

HANCOCK, WILLIAM A. INTERVIEW 13255

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

HANCOCK, WILLIAM A. - INTERVIEW.

13233

Field Worker's name Ella Robinson

This report made on (date) March 16, 1938. 1938

1. Name William A. Hancock

2. Post Office Address Muskogee, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 1209 Fremont

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year 1866

5. Place of birth Mississippi

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

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Robinson, Ella - Investigator.  
Indian Pioneer History-S-149.  
March 16, 1938.

Interview with William A. Hancock.  
Muskogee, Oklahoma.

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I was born in northern Mississippi in 1866 and lived there until 1891, at which time I came to the Indian Territory. My older brother had come west prior to that time and was living at Pryor Creek where he was engaged in the insurance business. I immediately went to work with him, but that kind of work did not appeal to me as I wanted something with more activity to it.

One day I happened to go to Choteau where Mr. J. C. Hogan was engaged in the General Mercantile business. I did not know Mr. Hogan very well, but I asked him if he needed any more help and told him that I would like to make a change. He said he did need help and asked when I could begin. When I told him "right now" he told me to go home and get my clothes, that I was hired. It never occurred to me to ask what my salary would be, in fact, I didn't think anything about the pay. I only knew that I had a job that I would like.

Mr. Hogan was a white man, who was born in Georgia,

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and had come to the Indian Territory with the family of Mr. John Adair who were Cherokees, in 1869, driving one of the wagons through. The Adairs were related to the Mayes and Fields families and Mr. Hogan married Mr. Adair's daughter, Margaret, thereby becoming a Cherokee citizen, with all the rights and privileges of citizenship.

The Adair family located on Barren Fork and lived there for some time, then moved to Pryor Creek, a small trading post on the Katy railroad. Mr. Hogan was employed by Mr. Adair for some time, but seeing the possibilities for a fine cattle business, he began buying a yearling or two at a time until he acquired a small herd of cattle; Adding to his herd each year, he began the business in real earnest. In the meantime he had operated the store at Choteau.

When I began working for him he employed seven clerks and carried not only dry-goods and groceries but everything needed on a farm. The farm land around Choteau was productive and the range for stock wide and fine. It was no trouble for any man to make money in those days, if he attended to business.

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Cattle were fattened on the range and enough prairie hay was put up to feed them through the winter.

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Among the men employed in the store were David Tadpole, George Pumpkin, and Dan Hogshooter, all full blood Cherokees. As a majority of our customers were full bloods, it was quite necessary to have clerks who both understood and spoke the language.

After I had been working there for some time I chanced to notice on the books that my salary was \$60.00 per month. I was greatly pleased as that was a top salary at that time.

The little village of Choteau was small and the residences in the country few and far between, but we were not without social life for dances, parties, picnics, barbecues, political meetings and church affairs all came in their place. The Cherokee families were closely related and visited with one another frequently.

In 1885 Mr. W. A. Graham, a white man from Missouri, came to Pryor, and he and Mr. Hogan formed a partnership in both the mercantile and cattle business. Mr. Hogan had \$11,000.00 and Mr. Graham secured the same amount, and they invested it in Texas cattle. Every year the business was expanded and their cattle ranged from Pryor Creek to Choteau and as far west as they cared to. Mr. Graham being a non-citizen, the business went in Mr. Hogan's name, as at that

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time a non-citizen was not allowed to operate a business in the Cherokee Nation.

In 1890 they opened a small store at Pryor Creek, Mr. Graham taking charge of it. Mr. Hogan remained at Choteau and I managed the store and ranch. The cattle business was at its height then. At one time Mr. Hogan shipped eight thousand head of fat beef cattle, receiving more than \$80,000.00 for them. During the time just prior to the big Cherokee payment we extended credit to all those who were entitled to participate in the payment. We had \$160,000.00 indebtedness on our books and when the payment was made in '94 we collected all but \$700.00 and some of that was where a death had occurred.

In 1894 I married Mr. Hogan's daughter, Viola, and we continued to live at Choteau. In 1904 it was made lawful for a white man to operate a business in his own name and Hogan and Graham divided the business, Mr. Hogan taking the cattle and Mr. Graham the store. The store at Choteau was moved to Pryor Creek and the Hogans built a comfortable home just outside the town. As the farms were improved and the cattle business increased the town grew.

I bought the Joel Mayes home, a ten-room house, and

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farm ten miles east of town near Grand River, paying \$5000.

for it. We had seven children, all of whom are living.

When the lands were allotted, my family took their allotments there and altogether we had four hundred and sixty acres of fine farming land, and many acres of wood-land and pasture.

After a time my wife's health failed and we went west and lived for some time. Returning, I sold the home place, including the house, to Mr. J. T. Haizlip, for city property in Muskogee, and moved here. I was employed for six years in the county Assessor's offices and have put the valuation on every piece of property in Muskogee.

My wife's mother died in 1926 and her father in 1930. The old Hogan home is standing and is owned by the heirs as is approximately one thousand acres of land. There are four sets of heirs to the property and the income is equally divided. In December 1936, my wife died.