

VENTRESS, J. E.

INTERVIEW

#8113

310

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

311

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Field Worker's name Maurice R. Anderson.This report made on (date) July 28, 1937. 19371. Name J. E. Ventress.2. Post Office Address Pauls Valley, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) North Cherry.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 9 Year 1872.5. Place of birth Tennessee.6. Name of Father W. J. Ventress. Place of birth Tennessee.Other information about father Deceased.7. Name of Mother Mary Koonce. Place of birth Tennessee.Other information about mother Deceased.

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 4.

VENTRESS, J. E.

INTERVIEW.

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Maurice Anderson,
Field worker,
July 28, 1937.

An Interview With J. E. Ventress,
North Cherry, Pauls Valley.

I was born October 9, 1872. I came to the Indian Territory in 1892. My uncle, Tom Ventress, was living at Pauls valley, at the time and he was working in the store for W. J. Grant and he wrote to me and said that he would get me a job if I would come to Pauls valley. After I was here a short time a Mr. Paul, who was working for James Rennie in the post office, quit and I took his place. Mr. Rennie was the postmaster then. I had to go to work at five o'clock in the morning and wouldn't get off until about eight in the evening. I was paid \$25.00 a month, by Mr. Rennie. This was a fourth class post office at that time and Mr. Rennie received so much on the cancellation of stamps and money orders.

We had at that time four Star Routes, one west to Mussey, one to Erin Springs one to Johnsonville and one to old center.

There was a postoffice and store at a place called Hart; this place was located a few miles south of where Stratford is now.

VENTRESS, J. E.

INTERVIEW.

8113.

-2-

the route that went to Center went by the Hart postoffice and McGee postoffice. We didn't have anything but trail roads in that time, and that was why I would have to work until about eight o'clock in the evening as the route carriers would get in late and this mail had to be worked up and sent out.

Pauls Valley then was a distributing point for the mail in this part of the country, for thirty to forty miles around. Then all freight was shipped into Pauls Valley for other towns around, and the people would come and get it in freight wagons.

At that time we had no telephone lines and sometimes men hauling freight would have to stay in Pauls Valley two or three days waiting for their things to come in.

The business men at Pauls valley, Old McGee and Center had a telephone line built from Pauls valley to center by Mr. McGee, and this end of the line was located at the post office. We didn't have a switchboard. I took care of this end of the line.

If we wanted to call McGee we would ring so many times and for Center so many times.

VENTRESS, J. E.

INTERVIEW.

8113.

-3-

This line was a great help to McGee and Center because when freight came in for those places, I would call over the telephone and let them know it was here and in that way it saved the men from having to stay two or three days waiting for their things to get here.

The men who carried the mail on these Star Routes would use two wheeled carts or buggies—they used just as light vehicles as they could, as the roads were very rough to get over.

We had several little towns in that time around in this shipping area, that later were moved to different locations and their names changed.

Johnsonville was moved a few miles and the name changed to Byars. Old McGee was moved south about two miles and named Stratford, and this place called Hart was moved to Stratford and Old Center was moved to Ada, or the largest part of it was.

There are still a few houses and a store or two left at Old Centre. A place called Beef Creek was moved west and named Maysville.

For several years after I came here Pauls Valley was a large trading and shipping place. People from McGee and

VENTRESS, J. E.

INTERVIEW.

8113.

-4-

Center would bring their cotton to Pauls Valley and ship it and people from Elmore, Tussy and Beef Creek did their shipping and trading at Pauls valley.

Pauls valley at that time had a nice little school house, but it was a subscription school.

A United States Court was established at Pauls valley in 1895 and a few years later we taxed ourselves so much apiece and started a free school. We had the first free school in this part of the country.

There was no church house at Pauls valley, when I first came here. There was a church house about a mile south of Pauls valley. Our first lodges here were the Masonic Lodge and the Knights of Pythias Lodge. I was a member of the Knights of Pythias lodge. Both lodges held their meetings in the same building.