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James R. Carseaway,  
Investigator,  
April 19, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. Thomas Bluford Downing,  
Locust Grove, Oklahoma.

My name is Thomas Bluford Downing. I am a three quarter blood Cherokee and speak both Cherokee and English. I now live on a farm two miles west of Locust Grove, in Mayes County, Oklahoma.

I was born nine miles north of Tahlequah, at what is now known as Moddy. My father's name was Daniel Downing, and my mother was Martha (Nicholson) Downing. They were the parents of Fannie H., Jacob, Alex, Thomas Bluford, Tooker, Chester, and Ella. Besides myself, Ella, who married Walter Markham, is the only one now living.

My grandfather said when the United States Soldiers got ready to move the Cherokees, known as the Eastern Emigrants out of Georgia, they just made a drive through the country, and gathered up every Cherokee they came to, and took them to a place where they were guarded, until the movement was ready to start. He said the first thing the soldiers did when they came to a house was to reach up over the door and get the old musket or rifle, if there was one, and say,

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"Now get out." He said they were driven out without being allowed to take anything, except what they could carry in their arms.

Had \$2000 Buried

My grandfather said he had \$2000 in money buried on the place, but was afraid to tell the soldiers about it, for fear they would take it away from him. He was two days out when he got away and went back and got his money and overtook the company. He said all the aged people, who were too old to walk, were left on the premises. He was looking for my father to arrive any day and was all the more anxious to catch up, to be with my grandmother, who was walking.

Father Born on Trail of Tears

My grandfather said when they had reached Calhoun, Tennessee, while on the Trail of Tears, that my father, Daniel Downing, was born, and both of my grandparents were allowed to drop out. They remained at Calhoun, Tennessee, a good many years before coming on to the Indian Territory.

After my father had grown up and I was a good sized boy, he told me that he owned a section of land back at Calhoun;

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Tennessee, left him by my grandfather and he gave me some kind of papers concerning them, but before I was grown up I lost the papers, and I figured the land was lost too, so I never went back to see about it as we had all the land at that time we needed.

#### Landed at Stilwell

When my grandparents landed in the Indian Territory they stopped at Stilwell, Cherokee Nation, where most of the Indians who came from Georgia landed, and later scattered out to all parts of the Indian Territory. My grandparents lived there the rest of their lives, but when my father married Martha Nicholson they moved up in Tahlequah District, nine miles north of Tahlequah where I was born February 23, 1871. My father stayed on the farm he settled in Tahlequah District until 1880, when he moved to Tahlequah to educate his children.

I received my education in the Cherokee National schools, the Male Seminary and the Old Baptist Mission, then an Indian Mission school, located in the old brick building, now occupied by Buff Wyly in Tahlequah as a residence.

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The Old Baptist Mission

The Old Baptist Mission was one of the oldest Indian schools in the Cherokee Nation, and was built by the Baptist people to educate the Cherokees. Reverend John Jones was one of the first missionaries, and he lived in the brick house now occupied by Buff Wyly. He was a white man, but could talk Cherokee better than most of the Cherokees. This may sound strange, but I have known several white men who learned to talk Cherokee, who could talk better than lots of the Cherokee people, for the reason that they had a better education, and it was not so hard for them to find the right word to express themselves. I am an interpreter and am at this time applying for a position on the Grand River Dam project, in buying up the land in the Grand River basin, which may be owned by Full Bloods.

The Old Baptist Mission was moved to Muskogee and turned into the Bacone College, and is now one of the finest Indian colleges in the country.

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Married a White Girl

It was in 1910 that I ran away with a white girl by the name of Elsie Ratcliff, living at Chateau, I took her to Jackson, Michigan, and married her. We went to Canada on a wedding trip and returned to Pryor, where I went into the mercantile business.

I also served six years as undersheriff under George W. Mayes and then ran in a field of ten Democrats for the office of sheriff of Mayes County and received the nomination, but was defeated in the general election, by Joe Ross, another Cherokee boy, who lived across the river in the full blood section. Joe received the full Republican vote and the votes of most of the full bloods and beat me in a Democratic County. He was re-elected for a second term.

Served in Last Cherokee Council

I was living in Saline District east of Grand River, when the last Cherokee council was elected, and Love Bumgarner, Cicero Howard and myself were elected as the last Cherokee councilmen. It was after the Curtis Act had

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passed, and it provided that all the acts of the National Senate and Council had to be approved by the President of the United States before becoming a law, which took all the pep out of our members, and there was not much doing, except such things as was necessary in winding up the affairs of the Cherokee Nation.

#### Political Trouble In Saline

Washington Swimmer, a well known full blood Cherokee, of Saline District, was elected as Assistant Chief under Samuel Houston Mayes in 1895 and served six years, through two terms with Mayes, and one term with Thomas M. Buffington. When Buffington was defeated in convention for the office of Principal Chief by William C. Rogers in 1903, the ex-chief put forward his old friend, Mash Swimmer, for Assistant Chief to run on the ticket with Rogers, but the Rogers bunch had David Faulkner, a half-blood Cherokee from Sequayah County, slated for the job and nominated him. He was elected in the general election with Chief Rogers and served in that capacity until his death on August 2, 1914.

The office of Chief and Assistant Principal Chief, after 1903, became hold-over affairs, as there were no council and

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senate after statehood in 1907, and Rogers and Faulkner both held the offices until their death. Rogers died on November 8, 1917, and Levi Gritts, a full blood Cherokee, was appointed by the President of the United States to take his place, there being nothing to do but to sign papers.

When Washington Swimmer was defeated in convention for the office of Assistant Chief, under Rogers, it made him so mad he went back to Saline, and ran for the senate on an Independent ticket. He waged a hot fight against both National and Downing tickets, but was defeated by Thomas Smith and David W. Ragsdale, who served as the last two senators from Saline District, being elected on the regular Downing ticket.

Dave Faulkner Jr.

During the eleven years Dave Faulkner, Sr., served as Assistant Chief of the Cherokee Nation he became a very popular man. He was a man who bore acquaintance, and everyone who met him learned to honor and respect him. He was a Mason and well-to-do farmer and stockman in Sequoyah District, and after



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statehood his son, Dave Faulkner, Jr. married and moved to Claremore in Rogers County, where he served as sheriff of that county for many years.