

CLARK, A. F.

INTERVIEW

#12288

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

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Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton

This report made on (date) November 29, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mr. A. F. Clark, a pioneer.

2. Post Office Address Clayton, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 29 Year 1867.

5. Place of birth Washington County, Tennessee.

6. Name of Father \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth Tennessee.

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth Tennessee.

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 6.

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Johnson H. Hampton,  
Investigator,  
November 29, 1937.

An Interview With A. F. Clark,  
A pioneer, Clayton, Oklahoma.

I was born July 29th, 1867, in Washington County, Tennessee, and came to the Indian Territory, Choctaw Nation, when I was practically a young man. I don't know how old I was when I came here to this country. My father and mother did not come to this country. They lived at our old home until their death and both of them were buried there at the old place back in Tennessee.

I came to this country by myself on the train. I had wanted to come over here for several years but on account of my folks I lived at home with them until their death. I then left there and came over to this country. Why I selected this place to come to was that my uncle was living here, having been here for several years, and had written me to come and that he would give me a job, so I came and went to work for him in the store. I worked for him for several years. I had a pretty hard time in the store for I could not understand a word in Choctaw. Most of the Choctaws could not speak the English language at that time and they could not make me understand them, but

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they would go around the counter and point out what they wanted, and by that way I got by with them all right.

I soon learned to trade with them-I did not learn their language very much but I learned enough to make trades with them better. I then put <sup>in</sup> a little store of my own and ran it for some time; then I sold out and went back to work for my uncle again.

When I first came to Antlers, there were but few white people here in town and none out in the country. The country was wild and woolly. It was open country with very few houses. The Choctaws lived in communities and it was several miles between them. There were no houses for several miles.

At that time, especially on Saturdays, the town used to be full of Choctaws. They did not get drunk very much back in those days for they could not get any fire-water in town. They had to go to Paris, Texas, to get their fire-water and had to go on the train. The United States Marshal would be on the lookout for them, and when they crossed the river with it the marshals would take it away from them, so they could not get any fire-water over very much. Sometimes they would get some fire-water over but not very much.

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When the Federal Court was established in Paris, Texas, that court had jurisdiction over this part of the Indian Territory. A man by the name of Dixon was appointed United States Marshal. He was located at Paris. I was appointed one of his Deputies of which he had several

through this part of the country then. When we caught criminals we had to take them to Paris, there being no jail nearer than Paris, where they stood their trials.

It was very difficult to catch a man for the country is mountainous and hilly, and but few houses where we could get information we wanted. Most of the people were Choctaws, who could not talk the English, so we could not get very much information out of them.

After several years the Federal Government finally established a Federal Court at Antlers, Indian Territory. J. J. McAlester, who was living at McAlester, was appointed United States Marshal in the central district as it was then called, and I was appointed one of his Deputies and served with him until his term expired. I think that it was about 1897 or 1898, when the court was established in Antlers.

We had to contend with all kinds of criminals at that time, for the most of them were criminals back in their home

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state and were maybe about two or three days ahead of the officers in that state, came over here to harbor themselves and had friends that would harbor them as long as they wanted to, and it made very hard on us sand-hill deputies to get our man, but we would finally land him. The old courthouse that the Federal Government built was burned down in 1933, and the old jail was torn down some few days ago. The old relic is gone now.

We had no trouble with the Indian people. If we had a warrant for one of them all we had to do was to send him word that we had a warrant for him and for him to come in and he would come, bring his bondsman with him, make his bond and go home. No trouble at all with them.

When I first landed here there was lots of wild game-deer, turkeys and lots of fish in the river and the creeks, and some bears and panther and lots of small game, quails, squirrels, and prairie chickens on the prairies south of Antlers, but they are all gone now-not many deer and no turkeys at all any more.

I was a deputy United States Marshal at the time and was located at the town of Antlers, when the Jones and Locke trouble was on and after the battle, under the instruction

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of the court at Paris, I arrested most of them and took them to Paris, but the court decided that it had no jurisdiction over them so we turned them loose and let them go. They came very near having a big battle. The Locke forces were camped across the river, and were entrenched there behind some big logs that they had piled up for their protection; and the Jones forces were camped at Goodland getting ready for the battle, and we, the Marshals, had to go from one place to another trying to keep down trouble between them. Still it looked like that we were not going to keep them from fighting. In the meantime a company of soldiers came down and camped here in Antlers, and went out and talked to both sides and finally succeeded in getting them to lay down their guns and go back home and when they did, that stopped the war.

I have attended several of the Indian camp meetings. We would go out to keep the peace for them while the meeting was going on. We did not have any trouble in keeping the peace for you take the Indian people and they respect the law and order. All you had to do was to be there and let them know that you were there, and they would not do anything that was in violation of law.

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I have also attended several Indian Ball games. They, of course, would fight during the game. Some would be playing ball while some would be fighting. They sometimes would not finish the game until the next day. My experience with the Choctaw people has been good. There are no better people on earth than the Choctaws. I have had lots of dealings with them in the stores and out, and I always found them to be honest lawbiding people, but they would kill and fight among themselves. They all used to carry guns back in those days, so the fastest one would kill the other one in a fight with guns.

I am now living at Clayton, a sawmill town about thirty-eight miles north of Antlers.