

HILLEY, JAMES T.

INTERVIEW

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HILLEY, JAMES T. BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Ida A. Merwin

This report made on (date) July 12, 1937. 193

1. Name James T. Hilley

2. Post Office Address Perry, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) South 4th Street

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 13 Year 1871

5. Place of birth Georgia

6. Name of Father S. F. Hilley Place of birth Georgia

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Ada Dingler 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 _____

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Field Worker, Ida A. Merwin;
July 12, 1937.

Interview with James T. Hilley,
Perry, Oklahoma.

I was born in Georgia, March 13, 1871. I am the son of S. F. and Ada Dingler Hilley.

When I was seven years old my parents moved to Texas where I grew to manhood, and learned to be a cowboy.

In 1889 I secured work on the Suggs ranch, near Ryan. Later, I went to the Three Circle Ranch, near Henryetta.

After I was married I located in 1897 at Box. This was on the South Canadian River, near the crossing known in those days as the Tom-Ike crossing. There was no ferry at this place, the only means of crossing was to ford. Later, the bridge from Purcell to Lexington was built here.

A few years later I moved to the Q. L. Ranch, which was located near where the town of Blanchard is now. At that time a man by the name of Womach ran a store there, and this was used for the post office and called Womach. Later, the town of Blanchard was started about a mile from this store already mentioned.

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The ranch where I located was owned and operated by Bazil Swinney who now lives at Norman. I worked for him as cowboy or cattlemen as long as he operated the ranch.

While living at Box, our first house was a dugout covered with sod and what we termed rawhide lumber. This was secured from the sawmill near us.

There was a camp of Pottawatomie Indians near, which seemed to be very friendly and honest Indians. I found with my association with them, if a white man tried to be fair and friendly with them they were just so with him.

One very peculiar thing while I lived at Box was a saloon built in the bed of the river which was on piers, or stilts, and on one occasion when the waters were rising, the piers began to give way and the building began to topple over. There were several men in the building at this time. The hack-driver, Walt Bottoms, arrived on the scene about this time when it began to look very serious and there seemed to be no way other than swimming for these men to get out. One of the horses on the hack was noted as a good swimmer. The driver unhitched it and rode it in to rescue those he could.

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He succeeded in getting three men safely out but the others drowned and their bodies were found later on the sandbars.

Several barrels of whiskey were found later. A Mr. Clark, a neighbor of mine, found a forty gallon barrel, two years later on a sand bar, which was practically buried in the sand.

After leaving the Q. L. Ranch I lived in and near Enid, working as a cattleman for different men. I moved to Noble County about four years ago.

Although I am sixty-six years old, I still enjoy riding horseback and working with cattle.

Last Fall while we were transporting some cattle, we needed sand to bed the trucks. We went to the Arkansas River in the Big Ben country, in the northeast part of Noble County and while we were getting this sand I found a baking-rock like the Indians used to bake their bread on. Having seen these used by them in early days, I knew what it was and brought it to Perry and it is now at the Spradlin Oil Station.

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Mr. Hilley rode a large bay horse in the parade in the Cherokee Opening Celebration held in Perry, Oklahoma, September 16, 1936, and won first prize. His make-up was to represent a rider in the race for the opening in 1893, and made a good representation.