

HARTNESS, JOE

INTERVIEW

Form A-(S-119)

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12841

BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Wylie Thornton

This report made on (date) January 27, 1938

1. Name Joe Hartness

2. Post Office Address Hulbert, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) About 5 miles North.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 25 Year 1867

5. Place of birth Murphy, North Carolina, in Cherokee County

6. Name of Father Marion Hartness Place of birth North Carolina.

Other information about father Died January 27, 1930 Tahlequah,
Oklahoma.

7. Name of Mother Mary Ann James Place of birth Cherokee County,
North Carolina.

Other information about mother Died at Eureka

Indian Territory, June 27, 1904.

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 5.

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Investigator,
Wylie Thornton,
Jan. 27, 1938.

Interview With Joe Hartness,
Huibert, Oklahoma.

I was born January 25, 1867, near Murphy, North Carolina, on the Hiwassee River, a farmer's son, in very moderate circumstances. Murphy was a small inland town located near a large stream in the county of Cherokee, named so because of the large Cherokee Indian population along the river and surrounding hills.

I lived on Father's farm in Cherokee County until 1882, then Father sold his farm and other possessions and moved us to Georgia where we lived until October, 1884. At that time I left my parents in Georgia and accepted an offer by E. T. Wilson to pay my transportation to this country. I landed in Gibson Station on the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad north of Muskogee.

Mr. Wilson hired a wagon to transport the Wilson family to Tahlequah, and I cannot forget that bad road we came over on our way to Tahlequah.

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Mr. Wilson remained in Tahlequah but I got out into the country north and west of Tahlequah and procured employment on Uncle Coose Thompson's place at a salary of \$15.00 per month. I held that farm job for one crop season, and the next year I purchased the Boiles place near Gideon and I remained on that place for several years.

I farmed on this place in a very crude way, sowed oats and harvested them with a hand cradle. I cut about four or five acres per day, and that, too, was real hard labor. I plowed my corn with a wooden beam double shovel, checked my corn rows and plowed the corn three times, twice in one direction and only one time the other way, and I made corn running from forty to fifty bushel per acre.

We cooked our meals in the fireplace as we had no cook stove, and our dining table I made myself. I had quite a fight to keep wild varmints and game from eating up my stuff out of the field. Squirrels, coons, deer and turkeys were the worst pests of all; deer came into my field and ate my beans and garden up, and ate my corn after it got into the roasting ear size.

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My hogs and cattle increased faster than I could keep up with the increase, but there was very little market for such stock.

I was married in the year of 1888 to Hattie Walker, I obtained the marriage certificate from a country preacher. He just got a piece of white paper and lead pencil and wrote the marriage certificate himself, and after performing the ceremony he got a couple of witnesses to sign their names on the corner of this sheet of paper.

When I first arrived in Tahlequah in 1884, there were about two or three stores and about eight residences.

Joel B. Mayes was Chief of the Cherokee Nation at that time. When he became ill he was living upstairs over a hotel. Chief Mayes, who weighed two hundred and seventy pounds, died and I helped to bring his body down by way of the upstairs porch as it was impossible to bring it down the winding stairway, on account of his size. Some men suggested we take his body out of the box and drag it around the curve of the stairs then put it back in the coffin after we got it downstairs, but others protested that it would

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be a shame to the Nation to do such a thing with the body of a national figure who had been Chief of the Cherokee Nation.

Some of the men who were identified with the Sherriff's office in Tahlequah in 1886 to 1888 were: George Roach, Dick Robbins, Jeff Robbins, Whitie Starr, Jack Rider, Sam Manos, Sscope Manos, Boot Pigeon, Jess Pigeon, Jack Ellis, and Charley Starr was High Sheriff. Allen Ross who was the Clerk of the Cherokee Court, was the father of Bob Ross. The next court clerk was Tom Triplett who was later killed by John Sharp while Tom was our Sheriff. At that time Albert Taylor was first deputy under Tom Triplett.

My father was Merion Hartness and my mother was Mary Ann James Hartness. Father died January 27, 1930, in Tahlequah. Mother died June 27, 1904. Both were born in North Carolina and in Cherokee County.

I worked some in the timber out here on Fourteen Mile Creek in the years 1885-86 and also observed some nice timber in Pumpkin Hollow during the same years. I found

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Water oak trees and also Red oak that were eight feet in diameter, which were clear cut without a flaw, running from twenty-five to thirty feet in height.

Buck Richard was the saw man for the Bill Ballard Mill, and Jeff Hicks the saw man for the Sam Williams' mill; both these mills ran steadily with full crews in Pumpkin Hollow, which is about eight miles east of old Tablequah. The best known citizen living in that Hollow, I suppose, is W. W. Ross, better known as "Biscuit" Ross.

These mills sold first class pine lumber without a flaw or a small knot for 75¢ per load. There were about a million feet of lumber junked just because it happened to have a small knot or a flaw.

I have gathered corn out of a field right where the little town of Hulbert is now situated, when the man who pioneered the settling and clearing out of the timber for the field still owned the land. His name was Uncle Ben Hulbert.

The Cherokees used two kinds of poison to kill their fish for their big picnics or fish fries, as they called

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them. One was buckeye roots and the other black gum berries. Both of these poisons were very effective fish poisons, and yet did not harm stock of any kind.