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

Field Worker's name Thad Smith Jr.

This report made on (date) 5-14 1937

1. Name Mrs. Ben Smith. (Emma Wilson) other name

2. Post Office Address Chickasha, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 823 South 2nd Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

5. Place of birth Virginia.

6. Name of Father Allen Wilson. Place of birth _____

Other information about father Was a slave.

7. Name of Mother Emma Place of birth IL

Other information about mother Was a slave and sold away

from child during Civil War.

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 3

I came to the Chickasaw Nation, near Wynnewood, in 1891, with my husband. He rented a farm and raised some cotton and corn. The cotton was ginned at Wynnewood and sold for about four cents a pound. The corn was worth about twenty-five cents a bushel.

In 1893 we moved near Chickasha, and rented a farm from George R. Beeler, a white man, who was married to a Choctaw woman. My husband planted some cotton which was the first cotton to be planted in the Washita Valley. The year was favorable, but the cotton never matured, but did well enough to encourage my husband to try it again. The next time he got his seed at Purcell and it made good cotton. The cotton was ginned and sold at Chickasha for four or five cents a pound.

Father Isodore, the Catholic priest at Chickasha, founded the Catholic school and intended to school the negroes with the Indians and whites, but the Indians and whites rebelled and the negroes finally got a subscription school started in a church house. The teacher's name was Emma Miller. The books my children studied were Harvey's grammar, McGuffey's reader, Ray's Arithmetic, and the blue back speller.

The Church that was used as a school house during the week, was the New Hope Baptist.

In 1896 a Mr. Crump came from Purcell to Chickasha to organize the Masonic lodge for the colored people.

H. F. Fields and Andrew Carter were instrumental in getting the lodge organized. The membership the first year was twelve or fifteen. About three years later the negro Eastern Star was organized.

Leslie Watson (white man) organized a band (negro), taught the pupils music twice a week for twenty-five cents.

There were thousands of Texas cattle unloaded at Chickasha and driven to grass nearby. John Light owned one of the largest Texas herds near Chickasha. He leased grass from Buck Sparks, an inter-married white man.

When we first came to Chickasha the town was very small, and streets were uneven and in rainy weather there was a lake on one side of Main street. My husband helped to haul dirt and fill in all the low places. The best workers made one dollar a day.

When we first came to Chickasha women wore long dresses that reached to their ankles and they had big puffy sleeves, that were called leg of mutton sleeves.

It took as much cloth to make the sleeves as it did to make the rest of the dress. Wool material could be bought for twenty-five cents a yard. Women wore hightop round toed shoes, made of calfskin.

I heard my first talking machine in 1896. Dr. Evans brought it to town. He played it for the towns-people and had large audiences.

Mr. High had several ox teams that he farmed with, and drove to wagons.

There were a good many Indians in Chickasha, and I went to some of their dances. They usually danced to the beat of drums.

There were a good many peddlers in the country, in the early days, selling cook stoves, sewing machines, clothing and nearly everything imaginable. If the prospects didn't have cash, the peddlers would trade for chickens, eggs, horses, fruit or anything of value.

In August, 1901, my husband went to El Reno to register for the drawing of land in the Caddo, Kiowa and Comanche County. He drew a claim southwest of Chickasha, that he kept for a good many years.