

DEAN, JOHN

INTERVIEW

#12250

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

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Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton.

This report made on (date) November 25, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mr. John Dean, a pioneer.

2. Post Office Address Jumbo, Oklahoma.

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

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February. Day 17 Year 1849.

5. Place of birth Calhoun County, Alabama.

6. Name of Father \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth Alabama.

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

7. Name of Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth Alabama.

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 6.

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Johnson H. Hampton,  
Investigator,  
November 25, 1937.

An Interview With Mr. John Dean,  
A pioneer, Jumbo, Oklahoma.

I was born February 17th, 1849, in Calhoun County, Alabama, My father and mother did not come to this country; they lived at our old home until they both died there and were buried at our old place. After the Civil War, I, in company with three others, left our old home and started for the new country; we had heard of it but did not know anything about it but we decided that we might find it a good place to live and make money which we did for a while.

We left in covered wagons, came into Texas and stayed there for a spell then we came on. It took us several days to make the trip on account of rain and other hindrance and high water; as well as I can remember we stopped near what is now Hugo. Then, there was no hugo and no railroad there; we camped there for a while, hunted deer and turkey; there were lots of them there then so it did not take us long to kill what we wanted to eat, we then moved on to what is now Jumbo.

There was no Jumbo at that time; there was a small store put there by the lumber company for their workers to

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trade at, so when we got there we stretched our tent and went to hauling lumber; it was a long haul from where we were to the place where we took the lumber. It must have been about a fourteen mile haul to the railroad where we took the lumber. It was at a little place called Moyers, on the Frisco Railroad where we hauled the lumber and unloaded; they then loaded it on the cars and shipped it some where else; we made good money on the haul.

This sawmill I am speaking of was located on the mountains west of Jumbo; the timber was fine, large, yellow pine timber and there were a good many white oaks there, I do not know whether the sawmillers paid for the timber or not but they sure did cut some fine pine timber and I guess they made lots of money out of it.

We lived in tents for a long while, then we built us box houses; they were called sawmill shacks.

We had no furniture just only what we brought in our wagons and did not need much for we were camping out most of the time any way and the sawmillers do not have nothing but camping outfits any way for they are moving from one sawmill to another every few days so we did not need but very little furniture.

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I was not old as I am now so I worked around the mill while the boys hauled lumber; the lumber was cheap at that time.

We could buy all the lumber we wanted at \$5.00 per thousand; second grade lumber was not known as they burned up the second grade lumber; then they took only first grade lumber; of course they wasted lots of lumber but I do not guess it cost them anything to make the lumber out of the fine timber they were cutting. At this sawmill, they had no school nor even church and the children grew up wild around the mill; they were raised up without an education at that time.

Several years after that there was company of men who came in there calling themselves the Choctaw Asphalt Company; they opened up an asphalt mine at the place; we then got a post office there and named it Jumbo, so it is still going by that name. Then, several small stores were put up and we had a pretty good village. We then hauled the asphalt to Moyers, where it was loaded on cars and shipped somewhere.

I worked in the mines myself then while the boys hauled. I made good money mining with the other miners. After the mines got in operation then they organized a school and

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a Sunday School and had preaching every Sunday. This mine gave a good many people work and they began to come in there for work so the village became a pretty good sized place.

Sometime in about 1910 the Asphalt Company put up a small, dinky railroad which they used in hauling the asphalt from the mines so the people had to quit hauling it with teams. Sometime in 1914 the mine blew up and killed fourteen men. I happened to be not working that morning so I did not get killed in the blow up, but those others just had gone down to work when it blew up and killed that many. Several others had not come down to go to work yet when it blew up; the mine stopped then; they worked for a while; they then closed it up and it is still closed to this day.

When I went to Jumbo, there were lots of wild game on the mountains, deer, turkey and lots of fish in the creeks; it was no trouble to kill a deer or a turkey at any time a man wanted to eat one of them and there was plenty of fish in the creeks; the boys at the sawmills lived on them and some of the boys killed a few bears back in the hills. There were no white people much out there when I first came there; none out on the farms, a few sawmill hands around the mill was about all the white people you saw but they got to

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coming in there after the mines were opened, then, there were good many whites settled there and some went out on the farms and went to farming.

I have been at Jumbo for a long time; I was a young man when I came here; I had a family though.

I am now eighty-eight years old, and my mind is not what it once was and I have lost my eyes and can't hear much now so I just can not tell you all I do know and at what dates things occurred but I have had lots of experience in my life since I have been living around Jumbo.

My experience with the Choctaw people has been just as good as any one would expect; when I first landed here there used to be good many Indians lived around here; they would come over and sit around with me all day and some of them would stay for two or three days with me but they were fine people.

We did not have to lock up everything when we left the house; nothing was ever bothered by them and they would not take anything that did not belong to them and they were good neighbors as any men would want. They never bothered anybody, they would fight among themselves and maybe kill one another.

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but they would not bother any other people; I figure that they are the best people on earth. I know lots of them and they are all good friends of mine.

I have lived at Jumbo so long that I guess I will end my days here for I do not know of any other place that I would be satisfied at if I was to leave here. Jumbo is twenty-two miles northeast of Antlers.

(Editor's Note: These interviews by Johnson H. Hampton, an Indian, are purposely left practically unchanged.)