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Choctaw Nation
Towson County
Ida
Tribe-Choctaw

Johnson H. Hampton, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History S-149
June 10, 1937

Interview with Winnie Benjamin
Snow, Oklahoma.

I was born near Mount Sion in Towson County,
Choctaw Nation, some time in May in 1872.

My father's name was Gilbert Cooper. I don't remember my mother's name. My father and mother did not come from Mississippi; they were born and brought up near Mount Sion where they lived and died. This Mount Sion I am speaking of is a church house. There were no towns at that time; it was out from anywhere and in the mountains. This church house was built of logs hewn and made square on two sides. It was built a long time ago; it was there when I was old enough to remember anything. The seats were made out of split logs. The Indians had their meeting there. They still call it Mount Sion, but the church house has been built out of lumber in recent years.

I don't know whether my father or my grandfather was in the Civil War or not, I never did hear them say anything of it. Of course, there was lots of talk about the war, but my father never did say whether he was in it or not.

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Where we lived was a mountainous country. There were no stores near us, so my father had to go to Texas for our groceries. I don't know where he went; he might have gone to Clarksville, Texas. There were no stores in that part of the country where we lived, and no post office. Several years after, they established a post office near us and named it Ida, Oklahoma. There was a little country store put up with the post office where we got our groceries. Before that time we had a hard time getting any groceries such as flour, coffee, and sugar. We had corn meal to eat for we raised enough corn for our bread, but we did not have any flour to eat, but very little. Mother made the meal out of corn we raised by putting it in a bowl in a block of wood made for that purpose which some called a mortar, she then would beat this corn until it was made into meal.

There was lots of wild game in the country so all we had to do was to go out into the woods and kill what meat we needed. There were lots of deer, turkeys, fish, and squirrels.

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Mother had a spinning wheel and a weaver. We raised a little cotton to be used in making cloth. We had to pick the seed out with our hands; then mother would card this cotton and put it in rows, then she would put it in the spinning wheel, then she made a big ball of thread, then she would put the thread some way in the weaver. It took her some time to make the cloth. Then she would go out and get some kind of weeds, roots, and bark of trees and use it to dye the cloth. I don't know just what she used, but she would make some black, some blue, and some yellow. Then she would make shirts, breeches, and dresses which she sold to other Indians. She would also make socks and cotton mittens which she sold. There was lots of work to make the clothes she made.

I never saw an Indian ball game. They had them, but my father was a Christian man so he would not go to the games and would not let us go to see the game but I heard that they had the games in several counties around.

I never attended school so I am not able to speak nor write in the English language, neither can write

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hardly at all, but can read a little in Choctaw Language.

I am a fullblood Choctaw. I have lived among the Indians all of my life. I lived mostly in the mountains, and I guess I will live there until I die. I have been told that I belong to the Double Lake Clan, Hiyape Atukla mia beka tok oke. I don't know what it means but that was the clan I belong to.