

THOMAS, G. H.

INTERVIEW

10017

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

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#10017

Field Worker's name Bessie L. Thomas.

Report made on (date) February 21, 1938

Name G. H. Thomas.

Post Office Address Cache, Oklahoma.

Residence address (or location) _____

DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 2 Year 1875

Place of birth Bardwell, Kentucky.

Name of Father George Thomas Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father Medical doctor.

Name of Mother Hannah Webb Place of birth Kentucky.

Other information about mother Housewife.

es or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life, and
ry of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects
questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to
s form. Number of sheets attached Seven

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Bessie L. Thomas,
Investigator.
February 21, 1938.

Interview with G. H. Thomas,
Cache, Oklahoma.

I was born near Bardwell, Carlisle County, Kentucky, of Scotch-Irish ancestors. My father is buried in Bardwell and my mother at Cache. All my sisters and brothers were born near Bardwell on a farm.

Having read accounts of the opening of the Oklahoma Territorial land for settlement, I became restless and longed for new scenes, new adventures and a home in a new country. So coming to El Reno, I registered on August 15, 1901 but was unsuccessful in drawing but not being discouraged I bought with my mother's help a farm near Cache. I returned to Kentucky for a few weeks and my glowing account of the open Oklahoma prairie, of the tall native grass and acres of beautiful wild flowers made my mother and the rest of the family except my father want to come, too.

So on April 25, 1902 they arrived in Oklahoma City on the Rock Island Railroad and arrived at Lawton the next day in the late afternoon. After making inquiries

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as to direction and the distance to Cache my brother, Wallace, and I started west on G Street, walked west to 11th Street and then north, stopping and asking directions every few feet. We proceeded north to the section line on the road to Cache, turned west and went a mile or so when we came to a shack. We noticed a man feeding a team of ponies hitched to a light covered wagon or a prairie schooner as we called it. We asked him a few questions about the roads and the country and asked if it would be safe to go on afoot. He advised us that it might not be safe on account of the Indians. So we made a contract with him for our conveyance and safe arrival to the claim of the Sanford brothers, old acquaintances from Bardwell. We loaded in and started although there were no roads, traveling northwest towards the mountains until we reached what is now called Old Fort Sill where the original "Red Store" first stood. This store or Indian trading post was painted red and so was named the "Red Store". From this store we followed the

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trail directly to our friends' claim, arriving late the next afternoon.

This place we learned later was known as the "old Poco place? Poco was a Comanche Indian. Near the old Poco place was another place where we contracted for a team. This place was known as the Edith Henderson claim and the owner of the team was a traveling photographer.

On the morning of April 28th, we took positions around the cabin and had some snapshots made. Later in the day we went to the place where the town of Cache was to be and on to another "Red Store" southwest of this new townsite where a store was operated by Harris and James. Here we bought some groceries asked for mail but received none and were very much disappointed. We returned to the Cache townsite and looked around some, the railroad dump having been completed a little beyond the site a few miles to the west. This was in 1901. This railroad had been built from Lawton west to Cache.

Having no cabin on our farm as yet and no place for my mother, sisters and younger brothers to stay, we left

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them in Lawton and my brother and I took up for the time being our abode with our Kentucky friends.

About May 1, 1902, my brother and I were coming over to Cache and on to the Red Store for our mail. It was our custom to go down Money Creek and cross on a log but this morning the road was obstructed by a work train as they were laying the rails on the road bed. We stopped a few minutes watching them and contemplated the future of Cache. They were working hard and moving fast so we climbed aboard the old work train and so rode the first train across Money Creek and into the new townsite of Cache.

About 10:00 A. M. that day Mr. Billy Savage opened a little land, or real estate, office, the first building on the townsite. We went over and got acquainted, bought two lots on the extreme east side of town.

Our first job in this new country was the building of four miles of fence on what is now known as the old York place on Blue Beaver Creek, three miles north and three east of Cache. In the fall of 1902 we bought a

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hay baling outfit and baled hay for the Indians on a fifty-fifty basis, one contract being with Noda-Aker. We were all set and running fine; we stacked his hay in stacks close to the machine the first day and hauled our part away to the place where we were living and stacked it that night. Noda-Aker's cattle on the pasture got into our hay that night, tore some of it down and ate a lot of it. We went to see him and asked him to take care of his cattle and make amends for our hay. He was not at home and we were told he would probably not be for a week or two. So we moved his hay near the center of the tract of land, built a fence around it of our own posts and wire to protect it from fire and his own cattle. When we finished he had a stack of something near a thousand bales. We back-fired around on all sides trying to protect it for him and thought that in so doing we were gaining his friendship and that of the other Indians, too. After Noda-Aker returned home he overtook Mr. Balsly, one of our partners in the hay business, and rode up beside

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him and said, "You steal 'um, my hay", and kept on saying this over several times. He followed Mr. Balsly all the way home.

Several Indians had been appointed deputy sheriffs by our first county sheriff. Among them was Noda-Aker. Noda-Aker said to Balsly, "I arrest you and take you to Lawton". Mr. Balsly kept talking to him, trying to bluff him but the Indian rode away, coming back later to Balsly's home with four other Indian deputies. Mr. Balsly, my brother and I went out to meet them. I had the figures on the number of bales of hay each one of us had. Noda-Aker did the talking; he said, "You steal 'um hay." I said, "No", and I showed them my papers and tried to explain. He said, "No savvy, you steal hay". I said, "You are a liar." He said, "We are going to arrest all three of you and take you to Lawton". We went in the house and armed ourselves, came back out and told these Indians that they had better be going for they were not going to take us to Lawton. They left and went to the Indian agent, Jim Simmons, and told him that we had

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stolen Noda-Aker's hay from him. A few days later the agent spoke to Mr. Balsly about the matter and Mr. Balsly told the agent all about how it was and that was the last we ever heard of the matter.

In later years old Noda-Aker became one of our best Indian friends and would often laugh and say, "You steal 'um my hay".