

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

Field Worker's name Bessie L. Thomas

This report made on (date) January 15, 1938 1938

1. Name A. J. Fulbright

2. Post Office Address Cache, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 3 Miles North Cache

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 12 Year 1860

5. Place of birth Oak Ridge, Missouri.

6. Name of Father John Fulbright Place of birth Oak Ridge, Missouri.

Other information about father Farmer

7. Name of Mother Matilda Mayfield Place of birth Oak Ridge, Missouri

Other information about mother Housewife

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 8.

FULBRIGHT, A. J.

INTERVIEW

#9702

Bessie L. Thomas
Investigator
January 15, 1938.

Interview with A. J. Fulbright,
3 Miles North of Cache.

I was born August 12, 1860, at Oak Ridge, Missouri, the youngest of six brothers and seven sisters. My father was a farmer and as he had so many mouths to feed I decided when I was seventeen to strike out for myself. We children received very little education, the three "R's" were the only subjects taught in a country school in those days and terms were only three or four months.

When I was seventeen I went to the Chickasaw Nation, just across Red River fifteen miles north of Gainesville, Texas, when Gainesville was just a new town without a railroad and only a few shacks, and started farming. I batched and worked until late at night, trying to make a living in a new country; had mostly Indians for neighbors, Chickasaws and Choctaws. One neighbor, a Chickasaw, Harrison McClain, and his wife, a red-headed white woman, were good to me and doctored me when I had chills and fever. McClain's mother gathered roots and herbs and made the medicine to doctor me with and took care of me for two months, until I became strong

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enough to get around. She would snare rabbits and other game, cook them up some way and feed me the broth.

While I was sick, one night I dreamed that I was healing people of cancers, taking off warts and healing other long standing sores. One day after I had become well, but was too weak to work yet, I was sitting in my dugout and thought of the dream. I decided the first chance I got I would practice on someone, so the next time I went to town I hunted up an old person who had had a running sore on his leg for years, told him what I wanted to do and asked if I could experiment on him. He said, "Go ahead young man, but I don't believe in sech". I rubbed my hands on the sore, talking all the time and went on home. The next time I went to town I hunted up the old man and his leg was well. After that, I did a lot of that kind of work. Have taken off warts of long standing, cancers, and other sores from scores of people during my life. Since living in Cache a doctor wanted me to travel with him over the country, and heal people, said we would make thousands of dollars this way. I told him if I began charging, I would not have any results and refused to go with him.

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I was sick a great deal while living on a farm near the river, so in 1885 moved up to where Ardmore is today and leased another farm, and farmed; I also raised cattle and horses. I became acquainted with a neighbor family named Thomas, who had a blue-eyed daughter that I began to make eyes at. In 1892 Mattie Thomas and I were married near Ardmore. My wife was a second cousin of Cynthia Ann Parker.

I lived in the Chickasaw country twenty years. When I first went there it was almost a wilderness and when I left there it had begun to be settled by white people from the northern and eastern states, who were beginning to hear so much of the Indian country and were desirous of seeking new homes in a new land.

Quanah Parker had been writing to my wife's people for over a year asking them to come to Comanche County and take up land where he was living, so in the fall of 1900, I, with my family and my wife's parents, started for Southwestern Oklahoma where the town of Cache later sprang up in 1902. I leased land from Quanah Parker, living on his land five years and paying him to graze my cattle and horses on his grass land.

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We moved from Ardmore in covered wagons, making the trip in three days. There were no roads, only trails and the creeks to follow. We would follow a creek a ways, then out again across the prairie, camping at nights, tired and worn from travel.

Duncan was the nearest town and we had to go there to buy groceries and feed, going in covered wagons one day and coming back the next. The nearest doctor was at Fort Sill. One night I started after a doctor for my wife, it was a dark stormy night and I had no mode of travel except on horseback. It took all night for the trip. I got home at daybreak and that day our third baby girl was born; the Indians came from miles around to see the white baby.

My herd of cattle and horses grew until I had a herd of almost six hundred. Quanah Parker had no more grazing land so I had to begin pasturing in the Wichita Preserve, paying the Government for pasturage by the year. Bobcats and coyotes were bad to attack the young calves and I have killed many a "varmint", sometimes with a shotgun, but more often in traps.

After retiring from active farming, for years I had a trapping permit to trap in ^{the} forest preserve; furs from bobcats,

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coyotes and wolves brought a good price several years ago.

For years I have lived among the Comanche Indians without any trouble; they lived in tepees when I first came to this country. In 1902 the Indians died like rats, with small-pox. We had some good Indian friends, among them Black-moon and family who lived close to us. One morning he and his wife were found in their tent with their heads chopped open; the other Indians thought their son-in-law had killed them. In early days before the Indians had homes, all their cooking was done out-of-doors on open camp fires; I have seen them many times preparing meals. One day I was watching an old squaw prepare bread. She turned around to poke the fire when her dog came along; a mangy one, full of sores. He went to eating the bread dough and she picked him up with her hands covered with dough, set him out of the way and went back to mixing bread without washing her hands. I have known of Indians eating decayed meat from a calf or cow that had lain dead in the woods for several days; rotten, fly-blown meat that you would think would have poisoned and killed a white person.

The Comanches would never talk much to white people even though they could and today most of the older ones are still that way.

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The Apaches, while prisoners of war at Fort Sill, were more talkative to white people and I made friends with several of them who were good enough to help me more than once when I was out looking for a cow or calf that had strayed from my herd. They could find them when white people couldn't, as they knew every canyon in the mountains and around the reservation. I was at Fort Sill the day the Apaches started to the reservation in New Mexico.

A part of the trail used by George B. McClellan, when he went from his camp on Red River to Fort Gibson, runs through my cow lot. I have seen the spring where McClellan was camped, the water in it was boiling all the time, going around, and around, and down, instead of boiling up. That is how it got its name, "Auger". Whether it is there today I do not know.

When I was a small child my hair was white and my folks got to calling me cotton-head. That was too long, so they cut it down to "Cot". After I became grown and got a few cattle I decided to brand them Cot, so that is how my cattle ever after were branded C.O.T.

When I was young I stood six feet-two in my stocking feet, a picture of health. I have always worn a broad brimmed cowboy

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hat, and still do. Today I walk with a shuffling gait, use a cane and am stooped from rheumatism. On warm summer days I sit on my front porch and watch the sun come up over the mountain and in foggy or damp weather I watch the mist rise from the hills, smoke my pipe and see pictures in the mist of happy days gone by, even though they were hard days of work and worry. Our home is surrounded by the Wichitas, Loaf of Bread and Biscuit Mountains on the southeast, Juanah Parker Mountain on the west and Dead Man's Mountain on the southwest. This latter one was so named because the Comanches years ago buried their dead on top of it; they would carry a body to the top and either drop it in a crevice, or poke it under a ledge and pile rock on top. They carried the body on a horse up the mountain, buried all personal belongings with it, then went home and killed all the stock belonging to the dead person. Even today some of the Comanches will never again live in a house where one of their family has died.

The reason the Indians used to have so many dogs was that they would never kill one, did not believe in doing so. The Wichitas used to abound in rattlesnakes and still there are a plenty. I have killed hundreds and shipped some for

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which I took pay, but I have helped many a sick friend by giving them snake and skunk-oil free. I would bring the snakes to the house, skin them and my wife would fry out the oil on her kitchen stove.

In a modest little bungalow, three miles north of Cache, I live, a retired cattleman. My wife and I have settled down to dream and reminisce of other days gone by, days of hardship spent in a new and western country, yet happy days, days of work and a fight to keep going, trying each day to make a living from a dry parched land in South-western Oklahoma, when the country was new and when each night could be heard the howls of coyotes, or the scream of a panther, together with the beating of Indian tom-toms.
