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BASS, W. H.

INTERVIEW

13781

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

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BASS, W. M.

INTERVIEW

13721

Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton,

This report made on (date) April 25th, 1938

1. Name Mr. W. M. Bass, A Pioneer White Man.

2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 31 Year 1882

5. Place of birth Arkansas

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 5.

BASS, W. M.

INTERVIEW

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Johnson, H. Hampton,
Investigator,
April 25th, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. W. M. Bass, A Pioneer,
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born July 31st, 1882, in Arkansas, came to the Indian Territory, in 1898, and located near Marietta in the Chickasaw Nation. I was about sixteen years old when I came to the Indian Territory. Father and Mother came over in a covered wagon from Arkansas, Father wanted to see the new country and to see if he could make any money and make a living for his family. When we got located we lived in a box house built out of cottonwood lumber; we had no furniture only what we had in our wagon so when we rented the farm we had to get some more furniture but not enough for housekeeping for we did not know whether we were going to stay there for any length of time. We went to farming on some land that we rented from an Indian, we raised lots of corn and cotton - and we had our cotton ginned at this little town which was nothing more than a village then. Cotton was very cheap at that time, but we sold it anyway, and made some money out of the cotton even at its low price for it did not take much work to make the crop. The corn

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we fed to our hogs and killed the hogs for winter use, and sold some of them as the corn was not worth anything at that time, for every farmer in the country made lots of corn, and they used to pile the corn in windrows out in the field so we could not sell any corn, but we did very well with it by feeding it to the hogs. When we first settled in this country it was open with very few farms cultivated and there were lots of cattle there owned by intermarried white people and some Indians who shipped some cattle from Marietta the little station but most of the cattle were shipped from Ardmore which was the shipping point in that country; Ardmore was at that time a small railroad station.

Not many white people lived in that part of the country at that time, but when they began to come in, and commenced breaking the land, and putting it in cultivation, and fencing up the land, we left Marietta and came to Oakland on the branch line of the Frisco near Madill. We lived there for about one year and Father ran a hotel there, it was in Marshall County in 1899 and we then moved from there to Weleetka and when we got to this little village we found the town in tents, there were no houses there then; they had

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just laid the townsite out but had not built any houses yet. The post office was in a tent and some of the men had their stores in tents but it didn't take long to build houses and they built a town and it turned out to be a pretty good sized town after all. I married in this town in 1904 and worked around there until my wife died in 1908. I then moved to Booneville, Arkansas, where I lived with my uncle for about one year; there I married the second time. I then left Arkansas and went to Sallisaw in Sequoyah County in the Cherokee Nation where I farmed until 1920. I then moved to Meeker in Lincoln County and I lived there for about one year. I then moved from there to a place in Pushmataha County near Antlers. I lived out in the country and farmed there until 1925 and I then moved to Waurika, in Jefferson County where I lived for a while and farmed and I then moved from there back to Pushmataha County.

I was a Deputy Sheriff under an Indian Sheriff in Jefferson County, and I was a Deputy Sheriff in Sequoyah County under another Indian Sheriff, and was under another Indian Sheriff as Deputy Sheriff; his name was Ben Falker.

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I have been an officer in this country for the last fifteen years and was a Prohibition officer for a long time and in all my career as an officer I never had any trouble with the Indian people. If I happened to get a warrant for one of the Indians all I had to do was to send him word that I had a warrant for him and he would come in and make his bond and go back home. We did not have to go after Indians at any time. I have lived among the Indians as a private citizen and they always treated me with all the respect that a man could wish. I never did have any trouble with any of them and I have raised my children and they have attended school with the Indian children; they never did have any trouble with them, and they are honest and law-abiding and are good people and they are my friends. There are very few Indians who won't take a drink of whiskey. When they get under the influence of the "fire water" they fight among themselves but do not bother anyone else and as long as I was a Prohibition officer I never did catch a full blood Indian making whiskey or running a still. I have caught some half-breeds making it but not many of them. The Indians just don't get into trouble like the white people

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and another thing is that they do not steal but very little and they are nearly all law-abiding citizens.

I have attended some Indian camp meetings as a Peace officer, that is, to see that no one comes to the church drunk; the Indians did not do that very much but the white boys would go to the church drunk and raise a disturbance at the church. I have often been called to attend the church and keep order. I never did attend any of their dances although I have heard of them and I have never seen an Indian ball game which I have heard they play with sticks. I am living about six miles southeast of Antlers.