

DAVIS, WILLIAM ALFRED. INTERVIEW 9738 397

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

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INTERVIEW.

9738.

Field Worker's name Ethel B. Tackitt.

This report made on (date) January 13, 1938. 1938

1. Name William Alfred Davis.

2. Post Office Address Lone Wolf, Oklahoma.

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

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 14 Year 1872.

5. Place of birth Missouri.

6. Name of Father James Henry Davis. Place of birth Kentucky.

Other information about father Confederate soldier.

7. Name of Mother Mahala Jane Fuquay Davis. Place of birth Kentucky.

Other information about mother Pioneer 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 _____.

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Ethel B. Tackitt,
Investigator,
Jan. 13, 1938.

Interview With William Alfred Davis,
Route #3, Lone Wolf, Oklahoma.

I was born in Missouri and my parents, James Henry Davis and Mahala Jane Fuquay Davis, were both natives of Kentucky. My father served as a Confederate soldier during the Civil War and moved our family to Grayson County, Texas, in 1878.

In 1882 we moved to Preston Bend on Red River and located right on the river just on the Texas side, while the Chickasaw Nation was on the north side of the river. Dave Tuna operated a ferryboat for crossing the Red River, also one that ferried on the Washita; we lived just across the river from where Washita River empties into Red River. We lived at this place nine years; there was a store and a school and many of the Indian families living across the river sent their children to the Preston Bend school as there was no Indian school near. These girls and boys came horseback, often crossing on the ferry as there was usually a great deal of water in both rivers. Abb Nobles was one of our first school teachers.

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I worked for Dave Tuna as a boy on the ferryboats and there was always a man on board to manage the tough characters who made much use of the Territory line, as the officers from Texas could not follow them into the Territory and were, therefore, forced to stop for assistance of the United States deputy marshals before they could make the arrest in the Territory. These tough fellows made good use of this fact, much whiskey was sold here on the line and there was good sale for bottles. I remember once as a small boy of taking a sack of bottles to sell down at the store when one of these exciting affairs came off. A young fellow of the name of Dave Mitchell lived over in the old Chickasaw Nation but he had grown up at Pottsboro in Grayson County, Texas, a few miles away and his mother still lived there. He was in the habit of going over there and acting the regular badman, then dashing back to the Chickasaw Nation but on this particular day he had been visiting in Pottsboro, then before he left he got drunk and went to the office of the Justice of the Peace and shot out the sign and the window light and got the officers after him, then he made a dash for the Nation, as usual. He came into Preston Bend and every

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one was watching the show; the officers got between him and the ferryboat but he made a dash and got past them before they knew it, then he went out just across the line and tantalized the officers, begging them to come out and take him and the officers became disgusted and went away.

I have seen many runaway couples married out on the ferryboat; they did not have to get license to be married in the Chickasaw Nation then.

When the white outlaws stole cattle and drove them over into the Indian Territory it was almost impossible to do anything with them and there was a very poor chance of getting the cattle back.

I remember once of a great flood coming down Red River. There had been no rain where we lived on the river and we had not heard of any and were taken completely by surprise. Dave Tuna had come over to the store to get some groceries and had left the ferryboat on the other side; people had numbers of skiffs that we used in passing back and forth. Someone called to look at the river and there the muddy torrent came rolling down many feet deep. It was useless for Tuna to try to get back to his family; he lived in a

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house on the Chickasaw side, but everybody rushed out to watch. We saw his wife and the boat hand bring the ferry boat as the water raised and load on their household goods as rapidly as they could and at last we saw the house wash away and go down the river, with other houses, trees, cattle and horses. It was an awful sight, the river swept everything in the bottoms away and we people who lived above flood water line searched up and down the river for days saving stock and anything else we could get from the mud and water. We found a calf that belonged to Dave Tuna that we had watched wash away; the little thing had a bell on and it washed five miles down the river. We got it out and took care of it until we could take it home and it lived.

There was then a ferry at Thompson's Crossing, three miles up the river where there is now a bridge.

When the Pottawatomie Country opened in 1891, Father filed on a claim seven miles south of Tecumseh, it had been opened by run but for some reason there was unclaimed land and he did not make the run. We cleared the land and built our house of the logs which we split and hewed, also made the puncheons for the floor and the clapboards for the

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roof all by hand. We built a stick and mud chimney and daubed the chinked cracks with mud as cement was not heard of by us at that time. We built brush and wormrail fences, plowed our ground with a wood beam plow, called a road plow with yokes of oxen. Our wagons were of the tar pole kind, that is there were no steel axles or thimbles. It was all of hardwood and tar was carried in a bucket hung under the back axle and smeared on very often to keep the wood from wearing. The wheels were fastened on with a linch-pin, that is a hole was bored through the outer end of the wood axle and a hardwood peg driven through it, so the wheel could turn and not run off the hub. We used a froe for splitting boards and later got hold of a hand-operated shingle machine with which we made shingles out of native cottonwood boards, this was quite an improvement on the clapboard way of roofing, but these shingles became dry and turned up at the edge and caused the roof to leak.

Among our neighbors was a Pottawatomie Indian preacher of the name of Steve Lononquet, who was a very influential man with both the white people and Indians. He was educated and a good citizen in every way; at that time he owned a large tract of land ten miles south of Tecumseh.

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When the Kickapoo Indian lands were opened in 1895, I had become of age and decided to make the run and get a farm of my own. It was in May of 1895 and there were hundreds of people on the line, which was a plowed furrow. Some were on foot, others on horseback but I had a light Spaulding hack drawn by two very good horses. I sat about four hours with my horses on the inside of the line, while I was on a spring seat that was in the hack and also exactly on top of the furrow. This was done to hold my place and to be ready to go when the signal gun was fired by the guard. I had lots of fun as well as did most of the people there. Before time some fellow would pop across the line and try to sell some article or water, I paid ten cents a drink for water to be handed to me, as I could not let my lines loose. When the shot was fired, we all struck out and when I reached the top of the first rise I could see streaks of dust five miles ahead of me. It was rough going over the prairie with no roads, bridges or anything. I started from about four miles north of Shawnee and I staked a claim, for I had a white flag and stake all ready for the purpose, then I went on to El Reno to file but to my dismay

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I found some one had already filed on my claim and I did not get any, but I was not the only one. I met some other fellows and we all stopped on the way home and went fishing.

I lived in the Pottawatomie country until 1908, then I moved to Kiowa County where I have continued to farm until the present time.