

SMITH, THAD, SR.,

INTERVIEW

1325

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BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

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Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

SMITH, THAD, SR.

INTERVIEW

1325

Field Worker's name Thad Smith Jr.

This report made on (date) April 20 1937

1. Name Mr. Thad Smith, Sr.,

2. Post Office Address Chickasha

3. Residence address (or location) 4 1/2 miles southwest

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 7 Year 1858

5. Place of birth Alabama

6. Name of Father James Smith Place of birth Alabama

Other information about father Buried in Alabama

7. Name of Mother Sarah Ann Savage Place of birth Alabama

Other information about mother Buried in Texas

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 _____

Thad Smith, Jr.,
Interviewer
April 20, 1937

Interview with
Mr. Thad Smith, Sr.,
Chickasha, Okla.

I came to Indian Territory in the year 1881, crossing Red River, or rather fording it at Jim Town. I landed at Burneyville, where I got a job from Dr. W. H. Minter, clerking in his general mercantile store.

The supplies for the store were freighted from Gainesville, Texas, with wagon and team. The store building was a frame structure, the lumber for which had been hauled from Gainesville, Texas.

About every month or two Dr. Minter would send me out horseback to collect doctor bills and store bills. Once when I was out collecting, I was riding along the road about six or seven miles south of Healdton when I saw a horse grazing around with saddle and bridle on. I rode off the road to look at the horse and when I got near I saw three men hanging to a post oak tree. It sure did give me a creepy feeling. Later I found out that they had been hung because they were either horse-thieves, or were harboring horse-thieves. One of the fellows was only sixteen years old.

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I worked for Dr. Minter for four years and never did hear who the men were who did the hanging.

In 1885 I came North with three thousand head of steers, belonging to Gunter, Gunter and Isaacs, branded J T anchor. We brought the steers to Cache Creek near Fort Sill, where the grass was very good. After the

cattle were located, we went back to Burneyville and brought three thousand more and later we made a third trip with three thousand more. The reason for making so many trips was on account of not being able to handle more than three thousand in one herd.

In 1886 we started to Kansas with around three thousand head of steers. There were seven men driving this herd, besides our cook. We had seven horses each. We used one horse exclusively for night, guarding the cattle, and we always changed horses at noon, using two horses each day.

We started North with these cattle in the spring just as soon as the grass had started up. We did not drive the cattle, but grazed them, keeping them herded north. We struck the Chisholm Trail near Silver City and kept a

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northerly direction and we landed in Hunnewell, Kansas, in the fall, with our cattle fat.

We were usually around town for about four or five days getting the cattle loaded on the train and on the way to market; then started on the long trip back, driving our saddle horses.

The next year, 1887, I made another trip to Hunnewell, Kansas, with another herd of cattle for the same people.

Gunter, Gunter and Isaacs had a contract with the Government to furnish beef for the Indians at Anadarko. When I was not on the trail to Kansas with cattle I helped move about one hundred and seventy-five head of ~~cattle to Anadarko every two weeks.~~ I think they got two and one half cents per pound for the cattle.

I have seen Indians, who were horseback, turn a steer outside of the pen, run it until it was hot and then shoot it down. Some of the Indians used guns but I have seen them shoot steers down with a bow and arrow. I have seen the Indians issued some pretty poor cattle.

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In 1887 I was married to Sarah Ann Davis, a half-breed Caddo girl. I started in the cattle business for myself. I also had fifty acres of land broken. The man I hired to do the breaking used a team of oxen to the plow.

I dug a dugout and then built a two-room house with a hallway ~~between the rooms, that led to the dugout.~~ The house was double walled, made of cottonwood lumber, bought at the Government sawmill at Anadarko. This sawmill was the only one in the country and was operated by a steam engine.

I bought the shingles for the roof, the door and windows at Purcell, which was forty-five miles east of us.

I also bought all of our groceries and wearing apparel there and freighted it with wagon and team.

Caddo Jake and ^{Towankanee} ~~Tuwankney~~ Jim, both Caddoes, and Autobelt and Kicking Bird, both Comanches, were my best Indian friends, although I had a good many Indian friends.

I attended several Fourth of July celebrations in Chickasha after the railroad was built. There would be

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many horse races, although the Indians' horses could not compete with some of the other horses that would be there in races, although they were much better cow horses than the better bred horses.

I never made any of the "runs" or drawings for land, but later bought some land and in 1895 was farming five hundred acres.

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