

HAYES, J. W.

INTERVIEW.

#12393

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

HAYES, J. W.

INTERVIEW.

12593.

Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton.This report made on (date) December 13, 1937.1. Name Mr. J. W. Hayes, a pioneer.2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 23 Year 1869.5. Place of birth Arkansas.6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth Arkansas.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth Arkansas.

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 8.

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Johnson H. Hampton,
December 13, 1937.
Investigator.

An Interview With J. W. Hayes,
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born December 28, 1869, in Arkansas, and came to the Indian Territory when I was about 18 years old. My Father died in Wyoming in 1865, my Mother came to this country after I came, but after living in Antlers for several years she moved back to Arkansas where she died and there she is buried.

We came over in a covered wagon, landing in LeFlore, Indian Territory, Choctaw Nation, where we lived for a while, then I moved to McAlester and lived there for a while. I moved from there to Boggy Depot near Atoka and made one crop there; then I moved to Antlers. In all my rounds I never saw but a very few white people in this country at that time.

When I moved to this country I went to work at a sawmill here at Antlers. At that time there were but about two stores in this town, and part of it was a lumber yard. The Long Bell Lumber company had a sawmill just below the town. They built a tramway about ten miles long here to the mountains where they hauled their pine logs

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to the mill. This tramway ran to the river, The sawmill was finally moved after they cut all the timber they could get. They cut some fine yellow pine timber and it did not cost them anything to get it. They were supposed to pay the Choctaws a royalty on this timber but they got away without paying for it so the timber was a complete loss to the Choctaws.

At the time the sawmill was running here there were a good many white people around the mill but there were none out in the country.

I never did farm much. I always worked at public works most all of my life. I made ties and did lots of sawmilling; then I did some real estate work; in fact, I have worked at almost anything that I could find to do and there was lots of work at that time here around Antlers, that a man could do if he wanted to work. They did not pay much for labor at that time but a man could make a living all right if he tried. It was the best country for a poor man I ever saw.

After it was planed and loaded on cars, they shipped the lumber out. This was a shipping point for most of the lumber that was milled around here, and it was the

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shipping point for stockmen. There were a good many cattle shipped from this place. There used to be lots of cattle raised in the county, and most of them were shipped from here to St. Louis to market.

At that time there was no school nor churches. The Catholic people came in and built the first school and the first church. Then after that Brother Brantly, a Presbyterian Preacher, came and built his church and organized a school. He ran that school. After the town built a high school, his school house was torn down and done away with. The Catholic School is still running as most of the Indian children went to this school, and it is still attended by the Choctaw children.

I was here at the time Jones and Locke had their war. After the shooting the United States Marshal arrested the leaders and took them to Paris, but they were all turned loose and came back home, the court deciding that they had no jurisdiction over them. They shot Locke's house into splinters. I don't see how they lived. From the looks of the house and the bullet holes in the house it looked like that there was no chance for anyone to come out alive but

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none was hurt to amount to anything. I think that about two of the Locke men were shot but no one was killed in the war.

Then again an Indian by the name of Barton Jones, who lived out from where Finley, Oklahoma, is now, went to church some where with his family. While they were gone some Choctaws went to his home and tore up all of his furniture and burned his bedding. When he came home he found his home torn up and he gathered up some Choctaws and went after them. He knew who they were, so they hunted up these Choctaws who had torn his house up and killed about four of them. One man they shot all to pieces, and arrested several of them and took them to Sulphur Spring, where they put them in a log house for they had no jail. They kept them for two or three weeks in this log house and they finally turned them loose. One of the men they killed had been or was at the time they killed him a Federal Officer, may be a special deputy marshal, so the Federal Court got them and put them in jail at Paris, Texas. There were about 25 or 30 of them arrested and some of them died in jail. The ones left alive finally had their

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trial at Paris. They beat the case and came home, what was left of them; most of them died in jail.

When I came to this country there was plenty of wild games, deer, turkeys, bears in the mountains and plenty of fish in the river and creeks, I have seen deer in droves and turkeys too, but they are all gone now. A few deers are still in the mountains but no turkeys at all anywhere. I don't know what became of them. We used to go out and kill a deer or a turkey just in a few hours and came back home; and a few bears were killed by some of the mill hands.

I have attended Choctaw camp meetings. They had some big meetings and not only that they fed the people that came to the meetings. They would kill hogs and beef and divide it among the campers at this church and the campers would get their food stuff ready and move to the church where they camped as long as the meeting lasted, may be four or five days. They generally camped four or five days ahead of time and get everything ready for the meeting which would start about Friday and last until Monday morning.

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And I have been to their cries as we called them. They would have these cries at the church some times but most of the time they would have them at the grave. The grave was at the house where the Indian died. They would bury him at the house and build a small house over his grave, so when they had their cries they went to the grave; they would all get around the grave and cry; then they would have their dinner and after dinner they would all go home. Then the widow was ready to marry again. Before that time she was not privileged to marry, but she would marry at any time she wanted to after they had their cries.

I have been to their ball games. They would put up stakes about a quarter of a mile from each other, which were their goals and the players would get together and select the goal that was for each county. They then would put some men at their goal on each side and put the balance out in the middle between the goals, and they sure would have a ball game. They usually had a big fight while the game was going on. Some would be playing and some fighting. Some times they would have to wait until the

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next day to finish their games on account of the fighting among themselves, one county against another. I have seen some of the fastest runners among them. They would have some kind of a tail attached to them, the fastest of them would have a tail of a deer hooked on them showing that they were then fastest on the team, and they usually carried the ball. They used ball sticks, never touching the ball with their hands only with those sticks. The ball was a small one but hard as a brick. Some of these Indians could throw the ball like a bullet with their sticks, and when they got to fighting they would turn the sticks and used them to fight with.

The Choctaws would kill and eat deers, turkeys and other wild games, I have seen them eat polecat. I don't know how they cleaned them but they ate them, and they would roast terrapins and eat them. But very few of them ate opossums. They would eat coon but they drew the line on opossum.

The Choctaw people as a rule did not work much—they would have a small patch of four or five acres on which they raised corn to do them the winter.

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The men hunted most of the time and the women had to do the work on the farm. If he did not hunt he would sit around the house and let the women do the work. They nearly all of them lived in log houses, chinked and daubed, with one door and no windows.

I have lived among the Choctaws ever since I came to their country, and have traded with them one way and another. I have found them to be honest and straight, they made their word good on everything they promised. They would kill and fight among themselves but never bothered any one else, I know that they got a bad name but it was because the people that did the talking was not among them to see for themselves, only what they read in the books, I have been living among them for these many years, yet I have not seen a bad Indian as yet. They never robbed anyone nor do they steal other people's property, and not only that they never do bother any one as I said. I have raised my children right among them and they have gone to school with them and associated with them all their lives yet they never did have any trouble with any one of them.