

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

Field Worker's name John E. Daugherty

This report made on (date) July 19 1937

1. Name Thomas Jefferson Palmer

2. Post Office Address Davis, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Route 1

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 16 Year 1871

5. Place of birth Boone County, Arkansas

6. Name of Father G. W. Palmer Place of birth Georgia

Other information about father Farmer

7. Name of Mother Margaret Chambers Place of birth Georgia

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 4

John F. Daugherty
Field Worker
July 19, 1937

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Interview with T. J. Palmer.

My parents were G. W. Palmer and Margaret E. Chambers Palmer, both born in Georgia. (Dates unknown). Father was a farmer. There were six children in our family. I was born on February 16, 1871, in Boone County, Arkansas. I had friends living in Webbers Falls, Indian Territory, in the Cherokee Nation and I came to see them in 1887. I liked this new country so well that I stayed.

I got a job on a ranch belonging to Frank Vore and rode after cattle for a year.

One very cold night John Brown, a United States Marshal, came to the place where I was living and arrested me. I was just a lad, and they had a warrant for Tom Palmer for introducing liquor unlawfully into the Indian Territory. I knew they had the wrong Tom, but I went with them. When daylight came they gave me a good looking over and turned me loose. It was my uncle they were looking for.

He had a small log hut built in the cane brakes at the junction of the Arkansas River and Dirty Creek.

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There were portholes all around his little log-hut, through which they shot at anybody trying to molest them.

Each day a small steamer called the Winnie Mae came by. As it went west, it was loaded with freight, dry goods, groceries, etc., for the towns in the Territory. As it came back east it carried cotton, prairie hay, wheat and oats to Fort Smith. There was whiskey on this boat each day for my uncle who was a bootlegger. They always rolled it off down a gangplank and away they went. Then uncle and his partner would carry it into their hut and sell it during the night.

I went to a dance south of Webbers Falls one night and Belle and Sam Starr were there. Sam had decided to kill another Cherokee Indian across the logheap fire built in the yard. Belle was to tell Sam when to shoot. When the time came the other Indian was ready for him and they both shot about the same time, both dying soon after. That stopped the dance.

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I was acquainted with Tom Starr. I've heard him tell of his narrow escapes many times. He often evaded officers by hiding in a thicket and turning his horse's shoes with the conks to the front. When the officers got on his trail they went in the opposite direction from what he was traveling. I heard him tell once of being in Texas. He became a friend of a merchant and one day they went on a fishing trip. The merchant had taken some newspapers along, and during the time they were fishing he was reading. He suddenly stopped and looked Tom over from head to foot. Then he read some more, and looked at Tom again. Finally he said, "Here's a large reward offered for Tom Starr, and you are just like this description of him. Are you he?" Tom replied that he was not and knew nothing about Tom Starr. At last he asked, "What if I were Tom Starr? What would you do?" The man replied, "I'd try to help you to get away. I wouldn't arrest you." Tom would have killed him right there and taken the buggy and team

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and escaped into another section of the country, had he not answered as he did.

One evening about dusk a man rode up to Tom's house and he was sitting on his porch with a Winchester ready to shoot. He said, "Go back, get on your horse and leave here." The man replied that he wanted to stay all night. Tom told him he'd kill him if he didn't get away. The man ran back to his horse, and Tom said, "Now you can come back and spend the night." He took no chances on keeping some one who would try to arrest him, but he decided when one ran he was not an officer.

There were many Indians near Webbers Falls. All the merchants kept at least one Indian Clerk to wait on their Indian trade.

I married Minnie Fowler in 1893 and moved to Sorghum Flat, south of Davis in 1898. I have lived near Davis since that time. We have six children.