

BIOGRAPHIC FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Planner History ~~Project for Oklahoma~~

ESTES, JOHN THOMAS.

INTERVIEW.

6662.

Field Worker's name Bradley Bolinger.

This report made on (date) July 15, 1937.

1. Name John Thomas Estes.

2. Post Office Address Wilburton, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) General Delivery.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month march Day 19 Year 1872.

5. Place of birth Tupelo, Mississippi. in Lee County.

6. Name of Father Charles Estes. Place of birth Alabama.

Other information about father 67 years of age at death.

7. Name of Mother Martha Gullard Estes. Place of birth Alabama.

Other information about mother Died at the age of 72.

Both father and mother were buried in Springhill Cemetery in Mississippi.

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 3.

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Bradley Bolinger,
Field Worker,
July 15, 1937.

An Interview with John Thomas Estes,
farmer and general trader of this
County. An Early Day Settler.

My father, Charley Estes, was born in the state of Alabama, and was sixty-seven years of age when he died. He was buried in the Spring Hill Cemetery in the state of Mississippi.

My mother, Martha Bullard Estes, was born in the state of Alabama and died at the age of seventy-two. She was buried at the side of my father in the Spring Hill Cemetery in the state of Mississippi.

I was twenty-one years of age when I came to the Indian Territory to what was named by the Choctaw tribe as Gaines County. I was single and just traveling around to see some of the Indian Country. When I came to this county there were very few white settlers. I met Miss Helen Bowers, a white woman, and she and I were married.

Along about that time there was three McCurtain brothers living in this county. I do not remember much of the two older brothers but I was personally acquainted with Green McCurtain, the last governor of the Choctaw tribe.

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There was a plan on then to allot all this Indian land to the Choctaw tribe. Many of the Choctaws did not want this to happen, they wanted the land to remain just like they found it when they came from the South.

I had a place that was located six miles west and one mile south of where Wilburton is now. That place was some of the outside land that was in this country then. The Choctaws along about this time held an election trying to decide how many of the Indians wanted this land allotment and were in favor of the Territory being accepted in statehood. There was lots of unrest here then. The more illiterate Choctaws were against allotment. Federal Judge Parker of Fort Smith had to send 160 soldiers all over the country in order to stop a lot of fighting and killing among the Choctaw tribe. However, the progressive clan won the Indian election that called for the land allotment and for statehood. All the records of these Indian elections were written in the Choctaw language.

In this early day there was only one definitely marked road in this country. This was an old stage road that ran from Fort Smith to the Texas border. There were two main

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stops in Gaines County. One was near where Red Oak is now located and another on a large mountain, called Mountain Station. It consisted of water and feed for the stage team and food for any passenger who might need it. The Indians used the top of this mountain as a burying place. It is used at present as a burying place for the white people who later settled around there.

When I first came to this country, when any member of the Indian family took sick and died, they just put their graves near the family cabin and then built a little log house over each grave. Most of these places have rotted away and many of the graves you can not even find because most of them have been put in farm land and have been plowed over for many years.

When this country was accepted for statehood, this county was renamed for a man by the name of J. S. Lattimer. He still lives in this county now. This man, J. S. Lattimer, was one of the first representatives to be sent to the state capital after statehood was accepted. The capitol in those days was located at Guthrie.

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You could buy land in this country then that was considered surplus land and was not allotted / ^{to} any Indian. I bought sixty acres of this land at a price of \$11.00 per acre.

When the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad came through this county and an abundance of coal was located there, many white people came to this county and settled.