

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORLD'S PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton

This report made on (date) October 28, 1937

1. Name Mr. J. A. Herman, a pioneer

2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 17th Year 1871

5. Place of birth Lexington, Alabama

6. Name of Father Benjamin F. Herman Place of birth Alabama

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Elsie Jane Herman 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.

HERMAN, J. A.

INTERVIEW.

7979.

Interview with Mr. J. A. Herman.

I was born September 17th, 1871, at Lexington, Alabama; we moved from there to Texas; we lived there for a while then we moved from there to the Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory, some time in 1894.

We came over on the train; there were fifteen children in our family, eight boys and seven girls.

We located in Oklahoma between the two Boggies, Muddy Boggy Creek and Clear Boggy Creek. We had no furniture when we got located so we had to buy our furniture after we got a house.

Father rented land from an Indian named Sam Colbert and I rented from an Indian named Lee Pierce and we lived on these farms for several years. We then rented land somewhere else near where we had lived so long.

We raised corn and a little cotton. We had to take the cotton to Paris, Texas, to get it ginned and then we sold the cotton there, for there was no market for cotton in this part of the country.

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We could sell the corn at home any time we wanted to for the Indians would buy the corn at any time. They did not raise much corn themselves in that part of the country, and they did not have large farms either. They would have small Tom Fuller patches as they were called which contained about five acres.

When we first located at this place the country was just fine; the grass was higher than the head of a man who was riding horseback and plenty of cane on the bottoms so that we did not have to feed our stock any corn or any other feed during the winter season. We raised a good many cattle, hogs, and some ponies. The Choctaws had lots of cattle and hogs in the country; they just ran loose out on the range for there were no wire fences at that time.

The country was just opened and there was no one to bother the stock then, but after awhile when the white people began to come in we had to look after our stock pretty closely.

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We first lived in log houses; they had plank flooring; the log houses were chinked and daubed with mud and each had a little opening for a window and after we got into the log houses we then bought our furniture. We did not have the money to buy much furniture so we bought just what we could get by with.

While we were renting the farms we had to pay our permit to the Choctaw Government as taxes for a right to live and farm and to raise our stock; when you paid the permit, you were just the same as Choctaw Indian, you could raise all the cattle and hogs you wanted to and not be bothered.

At the time we located, there were not many people out where we lived. There were a few white people there then, and a good many full-blood Indians but they were scattered so much that we did not get to see many of them out where we lived.

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The full bloods lived in communities, and in this community where we lived there were few full bloods and from there to Antlers there were only two houses on the road that we could see. We lived about twelve miles southwest of Antlers. The Choctaws did not live very close together; they were about four or five miles apart.

Our principal trading point was at Paris, Texas; we made the trip about twice a year; we would go in the spring and then in the fall we would take our cotton to have it ginned and would sell it there for there was no market for cotton in the Territory at that time.

There was a small store put in at Nelson by an Indian named Coleman Nelson; he and his son-in-law, C. S. Venson, put up the store where we traded for small things which we needed and they finally got a post office at this place and called it the

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Nelson Post Office; this office is still there at this time. When we went to Paris, Texas, in the fall we would lay in enough supplies to run us all winter; it took us about three days to make the trip.

When we located between the two Boggy Creeks there were lots of wild game, deer, turkey, and plenty of fish in the river, and lots of prairie chickens on the prairies; we could kill a deer or a turkey at any time we wanted to. We could get out and kill chickens as well as fish; there was no trouble in getting wild meat to eat at any time we wanted it.

The first United States Federal Court that was established in Antlers was about the year 1897; it was called the Central District Court and it used to run for thirty days and this court tried and sent away lots of bad people who had come from other

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states to escape the law. Before Statehood, there were a good many bad people in this country.

I never went to school very much. I never attended Indian camp meeting much. I have been to some; they have good meetings and they feed all who come to the meeting.

My experience with the Choctaws has been good. The Choctaws have visited with us and I have visited them and we have had dealings with them and have never lost one penny. They are just as honest as they can be, although most of them cannot speak the English language and have to make trades through an interpreter; when they tell you anything it is true and they never forget a good deed.

I have lived among the Choctaws ever since I came to this country, at which time there were lots of full bloods here.