

SIPES, ELIZABETH

INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for OklahomaField Worker's name Johnson H, HamptonThis report made on (date) September 13th 19371. Name Elizabeth Sipes.2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 18675. Place of birth Red River County Texas.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

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 6.

J. H. Hampton
Field Worker
9-13-37

An interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Sipes
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

I was born in Red River County, Texas, near Clarksville, some time in 1867. My parents were raised in Canadian County.

The Choctaw Indians would come over there in the Fall to pick cotton; they would come over in wagons, camp at some field and pick cotton although they would not pick much cotton even tho they worked hard; they just could not pick cotton like the white people could. I used to come over the river and visit some of the Choctaws after I got acquainted with some of them.

The Indians whom I got acquainted with were mostly full bloods who lived in small log houses or huts. These huts had no floor and no windows; just had one opening and that was the door but the houses were chinked and daubed with mud and they were warm.

In the winter they would make a fire in the center of the house and would get all around it and sleep; some

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families had blankets and some of them did not have but one quilt for bedding, but they all kept warm in the log houses.

They all had a small patch of land in cultivation where they raised corn for their bread; they did not raise much of anything else but had to have their corn for that was about all they had to eat. They would come over to Clarksville for their groceries. I think that nearly all the Indians who lived in that part of the country did all their trading at Clarksville for there were no stores in the Choctaw country at that time; but since that time stores have been established. Idabel is a town now and there are several little stores in the country and there are some big plantations on Red River now.

The Indian women made corn meal by beating corn in a bowl made in the end of a block of wood about three feet high; they would beat this corn until it was made into meal, and they made hominy just the same way they did meal; the Indian women cooked out in the open; they would build fires out in the yard and cook their meals out there.

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The Choctaws at that time would work very little and if a Choctaw man got behind with his crops he would give a "working"; that is, the neighbors would all come out and work the crop for him and they would have a dance that night and dance all the night after they got through working. The Indians did not work hard and did not work all day for they only had a little crop to start with so it would not take them very long to get the crop worked out.

At that time there were no white people in that part of the country; they were mostly full blood Choctaws; there used to be lots of Choctaws but before I left that country most of the Choctaws had died.

A good many of the Choctaws had cattle, hogs and ponies running out on the range; they did not have to feed them because the grass was good and kept green all the winter and the stock stayed fat all the year around; there was plenty of small cane in the bottoms for the stock to graze on so the owners did not have to feed the stock at all.

At that time there was lots of wild game in the woods such as deer, turkeys and there was plenty

of fish in the creeks and I have heard that there were bears on the mountains but I never saw one; the Indians would go out and kill anything they wanted to eat and they were saving with the game but when the white people began to move in there they soon killed the wild game.

I remember the first Choctaw child I ever saw. One of the woman give birth to a child and came over to our house the next morning and the child had no clothes on but it was wrapped up in a little piece of rag not hardly big enough to cover the little child, so we made it some clothes and put them on the baby and the mother seemed very proud of her child and of the clothes we had put on. We kept this woman for several days and when she went home we gave her some clothes for herself and for the little child.

Those Indians were not cotton pickers; but the cotton they did pick was just as clean as could be; there was no trash on the cotton at all, it was just as white as could be; the Indians did not make much money but they made enough picking cotton to live on; they would stay in Texas about two months and then would quit and go home.

I lived just across the river on the Texas side; there were no ferry boats at that time so that when the river got up we had to wait until it ran down before we could cross.

I have been to Indians' camp meetings where they would have plenty to eat and plenty to feed all who came over to attend the meeting.

I saw one of their chiefs and I was told that he had four or five wives. I do not know whether he had that many or not but there were four or five women at his house.

The Choctaws had their laws and were strict about observing them, I never heard of any Choctaw stealing much; they would fight and kill one another once in awhile but that was about the only violation of their laws.

At that time the Indians did not have many clothes, the children did not wear any clothes at all except breech-clouts and some of the men wore these breech-clouts, and women did not have many dresses; maybe they would have two dresses so they could change once in awhile but they had a hard time

getting any clothes to wear. I saw some baskets that an Indian woman made; some were small and some were pretty good size; they would bring them over on our side of the river and sell them to the white people.

The Choctaw people were a proud people and they were all good people; they were honest and the word of a Choctaw was good; they would not lie to any one; we had lots of friends among them and those with whom I became acquainted were all my friends and I never had any trouble with any one of them during my stay with them. I then moved to Hughes County where I met with a different kind of Indian; they didn't seem to me that they were as good as the Choctaws among whom I had lived and I don't think that they were.

I am now living in Oklahoma City, just down on a visit to my son.