

Field Worker: Johnson H. Hampton  
Interview with Josiah Thomas  
Corrine, Oklahoma.  
Born March 10, 1865  
Near Old Doaksville.  
Parents Simon Willis, father.  
Cilian Anderson, mother.

---

I was born near Old Doaksville, just north of Fort Towson, on the 10th day of March, 1865.

My father's name was Simon Willis, and my mother's name was Cilian Anderson. After my father died, my mother married again, and I took my step-father's name and so I have been known as Thomas. My grand-father's name was Atichi, and when he came from Mississippi, he located near Old Doaksville, Indian Territory, and lived there until his death. He joined the army at the beginning and served all through the war. My father joined the army during the latter part of the war and he did not serve very long.

While they were in the war, we lived pretty hard. We made a little garden, but as we did not have any seed much ourselves, we had to get our garden seeds from our neighbors. We made some corn in our little field for our corn bread.

Mother used to go out into the woods and dig up some roots that she called mud potatoes. She would boil these and then she would slice some and put them on top of the house to dry; then she would put them in the mortar and beat like she would corn and make bread out of it. It was pretty good eating. She had another root that she would dig up, it had a very big head on it. I don't know what she called it now but the vine looked more like a bamboo brier that grows on the banks of the creeks. The vines had stickers on like bamboo briars have. The roots were very large. She would take that and skin the top off of it and the inside was as white as could be. She would slice this and put on top of the house and let it dry. When it got perfectly dry, she would put it in the mortar and beat it just like she did the other roots and make some meal out of it. It would be just as white as any flour bought in the stores.

She would make meal out of corn, beaten in this mortar, which us Indians called Kitib, and make hominy and other things to eat out of the corn. All the Indians used to make meal out of corn the same way my mother made our meal. It was about the only way they could make meal in

those days. They made (banaha) Tanchi Palaska, and Tanchi - lobona, Tanchi - Hauwashko, sour bread and other things that we ate.

There was one thing that father and mother used to talk about and that was a witch. They used to sit and tell us about the bullet a witch could shoot into a body and one would die from it if they did not get a doctor for them just as quick as they could. I don't know whether there is anything like that or not. They believed in those things and some Indians still believe in those things to this day. There might be witches but I don't know. The Bible speaks of them, but I don't know.

Mother had two spinning wheels, and had a weaver. She would spin the cotton on this spinning wheel and make it into thread, and then she would wind it in a big ball. Then she would put the thread in the weaver and make cloth out of it. She would make pants and sell them for \$5.00 apiece, and the cloth she would sell for \$2.00 per yard to women to make dresses out of it. It sure was a tough cloth. It was hard to wear out. She would make some socks for men,

and sold them at 50¢ per pair; the mittens she would sell them at 50¢ per pair. It kept her pretty busy all the time during the winter months.

The Choctaw Nation was divided into three districts, with about five or six counties in each. The first district was called Mosholitubbee, the court ground for this district being at Wilburton, I think. The second district was Pushmataha, and the court ground for this district was at Alikchi. The third district was Apakshanubbe, the court ground being between Clear Boggy and Muddy Boggy. They moved it to Mayhew just before statehood. Each district had what was known as a District Chief who was elected by the votes of the Indians. They served one term each. The duty of these Chiefs was to keep peace in their own districts. They did not have much to do only in uprisings in the neighborhood and to make talks, advising them to be law abiding citizens. They usually made their talks just before the district court convened.

These District Chiefs had the authority to appoint as many Light Horsemen as they needed. They had as many as ten in each county. The Light Horsemen had the

right to arrest anyone violating the laws of the Nation, just the same as the sheriff and his deputies now, but they acted under the District Chiefs. In fact, these Light Horsemen were the legal representatives. Whatever the Chiefs wanted done, they called on their Light Horsemen to do.

After the war, my father used to go to Texas to work. He would be gone for about a month and come back with flour, sugar and coffee and other groceries needed at home. There was no one able to have any work done close to home so he had to go there to get work and get us groceries. Paris, Texas, was our nearest trading post in those days before the railroad went through going into Arkansas. After the railroad went through, we began to trade near home and did not have to go to Paris any more for our groceries.

We had to use oxen to do our traveling. We made our wagon ourselves that we used, also did our plowing with oxen; in fact, we used them altogether on the farm.

We had some hogs and ponies but we had only a few cows. The other Indians had lots of cattle, hogs and ponies in our neighborhood.

Every Indian then lived in a log cabin. Some had floors and some didn't. We would build our fire in the middle of the house for we did not have any floor in our house. It used to be warm during cold weather.

I went to school just one term but did not learn much. The school house was a log house and the seats were made of split logs. This school building and the school has been out of existence for several years.

We did not go camp hunting for it was no use. There was game all around us and all we had to do was to go out and get what we wanted in the way of wild game.

I never did play ball in a big game--that is, between two counties. The old men would not let us play but I have played in a neighborhood game, which did not amount to much, not like different counties playing where they fight and kill one another.

I am a fullblood Indian, can't speak but  
very little English and can't read much English but  
I can read and write in my own language pretty well.  
I live about 25 miles east of Antlers, Oklahoma, ~~now~~,  
have been raised there, am still there.