

HARLESS, HENRY

INTERVIEW

7358

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BIOGRAPHIC FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Planter Histories Project for Oklahoma

HARLESS, HENRY. INTERVIEW. 7358

Field Worker's Name J. J. B. Bigby

This report made on (date) August 24, 1937

1. Name Henry Harless

2. Post Office Address Watts, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 5 Year 1864

5. Place of birth Tennessee

6. Name of Father Doc Harless Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Betsy McCoy Place of birth Tennessee

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 _____

W. J. B. Bigby
Field Worker
August 24, 1937

Interview with Henry Harless
Watts, Oklahoma.

Henry Harless, a pioneer white man, was born in the state of Tennessee October 5, 1864. His father was Doc Harless and his mother Betsy McCoy, both white persons. They came to the Cherokee Nation in 1878 and settled on the Illinois River northwest of the place where the town of Watts is now. They bought a claim from a man named Ward.

Ward was a white man but for some reason he had a claim to this land. He spent most of his early life on the farm which his father operated for many years. They cleared more land until now the farm on which the Harless family settled when they came contains about two hundred acres. The land was fertile at that time and people did not have to work much to make abundant crops.

Education

Harless was not allowed to go to school in the Cherokee Nation. The only school he ever attended in the Cherokee Nation was the school that his father and a few of the permitted white people in this part of the country built; this was a small school

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near the present highway bridge, across the Illinois River north of Watts. They went to school all together about seven months. The teacher that they hired to teach this early day school was named Glen Williams.

The school was built from the lumber that was sawed at George Welch's saw mill up the Illinois River several miles.

Old Timers

The Cherokees who lived as neighbors to the Harless family at that time were Jim and Tom Swake, Dun-Ne-Tose, Mose Crittenden, Zeke Proctor and Richard Parris. At that time these families I have named were all well to do people. Zeke Proctor had more cattle than ~~any man~~ in this part of the Cherokee Nation. Very few people lived in this part of the country at that time. This part of the country between the Illinois River and the Delaware District was a wild country.

Trading Point

The trading point was Siloam Springs, Arkansas. This town was about eight miles from this community. This was the largest town in this part of the country. Before they built this town there was only a small mill located about the locality which is now the eastern part of the present town of Siloam

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Springs. They called this mill the Kiko Mills. This was the milling point for the Cherokees for several years.

Kiko Mills was operated by a man named Toon Gunter. Another small mill was located at Flint which was called Becks Mill.

Intruders

The people who remained in the Cherokee Nation who did not have permits were called Intruders. The man Iard from whom we bought our home was one of these men. He was an Intruder. All white people who made their homes in the Cherokee Nation had to have a Cherokee to ask for their admission into the Nation. If a white man could do a certain piece of work that would be a benefit to the Cherokee Nation he was allowed to remain.

Politics

Politics became an interesting thing after several years of voting. There were only two parties among the Cherokees. The Harless family voted in the Cherokee elections. They voted at Mitchells Mill precinct which was about five miles northwest of Watts now on the Illinois River.