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

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Field Worker's name Gomer Gower

This report made on (date) May 13th, 1937 1937

1. Name Jesse Green Robb

2. Post Office Address Poteau, Route 2

3. Residence address (or location) Near Gilmore

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 23 Year 1854

5. Place of birth Walker County, Georgia

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about mother _____

Write a 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 Four

Complete narrative follows on pages one to four incl.

Jesse Green Robb,
a biographic sketch
From a personal interview with the subject.

Gomer Gower, Field worker
Indian-Pioneer History B-149
May 13, 1937.

Jesse Green Robb was born December 23, 1854, in Walker County, Georgia. Moved to the Indian Territory in September, 1880, and settled in Sugar Loaf County.

Soon after his arrival in the Indian Territory he engaged in teaching school and was in charge of an Indian school at Le Flore and served that school as its teacher for a period of four years. This school was supported by tribal funds and was conducted for Indians only. The conditions of his employment were that he was to receive two dollars per month per pupil who attended not less than fifteen days a month. For pupils who attended less than fifteen days, he received \$1.40. The attendance at the school ranged from forty-five to sixty. It will thus be

~~seen that he earned approximately one hundred dollars~~
per month,

While engaged in teaching this school, Mr. Robb boarded with Mary Le Flore, a prominent Choctaw woman, for whose husband the village of Le Flore was named. For board and lodging he was only required to pay six dollars per month.

He looks back, with the greatest delight, upon those days when "Tom Fuller" - Tah Fuha, as pronounced by the Indians - was the principal article of food other than meat, which was plentiful and of all varieties. The process of preparing the corn in the "Tah Fuha" block, made it possible to remove every particle of husk from the rains of corn thereby making it more palatable when boiled and prepared for the table.

Mrs. Le Flore was a deeply religious woman and her home was at all times open for the accommodation of the circuit riding preachers, both white and Indian. She also took especial pains to see that a supply of feed was kept for the mounts of the preachers. She had a home of plenty, as her brother, before his death, was an enterprising stockraiser and farmer.

After teaching at Le Flore for four years, Mr. Robb engaged in merchandizing at Le Flore for several years. He obtained a special permit from Governor Edmund McCurtain to do this, paying for the permit at the rate of \$15.00 per 1000.00 of business done. He bought his goods at Fort

Smith, Arkansas, and freighted them by wagon to his store at Le Flore, a distance of approximately sixty-five miles.

He later moved his business to Cavanal, a point about two miles northeast of the present town of Gister. All trace of the town of Cavanal has now disappeared. He recalls that

during the incumbency of Jack McCurtain as governor, a troop of militia was used to dispossess white settlers who had moved into Sugar Loaf County and by unauthorized and illegal agreements with individual Indians, had settled upon land owned by the Choctaw Tribe in common. However, the Indians residents themselves defeated the efforts of Governor McCurtain to oust the whites. They did this by purchasing from the Tribe, at a nominal figure, the improvements which had been made upon land by the whites and then renting the improvements to the former settlers. Outside of the mental disturbance experienced during the activities of the Militia, conditions as to occupancy of Indian lands by whites remained practically the same as before the effort to exclude them was made.

The McCurtains-- Jack, Green, Edmond and later, D. C. McCurtain, have all honored Mr. Robb with a most intimate friendship and his acquaintance and association with these men are among the most pleasant memories of a long period of his life spent in this part of the Indian Territory, where without the name of McCurtain being connected in some way with its interesting history, would be incomplete.

He also relates that during his travels in that early period, whether by day or by night, he never felt the least uneasiness for his personal safety from thieves, robbers or other marauders.

On the issue of land allotment the citizens were sharply divided, while they were, to a large degree, indifferent on the question of statehood.

In their Tribal Courts the matter of former conduct was the yardstick by which punishment for infractions of the Tribal laws were measured, thus, sometimes, punishment for a minor offense would be more severe than that for a major offense. A first offender might suffer a penalty of a few lashes on the bare back; a second or third offense of the same character, by the same person might carry a penalty of death by being shot.

ugar Loaf, a border County, bordering on the state of Arkansas, where intoxicating liquor could be and was easily secured, was unduly scourged by the introduction of liquor and such crimes as were committed were the result of such introduction of whiskey by peddlers from the state of Arkansas. The Federal Government, through the Federal Courts and United

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States Marshals, was ever alert to the necessity of curbing this traffic in liquor among the Indians, yet that evil existed then, as now, to an alarming degree.

After the allotments of land were made, Mr. Robb bought land in the vicinity of what is now Gilmore, where he now resides. He has never married, but until recent years he had a maiden sister to keep house for him and his brother, W. W. Robb, who, incidentally, also taught an Indian school at a point about two miles east of what is now the town of Wister and was thus engaged when the Choctaw Railroad, now the Rock Island, was being constructed at that point.

Mr. Robb owns considerable property in the City of Poteau, as well as his farm holdings, and is now, as in the past, held in high esteem by all who know him. A pioneer of the Indian Territory who deserves mention on account of

his activities in behalf of the progress of his adopted home and country.