

ROCK, CATCHER . INTERVIEW.

#6164

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

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Field Worker's name Gus Hummingbird

This report made on (date) June 12, 1937

1. Name Catcher Rock (Fullblood Cherokee)

2. Post Office Address Proctor, Oklahoma, Route 1.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 9 Year 1877

5. Place of birth Saline District, Cherokee Nation

6. Name of Father Daniel <sup>Back Bone</sup> ~~Backward~~ Place of birth North Carolina

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Maggie Kingfisher Place of birth Cherokee Nation

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 8

Catcher Rock, a fullblood Cherokee Indian, was born in Saline District, Cherokee Nation, March 9, 1877. He was the son of Daniel Back-bone and Maggie Kingfisher, fullblood Cherokees. They were natives of the Cherokee Nation. His grandparents were North Carolina emigrants who came to the Indian Territory about 1838.

#### EARLY LIFE

Mr. Rock's parents were married the old Common Law way. When Catcher was still a small baby his father left him. His mother and grandmother raised him. They remained in the Saline District for several years after his father left them. At last his grandmother traded for a small place in the Tahlequah District not far from the small place called Peggs, Oklahoma. Mr. Rock was ten years old when they moved to this place. His grandmother gave a small pony for payment on this place.

Catcher was forced to help with the farm work after they moved to the Tahlequah District. He did not go to school any. All of the schooling Catcher received was about three months.

CHURCHES

He does not remember of any church that the family attended while living in the Saline District. After moving to the Tahlequah District the Fourteen Mile Creek Baptist was already a well organized church. This old time church was located about six miles north of the present town of Hulbert, Oklahoma.

Some of the old timers that took active parts in the church work were: William Bird, Johnson Spade, and Mose Ridge. They were all early day Cherokee preachers.

TRADING POSTS

Our early day trading posts were Tahlequah, Ft. Gibson, and Salina. Tahlequah was the main trading post. It was also the seat of government of the Cherokee Nation. Jim and John Thompson were the early day traders at this place. He does not remember the names of the traders at the other places.

They seldom went to these places because they did not have any money to spend. They were all hard working people and usually took pay for their labors with the produce of the farm. This was common in those days.

People worked for corn and many other things that they did not have at home. The only things it was necessary to buy were coffee, sugar, and nails. When things like that were needed the people would go to town to get them.

All of our clothes were made at home. Although we did not own any sheep, mother and grandmother would work for people that owned sheep for wool. We would get our clothes that way. Grandmother was an expert at making cloth. People from miles around would come to have their clothes made at grandmother's. Thus she earned a few dollars that way.

Our daily food consisted of bean-bread, dried pumpkin, hominy, sweet potatoes, and always had some kind of wild meats. In the winter we had deer, squirrels, rabbits, and birds for our meat. In the summer we had fish.

When Catcher was about fifteen years old he was already killing deer and other large animals. He was considered a good hunter. His grandmother would cure the venison. They would have deer all winter.

Fourteen Mile Creek, Spring Creek, Grand and Illinois Rivers furnished abundant fish.

CIVIL WAR

He does not know anything about the Civil War, only what his grandmother told him. His grandfather Kingfisher joined the Northern Army. He went through the war but died immediately after the war. He is buried about five miles southeast of the old Saline Court House site.

FERRIES

He remembers crossing the Grand River two times on a ferry. He crossed at Salina once, at which time the ferry was operated by a Cherokee named Mayes. This ferry was located a little east of the present town.

Another ferry was located between Wagoner and Choteau. He crossed this once going to the Salt Springs which was located west of Choteau. Here was the place most of the Cherokees in this part of the country received their salt. The place at that time was operated by some Cherokees, he does not remember their names.

He has seen as many as two hundred people at this place at once. At the beginning this was free but several years later the persons that claimed the land where the springs were located began to charge the people. They made this a business.

HORSE RACING

Horse racing was a great sport at that time. Peggs Prairie was the scene of many a horse race. George Downing was the early day owner of race horses. He witnessed one horse race on this prairie about 1889. The race was run by the Downing horse and a horse belonging to some white man that lived near Mayesville, Arkansas.

INDIAN POLICE

Mr. Rock was acquainted with several old Indian Policemen. He defines an Indian Police as an officer appointed by the Government to keep out whiskey in the Indian Territory. This Police was not allowed to take anyone out of the Cherokee Nation. If said Police discovered whiskey in some Cherokee home he was only allowed to pour <sup>out</sup> the said whiskey. But if caught transporting it they were tried in the United States Courts. Convicted, they were sent to a Federal Penitentiary.

There was another group of officers who were appointed to enforce the whiskey laws; they were the U. S. Marshals. Most of the U. S. Marshals were Arkansas men. These marshals sometimes aided the

sheriffs of the various districts to capture some bad Indian. These men were called upon to help catch Stan Rowe, an early day bad man.

#### NEWSPAPERS

Mr. Rock never saw a printed paper until he was a grown man. The first paper he saw was printed in Cherokee and English.

#### INDIAN MEDICINE, CUSTOMS, RELIEFS, AND WEDDINGS.

Indian medicine was all found in the woods. There were many medicine men at that time. Each medicine man had a different way of treating different diseases.

There were no two Indians that doctored alike. The Clan that they belonged to had a great deal to do with their doctoring.

When an Indian doctor was called to a certain case, the first thing he wanted to know was the Clan that the patient belonged to. They believed that the patient and the doctor belonging to the same Clan would not cure. They had to be the opposite Clan. There are seven Clans among the Cherokee people.

The Old Timers were very particular as to who handled their medicines, also who prepared the food that the patient ate. People that had helped <sup>in</sup> any way



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with a corpse were not allowed in the sick room.

The Old Time Cherokees taught the young Cherokees that all the people who belonged to the same Clan were related. They would not allow two persons that were of the same Clan to marry. This old belief is still kept by many Cherokees until this day.