

WALKENSTICK, RALPH

INTERVIEW

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## BIOGRAPHY FORM

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## WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

## Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Mildred B. McFarlandThis report made on (date) July 22 19371. Name Mr. Ralph Walkingstick2. Post Office Address Edmond, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 407 E. Campbell4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 17 Year 18965. Place of birth Tahlequah, Cherokee Nation6. Name of Father Simeon Walkingstick Place of birth 1867Other information about father Goingsnake District - Cherokee NationName of Mother Viola Osborne Walkingstick Place of birth TahlequahOther information about mother Cherokee Nation 1867

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Mildred F. McFarland

Interviewer

Edmond, Oklahoma

July 22, 1937.

Interview with Ralph Walkingstick  
Edmond, Oklahoma.

The Cherokee Indian Tribe never lived in teepees or in tents. We lived in houses made of bark or logs. Our tribes were living in that sort of house in small villages when the white man came to this country. We cooked over open fires out of doors, in pottery which we made ourselves. The log house of today is a copy of the Cherokee house of years ago.

We never moved around much, except on our yearly hunts for meat for the winter.

In 1836 the Indians were forced to migrate from Georgia and Tennessee. This journey was called the "Trail of Tears".

My uncle, Ben Walkingstick, was among those who finally arrived, sick, weary and half-starved. I remember the terrible tale he told of that trip. I also knew quite a few others by the names of "Six-killer", "Old Man Wolf", "Backwater", "Terrapin", "Ross", "Mays" and "Rat".

My grandfather was a farmer. He raised practically everything. He owned great herds of paint ponies. The

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men wore moccasins and had feathers in their hats. We made our dyes and paints out of certain types of clay, stones and herbs. For different colors these things were mixed.

The Cherokee Tribe is the only tribe having a secret society. It is called "Keetoowah". It is the only one of its kind. The Kee-too-wahs have a festival for four or five days each year. They hold their meetings in a little log cabin about ten miles from the Arkansas river at Gore. The old organization leaders were called "Medicine Men". Two hundred years or more ago, a few of these old medicine men were gathered together on their knees, in a circle, praying. Suddenly a fire sprung up in their midst. This was an omen to them. That fire has been kept burning constantly ever since. Someone is there all the time to keep it going. It is located at the cabin where they hold their meetings. Everything is secret. All of them are full-blood.

My father was a lawyer, the first full-blood Indian to practice law in the United States Courts. I attended grade school in Tahlequah. Our teachers were all Indians. No white children were allowed to attend without paying tuition.

After leaving there I entered Sacone College, and later Dartmouth at Hanover, New Hampshire.

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When I was a child we had our own government. Chief Harris was Chief of the tribe about the time tribal government was dispensed with.

We were friendly with all tribes except the Osages.

There was not much game in the Cherokee Nation and the men wanted to go to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

To get there they had to cross land belonging to other tribes. These other tribes were not so favorable about that, so the Government granted the Cherokee Tribe a strip of land from the western boundary of the Cherokee Nation to the Arkansas River, and due west to the Rockies. This strip was thirty or thirty-five miles wide. It was called the "Cherokee Outlet" or Strip. It was opened for settlement in 1893.