

~~SMITH, JIM M.~~

~~INTERVIEW~~

10098

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

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Field Worker's name Ethel B. Tackitt.

This report made on (date) February 28, 1938. 193

1. Name Jim M. Smith.

2. Post Office Address Hobart, Kiowa County, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Monroe Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 2 Year 1851.

5. Place of birth Benton County, Arkansas.

6. Name of Father Casey M. Smith. Place of birth Arkansas.

Other information about father Confederate soldier.

7. Name of Mother Smith. Place of birth Arkansas.

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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Ethel B. Tackitt,  
Investigator,  
Feb. 28, 1974

Interview With Jim M. Smith,  
Hobart, Oklahoma

I was born in Benton, Grant, Arkansas December 5, 1851. My parents were natives of Arkansas and their forefathers were born in Washington County. As we live so near the line of the Indian Territory, I grew up knowing much of the country and the people both white and Indian. Our family lived on a farm and we lived as did the other people of that time. Mother making our own clothing, spinning and weaving; Father making our own shoes and mending our simple farming implements. We had a fine orchard and lots of apples.

I clearly remember the Civil War times, both before and during the time, for I was ten years old and the war made men and women out of children in a short time. My father was a Confederate soldier and belonged to Quantrill's band. He was under Buck Brown's command and I have the honor of remembering seeing General Price and carrying a message to him from Quantrill after the battle of Pea Ridge,

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Arkansas, in 1862. It came about in this way: The  
Federals had laid a trap to catch some of the Confederates  
at Fisher's Ford and the plan was discovered by some of  
Quantrill's men, who reported the fact. The region was  
under heavy guard of the Union Army and the country was  
full of Yanks. It seemed impossible for a message to get  
through to warn the Confederates of this trap. I was  
among these men of Quantrill's and Buck Brown's all the  
time, for my father was there and I had been well trained  
in the art of keeping my mouth shut. I knew the danger to  
me and to my people and I well understood what would happen  
to any of these men if they should happen to be caught by  
the Yankee Army, also I wanted the Confederate soldiers to  
get out. Quantrill asked my father if he would permit me  
to attempt to take a message to General Price and Father  
said if I was willing to try he would give his permission.  
I was frightened, as any boy would have been, but I was  
willing to make the effort because I knew that a man could  
not go through the country so guarded by Yankees and I  
did not want them to trap the Confederate soldiers. So  
I listened to the instructions given me while they sewed

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a patch on the hip of my homespun breeches, under which was concealed the message from Quantrill to General Price. This was not the only patch on my clothes for I was ragged and barefooted, not for disguise but because I went that way from necessity. They told me where to expect to find the outpost and what I should do when I saw them. They also told me to make my way among the Yankee soldiers, if it came necessary, just like the Arkansas boy that I was. I was well acquainted with the rough country over which I had to go. I set out with all the misgivings of a boy on such an errand. Walking was not so bad, for I was accustomed to it, also to looking out for myself, but when I came across Yankee soldiers and they bantered me like they would any local boy, I felt awfully small and said nothing but went on my way, and not one time on the forty-two miles, did anybody stop me to search me or seem to suspicion that I was any other than a local boy trudging along the path. My hardest test came when I reached the outpost, I saw six men riding on horses toward me and I thought that they were Confederates but I was so scared and frightened I was not sure, so I hid myself in the old

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brush pile and let the people take two more men  
 some riding that was on the top that had some  
 things. I could not stay hidden there. Some of  
 an when the steamer took her from me to General  
 Price's Army. On the 10th of the month we went  
 up on a boat to wait for General Price. He  
 told me that he had reached down on the 10th of  
 the month. After we held on for a few days we  
 General Price's headquarters. He told me that the General,  
 who was with us, was showing us the way to  
 break through the lines of the Yankees. We  
 had to go through the rough Arkansas country. It was several weeks before  
 we felt recovered from the hardships. I learned later that  
 the Confederate soldiers went through the Indian Territory  
 by way of Fort Gibson and this was not surprised by the  
 Yankees at the head of Fisher's for Joseph Tabeau.

After the close of the Civil War, my father's farm  
 was confiscated and he moved our family to Texas, where  
 we lived until conditions became more settled and he had  
 made a little money, then we came back through the Indian

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The next fall, Father, ... three-mile team and  
 a wagon loaded with Kentucky ...  
 apples through the Indian Territory by way of Fort Gibson  
 trail to Texas and sold the apples at the rate of from 75  
 cents to \$1.75 per bushel; we made a good deal of money.  
 The following fall we bought four wagons and four mule teams  
 and, with eight other young fellows, went back over the  
 same trail with these four loads of apples. We went by  
 way of Fort Gibson, Boggy Depot and Colbert's Ferry. The  
 reason for so many going along was that it was not safe  
 to be alone on account of renegade bands and we had to

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stand guard at night to keep our mules from being stolen. That time we sold all of our apples, then sold all the mules and wagons except one to go back home in, and the way we received payment <sup>was</sup> in gold, since for gold we could get ten cents on the dollar value from the state as the war debt had to be paid in gold. On the return trip we had to watch out for robbers sure enough. At Colbert's Ferry we had to pay one dollar to cross with a wagon and a team of two mules and for four to six mules we had to pay \$1.75 each way. Bringing the money back at last became too much risk, <sup>so</sup> we began selling our wagons and teams. It became a community business of freighting goods to Texas, sometimes there would be ten or twelve wagon loads. We would buy longhorn Texas steers and drive them back through the Indian Territory and feed them until fat on the cheap corn grown in that part of the country. After which we would drive them to Fort Scott, Kansas, and sell them to be shipped to the Northern market. I made seventeen trips of this kind over this Old Fort Gibson trail up until the time I was married, after which I did not go so often.



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I have been over the present state of Oklahoma a good deal in these ~~eighty-six~~ years and I believe that Abe Lincoln would have done more for the people than any other President if they had not killed him.