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NAME: Lem W. Oakes.  
A biographic sketch.

From personal interview with the subject.

Hazel B. Greene.

Indian-Pioneer History, S-149

April 12. 1937

Date of birth---December 31, 1857

Place of birth, Goodwater, about 18 miles  
S. E. of Hugo, Okla.

Father-----Thomas W. Oakes.

Place of birth-North Carolina.

Mother-----Harriet N. Everidge.

Place of birth-Choctaw Nation Mississippi.

Thomas W. Oakes, and Harriet Everided Oakes,  
buried at Old Oakes family graveyard where  
Goodwater church and school were located.

Note by Field Worker.

I have given this sketch just as Mr. Oakes  
gave it to me, in an interview this morning.  
He is one eighth Choctaw Indian, the balance  
white blood..

## OLD INDIAN DAYS

An Interview with Lem. W. Oakes, Justice of the Peace in Hugo,  
Oklahoma.

Hazel B. Greene.  
Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History Project S-149  
April 12, 1937

My father's name was Thomas W. Oakes. He was a white man. His birth place was North Carolina, but he left there young and went to Mississippi, from there he came to the Indian Territory about 1837, to a place on Red river called Pine Bluff Ferry, about twenty three miles from what is now Hugo.

Pine Bluff ferry was a landing place for steamboats, which came up Red river. There was a ware house there, that the people of the country had built to store goods that had been shipped by steamboat. Then merchants from all over the country, some of them a hundred miles away, would come there and get the goods. People close around who had money would meet these merchants there and buy some of the goods. Or if they had anything that they could trade for them they would do that.

Steam boats sometimes went up the river as far as Danison, Texas. Small steamboats. And sometimes they entered the mouth of Kiamichi river, and went up it as far as the Folsome gin, which was not very far from the mouth of the river.

My father was very much interested in this ware house, when he first saw it, because he was a carpenter. It was built of split logs, or half logs, with the ends sunk in the ground, and covered with boards that

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were riven by hand. Riving boards was sone by cutting a piece of timber the desired length of board, then they would quarter that, length-wise, and proceed to split off pieces of the desired thickness with a froe and mallett.

He met and married my mother, Harriet N. Everidge soon after they both came here. She was born in Mississippi. They settled on a farm that they cleared about four miles northwest of Frogville, but there was no Frogville then. There was a school called Goodwater. Presbyterian Missionaries from up North had built it. And those Missionaries tilled the soil, and made their livings just like everybody else did. They swapped work with their neighbors when they would get in a tight pinch just like others. There were both men and women Missionaries, the women were usually old maids, and seldom ever married out here, even tho they spent their lives here, as the missionaries usually did. There were several buildings at Goodwater, but in time of the war the Confederate soldiers were stationed in them and just tore them up, destroyed them, and the buildings they put up after that were never so good.

There were nine of us children, four of whom are still living, Doc Cakes, lives three miles east of Hugo, George Cakes lives in Oklahoma City, and our sister, Mrs. Jeter, lives near Forth Worth, with some of her children. We got to go to school about two or three month in the year. At that we walked about four miles.

We hadn't much time to go to school we all had to work, big, little, old and young. We had hogs, cattle and horses, chickens etc, and had those to attend to, because we raised everything we had to eat and almost every

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thing we had to wear. We raised cotton for our cotton clothes and wool for our wool ones. Mother spun, wove and carded and made our clothes. For years we had only corn bread of course cooked it different ways. Then we got to raising wheat, and Father put in a little grist mill, kinda like a sorgum mill, countryside. Then we ground wheat, and would eat the whole wheat flour. We had biscuits on Sunday mornings only. Then a man put in a mill that would grind the wheat and separate the shorts etc. We'd take our wheat over there and swap it for so much first grade flour and so much shorts, or seconds, but we ate it all. None of it was wasted. This mill was located just over in Texas on the road to what is now Paris. But I remember when there was no Paris Texas. They put Oxen on an immense wheel, and they kept walking to turn it, and operated the mill that ground the meal and flour.

There were no Post offices in this country,. We had to go over in Texas to get our mail. The Post office was called Tamaha. Then it was changed to something else. It was in Travis Wright's store, across the river from Goodwater. Then years later a post office was established at Doaksville, I don't remember just when. We didn't pay any attention to those changes we were too busy trying to make a living to remember WHEN these changes took place. I don't even remember when the railroad was put through here.

Father died a long time, many years, before mother did. He was 75 when he died. Mother lived to be nearly 84. She was younger than he. They are both buried at Goodwater in the Oakes graveyard.

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When we were growing up, there were no doctors in the country. I was half grown before I ever heard of one. Every body those days, went out in the woods and gathered roots, herbs and barks for remedies, gathered them when they were at the proper stage of maturity, and hung them up in the house, for winter use just the same as we hung our meat in the smoke house. We'd kill enough meat to do us from one year to the next. And I believe that that was one reason we were so healthy. We lived mostly on hog meat and corn bread and molasses. I attribute the most of the present day ills to modern food. We never heard of appendicitis. Perhaps they had it and didn't know what it was. Any way when one got sick, they sent for the neighbor women, and they generally knew just what herb to brew to bring about the recovery of the patient.

If people would live on things produced at home more now, they would be better off.

Men who were good prosperous farmers have quit their farms, and quit trying to make a living, and come to town to live on a little old government job. The government did nothing for us. We didn't want it to do anything for us. There is a living for every able-bodied man, right in the earth, and he can have a bounteous one by digging and working for it. Too much help has ruined many good men. It is making outlaws of them too. I've been justice of the Peace here in Hugo continuously for 26 years, and if I live I have two more years to serve and am certainly in a position to know what I am talking about.

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Now, just the other day a 13 year old boy was brought before me for a trial for theft. He was sent to the reformatory. If they had thrashed that boy as I saw them thrashed in my younger days, I'll guarantee that he would never steal another thing. It was a finable offense to cut down or destroy a nut or fruit bearing tree or bush or vine. \$5.00 for the first offense, They were tried and punished right there. A jury decided the extent of the punishment. We had no jails, no courthouses, or reformatories. We needed none. One could pay the fine in cash if they had it, for the first offense, if they chose. After that they were sentenced to be lashed, from 39 to a hundred lashes on the bare back. They would cut to the blood, the culprit would faint, He would be revived with water, and lashed till the sentence was carried out. I saw one lad get a hundred lashes on his bare back. He fainted again again, but he was revived each time and the whipping continued. He was guilty of stealing a horse. He was never apprehended again for any sort of thing. That lashing made a good citizen of him. He lived to be an old and honored citizen, was a minister of the gospel for many, many years before he died just a few years ago over here at Soper. I'd rather not tell his name. He grew into such a splendid man, and it is a sore subject with his family. He never knew I was on the jury.

I was married to Miss Lucy Smith, a girl from Arkansas, December 25, 1879. She passed away this year, was buried on Easter Sunday. Seven children were born to us, all of whom are living in and near Hugo. He was 74 years old when she passed away.

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family there. Then I sold my farm and moved to town, and have held the office of Justice of the Peace ever since. I own my home, and make a garden all the time. I always keep something growing in my garden. I make enough stuff on it to feed two families. We have always canned the surplus that we have not given to our less fortunate neighbors.

In looking over my docket, I notice the names of more than fifty lawyers who have practiced in my court, who have either moved away or have passed on to that land from which no traveler returns, and where I shall soon have to go, as I am living on borrowed time now. I was born December 31, 1857.

My father and mother came to this country with their respective families, by ox-wagons, and a part of the way a foot. Mother said that all the young and able-bodied walked the most of the way. Just the old, sick and babies were allowed to ride.