

BIOGRAPHY FORM

434

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

DILLON, JOHN H.

SECOND INTERVIEW.

9518.

Field Worker's name Augusta d. Custer.

This report made on (date) December 20, 1937. 1937

1. Name John H. Dillon.

2. Post Office Address Geary Route 3.

3. Residence address (or location) Six and one half miles north of Geary.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month Day Year 1859.

5. Place of birth Lawrence County, Ohio.

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 6.

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Augusta H. Custer,
Investigator,
Dec. 20, 1937.

An Interview With John H. Dillon,
Rt. 3, Geary, Oklahoma.

The settlers in Kansas were starving on account of the continued drouths. They were moving into Oklahoma by the dozens. I would go out to a turkey roost and shoot as many as thirty-seven turkeys and as I went to Lingfisher I would give them out to the settlers. Many of them did not even have a ~~gun~~^{gun} and if they did they often had no money to buy ammunition. One time a man named Shaffer and I went deer hunting out east of Watonga. We separated and after a while I heard my partner shoot. I knew him well enough to know that he would not waste ammunition. I heard no more shots and I kept wondering why he did not return but time went on and still he had not come. There was a rule that if anyone was lost or hurt and could shoot that these signals were given. I went up on a little rise and fired three shoots close together and listened for him to shoot twice and if he had done so then I would have answered with one shot and after that I would have tried to locate him. But I got no

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answer. So I returned to camp and then later went to the place where I had heard my partner shoot. There I saw some blood on a bush and I saw the empty cartridges that he had thrown from his gun. I also saw tracks of Cavalry horses as they were the only horses in the country that were shod. Then I knew that some soldiers must have seen him or must have heard him shoot and perhaps had taken him away to the fort. This was after the country had been posted for everyone to keep out until the run. If anyone was caught in there he or she was not allowed to make the run for a claim. They were called Sooners. When it was dark I built up a small camp fire and was seated there wondering, and watching for something to happen. I saw two eyes low on the ground with the fire shining in them. I looked and my partner spoke but I could not recognize his voice at once. When he said, "Don't shoot". And I said, "Well, why don't you come on up here and tell me what was happened to you?" He got up and came to the fire; his clothes were torn off him and he was dirty and worn out. He told me that as he shot the deer two soldiers came out of hiding and he had leaped off

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a high bank, and then ran for some small canyons where they could not ride their ponies. He was near a steep ledge and he dropped off anywhere and had to hide and seek with them until dark. When they could see him no longer, he knew that they would not shoot and he did not want them to find out who he was. He was sure a scared man and he was afraid that the soldiers had seen the camp fire and were hiding around there some place. There was trail which run right past there and soldiers going from Fort Supply to Cantonment would detail four men, two on the north side of the river and two on the south, and they were to kill some game for the supper in camp that evening.

I had a picture of the first Indian couple who were legally married in the court house in Watonga where the picture was taken and when I first came here the Cheyenne and Arapaho couples who wanted to marry would live together for two weeks and then if they were both satisfied the chief would pronounce them man and wife. It was sort of probation.

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I have seen as many as thirty-five hundred Indians camped right here where this house and yard are now, and when we plowed up the fields we found old butcher knives, guns, and other relics of the Indian camping ground.

Anderson Chamberly was a squaw man. He had many cattle and someone was killing them. He was determined to catch the thieves. He rode up into the timber and was watching closely and saw the head of an Indian disappear in the brush. He rode over that way and found four or five Indians had butchered a cow and had her cut up into pieces. He took in after them and they scattered but he got out his rope and caught one of them. He drove and dragged this buck into Watonga. The Indian's clothing was torn and his face was scratched and bloody. Chamberly took him up to a hitching post and tied him. It was customary to let every one settle his own troubles, so no one thought of letting the Indian loose. Chamberly went into the saloon and was drinking. The Indian was thirsty and hot and the Deputy Sheriff came along and asked what he was tied up there for. The Indian could not talk English but he made signs and the sheriff told

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him to slip off the rope and get away. The Indian thought that this was higher authority so he did this. After awhile longer Chamberly came out and found his Indian had vanished. He asked where he was and who had turned him loose. Some one told what had happened and then he began looking for that deputy sheriff. He was told that he would find him in the little board jail house and Chamberly went over there shooting up the town as he went. He called the deputy everything he could think of, and told him to come out but got no response from the sheriff and after he had tired of riding up and down the streets and had shot away his ammunition he went back home.

STORMS.

I was never in a cyclone but I have been so close to the edge of one that there was no air to breathe and it was so hot that I almost suffocated and I saw fence posts with wire attached floating around in the air, just above my head, but the cyclone did not get down to where I was.

Indians would start fires and it was very unsafe for freighters to travel across the country in the spring.

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The Government hired Will Frazee and George Cox to plow a furrow from Fort Cobb to Arkansas City, Kansas. They were accompanied by a group of soldiers who rode ahead and another group who rode behind them. These furrows were plowed one on each side of the old trails. Then all the grass was burned between the furrows. The freighters could camp in this burned strip without danger of fire reaching their wagons. The horses could be staked outside where they could eat the grass. These men drove four head of oxen each to a heavy plow and Will Frazee fixed a rude seat on the plow where he sat most of the time, when the plowing was smooth. When they had reached what is known as Hinton today, they camped near the head of "Devil's Canyon" and would let a rope down over the high cliff with a bucket attached and would get the best of water from a wonderful spring under the rock.