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Johnston, Douglas H.--Interview

Supervisors Note:

The field worker who interviewed Mr. Johnston was dropped from the project before he completed his report.

The following are the field worker's unedited notes.

Field worker: Arnold N. Aronson

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Biography of Douglas Henry Johnston

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Born at Melmun, Oklahoma, Johnston County

Mother: Elizabeth Harper Johnston

I, Douglas Henry Johnston was elected Governor of the Chickasaw tribe in 1892 to 1896. In these days, the Gov. was allowed to serve his government 4 years. Then in 1904 I was elected to governor and allowed to remain governor until all Indian matters were settled. In case where the Indian governor died, the only person who could appoint another governor was the president of the United States. Then the Chickasaws had their own government just like we have today, city, county, state governments and the same laws as today.

Later the Choctaws joined the Chickasaws, as these tribes owned their land and nothing could take their land away. Their land was free of taxes too. The Chickasaws were perhaps the most enlightened of all the American tribes. They had progressed in government, morals and in influence to an amazing degree. They occupied a fertile area and their abundant crops of Indian corn was known for hundreds of miles around even as early as 1837, when Governor Johnston took himself a wife, the 6th decended of the cheif of Tishomingo, Oklahoma, after his wife's people left Mississippi in 1873 coming to Tishmingo, Oklahoma. Her maiden name was Elizabeth

Harper. Chief Harper, her father was ruler of the Chickasaws in 1865. There were three generations of these Harpers. 460

Most other tribes of Indians called their leader chief but the Chickasaws had the same form of government as we have and held an election and elected a governor at the head of their tribes. They also had taxes then, on cattle, hogs, horses and wagons and even a 1 percent tax on food stuff. In fact they policed their tribe such as special guards among the Chickasaws and even held trials of each who violated law and order then.

The Chickasaws were looked upon as a smart tribe and were given the best of consideration by the U.S Government. The Chickasaws had their representatives of their tribes to meet with the U. S. to make laws and see that the Chickasaws and Choctaws were given the best of consideration and saw that these peaceful tribes were not harmed or even that their land was not taxable for 21 years from date of patent. When Indian Territory was admitted as a state, now Oklahoma, succeeded in repealing their treaty and making land taxable and alienable. Only the full blood Chickasaws and Choctaws were not taxed on their land. Governor Johnston was opposed to taxing his tribe and proceeded with the U. S. Government and after a hard dragging court holdings, Governor Johnston won his point and a law was passed for 21 years of free taxes from date of patent. Then of course the land and homestead thereafter became taxable and sold to aliens as well their tribe. In those days a Governor of the Chickasaws term of office was two years but could serve 4 straight years and then skip 2 years and then could run again.

Hominy was a very important food for the Indians. There were many ways in which hominy could be cooked and prepared for the table. Mrs. Johnston as well as Governor Johnston look mighty young for their age, as the Governor, told me that thousands of white people died from different ailments in those days. The Chickasaws and the Choctaws lived a slow life and took things easy and then they had their Indian doctors and medicines of roots and herbs.

Governor Johnston has many many books and paintings and Indian relics that money cannot purchase but some day he hopes to turn it over to the government in Washington. Governor Johnston has made many speeches in Washington and in a short while will be called back to Washington to represent his Chickasaw tribe as well as the Choctaw tribe.

The Choctaws saw where the Chickasaws were so loving tribe and peaceful that they soon joined the Chickasaws and abided by their Governor Johnston, law making. Then too they held court and punished Indians that stole cattle or did not pay taxes. If an Indian did not pay his taxes Governor Johnston would then give a certain length of time to meet these taxes, then he would send his deputies after the violaters. Just so they paid taxes in corn, wheat, potatoes or anything of value had the same value as money.

The Five Civilized tribes had the same form of government. They had a constitution, supreme court, state and county court, The Chickasaws and Choctaws were joined and both had the same laws. Governor Johnston's father was then only interested in

the Chickasaws but later when Governor Johnston's father died, he started to be more jointly connected with the Choctaws. ⁴⁶²

The Choctaw Nation then too was separate nation issued patents on both land and homesteads. Governor Johnstone was the last governor elected by the Chickasaws and is still in office to look after the interest of the Chickasaws in Washington.

About 20 million dollars in allotments were lost by the Chickasaws, but Mr. Mansfield, Mr. Cornish and Mr. McMurray Attorneys from McAlester, Oklahoma, knew these Indians well and knew they were entitled to their lost allotments, were hired at 4½ percent age commission to go to Washington and fight back by law these Chickasaws allotments, so with Governor Johnstons ~~assistance they hurried back to Washington~~ and of course won ~~back every stitch of interest to Governor Johnston's tribe.~~

The Chickasaws appealed this great loss of allotments but by the aid of these three fine attorneys, \$750,000 fee was the award these three attorneys got, the Dawes Committee offered to close rolls of this tribe but could not on account of case in court, pending the appeal. The land was reserved until case were closed. The United States court allowed the attorneys the 4½% fee.

In 1902 a court created and tried cases and succeeded in taking 96% off rolls. The citizenship court fixed the same amount 4½% fee to these three attorneys. They were very strict on this fee as the U. S. Supreme Court did not want them to get too much. An allotment of land then was 320 acres of average land. The treaty was made in 1902 and allotments given and then the rolls were closed and reopened that law suit, the Clemens at that time the land was held and in favor of the Chickasaws and Choctaws.

The children born in 1902 to 1906 were given allotment. In 1906 all rolls were closed for good. Hardship was put up with by the two tribes while the rolls were closed, because they were losing control of the tribes in 1906. The Chickasaw and Choctaw schools were kept open by collecting revenues and Governor Johnston's tribes were independent of other tribes by collecting taxes to keep the schools open. Other tribes had to turn their schools over to the U. S. government, but not the Chickasaws and Choctaws. The Chickasaws and Choctaws had to agree to each other on all tribal matters. Many children of the Chickasaws and Choctaws went to these boarding schools so they could get free board but no child could get free board unless they went to school and ~~studied.~~

In 1898 when patents of land allotments and homesteads by the five civilized tribes were to be non taxable for 21 years from the date of patent. Then Oklahoma was named a state making land taxable and treaty of the Indians appealed and lost, restricting only the full blood to non taxable land. But aliens were allowed to purchase land from the government, soon the white aliens bought the land. The Chickasaws and Choctaws organized what was known treaty rights association of raising money to try cases in Washington and test the laws of the treaty as to the constitution of the act. Joe Bailey of Texas represented the tribes and argued the case before the supreme court, the highest court in the land passed and forbidding taxes to the full blood Indians for 21 years. Other tribes did not have schools like the Chickasaws and Choctaws. Governor Johnston's tribes ran own schools, paid own expenses for the girls and boys, then called acadmenys and

seminaries. Girls were separate from boys going to school, each had their own schools. The nation furnished their own ⁴⁶⁴ teachers. They had free medicine and doctors for their children. After the agreement was ratified to allot the lands the government took control of all Indians except the Chickasaws, who controlled their own schools for the 8 years the life of government under the treaty limit. The U. S. supervisors came to take charge of the Chickasaws schools, but Governor Johnston explained not to take supervision and Governor Johnston won that point to keep his own schools under his own supervision 8 years was allowed these schools to run at a time by the U. S. government to Governor Johnston's tribes. Indeed a high honor bestowed on the Chickasaws by the government of the United States, because the Chickasaws were so smart and could make their own laws. Kiows and Comanche Indians, they lived on reservations by the United States Government, but the Chickasaws and Choctaws owned the own land and were two independent tribes. Government patent was the title by patented complete ownership of allotment. The patent was the deed to the land. The Five Civilized tribes could not be made to give up their land any money than today's laws. Savages burned Pat Hennessey tied to wagon, all were burned to death 60 miles from Oklahoma City, which is called Hennessey, Oklahoma. The Chickasaws and Choctaws help white man, but other savage tribes did not, Chickasaws and Choctaws very good friend to white people.

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