

JOHNSON, ISAAC.

INTERVIEW

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Form A-(S-149) 8282

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

Robert H. Boatman

Field Worker's name \_\_\_\_\_  
This report made on (date) August 17 1937

1. Name Isaac Johnson  
2. Post Office Address Byars, Oklahoma  
3. Residence address (or location) 2 miles North 1 Mile West of Byars.  
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 23 Year 1873  
Territory Old Stonewall  
5. Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name of Father Tom Johnson Place of birth Alabama  
Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_  
7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Strickland Place of birth Mississippi  
Chickasaw Tribe.  
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 \_\_\_\_\_.

Robert H. Boatman  
Field worker,  
8-17-37

An Interview with Isaac Johnson  
McClain County, Oklahoma.

I was born near Stonewall in 1865. At the age of two I was taken to a small place called Johnsonville.

My mother was one-fourth Chickasaw Indian and so my father intermarried into that tribe. It was a tribal custom that when a Chickasaw woman married a man who was not a Chickasaw, the Chickasaws would accept him into the tribe. So Tom Johnson was initiated and as was customary was given a title. He became "Judge". At the time this was only a title but as time passed he really became judge over the Chickasaw Caucus. This Caucus was to the Indians what our legislature is to us.

Tom Johnson bought a ranch near where Johnsonville is now located. A small town grew up and was named Johnsonville. Some think it was named for Judge Johnson but that is definitely a mistake, it was named for Manford Johnson, who was the first merchant of the town.

I grew up on the ranch and at the age of ten I could ride any ordinary bronc out of the two hundred Indian ponies which my father kept. I will remember the first time I was allowed to go with the "gang" on the

round up. For two or three days before we started two of the hands rode "fence". That is they rode round the entire range, mending fence and keeping a sharp look-out for strays.

Finally we started; we rode to the corner farthest from the ranch house. We were more than glad to eat our "jerky" and cold biscuits and bed down for the night.

The next morning at dawn our work began. I did small jobs and ran errands. We built several large stout corrals and then the cowboys really started on the round-up. They spread out fan-like over the range and when they would run up on a bunch of cattle they would herd them into the corrals and go in search for more. This went on until the estimated herd was found. On our last day, Tom, one of our best, devoted riders, was trampled beneath the hoofs of his pony when it stepped into a prairie dog hole.

Upon reaching home with the cattle, my father decided to dip all the young calves and yearlings. He already had a dipping pen and pond so he sent for some dip and began. My brother and I were allowed to watch

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and we did, by climbing on the fence. The odor was so offensive to our young no trils that we could hardly bear it.

The calves were run, one at a time, out of a chute and they fell into the pond and after floundering and swimming around they made for the bank.

Then the cowboys hooked long implements made for the purpose behind the forelegs of the cattle and helped them out. The cattle were then turned into the fenced range to wait to be sold. In winter the cattle were fed and kept sheltered from the cold.

After the round-up the cowboys all went to the bunk-house, a building containing a cot for every hand. It was comfortable but nothing to compare to the ranch house.

The large porch of the ranch-house opened into a cheerful front room which was office and living-room combined. Next was a large dining-room where everyone ate and the kitchen was back of the dining-room. The family sleeping quarters were upstairs.

I, like my father, am a rancher. I also farm on a small scale. When my father died he willed the

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homestead to me and some other estate to my brother.

Today with my family I live in the house I've told you of, the house I've lived in since I was two years old. I hope to end my life in it.