

SCHOOLER, BEN F.

INTERVIEW

#12549

419

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

420

SCHOOLER, BEN F. INTERVIEW. 12549.

Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton.

This report made on (date) December 31, 1937. 193

1. Name Mr. Ben F. Schooler, a pioneer.

2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 26 Year 1882.

5. Place of birth Kentucky.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth Kentucky.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth Kentucky.

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 5.

SCHOOLER, BEN F.

INTERVIEW.

12549.

421

Johnson H. Hampton,
Investigator,
Dec. 31, 1937.

An Interview With Ben F. Schooler,
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born November 26, 1882, in Glasgow, Kentucky. I came to the Choctaw Nation in 1898, when a young man. My father and mother moved from Kentucky to Texas and located at Clarksville; I lived there with them for a while. I then came over into the Nation and worked for the Telephone Company. I then went back to Clarksville, Texas; my father and mother then moved to Louisiana and lived there until they both died in that state. I then came back to Hugo, and went to work for the Telephone Company again and worked for them for several years.

I wanted to come into this country and see what I could do with myself and see if I could make money with which to live on, and I did make money; it was a good opportunity for any young man at that time for there was lots of work for everybody; they did not pay very much but everything was cheap so after all it was good wages that we got, and we could save up a little money.

When I first came to this country there were but very few white people here. I then left and came back and then

a good many white people had drifted into the country while I was gone.

Hugo was a very small town then; there were not many houses and not many stores there at that time, but it built up pretty fast after the people began to come in and commenced to build houses.

At that time you would ride for several miles and not see a house; the Choctaws lived in communities, a few in each neighborhood, then when you left one community you would ride for several miles before you would see another neighborhood, so the country was wild yet when I came back the second time there were no fences only small patches, maybe about five acres which was a farm for the Indians, and they had small gardens where they raised their garden vegetables and their corn. I don't think they needed much of anything for they lived on the game they killed and did not have to work very hard to make the living, just so they had enough corn to make their bread.

This was a fine country then; everybody did well and made an easy living; a man did not have to work hard to make a living for his family. I married about that time

SCHOOLER, BEN F.

INTERVIEW.

12549.

-3-

and came to Antlers, where I went to work in a bank and worked for several years as cashier. I stayed there until my health got to where I had to leave the bank and do something else because of my health. I then got a job as Superintendent of the water works and am still on that job.

I never was out to the Indian camp meetings nor at one of their "cries", and never saw an Indian ball game. I have heard of them but never saw one of them; they still have their camp meetings but they have no more cries. I have been told, and they do not play ball any more. They stopped their "cries" on account of the white people making fun of them; that is that is what they think; maybe some of them did but I don't think that a white man with good sense would make fun of Indian "cries", but still the Indians believe that, so the consequence was that they stopped having their "cries".

I have been in Antlers, for several years; I have raised my family here and my children went to school with the Indian children and they have associated with them and have played with them, but they never had any trouble with any one of them at any time. And I have been closely come

-4-

in contact with them through the bank. We have loaned the Indians money through the bank and have dealt with them in other ways; and I have found them to be honest and true to their word and my experience with them has been satisfactory in every way. To my way of thinking, the Indians are the best people anywhere; they are all my friends and we get along just fine with all of them. They have their customs and their ways that are different from ours for they were taught that way but after all is said and done they are fine people; there are not as many Indians as there used to be, they have all died out but a few Full Bloods now living in this county.

I don't think that the Indians should be criticized for getting drunk; they should be pitied instead; they were brought up to drink and they do not think that it is wrong for them to get drunk; the white people are the ones who should be criticized as they sell the Indians the whiskey. They know that an Indian will get drunk if he gets hold of whiskey. You never saw an Indian selling whiskey but they surely will drink it.

SCHOOLER, BEN F.

INTERVIEW.

12549.

-5-

As I said that I have been among the Indians ever since I came to this country and I find them to be law-abiding citizens. I never hear of one of them stealing any thing nor bothering anyone; of course they will fight among themselves and maybe kill one once in a while but they do not bother any of the other people who live among them.

I am living in Antlers, and it maybe that I will live and die here for I have been living here for so long that I would not feel right if I was to leave here and go somewhere else.

Note:

Johnson Hampton is an Indian and the repetitions and Indian expressions are not changed in his manuscripts--Ed.