

MOORE, JOE C.

INTERVIEW

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

MOORE, JOE C.

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Field Worker's name Augusta H. Custer

This report made on (date) April 13, 1938 1938

1. Name Joe C. Moore

2. Post Office Address Geary, Route 3

3. Residence address (or location) 7 miles Northeast

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 3 Year 1883

5. Place of birth East Texas

6. Name of Father M. C. Moore Place of birth Georgia

Other information about father Pioneer cattleman and farmer

7. Name of Mother Adelia Moore Place of birth Georgia

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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Augusta H. Custer,  
Investigator,  
April 13, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. Joe C. Moore,  
7 miles Northeast, R. 3, Geary, Okla.

I am a farmer, living on an Indian lease. I was born in the eastern part of Texas, January 3, 1889. I came into Oklahoma in 1894. We lived in the Chickasaw Nation. There was much game in this part of the country and I had two nephews named Allen who went into the Territory to hunt and trap. The Choctaws resented having the white men come into their country and kill the game. They acted so ugly about this that my nephews asked the Government men about it and were told to go on and trap if they wanted to as they had as much right to do so as any one else. One morning my nephews left their little log shack and went to look after their string of traps. Some Indians shot them and then mutilated the bodies, cut out their eyes and cut off their ears. They were camped just at the foot of the Kiamichi Mountains and were trapping small game like polecats, minks, coons and possums. This took place in 1892. When we went over into the Indian Territory we were

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afraid of the Indians and my older brothers went armed and we younger boys gave the Indians a wide berth, never coming in contact with them any more than we had to.

There were twelve Indians who took part in the murder of my nephews. They were captured and taken to Paris, Texas and placed <sup>in</sup> jail. The Indians were accustomed to have their own tribal laws, and they were afraid of the white men's courts. They did not think they were going to get justice. In captivity these Indians began to die. The case was dragged out for two years and the <sup>last</sup> Indian only lived two years. This saved my brother-in-law and his remaining son from taking the law into their own hands in case these Indians had been turned loose. They had it planned to 'get' any of these Choctaws if they ever got out of the jail in Paris.

Under the Territory laws of the Indians they had a courtyard that the white people called "Pigeon Roost". The Indians had another, an Indian name for it. But when wrong doers were tried and found guilty they were sentenced to death. Prisoners were put into a pen with their hands tied behind them to a post.

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Then four men were given each a gun, three guns were blanks and one had a bullet in. They all fired at the same time but no one knew which gun had the fatal load. One time a negro was condemned to death and the loaded gun snapped. The negro yelled and tried to get loose but the Indians just laughed at him and loaded another gun.

Another time a doctor whom we knew very well went hunting with a party of friends. They had camped on Muddy Boggy. The men were standing around the camp when one of the dogs barked as if he had something treed. Dr. Langster said that he would go and see what the dog had treed. He left camp and went in the direction of the barking dog. After a little while the party heard a shot and they said they guessed that the doctor had killed something. They waited a long time and the doctor did not return. The men went to see what was the matter with him. They found the doctor shot with a bullet through his forehead. They were examining him and wondering how it happened when some one

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took a shot at them, then they all began to shoot. Several Indians were hidden near and one old man was shot in the head. The others gave up at once and wanted the old man taken to a doctor to see if his life could be saved. The men of the party got a wagon and loaded the Indian in, and drove to town sixteen miles, to get medical aid for him. But they took their time, and drove over every stump and into every ditch they could so as to give the Indian a chance to die which he did shortly after he reached town. All those other Indians were taken into Texas for trial. This they did not like.

The country was open and unfenced and my father and the neighbors cut many tons of wild hay from the prairies. In that part of the country there was a big red bull that had fought everything in that community. All the cattlemen wanted him killed but no one had done the deed. He would fight the cowboys on their ponies and chase them. I had a good horse but was not allowed to carry a gun. I did have a long sharp knife. One beautiful moonlight night I

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went to the corral, saddled my horse and went for a ride. I had no particular place to go but just rode out where the hay had been cut. The prairie looked peaceful under the light of the moon and I saw one dark object in that big space of mowed prairie and rode out toward it and to my surprise I saw that it was the big old red bull that everyone was giving all the room he wanted. Father had warned me to stay away from him. When the bull saw me riding up, he got to his feet and just strolled off and after a little he started to trot. I do not know what possessed me to urge my pony to follow, unless it was just the spirit of adventure that springs up in all of us at times. My horse broke into a lope and I could see that the animal was not in a fighting humor. I rode my pony right up beside him and taking out my knife I reached over and stuck it many times into the bull's back. I was fully satisfied that the wounds would kill him. Then I turned and rode home. I said nothing about what I had done because Father would surely have whipped me for going near

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the animal. Two days later one of our neighbors came to the house and said that he had found the bull down and that he could not get up. Said that his back was all cut to pieces, some one must have decided to get rid of him. It was ten years later, before I had courage enough to confess to my folks that it was I who had been the cause of the red bull's death.

A few years later when the Indians had become more accustomed to the white men and their ways they wanted to build houses like the white men and they would come into Lebanon from Coalgate to buy lumber. They would ask the white men how to build. We were still somewhat afraid of the Indians, all except Father or at least he would not admit it. One cold day we were all gathered around the big stove enjoying the heat. I was always known to get as near the stove as possible. Four wagons with several Indians came to the door and without any invitation walked in and up to the stove. In they came and the family gave way and let them have the choice places. They filled the small

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room. One of them told father that they meant no harm, they just wanted to get warm. They warmed their hands and looked the room over. We had five Angora goat hides hanging on a rope across one end of the room. These took their attention. Father had gotten them from some relatives in Idaho. The Indians wanted to buy them but Father did not care to sell them as we used them on our beds. They were not worth more than 50 cents at that time. So he told them he would take \$1.00 each. The Indians granted. I will never forget how one old Indian took a belt off his waist, unbuckled it and opened up a flap, <sup>then</sup> he poured out the silver pieces of money. Those coins which just slid out on the table so smooth and quietly reminded me of liquid silver. He counted out \$10.00. Father told him that was too much but the Indians said that it was not. The Indians then got out pipes and put some tobacco in them and each one smoked the pipe; they passed it to Father but he would not smoke. One man came around and told him that the Indians would not like it and would consider him not a friend if he did not smoke. Then he took the pipe and smoked

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and the Indians grunted in approval. They got some coffee from their pockets and made some coffee on our stove. Then they had some dried meat which they ate and this <sup>was</sup> all the lunch they had. After what seemed like hours to me they left, taking the Angora goat hides with them.