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BAGGS, J. A.

INTERVIEW

#12588

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

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Field Worker's name Johnson Hampton
This report made on (date) January 3rd. 1938

1. Name Mr. J. A. Baggs A Pioneer
2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) _____
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 25th Year 1877
5. Place of birth Polk County

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth Arkansas
Other information about father _____
7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth Arkansas
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.

Johnson H. Hampton
Investigator
1-3-38

An interview with J. A. Baggs
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born April 25th, 1877, in Polk County, Arkansas and I was about fourteen years old when we moved into the Choctaw Nation. My father and mother moved from Arkansas to the Choctaw Nation and located on what was known as Beach Creek near Smithville in 1891 and where we rented a farm from an Indian named Ellis Cusher; this creek runs through that part of the country and this settlement was known as the Beach Creek Community and there was an Indian church there by that name; this church was a Presbyterian Church and they used to have big camp meetings there.

We came in a covered wagon; we did not have but very little furniture, only what we brought with us in the wagon, but after we rented this farm then we bought a little more furniture. We lived in a double house made of pine logs. We had a spring that we got our water from; the farm was on the creek and it was a good land

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with about forty acres in cultivation. We farmed there for several years and made lots of corn and raised cattle and hogs; in fact, we did well while we were on this farm, we paid the landlord the third and fourth part of the cotton, but we did not raise much cotton for it was too far to take it to have it ginned, for since there was no gin in that part of the country, we had to take it into Arkansas; so we did not go to the trouble of raising cotton in that part of the country but we did raise lots of corn on the place.

This beachton is a little community where several Indians lived mostly around the church house; a man, Ellis Cusher had a little store there where we traded for small things but we mostly went to Hatfield and some times to LeQueen Arkansas and most of the Indians went there for their groceries when they could not get it at Cusher's; this man Cusher was in better shape financially than most of the Indians around his home and he used to take care of them; they would come to his home and stay there for several days at a time and some came to his home and just lived with him; he was a Presbyterian preacher and I have heard him preach several times but he would preach

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in Choctaw so that I could not understand what he was talking about but I used to attend his church whenever he had a big meeting.

This Beach Creek is not very far from the Arkansas line, it must be about twenty miles. It used to be called Nashoba County then but it is now a part of McCurtain County and it is right in the mountains and some of the mountains there are the biggest you ever saw; there used to be fine grass there when it was open range and no fences thereabout. The settlers all had about four or five acres for their farms; they used to raise plenty of corn to feed themselves through the winter and most of them had cattle, hogs and other things they needed on the farms; they mostly lived out of the woods for there was lots of game for them to kill, they never killed their hogs much, in fact, they never put up any meat for their use for the winter except that they would kill a hog once in a while for fresh meat.

at that time cattle and hogs were not worth any thing; there was no market for them so the settlers just kept them and let them die with old age; we had many cattle

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and hogs but we could not sell them at any price.

I used to attend the Indian camp meetings when they would camp and feed all the people who came to attend the meeting and I have attended their cries; they would preach the memorial sermon and they would sometimes have a cry in the church and sometimes they would have it at the grave of the deceased. They would build a small house over the grave out of logs and put a cover over it and in about five or six months they would have their cry at the grave and every one who was there took part in it; it was a very solemn affair to see them cry.

I have lived among the Choctaw tribe of Indians ever since I have been in the Nation, and I have traded with them and have attended their meetings and have attended their cries and their ball games, but I never was bothered by them in the least; they have always been my friends and I have been their friend ever since I have been here and my experience with them has been as good as any one could expect of any tribe of people, and they are honest as can be in their dealings with other people and among themselves. I am now living in Antlers.