

HUNTER, THOMAS W.

INTERVIEW.

7908.

Hazel B. Greene, Interviewer.
October 21, 1937.

Interview with Thomas W. Hunter,
Born September 18, 1869
Father-Benny Hunter(Bina Ahantubbi)
Full blood Choctaw Indian.
Mother-Tennessee Risner

When my daddy came from Mississippi, he settled at old Lukfata, in what is now McCurtain County. He stayed there a number of years, then traveled by ox sled to up between the two Boggy Rivers, north of what is now Boswell. He lived there a few years and then crossed Clear Boggy and built a home on the east side of the river, about five miles west of what is now Boswell, where I was born.

He used to tell me tales of the early settlers here and of stories that were told him of settlers before the Government sent the Choctaw Indians out here. He and others told me of a man by the name of Doaks who came here some ten or twelve years prior to the general Exodus of the Choctaws from Mississippi. Doaks came up the Red River and landed somewhere about

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two miles east of the mouth of the Kiamichi River on the north bank of Red River and established a trading post where he traded with the uncivilized Indians.

Doaks was a fur trader and was very wealthy. There is no doubt in my mind that there was a Doaksville or Doaks Stand, as some called it, other than the Doaksville that was located about a mile or less west and north of the Fort Towson, because there was a military post on Doaksville Creek, about six miles southeast of Fort Towson, a year or so before that fort was established, about in 1824, on the bluff overlooking Gates' Creek.

Aside from the stories told me about there having been a Doaks' store or stand on Doaksville Creek, and of the territory east of the Kiamichi River being called Miller County, Arkansas, stories were told me of there having been a Miller County Court House.

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It is my opinion that that fellow Doaks was a Justice of the Peace, or its equivalent, in those days, and that he held court in his store, or trading place. Hence the story of a Miller County court house. I have gathered this from bits I have heard here and there. Down on Doaksville Creek there are ruins that look like the ruins of an old furnace or a brick kiln. It is possible that instead of there having been a brick kiln there, these ruins are what is left of the old foundation of that store or the military post.

When Fort Towson was established on the bluff overlooking Gates' Creek, Doaks then moved his store west and a little north of the fort, and thus started the famous old Doakville that has gone down in history as the place where the Constitutional Convention was first held. This was where the Constitution of

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the Choctaw Nation was written, and the first Choctaw Council was held. Also the first Council House of the Choctaw Nation was right at that old Doaksville.

There is no doubt in my mind either that Fort Towson was the first United States Post Office in the Indian Territory, that is now Oklahoma.

Along with blue prints of the plans of the old Fort Towson, and other records of the Fort, are letters which were written from Fort Towson, Arkansas. It was really Arkansas then. Those letters were dated 1834 or '36, somewhere along there. There should be records somewhere showing just when Fort Towson, Arkansas, ceased to be that and became Fort Towson, Indian Territory.

I have a very good friend who might have some very valuable papers to the very early history of this country. She is Mrs. Carrie L. McClure, and she lives at North McAlester. Her father was Mr.

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Harvey R. Skimmerhorn, Superintendent of Spencer Academy for years. He was the superintendent when I attended that school. He was always delving into the early history of the Indians and their country, and making records of his findings. It is probable that his daughter has kept those records of his findings.

Mr. Skimmerhorn was so loved by the Choctaw Indians that they adopted him into the tribe and permitted him to file on an allotment of land. I believe his allotment contained eighty acres. He was a smart man and knew geology, so he took his allotment up close to Ardmore, where the oil fields are now. Oil made his children very wealthy.

I am reminded of the romance of Miss Carrie Skimmerhorn, and the part I played in it. She was educated in the East and was a graduate of Boston Conservatory of music, and when her parents came to

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the Indian Territory to Spencer Academy where her father was Superintendent, she accompanied them, of course, and taught in the Academy. Another teacher was a young Choctaw Indian with whom she fell desperately in love. He developed tuberculosis, went west and died.

A year or so later she fell in love with one of the schoolboys, an Indian lad named Freeman McClure. Her parents opposed her affair with this poor Indian boy. They thought that their highly educated daughter should marry some wealthy man. Carrie and Freeman took me into their confidence and told me of their plans to get married and enlisted my aid. I was only about sixteen so the parents paid no attention to Carrie's talking to me a lot. Carrie and Freeman planned to elope on the last day of school.

One night about two weeks before school was out I waited until about midnight, when I thought every-

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body was asleep, then I climbed out of a window with a sack of Carrie's clothes. She had lots of fine clothes that she had brought from Boston with her; then I saddled a horse that belonged to the cook, and rode two miles to Nelson and left the clothes with a Mr. and Mrs. Woods there. Mr. Woods was postmaster. Then I returned and went to bed.

Well, the last day of school came and we were holding last day exercises when Carrie complained of sudden illness and left the chapel with a handkerchief held to her face. I watched her and wondered if I would ever see her again. After the exercises were over, her mother went to Carrie's room to see what she could do for her. She was gone and a search did not result in finding her. Mrs. Skimmerhorn came out to where I was cutting wood, and asked me if I

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knew where Carrie was. I did not. Further search revealed one of her slippers that she had lost as she climbed over a highboard fence to join Freeman McClure, who waited just north of the cemetery for her. They drove to Armstrong Academy where Mr. J. J. Boyd married them. It was the next summer when they came home for a visit that they told of my part in their elopement, and when I returned to school that fall, Mr. Skimmerhorn called me into his office and gave me one of the most terrible tongue lashings a boy ever got. He told me about how I had betrayed their confidence in me, and that he could forgive me for my part in the elopement, but that he could never forget it and ^{that} if he obeyed the dictates of his heart, he would not permit me to attend school there that term. But he did upon my promise to "walk the straight and narrow path", which I did.

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After several years, Freeman and Carrie separated and Freeman married Jimmie Dyer's sister, I believe at Lukfata or some where near there. Carrie never re-married and lives in North McAlester. I don't doubt that she has many, many valuable papers and records which her father had collected.

Thomas W. Hunter is now (1937) the County Judge of the Choctaw County, Oklahoma, at Hugo, Oklahoma.