

George Washington Finley

Birth: 1855, USA
 Death: Nov. 16, 1932
 Miami
 Ottawa County
 Oklahoma, USA

Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Date: June 21, 1937

Name: George Washington Finley

Post Office: Deceased

Residence Address:

Date of Birth: 1858

Place of Birth: Miami County, Kansas

Father: Unknown

Place of Birth: Ill.

Information on father: Came with the Miamis to E. Kansas

Mother: Unknown

Place of birth: Ill.

Information on mother: Came with the Miamis to E. Kansas

Field Worker: Nannie Lee Burns

Information given by Mrs. Leo Finley and daughters, 25 1/2 South Main St, Miami, Oklahoma.

THE TRAIL OF THE STORM

To-Wah-Quah-Ke-Mon-Quah, meaning The Trail of The Storm, otherwise George Washington Finley, who was born in 1858 (though he was thought to be older) in Miami County, Kansas, near Paola and came with his parents when a lad in the teens to the present Ottawa County, Oklahoma, after Chief Richardville had secured for the Miamis and the other amalgamated tribes of the Miamis, had received land west of the Peorias in the Peoria Nation.

Nothing is known of his parents except that they came with the Miamis and others when they removed from Illinois to eastern Kansas. George Washington Finley took the name of Finley from an older brother and most likely chose the name of George Washington to go with it from his ideal man. "Uncle George", as every one here knew him, was the last full-blood Piankeshaw Indian and in the allotment and settlement, they were settled just north and west of the present city of Miami.

Early Life

From the fact that when Uncle George came to the Indian Territory he did not speak English, he seemed a stranger to the white man's ways for he and his people had not adopted as readily as the others who had settled in eastern Kansas, the life of the white man.

His name, The Trail of The Storm, was given



George Finley

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because he was born during a severe snowstorm and is said to have been born in a native Indian home.

He remembered easily the Civil War and recalled seeing the soldiers of both the North and the South pass through Kansas and from the fact that his people were annoyed and troubled so much by the Quantrell Band from Missouri, they moved south and lived among the Osages till the termination of the War. Another observation during this time caused him to decide to become a Mason. Frank Valley, an interpreter and a Mason was not molested by the soldiers.

Removal to Indian Territory.

One incident of this trip was always recalled by Uncle George with considerable amusement. On the way he traded for some fresh sorghum and filled everything available with it. They were traveling in a wagon and the heat caused the sorghum to run and he said he had sorghum on everything.

School Days

Not speaking English, and a large lad, he started to school and not aware of the strangeness of its appearance, he carried his lunch in a water bucket and on being laughed at for it by some of the pupils he terminated his school days and two years after his coming to Indian Territory he began working as a farm hand for neighboring farmers.

However his education did not cease, for he was a keen observer and always on the alert and watching and noting his surroundings and accepting which seemed better than his way.

Here Mrs. Finley laughed and said he understood the meaning of the words better than most people. One day he used a word in a way that she laughed and Mr. Finley said "You had better be sure of its meaning before you laugh". She looked the meaning up in the dictionary and found that he was right. He always kept a dictionary handy and when he heard a new word or phrase, the meaning of which he did not know, he would write it down and look it up. In this same way he acquired an extensive knowledge of law and in later years caused him to be selected different times to represent the interests of his people in Washington.

Early Manhood

He was very friendly and liked to be with people and early showed his ability as a caller for the neighborhood dances. He had a strong voice, played the Jew's Harp, and always kept perfect time with his feet. In fact no dance was complete without him. He was chosen caller for the first community dance in Miami and this was a pleasure that continued



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many years. His son Leo says that when small, when there was a dance, the whole family went and when he grew sleepy he would curl up in a corner and go to sleep.

Once he and another man went horseback to a distant part of the state and while riding across the wide prairies, his comrade sang in a low monotone voice, "What A Friend We Have In Jesus" and Uncle George said that he was never so lonesome in his life, caused no doubt from the tone of the singing and no human habitation in sight.

Being an excellent horseman, he joined for a year Sells Brothers Circus and appeared in many sections of the country with them as a bareback rider. The next year he visited some twenty states at thir State Fairs as a member of a "Wild West Riders" troupe.

Marriage

November 26, 1878, he married Mrs. Nora B. Hedges, formerly Miss Nora B. Crosby of Utica, New York, who was the mother of Walter and Florence Hedges. From this union two children, Leo of Miami and Mrs. Lena Bernard of Tulsa, survive.

He improved his land northwest of Miami and began farming, being successful and eventually erecting for his family a large, comfortable frame house with good out-buildings and made attractive with numerous flowers. A contrast to his surroundings was his old Aunt, a full-blood, whose name Mrs. Finley does not recall but who was allotted as Mrs. Mitchel. Her allotment was at that time one-half mile north of Miami but is now included in the present Miami city limits. She refused to share the comfortable Finley home, and lived in a typical small Indian home on the edge of his place and is buried on the Finley home place with some other members of the family.

Masonry

He became a member of the Miami Lodge #140 A T & A M. September 24, 1913; The Indian Consistory #2 A A & S R, Jan., 25, 1917, and the Akdar Temple A. A. O. N. M. S. April 1, 1918, and is believed to have been the first full-blood Indian to complete the Scottish Rite Masonic Work. He served fifteen years as Tyler of the Masonic Lodge and none was more devoted to its teachings than he.

Later years

Uncle George continued to live on his farm and remained active in the social life of Miami and the surrounding country, educating his children in the City Schools, and always interested in the betterment of conditions for his people as well as those around him. In 1886, G. W. Finley was chosen as one of the

delegates to go to Washington to ask for aid and funds to relieve the Indians facing famine and shortage of food. When the present lead and zinc district in this county began to develop, Uncle George became interested in some mining holdings which unfortunately met with financial reverses, partly through unfair dealings. After the death of his wife and the mining losses, which caused him to give up his comfortable home, he came to Miami and lived either with his daughter, Mrs. Bernard, or his son, Leo, with exception of the time that he was caretaker for the Beck Clubhouse and acreage on the Neosho River west of Miami.

Some two years before his death he went to Tulsa to make his home with Mrs. Bernard who with her husband and family had moved there. Here he passed to the Happy Hunting Grounds on November 16, 1932, at their home at 1133 N. Cheyenne.

Family links:

Spouse:

[Nora Belle Crosby Finley \(1861 - 1911\)](#)

Children:

[Leo John Finley \(1893 - 1982\)*](#)

[*Calculated relationship](#)

Burial:

[Grand Army of the Republic Cemetery](#)

Miami

Ottawa County

Oklahoma, USA

Plot: Blk.1, Lot 23, Plot 6

GPS (lat/lon): [36.90797, -94.87918](#)

Created by: [Rob Lindsly](#)

Record added: Jul 17, 2010

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