Form A-(S-149) 290

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

TAYLOR, THOMAS. INTERVIEW. 9579.

Field Worker's name Linnaeus B. Ranck.

This report made on (date) December 23, 1937. 193

1. Name Thomas Taylor.
2. Post Office Address Shattuck, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location)
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 13 Year 1865.
5. Place of birth San Antonio, 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

TAYLOR, THOMAS. INTERVIEW. 9579.

Linnaeus B. Ranck,
Investigator,
December 23, 1937.

An Interview With Thomas Taylor,
Shattuck, Oklahoma.

Taylor is a native of Texas, born near San Antonio, January 13, 1865. His first visit to Oklahoma was in the summer of 1881. He came up the trail that summer with a herd of three thousand eight hundred cattle, crossed Red River at Doan's Store and followed the old trail on northwest through the Indian country and on to Dodge City, Kansas. In those days, the Indians inhabiting western Oklahoma were always referred to as the "wild Indians". Taking trail herds through the wild Indian's country was not risky so far as the Indians were concerned provided the trail boss was willing to pay the tribute in cattle these Indians uniformly requested or demanded. The "big jaws" in the herd and other inferior and little salable cattle they used to give the Indians when they gave them any cattle; some trail bosses refused to pay any tribute. The Comanche and Kiowa tribes were the most difficult to satisfy.

They were not inclined to accept a few cattle from a herd but instead would insist on twenty head or more if the herd happened to be unusually large. Mr. Taylor recalls Quanah Parker and another prominent Comanche chief, whose name he could not remember, as crafty and mercenary fellows with the old trail bosses.

Mr. Taylor was over all of the old cattle trails famous in early day Oklahoma history. They used to swim the entire outfit through the streams sometimes rather than wait for flood waters to subside. Unless the water was very high it was not difficult or risky to get the cattle through. The task and hazard was in getting the chuck wagon across a swollen stream such as the Red River, the Cimarron, etc. In instances where they undertook to cross a stream at flood stage, the herd went in first and many cattle would not reach the opposite bank for nearly a mile farther down stream. The chuck wagon went in after the cattle. Beforehand, however, the wagon box was tied securely down to the bolsters, boards were placed over the top of its box and upon these they would place, if possible, all of

the wagon's cargo most apt to be damaged by water. Several cowpunchers would then tie one end of their throw ropes to the top of the wagon box and the other ends to the horns of their saddles and start across; the wagon driver turning his teams rather down the current and the mounted punchers--three or four as a rule--with their ropes tied to the top of the wagon box going in with the chuck wagon but up stream from it the distance of the length of their lariats. When the teams reached water so deep that they had to swim, the water was almost always deep enough to float the wagon. The men up stream on horses tried to keep a course that enabled each and every rider to keep his rope to the wagon box tight enough to hold the wagon more or less steady and prevent the force of the current from turning it over downward of the stream. Such a venture didn't always turn out satisfactorily.

About '83 or '84 Taylor was on the Shoe Bar Ranch in Texas helping work up a herd to drive to Dodge City. One evening the men in the outfit were in camp ready for supper when old Chief Geronimo and twenty of his

warriors rode in asking for something to eat. All in the outfit knew the old chief quite well and were on most friendly and peaceable terms with him in spite of the fact that Geronimo and his little band were then committing outrageous depredations in various sections of the Southwest. The Shoe Bar outfit fed the Apaches and they left the camp. The next morning, however the cowboys were quite surprised to see old chief Geronimo return to the camp before some of the boys were up. He asked for his breakfast which they gave him and then rode away. Taylor declares Geronimo was an Indian of much personal pride in his savage way and hence did not bring his twenty warriors back for their breakfast.

Taylor was punching cattle in the Chickasaw Nation when the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation was opened for settlement. With two companions he drove across to make the run for a claim. The party approached from the east through the locality of the John H. Seger colony. They got temporarily lost in the rough country not far east of the border line and arrived on the

reservation line nearly an hour too late to take part in the run proper. They went on in, however, and the next day had driven west as far as about twenty miles southwest of Weatherford. They found all the land apparently taken so they turned back. In a locality about twelve miles south of Weatherford they came upon the most appealing land all of which seemed to have been staked, but few remained of those who had staked this land the day before. Taylor claims many never made legal entries on the lands they staked the day of the opening and never returned to claim them; he homesteaded on a quarter in this vicinity, established residence in a dugout and began some farming.

On this homestead Taylor had a number of Indian neighbors. His associations with them brought on trouble. While away from home one day a squaw had an altercation with Taylor's wife and assaulted Mrs. Taylor with a club. Difficulties with his Indian neighbors multiplied thereafter for Taylor, and his wife was determined to leave the country. Soon he sold his relinquishment for a $1,000.00 and went north to a new

location near the place where the town of Leedy was later founded. Here he homesteaded again in 1893 some time, as best he was able to recall, and got control of some school land and started ranching on a small scale.

While Mr. Taylor was still on his claim south of Weatherford and during the early part of 1893 a large herd of cattle from Texas passed through his locality on their way to the ranch of Amos Chapman on the North Canadian River north of where the town of Seiling now stands. It so happened that all the men with this herd were old friends and former cowboy associates of Taylor's. The outfit was very shorthanded and persuaded Mr. Taylor to help them on to the Chapman ranch. The weather turned bitterly cold before they reached the South Canadian River and they found it nearly dry and apparently frozen over solidly; at least they crossed the cattle on the ice and made no effort to get water for them there. They calculated on going on to the North Canadian River and water the cattle there. The extreme cold continued and when they reached the North

Canadian River it was frozen over almost solidly, too. The cattle by this time were frantic for water and it was almost night. The outfit camped on the south side of the river and during the night that followed every man was obliged to be on duty with the herd even the negro cook. All the men except the cook were busy throughout the night trying to hold the restless, milling cattle from scattering far and wide and searching the frozen current of the river for places to chop the ice so the cattle could drink. The negro cook remained at the camp and kept a fire going all night and had hot coffee ready for the other men who took turns returning to the chuckwagon to warm a short time at the fire and brace themselves with a hot drink. Taylor declares that was the most miserable experience he ever went through in all of his cowpunching days. Chapman then had a very commodious log house at the ranch headquarters, and the next mornin most of the men with the herd went to Chapman's house for breakfast. Chapman's Cheyenne wife was a good housekeeper and a splendid cook. It was on this trip that Taylor became interested

in locating in the section of the country where the town of Leedy was later built. At that time little of that part of the Cheyenne-Arapaho country had been homesteaded and there were no Indian residents for many miles distant. He, therefore concluded to leave his claim south of Weatherford and start a ranch of his own farther north where there was still abundant free range and no Indians to contend with.