

HOUGH, JOHN G.

INTERVIEW

#7986

266

HOUGH, JOHN G. INTERVIEW.

7986

Interviewer, Ella Robinson,
October 28, 1937.

Interview with John G. Hough,
Muskogee, Okla.

First Football Coach of Indian Territory.

I was born in Liverpool, England, in September, 1864, and lived there during my childhood. When I reached the age to attend college I went to Cambridge and entered the college, remaining there until I graduated. As I expected to make teaching my life work I served an apprenticeship as all young teachers were required to do. I then returned to Liverpool and taught for two years, when I attended a teachers' Normal College, finishing the course.

Thinking that a change of country would be interesting, I crossed over to France where I taught near Paris for sometime. In the meantime the parents of the young lady, Miss Margaret Ann Lewis, in whom I was deeply interested had emigrated to the United States. The young lady, however, remained for some time in Liverpool teaching in

HOUGH, JOHN G. INTERVIEW.

7986

a kindergarten school. She then came to the United States and it occurred to me that if I were ever to get her I had better follow along.

I came to the United States in 1888, landing in New York and going immediately to Albany where I took the teachers' examination and began teaching in Rome, New York, where I spent five years. Then I went to Utica, New York, where I taught for four years. I had previously married the young lady I had followed across the Atlantic Ocean.

As Mrs. Hough's health was not at all good, on advice of the doctor I decided to seek a milder climate. Having friends in the United States Congress, some of them connected with the Indian Department, I was asked by one of them how I would like to go to the Indian Territory and take charge of a boys' boarding school. I said that would suit me, exactly. They told me that a man was wanted for the place and they would recommend me to the school authorities of the Cherokee Nation.

I was accepted and came to Tahlequah in the summer of 1898 to start the fall term of the Cherokee Male Seminary. Honorable C. J. Harris was Chief of the Cherokees at that time.

-3-

HOUGH, JOHN G. INTERVIEW.

7986.

Captain J. S. Smith, an experienced teacher from Alabama was my first assistant. Miss Jean Finley taught Latin. D. W. C. Duncan had the mathematics department. Walter P. Thompson, Charlie Willie, W. T. Thorne were also connected with the school. We had approximately one hundred Cherokee boys in attendance, all living in the building.

Prior to that time there had been no organized sports. After the school hours the boys had nothing to do but sit around in groups or go to their rooms. As they were all accustomed to a free outdoor life, that mode of living did not agree with them. As were all English people, I had been accustomed to all kinds of sports and so I decided to organize a football team and it chanced to be the first one organized at the Seminary and in the Indian Territory and I was the first football coach in the Territory.

The idea appealed strongly to the boys as the Indians, too, are fond of sports. We began practice work at once. There was a sort of football team at Kendall College in Muskogee and the Indian University (Now Sacone) but they had no coaches. In fact, one boy said afterwards he didn't know what a football coach looked like.

HOUGH, JOHN G. INTERVIEW.

7986

The first game we matched was with Kendall College which had big husky, Indian fellows, averaging 175 pounds in weight, but they had no chance with the slender, active Cherokee boys with an average weight of 140 pounds. Our team developed into the best team in the Territory and we were never once defeated.

Our boys wore red blankets as they came on the field and that was a picturesque sight which seemed to inspire the crowd as well as the boys. All the signals were given in Cherokee, which was quite an advantage as the opposing team of Creek boys could not pick them up. The boys possessed qualities I had never seen in Eastern boys. When they were injured you never knew it as they never stopped or made a complaint and we never knew who was hurt until after the game; they were sometimes down but never out.

They were given training in other ways as well for we started out at 5 A. M. for a cross country run for two hours, then a rub down and breakfast and we were ready for the class rooms.

HOUGH, JOHN G. INTERVIEW.

7986

I was never connected with a group of boys of which I was more fond and they seemed to like me equally as well and in later years we have occasionally met as friends of long ago.

The boys who played on the noted team were:

George Russell, Larkin Sevenstar, Clint Lipe, Ben Mills, Henry Ballard, Joe Sevier, Wallace Thornton, Jim Sanders, Tom Roach, Joe Ross, George Cox, Lick Paris, Will Meeks, Cap Dameron, Merritt Eton, Bill Harris, Walter Smith, Bulger Hough, the coach's little boy was the mascot. Walter Smith is now County Commissioner of Muskogee County, Tom Roach has been connected with the Indian Agency for many years.

My connection with the school and with the Cherokee people was most pleasant. Chief Harris was one of my best friends, a noteworthy fact and one that impressed me so much regarding the Cherokees was their intense interest in their schools and churches. Anything that they could secure that would be of benefit to their schools was readily adopted as they considered nothing to good for them. All the schools in the Nation was financed from funds accruing

HOUGH, JOHN G. INTERVIEW.

9986

from tribal lands and invested money. All books were furnished free by the Nation and board was so low that even the poorer citizens could avail themselves of the educational advantages offered.

While I was connected with the school these ^{three} years my family made our home at the school, which was located several miles from Tahlequah. As my own children reached school age, the question of sending them to school became an important one as there was no school for small children in reach. It was with much regret that I gave up my work at the end of three years and moved to Muskogee.

On coming here I took the Civil Service examination and entered the Federal service at the Indian Agency, serving 30 years when I retired.

I have continuously made my home in Muskogee. I count the years of my association with the Cherokee people among the happiest years of my life.