

JOHNSON, SOPHIA.

SECOND INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Levina R. Beavers

This report made on (date) April 12, 1938

1. Name Sophie Johnson

2. Post Office Address Broken Bow

3. Residence address (or location) Southwest of Broken Bow.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 14 Year 1862

5. Place of birth At Abner Hill two miles west of Lukfata

6. Name of Father Bill Anderson Place of birth Golden

Other information about father Farmer and Stockman

7. Name of Mother Betty Anderson Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about mother Housekeeper

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 3.

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Levina R. Hudson,
Investigator,
April 12, 1938.

An Interview with Mrs. Sophie Johnson,
Broken Bow, Oklahoma.

In the timbered districts all over McCurtain County may be seen evidence of the one time log cabin and Tafala patch (white people called it Tom fuller) now over grown with heavy timber and the place where the cabin stood is indicated by a little mound. These mounds have a significance besides being the decayed remains of the cabin. In many instances they contain the remains of the Indian dead. It was the Indian custom for a long time after coming to their new country, to bury their dead under the floor of the cabin in which they lived. Indeed it was well up in the nineteenth century before the Indians adopted the white man's manner of burial and even then the grave was penned in and roofed over, as if the Indians were determined that water should never reach their dead. There is yet a superstition among the full bloods that water in the house of the dead is an ill omen, or as they term it "bad luck" and they were not long about moving to another place, if it is only fifteen yards

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away. This accounts for the many cabins that the older full blood families have around them.

The Indians are strictly gregarious. It made little difference with the white man whether he was very near to another settler or not, but the Indians either lived in villages or a very close settlement, the reason is obvious-mutual protection. For ages and ages tribal wars were frequent, and were nearly always in the nature of surprise parties of death and destruction, so this custom of living in villages and close settlements became fixed in the lives of the Indians as means of protection.

At the time of the coming of the Choctaws to their new country, there were some ten or twelve tribes of Indians occupying the state of Oklahoma, and parts of other states but perhaps, with the exception of an occasional raid made by the Comanches, none of these tribes ever visited southeast Oklahoma.

Coming with and in the wake of the Indians were the missionaries of the different religious denomination and with the help of their church organization they finally established

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missions and mission schools all over the Indian country. The first mission established in what is now McCurtain County, and one of the oldest in the State, was Wheelock. The stone church building, which is yet in a fair state of preservation, was built in 1846, and we hope to see it pass into the hands of the state or some historical or benevolent society that it may be properly cared for and preserved for the benefit of posterity.