

STUMPF, WILLIAM H.

INTERVIEW

4219

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

#4219

STUMPF, WILLIAM H. INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Jimmie Birdwell

This report made on (date) May 24, 1937.

1. Name William H. Stumpff

2. Post Office Address Spiro, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Spiro, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 12, Year 1863

5. Place of birth Northwest Kansas

6. Name of Father Benjamin Stumpff Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Alice Marrs Place of birth Illinois.

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.

An Interview with Mr. William H. Stumpff, Spiro.

By - Jimmie Birdwell - Investigator.

May 24, 1937.

Mr. Stumpff moved to Paw Paw in 1885 with his father. Paw Paw is about four miles northeast of Fort Smith, Arkansas. Benjamin Stumpff, the father, took a lease on a tract of land. He got the use of the land for five years for clearing off, building a house and barn and digging a well. The trees that were cut off the land were cut into cord wood and Mr. Stumpff bought a team of oxen and the wood was hauled to the bank of the Arkansas River and the small steam boats that were on the river, bought it for fuel.

The ox team was used to farm with also. Only feed and corn were raised. The corn served as feed for stock and bread for the family. Mr. Stumpff raised a big patch of Irish potatoes every year. When he had more than he could use he would ship them by steamboat to Fort Smith. He said that he would pile the freight up on the bank of the river and the boat would load it anywhere he put it.

The first levee that he ever saw was one that was

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built in his father's field to keep the river from overflowing.

Flint, a small place, store and post office, was sometimes used as headquarters to pay the Cherokee Indians off. The Payne Brothers had a general store there and gave credit to the Indians. Mr. Stumpff said that when the Indians were going to be paid off at a certain time, Flint would be just like a big picnic. All the thugs and bad men would show up to try to beat the Indians out of some money. The Payne Brothers one year collected \$30,000 for credit they had given the Indians.

About 1897 the whites and negroes at Pine Bluff, Arkansas, had a dispute and a bunch of negroes were run out of town; some of them settled around Paw Paw, the first negroes to live in this part of the state.

When Stumpff moved in there, there were not any bridges. There was a ferryboat owned by the Payne Brothers and the ferry was at the spot where the bridge is now at Fort Smith.

White men would sell the Indians anything they wanted on credit and make out a plain note for the money to be paid when the Indian got his government money. Two men, Smith and Railey, went to western Oklahoma and bought a large bunch of broom tail ponies and drove them to Indian Territory and sold them to the Indians. Most Indians, Mr. Stumpff said, wanted a small pony instead of a large horse.

Mr. Stumpff said the first few years on the farm in eastern Oklahoma were hard. Irish potatoes, cornbread, garden vegetables and wild berries and wild grapes were about all the food they had.

This part of Oklahoma was a natural hideout for outlaws. Bad men had a trail out of Texas that passed up through the hills here. The horse thieves had camps about every forty miles and most any bad man who came by was welcome. He could get food and if he needed a horse or shells for his gun he could get them.