

COOK, JOHN

INTERVIEW

#9089

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

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INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name Augusta H. Custer.

This report made on (date) October 28, 1937. 1937

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1. Name John Cook.
2. Post Office Address Greenfield, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) Conoco Filling Station. south of town.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 14 Year 1854.
5. Place of birth West Virginia.

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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 4.

Augusta H. Custer,
Investigator,
Oct. 28, 1937.

Interview With John Cook,
Greenfield, Oklahoma.

I came from Johnson County, Virginia, to Missouri, then to Oklahoma. My parents died when I was about sixteen and I decided to be a cowboy so I went to Texas, where my wish was granted. I later bought a place near Greenfield, Oklahoma.

I wanted some of the adventures that I had been hearing about from others who had been out in Texas and Oklahoma. As my parents were gone, I had no one to tell me that I could not go so I went to Fort Worth, Texas, but there was no town there then. Just a postoffice and the big wide open spaces. I got a job with Jack Lyons, a big cattleman. They were starting to drive fifteen hundred and fifty head of cattle, Texas Longhorns, through to Baxter Springs, Missouri.

The boss, Mr. Jack, took a fancy to me, maybe because I was so young and inexperienced. Anyway, he shielded me many a time from the rough pranks of the cowboys. One thing he did enjoy was to see me dance and he took along with the camp outfit a smoke house door for me to dance on. Many an evening I would entertain the crew by dancing

jigs on that old smoke house door. No time when all the fuel we had was wet and we needed a fire, was the need great enough for them to split up the planks in that door to make a fire.

Some of the cowboys would pick a guitar or play a mouth organ for me to dance.

There were fifteen cowboys and we took turns standing guard or herding the cattle in twelve hour shifts. It was necessary to ride around the herd all the time on account of thieves. One time just before we left, the boss had to go to Sherman, Texas. He left a fifteen year old boy at the camp with me. The boy was a little over a year younger than I in days, but many years older in experience and knowledge of the ranch life. He ordered me around like I was a slave and I was trying to obey him. One of the older cowboys took me to one side and told me to stop that and the next time the boy ordered me to do something to tell him where he could go- that he would stand by me if the boy was too much for me. The time soon came and I told the boy to do the work himself if he wanted it done; that I did not care if he did it or not. I did not have to fight him as he could see by the look of the faces of the older men that he had gone far.

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enough. I did not have any more trouble with him. That did a lot for me and made the older men think more of me.

The cook, who drove a team of oxen and carried the food, made sour dough bread, cooked beans, salt meat, and made corn bread once in a while. We had dried fruit sometimes, and rice, coffee, and hominy.

We made about fifteen miles a day, as the cattle grazed along and the horses had to eat the grass as we went along.

The cattle would eat around until they were filled up, then lie quietly down. They slept and chewed their cuds until daylight unless something happened to disturb them. That was what we riders in the night were trying to prevent, a stampede. One time we had a terrific storm and the cattle "broke." My boss told me to get out of the way as they were coming toward me. He rode on ahead of them until they were rather tired, then he slowly rode around the head of the bunch and quieted them down. It took us all of three months to make the trip and that was quite an education to me, but I was satisfied that I had enough cowboy life to suit me.

Since then I have settled down on a farm and lived the quiet life of a pioneer farmer.

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One of the things that we did for amusement was to go to horse races. When we camped at noon or evening there was usually a race matched. The boys bet everything they possessed, saddles, bridles, gloves, neck kerchiefs, knives, cigarettes, tobacco. One boy had a small testament; that became the possession of everybody in the outfit at sometime or other before the trip was over.