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Field Workers Joe Southern
April 10, 1937

Interview with Joe Flax, age 65
Cherokee and Chickasaw
Indian
Atoka, Oklahoma

A PERSONAL INTERVIEW.

Joe Flax, of Atoka, Oklahoma, was born August 31, 1872, near Boggy Depot, Old Salt Lake, Indian Territory. Here salt was made by digging dirt and water from salt springs, putting it in large pots made of stone sealed with wet clay as mortar, and boiled and condensed to salt. This location is about two miles southwest of Old Boggy Depot, on Clear Boggy River, then in Indian Territory.

The stage line from Atoka to Boggy Depot crossed Clear Boggy River, Section 8, T. 2 S., Range 10 E., below mouth of Sand Creek, Atoka County, Oklahoma.

Indian stick or clubs ball game met at Wallace Thomson Prairie, S. E. of Atoka three miles--Snake Root grounds was located south and east of Atoka between Clear anduddy Boggy rivers in what was known as Flat Woods, where the Indians would gather in the spring and summer

and gather snake root and May apple root, which they would market at Atoka, Indian Territory.

In Atoka D. N. Robb, Mercantile Company and Julius Hass, fur and hide buyer, were located west and north of the K. K. & T. Ry. depot. They are not in business anymore.

The Indian court house and jail were located in what is now Atoka, just north and east of Atoka Ward school, lots 8 and 9, block 19. This court house was built of native logs and covered with boards rived from native lumber. The building was 16 x 20 and had a dirt floor. The jail had two small square openings for ventilation and one door for entrance. There was a good spring near there, is why this place was selected as the location for the court house. The Indians would meet there to hold County court and their elections for different officers. These buildings were torn down when Atoka City began to build. "Those buildings were erected before I was born", Joe Flax said, "and I do not remember what year they were torn down".

Hunting grounds were east and south of Atoka, in the mountains along the McGee and Potato Creeks and along Boggy rivers.

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D. N. Robb owned the first toll bridge across Muddy Boggy at Atoka. Bishop Ward was care taker and the bridge was located just north of present Ice plant about 50 feet down stream from the present bridge in Atoka. It was moved after statehood. "I don' know when the toll bridge was built," added Mr. Flax.

There was a ferry boat up stream about 200 yards, used for stage line crossing. Part of the old wire cable is still there around a tree grown over it. "I saw it about six months ago" said Mr. Flax.

"My aunt, Francis Flax, ran a hotel at Atoka when I was a boy. My grandfather was Jordan Flax, a full blood Cherokee; grandmother was a full blood Chickasaw. I do not know anything about my father or mother. I went to work as my first job with S. B. Scratch in 1884, on Magee Creek, east of Atoka in the pine mountains, at the first saw mill established in Atoka County. I drove an ox team in the transportation of lumber."

In the early day there were Light horsemen, with authority to ride the county and collect from white settlers once a year for permits to live and transact business in the Choctaw Nation.

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