

PERRY, A. L.

INTERVIEW

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LITERARY RECORD  
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Worker's name Zaidas L. Bland

Report made on (date) April 29 1937

Name A. L. Perry

Post Office Address Duke, Oklahoma.

Residence address (or location) North Duke

DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 29 Year 1898

Place of birth Dallas County, Texas.

Name of Father Capt. Middleton Perry Place of birth Illinois

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Mother Ellen Ellis Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

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 5.

Zafidé B. Bland  
Field Worker  
April 29, 1937

Interview with A. L. Perry  
Duke, Oklahoma.

I was born in Dallas County, Texas, July 28, 1856 and in 1890 my wife and I decided we would like to try the new country we were hearing so much about in the Red River valley country where you could take up one hundred and sixty acres, pay \$1.00 an acre for another one hundred acres and establish your home in the little known fertile plains of what was then north west Texas.

We came to Quanah, Texas on the rail where we bought all the supplies needed for an indefinite wilderness trip and loaded them all into a covered wagon to which I hitched a couple of oxens and we headed north over the old Quanah and Mangum road. We did considerable wandering around before we crossed Red River and found a lot of squatters, who were full of enthusiasm and plans for a great development of the country. They seemed not to care whether Texas won the dispute or Oklahoma; it was the soil and climate which they loved and believed in.

Fifteen or twenty miles north of Red River where we crossed

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it, we came to the merging of four or five draws making a fair sized creek with running water that looked as though it might never go entirely dry as we were told that most of the streams in this part of the country did through the dry season every year. The banks of this stream had large trees growing on it, offering shade for animals and nesting places for birds.

We learned later that the stream was named Turkey Creek because of the immense droves of wild turkeys that came to the trees to roost each night to be out of the way of wolves and other night prowlers that were their enemies. We made camp and decided from this point we would investigate the lay of the land. In the branches of the trees sang, chatted and nested birds of various sizes and color. All the song birds common to our own beloved Texas were present, mocking birds, scissor tails, Spanish canaries, Baltimore Orioles, blue quail as well as gray robins, prairie chickens, road runners, wild turkeys- we could see them all in a half day. The water was alive with fish.

We selected a place a hundred yards or so from the north bank of one of the draws, plowed around our half section of land. South half of section 12, Township 2, North 23 west.

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We were just in the beginning of the Gyp Hill lands. I began to dig a hole in the ground for us while my wife busied herself setting up housekeeping in our tent because the very pressing need of my having the use of the wagon to haul rock. Our underground room was lined with white rocks very irregular as to shape and size which were commonly called flat rock and were of a lime formation usually referred to as Gyp rock.

Because we were so lately out from the railroad and had plenty of time to make the trips back to Quannah for more supplies but were really too late in the season to plow and plant, we found ourselves trading or selling our surplus supplies outright to the squatter families who were already in possession of their homesteads. I finished up my dugout with a large upper store room with rock walls and began trucking or hauling supplies from Quannah. We did not have a very well defined road nor a safe crossing over Red River but I had a stout dependable pair of oxen, a stout heart, a pair of willing hands and a wife who could be depended upon not to lose her head if I happened to be a day or two late, or a little twister of wind came along or a head rise or a big rain. Also, she was not afraid to be alone a few days and could when necessary attend to the store while I was away. Thus

started one of the largest and the very first general mercantile business in Duke. Many were the times I bogged down in the middle of the river and had to carry my load out on my back, which took many trips back and forth. Some times I would have to carry a two bushel sack of grain out on my shoulders. I soon learned to make a straw bridge before driving into the water if the crossing looked difficult. A straw bridge was made by pulling up or breaking off the tall native grass and sage brush spreading it before the oxen as they crossed.

I really enjoyed my work. I was surrounded by a people who were honest and sincere in their dealings and appreciated being able to obtain supplies without going miles to get them. The main traveled road both east and west soon came right by my door. Strangers stopped to ask questions and get supplies. I think I cashed checks from every state in the Union; I never turned a stranger down and never in my life got a bad check. Quanah Parker and his band of braves came across the river some times and usually attended all our picnics and barbecues.

Lone Wolf of the Kiowas and his braves often came over hunting and fishing and when they would come into the store, I usually hired three or four extra clerks to see that the Kiowas

paid for what they would pick up. They had a way of wanting to handle everything in the store and were not as careful in paying for them or putting them back down as they might have been. We dug a public well on my place near my store and built a horse trough. The Indians never trouble to ask for a dipper but drank from the trough with the horses. I soon traded my oxen off and got four large mules to pull my freight wagon. They were worse about getting bogged in the quick sand than the oxen but made the trip <sup>in</sup> much quicker time. From my store door when I came here you could look out and see plenty of cattle, some horses, an occasional herd of antelope and at night the coyotes call was always heard. I am still living on my land and part of my first stone walls are still standing.

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