

WILCOX, JOHN

INTERVIEW

#5963

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BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Bradley Bolinger

This report made on (date) May 26 1937

1. Name John Wilcox

2. Post Office Address Wilburton

3. Residence address (or location) 1 1/2 Miles South East of Wilburton

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 5 Year 1864

5. Place of birth Des Moines, Iowa

6. Name of Father C. D. Wilcox Place of birth Wisconsin

Other information about father Died in 1917-buried in Cravins Cemetery

7. Name of Mother Imelia Streeter Wilcox Place of birth Des Moines, Iowa

Other information about mother Do not remember date of birth.

Died November 16, 1934. Buried in the Sulphur Cemetery. In Pittsburg Co.

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 3

Bradley Bolinger
Interviewer
May 26, 1937

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Interview with
John Wilcox
Wilburton,

My father's name is C. D. Wilcox; he was seventy-nine years of age when he died. He was born in the state of Wisconsin and I do not remember the date of his birth. His death, as I remember it, occurred on October 3, 1917. He was buried in what they called the Brown Prairie Cemetery in the early day. The cemetery has the name of Cravins Cemetery now.

My mother's name was Imelia Streeter Wilcox, and she was born near Des Moines Iowa. I do not remember the date of her birth. She died after moving to the Choctaw Nation and was buried in the Sulphur Cemetery in what is now Pittsburg Cemetery.

I was eighteen years of age when my father and mother moved to the Choctaw Nation; we settled on Brown Prairie near what is now called Cravins. Cravins is now in Latimer County. There were two families of white settlers living at that time within fifteen square miles of each other. This was in the year 1884.

When my father moved to this Choctaw Nation he was

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the first white settler to come to the Territory with a team with harness on them, hooked to a wagon. We owned a good team of mules and some pretty good harness and a good factory made wagon. There were not any mules for a team in this early day in the Choctaw Nation. When we moved into the Nation the Choctaw Indians thought our harness and wagon were curiosities and came for many miles around to see how we had the wagon hooked up.

The Choctaw Indians in this country during the summer and until late in the fall went barefooted and with little or no clothes from the hips up but when winter set in, they would make shoes or moccasins out of the skins of cattle and wild game for each member of the family. These were made with the hair or fur of the hide turned inside. Much of the clothing was made from the hides of animals.

The Indian women in this country did most of the work around their cabin. It was the women who raised a patch of corn for their bread and what they called Pashofa. This corn was put into a large block of wood with a hollow place in the center of the block and a home made maul was used to mash this corn. They would blow the husks out as they mashed the

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corn. The Choctaw man did not do very much of anything but hunt. This country was well supplied with all kinds of wild game in those days.

Most of the Indians here had log cabins and what they called a stick and mud chimney. This chimney furnished heat. They had no cook stoves in those days and the Indian women would go out and gather large flat stones and place these stones in the fire and heat them. Their bread in those days was just mixed with the beaten corn and water and made into cakes and laid on these hot rocks to cook.

When any member of the Choctaw Tribe was taken sick they had what they called the Medicine Man who went out and dug up different roots and wild plants and cooked them down as low as possible. Then they would give the sick Indian some of this mixture. They were very careful not to tell just how this was made and what it was.

In case the Indian did not get better and was expected to die, the old Medicine Man and the whole family did a dance around the sick Indian in an effort to run the sick-

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ness out of the body of the sick man or woman. If the sick Choctaw died the body was just placed in a rough, sawed box and in the early days the box containing the body was just taken out into the yard and in some cases was buried under the house where the family lived.

Almost everything which was personal, in the way of clothing and personal adornment, was placed in the grave with the body. I do not remember just what year the Choctaw Tribe stopped burying their dead around the houses where they lived but they did stop this practice and began placing the bodies on high knolls and small hills.

The first Trading Post which was opened in the Choctaw Nation was conducted by a white man named George Riddle. It was located on the side of a creek called Bandy Creek; nowadays this location would be about two miles south of what is now the town of Wilburton.

My father had a good team and wagon which were unusual things for the early settlers in this country to have. He worked for the Riddle Trading Post hauling cow hides and all the things that the Choctaws and the white settlers had to trade. These things were carried from

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the territory to Fort Smith and a wagon load of all kinds of things needed by the owner of the Trading Post were brought back.

It was not long then before coal was found in this county and the white people began to come here pretty fast.