

INDEX CARDS:

Choctaw Nation
Tribe-Choctaw
Choctaw Removal
Fort Coffee
Civil War
Doaksville
Shady Point
Sofka
Camp Meetings.

Gomer Gower
Field Worker
May 18, 1937

Interview with Betsy Christie.
Route 1. Shady Point, Oklahoma
Father-Isaac Adams
Mother-Emily Adams

Betsy Christie was born in Sugar Loaf County--
now Le Flore County--Indian Territory, at a point
about two miles south of what is now the city of
Poteau, on November 13, 1866, and is now seventy
years of age. She now resides six miles west of
the town of Shady Point.

Her father was Isaac Adams, a fullblood
Choctaw Indian of the Sixtown Clan.

Her mother was the daughter of James Terrell,
a halfbreed Indian who came to the Indian Territory
at the time of the removal of the Indians from
Mississippi. Both her mother and her grandfather
are buried in unmarked graves near what is now
the Fair Ground, the same being the site of their
first home in the Indian Territory.

Betsy Christie learned much of the experiences
of the Indians from her mother who, herself, expe-
rienced the hardships of the removal and the sub-
sequent problems which it entailed. From her mother
she learned that her people landed at Fort Coffee on

-2-

the Arkansas River and immediately set out to find and locate a place where they could make their home. It is characteristic of the Indian to want surroundings that are unrestricted in scope. This characteristic resulted in the party of Indians which landed at Fort Coffee being scattered over a great deal of territory in what is now Le Flore County, as each head of a family wanted to be assured against too close proximity to his neighbor. The place selected by her grandfather, James Terrell, and her father, Isaac Adams, is approximately twenty-five miles south of where they landed at Fort Coffee, and was five miles away from the nearest neighbor. It was at this place, her mother was reared and where she and the other feminine parts of the family underwent severe hardships, especially so during the Civil War, because of the absence of the masculine members of the family then engaged in war. During this time, a concentration point had been established at Doakville, where the women whose male relatives were engaged in the conflict could be congregated for protection and sustenance. She and three of her sisters

-3-

walked to this concentration point, a distance of nearly a hundred miles, and stayed there for some time. While at Doaksville they fared reasonably well as game was plentiful though breadstuff was scarce. On returning to their home--this was before the close of the war--they again suffered severe hardship, as what stock they had when they left their home had been taken. They subsisted principally on game and fish and sometimes terrapin until they could again raise some corn with which to make bread and "sofka". During this time, all they possessed was the shelter afforded by the log cabin which her father, James Terrell, had erected when he settled in the Indian Territory. It will thus be seen that the Choctaws suffered the brunt of the hardships which were a large part of these cruel days.

When she was thirty years of age, Betsy Christie married James Christie, by whom she had five children, all of whom died in infancy, and she relates that before her marriage she lived at the home of her mother which was shared by her grandfather, James Terrell and several others of the family connection.

-4-

During those years, she recalls that their nearest church was at Shady Point, then called Double Springs, a distance of about ten miles from their home. Since it was the custom when attending services at this church to go prepared to stay all day, they were all routed from their beds before daybreak and each one was allotted a task to perform in connection with such preparation. The task of the boys would be to bring in the ponies to be ridden by the entire group. The girls would prepare the sofka--which bore a close resemblance to what we now call hominy--and catch and prepare the chickens and many other good things, which entered into the makeup of a bountiful dinner for the day. When all was in readiness, they would all mount their ponies, oftentimes as many as three half-grown on one pony, and set out upon the journey, proceeding in single file, to the church, where, after the morning service, the dinner would be served picnic fashion, after which services would be resumed and continued until late afternoon, when the ponies would again be mounted

and the return journey home begun. These occasions were the delight of both old and young. A preacher whose name was Luce usually conducted the services.

Betsy and her husband, Jim Christie, took their allotment of land, some four hundred acres, at the point where she now resides, and she is now living alone on a part of that allotment. She occupies her time raising chickens and turkeys.

She had no schooling whatever as the school at Shady Point was too far distant from her girlhood home near Poteau to permit attendance at that or any other school. Yet she speaks English reasonably well and is above the average in intelligence.