

WRIGHT, ISLIN

INTERVIEW

#6365

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

Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton

This report made on (date) June 17th, 1937

1. Name Islin Wright

2. Post Office Address Snow, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day _____ Year 1869

5. Place of birth Near Red Oak, Oklahoma.

6. Name of Father Simon Wright Place of birth Red Oak, Oklahoma

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Sophia Wright Place of birth Red Oak, Oklahoma

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 _____

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Interview with Islin Wright
Snow, Oklahoma

I was born near Red Oak in February, 1869. It was then Sugar Loaf County, Choctaw Nation. At the time I was born there was no Red Oak, this village was established sometime before the Rock-Island Railroad was put through that part of the country.

My father's name was Simon Wright and my mother's name was Sophia Wright. They lived near what is now known as Red Oak until their death. My father was in the Civil War. He joined the Southern Army. I don't remember who was in command of his troops. He served all during the war and he said they had a hard time getting by. They had to go without anything to eat for several days and water was hard to get. They came near starving to death for water while on their trip from one place to another.

My father was not married during the war, but after the war my mother came to Sugar Loaf County where my father married her. She came from near Fort Towson, which was in Towson County at that time. I think she came over

there visiting when my father married her.

Our trading point was at Skulleyville, a small village out from Fort Smith. Then a white man put up a store near Summerfield. This place was called Ben Hur. The white man's name was Ben Hur, so they called the place after him. That was in the year of 1880 and is where we traded. Then a white man by the name of Joe J. Moore put up a store at Red Oak, about the year 1882 or 1883, then we begin to trade there for it was near our home. Red Oak was put up before the Rock Island railroad went through the country, then there were several little stores established where we did our trading.

After the war father went to work and put in a little farm where we raised corn and other garden stuff that we had to have. We sure had a hard time getting by. After I got pretty good size we had some cattle, hogs and ponies; we did not have a great many of them, but we had what we needed on the farm. ^{father} had to work for other people to get food for us. We did not have flour, sugar or coffee to eat very much for they were hard to get, and

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the folks had to save. We did not get to eat any flour nor did we get any sugar for our coffee only once in awhile.

We had lenty of corn for our meal. Mother had to make the meal out of the corn we raised; she did it by putting the corn in block made for that purpose, and beat it until it was made into meal. There were no gristmills in that part of the country. Some times she would soak some corn on the ear and grit it. She would have a grit made, then she would grit this corn and make meal out of it. She used to make banaha, hominy and other things out of this corn.

We had a woman that made baskets. She would go out and strip some young white saplings and get the strips and weave it and make baskets, and she would make baskets out of cane, which was grown on the banks of the cr eks. She would sell those baskets to people that wanted them; she sure could make the baskets. The women used some of them for husking the bran from the corn they were beating. It was woven tight for some use, the other was not woven so tight. She sure could make

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those baskets and it was good thing to have when they were beating the corn to make meal out of. Sometimes she would dye them some way. Some were red, some striped and some white and red spotted. We had some sheep, not many, but it was enough to shear and used the wool in making socks and wool mittens for the winter, and sometimes we sold the wool to our neighbors that wanted it. We did not have many sheep for we had to stay with them nearly all the time for fear that the wolves would catch them. The country was full of big timber wolves at that time and it was pretty hard to raise sheep.

The cattle, hogs and ponies were not worth much at that time. The grown cows were sold at about \$8.00 to \$10.00 and the yearlings sold for about \$5.00 each; ponies were not worth anything they could not be sold at any price.

We had an ox team which we used in going to meeting anywhere we wanted to go. We had a wagon about 3" size which we used to pull with the ox team. We used to plow with them; in fact they were just as good as a horse team

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after they learned what you wanted to do with them.

I did not know that we had an Indian Agency until a few years ago. I don't know whether the Choctaws had an Agency or not. The first time I heard of an agency it was at Muskogee, where it is now.

The Choctaws never did have any wars with any other tribes of Indians. They have been friendly with all tribes of Indians that I know of; they would fight among themselves, but not with any other tribes. The Choctaws have been always civilized for a long time.

My grandfather was from Mississippi. His name was Sholush Horna (Red Shoes) in English. He located near old Doaksville, just north of where Fort Towson is now located. He was not in the Civil War,^{or} I don't think^{so} I don't remember what my grandmother's name was now.

I saw a ball game once when Sugar Loaf County and Gaines County had a game. I did not get to play in the game; it was a pretty hot game. A few fights pulled

off among them, but no one hurt. It was a pretty good game.

I went to school at Spencer Academy for two terms. Then after some years I went to Bacone College for four years, where I studied for the ministry and was ordained a minister in 1893, and since that time I have been preaching to my people. I do not speak English much, that is I can't preach in English, so I preach in Choctaw to the people all the time. We do have some good meetings yet, but the Choctaw full-blood Indians are dying out so we don't have many like we once did. I am a missionary Baptist Preacher, and a full-blood Choctaw Indian, and have lived among my tribes all of my life.

Note: This interviewer is an Indian and his interviews are expressed exactly as his talk. No effort is made to change his manuscripts to correct English.--ED