

LABORS, ALEXANDER. INTERVIEW

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

LABORS, ALEXANDER

INTERVIEW

12549

Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton

This report made on (date) January 10, 1938 1938

1. Name Alexander Labors

2. Post Office Address Ethel, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 15 Year 1879

5. Place of birth Near Smithville, Oklahoma.

6. Name of Father Houston Labors Place of birth Arkansas

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Parcellia Labors Place of birth Near Smithville, Oklahoma.

Other information about mother _____

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 _____

Johnson H. Hampton
Investigator
January 10, 1938

Interview with
Alexander Labors
Ethel, Oklahoma.

I was born August 15, 1879, near what is now Smithville. My father's name was Houston Labors and Mother's name was Parmillia Labors.

My mother was raised in Oklahoma; she was a full blood Choctaw woman. My father was of Spanish descent. He came from Spain and located somewhere in Arkansas.

The country was wild where I was raised and not many people lived in there; those who lived in there were mostly Choctaws and there were not many of them. The country is mostly mountains and there are some rivers running through the mountains, and it is very rough.

At that time we had no roads to speak of so it was very hard to get out and in. We had no bridges on the rivers either, so if we happened to be out away from home we just had to wait until the rivers ran down to where we could cross before we could get back home.

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We lived in a log house; it was a double house and we had flooring made out of split logs. We had a small farm of about twenty-five acres on the creek bottom where we raised all the corn we needed and raised a little cotton for quilting purposes. We did not raise much cotton for there were no places to get it ginned. There were no gins in that country at that time nor were there any grist mills where we could get our corn ground. There was a grist mill in Cove , Arkansas, where we got our corn ground for meal but there was no gin there.

At that time our trading point was at Cove , Arkansas, we bought all our groceries from there; it was not very far from where we lived to this place. We traded there until we moved away from that part of the country. We moved to what is now Bryan County, it was then Blue County before statehood. We moved from Nashoba County to Blue County where we lived until I moved from there to what is now Pushmataha County.

My mother had a spinning wheel and a loom and she

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used to make clothes and pants and sell them. I don't know what she got for them but she had no trouble in selling them to the Indians who wanted them. Then she would make mittens and socks; she made them out of wool, but the clothes and pants she made them out of cotton. When she made the clothes and pants she would dye them with some kind of roots, bark and leaves and some other things, but what she used I don't know; anyway, when she got through with them they looked nice and pretty, like store bought clothes and pants. She would dye the mittens and socks with different things and it made them black and of striped colors and they were heavy. She never made any baskets nor did she make any pottery that I know of.

I never killed a deer with my bow and arrow myself but some of the other Indians did kill deer with their bow and arrows. Some of the Indians did not use anything but their bow and arrows when they went hunting, they would kill anything they wanted to with them, but I never did have that much luck. There were a good many panthers

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in the mountains; we could hear them all during the night. There were also lots of wolves, we had a few sheep on our place and I sure did have to look after them. I have run the wolves away from the sheep in broad daylight, and have killed wolves among the sheep. We had a hard time raising pigs on account of the wolves; the country was full of them. They would catch grown hogs and calves and sometimes they would catch grown cows and kill them, they were awful bad at times.

There were no white people in that country at that time, only a few who came in there who were desperadoes. They did not care for anyone and they did not come in there for any good, just to get away from the law and they gave the people lots of trouble by stealing what they had. The Indians lived so far apart they just lived in communities and it was several miles from one community to another, so it was a good place for that kind of men to come and stay without being caught by the "laws."

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I never did know that we had an Indian Agency until after we got our allotments. We were enrolled by the Dawes Comissioners sometime in 1898 and after that we took our allotments. After we had taken our allotment all the papers concerning our land came out of Muskogee, and that was the first time I learned that we had an Agency anywhere. There might have been an Agency prior to that time but that was my first time to hear of it; after that time we got our payments through that office.

Our court ground at that time was at Alikchi; it was called the Alikchi District Court Ground where the Indians would hold their court once a year and where they tried everyone who had been arrested during the year. They held the court for about three weeks every year, they would convict some and give them good whippings and turn them loose.

The last man whom the Choctaw Court executed was William Going, he had killed a man during the year and

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was out on bond; when the court convened, they tried him for murder and convicted him and executed him; that was just before statehood and he was the last man whom the Choctaw Court executed. The way this was done was that when the Court convicted a man for murder they would set a date for his execution and when the day arrived he would be there with all of his kinfolks who were there to take his body home. After they got everything ready, then they would let the man sit down on a sheet or on the ground and they then would make a small black spot over his heart, then the executioner would be selected out of the deputies by the sheriff, who then would read the sentence of the court to the prisoner. The executioner then would step back about ten steps away from him; then level his Winchester down on him and pull the trigger and that would be the last of the prisoner. The executioner hardly ever missed hitting the black mark, that was the way William Going went and he was the last man to be executed by the Choctaw Court.

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The Choctaw people out where I lived did not work much; most of them had small farms, about five acres was about the largest farm the Choctaws had. They would raise enough corn for their use and back in those days it did not take very much of a farm to raise all the corn a family needed.

I never saw an Indian war dance nor the scalp dance. Mother told me that the Full-Bloods would have those dances when a young man was going to join the army. They would dance all night and the next morning the young man would get on his pony and start out to join the army.

When a man came back from the war they would have another war dance for him, celebrating his safe return.

I went to a neighborhood school when I was a boy which was built out of pine logs and had split logs for seats. It was a subscription school. I did not attend very much for I did not want to go to school at that time, just like all other boys.

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I have lived among the Choctaw Tribe ever since I was born. My mother was a full-blood Choctaw and although my father was part Spanish, he lived among the Choctaw Tribe with my mother until he died.