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BROWN, MINNIE

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton

This report made on (date) August 18th, 1937

1. Name Minnie Brown

2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma

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

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 8th Year 1890

5. Place of birth Near Lehigh

Choctaw Indian

6. Name of Father David Harris Place of birth Lehigh

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

7. Name of Mother Delia Harris Place of birth Lehigh

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

Interview with Minnie Brown  
Antlers, Oklahoma  
August 18, 1937.

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I was born near Lehigh, on the 8th day of July 1890; at that time Lehigh was in Atoka County, Choctaw Nation. My father's name was David Harris and my mother's name was Deliar Harris, I don't think that they were from Mississippi for my father never did say anything about it to us if he did come from Mississippi, nor was he in the Civil War. I think that he and mother were raised near Lehigh where I was born. They both died and are buried there at home; the Indians at that time had no cemeteries; they buried their dead at home so my mother and father were buried at home.

I never knew any thing about my grandfather nor my grandmother. I never was told anything about them. I don't know whether they came from Mississippi but I think that they did, for they located some where along the Arkansas line. Then they moved from there to Lehigh and I have

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been told that the Choctaws who came from Mississippi located along the Arkansas line when they first came over.

We had a small farm of about ten acres in cultivation where we raised corn for our bread. We also raised peas, potatoes, and we had a small garden where we raised beans, cabbage, pumpkins and other garden vegetables. I did not know how to can up for winter use; they would eat up what they raised not thinking of any thing for the winter at that time, and they are not very much better now. We had a few cattle, hogs and a few ponies; we did not have much stock ourselves but there were good many Choctaws who did have lots of cattle, hogs and ponies out on the range.

We had to make our own meal; we would put the corn in a mortar which is a block of wood about three feet high. The mortar had a bowl in the center which was made by burning the wood out by fire; then we had a

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kettle about five feet long which we used to beat the corn. This was hard work but that was the only way we could get corn meal at that time out in the country. We would make sour bread, and bread that was not sour, and we also made hominy of different kinds.

I do not know where my father traded but the Indians who lived in this part of the country used to go to Boggy Depot for their groceries. The place where we lived was across Clear Boggy Creek; that was before the M.K.& T. railroad was put through; after the town of Atoka was established the Indians traded there and at Lehigh. Lehigh is a small coal mining town along the branch of the "Katy" railroad that runs out of Atoka, and on to Oklahoma City.

We had no spinning wheel but some of the Indian women had them. I have not seen any of these spinning wheels so I don't know anything about running one of them. We used to buy our socks and mittens already made from those who made them. These socks<sup>were</sup> already dyed and looked like

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store bought socks but they were heavier than store bought socks.

We had never heard of <sup>an</sup> agency until after the Dawes Commission came down to enroll the Choctaws. I do not remember what year it was that we were enrolled, and I do not remember what year it was when we selected our land. I know that I had to go to Atoka both times to make my selection of land and to be enrolled and since that time I have learned that we had an agency which took in the Five Civilized Tribes and it is called Union Agency.

I never heard of any ghost towns in this country nor any ceremonial ground nor any cowtrails or cow towns. Those are some things that we Choctaws do not know anything about; they might have had those things out west of us on the reservation but we did not have them. In the place where I lived the people who had cattle would load them on the train at Atoka and at Lehigh. It may be that a town out of which cattle was shipped would be called a cowtown.

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The Choctaws tell me that they had a payment some time in 1893 which was their first payment. The Choctaw officials made that payment I understand but I am not sure. The Choctaws had a payment they called a lease District Payment, I do not know about that; the only payments we had that I can remember are payments after Statehood; we got several payments then; the last payment we got was the \$10.00 payment; since that time we have had no payments.

I have attended Indian camp meeting where they would camp and feed all who came to the meeting, and I have been to their cries. They are called cries by the white people. Their cries would be at the meeting some times and some of them would be at their homes and all those who came there would take part in the procedure. It is a very heart breaking ceremony. I guess that it has been the custom among the Choctaws for ages to have these cries and this custom was followed up by the Choctaws, but they have gotten away from this custom on present day account of there being



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too many white people making fun of them.

I don't know whether the Indians in our community had war dances or not; I have heard that among the full bloods they did have war dances but I do not know but after the war they quit those dances. In fact, they don't dance any at all; they quit dancing for several years so we don't hear of any more dancing among the Choctaws.

I am a full blood Choctaw Indian; all of my people were full bloods and we have lived here with our tribes all of our lives. I went to school at Atoka; this school which I attended has been out of existence for a number of years. I do not know what became of this school. I can write and speak a little English. I am now living at Antler, with some white people.