

NOTTINGHAM, WILLIAM JASPER.

INTERVIEW #6460

394

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

NOTTINGHAM, WILLIAM JASPER INTERVIEW

6460

Field Worker's name Wylie Thornton

This report made on (date) June 25, 1937

1. Name William Jasper Nottingham
2. Post Office Address Tahlequah, Okla.
3. Residence address (or location) Two miles west of Tahlequah
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 31 Year 1846
5. Place of birth Brackinridge County, Elizabeth, Kentucky.

6. Name of Father Henry J. Nottingham Place of birth Harding County  
Elizabeth, Kentucky.

Other information about father My father and Abraham  
Lincoln were neighbors in their boyhood days.

7. Name of Mother Baily Jane Nottingham Place of birth Same Address

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Wylie Thornton  
Interviewer  
June 25, 1937

6460 396

Interview with  
William Jasper Nottingham  
Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

I arrived here in Oklahoma in the spring of 1903 and found a lot of open country, houses about three miles apart, and scarcely any roads. To my surprise I found the Cherokee Indians very friendly toward me; and the only trouble I found in dealing with them was that they would n't talk English to me. I was forced to converse by signs using my hands.

The impression I got of them was that they had been hounded by Government officials and usually thrown in jail for petty matters and made to remain in those dirty jails unfed and unwatered for days at a time.

The first thing the whites did was to bring a lot of range cattle into the Indian Territory to graze out the pastures and range. They paid nothing for the grazing land unless forced to, and nothing was done about this until later years.

The cattlemen didn't stop at overloading the open range but were accused of cutting down wires and throwing down Indian rail fences to permit their cattle to destroy the small gardens and crops the Indians had worked out. I am sure they stole any number of hogs and cattle.

- 2 -

In later years there was a great number of killings over the range dispute and many were hung for murder and called bad Indians because of their efforts to protect their own rights as they saw them.

I have had almost every kind of dealing a man could have with the Cherokees and I am thoroughly convinced a Cherokee fullblood is naturally honest and can be depended upon to keep his contract with a white man.

I moved from the top of the Boston Mountain with a wagon and a team of mules. I stopped near Muldrow, and rented a small farm from a full blood Cherokee by the name of Lewis Henson. It was about two miles north-east of this little town which had about three stores. This landlord of mine and I became great friends; if I needed help of any kind all I had to do was call Mr. Henson and he would be right there.

Once a white man, weighing about two hundred pounds, kept turning his cattle into my crop during the night. One morning I went over and told him I didn't intend to stand for that occurring again. This big man's name was Bill Patillo, and he came over into my field where I was plowing and said to me "Well, I just decided I would come over and just whip

- 3 -

you for talking to me like you did about my cattle." He made a lunge at me and I dodged him and he fell to the ground by the force of his own swing, and when he got up to make another lunge at me I hit him on the head with a bolt nut and I almost killed him. This friend of mine, Mr. Henson, heard the trial and he got so tickled because I had whipped that big white man he just got down on the ground and rolled around for several minutes.

The judge had the big nut on his desk during the trial, and after he heard the evidence he said "Here, take this big nut home with you and if anybody else comes into the field to bother you and that Indian you cool him off just like you did Mr. Patillo."

After seven years I left Muldrow, and came up to Bunch, Oklahoma. I rented Dr. Devot's place where I lived for three years, and I made some real crops on this place. Here I contacted more Cherokees than I had in Muldrow, and I still continued to make friends among them. Then after two years on this place I bought out a small eating place near the depot in Bunch which I ran for one year, and here I bought all kinds of produce from the Indians. I still found them more than fair and there I learned to love the

things they loved and to hunt and fish.

The wagon road running through Bunch ran right down the railroad track and today when I think how very rough it was I don't see how people ever hauled a load of cotton to market over those roads. It wasn't anything to hear a wagon running after night, two or three miles away, when the wind was not blowing.

#### STATEHOOD

I remember so well the next morning after Statehood election I started walking to Muldrow to get some news, if there was any, about the result of the election. Before I got down there I met a big fine car and the man stopped me to inquire about the roads. I told him, and then I asked him if he knew the result of the election and he said "Yes, it went for Statehood, I guess; I just came from Muskogee this morning; that's what I heard early this morning." He kept talking until he told me that he really lived in Dallas, Texas, and that he was one of fifty men that had come up from Texas to vote for Statehood. I found out that he had been paid for doing so and that another fifty had gone to Tulsa and Oklahoma City and other points to do

- 5 -

likewise.

PRODUCE PRICES

I bought produce when I was in the produce business very cheaply. I bought eggs for ten cents per dozen and prepared good meals for twenty cents. I bought good fat hogs for three and four dollars each.