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

Field Worker's name Gas Hummingbird

This report made on (date) August 18, 1937 1937

1. Name Nick Comingdeer

2. Post Office Address Watts, Oklahoma. Route 1.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 1 Year 1850

5. Place of birth Cherokee Nation

6. Name of Father Comingdeer Place of birth North Carolina.

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Yoxie Wolfe Place of birth North Carolina.

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Gus Hummingbird  
Interviewer  
August 18, 1937.

Interview with Nick Comingdeer  
Watts, Oklahoma R#1.

Nick Comingdeer, a fullblood Cherokee, was born in the Saline District in the Cherokee Nation. Saline District is now a part of Delaware County. His parents were Comingdeer, a fullblood Cherokee, and Yoxie Wolfe, also a fullblood Cherokee, and both North Carolina emigrants. They came to the Indian country in 1837 and settled near the small village of Oaks, Oklahoma, which is now the southwestern corner of Delaware County. Five children were born to this union. He does not remember<sup>4</sup> their names, for they all died before he was large enough to remember.

(Early Life)

Most of his early life was spent on a small farm near the place mentioned in said county. Comingdeer settled about three miles from where the village is now. The only thing given the family after they came to this place was a hoe and an ax. This was all they had to begin farming with. They lived in this community for about ten years then moved to Fourteen

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Mile Creek, which is now in Cherokee County. They lived in this neighborhood until he grew to manhood. The farm on Fourteen Mile Creek consisted of about ten acres. There were no large farms at that time in the Cherokee Nation. But the people made a living. It was a hard life in the new country for several years.

(Education)

The only school that Nick has attended is a small school on Fourteen Mile Creek, which was called the Sen-A-Da School. This was an Indian word but no one knows the meaning of it.

(Civil War)

They were living on Fourteen Mile Creek when the Civil War began. His father enlisted in the Union Army at Fort Gibson and served throughout the war. Later in the years of said war he was appointed captain of a regiment of Home Guards, The Third Regiment Indian Home Guards. Their headquarters were at Fort Gibson. After the war started in the Cherokee Nation the Comingdeer family was taken to Fort Scott, Kansas. They remained

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at Fort Scott for three years.

His father took active part in the battles of Pea Ridge and Bentonville, Arkansas. These two battles were interesting to the Cherokees, as many of them took part in these two battles.

He does not remember any battles fought in the community in which he was raised. His father died several years after the Civil War and was buried near an Indian Church called U-wasa.

Captain Fish was another fullblood Cherokee who was a captain in the Union Army during the Civil War. He lived several miles west of Tahlequah at that time.

(Emigrants)

Comingdeer, the father of Nick, came in the "Trail of Tears". This story has been told to Nick by his father. The emigrants that he came with were two years on the road to the Cherokee Nation. It is a very sad story as told to him. Many children died on the road. They were not given time to bury their dead as they should.

He has seen many old Cherokees carry their dead children all day until night when they would all stop for the night. The fathers of the dead children, with the help of other

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Cherokees in the group, would dig a shallow grave and bury them. They were not fed well on the road. Most of the Cherokees walked all the way; but they were taken across the Mississippi River on ferry boats. If the Cherokees had not loved their loyal chief, John Ross, as they did there would have been blood shed, for they would never have moved.

They hated the name of the Ridges and the Boudinots. They would talk at night of how they were going to kill them when they came to the country where they lived. There would have been war after the emigrants came if the leaders had not agreed to a treaty at once. The emigrants hated the old settlers, as the bunch that favored the "Removal" were called.

As soon as they arrived in the Cherokee Nation the leading men of the emigrants like Goingsnake, Tom Foreman, John Looney called a peace council at Tahlequah. Thousands of Cherokees attended this meeting. But it was bad to say anything at this gathering because there were so many Cherokees that one did not know who was listening to you talking. There were four men killed at these meetings. The cause of the killings was the treaty question. The treaty was signed but this did not help much. The hatred remained as before, but in secret.

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This meeting was in the summer of 1839, as told to him by his father. Goingsnake was the speaker of the council back in North Carolina and he was chosen as speaker at this meeting. John Looney was the president of the emigrants.

This treaty was called by the old settlers, thinking this would save the Ridge and Boudinot boys from being killed. It did not help them at all. They were killed just the same. It has been said by the old Cherokees of that time that the law which they were killed by was sponsored by their father back in the old country.

When the Cherokees at that time found out that their children were rapidly learning the ways of the white man, they knew some day they would try to enact a law compelling them to live as the whites. They made this law; that if any one talked of selling or trading any land that belonged to the Cherokee Nation in common, that a gun must be loaded and stood ready in the corner of every Cherokee home, that the seller or trader of said land must unload this gun by shooting him. Comingdeer said they brought this law with them. After arriving in the Territory, they hunted the Ridges and Boudinots until they found them, and they used this law made by their father.

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Mr. Comingdeer says this was one reason that the old timers did not believe much in education. They taught their children that education was a bad thing to teach a Cherokee. It made him crooked. If it had not been for the education the Ridges and Boudinots would not have done what they did.

(Secret Societies)

After the Cherokees talked of moving west back in the old country, and the talk grew stronger day by day, they organized an organization called the Kee-Too-Wah. This is about the oldest organization of Secret Societies among the Cherokees. People give different meanings to this word. Many have tried to explain this organization. The Kee-Too-Wah means straight, or what we would call a square shooter. This was organized at mid-night back in the old country. They met at night for a long time. They would let no one become a member until he reached a certain age. His folk must never have been bad at any time. This was some thing similar to a political party. After the Cherokees found that they were one day betrayed with their own tribesmen, this organization tried to elect all the men to the legislature that belonged to the organization. But,

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there were thousands that did not belong on account of age and reputation.

Kee-Too-Wah does not have a meaning in the Cherokee language. It was merely a name given to this secret organization by a vote. There is a song in the Cherokee hymns that is also named the same as this organization. It is said by old timers that this was the song that they sung at the opening of their meetings. No one could come in a quarter of a mile of this meeting. They stationed guards around their meetings.

(Pen Indians)

This was a bunch chosen out of the Kee-Too-Wah after they came to this country to kill the Treaty Signers and men who took a part in the transaction that caused the Removal.

A son of one of the Pen Indians still lives today in this part of the Cherokee Nation. Comingdeer and Arch Scrapper were both present at the time the Kee-Too-Wahs held the last meeting in North Carolina. They were also present when they arrived in what is now Arkansas, and chose the men to kill the Treaty signers. But the Old Comingdeer and Scrapper are now dead. This is just a story told to their kinsfolk before they died.

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## (Trading and Milling Points)

The early day trading point for the Comingdeer family was Tahlequah. John Stapler was the early day merchant at that time. The nearest mill was the Old Hilderbrand Mill, now known as Flint Mills in the southern part of Delaware County. This mill was about ten miles away. They usually went twice a month. They went to the mill on foot carrying about a bushel of shelled corn. Sometimes several would go together and at times one man would take an ox team and go for the whole community.

Long Prairie and Oaks were also old time towns. But, they did not do much trading at these places.

## (Politics)

After the Civil War the Cherokees became interested in Politics. They formed two parties called the Downing and the National. The Comingdeer family all belonged to this said party. At the beginning of the Civil War these Anti Cherokees all joined the Union.

## (Allotment)

This was the most important thing in the history of the Cherokees after they came west of the Mississippi.

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This same hatred that had existed among them was renewed. As said before all of the treaty Cherokees joined the south in the war. After the war they all belonged to the Downing Party. This bunch of Cherokees had caused the deaths of thousands of their own people by selling their home and causing them to leave them. And by exposure thousands of them had died in the Trail of Tears. Then just a few years afterwards this same bunch of Cherokees rebelled against the United States. That is in the Civil War. After the war this same bunch of Cherokees favored the Downing Party. This party then several years afterwards, by buying in the legislature, passed a law that caused the Allotment. The Cherokees were not in favor of this law. They were not in favor of the railroads either but they passed bills allowing them to cross the Cherokee Nation.

The voting precinct at the time of these happenings was at Salina. At that time that town was not known.