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INTERVIEW WITH JOHN MAHNKER  
ATOKA, OKLAHOMA  
FIELD WORKER PETE W. COLE.  
April 14, 1937

I was married to the daughter of M. H. Doctor in 1880. In 1862 my father-in-law, his family and my wife left Honeyville, Missouri, a town of one thousand population in Shelby County and came to Atoka, Indian Territory, which is on the M K & T Railway, in search of a new location.

Mr. Sam Scratch, an old saw miller, had saw mills scattered up and down the Boggy River, and had another saw mill in operation in the east part of town at that time, on a side of a hill. After ward this same place was named after him and today is known as Scratch Hill. Mr. Doctor was a blacksmith by trade and was related to this man Scratch. When he came to this country he brought his family with him and we also came with them.

There were eight in our family, but all have died with the exception of two who are still living. Mrs. Myrtle Downing of Atoka and Mrs. Emma Mahnker.

I was about twenty years of age when I came here. There were about five stores and hotels which consisted the town. We brought our own household goods and move in a six room frame building and there was where we lived. Of course the town was just building up there were no water system, but there were wells

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and cistern at each houses and this was our only means of getting water, We had plenty of wood to burn for fuel. Later a coal mine at Midway opened up and we bought coal from there.

When I was living in Missouri I went to school until at the age of fifteen. I never did work on the farm or stick a plow in the ground but after settling down, I went into shoe repair business and that has been my occupation since.

There were plenty of wild games in this country when I first came but I never did care to hunt or fish but have bought venison that had been killed by Choctaws and brought to town to sell. It could be bought for seventy-five cents and twenty-five cents for turkey.

I have in my possession two hand made shoe hammer that was bought in Quincy Illinois in 1874 and a hand made tin box that came from Germany. I bought it from a man who came to my house and said that he was hungry. I gave him twenty five cents for it.

I am a member of a Methodist Church. I was born in 1857 and am eighty years, and my wife 64. To this union are three boys who all are now grown.

When the town was growing up, Mr. Sam Scratch had one Choctaw boy, whom he raised, set a young cedar tree on the edge of the side walk where the old Atoka State Bank is now located still stands.

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Field Worker: Joe Southern  
May 13, 1937

Interview with John Mahnker  
White man--80 Years Old

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John Mahnker was born in Germany, Hanover, 1857;  
moved to Atoka, Indian Territory in the year 1882.

I have been in the shoe and harness business from  
that time until now--made and sold shoes and harness to  
the Choctaws from then until now. Shop made shoes were  
worth \$7.00 to \$10.00; boots \$10.00 to \$20.00; harness  
\$20. to \$60.00. I bought leather and supplies from  
Padgett Bros., Dallas, Texas, paying for leather 35¢ to  
75¢ per pound, tacks 35¢ per box, thread 75¢ per spool,  
wax 10¢ to 15¢, needles 10¢ to 50¢ per dozen, shoe lasts  
50¢ to \$1.00 each. ~~The terms on these were 10% off for~~  
cash.

J. S. Murrow was a missionary worker and Masonic  
organizer.

The Choctaw Indian Orphan School was located  
here in Atoka, Oklahoma. White children had to pay  
tuition, \$1.50 per month. A man and wife, named

Reichel, were superintendents. B. F. Smiser was one of the teachers. J. J. Phillips, general merchandise; also McBride and Company were in business when I came to Atoka, Oklahoma, in 1882.

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