



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

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#12679

EARHART, J. W.

INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton

This report made on (date) January 13, 1938

1. Name Mr. J. W. Earhart, a Pioneer

2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma.

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

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 24 Year 1861

5. Place of birth Texas

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

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

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

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 9.

An Interview with Mr. J. W. Earhart, Antlers.  
By - Johnson H. Hampton, Investigator.  
January 13, 1938.

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I was born May 24th, 1861, in Texas. I came to the Indian Territory in 1881 when I was about twenty years old.

My father and mother lived in Texas and moved to what is now Antlers in 1904. I came over to the Indian Territory by myself and was living here when my father and mother moved to this country; they both died here and are buried in the Antlers Cemetery.

I had left home sometime before I came to this country and was working on the river; there was a small village where I was working just on the bank of the Red River.

I had been there working for some time; I was not married at that time and was working at any thing that I could get to do, and one day I decided to come over to the Indian country, but before I came over, I, with several men, was standing on the banks of the river when an Indian, who had been to Paris, Texas, with a load of groceries came along and got stuck on the sand bar on this side of

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the river. I decided to come and help him off of the sand bar, but I was a little afraid of him for we had been told that the Indians were bad people and that they would kill a white man on sight. I told the men who were standing by that I was going to go and help this Indian off of the sand bar so I went, but I was afraid of him although I did not think that he would kill me and scalp me, so I went down there and spoke to him and told him that I came to help him out. He said that it was all right so I helped him get out of the sand bar and he thanked me and treated me awfully nice. He could not speak but very little English but I could understand him pretty well, and instead of killing me he invited me to his home and asked me to come and stay with him but I did not go with him. That was my first experience with an Indian. He was the first one I had ever seen up to that time but I saw right then that all this talk about Indians killing white people and scalping them was just talk and there was no truth in it.

At that time most of the Indians went to Paris, Texas, for their groceries and they traded there for nearly everything they wanted for there was no store in the country around where they lived so the only place they had to trade was at Paris. I stayed at this place where I was for several months, then I finally decided that I would come over the river and get into the Nation, so I came across the river and started out afoot.

I caught a ride with a man who had been to Paris for groceries and rode with him. He was working for a man named Colbert out on the edge of the prairie and we got to this house just about dark. I did not know where to stay for the night, so I told this man that "I sure was in to it" and he told me to just walk into the house of the man he was working for - not to say anything - but to walk in and make myself at home. But I was not used to that kind of doing, but he insisted that I just walk right in; so when we got there I walked in like he told me and got a seat and pretty soon the man came in and

shook hands with me and sat down and we had some talk. He could speak English pretty well; he was a big Indian, and after while, it was after dark though, supper was announced and he asked me if I wanted to wash and he got me a wash pan and I washed and got ready for the supper. He then invited me to the kitchen where we sat down and I certainly did eat! He had all the good things to eat on his table. After supper we sat down and talked for a good while, then he took me to a bed room and told me to sleep there in that room so I did. When he started out he locked the door from the outside; I did not know why he did that. I was a little afraid then but I dropped off to sleep and in the morning he came and unlocked the door and I got out, and after breakfast he asked me what I thought of his locking the door on me; I told him that I did not know. He then told me that he did not want anyone bothering his visitors; he said that the officers had come there and taken off some of his visitors and that he did not want anyone bothering his visitors. The officers could stay

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all night if they wanted to but he did not want them to take his visitors away any more, so he decided that he would lock my door so that I would not be bothered by any one. That was my second experience with the Indians.

After breakfast he wanted me to work for him; he said that I could make rails for him if I wanted to and he would pay me \$1.00 per hundred for all the rails I could make. I asked him how many rails he wanted and he said that I could make rails for the next twelve months. I did not make any rails but I worked for him for several months; he had plenty of everything; he had lots of cattle, hogs and wild ponies out on the range and was good pay.

I quit working for this man and then rented a small farm and moved into a two room box house; I had no furniture at the time so I bought me some furniture and went to house keeping. I "bached" on this farm for several years; I raised corn and very little cotton for it was too far to haul it to have it ginned.

We had to take our cotton to Paris, Texas, to have it ginned - about forty miles from where I lived. I raised cattle and hogs but did not raise any ponies. In that part of the country where I was living there were no white people at all and the country was all wide open. The full blood Indians lived back in the woods; there were good many of them but they did not live on the prairie; in fact, there were no houses at all out on the prairie and there were few people at that time.

When I first came there the grass was as high as the head of a man on horseback and it was fine grass; there were lots of cattle and ponies on the prairie but the grass was so high that they did not hurt it at all.

I have been to Indian camp meetings and have been to their dances; they did not dance any war dances but they would dance the Virginia reel; the white people danced that when they began to settle the country and they then learned to dance the square dance.



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I have been to those dances when I was the only white man there; they were all full bloods. I was the fiddle player for them; they used to have good times. I could not speak to them very much and they could not speak to me for they could not speak English very much. Some of them spoke English pretty well, but most of them could not. And I have been to their "cries" and I saw several Indian ball games, but in the ones I saw they did not fight like they do in match games as it was neighborhood games that I saw.

I then left the farm and came to where Antlers is now; there was no town here then as the railroad was not built through the country. I lived here and worked around here until the railroad was built.

The first store that was put up in this town then was put up by an intermarried white man named V. M. Locke. Then an Indian named Coleman Nelson put up one across the street and it was not long after that until there were several little stores, and Antlers is a pretty good town.

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We had no courts in this country at that time for the white man; the only court we had was at Fort Smith and the Marshals came down from there to catch the criminals who were located in this country; then the Federal Court was established in Paris, Texas, but when the officers came out of that court they had a hard time catching the criminals in this country for the country was wild and there were not many white people in the country and what were would not try to help the Marshals and the country was hilly and mountainous any way so it was hard for the marshals who had to ride this country after those criminals. In 1898 a federal court was established in Antlers called the Central District; the marshals then were put out of this court, they had a hard time with the white people who came in from other states to get away from the "laws" where they lived.

They did not have any trouble with the Indian people for they did not do anything to be arrested for; if they got a warrant for one of the Indians all they had to do was to send him word that they had a warrant for him and he would come in and give himself up; they did

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not have to look for him.

I have raised my family in this town and all of my children have been educated here and have attended school with Indian children and have associated with them all their lives, but they have never had any trouble with any one of them, and I have traded with the Indians and built houses for them, and have lived among them for these many years and I have found them to be good people, law-abiding people, and just as honest as they can be.

NOTE--Johnson H. Hampton, an Indian, expresses himself in typical Indian style and no change is made in his manuscripts to better English. Ed.