

JOHNSON, TOM

INTERVIEW

#7839

413

JOHNSON, TOM

INTERVIEW

7839

Etta D. Mason,
Investigator,
October 12, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. Tom Johnson,
Atoka, Oklahoma.

In the early days the Indian Territory was in a primitive state. The range was covered with cattle and there was game of all kinds. There were no schools except some private Academies and subscription schools.

Among the soldiers stationed at Fort Washita were many educated young men and these young men did all in their power to make the community a good place in which to live.

Back in the fifties some of these young men established a paper called the "Fly Leaf" which was entertaining and educational. The Motto of the paper was "Devoted to Moral and Mental Development." This paper was issued twice a month.

In the region surrounding Fort Washita were cattle and horse thieves, bank and train robbers, and the county was full of United States soldiers. Even the most peace-

JOHNSON, TOM.

INTERVIEW.

7839

-2-

ably minded people found it necessary to fight sometimes.

The county doctor was more often called for surgery than for the practice of medicine.

The doctors were compelled to travel into the Arbuckle Mountains to attend outlaws and were obliged to promise never to reveal the places where they had visited these outlaws.

When I was a very small child I remember climbing on the ruined walls of the Fort and looking off to the South. I could see Caddo in the distance.

Forty years ago the story was told by superstitious people that the Fort was haunted by a headless woman. There was a lot of excitement at the time and Fort Washita was visited by people from all parts of the country. It was said that the headless woman was trying to show someone where a fortune was buried.

The haunt was called "Aunt Betsy" and mothers for miles around the Fort would threaten their children with "Aunt Betsy" if they did not behave properly.