

NELSON, HATTIE PIERCE

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Hazel B. Greene

This report made on (date) July 22, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Hattie Pierce Nelson

2. Post Office Address Soper, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 29 Year 1892

5. Place of birth Nine miles northwest of Soper at Mudsand.

6. Name of Father Ed Pierce Nine miles northwest
Place of birth of Soper at Mudsand.

Other information about father Father buried old Colbert - Pierce Cemetery.

7. Name of Mother Belle Thompson Place of birth _____

Other information about mother Still living - Age 67.

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 _____.

Hazel B. Greene,
Interviewer,
July 22, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Hattie Pierce Nelson
Soper, Oklahoma

I was born at what is now called Mudsand, post office. Just a little way from there, at what was then called the Starr field. The old log house was said to have been built in 1837. I have a picture of it, and that was made in 1894, November 15th. The date on the other corner of the picture says that the house was built in 1837. It shows a story and a half, hewn logs, real wide, some of them were about eighteen inches, chinked and daubed with sticks and dirt; clapboard roof and puncheon floors in porch and rooms. The doors were made of hewn-out planks and it all was put together with wooden pegs, like the furniture that was in there when my grandparents moved in there. There is a chimney at one end of native stone. If one had been at the other end, it does not show in the picture. The rooms were eighteen feet square, the hall, too, was wide, and there was a long side room of boxing plank, which no doubt, was built on in later years, judging by the hand hewn material in the doors. When I lived there the windows were home-made hewn planks and slid

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into place. Some of them slid, and some were on hinges. Then mother had one small glass one put in. It shows beside the chimney.

That old house was always said to have been built by the stars, notorious outlaws of Indian Territory days, namely, Belle, Pearl and Henry, and perhaps others. I don't remember their names, because I was so young when people quit talking about them. I was born there on May 29, 1892. My father was born in the same old log house, was raised there, and died only a half mile away from it, and is buried in the old family cemetery there, that the Colberts and Pierces are buried in. My father was Ed Pierce, about one-eighth Choctaw Indian, and my mother was Belle Thompson, and she is a Chickasaw Indian, perhaps a little bit of Choctaw. She is sixty-seven years old and is living. Will be here soon again.

Old Indians tell us that we are more Chickasaw than Choctaw, but we are enrolled as one-sixteenth Choctaw. One could not enroll as of mixed blood. Had to be Choctaw or Chickasaw-or what have you.

Father died November 16, 1921. There are about twelve graves in that old cemetery and possibly six tombstones.

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My mother's aunt, Mossy Colbert is buried there.

In that old house where my father was born, were, when his father and mother moved there, high, home-made bedsteads with ropes across them, instead of springs. The bedsteads were made of saplings, for posts, and were the highest things I ever saw in the shape of beds. You could hardly climb up in them. There was an old home-made safe in the kitchen and flour chest and table, and several chairs. All home-made, like this one here. The chairs were ladder back, rope bottom, and rockers. This is the only one left, that I know of. It had rockers on it, but they came off and the posts have worn off till they are almost even with the rungs.

Grandfather Stewart, father's mother's father, said that all of that old furniture was painted red, when he got the old place. There was also a tall grandfather's clock on the wall, when he went there. I just don't know what became of any more of the furniture, besides this chair, nor the clock. It must have been several feet high. They were all there when I married, twenty-five years ago. (My husband is a white man from Arkansas).

My father's mother was supposed to have been a full

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blood Choctaw, a Stewart from Mississippi. His father was a white man, a school teacher who came in here, but where from, I don't believe they ever told me. Then my mother was Chickasaw and father about half Choctaw, yet they enrolled us children as sixteenths. I don't know where my mother was raised.

My Grandfather Pierce acquired that old Starr place somehow. He said that old field showed it to have been an old, old place when he moved there. His name was Robert Pierce, and grandmother was named Susan Stewart. Their children were my father, Ed, and Myrtle, who died when a child; and Lee. He is Robert Lee Pierce, of Hugo, who for years and years, I guess, thirty years maybe, was Deputy United States Marshal, from Indian Territory days at Antlers, to about 1932, or thereabouts. His health is completely gone now. He is also a Spanish American War Veteran. My father was always a "law" too. Just a deputy sheriff, I believe. He was a deputy under Lee Loftin, and then away back from young manhood, and he would be about seventy if living. He and Judge Tom Oakes were the "Daddy's" of the Anti-horse-thief Association. They held their first secret meetings at our house and Judge Oakes' house. He

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said that when they caught a horse-thief, and convicted him, he was usually whipped. Well, they whipped lots of them, and for lots of things. And it was the duty of the Sheriff and deputies to do the whipping. He said he surely did hate to whip a man, but had it to do or get it himself. I never heard of a woman being whipped. There were just not as many "wild" women then as now. But there was Belle Starr, and some more of her like, like Lou Carpenter, of the Carpenter outlaw gang. Maybe there were, according to the number of citizens.

My father allotted that Starr place. I'm sorry that old house burned, and I prize this picture of it, but would not permit it to be copied. However, I'd hate to lose it because that house was one of the most notorious places in the Choctaw Nation. Many raids, robberies and a lot of dirty work was planned there. It was nine miles northwest of Soper.

I understand that Pony Starr is still living. Let's see, that old house burned about seventeen years ago. It was vacant then and caught from the woods burning. It was about fallen down too, but I think it a pity that such landmarks cannot be preserved. Father always raised stock,

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and just a little corn for horses and our use, and gardens. He never pretended to make a living farming. He just ranched and was a "law." The cemetery is one-quarter of a mile southwest of the house. Papa never told anything about his business at home. Men would come there to talk and we were sent to bed if it were night, or off to play if it were daytime.

Father and mother used to go to the full blood Indians' church, there was one near us. I never went, but after I was a big girl, they built a church and school for white people, then I went to Sunday school, singings and play parties. And they had to be play parties, too. My parents were strictly religious.

The school was Big Springs, two miles away, and they still have school there. I went there three years, then I went to Tuskahoma two years, then to Durant one year. My eyes got bad and I quit.

Mother never cared for that old furniture that was in the house. It didn't look like anything to her, and I wanted to bring some of it to my house, but they talked me out of it. I was young and listened, but I am going to try to find that old clock. Very likely the old bedsteads burned in the house.

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Nobody cared for those things then, or thought of the historical value of them.