

FREEMAN, MELVIN

INTERVIEW

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Form A-(S-149)

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

Field Worker's name Robert H. Boatman.

This report made on (date) August 24, 1937. 1937

1. Name Melvin. Freeman.
2. Post Office Address Blanchard, Oklahoma Route #4.
3. Residence address (or location) Dibble, Oklahoma.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 1 Year 1854.
5. Place of birth Georgia, Murray County.

6. Name of Father Vernie Freeman. Place of birth Georgia.
Other information about father _____
7. Name of Mother Linday Adams. 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 4.

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Robert H. Boatman,
Interviewer,
August 24, 1937.

An Interview With Melvin Freeman,
Blanchard, Oklahoma. Route #4.

I was born in Murray County, Georgia, September 1, 1854, and there I lived and grew up. In 1875, my father's family and I left Georgia. We had a wagon and team and started out for Arkansas.

Wagons and teams were the only conveyance we knew then besides a few steamboats on the river, so we crossed the Mississippi River at Memphis, Tennessee, on a steamboat. Then, after six weeks of weary travel we finally settled near Ozark, Arkansas, and here I was married.

After twelve years there I left Arkansas with a wagon and team and crossed the Arkansas River on a ferry boat at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and headed for Texas in 1887.

I crossed Red River at Denison, Texas, on a ferry boat. Denison was five years old at that time, the first building having been built in 1882. I remained there till 1896, then again harnessed my team and started for

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the Territory with a few cattle, this time crossing Red River by fording it. A little old ferry boat is too slow for a bunch of cattle and the river was shallow enough at several places to ford.

I settled on Mill Creek, some sixteen miles from Davis, in the Chickasaw Nation. There were lots of Indians in that country and I at once set out to make friends with them. As the Chickasaw tribe was a very peaceful and friendly people I soon gained their friendship. I would kill a big beef and barbecue it and invite them in for a feast and many accepted my invitation. We would have an all day barbecue and some of the Indians would stay far into the night, then maybe next morning some of them would come over and want me to let them help do something in return.

I took a lease from a Chickasaw Indian, Will Tyson, who was a great leader among the tribe. He was a very peculiar Indian, every time I would meet him he would have his pipe and always say, "esta-Se-bun-da savvy?"

I started clearing out some of the land for a crop, but remained in the cow business also. The greatest

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difficulty there was that there were no roads and no churches or schools.

I cut logs and built a small house with a dirt floor and covered it with boards made from post oak timber.

My trading post was old Davis, which was located near the Washita River. It was one of the first towns ever established in the Chickasaw Nation. Davis has grown to a very good sized town, still located at the very place of its first starting. It was in 1898 that a man by the name of J. B. Fisher came to Sulphur Spring (there was only one spring there then) and there was a big cottonwood log sticking in the ground with the water coming out the knot holes. This man put in a store and soon another came then another, it seemed as though Sulphur would be a great city in only a very short time.

A person had to be very alert and watchful at all times for the rattlesnakes, they were very numerous. Sometimes as many as fifteen or twenty could be found in colonies. There were what were called snake dens in

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winter when the weather was very cold. A den could be dug into and the rattlers would be just piled up, great rolls of them rolled together. Rattlesnakes traveled in colonies as a rule and at night they have some secluded place such as a hollow log or a hole in the ground and in such places great numbers of them have been found, though next morning they all come out and resume their journey.

With the development of Sulphur the country was settled so fast it could hardly be told how it all happened. Towns began to spring up, railroads were built almost in every direction, roads were established permanently, bridges built; people just seemed to come from no where. The change was so fast I hardly knew where I was until I found the land was all being leased. I was in a poor position with a bunch of cattle as far as a free range was concerned, for when a man took a lease I was supposed to keep my cattle off his lease.

I decided to move where the town of Dibble is now. I have lived here for thirty-seven years and expect to remain here the rest of my life, as I am growing very feeble and there is not any other place I could call home.