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BOAKE, R. L.

INTERVIEW

#9948

1

BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

2

Field Worker's name Lillian GassawayThis report made on (date) February 18. 1938

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1. Name R. L. Boake
 2. Post Office Address Anadarko, Oklahoma
 3. Residence address (or location) 906 West Central Blvd.
 4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month x Day x Year 1870
 5. Place of birth

-
6. Name of Father Place of birth
Other information about father
 7. Name of Mother Place of birth
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 5.

Lillian Cassaway
Investigator
February 18, 1938.

Interview with R. L. Boake
906 West Central Boulevard
Anadarko, Oklahoma.

I was an Indian trader for sometime before the opening and then opened a store in the new Anadarko. My father was an Indian trader in the Cheyenne and Arapaho country before I came here in 1893. The licensed trade was a kind of political game. A trader would apply for a license to the Interior Department. When and if this license was granted he put up bond and a license was granted for one year. This was politics. If a Democratic president was elected then all Republicans were put off the reservation. Then when a Republican was elected the Democrats had to go. Sometimes a Democrat or Republican would stay through a political administration of the opposing party but not often.

There were no laws except those made by the Interior Department. We had strict orders and had to abide by them. There could be no firearms or ammunition sold to the Indians without an order from the agent or with his permission. No whiskey could be sold to the Indians. The reason we could not sell firearms and ammunition to the Indians was that

the Government was afraid that the Indians would go on the war path and use these firearms. Though through the Government orders we could sell the Indians firearms, we were not allowed to buy firearms from them, no matter how they had secured them. I could never understand why this was so. It would surely have been less guns on the Indians side. When the Indians were issued beeves they would bring the hides to the traders. The traders had a buyer to look after the hides. The Indians could trade most anything for groceries but the traders had to pay cash for the hides. We would give the hide man (the man who looked after the hides) the hide checks and he would go to the hide yard and if the hide was worth \$ 2.00 he would give the Indian a hide check for \$ 2.00. The Indian would come to the store and get the silver for it. Many times he would spend it right there in the store. But it was his to do what he wanted to with it and he had to have the cash. Though the laws for selling firearms were so strict, in later years the agent became more slack in enforcing it saying, "Oh go ahead and let the Indian have it; the Indians are not going on the war path any more, that has all been taken out of them". But as long as I was on the reservation I never sold an Indian a gun or

ammunition. During Col. Frank D. Baldwin's time as agent here the Indians were issued cattle for breeding purposes. One , one-year-old heifer was given to each man and one male to every twenty-five cows. These cattle were shipped in here from Louisiana and were unloaded at Chickasha. These sent to Fort Sill were unloaded at Rush-Springs and Ninnekah. These cattle were shipped double decked which was the first time I ever heard of shipping cattle double decked. Jack Stilwell was the inspector of these cattle. He would throw them and thumb them. He would run his thumb over the front teeth to see if the heifer was one or two years old. If it was two years old he would refuse to accept it. After the inspection the cattle were taken to the slaughter pen, or issue pen, on Bill Deitrich's place and issued to the Indians. These cattle were branded with the Indian's individual rod number and tribe initial. If the Indian was a Kiowa and his number was 120, his brand would be K120. These cattle could not be sold and if one of them was found where it should not be it could be returned to the rightful owner. If the Indians had taken care of these cattle they would have been rich by the time the

country opened but this was hard to do as the cattle would not stay in one place. The Indians ate part of the cattle I suspect and then when they would come to the Agency some of them were stolen, maybe by their own tribe for food.

Earlier than this though the Caddoes had raised cattle and horses. The Caddoes were more progressive than many other Indians but all the Indians had plenty of horses. When the country opened two Comanches had quite a nice herd of cattle but had to sell them for lack of range.

Going back to the Indian traders, Jesse Chisholm used to come through the Indian country, just after the war, with such wares as the Indians might want. He came in a wagon. Then Tim Peete worked for Mead when he brought things in a wagon to sell to the Indians. They sold sugar by the cupful, one cup for 25 cents. There wasn't any such thing as white sugar then. There was only brown sugar, and it was carried in a sack. There is a story that goes like this. One day Tim was going around with his wagon of wares. An old Indian wanted some sugar. The tin cup that Tim had to measure with had lost its handle. So in handling it he had to put his thumb in the cup.

The Indian watched and then said; "Wait, Sim-pa-ziddleby (dangerous beard), wait. Now look at that cup. It doesn't have any handle. Now, I don't mind your thumb in the sugar but please keep your hand out". Tim Peete worked in Colonel Fred's store for about twenty years after that. Colonel Fred was another Indian trader.