

DORSEY, WILSON T.

INTERVIEW 10211

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LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field worker's name Robert H. Boatman.

This report made on (date) March 9, 1938. 195

1. This legend was secured from (name) Wilson T. Dorsey.

Address Blanchard, Oklahoma.

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe _____

2. Origin and history of legend or story Conditions of Territory
from 1884. Early towns and routes.

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____

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Robert H. Boatman,
Investigator,
March 9, 1938.

Interview With Wilson T. Dorsey,
Blanchard, Oklahoma.

My parents came from Tennessee to Arkansas in 1875 and it was there I was born June 3, 1881; then in 1884 at the age of three years I moved from Arkansas along with my parents to the Indian Territory. We came by wagons drawn by a team of horses into the Territory and as we entered the new country it then seemed very disappointing because what we had expected of it was lacking. All the streams had to be crossed by fording them for bridges were not known here then, and in some instances there was great difficulty in traveling and also some times danger to life was encountered. No roads had been established as yet. We traveled along and after seventeen days of weary travel we settled in the Chickasaw Nation on the Washita River, between old Erin Springs and old Beef Creek. Here a little log cabin had been erected on the second bank of the river and driftwood from the river was used for fuel. The drinking water was very bad as there were no wells at all and the

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drinking water was taken from the Washita River and I believe it was the most impure water ever used.

This was in 1885 and an epidemic of malaria broke out there and at least fifty per cent of the people died, and this epidemic was said to have been caused from the drinking water.

My first employments in the Territory were farming and stockraising. The improvements on the farms were very poor; we had only Georgia stocks and Double shovels for tools. The principal crops grown were corn and millet. Millet was harvested by hand and cut with the old hand cradle. Corn was harvested and picked on the ground; the only ones who bought corn and millet were ranchmen and corn sold at prices from 10 to 15 cents per bushel. The principal foods were corn bread and beef, with an occasional deer or turkey which were there in abundance. The trading point was Denison, Texas, and it required several days to make the trip so people then went to town only as actual necessity required. My education was very limited as the schools were poor to none and only about three months of school was taught during the year and this was done by subscription by someone

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drifting in from one of the states calling himself a school teacher. Then as soon as the teacher had taught for the time agreed upon the teacher would drift along to other sections.

Old Erin Springs was an old cow town located near the Washita River and was established in the early '70's, and it took its name from a very famous ranchman, Erin Murray, whose headquarters were located at this particular place. There were some three to four stores there, also a blacksmith shop and hotel which was owned by the old ranchman. This town continued to live till the passing of the ranchman, then gradually died and today all that remains for a landmark of the old cow trail town are the old stone walls of the home of the ranchman, Erin Murray.

Old Beef Creek, which was also located on the Washita River, was only a country store and a postoffice but continued to exist till sometime in 1902 when a railroad was built and a townsite laid out and then they began to build a new town which was given the name of Maysville, and the old postoffice and store were discontinued and old Beef Creek became Maysville.

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I remember it was back in the '90's that a route running from Purcell west to Anadarko was established and then a negro named Williams tied a log to the horn of his saddle and dragged it through the country which marked the route from Purcell to Anadarko. The old Fort Sill or Government Road came from Fort Sill by way of Rush Springs and Erin Springs, Stonewall, on into the Choctaw Nation to Atoka.

I lost my parents several years ago and they are buried at old Naples, an old Territorial graveyard in the Chickasaw Nation. I have continued to live in Oklahoma since I first came in 1884. I now live in Blanchard where I have lived for the past five years.