

ERVIN, CHARLES WASHINGTON

INTERVIEW

#18391

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

ERVIN, CHARLES WASHINGTON. INTERVIEW.

12591.

Field Worker's name Hazel B. Greene.

This report made on (date) December 11, 1937.

1. Name Charles Washington Ervin.
2. Post Office Address Hugo, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) 12 miles southeast of Hugo.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year 1859.
5. Place of birth Rome, Georgia.

6. Name of Father William Ervin. Place of birth South Carolina.

Other information about father Father died at Roebuck Lake.  
Ervin.

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Cooper. Place of birth Rome, Georgia.

Other information about mother Buried at Shoal Cemetery.

12 miles southeast of Hugo, Oklahoma.

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 3.

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Hazel B. Greene,  
December 11, 1937.  
Journalist.

An Interview With Charles Washington  
Ervin, 12 miles southeast of Hugo.

My father had a brother, Calvin Ervin, who had<sup>4</sup> married a girl in Mississippi, who was almost a full blood Choctaw Indian. She had some French blood, but could scarcely speak English when he married her. Sally Gibson was her name. They came to Doakville in the Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory, in the year of 1833 or possibly sooner, perhaps with the first bunch of Choctaws that were brought out here from Mississippi. They settled a place about four miles west of Doakville, and a little north, the place now known as the Ben Sneed place. They lived there several years, in fact Aunt Sally died and was buried there in the garden.

In December of 1869 my father sold out at Rome, Georgia, to come to his brother Calvin in the Indian Territory. We rode the train from Rome, to Memphis Tennessee and we went from there to Little Rock, Arkansas, by steamboat. When we got to Little Rock we heard that the Red River was so low that steamboats were not then running on it. So Father set out and walked from Little

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Rock to Doakville, Indian Territory, to get his brother's wagon and team to come after us and our plunder. When he got there he was so worn out from his two weeks tramp of a little better than two hundred miles that he got his nephew, Columbus Ervin, and another Choctaw young man, Harrison Loman, to come after us.

We were in Little Rock at Christmas and New Years. I got a job driving folks around town in a hack. They'd call it a taxi now I guess. My little brother, Ed, saw some little boys distributing little pamphlets and it looked like a good idea to him, to hand books to people as they passed along the street, so he went to the free library and got an armload of books and was giving them away to anybody who came along when a policeman came along and investigated it, and took us both to the police headquarters. I had a hard time convincing them that I had nothing to do with it, until one who had been given a book came in and said Ed had done it. But when they found out that we were just two little ignorant boys from the country they turned us loose.

Well, finally the boys got there with the wagon and team, and we started out. It was rainy and cold and it

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took us a little more than two weeks to make the trip. We had so much rain and streams were swollen and we would have to wait for them to run down, sometimes two or three days, and sometimes about the time we would think we could get across, another rise would come along. We made that trip in February, barefooted, and we walked all of the way. Mother and the baby had to ride in the wagon with the plunder, and she drove the wagon. The bigger ones had to walk. Sometimes the little ones would give out and ride until rested. At night we would strip the limbs off of a sapling and bend it down and tie it down and spread a tarpaulin over it, and gather up leaves for a foundation for our bed, make our bed on that and we five kids would crawl into that and sleep as snugly as you please. That little tepee would be crowded. That kept us warm.

I was big enough to plow and when we got to Doaksville it was time to begin planting corn. We planted every seed we could get our fingers on. We had brought a lot of them with us. We raised a garden, lots of potatoes, beans and corn especially.

Uncle Calvin had a contract to re-build Spencer Academy, which was located about 15 miles north of his

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place, and had been almost demolished by the Union soldiers in time of the war, so he took his family up there and let us have his place for the year or more that it took him and my father to re-build the five buildings which made up the group of Academy buildings. Father stayed up there a lot of the time, and came home at intervals to see us.

After that we moved to Goodwater which was about 16 miles south-east of what is now Hugo, Oklahoma. Goodwater had been a mission school for the Indians, but was not in operation when we moved down there. There was a frame building there which they told us was the original Mission School and church building. We lived for two years in one of the old homes for missionaries, and brother Bill was born there.

There was no mission school there when we lived there; in fact, -I don't recall any school at all being held there, but I do remember the camp meetings they used to have there. People would gather there from miles and miles around and camp for weeks at the time. It was the big get-together of the year, and they would prepare and bring some of the best

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things to eat. And a lot of food was cooked there on the ground. They would barbecue beeves, hogs, goats and deer.

I was told that the lumber for the church was hauled from Texas. Red River in those days was fordable at Slate Shoals. That was before it was dynamited in order to permit passage of steamboats at that shallow place. Later the steamboats went up Red River as far as Denison, Texas. Occasionally small steamers could go up Kiamichi River as far as where Sawyer is now.

We moved over into Texas and lived a couple of years, then we moved to Pine Ridge, and stayed there about three years. That was about a mile north of Doakville. We lived in an old missionary home there too. There were several standing then and the church too, but they had no school or church there while we lived there, that I remember.

The first and only schooling that I got was one term of three months down on Horse Prairie. The teacher was an old Mexican War Veteran named Patterson. I was about 17 then.

When we lived at Pine Ridge, Father owned and operated a blacksmith shop at Doakville. It was while we lived

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there that he sent my brother and I out into a cedar thicket to cut some posts. Our little white dog followed us, and tressed one of these bob-tailed wild-cats. I climbed the tree and knocked him out with a club. He lit on my dog and the white hair was just a flying like snow. It made me so mad to see him tearing up my little dog that I jumped on him and stumped him to death. But not before he had raked my shin from my knee down with his claws. It never got well, though I stayed in hospitals for months at a time. I had a sore leg all of my life until Dr. L. P. McCuistian at Paris, Texas, amputated it in 1930.

It was while we lived at Pine Ridge, too, that I went one night to spend the night with a cousin of mine, and her husband. There were three of us boys sleeping in one bed in the west room of that log house, across the hall from my cousin and her husband. I was sleeping in the middle, when some horsemen halloed at the gate. Gilstrap was the young fellow on the outside of the bed, but he commanded me to get up and see who was calling "hello", out there. I started, but he got mad because I pulled the covers all off of him, so he swore and got



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out himself and opened the door to the hall. By that time they were in the hall, and when he opened the door, they began shooting into the room. There was a long table in the room covered with dishes and they shot them all off of it. Then they hammered and hammered at the door on the other side of the hall. Then they went out the back end of the hall to the back of the yard to re-load their old muzzle loading guns. While they were out there I got up to put on my boots. I thought the fellows gone, but they were not. You know how hard boots will get if put beside the fire to dry? Well I had been slopping around in mud and water that day in mine and had set them on the hearth to dry out. The hearth was made of clay, because it was a stick and dirt chimney, and constant sweeping had hollowed out the hearth until it was a lot lower than the floor. I was sitting on the end of the floor boards putting on my boots when they began firing again through the cracks of the house where the chinking had fallen out from between the logs. I keeled over flat, but was not hurt. Then they went off to re-load again, and my cousin's husband tried to get

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me to run out and go up to Uncle Calvin's about a mile north of there and get another gun and some more ammunition for him. His had given out. I was afraid to go, and then he suggested to his wife that we all make a run for it and get away into a thicket in front of the house while they were in the back yard. He said that the marauders would not bother the children, that he was all they were after. She refused to leave her children. She said she would just die right there with them. Then I slipped out and got under the house. Some hogs were sleeping under the house and I guess they must have thought I was a dog, they ran me out. I could not go back in the house. They were shooting into it again, so I slipped out to the lot. I started to catch a little gray pony, but I knew they would catch me on him, so I got a bridle on Gilstrap's horse and led him over the draw bars and hopped on him, away I went. The shooters sighted me, they mounted their horses and took after me. I had a little start and gave them the slip when I came to some thickets. They didn't know which way I went there, and they didn't much care, it was my cousin's husband they

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were after anyway. I rode on to Uncle Calvin's and got his shot gun, and by the time I returned it was broad day light, and another battle was in progress.

I stopped in front of the house across the road in a thicket and watched the battle, but did not go on over. After awhile the fellows went away. This man who had married my cousin had killed a fellow and these fellows were friends of his seeking revenge. But they didn't get him. He lived to be killed by another enemy, and his widow married four more times. Gilstrap didn't die either, he went off over into Texas where he had come from. He said he had had enough of the Indian Territory.

We lived at Doakville several years, then father moved to Rosbuck Lake. He had been there one year when he took sick and died. We buried him in Doakville cemetery. Mother died just about 12 years ago, about 1925. She was ninety-odd years old when she died. We buried her at Shoals cemetery.

There were lots of soldiers buried in the Doakville cemetery. A young man by the name of Charlie Waters was employed by the Government to dig them up for removal.

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It took him a year or more to dig them all up. He would make little wooden boxes and set them beside the graves and he would put the bones and all trinkets or means of identification in each box and print all he knew about each one, on his particular box. Then when he would get a wagon load he'd haul them to Fort Smith and they would be buried there or at Fort Gibson. I don't know which.

While we lived at Doaksville and Pine Ridge I was over all the hills and creeks many times, and all around the old fort. A good many of the walls were standing then, and there was a cemetery over near Fort Towson, but I believe it was a sort of family burial plot of the Gooding family. Some tombstones are there yet.

I remember the home of an old missionary, Parson Keith; the church had given it to him for a lifetime. I was on the Military Road east of Gates Creek. The road that ran from Ultimathule past Clear Creek, Doaksville, to Rose Hill, which was the post office until it was moved from there to the home of George Oakes, and named Longview.

Longview was three miles east of what is now Hugo, Oklahoma. An old fellow by the name of Case carried the mail over that route for a long time.

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Long years before we came to this Indian country, a band of Cherokees had a village on Carney Creek, which rises about two miles south of McCann in Choctaw County, and passes my place just about a mile and a quarter to the west, and empties into Red River about three miles south of Shoals. That village was just about west of my place. Well, for some reason, the Cherokees abandoned that village and left their cabins, unoccupied, so a bunch of Choctaws, who wanted to be different from the balance, took possession of that village. The Choctaws I mention were called Sixth Town or Bridle Indian, why, I do not know. They would tattoo a line from the lower front of the ears to the corner of the mouth. I used to see them eat terrapins. They would catch one, put a coal of fire on its back, which would make it stick out its head, which the Indian would whack off with a knife, then he would wrap it in wet clay or leaves and roast it. When it was done, he would remove the hinged lower shell, and take a horn or shell spoon, or a good stout stick and stir up all the inside thoroughly, and eat it. The entire contents, just like we do oysters".