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BERRYHILL, JAKE

INTERVIEW

#6650

John Westley Combs Story.

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Carl R. Sherwood,  
Interviewer,  
July 12, 1937.

JOHN WESTLEY COMBS.

John Westley Combs, one of the largest farmers and stock raisers in McIntosh County was born in Pike County, Illinois. He is a son of Sterling and Sara Combs. Mr. Combs and his family moved to, and settled in, the southern part of Missouri in Taney County. Most of the children were reared here. J. W. Combs received a limited education in the common schools of Missouri, and started in life for himself at the age of eighteen by farming in Taney County Missouri. Later he farmed two years in Cash County of the same state. From Green County he moved to the Indian Territory in 1891, locating for a short time at Eufaula. He came to Checotah when the Indians were under Creek rule, and the whites were under government supervision. When Mr. Combs and his wife came to Checotah they had but a

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small capital which consisted of two horses, a wagon, and very little money. He was financed the first year by merchants of Checotah. Soon afterward he leased the land on which he now lives and he carried on farming and stock raising. He farmed about two hundred acres of new ground-creek bottom land which would produce one bale or more of cotton per acre. At that time there was only one white family living between his place and Checotah, a distance of about eight miles. At that time the country was covered with cattle and horses, most of which belonged to the whites; but the Creek Indians also had small herds. Cattle and horse thieves were carrying on their depredations, and when a man lost a horse he would not spend more than a day looking for it, as he knew it would be a waste of time. The stolen stock were driven over the line to the states and were sold there. After Statehood, Mr. Combs began

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buying land, his family owns over twelve hundred acres of good land lying southeast of Oktaha. His children and grandchildren are at this time farming this land. Mr. Combs died about 1910 and was buried in the Combs' Cemetery on Pumpkin Ridge southeast of Oktaha.

Note: Jake Berryhill is a Creek citizen and was reared in the vicinity where John Wesley Combs lived. He had a long personal friendship with Mr. Combs. Ed.