

SMITH, CHARLES S.

INTERVIEW

9468

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

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SMITH, CHARLES S. - INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name Robert H. Boatman

This report made on (date) December 9, 1937

1. Name Charles S. Smith

2. Post Office Address Blanchard, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 22 Year 1864

5. Place of birth Arkansas

6. Name of Father William Smith Place of birth Tennessee

7. Name of Mother Mariah Brewster Place of birth England

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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Boatman, Robert H. - Investigator.
Indian Pioneer History-S-149.
December 9, 1937.

Interview with Charles S. Smith
3½ miles N.E. of Newcastle.

I was born in Arkansas, October 22, 1864, of Irish and English descent. My father, William Smith, was born in Tennessee, and my mother, Mariah Brewster, was born in England and came to America at an early age.

I grew up in Arkansas on a farm till at the age of nineteen years when, in 1883, I came to the Indian Territory, settling at Stonewall, a place of two stores, then located on Boggy Creek in the Chickasaw Nation. The stores were owned by two brothers named Byrd, the older of whom became Governor of the Chickasaw tribe and the other, Frank Byrd, became Treasurer.

Frank Byrd, owner of one of the stores, hired me as a store cleaner, and the job was rightly named, for the fellow who was keeping store was too lazy to even wait on the customers.

After three days of very hard work the store was set in order, and the evening of the third day the owner of the store came in and demanded to know who had done all that

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work, stating that no one man could do that amount of work in so short a time. However, after being fully satisfied I had completed the job, the keeper was at once discharged and the following morning I was given full charge as manager and clerk of the store. This was the beginning of a new life, and it was with great pride and difficulty that I took over the responsibility of the job for which I had bargained.

At that time there were only very few white people in this section of the Territory and so all the trade was principally from the Indians of which none could speak the English language. I set out to master the Chickasaw language and after many days of signs being interpreted I learned their language, and after mastering the language I was considered among the tribe as one of their boys.

The Indians were very peculiar in their way of buying. They had very little money and when one wanted to buy something he would sometimes bring a cow to the store and bargain it for some given amount and was then given due bills for the amount. The Indians did quite a large credit business and always paid for everything for which they had bargained. The honesty of the Chickasaw Indians was

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to be respected by all men, although they paid mostly with cows or horses.

If a native of the tribe died, some of his kin would come to the store for money to bury them and then in a few days would drive up some cows or horses to the store to pay the debt with. They would never pay a debt to any other one except the person from whom they had made the purchase.

I was employed for a period of four years by Frank Byrd, then in '87 he sold out his store and in the deal it was so bargained that I was to go with the store. I do not know how much Frank Byrd received for me in the deal and that is the first and only time I was ever sold.

There I remained until 1900 when at that time I gave up my job as manager of the store and began my business of stock raising and industrial farming, moving and settling in what is now the northern part of McClain County, some twelve miles north and east of Blanchard. Here, by careful consideration and good investments, I have made a very good success at the business.