

SMITH, JAMES OSCAR

INTERVIEW

#4878

129

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS-PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION.

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

130.

Field Worker's name Selfridge, Jennie

This report made on (date) July 20, 1937

1. Name James Oscar Smith.

2. Post Office Address Ardmore

3. Residence address (or location) Four miles east and one mile north.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 21 Year 1849

5. Place of birth Lawrence County, South Carolina.

6. Name of Father Spencer Smith Place of birth South Carolina.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Ellen Glenn Place of birth South Carolina

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 3.

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Jennie Selfridge,
Interviewer.
July 20, 1937.

Interview with James Oscar Smith
Ardmore, Oklahoma.
Born November 21, 1849.
Father-Spencer Smith
Mother Ellen Glenn

James Oscar Smith was born in Lawrence County,
South Carolina, November 21, 1849. Later the family
left South Carolina, and moved to Breckenridge, Texas.
While at this location Mr. Smith worked as a railroad
contractor.

In 1883 he came to Oklahoma and settled at Willis
on Red River. At that time the Indians and inter-
married citizens ran the Government. Smith began
operating a gin at Willis's Ferry. This gin was operat-
ed by steam. They had two gin stands and very often ran
at night. They ginned on an average twenty bales of
cotton a day, and usually operated until into the winter.

They received their mail at Cedar Mills, Texas, and
bought most of their supplies there. Trading towns on
the Territory side were Oakland and Tishomingo.

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The Indians were holding court at this time at Bear Creek Courthouse on one occasion when Mr. Smith visited court there; Governor Overton was Judge and Britt Willis was on the jury. Governor Overton did not approve of the verdict returned by the jury and asked how could he hold court when he had nine drunk men and three "d-n fools" on the jury.

There were no schools around Willis. Once in ~~while there would be a teacher hired to teach for a~~ month or two.

Forty-five years ago Mr. Smith moved to Oakland. At that time Oakland had three or four general merchandise stores, and was the county seat of Pickens County. The court ground was changed to Oakland, and Charles B. Carter attended court here.

In order that his children might have better educational advantages, Smith moved to Ardmore forty-three years ago, and was appointed Second Street Commissioner. He served for two years. There were no paved streets, and the Street Department did not have implements to

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keep up the streets. At that time Ardmore was the shipping point for about 30,000 bales of cotton a year; therefore the Street Department at that time had the time keep in Ardmore by means of a bridge that the cotton would not be kept in.

Smith's wife was Ida Chevis, who was of French descent. She lived to about sixty-two years. She died in 1931. They reared thirteen children, six of whom are still living. One son has served in the army twenty-six years.