

JACKSON, H. LEE

SECOND INTERVIEW

13744 62

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

JACKSON, H. LEE SECOND INTERVIEW

#13744

Field Worker's name Gomer Gomer

This report made on (date) April 26 1938

1. Name H. Lee Jackson

2. Post Office Address Poteau, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

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

5. Place of birth _____

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

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 3.

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Gomer Gower
Investigator
April 26, 1938.

Interview with H. Lee Jackson
Poteau, Oklahoma.

I came to the Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory, in 1884, and settled in that part of Wade County lying east of Talihina and north of the Kiamichi River where my parents were engaged in farming in a small way.

Prior to the construction of the Frisco Railway through Talihina in 1886, the people of the area lived a very quiet and uneventful life and although vast forests of pine, oak and various other kinds of timber grew upon the Kiamichi River bottoms and on the Winding Stairs, Rich and Kiamichi Mountains, which bounded the area, they contented themselves with producing only that which they consumed at home. The fine timber had no commercial value at that time because it was impracticable to transport it by wagon to the nearest railroad point, Fort Smith, Arkansas, distant about seventy miles.

Upon the coming of the railroad into the area, bringing with it hordes of workmen, the people began to find a ready market for all the produce they could supply and em-

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ployment was to be had at good wages for all who desired it. Sawmills were quickly installed and placed in operation at points contiguous to the forests and these, too, employed numbers of men to fell the great trees, teams and wagons to haul them to the mills and other teams to haul the finished product to the shipping point at Talihina. The unusual activity brought with it a great influx of people, not only those who came to engage in honorable work, but others, such as card sharks, whisky peddlers and others^{of} that ilk, who employed devious ways to divest the unwily worker of his hard earned cash.

Gambling halls flourished unmolested, as there was no law to prohibit their operation, yet the greater part of the card games were conducted under the shade of the trees. The professional gamblers were not content to confine their activities to taking part in games within the gambling establishments, but provided with a piece of green felt cloth and a supply of poker chips, they would visit the camps of the workers and inveigle them into entering the games which, though called games of chance, could have been more properly called games in which the non-professional player always lost.

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It was no unusual sight to come across a group playing poker at the roadsides, nor was it unusual to learn that some one of these players were killed in a dispute arising out of these games.

It was impossible for the few officers of the law authorized by the Federal and the Tribal governments to wholly prevent the traffic in liquor. The mountainous nature of the area not only afforded hiding places for the illicit traffickers, but it also rendered it more difficult for the officers to intercept the peddlers when entering the area with a cargo of contraband liquor. A trick sometimes employed by the peddlers for the purpose of diverting the watchfulness of the officers in one direction while Confederates with a load of whisky entered from another was, that two of the conspirators would purposely effect a suspicious appearance and engage in acts which were designed to lead the officers to believe that they were engaged in peddling whisky. While the officers were engrossed in following and watching these two "red herrings" the real peddlers were busily engaged ^{the} in/dispensing of their stock.