

JEFFERSON, SISEY.

INTERVIEW

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

JEFFERSON, SISEY

INTERVIEW

15240

Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton

This report made on (date) March 16 1938

1. Name Sisey Jefferson

Corinne, Oklahoma

2. Post Office Address _____

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 22 Year 1888

5. Place of birth Near Corinne, Oklahoma.

6. Name of Father Peter Jefferson Place of birth Corinne

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Pickey Jefferson Place of birth Corinne

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 _____

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Johnson H. Hampton,
Investigator,
March 16, 1938.

An Interview with Sisey Jefferson,
Corinne, Oklahoma.

I was born August 22, 1882, in what is now Pushmataha County, it was then Cedar County under the Choctaw Government. My father, Peter Jefferson, and my mother, Pickey Jefferson, were both raised in this country, they were not from Mississippi. I don't know how the Choctaws lived prior to the time I was born and grew up but my mother used to say that they had a hard time in getting by, that some of them would go down on the creek bottom and dig up roots and beat them into mush and eat them and they would get some leaves of some kind and use them for greens; that was before I was born so I don't know anything about it.

When I was growing up most of the Choctaws had cattle and hogs but they had a hard time in getting the other things that they had to have in the way of bread; they all had a small Tom Fuller patch where they raised corn for their bread. We had about five or six acres in

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our patch where we used to raise our corn for our bread. At that time we could raise all the corn we needed for our corn and other things and we raised peas, beans, potatoes and other things that we needed to eat and we had a few chickens on the place and a few cows for our milk; we also had a team of horses that we worked on the place, for we did not have but a very small patch to work. My mother and I worked the patch most of the time; the Indian men did not work but very little on the farm; the women had it to do most of the time, while the men sat in the shade and did nothing except go out a hunting. Of course, they would kill deer and turkeys for the family to eat but they would not work in the fields at all.

My father traded mostly at old Doakville, but he would trade at Clarksville, Texas, some of the time. Several men would get together and make the trip to Texas for their groceries; it would take them several days to make the trip. After the railroad went through the country going east and west we traded at Fort Towson, which was established after the railroad went through. It was a sawmill town but we

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could get anything we wanted at this place.

My mother had a spinning wheel but did not have a loom or a weaver. She would spin cotton and wool into threads and then she would get her knitting needles and make them into socks and mittens; she would dye them red and black striped and they would look fine. They were heavy and thick and were warm to wear. She would sell them for about 50 cents per pair, but usually she did not get money for them, for the Choctaws did not have any money with which to buy anything, so she would trade them for anything she could get in the way of meats, corn and other things to eat.

I was enrolled with the other Choctaws during the enrollment; I don't remember when that was but I was enrolled and selected my land with the other Choctaw and got my payments with them. I don't remember that I ever knew that we had an Indian Agency at all until after we made our selection of land, then we got our land papers from the Muskogee Office where it said "from the Union Agency". That was about the first time I ever heard of the

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Indian Agency, I am sure that the other Choctaws did not know of it either until after the allotment.

In early days the Choctaws did not go out on a camp hunting; all they had to do was to get out away from home and kill anything they wanted, for the country was full of game, so there was no use in their going on a camp hunt. There were lots of fish on the creeks; most of the Indians lived on the creeks or near some creek for they used their water from the creeks when there were no springs near them. There were no wells at that time, it was creeks or springs.

I used to camp at the Indian meetings. My father was a Christian man and he would get ready for the meetings so I had to help camp and cook for the people who came to the meetings, We sure used to have some great meetings at that time. There used to be lots of Indians then, and we used to have our cries at the church or at the grave where the dead were buried but we don't have those cries any more on account of too many white people in this country. The church that I used to attend is still being used as a church, it was a Methodist Church, a log church house when

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it was first built and it was used for a long time. They then moved it away from where it was and built it out of lumber, so it is a lumber church house now. This church house has been there for a long time, it was there when I was born and it is still there and is being used yet by the Choctaws, but they have about all died out and there are just a few Choctaws living in this community now.

My father was a deputy sheriff of our county for several years. When a sheriff was elected he would appoint my father a deputy; he was also Lighthorseman. I don't know who appointed him Lighthorseman for several years. The Choctaws used to say that he was a good officer so he was one or the other nearly all the time.

I never had the opportunity to attend school, my family were all ignorant when it comes to English books. My father could read and write in his own language but could not speak nor write in English so they did not send me to school anywhere. In fact, there was no school near to where we lived, so I grew up without any education and I am not able to read nor write in my own language, just

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an ignorant Choctaw Indian woman living in the backwoods and don't come to town but very seldom. My father and mother were full blood Indians and we have lived among full bloods all of our lives, but they are all dead and gone, I am the only one living of my family, and am living near where I was born in what is now in Pushmataha County, it was then in Cedar County, Choctaw Nation.

Johnson H. Hampton writes his interviews in an Indian style, and no attempt is made to put them into better English. - Ed.