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W. T. Holland
Investigator
January 27, 1938

Interview with John J. Baker
Tulsa, Oklahoma.

I was born in the mountains of East Tennessee in Hancock County, on December 4, 1861. My father, Jack Baker, was also a native of Tennessee as was my mother, Rosy (Sanford) Baker. My father served through the Civil War as a private in the Confederate Army.

In 1882 I was married to Nancy Wilder of Tennessee. We were married in East Tennessee. In my early years I worked in the timber cutting logs; these we rafted down the river. We worked into the Tennessee River and finally sold at Chattanooga. I was familiar with the rivers of East Tennessee.

In 1886 my wife and I came to Ellis County, Texas, where we lived for six years, coming to the Chickasaw Nation in 1894. I lived at, and operated the Tulip Ferry on the Red River, north of Bonham, Texas. I built a ferry boat 12X60 feet in size, as I had to ferry lots of cattle across. I could crowd fifty to seventy-five head of

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cattle on my boat, which was operated by a cable. I got 10 cents a head for cattle so when I had herds of a thousand to two thousand cattle, as I often had, I made some money. The sand was bad there and very little fording was attempted. I charged only 50 cents for a wagon or buggy so it didn't pay to take the risk trying to ford the river. I lived on the Oklahoma side. The Indians, Chickasaws and Choctaws came my way often, on their way into Texas to buy liquor. If they didn't have money which was often the case, they would trade their guns or anything of value they might have for whiskey.

Later on I ran the ferry at Ragsdale which was at the mouth of the Blue River, on the Red River. There was a post office at Ragsdale and a Mr. Jewett was the postmaster and Campbell, with Jewett, owned and operated a store there. They had a large store and had a good business, and there was quite a lot of travel through that way. The Ragsdale Ferry was a popular crossing. There is a new toll bridge, or was, near this old crossing.

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Jewett and Campbell got most of their goods from Honey Grove, Texas, about thirty miles south. All these goods were brought in by wagons. Cutting, baling and selling prairie grass hay was a good and active business around Tulip Ferry. There were thousands of acres of fine prairie grass cut each year. This prairie grass found a ready and profitable market in Texas, where most of it was sold.

In 1902 I came to Alluwe on the Verdigris River, between Nowata and Chelsea where some oil wells were being drilled. That was the beginning of, or the opening of the oil fields up in that section. The Texas, Pan-American and Cosden were early oil operators. From there I came to the Tulsa section working in and about refineries. The first refineries at Tulsa had to provide for their own water supply and I worked for a company which dug wells for these refineries. These wells ranged from eight to twelve feet in diameter and were dug to the shale. They were walled up with brick. All refineries at Tulsa used these wells until city water was available. We got from \$800.00 to \$1200.00 each for putting down

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these wells. We operated at Muskogee and Cleveland. We dug these wells with clam shells and derricks.

Editor's Note: Ragsdale, a town non-existent now, is not the Ragsdale in Beaver County.