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ADKINS, A. F.

INTERVIEW

18943

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

ADKINS, A. F.

INTERVIEW

12943

Field Worker's name Hazel B. Greene

This report made on (date) February 12, 1938

1. Name A. F. Adkins, Quadroon negro

2. Post Office Address Hugo, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Hugo, Oklahoma

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month ---- Day --- Year 1882

5. Place of birth Paducah, Kentucky

6. Name of Father Simon Adkins Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Lucinda Dillahunt Place of birth Tennessee

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 eight.

Both parents are buried in Oklahoma.

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Hazel B. Greene
Journalist,
February 12, 1938

Interview with A. F. Adkins,
Hugo, Oklahoma.

We moved from Paducah, Kentucky, to Guthrie, Oklahoma, by train when I was about ten years old and lived there in town. I attended school until I was about sixteen.

I never saw so very much of full-blood Indians at Guthrie, only I remember seeing them coming to town in big squads after their quarterly Government payments. I think they were Kickapoos and Sac and Fox Indians. The main things I remember were the beautifully colored feather head-dresses that the men wore, and their gaily striped blankets and exquisitely beaded moccasins. Of course, I had no way of knowing, but the people told me that neither men nor women wore very much, if anything, under the blankets. The men wore breech-clouts. I don't know what the women wore. They told me, too, that the babies wore no clothes except the shawls that the mothers wrapped around them to tie them onto their backs to carry them. I do know one thing, though. Those Indians had their leader or spokesman-interpreter, and they followed after and stayed close to him like a bunch of sheep following the bellwether. Neither white man nor negro

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need try to get near them when they came to town and got their payments, because the Indian Agents and their leader cautioned them against somebody always trying to get their money away from them before they had had a chance to buy necessities. And the Agent and leaders of groups kept a watch over them too.

My mother's brother decided that he would claim he was an Indian, a mixed-breed Creek. He had so much white blood in him that his hair was fairly straight anyway, so he let it grow long and wore it in two braids with beads and bright colored strings and ribbons braided in them and a beaded band around his head. He got a big hat, wore a blanket and moccasins, and came off down into the Choctaw Nation and posed as a Creek-Indian. They called him Chief Dillahunty. That made him swagger and strut and talk big. He married a big old yellow negro woman who beat him up at will. She was left-handed and on the third finger of her left hand she wore a large ring, with the claws sticking up, where a stone had been mounted. She always tried to hit him in the face with that ring and every time she did

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it would bring the blood. He got tired of the beatings and quit her, and returned to the Creek Nation. He lived until about two years ago.

I came by rail to Goodland, Indian Territory, and began working around by the day for the citizens. I worked all around Goodland. The first white man I worked for was S. B. Willard. He was a paralytic. He could not walk, but would go to the edge of his high porch in a wheel-chair and slide to his horse; with a little help he would mount it and ride to just wherever he wanted to go. Sometimes he went in a buggy. He could drive all right. He was a nephew of Mrs. John Turnbull. He had a good place and a fine home about five miles northeast of the present town of Hugo, Oklahoma. He had a ten-rail fence, staked and ridered. He had a good place, and made a good living, even if he was crippled.

Next I went to work for citizens around the Goodland Indian Orphanage; Parson Gibbons, Mr. Elias Jacobs, and the Reverend Silas Bacon and others, just doing chores and farm work. Then I got to going on the round-ups and

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cooking for the cow-hands. Of course, I drove the chuck-wagon. Another poor old cook was Louis Nail, a Freedman. He had a stroke of paralysis and cannot even talk now. Another old-timer I think of was Gilbert Graham. He was a near-white negro, with perhaps some Indian blood. He was a progressive man and as well respected as any white man, because he was intelligent, honorable and upright. He improved his land and was a good manager and had lots of stuff around him, cattle and stock. He had a nice big house southeast of Doaksville and the white folks didn't think anything about going to his house to spend the night. In fact they sometimes made it a point to pen their cattle there when they were gathering them to ship, and wanted to get a bunch together before they moved them to the railroad. He was a splendid cowhand, and always had well-trained cowponies. About two years ago, one morning after a big rain, he rode away from his ranch-home, up on Little River. His horse returned with an empty saddle. That was in December. In March his body was found away down the river in a drift where it had been washed after he was presumably drowned.

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They just rolled him in a saddle blanket and buried him on the river bank where he was found.

When we went on a roundup, we took plenty of flour, coffee, bacon, onions, dried fruits and all kinds of beans and Irish potatoes. But I cooked some kind of beans every day and always coffee, for every meal and baking-powder and water biscuits. When I knew we would be in the same place next day at noon, I soaked my beans overnight. They would taste differently. If we were moving on early next morning, I cooked them at night. Sometimes I would drop in a hog-jowl, brought along for that purpose. When we stopped for the noonday meal, I put the beans to warm and made a mess of biscuits right quick. I got to where I thought no woman could beat me making water-biscuits. Occasionally we would camp where I could slip off and pick enough dew-berries to make a cobbler. I sliced cold biscuits and put a layer of them, then one of sugar, then the cooked berries, and so on until I had a big old pudding-pan full, and believe me, none would be left when those hungry now-punchers got through with it.

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Hay was brought along to spread upon the ground under the blankets for beds. Sometimes under the wagon, sometimes under the trees a wagon-sheet was stretched from trees to the wagon, or from tree to tree, to protect the sleepers from the dew and rain. Somebody always rode herd all night if the cattle were not penned, but they would drive to a late hour if there was a chance to pen them for the night. The boys who rode herd would carry French harps, and if the herd got restless in the night, they played the harp. That would quiet them. Every rider carried a pistol, and a long whip with a short handle, and about twelve feet of rawhide plaited together. When the cattle would stampede, the riders would shoot their guns, whoop and pop their whips, and ride around them in a circle; if they could get the cattle to circling, and the leader in the center of the circle, they could stop the stampede. I remember once we were driving a bunch of cattle from Johnny Wilson's place away down southeast of Doaksville, to Goodland station. They stampeded once before they got to Kiamichi River, and once after they swam them across the river. I didn't cross

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with the cattle, it was too deep for the wagon. I went up the river to a shallow crossing, forded, and joined them up toward Goodland in time to give them some dinner. The riders carried their whips coiled and tied on one side of the saddle and the lariat rope on the other side, and tied in such a manner that it would stay, yet they could untie it almost immediately.

This country grew wonderful grass. I've seen the prairie where Hugo now is, with grass stirrup deep to a big horse. I've seen it that deep right where the Choctaw County Court House is now. Coyotes would go loping across in that tall grass, and one could only see the tips of their tails. Mule-eared or Jack Rabbits would jump a little higher as they loped across. Along in the fall that tall grass would fall down and afforded shelter for lots of little animals and some not so little. Then in the spring when old settlers would burn off the old grass in order to give the new grass a chance to grow, many a little animal was roasted, though the most of them got away, unless the wind was very high. The grass was seldom fired when the

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wind was high.

Stock raisers did not burn all the prairie at once, they would burn a patch here and there. The stock were smart for they knew there was green grass coming up where it had been burned. On disagreeable windy days they sought shelter in thickets, also on hot days, until evening, then they would come out and feed.

The old settlers would fence meadows so as to have hay for winter feed. I cooked for many hay-hands, too. We began about June 20th and cut and baled and put up hay until about September 20th. Sometimes the hay was stacked in the meadow and sometimes the bales were stacked there and roofed over with loose hay to protect it from rain, until it was hauled away to barns or by purchasers.

Hay-cutting time was the time to re-fill the old straw or hay mattress which was under every feather-bed in the country. We knew nothing about the modern mattresses. If a family lived where no hay was cut, they would just go out and pull up dry grass from the glades and fill the old hay ticks.

Editor's note: a picture of A. F. Adkins of Hugo, Oklahoma, a veteran cook for cow hands, is attached to original copy of this manuscript.