

GILLILAND, J. L.

INTERVIEW

0712

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

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GILLILAND, J. L. INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name Ida B. Lankford,

This report made on (date) January 20, 1938 1938

1. Name J. L. Gilliland

2. Post Office Address Cordell, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) R. R. Three

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 18, Year 1861

5. Place of birth Ringo County, Iowa

6. Name of Father Jo Gilliland Place of birth Indiana

Other information about father Farmer

7. Name of Mother Mary Nuts Place of birth Pennsylvania

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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Field Worker, Ida B. Lankford,
January 20, 1938.

Interview with J. L. Gilliland,
Cordell, Oklahoma.

An Early Day History.

We came from Wichita, Kansas, June 2, 1892, in covered wagons, filed on land and built a dugout, then broke some land. I freighted our supplies from ElReno.

I worked in a sawmill on the Washita River, belonging to Jack Osten, sawing cottonwood lumber to cover the dugouts.

I have started to ElReno to get a load of freight when it was snowing and be gone from ten to fifteen days or sometimes longer. I have been in blizzards and thought I would freeze in spite of all I could do. I would have to make a big campfire. We didn't have any roads, just drove across the prairie, sometimes driving off in a canyon and getting out the best way we could. As we didn't have bridges then, we had to ford all rivers and

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creeks any place we could. A man and I hauled two thousand bushels of corn across the Washita River, and sold it for fifteen cents a bushel.

There was no Cordell in Washita County when I came here. Later H. D. Young came and put in a general merchandise store, a mile and a half east from where the present Cordell now stands. Then Aunt Tillida Smith put in the post office and that was all the town we had. In 1902 Cordell was moved to the place it now stands. We didn't have any railroads before 1900, but Cordell gradually grew. There were two more stores put in, seven saloons, and one wagon-yard. Things began to pick up and we later got the county seat moved from Cloud Chief to Cordell. We had hard times but did not mind, we didn't have the Government to help and the old age pension.

When I first came here to the Territory there were no schools. Later we built dugouts and sod houses for our schools and churches.

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I remember once going to El Reno and was gone three weeks. It came a big rain and all the rivers were out of banks. When we got to the Washita River, we were close to home so we left our wagons sit, took our horses and swam the river. We got home for over-night but had a tough time in getting across the river.

We had plenty of milk, butter, corn bread and sorghum molasses to eat and that was almost all we had .

We had green cottonwood to burn and would have to rustle that; we also went over the prairie and gathered cow-chips to burn with the green cottonwood. We had lots of prairie dogs and fleas.

I got along with the Indians fine, I gave them all my dead horses and cattle, The cholera would get in my hogs and now those Indians would flock in and butcher the hogs, and in this way they were my friends. I remember in 1893, I farmed a mean old Indian's land. He told me I could have all I could make if I would farm the land. He was so mean everyone was afraid of him, but I got on the good side of him. I would brag on him, tell

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him how good he was, give him dead stock, sometimes chickens. I went hunting with him and gave him the quail, squirrels, and coons. Folks thought him so mean and didn't think there was a good spot in him but he was very good to me. I made a very good crop on his land. I started going to the Indian dances and this old Indian would always look after me. He has been dead for several years.

I really enjoyed the Indian dances. They would beat drums all night long, just a thump, thump, thump, and then give the war whoops. I have seen the old squaws dance with their little papoose on their backs.

We had some big prairie fires. I always got on my horse and rode to the Indians' camp and helped them save as many of their tepees as we could. I had my land broke around my dugout and was very well protected from the fires.

At this time I am a very old man. I live by myself on the farm. I filed on. I have an additional one hun-

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dred and sixty acres of land joining this home farm.

I am very glad I don't have to be on the old age pension,
which I think is a very good thing. I think of all
those old days over and over. I am so glad this woman
came to talk to me about the old days. Many days I sit
very lonely and see no one.
