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BAKER, A. J.

INTERVIEW

9725

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

#9725

BAKER, A. J.      INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Ethel Mae Yates

This report made on (date) January 18, 1938

1. Name A. J. Baker

2. Post Office Address Elk City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 1121 West 6th Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 18 Year 1872

5. Place of birth Tennessee.

6. Name of Father W. H. Baker Place of birth North Carolina.

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Nancy Baker Place of birth North Carolina

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

An Interview with A. J. Baker, Elk City, Oklahoma.  
By - Ethel Mae Yates, Investigator.  
January 18, 1938.

My parents were W. H. Baker and Nancy Baker; they never did come and settle in the Territory, but have been through on travels in the early days.

I came through the Territory in 1892 and, in July after the Run, came through with some friends of the name of Douglas Richmond and family. We started from Cloud, Texas, and were almost to the Arkansas line, were exploring and did see some sights. We traveled in a covered wagon and slept out at night; brought a bull dog along to guard us and we slept with our guns across our body but we never were bothered at night. I have wondered many times about it for we never saw a "law" of any kind until we got almost to Oklahoma City. We followed a trail along the Washita River and crossed that river a number of times daily, had to ford it and many times had to put on four horses to pull across.

We crossed the river the first time right at the head of the Washita River and came through Cheyenne when there was

only one dugout there and it was owned by the Thurmonds. We went on down to where Clinton is now and crossed the river, then on to Arapaho. I would estimate that the population was then about three hundred and there were no houses, just tents and wall tents. We stayed on the divide until we got to Bridgeport, there we crossed the Canadian River and met a white man who was freighting to Anadarko and helped him get across. We did not see another white man for days. We camped on the Canadian River and thought we would stay there several days and rest up. An old Indian man came to our camp and told us that their horses had been stolen and the younger Indians were hunting for them and if they came back without finding them they would be mad and if they found us there, they would kill every one of us. He told us that we had better move on, so we took his advice.

We encountered lots of Indians in our travels and saw lots of sights; just every little while we would come upon a family settling along the roadside with their covered wagons, there would be women and children and maybe an old grandpa to guard them while the younger men would be

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trying to find their stock. In our travels we never had any roads to travel on but winding trails, never saw a section post of any kind except between El Reno and Oklahoma City, and never saw a bridge or a boat until we crossed where the Arkansas and Grand River came together. The Arkansas River was muddy and the Grand River was so clear that we could see fish swimming away down deep in the water.

We went through the Cheyenne and Arapaho, Sac and Fox, Tonkawa, Pawnee and most all the Indian Nations; went to Tahlequah in the Cherokee Nation and stayed there three weeks. The Dalton gang were making their raids at that time. I left there and went to Coffeyville, Kansas, and was in the stagecoach the night they were captured. There was great excitement that night, some of the people just knew that they would be killed. The people that I was with stayed at Tahlequah.

One night while on our trip we camped near Oklahoma City, close to an Indian meeting which was being held in a little log hut. The Indians were singing in their own

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language but we knew the tunes, 'Jesus Lover of My Soul' and 'Near the Cross'. I told my friends that I was not afraid of the Indians that night.

In 1897 my half-brother, W. A. Vineyard, came out here and settled on a claim three miles west and five miles north of Elk City. In 1900 we came out here to visit him and had to fight fleas all the time, they were so bad that we just couldn't stay in the dugout. We came from near Amarillo, Texas; crossed the North Fork of Red River at the old Campbell crossing near Willow, and came around by Mangum. We came quite a ways on the Chisholm Trail and forded a stream between Mangum and Granite but don't remember what it was called. There wasn't a store from Willow to Ural and from Ural to Berlin. My brother took me out and showed me the country, which was almost desolate at that time for most of the Squatters had left the country. He showed me where he thought Elk City would be and where some stakes were set for the railroad tracks. We went back to Texas and never came back until 1913, we then came back to stay.

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I wanted to make the Cherokee Run but was too young. I had a neighbor who made the Cheyenne and Arapaho Run; his daughter made the run horseback and he in a two-wheeled cart. They ran from the Texas line down on Canadian and both got claims.

My half-brother, W. A. Vineyard, died here in Elk City three years ago last October. I have made my home here since 1915.