

HOLDEN, M. H. INTERVIEW

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Pete W. Cole,
Field Worker.
July 9, 1937.

An Interview With M. H. Holden,
A Pioneer of Atoka County. Age 66.

My grandfather, his wife and my parents came to this country, in 1881, from Pulaski County, Missouri. When we came to this country we first settled about nine miles southwest of Atoka, the present county seat of Atoka County.

The place where we first stretched our wagon sheet and where we lived was known as "The Old Black Jack" place because of the trees that were abundant at that particular place at that time.

I was about ten years of age when we first moved to this country and we first settled on what is known as the Judge Julius Folsom place. There were no settlement near this place when we first came. We rented some land from Julius Folsom and began making improvements at once with a view to farming. We moved into one of the old houses that the renter had lived in and had vacated a few days before and had as our belongings^{the} average household goods and kitchen utensils which constituted our belongings when we came in a wagon.

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We began at once to farm and that spring we planted garden vegetables, corn, and cotton mostly. In those days people did not have to plant a large acreage of feed for the stock for the winter as tall grass and cane stayed green throughout the year and the stock did not suffer for feed during the winter although I have seen times when the snow would be two to three feet deep yet there was never a thought of "shedding" the stock out of the weather.

The land was fresh and rich so that when a crop was properly worked it would make abundantly, though the price was not much, yet what we had to buy was about in proportion to what they had to sell. Since there were several of us in the family we did not hire any work done but occasionally when any one in the neighborhood was sick or needed any assistance we would voluntarily set the day and spend that day working at whatever work there was which needed attention. We did not know what it was to farm large farms as it was not necessary to raise large crops at that time. There was a fine spring of water near where we lived, plenty of wood for fuel where all one had to do was to

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step out to the tree and saw up what wood was needed.

Selling wood in town was unknown in those days.

Meat, bread, milk and butter was our daily ration. We killed wild game for meat and raised our own bread and all we had to buy was shoes and clothing. There were only about three stores which constituted the town of Atoka when the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad was built through here.

The coming of this railroad to Atoka was the cause of the town's first growth. It became the chief trading town of that section of country.

Lon Hawkins was one of the first to open a store at Atoka and he also bought railroad ties for the company by the carloads, and did much of their business.

My father died when I was ten years of age and was buried at Boggy Depot cemetery. This place is an inland town and was at one time a stop on the stage line which ran from Texas to Arkansas.

Since my arrival in this country, I have lived with and amongst the Choctaw Indians and I now own a place adjoining an Indian allotment and I still have my first

time to disagree with any Choctaw in a business deal or trade. I consider the Choctaws honest.

They live up to their agreements, treat others as they would be treated and if you do the same they will remember you and trust you. The Choctaws are a class of people who are willing to do any favor that is asked of them, but if they think you are trying to mistreat them or to beat them in a deal or if a white person should show some discourtesy to an Indian, then the whole tribe is "through" with that person, and no member of the tribe cares to speak nor be friendly with that person again.

That white man or woman is marked as an enemy to the Indians and no Choctaw will have anything to do with a white person who has once mistreated an Indian.