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

Field Worker's name Gomer Gomar

This report made on (date) May 15 1937

1. Name Rhoda James

2. Post Office Address Shady Point Route 2

3. Residence address (or location) 8 miles West Shady Point.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month Unknown Day Year 1869

5. Place of birth Shady Point

6. Name of Father Does not know Place of birth

Other information about father Died when subject was small child

7. Name of Mother Billy Tobley Place of birth Mississippi.

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 4.

INTERVIEW WITH RHODA JAMES.

FIELD WORKER GOMER GOWER
May 15, 1937

Mrs. Rhoda James was born near Shady Point, Sugar Leaf County, in the Choctaw Nation, some time in the year 1869, and now resides within eight miles of where she was born. Her mother, Emily Tolley, came to the Indian Territory at the time of the Removal of the Indians from Mississippi and settled near Shady Point. She does not know whether or not her father accompanied her, as he died when Mrs. James was a small child. She attended school at Shady Point-then called Double Springs - where for a time John Payne was a teacher. Later the school was taught by Jacob Jackson. The terms of school usually ran from September to March each year.

She cannot recall the year in which she was married but assumes it was at an early age. At the time of her marriage, both she and her husband were very poor. They erected a small cabin on the ground where she now lives. Her husband worked around in the community wherever work could be found. He found considerable work making fence rails, for which he received seventy-five cents per hundred. This was usually paid in trade, such as bacon, lard, flour, sugar and drygoods.

When crops were being made, both she and her husband found employment at fifty cents per day each. In their early married life they owned no cows, but were furnished a cow by those more fortunate. Later, however, they were able to buy cows and a horse or two.

At that time cows and calves could be bought for fifteen dollars. A small horse could be bought for the same amount. Corn usually brought fifty cents per bushel.

Her husband, Ben James, a Choctaw Indian, was born in 1862 and died February 20th, 1905, and lies buried in the James Cemetery which is within one hundred yards of the James home.

She later married Frank James with whom she lived until his death on October 21st, 1936. He also is buried in the James Cemetery, which, incidentally, is one of the most neat and well-kept cemeteries the writer has ever been privileged to see. It contains seventeen graves which are interspersed with beautiful cedar trees and other shrubbery and all enclosed. Its size is approximately ninety by ninety feet.

Their trading point was Scullyville, which in Choctaw language means Moneytown, for it was at this place that percapita payments were usually made. Feasts or picnics would

occasionally be held at this place and a gala time had.

She recalls hearing her mother relate her experiences both before and after the removal. Her mother said that there was considerable opposition among the Indians to being removed from their Mississippi homes to the Indian Territory. This opposition was so strong that quite a number refused to leave their homes, with the result that only a part of the Choctaw people were removed. The oppositionists warned those who consented to the removal that the land then offered them would again be taken from them just as it had been done in Mississippi. According to the mother of Mrs. James, the Choctaws were not accorded the best of treatment while in Mississippi. They were not permitted to hunt on any land owned by Whites, and if any game was killed on such land by the Indians, they would be subject to severe punishment. The Indians were restricted in many other ways and were far from being happy under such restrictions. After removing to the Indian Territory the Indians had not fully recovered from the effects of the trip from Mississippi, before the Civil War with its devastating effects overtook them. The families of such Choctaws as entered the war were left helpless.

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Many of them walked to Doakville where a great many such families were congregated. Food became scarce and they returned to their homes to find the situation no better. Then the postwar period with its reconstruction years. Small wonder those years were referred to as "The Veil of Tears".

Mrs. James took, as a part of her land allotment, the land upon which she and her first husband, Ben James, settled when they married and it is here that she still resides. She is a deeply religious woman and has erected at her own expense a small church near her house. Denominationally, she is a Methodist, and whenever possible she has a preacher of that faith to hold services. This interview was conducted with the aid of her Grandson who served as interpreter, as she herself does not speak English. She is a fullblood Choctaw and is justly proud of her people, a people who, in the face of broken treaties, evictions from their homes, and all sorts of hardships, still show an admirable spirit of Tribal pride.