

DOWNING, LIZZIE FLEMING

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Bradley Bolinger

Report made on (date) July 12, 1937

Name Mrs. Lizzie Fleming Downing

Post Office Address Wilburton, Oklahoma, General Delivery

Residence address (or location) Five miles out on Limestone Prairie

DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 2 Year 1897

Place of birth In the Cherokee Nation

Name of Father Martin Fleming Place of birth Indiana

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Mother -- Place of birth --

Other information about mother I do not remember anything about my

mother's age as she died when I was an infant.

For complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Use blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 4.

My father's name was Martin Fleming. He was born in the state of Indiana, August 16, 1841, and lived to be eighty-one years of age.

I was moved to the Cherokee Indian Territory along about the time I was twelve years of age, I am now forty. My father and I got to be pretty well acquainted with many of the Cherokee Indians in those days. I met and married a fullblood Cherokee Indian by the name of Blue Downing and we have lived in the Cherokee Nation since.

The best I remember, all that my father told me about the Cherokee Indians was that along in the early days there was a lot of talk of the allotment of the Indian land at so many acres to one individual.

These Indians had what they called clans in the Cherokee Nation. One was named the Night Hawks. This was a class of the Cherokees that were not educated very much, and they just wanted to be let alone by the white people and the government. They wished to be able to use their country as they pleased, for their own hunting grounds, and to be able to govern themselves. They were opposed to the white man settling in their nation. In

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the Cherokee's language Night Hawks were called the Ka-Pu-Ahs. They were entirely against any type of civilization and did not want the government to allot the land which they thought should belong to them always after they had been moved here from the South.

At this time there were a part of the Cherokees who had had some education. This clan was a more progressive one and they were in favor of the land allotment, and the acceptance of the Territory into Statehood. This clan of the Cherokees had no particular name, as did the Night Hawks.

The Night Hawks would travel all over the Cherokee Nation on horseback. They would find out where there was to be a gathering of the more progressive class of Indians and they would go there and start a big fight. There were many killings in these fights, a great number of which occurred at night. If there was any particular Indian who was a leader in the progressive clan they would go to his home at night, shoot him, and ride off. This also happened to several of the white settlers who had taken part in the argument.

The clan of Night Hawks finally thinned out, and many of them realized that their belief was not workable and

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that their plan would be impossible to get over. More of them joined with the progressive class of the Cherokee Tribe, and accepted their beliefs.

My father fought in the Federal Army during the Civil War, and moved to the Cherokee Nation in the year of 1870. He had a very good education for a man in those days. He was very successful in the making of friends with the Cherokee Tribe, especially many of those Indians who belonged to the Night Hawk Clan. He had learned to speak most of the Cherokee language and put in lots of time visiting around among these Night Hawks. He had many long talks with them explaining to them that their idea of civilization was wrong.

It was possible to tell in those days just when the Night Hawks were going to have one of their raids against other Indians who were against them. The Night Hawks would have a certain place in the country where they would all gather and have a large fire. They would cook and eat, sleep, and dance, and stay there for three or four days. Then we white settlers would know by that that they were soon to start on one of their raids.