enough to earn my own living and refused to go. I set up housekeeping alone in the Grand River bottoms and began raising hogs. As the range was free and open they required no feed except in winter. As I was successful in this enterprise, I decided to seek a larger and better location with plenty of timber and running water.

As I was saddling my horse one morning starting to where I did not know, my father asked me where I was going. I told him I didn't know but said I was going in search of a better location on which to operate a regular hog ranch. He said, "Wait a few minutes and I will go with you."

We started north riding through the country where sometimes there were no roads at all. As we approached the Kansas line I stopped. Father said, "What is the

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matter?" I replied, "I think this would be a fine place for my purpose. Plenty of timber, running water and good land." It was on Hickory Creek eight miles south of Coffeyville, Kansas. Father said, "Don't you want a partner?" I told him I did and he agreed to go in with me. We went to Parker, a little trading post nearby, to make arrangements for my moving. As all land was free to the Indians it did not require any legal action. Father and I returned home and my brother, Neville, older than myself, gathered up a hundred and fifty head of hogs and started driving them through the country. I had built a large corral in which the hogs were kept until they found out that was their home. Father turned his interest in the ranch to Neville and we lived there and operated it.

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A little later we came back home and took one hundred head more to the ranch, making a total of two hundred and fifty to start with. We put some land in cultivation and raised large crops of corn as the land was very productive. There was plenty of mast for them in the fall.

One day a merchant from Parker came over to our house and said he wanted a man who knew the Indian Territory well to go with him to Texas. Neville asked him what he would

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pay and he said \$2.50 per day and all expenses. My brother replied, "If it wasn't for leaving Fred alone I would go." I told him that I could manage all right, to go on. So I bought his interest and got my brother John, at Fort Gibson, to come in with me.

As Neville had driven cattle from Texas to Kansas many times he was familiar with the route. The merchant asked, "What do you think it will cost to make the trip?" And Neville said, "I think we can get through on \$2.50 as our meals and lodging at night won't cost us anything for I know everybody on the road. I have been traveling over the Indian Territory all my life and have never paid for a meal or a night's lodging yet." The man could hardly believe that. They started and when they reached their destination, they had 50¢ to the good and had spent most of the \$2.00 for tobacco.

I operated the ranch for more than two years and one fall I engaged one thousand bushels of corn to be delivered to me at 15¢ per bushel. Then the man came to deliver the corn he saw the hogs and said he would like to buy ten head and would pay \$10.00 a head. I sold the hogs to him and said I would sell the entire lot if I could get a satisfactory

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price. He brought other buyers and when I closed out I had \$3,000.00 in greenbacks. I went to town and had a leather belt made in which I put all my money.

After selling out, I started for home. I hadn't gone very far when I met a farmer who was desperately in need of a farm hand. On being told that I did not class myself as an experienced farmer, he said he would take a chance and give me \$15.00 a month with board. I hired to him and went to his home not far from the ranch. I plowed in the fields and drove the team for \$15.00 a month, with \$3,000.00 strapped around my waist. I stayed more than three months and came home.

My mother and father had moved to Brushy Mountain, nine miles northeast of Muskogee and were living with my ~~sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. George W. Elliott.~~ Mr. Elliott was bookkeeper for the J. E. Turner Dry Goods Company in Muskogee and only came home on Sundays. The place where they lived was afterwards known as the Rube Evans home.

I tended to the farm for some time and then bought a cattle ranch on Rattlesnake Mountain, a few miles east of Checotah, near a community that is still known as Lexanna.

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It was there that I met and married Miss Eva Scott, daughter of a practicing physician of Texanna. We were married in 1881, Judge Woodall of the Canadian District performing the ceremony. We then closed out the ranch and moved our farm a few miles south of the present town of Warner where we lived for more than twenty-years and where all of our nine children were born, eight of whom are still living. We then moved to a smaller farm, a mile and a half from Warner, where we still live. Although only twenty-one miles from Muskogee, I have not been there for five years.

We have eighteen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. I am eighty-four years old and have spent my ~~entire life in Indian Territory and Oklahoma.~~ My wife and I have been married for fifty-six years and have never had a misunderstanding or a quarrel, something, I think, worthy of recording.

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