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

#6470

Johnson H. Hampton

Field Worker's name _____
 June 28 7
 This report made on (date) _____ 193 _____

Celey Edwards

1. Name _____
 Darwin, Oklahoma
 2. Post Office Address _____
 3. Residence address (or location) _____
 Don't know
 4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1867
 Near Finley, Oklahoma
 5. Place of Birth _____

6. Name of Father Edmond Durant Place of birth Finley, Oklahoma
 Iksho
 Other information about father _____
 7. Name of Mother Simmie Durant Place of birth Finley, Oklahoma
 Other information about mother _____

Note: 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 Six.

Johnson H. Hampton, Field Worker
Indian Pioneer History, S-149
June 28, 1937

Interview with
Celey Edwards (Choctaw Indian)
Darwin, Oklahoma

I don't know just when I was born, but I have been told ~~that~~ by some Indians that I am seventy years old. I was born near what is now known as Finley, Oklahoma, a small village about twelve miles northeast of Antlers, Oklahoma. At that time it was known as Cedar County, Choctaw Nation.

My father's name was Edmond Durant, and my mother's name was Simmie Durant and both were reared near Finley, Oklahoma. My grandfather was named Alexander McCan and my grandmother's name was Eliza McCan. I have been told that they were from Mississippi, but where they located when they came here I don't know.

We had a small farm of about five acres. That was the size of the farms in this country at that time or at least in the community in which I lived. We had some cattle, hogs, and ponies on our farm, not many but we had enough for our uses. The grass was good in the country, so we did not have to feed our stock and feed during the winter. They ran out all the time, and in the winter they would go into the bottoms and run there until in the summer when they would come out on the hills and mountains. Then the men would gather

them up and brand them and turn them loose again to roam in the hills and mountains without being molested by anyone. They surely were wild.

The best time the Indians had was they they got ready to gather the stock. A bunch of them would get together and go after the ponies and maybe run them for three or four days before they would get them into the pen. They had pens built out in the woods with wings running on both sides of the fence, and while some of the Indians would go after them, some would stay and guard the fence. When they got close to the fence some Indian would give a loud whoop, then the Indians who were guarding the wing would head the ponies into the wing. In that way they would pen the ponies.

We raised enough corn for our bread and that was about all the bread we had. Flour was nearly unknown to us. We had flour ~~but~~ only for Sunday breakfast. Our corn meal was different to the corn meal we have now; it was made by beating in a mortar or Tom Fuller block as they were called. It took hard work to make the meal in these blocks but it had to be done. We made shuck bread and corn bread and another kind of bread out of the meal, and we made two kinds of hominy, one of which we cooked with hog bones, and it was good to eat. Then we had a gritter that we used in making meal. We would soak the corn in the ear

and the next morning we would take this corn and grit it on a gritter. This gritter was made by punching holes in a tin using a big nail, and just filling the tin full of holes. Then you nailed this tin on a board with nails which held it firm. By using the rough side of it, which was sharp, it would grit the corn fast. We would grit enough for our breakfast in a little or no time.

My mother had a spinning wheel and a weaver, and she would make cloth out of cotton. She would spin enough cotton to make a big ball of thread; then she would take this and put it in the wheel and turn the wheel until it was just as hard as she could make it; then she would put into the weaver and weave cloth. We used cotton for making shirts, breeches, and dresses. She would dye the cloth white, yellow, red, and black using some roots, some bark of trees for dyeing. I used to help her but it has been so long I just don't remember what she used.

We had some sheep on our farm, not many, which we sheared for wool. Mother would shear the sheep and then she would take the wool and wash it; then she would card it like cotton and make woolen socks and woolen mittens. These would sell to those who wanted them, I don't know what she got for them, she traded for something to eat.

My mother did not make any pottery but we had an old woman who lived in our community who did make them. Just for common

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pottery she would use red clay and something else. She did not make big ones but small sizes, just big enough to hold about a gallon of Tomfuller. For the fancy ones she would beat up mussel shells and mix it with the red clay and when she got this kind finished the pottery would look nice. It would just glitter, being the fancy kind, I don't know what she got for them. The other kind did not cost much but she sold both kinds.

Where we lived, there were lots of wild game--deer, turkey, and lots of fish in the creeks. We did have a good time fishing in those creeks. The men would get out and kill deer and turkey so that we had plenty of meat to eat. The only thing we didn't have was lard with which to season our meat, but we could kill a hog for our lard. The hogs were fat so we had lard when we killed a hog.

I never saw a scalp dance. I have heard of them having a dance of that kind but I don't know anything about it, and I never saw a war dance. They had war dances I have been told but I don't know about it. But we used to have dances I don't know what they called our dance but we used to dance all night and have a good time. I have been to several Indian ball games.. They would have them every once in a while. If they were going to have a ball game, about two weeks before the game, an Indian would get on his pony and ride through the neighborhood announcing the ball game to those with whom they wanted to play. They would

paint their faces with something red and when they would get to the house, he would make a long talk about the game--when it was going to be and where at, then he would ride off in a run, and when the time came for the game they would camp at the place where the game was to be, stay all night; then they would get up the goal and get ready for the game. They would fight before the game sometimes and then again they would fight during the game. They used the ball sticks for a club. Some of them would have a hole at the end of the stick and have some lead in it which made it heavy.

I have never been to school. I can't read nor write in English, nor in my own language which is Choctaw, and can't speak English at all. I am a full blood Choctaw Indian. My parents and I have lived here in the county all of our lives. I don't know what to tell. I knew of a lot of things at about 25 or 30 years ago but not now.