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INDEX CARDS

Greer County
Journey to Oklahoma
Banks, William E.
Jackson County
Trails
Cattle--trail driving
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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

LAIDEE B. BLAND

Field Worker's name LAIDEE B. BLAND

This report made on (date) MAY. 20, 1937 1937

1. Name ALBERT R. BANKS.
ALT
2. Post Office Address ALTUS . OKLA.
3. Residence address (or location) South Hudson. St.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February. Day 3 Year 1872
5. Place of birth SPRINGDALE . ARKANSAS.

6. Name of Father WILLIAMS E. BANKS. Place of birth ARK.

Other information about father MISSIONARY BAPTIST PREACHER.

7. Name of Mother ELIZABETH FITZGERALD Place of birth ARK.

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 7.

BANKS, ALBERT. INTERVIEW.

Zaidee B. Bland
May 20, 1937.

3.

**THE EXPERIENCES OF A PIONEER OF OKLAHOMA
Albert R. Banks.
Altus Okla.**

I came with my parents to Old Greer Co., Texas, in 1888. Father brought two wagons, each with two horses hitched to them, and I rode and drove about 40 head of loose stock, horses and cattle. Father squatted on a claim and mother lived there and we called it home the balance of their lives. My father, being a preacher, was not home much.

He helped frame the Constitution of this state and became its first representative from this district. When this county was cut off from Old Greer Co., he was asked to suggest a name. Not caring for personal fame he did not suggest his own name as many of the representatives did in those days, and being a great admirer of both "Old Hickory", and Stonewall Jackson, he suggested Jackson, and Jackson it became.

I feel almost like I was born in the saddle. I learned to ride at such a young age I do not remember when and there was not a horse that had a rope thrown over his head that I would not ride or try to. Riding wild horses was a great sport in my youth.

I have followed a good many herds up the trail to Dodge City, Kansas, and a few east. In this part of the country all travelers crossed at Doan's on Red River. At Nine Mile Spring north of Doan's crossing the trail divided, one bear-

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ing west along Turkey creek, on through Mangum and north; the other went east and north nearer the foot of the Navajo Mountains crossing the north fork of Red river at "Trail" crossing just north of the old post office at Warren.

We always had to follow water courses when driving our herds to market on the account of water. A herd of cattle consisted of about 1000 head and we traveled about ten miles a day, letting them graze along. Usually about 12 men accompanied the herd. Nine riders, one with the chuck wagon, and one to wrangle the horses. We usually took about 90 or 100 horses along with each herd. They were allowed to run loose when we were not riding them. Every morning we would tie several of our lariats together, and tie to each of the back wheels of the wagon. A cowboy on a horse would take an end of this long rope and ride away from the wagon making a great fan shaped corral into which the loose horses were driven. They were very wild and we could not touch one of them until a rope was thrown over his neck, then he would come trotting to us. We selected our mounts for the day, roped him; then saddled and bridled him and cutting out began. No matter where we camped there were always loose stock that would mix with the herd.

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The first thing every morning we had to cut out all of these strays before we could start moving the herd. It was very easy to take some one's cattle along if we were not real careful.

I never helped drive a herd in my life that stampeded. Many herds did though; and it usually occurred at night. Lightning and thunder was the usual cause and we all have had to ride herd all night long on stormy nights to prevent accidents for I have seen the cattle so restless that they would mill all night long.

The prettiest sight to me is to put a herd across a stream of water where they all have to swim. Cattle will swim a stream safely without the loss of a one where horses or mules will become confused and some of them be sure to drown. Drive a herd of cattle up to a stream of water that is deep and rolling and they will hesitate, bawl, run to and fro along the bank a little. Be patient and urge them a little with your voice. All at once one will take to the water and then they all hurry. Looks like each one then is afraid the other will get into the water first. All along the line they will plunge in. Mat up together and swim across with only their horns showing; their heads only above the water. It looks like a great raft of some kind. Cattle will come near-

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or going across straight with scarcely any drift with the stream than any animal I know.

I don't just know how we managed to control a herd with our voices but we did. You will just naturally sing or whistle when you are riding herd on a lonesome trail and cattle are trained to have confidence and obey the human voice just as a wild horse, after he is once broken, will come to you as soon as a rope slips over his head.

We always brought the chuck wagon full of groceries back from Dodge City and made the trip home much quicker than we went. Most every man carried a gun in those days and drank a little but I never did either. A gun was always in my way and I guess mother's and father's training prevented any of us boys wanting to drink or maybe observation taught us boys that a sober man had nine chances to every ten of staying out of trouble and getting home safely.

We seldom made less than 30 miles a day coming home. About the only animal beside cattle and horses in this country was antelope. They are a prairie deer. Their meat tastes very similar to a deer but their habits are almost opposite. You get after a big red or gray deer and they will hunt a dense brush or thicket to hide in. Flush a bunch of ante-

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lope and they will make for the highest point to look around for their enemy and then trust to their swiftness to outrun their foe.

We used to have in this country a grass that was called Tickle Tail. It grew thick and tall. I was going along at a pretty fast canter when both my horse's forefeet went down into a hole. It was a hole I guess a wolf had dug and the Tickle Tail had grown so thick and tall over it that neither my horse nor I had noticed it. I was thrown over the horse's head and he rolled over me twice trying to get up, before everything went blind for me. I never knew how long I lay there. When I came to my senses, the horse was grazing near me with his bridle dragging. I had on a new pair of cashmere trousers, that they were ruined was my only lasting hurt from the experience but you can guess that hurt a lot for we cowboys were surely proud of cashmere pants.

We had a lot of trouble with wild horses stealing our horses. I remember there was a mare and two geldings one year that gave us so much trouble that we framed them and decided to catch them. We boys stationed ourselves every two or three miles and took time about running them. We ran them all one day and way into the night. We knew they would be stiff the next day; but as soon as it was light enough to see

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we went at it again. We found them in the midst of a big herd of cattle as if they were trying to hide. All day long we ran them again. Way late in the afternoon we succeeded in getting close enough to rope them and took horse shoes and put them on their legs at the small part and let it fall down around their hoofs, and turned them loose. They could never run fast enough to steal our stock again.

I made the run for land in 1893, for the sport of it. I was not quite twenty one. There were seven men from here, who decided to run. We got us a chuck wagon and a cook. Took a slow trip. Got to Antelope Flats, about 12 miles east of Enid, a week before the drawing. Had a little look around. There had been a prairie fire and you could see the white stones that marked the corners of the sections. Each of us was given a little flag.

On Sept. 16, 1893, at high noon a soldier walked among us and fired his pistol and we were off. Every size, shape, and color of man and beast, as well as most every kind of a wheeled vehicle, were there to start. We seven all rode our saddle horses. Mine was a big bay. I called him Strip and he would weigh about 1000 pounds. One of the boy's horse tripped and threw him, breaking his arm. We were all pretty close together and well in the lead. We stopped, tore

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our shirttails off, and bound up the arm the best we could; put the boy back on his horse and away we went. We all got our land. The next day we all had to stand in line until we were given a number of the land so we could file. We camped on our strip of land all night. There was a Doctor camping not very far from us and we got him to set the arm and it was "OK". I never proved up on mine. I had run more for the sport. I traded my right to my strip for a sorrel horse and \$11.00 and thought I was getting a big deal.

I worked more for the Tripple "D" than any other ranch. His brand was a triangle with a capital "D" in each corner. Mr. Wagner owned the ranch. Mr. Wagner is still living and has a big stock farm near Ft. Worth, Texas. He calls his place Arlington Downs.

I was sworn in as deputy once by Mr. Tittle (now of Mangus) to help catch some outlaws, but the Texas Rangers had beat us to them. It was a terrible battle, and the coldest night I ever knew.