

**Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma**

**Date: April 22, 1937**

**Name: Timmie Fife**

**Post Office: Sapulpa, Oklahoma**

**Residence Address: 800 S. Bixby St.**

**Date of Birth: 1850**

**Place of Birth: Hitchita Town, Indian Territory**

**Father: Ben Fife**

**Place of Birth:**

**Information on father:**

**Mother: Liza Barnett**

**Place of birth:**

**Information on mother: Died in 1870's**

**Field Worker: Dawes Fife**

**Interview with Timmie Fife, 87 years old, living 800 S. Bixby St., Sapulpa, Oklahoma. Creek Indian.**

**Timmie Fife was born in 1850 at Hitchita Town, Indian Territory.**

**Mr. Fife is a fullblood Creek Indian and is a Hitchita of the Bird Clan.**

**His mother was Liza Barnett and his father Ben Fife, both Creek Indians.**

**He went to school when he was 7 years old, in 1857, at Asbury Mission, near Eufaula, Okla.**

**At the age of 2 years his mother married again. She married Wm. Frank. When the Civil War started, Mr. Fife and his mother, stepfather and close relatives left Hitchita and went south near Red River in Chickasaw Nation in 1861, and came back to Hitchita in 1866. He lived with his mother until she died. She died in the early seventy's.**

**After his mother's death he went to live with his father, Ben Fife, at Conchatee close to Haskell in Muskogee County.**

**Mr. Fife married Joe Bruner's mother in 1880, made his home near Sapulpa. In 1897 he married Sarah Harjo by whom he had three children; Jessie, Bixby, and Dawes.**

**He and Joe Bruner went into business dealing in Indian lands--after allotments of Creeks--until about 1913.**

**He has been living in Sapulpa where he has lived for last thirty-six years. He has been guardian of several Indian children.**

**Second Interview of Timmie Fife.  
February 28, 1938 by  
Field Worker, Effie S. Jackson**

**Timmie Fife-Pioneer  
(Interview with Timmie Fife-Sapulpa, Oklahoma-in office of Joe Bruner-Chamber  
of Commerce Bldg.)**

**I found Timmie Fife to be a little old dried up man with fair skin, small blue eyes, gray hair and nothing about him to indicate his Indian descent. He talked slowly, in a jerky, low voice and was very difficult to interview. His memory is fast failing. I checked his statements with Joe Bruner, a well-known and reliable authority on Creek Indian history. Of course, Timmie was born long before Joe Bruner-he was Bruner's step-father. Timmie's story follows:**

**My mother's people were from the old country, of Indian and Scotch birth. My father's people were Indian and Irish. That's why I look like an Irishman. My mother came with Removal over a hundred years ago. She was only six years old. Her people settled around what is Hitchita today. Her name was Liza. My father's people settled where Haskell is today. His name was Ben. I was born about ten years before the war. All the schooling I had was at Asbury Manual Boarding School near Eufaula.**

**My father had gone back to his people; while there he was hurt and it took so long for him to get well that my mother thought that he would never return and she married again. So I grew up a wandering boy. Maybe that is the reason so many wild tales have been told about my adventures. I never had any wild experiences. The only one I remember was when some men used me to help bring in some whiskey. I was only fifteen years old. They gave me a horse and told me to follow them. It seemed we rode a long way. They said the town was Fort Smith. They loaded my horse with something heavy and made me ride back with them. It took all night. When we unloaded at an Indian's house near Eufaula next day I knew I had been "used" to help them bring in whiskey. Then Indians came from everywhere and the celebration lasted for days.**

**I had a small farm about a mile north of the old Sam Brown store, that was just northwest of where Leonard is today. I used to go over to the "busking grounds" in Tulsey Town. That was in the 70's. There were only a few houses there belonging to Indians. It was there I met Lucy Bruner, a widow of John Bruner; I married her in 1878. She had one son, Joe Bruner, six years old. We lived at the old Bruner farm on Rock Creek at the "Chissum Crossing" - about six miles northwest of the present Sapulpa. That was in 1878. I lived with her about twenty years and then we got divorced.**

**Just before the allotment I married Sarah Sapulpa. She is the daughter of "old Sapulpa" and his wife, Nakitty. She was a sister of James Sapulpa and is the only child of old Sapulpa left except her half-brother, William Sapulpa, who lives in the Bald Hill region. She cannot speak English. We live at the edge of Sapulpa about a mile west from down-town. We have been allowed \$100,000.00 by the courts from the oil money of a relative of mine, but between the lawyers and the administrator it seems as if we will not get it in time to do us any good. My wife and I are getting old and helpless, maybe eighty years old, maybe more.**

**Old Tiger Bones**

The most interesting story Timmie Fife told me was one that he called the story of "Old Tiger bones." Joe Bruner told it about the same way. Neither one was able to give exact information and what checking I could do of early records did not give the names of the participants. This is the story as Timmie Fife and Joe Bruner tell it: Back in 1880 Lucy Bruner, then the wife of Timmie Fife, lived on Rock Creek six miles northwest of the present town of Sapulpa. They lived on what they called the Chisholm Trail crossing of the creek. This was the pony-express route taken by post riders on their way from the Sac and Fox Agency northeast. Mrs. (Bruner) Fife always served them meals and she also gave meals to paymasters or other government officials on their way to the Sac and Fox Agency.

One day a light hack drove up with three men in it. They stopped to eat, paid for their meal and drove on north. The last person to see these men was an Indian working in a field. He noticed a white man on horseback following them; this white man later was joined by three other men on horseback. A few days later a man came along the route making inquiry about the paymaster and his companions who had been in the hack. He went on his way. Old Tiger Bones was a Euchee Indian who lived about three miles west of the Bruner's. He was an old frontiersman and expert Indian trailer. A day or two after the inspector came through what was Mrs. Bruner's surprise to see Old Tiger Bones come driving up in the hack the paymaster had had. She asked him about it. He said he found it in the woods ten miles west of his home. He said he also had found some harness and taken that, too, since no one was using it. Mrs. Bruner told him to return the hack and harness at once to the spot where he had found it.

Another group of inspectors came. They got Tiger Bones to lead the way and there they found the dead bodies of the men and their horses, undoubtedly robbed by outlaws. Then came two hundred soldiers; as Joe Bruner, who was ten at that time, told the story, these were the first soldiers he ever had seen and were quite curiosities to him. The soldiers called on Old Tiger Bones as trail leader and recruited Timmie Fife and Jim Sapulpa to assist and took the trail.

Seven months had elapsed since the murder. That is the part of the story that the Creeks like the best to tell. They like to tell that Tiger Bones took a trail seven months old and was able to run the outlaws down. As they said "he took the trail like a hound." He found the hideout of the desperadoes west of Mannford among the caverns on the Cimarron River. They claim the four outlaws were seized and taken to Fort Smith, convicted and hanged. It is said to be a matter of court records.

Transcribed and contributed by Lola Crane <coolbreze@cybertrails.com> Sept 2003.

The town of Hitchita was spelled Hitchity/ Hichity and corrected to Hitchita by the typist. I do not know which is correct.