

LEDBETTER, THOMAS ERMITT.

INTERVIEW. 8778

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

Field Worker's name Ethel B. Tackitt.

This report made on (date) September 30, 1937

Lone Wolf, Kiowa County, Oklahoma.

1. Name Mr. Thomas Emmitt Ledbetter.
2. Post Office Address T. E. Ledbetter, Lone Wolf, Kiowa County.
3. Residence address (or location) Lone Wolf (City)
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 19 Year 1887.
5. Place of birth Berry County, Missouri.

6. Name of Father James Henderson Ledbetter Place of birth Shelby County Illinois

Other information about father Came to Missouri as a young man.

7. Name of Mother Barbara Greenway Ledbetter. Place of birth Missouri

Other information about mother Member of Pioneer Missouri Family.

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 4.

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Ethel B. Tackitt,
Interviewer.
September 30, 1937.

Interview with Mr. Thomas Emmitt Ledbetter.
Lone Wolf, Oklahoma.
Born May 19, 1887.
Father-James Henderson Ledbetter
Mother-Barbara Greenway Ledbetter.

I was born in Berry County, Missouri, May 19th, 1887.

My father, James Henderson Ledbetter, who was of a pioneering disposition came there from Illinois when he was quite a young man. My mother, Barbara Addaline Greenway Ledbetter, was a native of Missouri.

There was much talk in our country about the Indian Territory and the farming land of Oklahoma, so Father decided to come where he could get a home and we could have a better farm.

In the summer of 1897, he and Mother packed what we had in a two horse covered wagon and loaded us in — three boys and two girls — and started to Oklahoma. Two other families came with us — Uncl. Enoch McMillain and his family and Bill Leemaster and his family. Altogether there were seventeen of us in the group.

We were on the road three weeks. It was like a big picnic; we would ride in the different wagons or walk

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along as we liked and as night came we would begin to look for a good camping place, for then you could camp where you chose for the range was free and most people were glad to have travelers come near their homes for that was about the only way to get the news going on in different parts of the country.

We would select a place sheltered from the wind and which looked as though it had wood and water. Mother and the other women cooked our food on a camp fire. They cooked flap jacks in a frying pan in which meat had been cooked and made coffee in gallon buckets. At night we children slept on pallets made down on the grass while our elders slept in the wagons.

In crossing the Arkansas River, Father drove our wagon across first with all our family and some of the children of the other families in it and he made the crossing very well but the next wagon which started across did not make it. One of the horses bogged down in the quicksand and fell and it looked as though the wagon would be lost and the family would be drowned, so

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Father and Mother and we children unhitched our team as quickly as possible and Father went back and hitched it onto the wagon in the river and the men got the horse up and pulled both onto the bank; then when the next wagon was ready to cross they hitched all six of the horses to it and at last all were safe without the loss of anything.

We rented land near Stillwater and it all looked so good that Father rented three quarter sections; one from Widow Smith, another from Ed Scott and one from George Flaming. We farmed it all with walking tools and the cotton land we listed then dragged down and planted on a bed and not on a ridge as is now done.

The wheat was put in with a breaking plow, harrowed and drilled in with a chain drive walking drill. We used a Milwaukee Drill and Grain Binder.

In 1900 Father sold out everything we had; there was a great deal of stock in the country and it was free range and we had accumulated some cattle, hogs and horses.

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We moved to Perry for Father expected to register for the drawing of land in the Kiowa Country when it opened in July 1901. There were all kinds of people living in Perry at that time, whites, negroes and many people of other races, all waiting for the drawing.

Father registered at El Per but failed to draw a claim, so we went to Bridgeport and camped for three weeks.

While there Father traded for a quarter section of land three miles south and three miles west of the Lone Wolf townsite in Kiowa County.

Our family moved to this place in 1901 and we improved it and made a home. Father and Mother raised our children there and lived on the farm until their declining years forced them to quit farming, then they moved to town where they lived until both passed away. I, with my family, and my youngest brother, Oscar, with his family, are yet living in these homes.

I have lived in Oklahoma for forty years. Thirty-six of those years have been spent in the vicinity of

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Lone Wolf where the pioneers have moved quietly along making use of every improvement in farming and in living conditions.