

INDEX CARDS

Removal--Choctaw  
Lukfata  
Cemeteries--Choctaw  
Hunter  
houses--Choctaw Nation  
Farming--Choctaw Nation  
Cotton Gins--Choctaw Nation  
Grist Mills--Choctaw Nation  
Orchards--Choctaw Nation  
Clothes--Choctaw  
Wealthy Indians--Choctaw  
Finance--Choctaw Nation  
Schools--Choctaw Nation  
Rotana, Solomon  
Witchcraft--Choctaw  
McKinney, William  
Names--Choctaw  
Family Life--Choctaw

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS WOUTIN HUNTER.  
HUGO, OKLAHOMA

FIELD WORKER HAZEL B. GREENE.  
May 4, 1937.

Date of birth-----Sept, 18, 1839.

Place of birth,-----5 miles west of Boswell, Okla.

Father-----Benny Hunter. (Bina Ahantubbi)

Place of birth-----Choctaw Nation Mississippi.

Mother-----Tennessee Risner.

Place of birth-----Tennessee.

Father and mother both buried at old home place, north  
of Boswell, called Hunter springs.

NOTE BY FIELD WORKER.

Judge Hunter's father was thrice married. Had three  
sets of children.

A BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

My father,

Known to the white people as Benny Hunter: but whose Choctaw name was Bina Ahantubbi: was a fullblood Choctaw Indian. He and my mother, Tennessee Blamer, married soon after the close of the Civil war. I was born September 18, 1869 the oldest of my mother's children.

He came here in 1832 when he was 18 years old, with the other Choctaw Indians, who were removed here from Mississippi. They first traveled horseback and in wagons to the Mississippi river, then by boat up the Arkansas river to Fort Coffee. He stayed there a short while, went from there to Lukfata, in what is now McCurtain County, Oklahoma. Lukfata is the Choctaw for Skeleton depot. Government supply stations were called depots. He stayed there a number of years, then traveled by ox-sled to, up between the two Boggys. (Boggy rivers.) north of what is now Boswell, where he lived a few years, and then moved about five miles west of what is now Boswell. There I was born. He lived there until April 18, 1887. He is buried at the old home place.

Mother died August 2, 1902, She is also buried at the old home, where there is a family cemetery.

There was once a small village named Hunter, named for my father, about 5 miles west of what is now Boswell, Okla.

2

We had a pretty a log house as I ever saw. The logs were hewn almost as smoothly as a plank, and notched to fit pretty closely at the corners, there were probably a few wooden pegs or old square nails to hold them in place. It was chinked with sticks, held together with lime and clay. There were two large rooms with the usual wide hall between them and the long porch across the front, and boxed siderooms.

I was ten years old when Father discarded the log house and built a story and a half frame house.

He was never interested in politics, he engaged strictly in live stock raising and farming. We raised everything. We had an old horse power gin and grist mill. I've driven those horses around and around till I'd be so tired I'd want to drop dead. We also made our own syrup. We raised wheat and would send it to Benham, Texas, by the wagon load to be ground into flour, shorts etc. It was only about a weeks journey there and return.

Then we quit raising wheat, and would buy our flour. By that time Caddo was a good trading place and we'd go over there or to Paris, Texas, and buy flour by the thousand pounds. Green coffee in 150 or 200 pound sacks, roast it in

3

the oven and grind it as we needed it, usually each morning before breakfast, in an old square mill that was held between the knees, and ground around and around. Then we had the kind that were nailed upon the wall. The coffee was poured into a hopper like tin, and ground by a handle.

On Sunday mornings we had biscuits for breakfast, and all the hired hands would get up earlier than usual, because of that. Around four O'clock, you'd hear them out chopping wood, milking, feeding, drawing water, and so on, whistling and singing about biscuits for breakfast. On a clear frosty morning one could hear a big "buck nigger" singing for miles, about those biscuits. And we had them EVERY Sunday morning, and on holidays, birthdays etc.

We'd kill 90 or a hundred hogs every winter, in order to have enough meat and lard for our own use and for our work hands. We paid for work in meat, lard and syrup.

We had a big orchard, peaches, pears, plums, apples, cherries, grapes and berries. Always kept about a hundred stands of bees, so we would have plenty of "sweetenin".

We didn't have much money, didn't need much, we had just everything to eat, and just enough to buy a few clothes

4

was all we needed. Speaking of clothes, I remember when lots of the fullbloods, Choctaw Indian men, wore only one garment, and that was a long shirt. I recall an old man, so infirm that he leaned on a staff, wearing only a long shirt, came to our house one morning.

Now back to the subject of money. Cattle buyers would come along every so often to buy our surplus stuff and they brought their money right along with them, in their saddle riders, usually it was gold, too, to pay for them. There being no banks in the country we had never heard of a check. Travelers would carry their money in the saddle riders, and when they would stop to stay all night, they'd turn the saddle riders over to their host, who would return it next morning with every dollar in it. People were honest those days. One couldn't go around with a lot of money like that now.

I am reminded of how some of the fullblood Choctaw Indians would be sent away to colleges, and be given a good education, then come back and "go native". Retrograde. For example, Solomon Hotema was a college graduate, a lawyer and minister, yet he believed in witchcraft to the extent of murdering "witches".

5

Then there was one William McKinney, a graduate from Roanoke College, Roanoke, Virginia, who had had a course in Theology at Yale, and who came to Spencer Academy to talk to us, and made a splendid talk. He looked every inch the polished gentleman. Dressed immaculately in snow white shirt, collar and black tie. Fine long Prince Albert coat, with a handkerchief in the breast pocket, shoes polished, up-to-date hair cut, just perfectly turned out. I saw him a few years later. He had on very common ill-fitting clothes, he was wearing a wide cartridge belt, long hair and looked to be just what he was, a fullblood Choctaw Indian. A true case of retrogression.

I must tell you here how my father came by his name. His father, Akaysha, went on a big hunting expedition with a lot of members of his tribe. Some one was always selected to stay in camp and protect the women and children from bears, cougars, and other dangerous wild animals that infested the wilds of Mississippi. On this occasion it fell to the lot of my grandfather to stay in camp. A big buck deer approached the camp and he killed it with an Enfield rifle, and because he killed the deer while in camp, he named my father, who was then about six years old, Bina Ahantubbi, which means "Stay

in camp and kill". And white people corrupted it to Benny Hunter.

It was with an old cap and ball Enfield rifle that I killed my first squirrel. I was too small to hold it up and aim, so I braced it against a sapling, got a bead on the squirrel and fired.