

KEENER, JOHNSON

INTERVIEW

#12257

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

KEENER, JOHNSON.

INTERVIEW.

12257.

Field Worker's name Charles H. Holt,

This report made on (date) November 22, 1937.

1. Name Johnson Keener.

2. Post Office Address Hominy, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1884.

5. Place of birth Tahlequah.

6. Name of Father George Keener Place of birth 1849.

Other information about father Fullblood Cherokee.

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

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 3.

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Charles H. Holt,
Nov., 22, 1937.
Investigator.

An Interview With Johnson Keener,
Hominy, Oklahoma.

Johnson Keener, a fullblood Cherokee Indian, was born on a small farm near Tahlequah in the year 1884.

In their farming they had two small horses and raised small crops, mostly corn but some cotton. On the open range they had a small herd of cattle, and it was hard to keep track of cattle; sometimes they would be stolen, then they would range such a distance from home that sometimes the Keener family would think that they had entirely lost their cattle, but Johnson would be put on a small Indian pony by his father and sent in search of the cattle.

If he did not find them the first day, he was sent in a different direction the next day. His father would always caution him to look closely when he found any cattle for the ear marking, as Mr. Keener did not brand the cattle as most people do now. Mr Keener's old ear mark was crop and split in left ear, and "under bit" in right ear.

From a small boy, Johnson Keener liked his bow and arrow and became an expert in his neighborhood contests, shooting with the other boys of the neighborhood. He would

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kill some game with his bow and arrow but after getting himself a rifle he found it was less difficult to kill game with the rifle, so he lost interest in his bow and arrow.

Deer were plentiful and at the time of the year when the young ones were raised Johnson Keener would go in search of the young deer and capture them for pets and every year they would have eight or ten tame deer and after they got grown they would stray or range out at a distance among the wild deer during the day, but would usually come home at night as they would be fed some grain.

To keep hunters from killing these tame deer when they ranged with the wild deer, red collars were put around their necks usually made of red cloth. It was a custom in that country to mark the tame deer that way and Mr. Keener never had a tame deer killed by a hunter.

The only plow that Mr. Keener remembers for a number of years, was made from an elm tree by taking the fork and making a stock. A "bull tongue" was used on the stock.

The clothing for the children was limited. It consisted of one pair of shoes a year, and a blouse made

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dress effect of some loud colored gingham. The breeches were more like skirts, being made large and loose fitting with a split in the sides of the legs.

The school house was a small log building. Johnson Keener's first teacher was Mrs. Tom Bevoid who was paid to teach by the Government. Jennie Foreman was another teacher.

The oldest Cherokee man in the neighborhood while Johnson Keener was growing up was named Geedick. It was not known his exact age and a Cherokee woman in that county was Beckie Neugen who died a year or two ago. She had grown a new or second set of teeth, also, she regained her eyesight before her death.

Johnson resides in Hominy now.