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INDEX CARDS

Oklahoma in 1879

Trail Driving

Westward Trail

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LITERALLY FROM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Maidee Eland

This report made on (date) Sept. 5, 1937

1. Name T. D. (Dave) Adams

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 216 Main st.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 10 Year 1858

5. Place of birth Gardin county West Tennessee

6. Name of Father Don't know. 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 _____.

ADAMS, T. D. (DAVE)

INTERVIEW

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Experience of a Pioneer of Oklahoma
T. D. Adams, 216 N. Blain
Altus Oklahoma

I came into Oklahoma or Indian Territory proper in the fall of 1879. There was quite a company of us. Several wagons, and I was in a wagon driving two big gray mules. Just after we got over the line there came up the most dreadful storm I was ever in. Our wagon sheets were torn into shreds and our camp equipment generally was destroyed.

I walked out of camp and walked and walked until I found a ranger camp over the Texas line. I stayed there for several days until I heard of a cow camp where I could get a job and grub. I guess you would have called me a bum. When I would get through one job I would just start out and tramp until I would attach myself to another ranch and work for a while. I did not like to drive cattle much but would rather work around the ranch house getting up hay, and planting the few crops that a rancher usually planted.

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I have helped to drive several herds into Kansas.

Once when I was with a herd driving into Kansas a wolf stampeded the whole herd and I was well in among them when they came to ^acanyon and began to tumble in. My horse tried to jump it but fell and broke his neck throwing me away over his head. I climbed a mesquite bush to keep from being killed while the cattle ran by. There was fourteen dead cattle besides my horse just where he tried to jump the arroyo. We had to pull some of the cattle off of my horse before I could get my saddle and bridle.

Once when we were camped down in Texas gathering a bunch of cattle my friend and buddy got sick and the herd had to move on north without us for I stayed with my buddy. When he was able to travel we hunted another ranger camp and stayed until he was strong enough for us to seek work again. The nearest I can tell about where we camped is that it was by a well, and that well is on the north side of the court house square in Altus now. I have tried to locate it a great many times but I was

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in Texas when Altus was laid off and cannot be sure if that well is the old road well that so many of us cowboys sought in the eighties.

The nearest ferry was the Harris Ferry east of here, and we always had to ford all rivers west of that ferry. When I first came into this country I had to go to Tishomingo for a permit to stay in the eastern part. Of course when in this part of the country I was in Texas and that was all right.

I have helped drive herds of 48,000 cattle through here. We always had a running iron with us and if steers accidentally got with us we ran his brand to match some of the others. Our trail boss always paid us for all extras we got in this way.

Once we got nine big fellows and ran their brand and in about two days a man came riding up looking for them. He had missed them and had been trailing us. He followed us three days but it was too late for we had already run the brand and would not acknowledge that we had them.

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The man really cried and said he could not afford to lose them but we could only be sorry for him as we could not afford to acknowledge that we had them after once the brand has been altered.

When we were out gathering these herds we took salt, bread and coffee and depended on killing our meat for food. Once when there were four of us we had to camp right out on the prairie without a fire or water. We tied our horses to a hole in the ground and spread our blankets so we slept heads and tails. All our feet in the center and our heads out like a wheel so that our cover would help us all and in the morning we were covered with snow. That was one cold camp.

To tie a horse to a hole in the ground you select a big bunch of grass, in the center you hollow out a hole big enough to tramp the knot in the end of your lariat and tramp the grass down over it, cover all with more dirt and tramp it down. There is not a horse in the world that can pull the knot out at the end of a 50 foot lariat. We drank our coffee black on such rides and always carried a canteen of water. Sometimes we would have to divide our

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canteen of water with our horse if we got too far away and could not find water.

There were a few buffalo left when I first was roaming these prairies but they were very vicious and were bad numbers to encounter so we usually gave them the range.

Once I came onto a little bunch, an old bull, three cows and a yearling or two and some little calves. I trailed them along until it got dark and then dropped a yearling and took him to camp for food. Usually though we had all the deer we wanted. I have killed a boat load of duck, wild turkeys, quails and squirrels right through these hills. Once in a great while a pair of panthers would come across the prairie. I have never killed or even seen panthers, but have heard them at night. Their cry is blood curdling and frightens everything that hears it. It surely makes the cold chills creep up your spine.

The worst fright I ever had was from a bull snake. Did you know a bull snake is entirely harmless, and could not poison you should he bite you? However, when you are

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riding along lonesome like and all at once one of those big fellows throws himself out of a bush with a bellow like a mad bull you do some jumping and your horse will bolt every time. That is where they get their name you wouldn't think such a little thing as a snake could make such a noise. Even if you see the snake you go on looking for something big that could have made such a noise until you learn it was the bull snake. There are lots of jokes played on the range before a tenderfoot learns that the snake can make the noise and is harmless as well.

Lots of wolves were here in the early days, but they never molested man. The nicest pet I ever had was a badger pup. We dug him out of his hole when he was no larger than a six weeks old kitten of a house cat. We had to raise him on milk at first, but he made the nicest and most gentle pet. He did not like dogs nor did the dogs like him.

I have only my old Stetson hat and my memories now. There are so many holes in the hat now it would take an

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old cat and forty nine kittens to catch a mouse in it; but it had its day, even as I.

I would never brand a cow in the increase of the moon for the brand would grow but if the branding is done on the decrease of the moon your brand will always be just the size of your iron. I always carried a running iron on my saddle to straighten out brands until the state of Texas made it against the law.