

ERVIN, WILLIAM JOSHUA

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

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Field Worker's name Hazel B. GreeneThis report made on (date) October 14, 1937.1. Name William Joshua Ervin2. Post Office Address Hugo, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) 20 miles south and east
of Hugo.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 18715. Place of birth Old Goodwater - In Choctaw County.6. Name of Father William Ervin Place of birth South Carolina.

Other information about father _____

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

Other information about mother _____

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 7.

An Interview with Mr. William Joshua Ervin, Hugo.
By - Hazel B. Greene, Journalist.
December 14, 1937.

Of course, being born here in the Indian Territory, the hardships we bore were accepted by me as a matter of course. I never realized that we had any hardships until I was grown and made money, which enabled me to have lots of conveniences and some luxuries. We didn't think much about schools because we knew nothing of them; consequently we had very little schooling. We thought very little of outlawry, because it was so common. Renegades, escaped convicts, and other undesirables came from other states into the Indian Territory for escape from the law and to ply their nefarious businesses, especially in the southeastern part of the Indian Territory because it was adjoining the lines of Arkansas and Texas.

There were plenty of outlaws in the Indian Territory who were raised here, too. A social gathering was the place that many of them selected to settle their disputes, feuds, etc. I have ridden as far as twenty miles to a dance, only to witness it broken up by a shooting scrape. They would sometimes shoot the lights out just

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to escape confusion. That was done by drunks. I have seen rooms so full of smoke from guns that one could hardly find ones way out at the door. I have seen as many as four killed at one dance, two white men and two Indians. It looked like the Indians just got bloodthirsty when they got drunk and they would hunt up their enemies and kill them. People in this country learned to hide out when they heard a drunk come racing his horse down the road, shooting and whooping as he came. And, if a dance was carried on peaceably and nice, the boys would race their horses and shoot their guns off and whoop as they left the place where the dance was held.

When I was a boy there were few white girls in this country. A fellow had to marry an Indian or not at all. The Choctaw Indian girls were very shy, especially the full bloods. When they knew you were coming they would run and hide if they liked you, and really wanted you to pay some attention to them. If they did not, they would sit stolidly and never notice you. They usually hid behind the door. A boy would know where to find his girl.

He would go look behind the door, and finding her there she would laugh and he would take her by the hand and pull her out. Even then, he had to do all of the talking. I have known girls to run and hide under the dining table.

I was about eighteen years old when I married sixteen year old Nellie Spring, daughter of James Spring. Her mother was "Puss" Roebuck. Nellie was three-quarters Choctaw Indian. In those days, if a fellow wanted to marry under the Choctaw Law, he had to get ten good substantial citizens to endorse him as a good prospect for a citizen of the Choctaw Nation, and then it would cost him \$100.00 to pay for the license. I said I would not pay a hundred dollars to marry any woman, so I just went to Antlers, got my license, and we went down to Goodland and got Parson Gibbons to marry us. When we found that we were going to have statehood, lots of folks tried to get me to re-marry Nellie under the Choctaw Law, but I saw no particular advantage to be gained, so did not. We had been separated for twenty-five years when she died.

My brother, Ed Ervin, married a full blood Choctaw

Indian girl named Rudie Roebuck, a daughter of Dave Roebuck. They separated and he married another Choctaw woman, a three quarters-blood, her name was Pookie Crowder. They also separated.

My brother, Frank Ervin, married Josephine Bohanan, a full blood Choctaw Indian. They separated, re-married and separated again; then she died and he married a white woman, Nannie Evans.

My brother Bud, C. W. Ervin, first married a full blood Choctaw Indian woman, Annie Peters. She died and he married Dollie Grubbs, of one-eighth-Cherokee blood.

I know every nook and creek of Choctaw County. I rode it first when I was about 15 years old, gathering the "T. O." cattle for Thomas Oakes when he decided to divide his property between his nine children before his death. They were scattered over a radius of about thirty miles or more, and those cattle were as wild as deer. We gathered a thousand head of them and penned them. There were three judges. We built nine lots. The judges would tell us which cattle to put in each pen until we would

have several in each of the nine pens, and then they would run them into other pens and give room for more until the whole thousand head were divided. I received \$2.50 per day for my work and thought I was rich. It took nearly a year to gather them. There were three of us working at it, too.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ERVIN, says:

I was born in Georgia, Floyd County, near Rome, January 15, 1865. I have a clear recollection of our trip by train from Rome to Memphis and thence by steamboat to Little Rock, Arkansas. Also of our wait there while Father walked to Doaksville after a wagon and team to send for us. It seems to me that it took us about thirty days to make the trip from Little Rock to Doaksville. About the second night we were in Doaksville, Father and my uncle were not at home, just mother and us children, and some Choctaws came to see us. They were friendly, but Mother didn't know it and she got scared and ran out in the night with her five kids. She had been

told tales of "Wild Indians" killing white folks, and that was the reason she was scared. Some Comanches had been in that community about two months prior to that and killed several white people and some Choctaw Indians.

We saw lots of different kinds of Indians when we moved to Goodwater. They would come there and camp for weeks at a time to worship, Choctaws, Chickasaws and "Six Town", the bridle Indians. In fact all the civilized Indians would come to this place to worship. Sometimes some of those Indians would get drunk. They had no jails to put them in, so the Lighthorsemen or Sheriff would chain them to trees until they would get sober. It was not far over into Texas to where they could get the whiskey, and the temptation was too great to resist some-
times.

My father died in 1877 and left Mother with six children, and no one to see after them but the Indians. They were good to us. They would bring us all kind of meats to eat. We had no doctors in this country, except herb doctors and witch doctors. I remember one Indian who became very

ill and was afflicted with "witch balls in his body". Those witch balls were all under his skin. One very large one on his hand. The witch doctor called that large one on the hand a "brother" and he sucked it out with his mouth. When a person was believed to have bewitched another he was shot, or killed some way. That was the only way to get shut of them.

There was a tribe of very small Indians both in height and size. They were called Scetina, or little men. Their main diet was slippery elm bark and herbs and barks of trees. The most of them died here on Red River, the few who were left went West and were killed out; so I have been told by old men.