

SANDERS, SAM.

INTERVIEW

7943

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Form A-(S-149)

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

Field Worker's name Hummingbird & Bigby

This report made on (date) October 20 193 7

1. Name Sam Sanders
2. Post Office Address Proctor, Ok'ahoma
3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 6 Year 1871
5. Place of Birth Goingsnake District, Cherokee Nation
6. Name of Father Dave Sanders Place of birth: North Carolina  
 Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_
7. Name of Mother Nellie Bark Place of birth Cherokee Nation  
 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 12

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Hummingbird & Bigby,  
Interviewers,  
October 20, 1937.

An interview with Mr. Sam Sanders,  
Proctor, Oklahoma.

Sam Sanders, a half-breed Cherokee was born in what is now Adair County, at that time Going-snake District, Cherokee Nation, May 6, 1871. He was the youngest child of Dave Sanders and Nellie Berk. Sam had only two brothers who died in infancy. He now lives at Proctor.

#### Early Life

Most of Sam's early life was spent on a small farm near the present village of Proctor. His father laid claim to a ten acre tract near where the Tyner's Creek Bridge is now. Here on this small place they raised patches of corn, potatoes and other vegetables.

They never raised enough produce to have a surplus. At that time there were not many as what we now would term big farmers. Richard Wolfe was about the largest farmer in this part of the country at that time. He operated about fifty acres just across the Barren Creek south of Proctor.

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Every farmer had a few head of cattle. They usually had two or three head of calves to sell every Fall. This helped them buy their winter clothes. But there were plenty of hogs in this part of the country. They ran at large in the hills around Proctor. Sam has seen as many as hundred head at one place. Plenty of mast was to be found therefore hogs stayed fat all the time.

#### Education

The earliest school established in this part of the country was the Tyner Valley School.

The Tyner Valley School was a Cherokee School. This was a log building. The school was located just about half mile northeast of the town just across Tyner Creek on Highway 62. There were about fifteen children who attended this school. The old teachers at this place are Eli Whitmire, Charlotte Whitmire, Mandy Sanders and Susie Nave.

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### Church

There was no established church in this part of the Cherokee Nation for a long time. The only church service that was held around here was held in the schoolhouse by John Smallwood a fullblood Cherokee. Smallwood was a Methodist Minister.

### Civil War

Mr. Sanders does not know anything about the Civil War. He was not living at that time, but what he knows was told to him by his father. His father did not serve in the armies of the Civil War. He remained at home and joined what was called the "Bush Whackers". He does not know of any battlefields in this part of the county.

### Cattle and Cattlemen

Many cattle could be found in the Goingsnake District. Every family had a few head of cattle

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but what we now would term big cattlemen were scarce. Among the few that could be found was Richard Wolfe, Zeke Procter and Johnson Whitmire. They sold their cattle to buyers from other states. There were no shipping points at that time.

#### Ferry

Sanders remembers only one ferry; this was the ferry at Boudinot Ford near the town of Tablequah. This is the only ferry that he ever crossed. He does not know the name of the operator of this ferry. But he thinks it was one of the Boudinots.

#### Fords

Almost every ford was named in the early days, that is, all the fords on the Illinois River. The Illinois River could not be forded just everywhere so the fords went by names. Among the early names for these fords are the Boudinot Ford east of Tablequah, Chewey Ford at Joe Chewey's place that is near

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the village of Chewey, now Proctor Ford north of the present town of Watts. This was the main ford at that time because it was the main road to Siloam Springs, the largest town nearest to the Cherokee country. Mitchell Mill Ford was located about ten miles west of Watts. This ford was named in honor of a white man named Mitchell who operated a grist mill at this place.

#### Furs and Hides

There were plenty of fur bearing animals to be found in this part of the Cherokee Nation. Otter could be found on Barren Creek. There has been several killed to his knowing around Proctor. The fur market was bad at that time. The fur prices ran from a nickel for an opossum to about one dollar for a fox. The Cherokees did not hunt much in the night. Hides sold for about fifty cents at Cincinnati, Arkansas. There was a tannery located at this place.

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There was plenty of game in the woods in this part of the Cherokee Nation at that time. Deer, turkey, squirrels and many other small animals could be found in great numbers. At that time there were some good hunters. Bullet Weaver, Dave Bark and Blue Stop were the greatest hunters among the Cherokees in this part of the country at that time.

Fish were plentiful in the streams around Proctor. The main streams at that time were the Barren Creek and the Tyner Creek. The Tyner Creek emptied into the Barren Creek about a mile south of Proctor. Every Spring the fish would go up stream on Tyner Creek. Where the creek became smaller they could be killed easily. Most of the Cherokees at that time speared the fish. Every year they would have what they called fish killings. This was done by polluting the water with buck-eye. This buck-eye was used to make fish drunk. It would not kill them if they could get a



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little fresh water. But if they could not get out of this poison it would kill them. Thousand of them were killed every year.

#### Financing Farmers

Most of the farmers at that time had a little money. We did not have many men that had plenty of money. Among those who had money were Richard Wolfe and the Whitmires. They usually loaned their neighbors all the money they needed. Notes and mortgages were not known; All money was loaned, based on honesty.

#### Horse Races

The tracks were at John Sanders Field and at Whitmire Prairie. John Sanders was the race man in this part of the country. He owned a couple of race horses. They were not real bred race stock. He owned horses that he raised on his farm, just common horses. The greatest race he ever witnessed at the Sanders tracks was a race run between Watt Sanders and a man named Ferguson. This was about 1885. The Sanders horse won the race. Ferguson lost a lot of money

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in this race. Another race at this place resulted in a tie. This was between the Sanders' horse owned by a horse and a man named Smith from Missouri.

#### Indian Dances and Music.

The Cherokees had two kinds of dances. The one called the Old Reel Dance was somewhat similar to the Square Dance of nowadays. The other was the Old Stomp Dance; this was a kind of a Ceremonial Dance; this dance was a Society Dance. They danced not all together; they did too in a way but the bunches were by clans. But in this community the Reel Dance was the favorite. Among the early day music makers were Dave Blackwood, Red Fish and Wilson Crawfish. They also had a choir that sang at funerals and at church services. This choir was composed of several members among them were Lewis Bird, leader, Isaac Hummingbird, Hyder boys and several others.

#### Politics

The Sanders all belonged to the National Party.

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The voting precinct was Rabbit Trap. The first time I voted Dick Wolf was the judge.

Elections were very interesting in the Indian Territory. The Cherokees knew the importance of the elections that early. There were not many jobs that the chief could appoint. The greatest election held in the Cherokee Nation was in the election the year that Joel B. Mayes and Rabbit Bunch ran for chief. Some people say that Bunch beat Mayes. And the majority will never believe anything else but that this was a crooked deal. The great issue was the Allotment of Cherokee Nation. Bunch was the only full blood who ever ran for chief and caused so much excitement. Bunch was the greatest states-

man among the Cherokees. His words in his speeches during his campaign, will never be forgotten. Everything that he to'd would come to pass has already happened just as he said.

#### Trading and Milling Points

Cincinnati, Arkansas was their main trading point at that time. Bob and Bill Rhea were the early day

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traders at this place. Tahlequah Indian Territory was another trading point for the people around this country. Jim Stapler was the trader at this town.

The nearest mill was at Bidding Springs and was a Water Mill. This was located near Tahillau. The operator was Dr. Bidding an early day white man.

#### Newspapers

There was not any newspapers in the Cherokee Nation at that time. The Cherokee Advocate was the only paper in this country. It was printed at Tahlequah both in Cherokee and English.

#### Salt Springs

The only Salt Springs that they knew anything of ~~was the one near the town of Salina.~~ Several times a year the Cherokees would go in bunches to this place. There was at this place several large kettles that was used to boil the water after the water was boiled there would be left a brownish looking powder that was used for salt. I do not know whether they

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Jack ...

the ...

Rama ...

Stage Route

The only stage route ...

was the route between Tahlequah and Fort Gibson. Mr.

Wilson was the manager of this stage route; his home

was at Tahlequah.

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Old Timers

Some old-timers were Squa-Nee-Da Bird,  
Ou-Ha-leu-Ga, Billie Plug, Skull Downing, Billie  
Crittenden and Nelson Terrapin.

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