

DAVIS, J. J.

INTERVIEW

9785

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

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INTERVIEW.

#9285

Field Worker's name Ophelia D. Vestal

This report made on (date) January 25, 1938

1. Name Mr. J. J. Davis

2. Post Office Address Lawton, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Route #3,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 1 Year 1862

5. Place of birth Belleville, Illinois,

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 _____.

An Interview with Mr. J. J. Davis, Lawton, Oklahoma.
By - Ophelia D. Vestal, Investigator.
January 25, 1938.

I was born in Belleville, Illinois, January 1, 1862, and lived there until I was about fifteen years old, at which time my family moved to Texas, near McKinney.

I was married at Sherman, Texas. I lived there for a few years. My wife was killed in a cyclone known to many as the Sherman Cyclone. A few years later I remarried and moved to this country October, 1901.

I was very closely associated with some Indians. My Indian name was Nini-nappa-watsa. One day as I had never clearly understood what they called me, I asked some of my white friends to please tell me what they were telling me or calling me. One friend spoke up immediately saying, "Uncle Jim don't you know that Nini-nappa-watsa means 'Barefoot Jim' in English?" I believe I can truthfully say all Indians I ever knew could be called my real friends. They have talked to me and told me things I would not dare tell others. My oldest son married Quannah Parker's granddaughter, Nora Cox.

I have helped dig several Indian graves at Deyo Mission. Once I was helping to dig a grave there and accidentally a man

hit my hand with his shovel, which caused it to be very sore and left a scar. It was not out of the ordinary to see several skulls when one went to the mountains. Lots of white people have been known to rob the Indian graves of valuables.

A brother of mine now living near Walters married a part Indian. He is well-known and liked by the Indians, always welcoming them into his home. He has helped rear and educate an Indian girl named Nona. Nona's parents passed away when she was small, leaving her quite a lot of land and money when she became of age. The next day after she was eighteen years old she kept asking to go to town, so my brother decided they would go. When they got to town she said, "Now I'm going to do what all girls do, I'm to be married and I want to deed you eighty acres where we have always lived". My brother would not consent to this. Finally she said, "Well, I'm just deeding you all the one hundred and sixty acres, that's all I can give you and I'm doing that before I marry".

I have eaten many meals with the Indians. One kind of bread they made was called 'ash bread'. It was made of

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corn meal instead of flour as they made grease bread, cooked on a campfire. They would make a big fire and when it died down they raked the coals away, leaving only a layer of ashes. They then spread their dough over these ashes as a hoe-cake, then spread a layer of ashes over this dough, then placed coals on the ashes. When the bread was thoroughly cooked it had a pretty good taste. The Indians would cut beef into strips from one-half inch to one inch in width and from four to six feet in length, hang this beef out on tree limbs or out in the sun for a few days, then eat it. The sun dried it quickly; I think that was the reason it didn't spoil.

I was sent a special invitation by one of Quannah Parker's men to attend a wolf hunt with Quannah Parker, some of his Indian friends, President 'Teddy' Roosevelt and some white friends. I did not accept this invitation because I felt I didn't have the 'means' to attend such a big gathering, although I let this Indian messenger who had delivered the invitation take my horse and saddle and dogs to use on the hunt.

I have helped load many herds of cattle for the In-

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dians to be shipped to Kansas City for market. All cattle were a brand and sometimes as many as thirty different Indians had cattle in one shipment.

I secured land from the Indian School Department to set aside for a poor farm for this County, paying one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre.

My father was a Yankee soldier, but I was only three years old when he returned from the War and don't remember anything except seeing him walk through the front gate.