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Buffalo Hunter
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Nesters

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

Field Worker's name Ethel B. Tackitt.

This report made on (date) July 15, 1937. 1937

1. Name Jess Lynn.

2. Post Office Address Lugart Kiowa County, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) SE 34-T5-R19.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 22 Year 1877.

5. Place of birth Texas.

6. Name of Father Jess Lynn Place of birth Illinois.

Other information about father Born in 1844. Buffalo hunter.

7. Name of Mother Caroline Crumm Lynn Place of birth Illinois.

Other information about mother Nothing given.

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 11.

Ethel B. Tackitt,
Interviewer.

An Interview With Jess Lynn,
Lugart Kiowa County, Oklahoma.

My parents moved from Illinois to Texas in a very early time and I was born in Texas on October 10, 1877.

My father was a buffalo hunter for years and traveled over the western plains' country and the western part of the present state of Oklahoma, taking part in the great slaughter of buffalo herds which was thought to be the only way in which to subdue the western tribes of Indians.

He, with other buffalo hunters would relate many stories of these hunts which were of wonderful interest to me. He said that in hunting the buffalo, they would be found in great herds feeding up on the short grass with which the face of the country was covered.

There was always a leader among these buffalo and when the leader scented the approach of the hunter, he would break to run. The whole herd would follow after him no matter what was in the way, therefore it was the custom of the hunters to spot the leader and when he started to run to shoot him down. The herd would continue to mill around in that direction and buffalo could be slaughtered by the wholesale.

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One afternoon my father sighted a herd and made the usual approach on the down wind side. He reached a spot near the herd before they discovered him. He got in a good shot and killed the leader with his long ranged buffalo gun, but to his dismay the shell hung in the gun and try as he would he could not get it out.

The buffalo herd lumbered on coming toward him, heads down to the ground and he knew that their huge bulks would pass over him, crushing him into the earth. His horse ran when the stampeded herd headed toward him as horses were trained in buffalo hunting as well as men. These long ranged heavy guns were usually aimed from the ground. That was the reason Father got off his horse.

Left with his gun useless and his horse gone, the only thing remaining for Father's protection from the rushing trample of the herd was to hide in a small clump of bushes. Father flattened his body behind the small trunk of one of these trees and the herd dashed by without knocking him down, none of the buffalo taking any notice of him in their fright, but passing on either side of him.

It was three miles to camp. His horse was gone and his gun was useless. There was nothing to do but to walk in,

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so he started across the rough country, for there were canyons and breaks which made off from the valley. It grew late and he discovered that an animal was following him. This proved to be a panther and as Father grew more tired, the panther came nearer, until at last in crossing a ravine, the panther stood directly in front of Father and he thought it was ready to spring. He had no way of escape. So remembering hunter's tactics, he stood perfectly still, gazing directly into the eyes of the animal. After what seemed a long time, the panther turned and sneaked away and Father went on to camp unmolested. These stories he told to picture traits of animals and how to protect oneself in an emergency. All people were supposed to know these things and to teach them to their children in the pioneer days.

There are traits which are peculiar to all animals.

It was a known fact that a buffalo calf, if separated from its mother and a horseman should ride between them, the calf would follow the horse away. My father related an incident when a buffalo calf thus separated from its mother followed his horse into their camp and remained around the wagon getting quite gentle.

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On one of these hunting trips my father told of coming upon a band of Crow Indian Scouts that had stopped on the Little Wichita River on the Texas side. The river was low and the shallow holes were full of fish. These Indians had caught the fish with their hands and had roasted a great number of them. Father watched them until all was ready to eat, and then he took aim with his big buffalo guns away above their heads, for he did not want to hit them. He then fired ^{the} gun. The Indians did not wait to see what had happened but dashed away. Father let them get well gone, then he went down and ate their fish. The Indians left the country.

In 1891, our family moved from Amarillo, Texas, to the Cheyenne country and in 1893 we settled nine miles southeast of the town of Cheyenne on Panther Creek. We were the only ~~settlers on the creek at that time.~~ My father had a small bunch of cattle, about three hundred head and we were called Neeters. Father's brand was (G) G Bar. We farmed some. Buffalo hunting time had passed but there were yet a great number of deer, antelope, wild turkey, prairie chicken and quail. There were no hunting laws at all.

On Sergeant Major Creek, west of the town of Cheyenne, at that time were to be seen great numbers of bones of both

humans and horses which marked the site of General George A. Custer's noted battle with the Cheyenne Indians.

It was understood among the settlers, that the soldiers had all been taken to army posts and buried while the Indians had left their dead with the horses where they fell on the battlefield.

The hatred for the Indians among the whites at that time was such, that the Bone-Haulers, which was an active trade in the West for many years after the Buffalo slaughter, hauled the Indian bones along with the bones of the horses and buffalo and sold them to bone-haulers who in turn shipped them to Eastern factories where they were made into fertilizing material. Some few bones remained to be seen for many years and there were some cartridge shells with many other signs of the battle which were to be seen through my boyhood days.

The Government kept soldiers at Fort Elliott which was sometimes spoken of as Fort Mobeetie. Elliott was the name of the fort. Mobeetie is the name of the little town. Mobeetie Fort was over on the Texas side of the river. Fort Reno was also the protection of the settlers, but both forts

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were quite a distance away.

During this time there were many clashes between the settlers and the Cheyenne Indians.

At one time the Indians drove away some saddle horses belonging to the R Cow outfit and two of the boys went to hunt and found them hobbled near the Camp of the Red Moon. These two boys got off their horses and began to unhobble the stolen horses to drive them back to the ranch, when the Indians began to shoot at them. One of the boys was killed and the other, Bill Banks, was shot through the arm but made his way back to the outfit. The Indians set fire to the grass in order to burn the body and burned it beyond recognition.

The news was carried by riders all over the country and down into Greer County. Cowboys, hunters, and Nesters gathered, to go and get the body and to punish the Indians.

A rider was sent to Fort Reno but the people were in no mood to wait for the soldiers. They gathered and made ready to charge the Indian Camp at daylight and were at the point of starting when the sound of the army bugle was heard and the leaders decided to wait the arrival of the army.

The soldiers came and arrested some of the Indians, taking them back to the fort and taking charge of the situation.

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A strict watch was set up on the Indians and the Government issued guns to the settlers even to those who lived as far away as Mangum in Greer County.

The needless killings were not all upon the side of the Indians. There was a white man in Cheyenne called Red Tom, who had been a Texas Ranger and he hated all the Indians alike.

The Government had issued buggies and wagons to the Indians and one day an Indian had driven into Cheyenne from Red Moon's Camp in a buggy. Red Tom was drunk and said that he was going to kill this Indian, Skillety Bill, who was a Cheyenne. At first the sheriff went to the Indian and told him that he had better get out of town and told him what Red Tom was threatening to do. The Indian got into his buggy and started back to camp as he was told to do by the sheriff.

Red Tom followed and as the Indian crossed a little draw Red Tom shot him in the head, killing him instantly. The Indian fell out of the buggy and the team went on the twelve miles to Red Moon's Camp.

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Red Tom came back to Cheyenne and told what he had done and of course everybody knew that meant more trouble with the Indians.

A rider was started to call help from the soldiers at Fort Reno, but that was a long ride and it was feared that the Indians would kill the rider before he could reach the fort. There were only six white men in the Cheyenne country and the sheriff was one of them. He put Red Tom in jail, which was only boards, two by four.

In a short time there were three hundred and fifty or more Indians in town. They were threatening to kill the people and burn the town. They would go to the jail and mark with their fingers around their necks and point to Red Tom. Sheriff Skillety Bill, who got his name by whipping a fellow in a cow-camp with nothing but a skillet, reasoned with the Chiefs, telling them that he knew that they could kill him and all the other white people in the Cheyenne Country and they could take Red Tom, but that he had sent for the soldiers and the whites would kill a lot of these Indians before they died and the soldiers would wipe out the tribe when they got there.

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Red Tom was still drunk but Skillety Bill put Oscar Thurman in the cell with him and gave them plenty of guns and ammunition and gave the keys to the jail to Thurman in case the Indians should charge.

Skillety Bill kept both whites and Indians under control until the soldiers arrived and took things in charge and once more a massacre was averted.

Our home was two rooms built of cottonwood logs and covered with shingles, which we hauled from Vernon, Texas.

On July 4, 1893, there was a wonderful celebration at the mouth of Sandstone Creek. People came from miles around. We had no lumber with which to build a platform so we scraped the grass off of a large space and packed it down hard. On this ground we danced all night long.

One of the neighbors called Cow Johnson played the fiddle and he had several daughters who also played musical instruments and they all furnished the music.

There were many small cow outfits in the country by this time, owning from one hundred and fifty to three and four hundred head of cattle. Each kept pretty well to his own range and they all got along fine.

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There was a firm in Fort Worth, Texas, known as Tank who shipped in and turned loose on these Nesters as they were called, ten thousand head of steers, without asking anybody about it. They put men in the country to keep these steers there and the trouble started.

The Nesters did everything they could do ^{to} get these steers taken out, but it did no good. They over-ran everything.

At last they started killing the steers. Seventy steers were killed in one bunch.

Then the owners took them out and the matter was settled.

I left Cheyenne in 1895 and went to work for Emitt Cox and Dock Clark. Both were squaw-men, having married Comanche Indian women. Emitt Cox's wife was Chief Juanah Parker's daughter. Their cow ranch was near Fort Sill and is now a part of the Military Reserve. The old ranch house is a two story white house yet standing southeast of Fort Sill on Cache Creek. The Cox Brand was (79). Emitt Cox had a daughter, Nellie Cox, by a former marriage. Her mother was also an Indian. Nellie Cox owned seven or eight hundred head of cattle. Her brand was (L E L). Cox and Clark owned lots of cattle.

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These Indian women were well educated and were nice ladies. I worked as outside man, that is, I took my mount and went to cow outfits for a hundred miles around.

We outside men carried a book of brands and brought in any cattle which we found that belonged to any cow outfit in our country.

In 1901 and 1902 I worked for Hezakiah Williams. His brand was (Tumbling A (A)).

I later came to the Kiowa Country and have since been engaged in farming.

I own the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE 34-T 5 -R 19 W. Kiowa County on which I have a grove of three hundred native pecan trees, some of which are paper-shell pecans.

These are the only native paper-shell pecans of which I have ever heard.