

RAY, PAT

INTERVIEW.

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

Field Worker's name Hazel B. Greene

This report made on (date) July 12, 1937

1. Name Pat Ray.

2. Post Office Address Idabel, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 2 Year 1905.

5. Place of birth Eighteen miles east of Idabel.

6. Name of Father W. H. Ray. Place of birth _____

Other information about father Died in Colorado, and buried at Idabel 1921.

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about mother Still living at Idabel.

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 Pat Ray,
Court Clerk, McCurtain Co.,
Idabel, Oklahoma.

Pat Ray is a white man and the genial Court Clerk of McCurtain County, Oklahoma. He was born February 2, 1905, eighteen miles east of Idabel, at the home of his father, W. L. Ray. Mr. Ray was the first County Clerk of McCurtain County at Idabel. This, by the way, was known formerly as Mitchell, in Red River County. The young gentleman was christened W. H. Ray, but he insists that everyone call him "Pat".

In 1900 W. L. Ray leased about a thousand acres from various Indians about eighteen miles east of Idabel, and built upon it. He built about ten or twelve rent houses, his own home, and fenced and otherwise improved all this land. He rented to tenants, sharecroppers and so on. It was just six miles to Cerro Gardo, Arkansas, so he built a store and gin. He died in Colorado in 1921, and is buried in Idabel. Mrs. Ray is still living in Idabel. Those old houses are still standing close to the Arkansas line where Mr. Ray built them.

Pat Ray states, "I've seen the streets of Idabel so muddy that teams bogged down right out there in front of this court house. Ox teams at that. Now tell me that we have not progressed. I remember long before the days of the

automobile. One fellow had a blacksmith shop here with a pile of horse shoes twelve feet high. Those were the days of horses and oxen. Really pioneer days. Then came automobiles and airplanes. Once there was to be a balloon ascension, and everybody and his brother and the dogs, and, of course, the kids came to Idabel. They came from the forks of the creeks and the hinterland. Folks who had not been to town for years, and some who never had, came to see that balloon go up. But something happened to it, and it didn't go up. A sadly disappointed group went back home. However, they had been to town, and it was a gala day for Idabel.

A few years later, some fellow brought an airplane in to Idabel on a flat car, and was going to give an exhibition of its flying. Of course the thing would not fly. It would just be another flare of hot air like the balloon ascension was. Mother bet me five dollars that it would not fly. She had to pay off, too. That was a bigger day of excitement than had been the day for the exhibition of the balloon. We climbed up on the tops of the highest buildings in order to be sure that we would see it, if, and when it flew. It did fly and we sunburned our tonsils looking at it.

Along about the time Dad settled his place out east of Idabel, Belle Starr came along. He didn't know her

from anybody else. She rode a beautiful mare and Father traded a horse for the mare. She went on her way rejoicing, but in a day or so officers and the owner of the mare came along, and of course Daddy lost his mare.

There is a story of a negro being elected Sheriff of McCurtain County, and disappearing, but I don't know anything about that. Oh, I just thought I'd mention it. You might follow it up and hear something about it.

It is a fact that Joe Willis, part Indian, but mostly white, with a little bit negro blood, was elected Sheriff of Towson County, in November 1907, but then Statehood came and he never served. He was a pretty good negro, above the average in intelligence and honor, and in every way.