

HUFF, WILLIAM WAYNE.

~~INTERVIEW~~

9902 **152**

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

HUFF, WILLIAM WAYNE.

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9902.

Field Worker's name Ethal B. Tackitt.

This report made on (date) January 21, 1938. 1938

1. Name William Wayne Huff.

2. Post Office Address Mr. W. W. Huff, Hobart, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Hobart, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 9 Year 1876.

5. Place of birth Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

6. Name of Father Robert B. Huff. Place of birth Mississippi.

Other information about father Pioneer Miller.

7. Name of Mother Martha Turner Huff. Place of birth Arkansas.

Other information about mother Woman of unusual business ability

and firmness of character.

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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Ethel B. Tackitt,  
Investigator,  
January 21, 1938.

An Interview With William Wayne  
HUFF, Hobart, Oklahoma.

I was born at Eureka Springs, Arkansas, May 9, 1876. My father, Robert Burl Huff, was a native of Mississippi and as far back as I have any knowledge of him, was interested in the milling business.

My mother was a member of a pioneer family of the state of Arkansas, The Civil War coming on in her girlhood deprived her of the education which her people would have otherwise given to her, but the war experiences developed in her a very strong personality and the ability to take care of herself and any other person who happened to come under her protecting care.

She often related to children of her acquaintance the awfulness of her Civil War experiences near the border of Arkansas and the Indian Territory, one of which was of a time when the Pin Indians were reported to be on their way to raid the community. She, a girl of sixteen, went to tell a neighbor woman who had a sick husband who was home on sick leave from the army, also two small children.

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It was night and Mother remained with these people. The bushwhackers appeared at the door and the ill man sprang up to make his escape through the shutterless square window of the one-room log cabin. But the bushwhacker was quicker than the sick man and before the eyes of his wife, two little children and my mother, they shot him in the back and went on their brutal way, leaving them alone with their dead.

The woman was frantic but Mother remembered that they must make their way to the cave in the mountains where the women, children and old men were hiding themselves from the Pin Indians. But they would not leave the man unburied.

They knocked to pieces a rough wooden table and an old wooden meat box and as best they could fashioned a rude coffin. They placed the corpse in it and between them carried it out on the dark hillside, dug a hole in the rocky ground, and buried the husband and father.

Mother and the woman then took the two small children and a few articles and walked the five miles through the woods to the place where the people were fortified for protection. These early experiences made her a fit companion for my father, who was a typical businessman of that day.

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Our family moved from Arkansas to Montague County, Texas, where we lived until 1886. Then we moved to the Chickasaw Nation and settled about five miles east of the present town on Healdton, in Carter County. We moved in two big heavy ox wagons, on one of which Father had loaded his sawmill engine for he expected to establish a milling business in the Territory.

The place he picked out was called Scottie and there was plenty of fine timber near at hand. He put up the saw mill engine and equipment under a kind of shed and we lived in a tent until he could cut and saw enough lumber to build his sawmill. Then we all went to work to cut timber and saw lumber to build a pig pen house.

A pig pen house, as they were then called, consisted of four big heavy log rooms, set so that a space of several feet would be between each room, then the whole was covered with clapboards. This made a house with four large rooms, one on each corner, and a large hallway extending north and south, east and west, with a large open space in the center which was a delightful sitting room in the summer.

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He later installed a cotton gin and a gristmill and our family enjoyed a busy happy life.

There was a great amount of wild game in the woods; turkey, deer, squirrel, to say nothing of the "varmint", wolves, bob-cats and panthers. There was free range for all livestock and everybody owned hogs, so they could be used at will.

We boys hauled freight back and forth between our mills and Ardmore, which was a notoriously tough town in the eighties and early nineties. I knew the outlaws, Jim and Henry Bennett, quite well, also George Giddings who was killed at Longview, Texas.

The land on which our mills, gin and house then stood is completely covered now with oil wells, but we never heard of such a thing in those days.

Father sawed the logs and the <sup>men of the</sup> neighborhood built a one-room log school house. It was equipped with seats of split boards, three legged benches. These benches were only boards with holes bored in them and wooden pegs driven in them for legs. I never could see the reason for three legs. We had three months subscription schools in the winter.

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Father cut the logs, made the lumber and built the first house in the town of Graham in Carter County and before we left the Chickasaw Nation a lumber buyer came in to our community and told Father that he had built his house out of the finest of Curley walnut lumber as well as the frame work of the old sawmill and he offered Father a good price for the lumber in the old house and to build him a new house as well.

Father sold all the old lumber to them and they tore it down and hauled it to Ardmore and shipped it to the North for the purpose of making furniture of it. They took every splinter, as it was all of the finest of walnut and oak. Then they hunted out the old stumps and dug them from the earth. Then they built a new house for us and even painted it for us and put in a hardwood floor. I tell you this to show that people did not know the value of the natural resources which they so wastefully destroyed in the Indian Territory days of Oklahoma.

In 1896 we left the Chickasaw country and moved to Greer County where Father bought a claim nine miles northwest of Mangum, near Bill and Nash Racy's Ranch. We did

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expect to go into the cattle business but a few years later my father died and Mother, with my sister Mary and the two younger boys, Jimmie and Henry, moved to Mangum. My brother, Sam, and I struck out for ourselves and I have followed gin, mill and real estate as well as many other kinds of business throughout the past years; I still own property in Hobart.

My mother passed away six years ago and is buried beside my father in the Mangum <sup>Cemetery.</sup> I feel that they especially have done much toward bringing the state of Oklahoma to its present state of development.