

KETCHER, ELLIS.

INTERVIEW

12600

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

KETCHER, ELLIS.-INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name Wylie Thornton

This report made on (date) January 5th, 1938

1. Name Ellis Ketcher

2. Post Office Address Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Box 45

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 30 Year 1872

5. Place of birth Goingsnake District, Cherokee Nation,
now Christie, Oklahoma.

6. Name of Father John Ketcher North of
Place of birth Stilwell

7. Name of Mother Margrett Chambers Place of birth Big Skin Bayou
in Sequoyah County.

Other information about mother Half-blood Cherokee.

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 4.

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Thornton, Wylie - Investigator.
Indian Pioneer History-S-149.
January 5, 1938.

Interview with Ellis Ketcher.
Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

I was born May 30, 1872, over near Christie, which at that time was in the Coingsnake District of the Cherokee Nation. This old homestead is located just about a mile and a half north of Christie, right on the banks of the Peachwater Creek.

When I was growing up there were plenty of outlaws, and whiskey was being brought in by white bootleggers. The Cherokee officers ran the law breakers into Fort Smith every week.

Under the Cherokee laws, if an Indian committed a crime in company with a white man, the Indian was confined in the Fort Smith Federal Prison and was tried by the Federal Court at Fort Smith before Judge Parker.

When I was twenty-one, in 1893, I left my father's farm and came to Bob Ross's place just south of Tahlequah, and I worked for Mr. Ross one year and the second year. Then in 1895, in January, I became a jail guard under Sheriff George Roach and the next year I served as jailor under the

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next sheriff, John Duncan.

During my term as jailer I guarded several murderers and robbers. I didn't mind guarding these bad men, but I did hate to guard a man condemned to be hanged the next day, for of all the pitiful begging and pleading to be allowed to escape.

I guarded one man I didn't mind guarding; that was an Indian named Bob Dalton, condemned for killing a boy by cutting his throat with his pocket knife. After the boy was dead Dalton spurred his face with his spurs, cutting his face up until he could not be recognized. I locked Dalton's ankle by a large chain to a large ring that was cemented in the middle of the jail floor and he was hanged next day, July, 1896. Many, many murder cases became outlawed when the Cherokee Nation became a part of the state of Oklahoma.

After I had served two years as jail guard here in Tahlequah I went back to the homestead on Peacheater Creek about the year 1900 and between that time and 1903 I lost my wife in death.

I have actively assisted in carrying out the United States Indian Road building projects in eastern Oklahoma for the past three years.

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In the early days of my boyhood Father and I made many trips from our homestead on Peacheater Creek to Cincinnati, Arkansas, the nearest postoffice for our mail, and our grain mill was also in Arkansas. Cincinnati was our postoffice until about 1898, the best I can remember.

During my boyhood days there was not any Westville; there was a field where the town is now situated- a prairie covered by tall grass full of quails, jack rabbits, wolves, fox and deer.

Where the grade school of Westville is located was a pond which was always full of rainwater, and was known to contain an abundant crop of pond moss, the thing wild deer prefer above any other food. That pond was where Father and many others went to get venison when their supply got low.

Bill Harnage owned the north portion of what is now Westville; some one whose name I can't recall owned the middle portion; and Mose Phillips owned the south end of that location.

George Christie and White Whitmire teamed up together as partners to go on a wild pigeon hunt in a race with Ben

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Knight and his son and White Whitmire posted a \$5.00 bet that he and George Christie would kill the most pigeons that day. Ben and his son accepted the bet, and away they went, each bent on winning the \$5.00 besides the gain they expected from the sale of pigeons to certain buyers at Siloam Springs, Arkansas, who shipped such birds to the Kansas City packing company.

When each group came in with their many sacks full of pigeons they had disinterested persons count them, with the result that Christie and Whitmire lost their bet. The count showed Christie and Whitmire to have killed one thousand pigeons and Ben Knight and son one thousand and five. This happened about the year of 1887.

The Cherokees believe the pigeons attempted to cross the ocean or were caught in a tornado and were drowned, because they left one day and never returned.