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BATTLEST, JANE

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton

This report made on (date) September 21, 1937 193

1. Name Jane Battiest, A Cherokee Freedman.

2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Antlers, Oklahoma

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month Don't know Day Don't know Year

5. Place of birth Near Tahlequah, Oklahoma About 105 years old.

6. Name of Father Forgotten Place of birth

Other information about father

7. Name of Mother Forgotten Place of birth

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 .

FIELD WORKER JOHNSON H. HAMPTON
Indian-Pioneer History S-159
September 21, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH JANE BATTIEST
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born in the Cherokee Nation, near Tahlequah, Oklahoma, which was then in the Cherokee Nation, I am not able to tell what year I was born nor the month or the day, I have been told by my people that I am about 105 years old, but I don't know, I can hardly get around any more, and I am almost blind. I have no education at all so I am not able to tell you very much of the happenings of the Indians during my life.

My mother and father were slaves and they belonged to a Cherokee Indian by the name of John Lowery. He had some slaves besides them, but did not have many. Those he had were all named for him so we were named Lowery and my name is Jane Lowery. We did not mix and mingle with other people very much, as we just had to stay at home and work on the farm and other places he wanted us to work. He kept us at home and did not give us the privilege of visiting anyone except the other slaves he had on the farm.

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I was a pretty good sized girl when the war broke out between the North and the South. The Cherokees joined the Northern army, and fought with the Northern army as it was called. I don't remember that they had over one battle, but I heard that they had a battle with the Choctaws at one time, but as to where I don't know, I heard that there were several Choctaws and Cherokees killed in this fight. They might have had more battles than that; but this one battle was the only one I heard of before I left that country and came down here.

We had plenty to eat and to live on while we were living with our master. He fed us good and took care of us. When we got sick he would get us medicine or a doctor if we needed one. He surely was good to us. Of course he worked us pretty hard, but we could stand it for we were well fed and stout enough to do any hard work that we had to do for him. We got along better then. than we did after we were freed. I remember that our master, John Lowery, joined the army. Before he left for the army he give us some cattle, hogs and ponies. I don't

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know what he said to my father, but any way he gave us the stock; and he gave us some furniture out of the house when he left for the army. I don't know where he went ~~we~~ then, but we left there and came down to this country. I guess we were what you call refugees from the war, any way we came down here and were living down here when we were freed by President Lincoln. We never went back to the Cherokee Nation after we were freed.

When we moved down to this country there were no railroads through here or were there any towns nor villages in the country. We had to do our trading at Paris, Texas. We built a log house which had a dirt floor as there was no lumber that we could get to make our flooring, so we just had a dirt floor for a long time. After a long while we finally got some lumber and made a floor out of it. We then cleared a small farm, and put it in cultivation. We raised all the corn we needed for our bread, which was about all we needed corn for. The stock did not have to be fed at that time for the grass was fine and it stayed green all the year around. Of course the stock did not

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need to be fed corn or any other feed.

After the railroad was built through this country and the towns established we did our trading at Antlers. At that time Antlers was just a small village, which had about two stores and a post office, and a depot at the railroad station. We have been trading here ever since that time.

We beat our corn to make meal just like the Choctaws did, as there were no gristmills in the country. The only way to get bread was to beat the corn in the bowl made on one end of the block of the block of wood. We made hominy as well as corn meal, and we got our groceries out of Paris, Texas, once in a while. It was too far to make a trip every time we got out of groceries so we had to make our meal at home until we could get to go to Paris, Texas.

Several years after this time an Indian by the name of Coleman Nelson put up a store at Nelson. That is, the store was named after him when he put up this store out near where we lived. It was about ten miles from Antlers, and we then traded there. This man Nelson was about a half-breed Choctaw Indian. He was also a

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Methodist preacher. He had lots of cattle, hogs, and ponies he was a man who had plenty of everything. He had held several offices under the Choctaw Government. He ran that store for a long time then sold out, and after he sold out this store at Nelson and put one in Antlers. He ran that store for a long time then sold out, and finally sold out all of his stock before he died. He was a fine man, loved by everybody who knew him whether white, red, or black. After he sold out all of his stock he died, but the store he had years ago is still known as Nelson Post Office. There is a small store still there that has been there a long time. I don't know what year he put up this store at this place, but it was a way out in the woods where he built the store, I think that he built this store for the benefit of the Indian school, which was a boy's school. It was called Spencer Academy for Indian children, and was attended by Indian boys only. It was burned several years ago, and several boys who were asleep upstairs were burned. They never did rebuild this school after it burned down.

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When we moved to this country there were no white people at all; there were a few Choctaw Indians.

In fact there were not many people out where I located. The country was wild, no one lived there, and there were no houses. A few negroes and a few Indians, who were Choctaws, lived in a small community. We lived in our community and we visited each other but very little.

I don't know very much about the Choctaws for I never lived among them. We lived quite a ways from them and ~~never~~ had occasion to be among them but very little. We lived near what was called Beaver Dam. This dam was built by beavers on this little creek, hence the name Beaver Creek. At the head of this creek is the dam that the beavers built, so it was called Beaver Dam by the negroes who lived there.

When I moved here there were lots of wild game such as deer, turkeys, and lots of fish in the river. We used to have fish fries on Boggy River every year. We got all the fish we wanted to eat in a little while.

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The men would go out and kill a deer or a turkey at any time they wanted to, and they did not have to go very far to kill a deer or a turkey, as there were lots of them out in the woods.

I never attended but one Indian church. This church was called^{*} Coal Spring, and it was a Methodist Church. The Indians would camp at this place and feed all that came to the church and I helped cook for them. There used to be lots of full blood Indians at that time. This church has been out of existence for a long time, and there are no Indians there now as they have all died out. The church went down after they all died out with no one to keep it up. I have attended the Indian cries. Sometimes they would have their cries at the church and some times they would have them at the grave. When they have them at the grave they would camp at the place that night, and the next day they would all get together and the preacher would preach his memorial sermon. Then they would go to the grave and all get around it and cry. After they

* This place was probably Coal Springs and is now known as Gay.

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got through they would eat their dinner and go home. The widow or the widower had to mourn over the dead until they had this cry, after then he or she was at liberty to get married again, but not before.

Although I have not lived among the Choctaws, all of this tribe I have known were friendly . They were good people and good neighbors.

I am now living about twelve miles southeast of Antlers, Oklahoma.