

ROBERTSON, J. L.

INTERVIEW

#8766

29

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

Field Worker's name Thad Smith, Jr.

This report made on (date) September 29, 1937. 1937

1. Name J. L. Robertson.

2. Post Office Address Chickasha, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 928 Chickasha Avenue.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 21 Year 1852.

5. Place of birth Kentucky.

6. Name of Father Jesse Robertson Place of birth Virginia.

Other information about father Buried in Illinois.

7. Name of Mother Harriet Key. Place of birth Tennessee.

Other information about mother Buried in Kentucky.

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.

Thad Smith, Jr.
Field Worker.

An Interview with J. L. Robertson,
928 Chickasha Avenue, Chickasha, Okla.

I came to El Reno in the summer of 1901 and registered for the drawing of a claim in the Caddo, Kiowa and Comanche Country.

It seemed to me that there were thousands of people there to register.

I failed to draw a lucky number, so I went to Lawton thinking that I could buy a relinquishment there, but failed to find anything I could buy, for the price I could pay. I went from there to Gotebo, and bought a relinquishment on eighty acres of land, one and one-half miles north of Gotebo for three hundred dollars.

After buying the relinquishment, I had two hundred dollars left ^{with} which to build a house and to have my land broken. The land was a mixture of black and sandy loam covered with a thick mat of big native grass.

I built a one room house on my claim, and then sent to Texas for my family.

I did not live very far from the north fork of Rainy Mountain Creek, where there was lots of cottonwood logs.

-2-

One of my neighbors and I sawed the logs into stove wood.

There were lots of cattle and horses in the Kiowa Country in 1901.

John Poole owned most of the cattle that ranged near Gotebo.

At one time, in the fall of 1901, several hundred Indians had a big meeting and pow-wow at Mountain View. There were several white men there who ran games of chance, and won some of the Indians' money. The Indians were not very well pleased at losing their money and they were already angry because the white men had killed all of the wild game, but the Indians did not make any trouble.

I never traded any with the Indians, but I met several of them who were allotted near me.

Some of the Indians had houses and some had tepees, in which they lived, in winter, but nearly all of them lived under brush arbors in summer.

The Indian children went to the Rainy Mountain Government school, which was about six miles south of Gotebo.

There was a Baptist Missionary Church on Rainy Mountain Creek, which the Indians attended. At this church a white man would preach the sermon which would be interpreted by an Indian.

The first churches which we had in Gotebo were the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches.

Most of the people who drew or bought claims near Gotebo were northern people. The majority were from Illinois and Iowa.

In the fall of 1902, I picked only three bales of cotton off of twenty acres of sod. The next year my cotton raised nearly a half bale to the acre.

Cotton seed was worth thirty-three cents per bushel, and cotton sold for about eight cents per pound.

The winter of 1902 and 1903, after we had burned all the wood we could get, we gathered cow chips, and burned them to keep us warm.

Some of the first farms that were proved up and on which patents were issued, sold for from one to five thousand dollars each.

I helped some of my neighbors sell their farms for which I received a small commission.

Later, I got an office in Gotebo, and sold a good many farms, receiving a liberal commission for each sale.

In 1902 we had a big rain that flooded the creeks and the river. It was a very little while. Many of the Indians had to hunt for the tea seed. We found the ground had, but after hunting for several days the little girls had to be taken out search.

I remember seeing some of the Indians wearing buckskin dresses but most of the men dressed in cloth with pretty shawls around their shoulders.

The Rain Mountain Indian school, which I spoke of earlier, is not now in use.