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INTERVIEW

#13498

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Johnson H. Hampton,
Investigator,
March 30, 1938.

An Interview With W. N. Bland,
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born May 25th, 1878, in Johnson County, Arkansas, came to the Indian Territory in 1895 and located near what is Nelson, Oklahoma; it was then Indian Territory. I drove through in a covered wagon with my family and there was another man with me; he was a single man; I don't know what became of him; his name was Shann. Before we came over I had heard that this Indian country afforded good opportunities for white people so I loaded up my wagon and started. It took me several weeks to get over here as at that time there were no roads to speak of and there were no bridges across the creeks and rivers so when it rained we had to stop until the waters went down so that we could cross without danger. When we landed here we did not have any furniture with us only what we had in our wagon; just a camping outfit is all we had. When I got located I went to work for an Indian woman of the name of Sallie Durant and she let us have a log house to live in. It was a pretty good log house; this

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woman was a full blood Choctaw Indian and she had a pretty good sized farm. Her former husband was not a full blood so he took care of her things and put in a good farm and she had a great deal of stock; cattle, hogs and ponies which ran out on the range at will for there were no fences to hinder them from roaming the range. This woman was a hard boiled Indian woman who used to have a gun buckled on her every day. She rode among her stock every day so she would take the gun with her and if she did not have the pistol she would carry her rifle strapped on her saddle; I don't think that she ever did hurt anyone though with those guns. She had about twelve hounds on her place that she used on the ranch and when she would start out she would take all the dogs with her and they were all mean to bite. The country was open at that time; there were no houses out where she lived for several miles and at that time but very few white people lived there; they were mostly Indians in that settlement, and the most of them just stayed at Sallie's home. She would feed nearly all of the Indians who lived in that

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settlement, she had lots of stuff anyway so she did not seem to care; it was the way the Indians do and I found out after a while that she was a good Indian woman at that but of course, being a widow, she had to protect her stock the best she could. I worked for her around the farm and around the house at anything she wanted me to do and she was good to pay but finally died and is buried at the old home place.

I left there then and moved to W. B. Buel's sawmill and went to work for him at the mill. I worked there for about five months and then I left there and moved to the Cherokee Nation and stopped at a little place which at that time was called Storeville, I don't know whether it is still there or not for that has been a long time ago. I rented some land from a Cherokee Indian and lived on this farm for about three years. I surely did raise some fine corn on this place. I then left there and moved to Nashoba, rented land from Henry Leflore, an Indian who lived there on this farm, for about two years. I then moved to Cloudy where I leased some land from an Indian for five

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years and improved it for him and when my lease was out I moved back to Nashoba where I leased some land from an Indian of the name of Israel McFarland for five years. I put that land in cultivation for him and when my lease was out on this land I came to the Pine Belt front where I went to work on the tram which they had running from Fort Towson to the front, and had small cars that hauled the pine timber or logs to the mill at Fort Towson where they had a sawmill. The timber in this part of the country was of fine big logs which were loaded on those cars and taken to the mill but it was not long until the pine timber was gone.

I then quit working at this front and went to Arkansas and traded horses for about two years and then went back to Storeville, and lived there for about two years. I then came down to Antlers, where I rented a farm out west of Antlers about six miles, and I still live out there. Back in 1895 when I first came here this country was a fine country with fine grass and fine timber but there was no settlement much only Indians and no white people. The whole country was wide open and no houses were to be seen,

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only a few Indians' houses and several miles apart. At that time nearly all the Indians had plenty of stock and were living pretty well and there were many deer, turkey, and fish so the Indians hunted most of the time, living on game; they never thought of killing hogs for their winter use but would kill one when they wanted fresh meat if they did not kill a deer or a turkey. The white people who lived out there did the same thing; they would get out of meat and then go out and kill wild game at any time they wanted for the country was full of wild game.

I have lived among the Indians all of my life, ever since I came to this country and have traded with them and put in leases for them and have worked for them. I never have found one that would try to beat a person or try to be dishonest in his dealings, and my children went to the same schools with the Indian children and played with them but they never did have any trouble of any kind with them, and to my mind the Indian people as a whole are about the best people in this country. I certainly have lots of friends among the full bloods who are now living. They are about all dead now; there used to be lots of the

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full bloods in the country but now they are very few and in the course of a few years there won't be any full bloods if they keep on dying as they have in the last few years. My father died here in Antlers and was taken to Golden, a small place in McCurtain County, and was buried there in that cemetery, and then it was not long after that until my mother died and was buried there at the same place; so my parents are both buried in Oklahoma.