

NEEKA, NOEL

INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Johnson H. HamptonThis report made on (date) December 20, 19371. Name Mr. Noel Nehka Full Blood2. Post Office Address Sobol, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 28 Year 18815. Place of birth near Corinne, Oklahoma.6. Name of Father Forris Nehka Place of birth Oklahoma
near Fort Towson

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Jennie Nehka, Place of birth Oklahoma
near Fort Towson

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 _____.

Johnson H. Hampton
Investigator
December 20, 1937

Interview with
Noel Nehka
Sobol, Oklahoma

I was born October 28, 1881, in Cedar County,
Choctaw Nation, near what is now Corinne.

My father's name was Forris Nehka and my mother's
name was Jennie Nehka and they were both raised in
this country near Fort Towson.

My father, I have understood, was in the Civil War;
he joined the Confederate Army and served through the
War; I don't know myself but that is what I was told.
I understand that they had a hard time in the Army,
but my father did not say much about the War while I
was growing up so I can't say what they did do in the
Army. After the War he came back home and lived near
where I was raised until his death.

He married my mother after the War; she was raised
near the place where they both lived and died. I don't
know much about my mother for she died when I was quite
a small boy.

We had a small patch of about five acres in culti-

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vation where we raised our corn and other farm products, and we had a small garden where we raised our vegetables for our table, at that time we did not need much of a farm; all we needed was enough corn to make our bread. We did not have much flour bread at that time for we did not have the money with which to buy flour and just once in a while we had flour, sugar and coffee.

Our trading point at that time was at Paris, Texas. Father would go about twice a year for our groceries where he would get flour, sugar and coffee. Most of the time we traded at Old Doakville; that store was at the old fort, it was near where Fort Towson is now located.

At that time there was no railroad but it has been built since then and Fort Towson has been built also.

We Choctaws used to have a hard time in getting anything to eat. I have heard of them digging roots and leaves and other things that they ate but I never saw them doing anything like that since I have been

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big enough to know anything; that was before my time when they used to do those things.

I know that they used to go out and hunt up terrapin and roast them and eat them; they are good to eat when they are roasted. Just put him in the fire and roast him, when he gets done peel the hide off of him and eat him.

They used to eat pole-cats. They would catch a pole-cat and roast him in hot ashes and scrape him like he was a hog, clean him up right good and take all the entrails out of him, put him out on the roof of the house until the next morning then bake him until he gets well cooked then eat him. It was fixed so that you could not smell him at all; he was good eating. There are not many Choctaws who would eat possum though, they did not like him at all; some few did eat them but not many.

My folks did not have a spinning wheel. I have seen them but I never did see them running and I have seen some pottery that an old woman made.

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This pottery I saw was what this woman had made some years before then but she kept it for a long while. Finally she broke it, I think, for she did not keep it very long after I saw it. I have been told that they used to make those things but that was before my time. They used to make cloth but I never saw them making any of them, but I saw some that had been made. It was very thick cloth and heavy and they had it colored and dyed with something, I don't know what they used but it was nearly like store bought cloth after it was dyed.

The only trail I know of is the Military Trail that ran from Fort Towson to Fort Smith; that is, that is what they told me. The trail is visible yet in some places. I never heard of any other trails in this part of the country except that one.

The country where I lived was an open country; no one lived in there but a few Choctaws and there were very few houses in the whole country at that time. It was what you might call a wild country and

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there were no white people in the country at that time. There were not many Choctaws in our community. The Choctaws used to live in communities but they were several miles apart at that, so the country was wild.

At that time the country was full of wild game, there were lots of deer, turkeys and lots of fish in the creeks so we did not have to work very much to get our meat. The only trouble we had was getting our bread to go with our meat.

I was one of the Chitto Harjo's men. He told us that he would get our Government back like it was before Statehood if we would stand with him and fight with him, so some of us did. We did not know of course so we thought that he would, but he failed. We did resist taking our allotment and the Government selected our land for us, but I guess it is better as it is. Some of us lost our stock for taxes on account of him. He would not let us pay them but we had them to pay or they took our stock for the taxes, after Statehood;

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which was all right for we should have known better for we were under the state laws then.

I don't know what became of him. I heard that he died but where, I don't know. After he died, then everything was over with us. There are a few of them still living in our county who were following him at that time.

I was enrolled by the Dawes Commission at Antlers but I don't know when it was. The Government selected our land for us and we refused to take our payments for awhile but we were told to get our money so we did get our payments with the others until they stopped them, since then we have not gotten any money.

I never saw any war dance nor the scalp dance. I have heard of them but they had them before I was born so I don't know anything about them. I did hear that they would scalp an enemy's head and send it down home then they would get together and have a big dance for him. They would dance all night then the young men would start to the war.

After the railroad was built through our country, small towns were built, mostly sawmill towns. Fort

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Towson was just a sawmill town and the sawmill company finally put up a railroad through our country where I lived for the purpose of hauling the big pine timber which they did. There used to be lots of pine timber in the mountains at that time but when they got through the timber was gone. Now they call it the cut-over land. There is no timber there now where there used to be lots of big pine timber before they came through with the diaky railroad. The sawmill was at Fort Towson and they had a planer there also.

I am a Full Blood Choctaw Indian; never went to school in my life and can't speak English nor read nor write at all, but I can read and write in my own language.

All of my folks were Full Blood Choctaw Indians and lived among their tribes all of their lives and never were anywhere else; until they all died out there used to be a good many of us but now I am about the only one living of my kinfolks. Nearly all of the Choctaws are dead in this country. I am still living near where I was born and raised.