

KELLEY, W. R.

INTERVIEW

#12201

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

KELLEY, W. R.

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Field Worker's name Johnson H. HamptonThis report made on (date) November 23, 19371. Name Mr. W. R. Kelley, A Pioneer2. Post office Address Antlers, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 6 Year 18615. Place of birth Pike County, Arkansas6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth Arkansas

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth Arkansas

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 7.

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Johnson H. Hampton,
Investigator,
November 23, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. W. R. Kelley,
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born October 6, 1861, in Fike County, Arkansas. I was about twenty-two years old when I came to the Indian Territory, Choctaw Nation, on July 24, 1883.

My father and mother both died in Arkansas.

Another boy and I came over together by train to Clarksville, Texas, and then we walked over to the Nation from there and stopped at a little place called at that time Pontona. This place was out in the country not far from where Wheelock Academy is now located. There was a little store at Ponton and we got a job near there, working on a ranch.

I lost my partner there. I never did know where he ever went after we got separated from each other. I worked on this ranch for about four years. There were not many white people living in that locality then; they were mostly Choctaws and no white people were seen around there.

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When I left there I went to what was known as Crowder Prairie near where Soper is now. At that time there was no Soper nor any other place. It was all open country but some time in 1903 they built a railroad through that country and then several small towns were built up along this railroad.

I came to what was known as Kiamichi County under the Choctaw Government but which is now Choctaw County, in about 1887. I got a job working on a ranch for Mr. Crowder with whom I lived for several years. I finally married one of his daughters and it cost me \$100.00 to get married to her. That was under the Laws of the Nation. I bought my script from Silas Bacon who was the county clerk of Kiamichi County at that time.

By marrying under the laws of the Nation I was given the right to participate in the allotment and, in fact, I was just the same as ^{any} other Choctaw and came under their laws. It gave me a right also to file my claim anywhere in the Nation I wanted to. I was just the same as any citizen of the Nation by paying the price.

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At that time there were no white people in the country where I lived and the Choctaws lived back in the woods on the outer edge of the prairie. They did not live on the prairie; at least there were but few Choctaws who lived out on the prairie.

After I got married I operated a small farm and built a log house on this land. I raised corn and other farm products but not any cotton, for it was too far to haul our cotton to have it ginned and to market. I raised cattle, hogs and some ponies. The country was full of Choctaw ponies as they were called.

This country around Soper was a prairie country and had some fine land on it. The grass on the prairie was as high as a man's head while sitting on a horse, so we did not have to feed our stock. They stayed fat all the year around and there was plenty of cane on the creeks.

My trading point was at Paris, Texas. There were no other stores anywhere in the country. It was a long way

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to Paris, Texas, from where I lived on account of there being no roads, and no ferry along the road. About in 1886 or '87 the Frisco built a railroad through the country and then several small towns went up. An Indian by the name of Springs put a store at Goodland, a small village, where we did our trading and we did not go to Paris, Texas, anymore.

At the time I first came to this place there were lots of wild game, such as deer, turkeys, and plenty of fish in the creeks and in Boggy River, and lots of prairie chickens on the prairies. We did not have any trouble in getting our living from the woods. It was easy to go out and kill whatever you wanted to eat. After the white people began to settle the country it was not long until the wild game disappeared to parts unknown.

we had lots of trouble back in those days with cattle rustlers and horse thieves and other criminals who came over here from other states to keep from being caught and brought to justice. There were not

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many people in this country then and the criminals had a good hiding place back in the hills and mountains. There were no courts then, only Indian courts, and they had no jurisdiction over the white people. Our nearest Federal Court was at Fort Smith, Arkansas. In 1896 or '97 a Federal Court was established in Antlers.

I being a member of the tribe by marriage was enrolled as an intermarried citizen and allotted land just the same as the other Choctaws did. I was enrolled at Antlers in 1898, then I allotted land after that some years, and I also participated in the payments. I think that the first payment the Choctaws got was in 1893, the \$103.00 payment. They had no more payments until Woodrow Wilson became President then they got several payments. The last payment they got was \$10.00. Since that time they have not gotten any payments.

When the Jones and Locke war was going on I was living on my farm out on the prairie, and was not interested in it anyway and did not take part in it. I don't know what it was all about, but I do know that there

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was a company of soldiers came from somewhere and stopped the trouble, and again, some years after that, Hunter and McCurtain had some trouble over the election of Principal Chief. Hunter thought that he was elected and so did McCurtain. So the row was on but before it got too bad, a company of negro soldiers came down and put a stop to that so there was no blood shed on either side.

I have been to the Choctaw Council house several times but never was a council member. I did not get into the Choctaw politics. They had two parties, the Buzzard Party and the Eagle Party. They finally changed it to ^{the} National Party and the Progressive Party, but I did not take part in either of them, I being a white man, and I never held any office of any kind under the Choctaw Government.

My experience with the Choctaw people has been just fine. They never did give me any trouble of any kind whatsoever; they are all my friends to this day and I have lived among them ever since I came to

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this country from Arkansas. I left the farm and came to Antlers and ran a hotel for several years and have had lots of dealings with the Choctaw people in the business + was in and they would come and board at my hotel for several days at a time but I never lost a penny on any of them. They are all good neighbors to live by. Of course they would fight among themselves and maybe kill someone once in awhile but they never bothered any other people at all if they were let alone. At that time they all carried pistols and rifles. They were all well armed at all times. That was the thing that the Choctaws had to have- they must have their guns everywhere they went.