

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

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Field Worker's name Lillian M. Gauseway

This report made on (date) June 2, 1937

1. Name W. T. Melton

2. Post Office Address Anadarko, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 216 West Oklahoma

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 7 Year 1856

5. Place of birth Corsicana, Texas

6. Name of Father Obe Melton Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Martha Lawson Place of birth Missouri

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 6.

Mr. Melton was a Texas Ranger, then a cow hand. He made one short drive on the old Chisholm Trail. He lives in Anadarko, at this time.

FATHER Obe Melton was born in Mississippi in 1836.

MOTHER Martha Lemon Melton was born in Missouri in 1839. Mr. Melton does not know the date on which either of his parents died.

The first time I came to Oklahoma was in 1875. I was nineteen or twenty years old. I came with a herd of cattle, along the old Chisholm Trail. I left the outfit over east of Chickasha somewhere, and with another boy went back to San Antonio. At night we would stop at some rancher's house, stay all night, and the next day get the woman of the house to bake us some biscuits, which we would take with us. When meal time came we would broil our bacon over a camp fire and eat bacon and cold biscuit and be well satisfied. In case we didn't have a match, we sometimes would eat our bacon raw. I don't remember who owned those cattle now, nor where they were going, but I came as far as east of Chickasha.

Not long after this I came back to Oklahoma and went to work for old man Andy Addington, over close to Ardmore.

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There were no settlements around there then. The white men owned cattle but the Indians held the cattle for them.

Jim Gaines was a Chickasaw Indian, and Addington's son-in-law. He held Addington's cattle. The Chickasaw Indians were afraid of the Wild Tribes. I believe Addington was United States Marshal.

There were lots of wild horses around where Duncan is now. Mustangs is what they were called. One day some of the cattle had gotten cut off from the rest of the herd. A boy by the name of Love, whose family lived in the vicinity, went to look for them. He went up around Duncan looking for these cattle. When he came into camp there were two colts following him. We raised these colts on cow's milk. I guess the mothers ran off and left them.

I went back to Texas soon after this and joined the Texas Rangers.

In 1885 I came back to Oklahoma and joined the ranch force on the Diamond Tail Ranch. Called this because of the brand it used, a diamond with a tail to it.  This Ranch was about where Childress is now. Once we took a herd of 1500 cattle by the Western Trail to the 101 Ranch. We left 1,000 three year old steers there and shipped the

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rest to Caldwell, Kansas. At the start of a drive the boss always stationed the hands at certain places along the line where they worked all through the trip. He placed me as pointer on the right, and a man they called Slicky as pointer on the left. Pointers were the men who guided the lead cattle. We had one stampede on this trip, but lost no cattle. Most anything would start a stampede, such as a bad cloud or some unusual noise.

The 101 Ranch wasn't very old then and the father of the late Miller Brothers owned it. The houses on it then were made of cottonwood logs. Miller was from the North, and didn't brand his cattle like the southern man did. His irons were only about two inches long, and curved just enough to fit around the base of the horn. The brand was placed on the back of the horn. The boys from the Diamond Tail Ranch made fun of Miller's way of branding, but they helped to do the branding. Once when branding, one steer in some way broke loose and we had to chase it. We roped and threw this steer, then we took our pocket knives and cut the brand on the back of its horn. It didn't show as much as if it had been burn^{ED} but it was there.

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There were no settlements close for west of there was what was known as No Man's Land, which was a strip of land used for hunting purposes.

After all the work was done that was required on this trip, most of the boys went home on the train. The cook and I went back with the chuck wagon. We crossed the North Canadian River east of Fort Supply, at Camp Supply. There was some kind of Indian school at Cantonment. I think it was for the Cheyenne Indians.

In 1887 I married and came to Fort Gibson. I was camping by the river one night when a man who lived near told us to come on up to the house and camp. All we had to do was to hitch the team to the wagon and we were ready to go. We did this. One morning we waked up to find that the yard was full of men and many horses. We decided we were in the headquarters of a bunch of thieves. I told my wife that we had better go for we didn't want them to take our horses. The men saw us getting ready to leave and asked us what we were going to do. I told him that I was afraid that they would take our horses. He told me that we were perfectly safe that he had told them to let us alone; that I was a good fellow; and he liked me. We stayed, thinking we might be safer there than anywhere else.

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Over at Healdton the Government was putting the white people out of Oklahoma. They drove them across Red River. We were warned to get out by those passing. I told them I'd stay until we were forced to go. We were never bothered. The money must have run out for the soldiers never got that far.

One day I was going to town, which was some distance away, and asked an Indian if it would be safe to leave everything. He studied a while and said: "Yes, there isn't a white man in twenty miles."

We raised a little cotton while at Fort Gibson. One day I took a load to town to sell. The ginster said that it was Thanksgiving day and they didn't do business on that day. I didn't know what Thanksgiving was, so I thought I'd go back to the wagon and ask my wife. It proved that she didn't know either. However the man took the cotton.

It was a mile from where I lived at Fort Gibson that Belle Starr robbed the train. One time she was going to have a show in town and we made all preparations to go; but the baby took sick and so we didn't get to see Belle Starr and her gang.