

HOLDER, T. H.

INTERVIEW

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

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HOLDER, T. H. INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton

This report made on (date) March 14th, 1938

1. Name T. H. Holder

2. Post Office Address Darwin, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 18th Year 1870

5. Place of birth Florida.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth Florida.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth Florida.

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 _____.

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An Interview with T. H. Holder, Darwin, Oklahoma.
By - Joseph H. Hampton, Investigator.
March 18, 1938.

I was born August 18th, 1870, in Florida; came to the Indian Territory in 1894 with my father and mother. I was a young man when we came to this country. Father wanted to come to this country to see what he could do in the way of making a living and making some money. He had been living among some Choctaw Indians in Florida and wanted to follow them to this country but he waited for some time before he came over.

We came over in a covered wagon and it took us several months to get over here on account of high water and bad roads, in fact there were no roads at that time from Florida to this country and we would have to wait for the rivers and creeks to run down so that we could cross with our wagon. We had only one wagon and we came over in that and when we landed in this country we did not have any furniture nor anything else only what we brought in our wagon. We landed at a saw-mill station called Rodney, on the Frisco Railroad. This railroad had not been built through this country very long at

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that time and this sawmill was right on the banks of the Kiamichi River. It was a big saw-mill and I think it cut over one hundred thousand feet of lumber per day and there was a planer with this mill that planed the lumber as fast as it was cut. At this mill the river was dammed and the logs that were cut above it were floated down to the mill in high water and the dam held them pretty well; sometimes it would break over, but very seldom. The logs were pulled up to the mill by bull chains; the saw was above the water about fifteen or twenty feet and this bull chain pulled the logs to the saw where they were cut. From what I heard this dam was built by a man of the name of Moyer who had a water mill there before this company got hold of it. Mr. Moyer was ~~the one who built this dam across the river and cut the logs~~ as they floated down the river to the mill.

When we landed in this place we lived in a small saw-mill shack. These buildings were called shacks for they were just thrown up and were very low and were not substantial buildings for they were soon moved from one place to another. We lived in one of those shacks and worked at this mill. I

hauled lumber, cedar posts and walnut logs to this mill and sold them to the man who owned the mill. We did not get much for our work but everything else was cheap and we made good money at that. At that time this country was full of fine yellow pine timber, walnut, cedar and white oak, but after a while this mill cut out all the best pine timber and other commercial timber and they then moved their mill into Arkansas and then this little town Rodney went out of existence and there is no sign of it left. There are no houses left but some parts of the dam are still to be seen across the river to this day.

The commissary went with the sawmill when it moved for the men who owned the sawmill most generally owned the ~~store and the mill hands traded at the store for they were~~ compelled to trade there for their jobs depended on it. If they went somewhere else to do their trading they would lose their jobs at the mill so they had to trade at the commissary to hold their jobs.

When we first landed in this country there were not many white people here and those who were here worked at the

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mills. There were no white people out in the country and at that time there were no farms to be seen. The only farms that were to be seen were Tom Fuller patches that the Choctaws had put in but they were very small, about ten acres was about the biggest farm any one could see. The country was all open and there was fine grass and plenty of it and on the rivers and small creeks there were lots of young cane switches that the stock lived on. The stock did not have to be fed at all during the winter season. At that time the weather was very cold, not like it is now, but the stock did fine and lived well all the winter without feed.

The Choctaw Indians did not farm very much then and so far as that is concerned they farm very little now. They had their small Tom Fuller patches where they raised their corn for their bread and potatoes and they raised beans and peas and they used to make pretty good crops of vegetables. The land produced good crops that made enough corn to run the Choctaws from one crop to another. The country was full of deer, turkeys, and there were lots of fish in

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the creeks. They lived on these things most of the time and did little farming. There used to be lots of deer in the woods; I have seen them in droves, like cattle, and turkeys went in droves. In the spring of the year a man could get out on the edge of the prairies and see the prairies full of deer and turkeys and then the grass began to come up green. There were some bears in the mountains and people would kill the bears and sell the meat. The Choctaws would kill and sell venison to the work hands at the mill. They did not get much for this venison but they would sell deer meat and turkeys and they sometimes would get as much as 50 cents per pair for their venison hams and ~~sometimes they would sell them for 25 cents per pair. The tur-~~keys sold for 25 cents, not more than that, and they would sell hogs already dressed for about 2 cents per pound to the work hands. The mill hands would buy everything that the Choctaws would bring to the mill for sale.

Out in the mountains there were lots of wild hogs and they were really wild. If a man got out in the woods and ran across these wild hogs they sure would take out after him and put him up a tree. They were bad hogs; they were

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regular Indian hogs, tall, hungry-looking hogs with long bristles on their backs and they sure could run, a man had to be fast to get out of their way. The work hands lived on these wild hogs most of the time for they did not have any hogs themselves and did not have time to raise any, so they would get out and kill the wild hogs for meat. These wild hogs belonged to any one who would kill them as no one claimed them. The hands would get out and kill deer and turkeys for their meat. The hands lived pretty well as long as the game lasted but now there is no game in the woods at all.

When we first landed in this country the timber was fine; there was cedar, walnut and whiteoaks and all other commercial timber but this timber is all gone now. It has been cut out until we have little timber in this country and in a few years there won't be any timber in this country.

I have lived among the Indians all my life and I have attended their camp meetings and have traded with them and have been among them ever since I have been in

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this country. My father and mother both have died in this country and are buried here. I have found that the Choctaws are all law-abiding citizens and are honest and truthful and are the best to my mind in the country anywhere. I lived among some Choctaw Indians down in Florida before I came here and there is lots of difference between the Choctaws here and in Florida. It seems that these Choctaws are more intelligent than those down in Florida. I am now living out at Darwin and am too old to do any work any more, but I own a little farm which I am now living on and will live here until I am called away. I have lived here for so long that I don't know any other place to go to.

We did well here in the early days; although there was not much money in the country, we had plenty to eat at all times and did not have to work very hard to get food. The country has changed since I came here. It is all under fence now and is farmed and the country is full of white people now and there are not as many Choctaws as there were at that time. It seems that the Choctaws are all dying out as fast as they can.