

KELLEY, JOE

INTERVIEW

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163

Charline M. Culbertson,
Interviewer.
July 14, 1937.

An Interview With Joe Kelley,
Three miles southeast of Wardville,

I was born in 1871 near Limestone Gap, Indian Territory. My parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Kelley, lived four miles west of the Gap till I was ten years old at which time my father died and was buried at Atoka.

At this time there was lots of wild game such as deer, turkey and a few bears here. The Indians lived in little settlements and built houses out of logs and covered ~~the houses with clapboards.~~ Few houses had windows or shutters. The Indians lived on meat and bread; their meat was wild game and they used corn in making their bread. They would also eat terrapin. I have seen the Indian women come to wash for my mother and bring a terrapin with them and when they made a fire around the kettle they would put the terrapin in the fire alive and the terrapin would crawl out of the fire when he got hot but they would put him back in the fire and roast him alive and when dinner time came they would have terrapin for dinner.

The Indians never went to school much. There were a few who had cattle and hogs and were fixed so that they

could send their children to school and these Indians would sometimes send their children off to the states to school but later on they had good schools in the Territory. The Choctaw Indians did not like the Government's allotting their land to them. Most of them when they were financially able, sold their land or took loans on it and got rid of their land.

Back in the '80's and '90's people that lived in Indian Territory had plenty of good range for their stock and plenty of game and fish.

The Indians would bury their dead close to their homes and sometimes, about a year after the death they would have their funeral and all the neighbors would gather and cry for three days. They would always have lots to eat at these cries. They would make little houses over the graves.

The Indians would have church; sometimes they would build a brush arbor and invite the white people to come to the meetings and treat them well. They would preach in their own language. They were very good singers.

I am in possession of a gun, some fifty years old with which I often hunted in the Territory.