

NELSON, RICHARD.

INTERVIEW

7512

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

NELSON, RICHARD

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Field Worker's name Johnson H. Hampton,

This report made on (date) August 19th, 1937

1. Name Mr. Richard Nelson, (3/4 Choctaw Indian)

2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma.

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

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 14th Year 1884

5. Place of birth Old McAlester

6. Name of Father Simon Nelson Place of birth Near Tuskahoma

7. Name of Mother Rebecca Nelson Place of birth Near Tuskahoma

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 5

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Johnson H. Hampton,  
Investigator,  
August 19, 1937.

An Interview with Richard Nelson,  
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born at old McAlester on the 14th day of November, 1984; my father's name was Simon Nelson and my mother's name was Rebecca Nelson. My father was raised in Cedar County and my mother was raised in Jacks Fork County. My father was elected and served as County Judge in Cedar County for several terms, and was elected County Judge in Coal County, it was called Tobaksi County in Choctaw. My parents were both raised in the Choctaw Nation; they did not come from Mississippi. When I was a boy Father traded at Wilburton and sometimes at Harts-horne; these two small towns were coal mining towns and were located on the Rock Island Railroad; old McAlester was located west of where McAlester is now located, the new McAlester was named after J. J. McAlester who was the coal baron and who made the town of McAlester. I don't know where Father traded before these towns were established, but most of the Indians at that time traded at Fort Smith, so Father might have traded

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there with the other Indians. We lived on a farm of about twenty acres all in cultivation where we raised corn, peas, and potatoes and had a small garden where we raised beans, cabbage, and pumpkins and other garden vegetables. We lived at a spring which was called Boiling Spring; it was a good spring and the water was cold. It boiled all the time, and I guess it is still that way. We had cattle, hogs and ponies which ran out on the range so we did not have to feed them then for the country was open and full of grass and there was plenty of water for them.

Mother had a spinning wheel but did not have a loom. She would spin wool and cotton into threads then she would knit them into socks, mittens, and nubias. <sup>That is</sup> ~~that we~~ called it; a nubia is something that goes around the neck to keep it warm. Those socks and mittens were warm for they were thick and heavy. I don't know how Mother dyed them but she would dye them with something to give them striped colors and they looked nice, just like store bought goods.

I saw an Indian ball game between Jacks Fork County and Gaines County; they met on the ground that morning and

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before they got the game started some of them had a fight; they had about twenty-five or thirty on each side. Some were stationed out in the middle and some of them at each goal so that when the game started the fight started too. They used the butt end of the ball sticks for that fight. One end had a spoon shaped cup that they used in catching the ball and the other end was the handle but they used it to fight with. I remember that my father was riding his horse through the place where they were playing ball and someone took a shot at him, and came very near hitting him on the head, and did hit his hat brim right at his head but missed his head. I don't remember whether they finished the game or not for it has been a long time ago.

I have attended several Indian meetings; they would camp for the meeting and would feed all who came there whether they attended the meeting or not and their food was free to all who came there. They would kill hogs and beef and buy plenty of flour and coffee and sugar and then would go and camp. There would be several camps at those meetings; the different churches would camp and feed the people, and I have

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attended some Indian "cries". I did not want to go to them for it was too serious to me so I would not go to them often.

I did not know of any Indian Agency before the Dawes Commission was created and sent down here to negotiate with the Choctaws, looking forward to dividing their land in severalty which was called the Atoka Agreement. They finally made this agreement some time in 1898, then the Choctaws had a vote on it and adopted it the same year; we then enrolled; after that then some time in 1902, the Curtis Act came out which superseded the Atoka Agreement; then we had to vote on it. That is where we had a fight, but it was adopted by the majority of the Choctaw vote so we had to take our allotments under that act and in 1903 we began to take our allotments. After we had taken our allotments I found out that we had an Agency, for all of our papers came out of Muskogee. We might have had an agency prior to this time or it might have been that I just had never heard of it. I understand that it is called Union Agency, covering the Five Civilized Tribes.

We had our first payment some time in 1893; that money was paid out by the Choctaw officials; it was the \$103.00

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payment. Then we did not get any payments until after Statehood and then we got several payments and the last payment we got was \$10.00. we haven't gotten any more payments since.

I went to school at a neighborhood school for a few years. The neighborhood school I went to at that time has been out of existence for a number of years. I went to Armstrong Academy which was maintained by the Government at the time I went to this school but since that time this school has been burned down and there is no schoolhouse there now. I can speak English and can read and write it but I am unable to read and write in my own language.

I am three quarter Choctaw Indian; my father was a full blood and my mother was a half-breed Indian and the other half was white. We have lived with the Choctaw Tribe of Indians all of our lives. My father and mother died several years ago, but I am still living and right among my tribe. I now live in Antlers.