

FISHER, J. B.

INTERVIEW

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81

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BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Robert H. Boatman

This report made on (date) August 13, 1937

**Mr. J. B. Fisher**

1. Name Mr. J. B. Fisher

2. Post Office Address Byars, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 17 Year 1869

5. Place of birth Missouri

6. Name of Father B. G. Fisher Place of birth Missouri

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Sally J.J. Ferguson Place of birth Missouri

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 \_\_\_\_\_

FISHER, J. B. INTERVIEW

8213

Robert H. Boatman,  
Interviewer,  
August 13, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. J.P. Fisher,  
Byars, Oklahoma.

I came from Missouri to the Indian Territory, arriving here on March 4, 1895. After coming to the Territory I stopped in the Pottawatomie Country, near Tecumseh and began teaching school.

It was in 1897 that the great Indian burning took place near the Seminole line.

In 1898, the Government decided to lay out a townsite and Tecumseh was then holding out for it.

Tecumseh had at that time a four mile limit law and continued to hold out. The Government offered them fifty thousand dollars for the land and yet they would not accept the terms so after some delay the government moved over some four to five miles North of Tecumseh just across on the north side of the North Canadian River and there they laid out the townsite of Shawnee. Then at once a town fight began and after several hard

FISHER, J. B. INTERVIEW 8213

- 2 -

and bitter fights Shawnee won the county seat from Tecumseh.

During this <sup>time I</sup> removed to Sulphur and built the first store ever to be built in Sulphur. I remained at Sulphur until 1901, when I came to what is now the eastern part of McClain County and went into the mercantile business at old Johnsonville, located just south of the South Canadian River.

There was some talk of a new town to be built two miles south of Johnsonville and a very bitter feeling was existing then. The following year the Santa Fe Railroad started building North from Pauls Valley and it was in April, 1902, that the new townsite was staked for Byars and the feeling of the people at Johnsonville was so very tense that I moved my business from Johnsonville to the new town of Byars. I had the first store in Byars in 1902, but the next day following the opening of my store came a drug store and the next day another grocery store but the fight between the towns was so bad that it was not until 1903 that a depot and post office at Byars were established. With the establishment

FISHER, J. B.

INTERVIEW

8213

- 3 -

of the depot the town fight became worse and buildings were burned time after time at each of the towns and as they were destroyed time after time they would be rebuilt for we were fully determined to have the new town of Byars and the town people of Johnsonville were as determined that we should not have it and so it was a bitter fight and the business men moved one by one from Johnsonville to Byars.

The town of Byars took its name from a very early-day settler, Mr. A.D. Byar.

The people of Johnsonville were very bitter and some two or three years later the post office at Johnsonville was discontinued. All mail routes then being fully established with the Post Office at Byars. The people at Johnsonville would not come to Byars even for their supplies but would go some distance to McGee and to old Sacred Heart.

It was some ten or twelve years before our neighbors of the town which used to be Johnsonville became fully reconciled and began coming over to our town. This was

FISHER, J. B.

INTERVIEW

8213

- 4 -

the worst situation that I have ever known in a town fight.

Our town of Byars continued to grow and prosper, and at one time was the most thriving town in McClain County.

We had many good stores; we had grocery stores, dry good stores, hardware stores, drug stores and a very strong bank. so after all my travels and business experiences I decided that Byars should be my permanent home and after several years in the mercantile business I sold out my business and have now retired .

I have lived in the town of Byars ever since. the first stake for the townsite was driven into the ground.