

INDEX CARDS

Negroes--Cherokee Nation
Journey to Oklahoma
Canebrakes
Churches--Cherokee Nation (Colored)
Schools--Cherokee Nation (Colored)
Payments--Cherokee
Game--Cherokee Nation
Farming--Cherokee Nation
Neighborliness--Cherokee Nation
Theft--Cherokee Nation

INTERVIEW WITH PHILLIS PETTIT
O. C. Davidson, Field Worker
February 22, 1937

I was born in Texas. I was just a little tad of a girl about four years old when the Civil War started. I don't know how old I am now. My father, John Harnage, and my mother, Emily Harnage, were slaves belonging to a big farmer in Texas by the name of Harnage.

My mother died during the war. When the war was over, my father loaded his mother (my grandmother), Phillis Harnage, myself and my little brother, Johnson Thompson, in a wagon and we came to the Indian Territory, Cherokee Nation, and settled on a farm five miles east and three-quarters of a mile north of Fort Gibson. The farm is now known as the Harry Ford Farm.

My father and my brother and myself stayed there and my grandmother went to the Garrison at Fort Gibson and cooked for the officers there.

A man by the name of Mounts brought us from Texas to the Territory. We came in covered wagons drawn by mule teams. I don't know how long it took us to make the trip but it seemed like an awfully long time. We would camp out nights. We had a little tent, and my brother and I would sleep in it lots of nights. My father would stay up all night and keep big log

fires to keep us warm and lots of nights the wolves would howl around our camp until I would be so scared I wouldn't sleep a bit all night. Sometimes they would come so close to the camp that father would throw chunks with fire on them at the wolves to scare them away.

We would go through breaks sometimes for miles and miles that the cane was so thick and tall that we could not see a thing. When we would come to a river we would cross on ferry boats but me and brother rode on a bed in the back of the wagon and when we were crossing a river father would make us lie down and wouldn't let us look out. He was afraid we would fall out in the river.

When the soldiers left the Garrison, grandma wanted a home where she could stay until she died so father went and got her and we went up Fourteen Mile Creek, about four miles west of Halbert, and settled a claim and built a little log cabin.

My father worked on a farm for Johnson Baldrige, a Cherokee Indian. Grandma died when we had been there about two years.

There was a little Baptist Church there near the Baldrige place where all the colored folks worshipped. Nearly all

colored folks are Baptists. The church house was built of logs and had what we called a puncheon floor-- logs split and laid against each other with the flat sides up--and the benches were logs split and with holes bored in each end and pegs driven in them for logs.

An old colored brother we called Uncle Stevenson always held services there every Saturday night and every Sunday. He wasn't any preacher but would make talks and every Wednesday night we would have prayer meeting. My grandma (Phillis Harnage) was the mother of the colored Baptist Church on Four Mile Branch east of Fort Gibson. She organized the church and was head of it as long as she lived.

While grandma was living I went to two schools. The first one Miss Edith Walker was teacher and the next time a white lady by the name of Miss Wade was teacher. The school was called the Four Mile Branch School house, but after grandma died I had to stay at home and do the cooking and milk the cows and do all kinds of work.

Father had an old hand mill that we ground the corn on for our bread. I have turned the crank on that old mill till I would get so tired that I would fall over.

When I was about fifteen years old I married George Pettit and we settled the claim on which I now live. The

colored folks were called Freedmen and could settle a claim just like the Indians and when the allotments were made we got our allotments just like the Indians.

When the Cherokee payments were made we had three children. What they called the Cherokee Strip payment (that was the big payment) was made at Fort Gibson. Each one got \$260.00. Our family got in all \$1300.00. We had been living in a little one-room log house. When we got our money we built this house in which I now live. (It is a four-room frame house). The little payment was made at Braggs. I don't remember what we got then, but it wasn't much.

There was lots of deer and wild turkeys here and the prairie chickens were so thick they would come right up to the house and eat with our chickens.

We didn't have a hard time making a living then. We raised our corn and our meat and molasses. We had our own garden truck, and if one family had hard luck and didn't raise enough to do them, other families in the neighborhood would divide with them.

We never were bothered with folks stealing, either. Everybody trusted everybody else and we all got along good.