

FERGUSON, HUGH ALEXANDER,

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Merrill A. Nelson.

This report made on (date) July 26, 1937. 193

1. Name Hugh Ferguson.

2. Post Office Address Fairmount, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 2 1/2 blocks south of his shop.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 4 Year 1866.
The shop is 1/2 block east of P.O.

5. Place of birth Denton County, Texas. (Not in town).

6. Name of Father James Ferguson. Place of birth Tennessee.

Other information about father A cooper by trade.

7. Name of Mother Susan Mizzell. Place of birth Georgia.

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 _____

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Merrill A. Nelson,
Field Worker,
July 26, 1937.

Interview With Hugh Ferguson,
Fairmount, Oklahoma.

My father was a hooper by trade; he would make some excellent churns and buckets. My mother had twelve children of which I was the youngest.

When I was two my father died, leaving me almost an orphan. My mother being a widow, and remaining so almost all the rest of her life, it became necessary for me to start a little earlier and work a little harder than the average boy. We learned to reverence our mother, who held our home together and prepared us for the battle of life. I lived in Denton County, Texas, and as a boy I remember getting up at 4:30 A. M. and milking eight or more cows, then with cotton sack in hand, waiting for daylight to commence work. We had open range in those days which meant we must go for the cows as well as milk them.

At an early age I had to buy my own things, clothes and any extras I wanted. I raised my own horse and also

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bought a saddle for him with money I had earned. The stage line used to stop at my uncle's, from Grayson to Farmington, Texas. They would stop there at his place for teams and shelter. The old stages were drawn by four small mules; some of the old stages rotted down at my uncle's place. This stage stop was located twelve miles south of Sherman, Texas. I used to play in these coaches as a boy.

When I was sixteen one day I was up early, milked eight cows, fed and saddled my horse, picked 205 pounds of cotton for which I received \$2.05 and returned to milk the cows again. By the time I was seventeen I was binding wheat by hand and was working on a ranch. At twenty-two I punched cattle on the Diamond Tail Ranch, whose brand looked like this - . I was a fairly good rider and a fairly good roper but I sometimes had to pull both hair and leather. I worked on the ranch for several years.

About forty-four years ago I moved to the Chickasaw Nation, twelve miles north of Ardmore, at Dougherty. One day I received a letter from Miss Tempe Green Marshall of

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Boone County, Arkansas, saying that she would marry me. So I drove up there. We were married and returned in my one horse buggy.

My first dealings with the Indians were with the Chickasaws; this was sometime before that country was broken up into allotments. One thing I noticed was the monuments erected by the Indians to mark their trails which were placed in prominent places. The Indians also liked spotted horses.

My wife and I settled down at Comanche, twelve miles south of Duncan, where our first baby was born in 1894.

I put up the first barber shop there in Comanche and stayed in Comanche a couple of years then moved to Cordell. There was one store and blacksmith shop there then and I built the first building there, the others having been moved there from the old town which was one mile east.

There were many Indians there; I learned to talk Cheyenne and many of the Indians were my customers. I became friendly with them and was well acquainted with many of them.

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We moved from there to Snyder, where we stayed a number of years. I put up the first barber shop in Snyder. I saw the worst tornado in Snyder which is famous for tornadoes. This was the one which killed 187 people. I was working in town and reached my farm home four miles in the country just in time to miss being struck by it. I wanted to go back and warn everyone of its approach but my wife prevented my going. The cloud was of an unusual shape even for a cyclone. There was an upper funnel, big at the top and small at the bottom, then there was a lower funnel, small at the top and big right next to the ground. These two funnels were connected in the middle but I will not say whether they were revolving in the same direction or not. The middle of the twister was in mid-air. Most funnels are small near the ground in this type of storm. Above the whirling mass was a large cloud which moved steadily forward in one direction.

My crops dried up on this farm so I moved back to Cordell where I lived a short time, then moved to Florida and stayed about a year.

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One time, two sharpers tried to rob me. I pretended I was a green boy from the country but when they jumped off the train I got off the other side and made connections instead of going around in front of the train where they expected to meet me. This was near Sanford.

About sixteen or seventeen years ago I came back to Cordell. I bought a building and lived there, my shop and home being together, as they had been in Comanche. When I moved to Carnegie a little later I brought a three chair shop and stayed there for five years. The Kiowas at Carnegie would come to me for advice; they liked me and called me their friend. I was well acquainted with Comanches there and learned some of their language. The Comanche for 'I have no money' is: "Ka' chot kahait to yaw way". The Kiowa word for 50¢ was "pah hes". All the Indians would paint their legs; the Cheyennes would paint theirs spotted.

The Kiowas had good kitchen stoves, the same as we. I do not know how other tribes of Indians cooked. The Kiowas lived in good houses provided by the Government, but they loved to spend their social times in arbors built

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near these houses. They dressed nicely, the better class using very fine American clothes and the poorer class using an inferior grade of store clothes according to their station in life.

At Cordell where I first met the plains Indians in considerable numbers we would have picnics and the Indians would have stomp dances. The Kiowas and the Cheyennes had no instruments but drums.

There were many Kiowas and Comanches at Carnegie. The Kiowas had an old church at Mountain View. I could not say just when this was built.

The northern Indians used to come down the Chisholm Trail to trade. There were trading posts up and down the trail where they liked to barter and the eastern Indians liked to go to the western plains to hunt.

I was at Fort Sill one time when the Government paid off the Comanche and Kiowa Indians. They poured the money on the ground; that was in the days when old Fort Sill was still operating, before the construction of new Fort Sill.

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The Cheyennes would dance in a circle. They varied in this respect from the Kiowas who would dance two or three at a time. The Kiowas had bells on their legs, and the men would beat drums while the women sang..

The Indians loved to play ball. They were expert both in the American game and in their own games and one of their games, they would sit around in a circle and pass a ball around with sticks.

Quanah Parker was a prominent Comanche acquaintance of mine. He was about six feet tall and a good, intelligent Indian who could talk good English.

The Kiowa Indians buried much the same as we do. I saw Gotebo buried. First a white man talked and then an Indian. That was about the only difference between their burial and ours.

Another prominent Kiowa Indian was Big Tree. I knew him forty years; he used to charge people for crossing the Washita, but he never made me pay. He was a dangerous Indian before the Government made him behave. One man when he asked him to pay cut at him with his knife.

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I have four boys living, two of whom are fine mechanics. One works for the Greenlease Moore Company in Oklahoma City, where he is one of the leading mechanics and the other for the McCormick-Deering agency at Covington. My third eldest works for a gas refinery two miles west of the state capitol at Oklahoma City. The other works for a dry goods firm in Blackwell.

I never had any success filing for a claim so I think my homestead rights are still good. I had made a run for a claim in Washita County, but secured a poor piece and relinquished it. Then in Kiowa County, I bought a relinquishment, got a deed and sold out later.