

HAMBY, MIKE

INTERVIEW

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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) April 12, 1938

1. Name Mr. Mike Hamby, A Pioneer,

2. Post Office Address Kosoma, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 12th Year 1856

5. Place of birth Lafayette County, Mississippi.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth Mississippi

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 4.

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Johnson H. Hampton,
Investigator,
April 12, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. Mike Hamby,
A Pioneer,
Kosoma, Oklahoma.

I was born November 12th, 1856, in LaFayette County, Mississippi. I came over to this country with my father and mother and located in what is now Le Flore County. My family came from Marshall County, Mississippi, but I was born in Lafayette County. It took us about two months to make the trip with our ox and horse teams. It was pretty tough driving, for the roads were not good as they are now. We stopped in Arkansas for several weeks on our journey and visited some relatives. Farming was our chief occupation. The first crop that we made in the country was made on an Indian farm, the owner being sheriff of that county, Skullyville County, Choctaw Nation, near Slates Crossing. We then moved to Clearlake Crossing on the Poteau River on the south side of Cavanal Mountain the next year.

In 1882 I married Mrs. E. Hamby, the widow of my half-brother, who had moved to Indian Territory from Arkansas after the death of her husband.

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Before I went into the general mercantile business at Kosoma in 1891, I operated a blacksmith shop for several years and I used to haul logs for Major Hackett's sawmill. From the time I operated the store I was a licensed trader, the license being obtained from the Choctaw Government up to Statehood. When the Frisco Railroad was laid through this part of the country in 1887, Kosoma became an industrial center. Major Hackett began to ship lumber the next year after the railroad was put through the country--some time in 1890.

There were at one time four big mercantile stores, two hotels, and a restaurant to accommodate a population of about 500 people. The Choctaws used to receive their per capita payments with more frequency than now. There were a good many Indians who lived in what was called Johns Valley, who used to do their trading at Kosoma.

I was appointed commissioner by the tribal government to assist in the distribution of their \$9.09 payment which was referred to as bread money and which put some money in circulation.

During the Civil War I was told that a company of

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Choctaw soldiers under Captain Thompson McKinney camped at Salt Springs about three miles north of Kosoma where they produced salt from the spring. The salt vats placed there by the soldiers still remain to this day. The cannon left by them was shipped to Fort Smith by a man by the name of Mr. White.

A legend that flavors of the early day conquest of this country has been associated with the immediate environs of Kosoma. As recounted, the tale told me when I first arrived there was that the deep pits found along the Kiamichi southeast of the village were evidence that Spanish explorers had a silver mine there, although no trace was found to indicate when the mines were operated if ever. Earth mounds here and there heavily covered by trees were pointed out as further evidence that those pits were dug by machinery. Human skeletons brought to the surface of Spirit Lake by fishermen dragging for fish gave rise to the belief that perhaps the Spaniards were driven into the lake by hostile Indians years before the removal of the Choctaws over the Trail of Tears.

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I was busy trying to earn a living when I first came to Kosoma and in a few years I felt as though I had always lived there; now I would not think of leaving Kosoma at all. I guess I am the only white man that ever lived in one settlement for fifty years. When we first came to this country there were very few white people here at that time. There were a good many Indians here but they were pretty well scattered, living in settlements several miles apart.

This country was a fine country at that time; grass was fine and lots of game in the country and lots of cattle out in the woods just ranging here and there without being disturbed by anyone. The timber was fine on the mountains.

There used to be lots of big yellow pine timber at that time but the sawmills have gotten that now and the timber is the thing of the past in this country.

I have a Philadelphia derringer more than one hundred years old which came into my possession in 1874 and is very highly prized by me. It shoots just as good now as it did then, and I have an old navy cap and ball sixshooter which I dug up while plowing in my garden but it is not like the derringer, it is of no use now but I am keeping it for a keepsake.