Form A-(S-149)

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

Field Worker's name Thad Smith Jr.

This report made on (date) October 9 1937

1. Name Mr. J. A. Dempsey
2. Post Office Address Verden , Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) 2 miles east of Verden
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 26 Year 1891
5. Place of birth Missouri

6. Name of Father J. P. Dempsey Place of birth Missouri

Other information about father Buried in Oklahoma

7. Name of Mother Julia Venable Place of birth Missouri

Other information about mother Buried in Oklahoma

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.

DEMPSEY, J. A. INTERVIEW. 8901

Thad Smith, Jr., Interviewer
October 9, 1937

Interview with J. A. Dempsey,
Verden, Oklahoma.

I came to the Indian country with my mother and father in the year 1901.

We came from Kansas in a covered wagon and we also had a horse and a buggy in which I rode.

Our covered wagon had an over-jet, which was a platform extending out over each side of the wagon about eighteen inches. Our bed and springs were made on this over-jet so that we would have a dry, comfortable place to sleep no matter how bad the weather.

Our supply of groceries and cooking utensils were kept in the bottom of the wagon beneath the over-jet.

Our food supply consisted mostly of bacon, potatoes, dried fruits and coffee, and our cooking was done in iron kettles and in Dutch ovens.

We carried an ax in the wagon to cut fire wood and we generally carried some wood in the wagon with us to burn on the prairie where there was no wood available. We also had a water barrel full of water.

Most of the land in the northern part of the state was broken up and was being farmed but the improvements were very poor.

I saw several flocks of quail and prairie chickens on our way to the Kiowa country but all the other game was gone.

A few miles north of El Reno we met several wagons full of Cheyenne Indians who had been to Darlington to the Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency after food supplies.

We crossed the South Canadian River, straight south of Union City, on a ferry boat. I believe the charge for crossing was one dollar.

My father got a job gathering corn four miles west of Chickasha and I rode to school to Chickasha on horseback. I was ten years old and I went to the Catholic school.

In the early winter we moved southwest about six miles into what is called Tony Hollow, on an Indian quarter. My father broke one hundred and sixty acres of land and disked it, then planted it in corn. That year my father raised ten thousand bushels of corn which he

shelled and shipped, getting about forty cents per bushel for it.

There was lots of prairie land but most of the bottom land was broken.

In the fall of 1902 and in 1903, I went to Freeman to a country school near us. My school teacher's name was Miss Jane Hendricks.

On August 6, 1903, I went to a celebration at Anadarko, celebrating the founding of the town. There were sports of many kinds, horse racing, ball games, foot races, fire works and a balloon ascension. The balloon was filled with gas from a fire made of pine with pine tar poured over it. This smoke contained a gas which would raise the balloon. After twenty or thirty minutes, the balloon was cut loose and it rose straight up.

Most of the Kiowas lived in small bands in a camp of tepees.

I knew one Indian named Guy Ware, who had two wives; one old woman and one young woman. The women went everywhere with their husband and they all got

along nicely.

The Indians' horses were small, tough horses and could run awfully fast for a short distance but could not compete with the white men's horses in quarter and half mile races.

There were lots of coyotes in the country and I chased and killed a good many of them with a stave and a greyhound.