

MYERS, C. A.

INTERVIEW

#12408

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

MYERS, G. A.

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Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton

This report made on (date) December 14, 1937

1. Name Mr. C. A. Myers, a Pioneer

2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 14 Year 1870

5. Place of birth Arkansas

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth Arkansas

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth Arkansas

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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An interview with C. A. Myers, a
pioneer, Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born February 14, 1870, in the state of Arkansas. I came to the Indian Territory when I was practically a young man. I came to the Cherokee Nation first, lived there for a while, then came to the Choctaw Nation and located at Albion, a small town on the Frisco Railroad.

From there I went out to a sawmill camp where I went to work at this mill back in what was called the Potato Hills. The sawmill was owned by two men by the name of Stump and Patrees and was styled the Stump and Patrees Lumber Company. I worked for them for about four years when they then moved their mill to Arkansas; I went with them and worked for them there.

Stump and Patrees then moved back to the Choctaw Nation and I came back with them and worked for them for a while, and then came on down to Antlers. My father and mother lived in Arkansas until their death and were buried there.

I wanted to come to the Indian Territory for some time before I did come. I had heard that it offered good opportunities for young men, so I wanted to come.

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I never farmed much for I have worked at sawmills nearly all the time I have been in this country. At the time I came, there was fine yellow pine timber in this country, and it did not cost the men that were running the sawmills anything to get the timber as they stole most of the timber from the Choctaw Indians. They were supposed to pay so much per thousand feet as royalty to the Choctaws but they got away with most of it without paying for it, and if the royalty collector came around they would tell him anything for the collector would not know anything about timber scales any way. In that way they sure did steal the timber. At that time the lumber was not worth much-about \$5.00 per thousand feet for the first grade lumber. They had no second grade lumber; what might be second grade they would use to fire the lumber kiln with which to dry the lumber for the planer.

When I landed in the Cherokee Nation there were only a few white people there, and when I came to Albion it was the same way - very few white people; and when I came to Antlers, there were not many white people here. At that time the town was very small, about three stores at that time. One of the stores was owned by V. M. Locke; one was owned by Coleman Nelson; and the other by Henry Almond. There was

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also a post office here and that was all that was here when I came to this town. They had no school nor church house either.

The only churches around were the Choctaw Churches. They had their churches and had their neighborhood schools but the white children did not attend these schools for a long while. Finally, however, white children did attend the schools with the Choctaw children.

While I was in the Cherokee Nation-I went to a shooting contest between the Indians who used bows and arrows. They called it shooting corn stalks. They would put up the corn stalk at about 100 yards from the line. Their arrows had long spikes on the ends just as sharp as they could be. The one who hit one of the stalks was the winner. I have seen them bet their ponies and anything they could bet. They did not have much money but they would bet all they had, and I have seen some good shooting with bows and arrows. When they turned the arrow loose from their bow it went like a bullet from a rifle. They had these shooting matches very often. I have never seen the Choctaw use bows and arrows at any time.

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I used to see the Corn dance and other dances while in the Cherokee Nation, but the Choctaw did not have that kind of dances; that is, I have never seen one of them since I have been among the Choctaw Tribe of Indians. I have seen them dance but they danced like the white people, a square dance, and they danced with the white people.

I have attended their camp meetings. I would go to hear them preach but I did not understand them for they preached in their own language but I would go to every one that I could get to. They would feed all that came there for the meeting. They killed hogs and sometimes beef and got everything ready; then they moved there and camped.

And I have been to their cries. Of course, it was a curiosity to watch them take on over the dead who had been dead for several months. They mostly buried the dead at the house where they lived and they would build a little house over the grave. They had their cries a few months after the funeral. They all gathered around the grave and cried. Nearly all of them would get down on their knees and cry. They all took part in their cries.

Our nearest court was at Fort Smith. The officers would come down from there after the criminals wanted in

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this country, and if they succeeded in catching them they would haul them in wagons or hacks back to Fort Smith where they were put in jail. Jim Ennis and a negro, Will Hale, would come down together. Jim Ennis would arrest the white people and the negro would arrest the Choctaws and negroes. They used to have a hard time catching the criminals in this country then. They finally got a Federal Court established in Paris, Texas, where they took their prisoners, and in 1898 a Federal Court was established in Antlers, after which all who were arrested in the central district were put in jail here at Antlers, and tried and sent to the penitentiary from here. They mostly was sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

I remember when Solomon Hotema, an Indian preacher, and a well educated Choctaw, killed three of his tribesmen for being witches. Some Indian doctor told him that those whom he killed were witches and that they were the ones who killed his little boy by bewitching them; so he took his shot gun, went out and killed all three of them. He then was arrested for murder and tried in the Paris Court and convicted for murder and sent to the penitentiary in Georgia. He finally was paroled and came home where he died just a short time

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after he came home. Some of the Indians still believe in witches to this day.

There used to be lots of wild game in this country. The woods were full of deer, turkeys and there were lots of fish in the creeks. Bears, panthers, wolves and all other wild game were here then. We could go out and kill a deer or a turkey at any time we wanted to. Some of the men would kill a bear back in the mountains.

I have been in this country for a long time and I have lived among the Choctaws most of my time here. I have never had any trouble with anyone of them. They have always treated me all right and they are good people; they did not bother the white people at all. They would fight among themselves and sometimes kill one another but they did not bother anyone else. And they were just as honest as they could be. You could depend on their word at any time. I think that they are about the best people anywhere to my way of thinking.