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CAMP, J. M.

INTERVIEW

#9312

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

CAMP, J.M.

INTERVIEW

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Field Worker's name John F. Daugherty

This report made on (date) November 27, 1937 193

1. Name J. M. Camp,

2. Post Office Address Davis, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location)

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 20 Year 1867

5. Place of birth Hunt County, Texas

6. Name of Father Jim Camp Place of birth Georgia

Other information about father Farmer

7. Name of Mother Fannie Calver Place of birth Mississippi

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 8

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John F. Daugherty,
Investigator,
November 27, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. J. M. Camp,
Davis, Oklahoma.

My parents were Jim Camp, born in Georgia and Fannie Calver Camp, born in Mississippi. Father was a farmer and hunter. He killed many deer and turkeys. He sold the venison halves for \$3.00 a pair to the officers at Fort Arbuckle, and dressed turkeys for from 75 cents to \$1.00 each. There were eight children in our family. I was born in Hunt County, Texas, February 20, 1867. We moved to the Indian Territory in 1869 in a tar-pole wagon. This wagon had no thimbles nor skreen but ran on wooden axles which were greased with tar which Father took out of pine trees. This wagon moaned and groaned as it rolled along. One could hear us approaching for miles. The wheels were fastened on to the axle with a linchpin to take up the slack. We settled on Zack Gardner's place on the Washita River at Rock Ford, northwest of the present site of Davis. There were about twenty-five acres in this farm, and was considered a large farm. Father raised corn and some wheat.

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There were only three grist mills in this part of the country. One was Byrd's Mill near Stonewall, another Harris' Mill on Mill Creek, and the third was Zack Gardner's mill on the Washita River near old Cherokee Town. These mills now all run by water.

The first thresher Father had was a pole pin thresher. There was a wagon sheet at the bottom of the pole pin to catch the grain as it was separated from the chaff by beating it with a pole. Later, the horsepower thresher took the place of the pole pin. When a family got ready to go to mill to have their wheat ground they usually let their neighbors know of their plans and three or four wagons would make the trip. The mills ground so slowly that it would take a week to go to mill if three or four wagons went at the same time. The flour was put in two bachel seamless meal sacks. When the people returned they brought back flour, shorts, seconds and bran. One day as Father was returning from mill at Cherokee Town a man, living between the present sites of Synnewood and Davis, stopped him and asked if he would sell

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a sack of flour. Father replied that he would, and the man paid him \$15.00 for the two bushel sack which ordinarily sold for \$25.00 a sack. That was the reason in the early days that biscuits for breakfast were rare except on Sunday mornings.

We lived in a log hut with a stick and dirt chimney and got our drinking water from a spring. We got our supplies at Denison, Texas, twice a year. Father would kill and dress a wagon load of wild hogs each fall, take them to Denison and peddle them for 2½ cents per pound.

I remember one of the Comanche raids. A runner came ahead of the Comanches warning the settlers of their coming so they could hide their horses if possible. Father put his five horses in an old log house. He lay at one door with a Winchester and a negro hired hand lay at the other door. They didn't get Father's horses but they did get the rest of the horses in our settlement. My uncle had one old mule left which jumped into a field and thus escaped. A posse came by, trailing the Indians, two days later. Father loaned his horses to four neighbors and went with the posse. They captured

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the Indians and the stolen horses in the Wichita Mountains. As the Indians and stolen horses went up a ravine they were seen by the posse from a distant ravine, and were surrounded before they realized anybody was near. The Indians were made to dismount, and the posse took all the horses. They left the Indians afoot and left their own horses at Fort Sill. They delivered each man's horses to him as they went along. They told the soldiers where the Indians were, and a company went after them.

There were many wild horses here and when an Indian near our home wanted a wild horse he would come after Father who was an expert shooter to help catch the horse he wanted. Father would "crease" (shoot through the top of the neck) the horse, which would fall as if he were dead. The Indian would rush to the horse and put a rope on him before he could get up.

When we first moved here the soldiers were stationed at Fort Arbuckle. The commissary was built of oak and pecan lumber. I had a driveway through the middle so that wagons could drive through and unload supplies. Its rafters were of hewed logs. It stands today but is used as a barn. After

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the soldiers were moved to Fort Sill, Fort Arbuckle was sold at auction to the highest bidder. Tom Grant bought it for \$50.00 because no one else would bid on it.

There were no schools here when I became old enough to attend. I only attended about five months, and that school was at our house. It was taught by an uneducated old lady whom we called Aunt Jane. She didn't know the letters of the alphabet, and so I didn't learn the letters. After that I began riding the range after cattle and my schooling came to an end.

We got our mail at old Mill Creek when Father went to the mill about every two or three months. It came on the stage from Caddo. Finally Noah Loel began carrying the mail from Fort Smith to Gainesville. He rode a mule. He had three mules; one remained at Gainesville, one at Fort Smith and the third one he rode, changing mules at the end of his route, leaving the one he rode and taking the rested one for his return trip. He was only fourteen years old when he began going on this route. He rode from Fort Smith to Fort Gibson, then to Okmulgee which was the capital of the Creek

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Nation. This was the last post office on his route until he reached his destination which was Gainesville, Texas. The mail was delivered to ranches and small stores along the way. There the people of the settlement for miles around secured their mail about every two weeks for it took Noah six days to make the trip each way. Instead of being addressed to a post office the mail was addressed to the addressee, in care of the store, south of the Arbuckle Mountains or in care of some ranch. High water didn't stop Noah. There were no bridges across the rivers and creeks and no roads to follow. He had only a trail to guide him and when he came to a river or creek which was too deep to ride through, he would put the saddle bags in which the mail was carried upon his saddle, remove his clothes and taking the tail of the old mule in his hands they would swim the swift waters together.

One day when he reached Hell Roaring Creek, northwest of Arbuckle Mountains it was on a rampage. As usual Noah got off his horse, put his clothes and the mail in the saddle and

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swam across. It was almost feeding time and there was a log house about two miles from the creek where he always fed his mule and ate his dinner. When he tried to stop the mule so that he could get his clothes the mule refused to stop, but went plodding along toward the house. Every time Noah got near enough, as he thought, to reach the much desired clothing, the mule would trot up a little and leave Noah without his clothes and so this race continued until the mule reached the house where he was to be fed. The mule walked up to his stall and stopped. Then Noah got his clothes.

A lad of the name of Robert Jones came to Pauls Valley from Arkansas during the '80's. He met a bunch of soldiers at Caddo, who were on their way to Fort Sill. Travelling alone in those days was very lonely, as it would be a day's journey from one house to the next, and there were very few travellers to be met. Robert was glad of the opportunity to accompany the soldiers on their westward journey. They camped on Sandy Creek, southwest of the present site of Sulphur one night, and the soldiers all died of the cholera that night, leaving only

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the teamster, Robert and two others. They asked the help of Indians in the surrounding settlement and they dug a large square hole and buried the soldiers before departing the next day. I was living in the Creek Nation in 1900 when an epidemic of smallpox occurred. The Government sent soldiers to care for the sick and dying. They buried the dead where they died, and burned the houses and all the belongings to avoid carrying the germs farther. I married Lizzie Colbert December 25, 1886, at Ardmore. I have lived near Davis all my life.