

PULSEY, LYMAN.

INTERVIEW

13660

308.

LEGEND & STORY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

309

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13660.

Field worker's name Theodore R. Hamilton

This report made on (date) April 20, 1938

1. This legend was secured from (name) Lyman Fulsey

Address McAlester, Oklahoma.

This person is (male or female) White, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe Choctaw.

2. Origin and history of legend or story \_\_\_\_\_

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 3

PULSEY, LYMAN.

INTERVIEW.

13860.

Theodore R. Hamilton -  
Investigator.  
April 20, 1938.

Interview with Lyman Pulsey.  
McAlester, Oklahoma.

"EXECUTION OF SILAN LEWIS"

For eight years Lyman Pulsey, a Choctaw Indian, who was born about three miles northeast of McAlester, served as a deputy sheriff in the Indian Territory. He acted as the official executioner at the execution of Silan Lewis, which happened to be the last official execution near Wilburton.

Lewis, also an Indian, had been living southwest of the city of Hartshorne and had run for an office in the Indian Government. When he failed to be elected he and some of the men who were backing him went to the homes of Robinson, Nelson and Hoklotubby and killed them. They then went to the town of Wilburton where they hunted two more Indians, Elias Colbert and Frank Frazier, and killed them also.

After committing the crimes Lewis did not try to leave the country, but waited for the law to come after him. He

PULSEY, LYMAN.

INTERVIEW.

13600.

- 2 -

was taken to the Indian Court near Wilburton, where he was tried and sentenced to death, after the case had dragged along for three years. He was not confined in jail during this time and could have left the country most any time but refused to do so.

On the morning that the execution was to be performed Mr. Pulsey ate a hearty breakfast with his prisoner, Lewis, before they went to the Brown Prairie courthouse near Wilburton. Here a quilt was spread out on the ground in the court yard and the condemned man set himself on it. About this time a messenger rode up on a horse and excitedly whispered something to the officers. In great agitation they hurried to get the execution over, and in their haste the black mark that was customarily placed over the condemned mans heart, was placed on the right side. When Pulsey fired, the bullet did not enter Lewis' heart and for a few minutes he lay in agony before his death. Two of the officers, when they saw the mistake, seized the dying man and held him to the ground after stuffing a handkerchief into his mouth to keep the blood from spurting on them.

PULSLEY, LYMAN.

INTERVIEW.

13860.

- 3 -

When his struggles had ceased he was carried away hurriedly and in a few moments the place of execution was deserted. It was later learned that the messenger who had arrived had brought the news that a party of Lewis' friends were on their way to rescue the condemned man.