

BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

203

Field Worker's name Robert H. Boatman

This report made on (date) March 17, 1938

- 1. Name T. T. Erwin
- 2. Post Office Address Route #2, Blanchard, Oklahoma
- 3. Residence address (or location) _____
- 4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 12 Year 1875
- 5. Place of birth Texas

- 6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____
- 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 3 sheets.

ERWIN, T. T.

INTERVIEW

#10335

Investigator
Robert H. Boatman
March 17, 1938

Interview with T. T. Erwin
Blanchard, Oklahoma

I came from Texas, in which state I was born, November 12, 1875, to the Indian Territory, in the year 1882, with my parents, when I was seven years old.

We first settled in the Chickasaw Nation at or near old Oakland which was then a country store. A country store in those days did little business, as they kept in stock only a very few supplies such as tobacco and coffee.

For our supplies we had to go either to Denison or Sherman, Texas, usually to Denison which was the principal trading point for the people through this section of the Territory. The only means of transportation was by team and wagon and in many instances a week would be required to make the trip as no roads nor bridges were known, and sometimes a team would get bogged. I have spent as much time as a whole day getting out of some bog.

My first home in the Territory was a log hut, of the very crudest type, which had a dirt floor and stick and dirt chimney. The fireplace was used for cooking.

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Grass grew everywhere, from one to three feet high, and in the Fall of the year people were in constant fear of fire. I remember that in 1890 a range fire got started and everyone had to fight fire for a week. Several homes were lost with all the possessions and several people came near losing their lives in the effort to escape from the roaring fire which swept the country.

The principal food at first consisted mainly of corn-bread, beef and wild game which was killed from the range. Turkey and deer were plentiful and the whole country was full of quail.

Polk Warren was United States Marshal in this section. All courts were either at Paris, Texas, or Fort Smith, Arkansas, and only the worst offenders were taken to court, such as murderers and horse-thieves. Minor offences were hardly ever given much attention for small differences were generally settled by agreement, arbitration, or at the point of a Six Shooter or Winchester.

The Chickasaw Indians were very friendly but were very bad to drink. They would ride across to Denison and buy whiskey then get on their horses and head back for Red River and gener-

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ally it was a race for an officer was sure to try and catch them.

The schools of the Territory were of a very poor type. Terms lasted only from two to three months and this was by subscription. I secured very little education, though I would not exchange my growing up in the new country for it was as I grew up that I developed some of the greatest friendships of my life among the Chickasaw Indians. I knew the Keels, Coatneys and Kings; these were my very best personal friends.

My very first employment in the Territory, as I remember, was riding range as a cowboy. Later, after I had grown up and the country was being developed to agriculture, I became engaged in the business of farming at which occupation I have since continued.

Oakland still exists, though may now well be termed West Madill, located in what is now Marshall County.