

RUMSEY, JIM.

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

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R. SLY, P.M. INTERVIEW 1980

Field Worker's name Delvin Stiles

This report made on (date) April 14, 1980 1938

1. Name Jim Atkinson

2. Post Office Address Atkins, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Atkins

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 18 Year 1870

5. Place of birth near city, Arkansas

6. Name of Father Ward Jackson Atkinson Place of birth Georgia

Other information about father near city, Georgia

7. Name of Mother Fing Gandy 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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Melvin Stites
Investigator
April 14, 1938

Interview with Jim Rumsey
Bufeale, Oklahoma

There were nine of us children in the A. J. Rumsey family. There were three children younger than I. I was but four years old when our family moved from Queen City, Arkansas, to Canadian Switch, Indian Territory, in 1874. Being so young at the time the journey was made, I do not remember much about the actual trip. We made the trip in wagons, of course, but I don't think any of them were covered because wagon sheets were not common at that early date.

The first objects to stamp themselves on my memory were our home and the furniture which it contained. This first Territorial home was flanked on the north by the rolling waters of the South Canadian River and a wilderness bound the other three sides, with a mesa eighteen miles to the north of us. Being poor people, most of our furniture was home-made; chairs, tables, and there was a bench out of a split log that stood on wooden pegs which had been imbedded in the bottom for legs.

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we got our water out of the South Canadian River.

My first playmates were Creek Indian children; in fact, our family was the only family of white people in this part of the country at that time. It was about 1880 before the next family of white people came. Everyone of us was treated by the Indians just like one of them.

Besides hunting and fishing, I played Indian ball with the Indians. However, we didn't play any matched games or at least I didn't. Girls and women would usually oppose the boys and men in these friendly ball games. Atop a tall pole -stuck on- was a cow's or horse's head. We used regular ball sticks. In construction these sticks were bent double, leaving a circular opening from three to four inches wide, five inches in length; strung loosely with buckskin to make a pocket for the ball. The handle of the stick was, of course, the two ends of the sticks pressed together and tied with buckskin.

The players in these friendly games played around the pole, tossing the ball at the horse's or cow's head.

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Each time the head was hit a number of points was counted.

Our corn stood in ten and fifteen-acre fields. The corn was used both for corn meal and sofkey. In our yard there sat what was known as the mortar and pestle. It was used to pulverize the corn to break it into grits for sofkey. This mortar was nothing more than a block of wood set up on end. A cup shaped depression was started with a foot adz and finished by a red hot iron. A pole, usually about eight feet long, with a heavy top end, was used as a pestle.

For making sofkey we planted a corn that is seldom planted now. The kernel of the corn was hard and flinty. This corn was placed in the depression on the top of the block of wood; the pestle was manhandled to break the corn into grits or meal. The grits were put in water and left to boil; lye was added and the mixture, after seasoning, was ready to eat.

My father was one-sixteenth Creek. I often went on fis. fries with the Indians. This sport was conducted in a distinctly Indian way. The tribe had a

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captain chosen by popular vote over them. The captain would instruct us the day before to dig out ten bunches of shoe string roots. After these roots were gathered, mallets were made. All the fishermen were to be at the fishing place before daybreak the next morning. As a general rule the fish catch and fry would be out away from the town; the entire town would go and most everyone would be on the bank waiting for the first rays of dawn, and when they came, the camp went into action. The men would spread out across a shallow point in the stream with stobs and mallets. The stobs would be driven into the bed of the stream with the tops on a level with the surface of the stream. Shoe string roots would be passed to the men. These roots would be laid across the stobs and beaten with a mallet into a pulp; the purplish colored juice would drive the fish loco. They would come to the surface of the stream and swim about in a crazy manner. No one tried to catch any fish until the captain said, "Kill fish." The youngest of the boys would catch the fish in the shallow part of the stream. The older boys and men

would go to the deeper part of the stream with bows and arrows. When a fish was killed by several arrows, the arrow which was in the longest ^{distance} /entitled the owner of it to the fish. Sometimes the first arrow to enter the fish would fall out before the fish was stopped. In such case the second arrow to enter the fish, provided it remained, gave the owner the right to the fish.

Identification marks were placed on the arrows. The women and girls would prepare the fish to be eaten.

In 1882 we moved across the South Canadian to the North Canadian about sixteen miles northwest of Aupaala.

They had fiddle dances. They were danced somewhat differently from the country square dances of today. The boys and girls would line up facing each other. When the fiddle music started, the boy and girl first in line would start jigging or shuffling, you might call it. When the caller called, "Swing," the boy and girl would do so; then the two hand in hand would skip between the two lines to the lower end. The next two would do the same thing, until each couple

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in the line had danced.

I often attended the Indian Stomp dances. In fact, the Indians thought it something of a slight if some white people didn't attend their Stomp dances. I recall a particular Stomp dance which going to almost cost me my life.

One summer night five other boys and I - three of the boys were my brothers and two were Indian boys - started for a Stomp dance that was being held out west of Eufaula. I was about eighteen years old at the time. When we boys were something like a quarter of a mile from the Stomp ground, we heard shooting. When we got there we found the Indians all bunched up together. The other boys stayed with their horses but I wanted to see what was taking place. I elbowed my way through the crowd until I was close enough to see and hear.

March Thompson, speaker of the Stomp dance, was talking. I saw him motion toward Bunny McIntosh, middle aged Indian, and I heard him say, "All this is your fault." Bunny turned to him and asked, "Who? Me?" He had no more than done so than a man on a sorrel horse flashed by the edge of the crowd. The man dismounted and made his way

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toward Bunny; I recognized him as Wesley Barnett, Indian desperado. He had his gun in his hand. He took Bunny by the collar and spoke to him in a voice full of threat. They began to tussle. I was so engrossed in trying to figure out what it was all about that I didn't notice the crowd scattering, leaving me to referee the fight, as it were. However, Barnett's gun went off and so did I. I struck out in the general direction of my home. I hadn't run far, when I almost caught up with an old squaw hoppin' 'long fast as she could go. She looked back over her shoulder, saw me and, I guess, thought me to be one of the gunmen. Anyway she started hollerin' at the top of her voice. To relieve her of this worry I picked up a little more speed and passed her up. The other boys were waiting on me. We mounted and "beat it" for home. It was the next morning before I understood just what had happened.

It seems two United States marshals had come into Lufaula on the probability of finding Ute Sonley and Wesley and Cheesy Barnett, outlaws. The "laws" had hired Bunny McIntosh to spy for them. Bunny saw the

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three outlaws at the big spring that supplied the Stomp ground with water. He told the "laws" and they laid in wait. When the outlaws rode up, the "laws" opened fire, killing Cheesy Barnett. The outlaws returned the fire, killing both of the United States marshals. It was later told that Bunny McIntosh, in makin his get-away, walked a foot log across the North Canadian River.