

HITCHER, JOHN

INTERVIEW

7731

511

HITCHER, JOHN.- INTERVIEW.

7731

Interviewer, Gus Hummingbird,
October 1, 1937.

Interview with John Hitcher.
Stilwell, Oklahoma

John Hitcher, a fullblood Cherokee, was born in Goingsnake District, August 31, 1884. His father was Dave Hitcher, a prominent Cherokee of that time. His mother was Betsy Cornsilk, a fullblood Cherokee.

John was born in what is now known as Fairfield community. He was not raised in poverty as most of the Cherokee boys of his time were. His father was a born politician and usually took active part in Cherokee politics at that time. He was elected to the senate several times.

Education.

John was educated in the rural schools of the Cherokee Nation. He completed about what we would call the sixth grade in the poor schools of the Cherokee Nation. He went to the Peavine School, which was located about three miles distant on what is known as Peavine Creek. Jackson Redbird was one of his old teachers. Later, John married one of Jackson Redbird's daughters.

HITCHER, JOHN. INTERVIEW.

7731.

Ella Clynes was another of his old teachers.

Church.

Big Shed was the earliest church that the Hitcher family attended. This was located on Peavine Creek, about five miles north of the town of Stilwell now. It was called Big Shed because for a long time this was a large four-room house that the Cherokees of that time used for a church house. Later, this was built as most of the churches are now constructed. At the beginning this was of log construction, with one large chimney in the center.

Among the old time preachers at this place were Johnson Spade and John Gritts, who is now buried at the old cemetery at this place. Adam Lacie was the most noted of these old time preachers. Wolfe Coon also preached at this place.

Allotment.

This was about the greatest question that ever arose among the Cherokee people. Most of the fullbloods were against this law. Politics played an important part in the passage of this law. At that time most of the members of

HITCHER, JOHN. INTERVIEW.

7731.

council were Downing men. Furthermore, most of the councilmen were men of less than half-breed Cherokees. It was said by the old timers that some day that the Cherokees would send a half-breed council that would pass such a law as this was and Hitcher saw the time that this came to pass. Wolfe Coon was the chairman of the senate when this law was passed. He at once protested the election held in the council. He sent a telegram to the President of the United States. In this protest he stated that the law was passed in the law making body of the Cherokee Nation composed mostly of less than half-breed Cherokees; that the law was strongly opposed by the majority of the fullbloods. The president issued a proclamation calling another election. This election was to be held in the various precincts throughout the Cherokee Nation. During the interval between the time this proclamation was issued and the date of the election there were many speeches made in support of this law. Among the men that made those speeches were, W. W. Hastings, who later became the congressman from this district; Anderson Gritts and Redbird Smith, who formed what is now

HITCHER, JOHN. INTERVIEW.

known as the Night Hawks among the Cherokees. It has been rumored that they were paid, that is the Night Hawk Clan, to keep their followers from voting in this election.

When the election came on the Night Hawks did not vote. The poorer class of these Cherokees were in earnest about their purpose of not voting in the said election, but their leaders received the best lands in the Cherokee Nation. The Nays lost in this election and the Cherokee Nation was allotted separately.

Camp Meetings.

The Cherokees would have camp meeting about once a year. Since there was only one church at that time, it was usually held at the old Big Shed. These meetings would last for two or three weeks. Many Cherokees from all over the Cherokee Nation would come to church.

The meetings would last for several days. People would bring their own food and prepare it on the grounds. For the benefit of those who did not bring food they would cook on the grounds. Long tables would be erected. Several head of beef were killed.

HITCHER, JOHN. INTERVIEW.

7731

Hitcher has seen as many as forty persons baptized at these meetings.

Fairfield Church.

This was an off-spring of the church at Big Shed. This church was established near the Scott Springs, about a mile north of Stilwell. This was the first church to branch off from the mother church. The leaders who took active part in this church were; Jesse Redbird, Fisher Fourkiller and Dave Hitcher. This was in 1879. Several years later this church was moved to its present location, about two miles north of Stilwell.

Politics.

As stated before, the father of John was a born politician. John was taught the importance of politics at a very early age. There were only two major parties at that time. This was the National and the Downing parties. The Hitchers belonged to the National Party.

The voting precinct at that time was at Peavine. Wolfe Coon, the uncle of John, was elected Senator for several terms. His father, Dave Hitcher, was also elected to several various offices.