

HILL, COBRAY.

INTERVIEW

6529

274

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

HILL, COBRAY

INTERVIEW #

#6529

Field Worker's name Jerome M. Emmons

This report made on (date) June 26 1937

1. Name Cobray Hill

2. Post Office Address Route 1, Box 46, Beggs, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) One mile North, one-third west
and one-half North of Beggs,
Oklahoma

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1840

5. Place of birth Fishertown, South of Okmulgee, twenty-five
or thirty miles

6. Name of Father ? Hill Place of birth Unknown
Formerly of Virginia - a slave

7. Name of Mother Sarah Hill Place of birth Unknown for
sure - thinks Tuskegee, Alabama
Other information about mother A slave

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 8.

HILL, COBRAY

INTERVIEW

#6529

Jerome M. Emmons

Field Worker

June 26, 1937.

Interview with Cobray Hill
Beggs, Oklahoma.

FAMILY

My sister said my father was from Virginia and had moved into Alabama or Georgia. Indians bought my father out of slavery or said that they would and my parents moved to Indian Territory with the Creeks about 1830.

Pink Hawkins, a Creek Indian, told me that my father had gone to California with him shortly after my birth. He was a wheelwright and carpenter and was killed there, I think, because he never returned.

HOME

I was born at Fishertown, twenty-five or thirty miles south of Okmulgee in 1840. Pink Hawkins, on his return from California, informed me of the date of my birth as he had known my parents well. Before this information was given to me, I did not know the year of my birth and still don't know the day and month.

Our first home was a log house and most of the furnishings were homemade. We obtained water from a spring and used wood for heating and cooking purposes.

HILL, COBRAY

INTERVIEW

#6529

-2-

EMPLOYMENT

I worked for my master, Elijah Carr, a Creek Indian, until after the Civil War. About this time I married and moved over near Miskogee at which place I raised stock, hunted, and farmed a little acreage for years to support my family. After most of the game was killed out, I just farmed; and of late have been preaching in the Negro Baptist Church at various places.

EARLY CROPS

Corn, sweet potatoes and pumpkins were about the only crops people raised around here when I was a boy.

FOOD

We ate the typical Indian foods as eaten by the Creeks when I was a youth. We also had deer, turkey, quail and squirrels. I used to have to get up early and go hunt rabbits for my master, so I lost my taste for rabbits. I would just bring them in and the women would prepare them, usually by roasting before a fire.

TRADING POST

There were trading posts at Fishertown, where Bill and George Fisher both had stores. George lost his place

HILL, COBRAY

INTERVIEW

#6529

-3-

by giving too much credit to people but Bill ran his for a long time afterwards. Old Agency near Muskogee was a trading post and there were others at Okmulgee and Red Fork, later. I have heard people talk of Shieldsville, but I was never there.

Gold and silver were the only money for many years. Scrip , tokens and bills later came into use. This must have been in the late ^{fifties} / or early sixties.

EARLY OKMULGEE

I remember a store and a blacksmith shop, run by Major Cramer and Silas Smith, respectively. Jim Parkinson and Captain Severs had stores there, also.

MARRIAGE

I was married in 1867 at Muskogee. My eldest boy was sixty-six years of age when he died last year. Two boys of my eight children are still living.

COUNCILS

I remember when the Council House was being built. I was a member of the House of Warriors for nine or ten years, just before this Council ceased to function. I don't remember

HILL, COBRAY

INTERVIEW

#6529

-4-

the year that the Government took over the job of ruling the Territory, but Sam Haynes was the judge and he was told by letter to wind up all tribal affairs then pending in preparation for the change.

ALLOTMENTS

Right after the Civil War, the Government asked the Creeks what they wanted to do with the slaves they freed. The Creeks said they had grown up with many of them and wanted to give them the same rights as themselves. In 1866, dumb rolls were made up at Fort Smith. I was put on the rolls at that time. Thus, I received the annuity payments and per capita payment the same as the Creek Indians. We have been looking for years for payments for land sold the Government but most of the old freedmen have passed on without getting anything to help them live during their last days.

FERRIES

Brewers' Ferry was on the Arkansas River and the Nevins Ferry was on the Grand River near Muskogee. The Leech's Ferry on the Arkansas River was north of the others named.

HILL, COBRAY

INTERVIEW

#6529

-5-

Clothing

In addition to home-made clothing from home-made cloth, the old Creeks used to wear buckskin garments but most of my clothing was bought in stores.

Their hair was left long, except in front which part was usually sheared enough to keep it out of their eyes.

CHURCHES

There was a Baptist Church at Brush Hill, where I lived before moving here and there was a colored preacher there and mostly colored people attended, but some Indians also came to services.

I have held revivals at Tuskegee, Brown Creek and Hollandsville. Saint Paul is the name of the Baptist Church about a mile east of here. It has been there for about forty years; I preach there now but the colored people don't show up at scheduled meetings, as the Indians do. I tell them they are children of the devil.

LIGHTHORSEMEN

Andrew Brady was a Lighthouse Captain and Thomas Grayson was one of the Lighthorsemen who helped capture the Buck Gang. Edmond Harry was the Captain then.

HILL, COBRAY

INTERVIEW

#6529

-6-

MISSIONS

Eufaula Boarding School was one Indian school; the Tallahassee Mission, on the other side of the Arkansas River, was later a colored ^{school} and there was another this side of Muskogee at Pecan Creek.

PERSONAL FRIENDS.

Most of the old friends that I had among the Creeks have passed on. Of course, I still have friends among the younger ones.

RELICS

I have a feather mattress which I am told my grandmother made. That is the only thing I have that is really old.

CIVIL WAR

I remember when they were firing artillery over Honey Springs. I was in Austin, Texas, when the Civil War ended. Major Scales, Dave Carr, my master's son, and I were hauling flour, which we had intended to try to sell at San Antonio when we were stopped north of Austin by soldiers. A man said to us, "What are you hauling and are those Government wagons?"

HILL, COBRAY

INTERVIEW

#6529

-7-

Major Scales told him who we were, but he wouldn't let us pass. He said, "I'm tired of eating cornbread I want some bread made of flour," and he had the soldiers throw off about half of the load from the wagon on which Dave and I were riding. When we got to Austin and told the mayor of the incident, he said "We'll see those devils in prison if they use so much as a pound of that flour." After military authorities were informed about it our flour was returned to us.

We heard rumors that it was dangerous to make the trip on to San Antonio, so we sold the flour in Austin. We got less, perhaps, than we could have received for it farther south.

When Richmond fell to the Federals, we were still in Austin. A soldier rode in and we heard a citizen say "What happened did Richmond fall?" and the soldier said, "Yes, an African General, with a silver saber, rode at the head of the army and we couldn't hit him."

GREEN PEACH WAR.

In 1885, I moved where I now live, but during the Green Peach War I was living at Brush Hill.

There was so much trouble with Isparhechar, I thought I had better join the warriors trying to stop him. We had one

HILL, COBRAY

INTERVIEW

#6529

-8-

skirmish with him at Greenleaf and one west of Okemah and I was still with Checote's men when we followed them to the Sac and Fox country. I was there when peace was finally made and troops were sent to bring back the revolvers.

I had taken a small caliber rifle and the others made fun of it. Some of them said that if I hit any of Isparhechar's men with it I might make them mad.

FORT GIBSON

When Fort Gibson was occupied by soldiers they sometimes found it hard to entertain themselves, they would go and get Sam Perryman, a Creek one hundred and thirty years of age, with one of the Government wagons. He would tell them stories, etc., and when they took him home, they would put a lot of groceries in the wagon for him. Perryman lived across the Arkansas River.