

SMITH, GEORGE A.

INTERVIEW

#9325

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

SMITH, GEORGE A

INTERVIEW

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Field Worker's name Ophelia D. VestalThis report made on (date) November 30, 1937

1. Name George A. Smith
2. Post Office Address Lorton, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) 606 South 9th.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 19 Year 1872
5. Place of birth Texas

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

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 _____

Ophelia D. Vestal,
Investigator,
November 30, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. George A. Smith,
Lawton, Oklahoma.

I came here from Texas in 1889 and started to work for a big cowman named W.H. Quinette. I worked for Mr. Quinette for fourteen years. He usually kept from one thousand to fifteen hundred head of cattle all the time. Each man had a certain spot of land to graze his cattle on. There were no fences and the division line was called a "drift line". When the cattle went over on the other man's grass a cowboy was kept handy to turn them back on their own grass.

There was but one house between here and Red River and it was called "twelve miles". An Indian named Moxie lived there.

An Indian named White Horse lived back in the Wichita Mountains and when I was working for Mr. Quinette I often rode out by his camp and talked with him. He was chief of a small band located near Mount Scott. I had heard that he had the scalps of several white women. One bright sunny day I was out in that vicinity and decided I would go over

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and talk awhile. When I arrived I saw several scalps laid out in the sun. Some were of light hair and some of red hair. This Indian said that he was sunning them just as he sunned his bedding, then he put them back in a box that he kept in his tepee.

Northeast of Fort Sill was a cemetery of the Indians. The first person buried there was Ny-Watt's daughter. That was thirty-five years ago.

In the early days here, I lived near Mount Scott, where Lake Lawtonka is now. There was a band of a few Indians, Chevois being their leader, living on the east side of the place where the lake is now, up on the hill. Here they held their medicine meetings.

When their relatives died they would take the bodies over to the northwest side of Mount Scott, to a Canyon, and leave them covered with rocks and brush so wolves would not bother them. The squaws did all the work and when there was a death they dressed the Indian, put him across a horse and took the body to the burying place. About ^{SUN}down each evening, for a great while, the squaws could be heard mourning over their dead.

Years and years ago, before I came here, I had been told where "Cut Throat Gap" got its name; the Indians and a few white explorers fought and the Indians cut the throats of all the white people.

There must have been two hundred in the band of apaches who were held captives at Fort Sill, Geronimo being their leader. The native home of this band was Arizona. They were captured in Arizona and taken to Florida, then to Mobile, Alabama, and finally brought here. They came here by stage, on horseback, and some ran most of the way from Rush Springs. After a few years here all were moved back to Arizona but thirteen families. I really don't know how the Indians had gained horses but people were afraid they would leave so General McKenzie ordered all their horses killed. As the Indians all liked pretty, fat horses, this nearly broke their hearts and I never saw so many pretty horses killed in my life either.

Geronimo was a good Indian. He had a very good memory too. One day Mr. Quinette had a few of his hired men out branding calves; I was among them. We were working near the railroad track. Geronimo was watching us.

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The train came through and stopped just for sight seeing. Someone asked if Geronimo was there. He straightened his shoulders, with his head in the air, and walked forward, meeting the people very proudly. One man walked up, shook hands with him, and said, "Have you ever seen me before?" He studied and replied "Yes, in Arizona".

I have camped all over this county with Mr. Quinette's cattle. Always two of us boys worked together.

Once I was camped up on Sandy Creek near Indianahoma with a big herd of cattle. Sometimes we had evening callers just a little after sundown. This Indian wanted to play cards or gamble with us, passing away the time. We soon learned their tricks; while this Indian was at our camp a crowd of several Indians would be out stealing a beef or some beeves. They thought, though, they were tricking us. If one of us would go away they soon left to tell the others, then they would leave without bothering the cattle.