

CHOATE, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

INTERVIEW

10386

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

CHOATE, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS INTERVIEW #10386

Field Worker's name Don Moon, Jr.

This report made on (date) March 28, 1938

1. Name Christopher Columbus Choate

2. Post Office Address Guthrie, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Masonic Home for Aged.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 17 Year 1857

5. Place of birth Near site of Indianola, Pittsburg County, Oklahoma

6. Name of Father Samuel S. Choate Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about father Half Irish, Half Choctaw.

7. Name of Mother Lydia Simmons Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about mother A white woman.

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 4

CHOATE, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

INTERVIEW

#10386

Don Moon, Jr.  
Investigator  
March 28, 1938.

Interview with Christopher Columbus Choate  
Masonic Home for Aged, Guthrie, Okla.

My parents and brother came to Indian Territory from Mississippi in the migration in '54. My father, Samuel O. Choate, was the son of an Irishman and a full-blood Choctaw woman. My mother, Lydia Simmons Choate, was a white woman.

They settled on the Canadian River in what is now Pittsburg County, near the present site of Indianola at which place I was born in 1857. We lived in a little log cabin.

There were no schools near enough for me to attend, so all the schooling I ever got was what my mother taught me around a brush-fire.

There were no missions or churches near us, either, but sometimes a traveling preacher would come along and hold services for us.

I still have my mother's Bible that was sent her from the old home just after they moved to Indian Territory; it has the family records in it and this Bible which was printed in 1829 has been in Oklahoma ever since about 1855.

-2-

There weren't very many people in our part of Indian Territory when my folks came. There was just one white man who had come with the Indians from Mississippi; I do not know his name.

Our people settled close together in what they called townships; I had seven uncles who lived close to us. My father died before the Civil War and these uncles helped to look after my mother and us boys. About the end of the War the Indians all left their homes and went away down on the Red River, I think they went in October or November and stayed until March. We were the last ones to leave our home. Some Government men came and helped Mother to move and I remember how funny our neighbors' cabins looked, half full of feathers. When they were leaving they emptied the feather-ticks so that they wouldn't take up so much room in the wagon. One of our uncles helped us move back to our home in the spring.

There were no towns or trading posts near us and supplies had to be hauled from Bonham, Texas.

There was plenty of game of every kind and when any one killed game or killed a hog, it was divided among all the

-3-

neighbors just as far as it would go.

My mother was afraid for us boys to use a gun until we were pretty good sized, but we soon had to go to shooting game to provide food for our widowed mother. The only guns we had were all flint-lock rifles. When we were old enough we farmed and raised cattle, horses and hogs; mules were unknown in our country for many years.

I was a member of our Council one year, but wouldn't go back the next year; our capitol was at Tuskahoma.

I served for ten years as County Ranger. The duties were to find and take up stray stock and after keeping such strays the required number of days, sell them and turn the money into the tribal funds.

The Lighthorsemen, or mounted militiamen, I guess you might call them, were sent wherever there was any kind of trouble to protect people and keep order. When the Council met, the Lighthorsemen were there to protect us.

Each spring a stomp dance was held just before the green corn was ready to eat. No Indian would eat any corn before this dance, nor would they eat with anyone who did eat corn before that. For three days before the stomp dance, all

CHOATE, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS INTERVIEW#

#10386

-4-

the Indians took medicine, then the Chief built a brush fire and the Indians danced around it. Music was furnished by fiddles and a drum and everybody sang as they danced. This dance lasted about three days, and was supposed to keep away sickness; after this we could eat green corn.

At this dance, all the boys of the tribe who were about four or five years old were brought before the Chief and he gave each boy a name, and a small piece of tobacco. The boy was called by that name after that.