

THOMPSON, ALFRED M. (SR.) INTERVIEW #8019 231

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-History Project for Oklahoma

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THOMPSON, ALFRED M. SR.

INTERVIEW.

8019.

Field Worker's name Catherine M. Thompson.

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

1. Name Alfred M. Thompson, Sr.

2. Post Office Address Walters, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 203 East Iowa.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 22 Year 1859.

5. Place of birth Blue Ridge, Texas.

6. Name of Father Joseph Place of birth Missouri.

Other information about father born November 11, 1831.

7. Name of Mother Caroline Place of birth Missouri.

Other information about mother born March 12, 1837.

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.

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-Catherine H. Thompson,
field worker,
July 15, 1937.

An interview with A. M. Thompson, Sr.
Pioneer days of Oklahoma.
203 West Iowa Street, Walters, Okla.

My father and grandfather moved to eastern Collin County, Texas, in 1849, where I was born in 1859.

My father, Joseph Thompson was located at Fort Gibson during the Civil War. He was in the battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, and was taken prisoner. While in prison he contracted fever. He was finally exchanged and sent home on furlough, where he died October 10, 1863.

My two brothers, a sister and I made our home with our grandfather until I was fourteen years old. I was married to Harriet Elizabeth Jackson, January 16, 1881.

A party of six men, including myself, drove overland from eastern Collin County, Texas, in a two horse wagon with one extra lead horse. We ferried Red River south of Kingston, in the Indian Territory up by way of Madill, through parts of the Chickasaw Nation, following the Washita River up to Pauls Valley and north to Purcell on the Canadian River. We there learned of the hazardous quicksand crossing on the Canadian River.

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we decided, on the advice of others, to go down the river fifteen or twenty miles to a creole settlement where we could cross at that time over in the Pottawatomie nation. we went on through the Pottawatomie nation to the north fork of the Canadian River in order to avoid being sooners in old Oklahoma where we were subject to arrest by the soldiers and being held prisoners until after the opening on the 22nd of April.

we had much difficulty in crossing the streams in Pottawatomie County. we found an Indian who assisted us in building a crossing and gave us information about a suitable place to camp on the north Canadian River. we crossed the north Canadian River to a wide, open valley where we camped awaiting the opening on the 22nd of April.

On our trip we found an abundance of game such as wild turkey, deer, and fish. we were about fifteen or twenty miles east of the present site of Oklahoma City. the crowd in the valley was estimated at 16,000 people.

At noon on the 22nd of April a captain gave the signal with his bugle for starting the run. when we staked off a

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number of lots in Oklahoma City, we had to wait a number of days over the surveying of the townsite of Oklahoma City which was in dispute because a company of townsite builders from Kansas, with a great many carpenters, were assuming authority to survey the town. This met with a great deal of opposition from people from Texas, Arkansas and the Indian Territory, which resulted in many fights, soldiers having to keep down trouble and enforce the law.

To avoid further trouble a lawyer from Arkansas got up in a wagon and outlined a plan to survey the city blocks and lots, and allot to the proper ones who had staked off lots. His plan was that the people present proceed to elect a committee, said committee to employ a competent, qualified surveyor to subdivide the city into blocks and lots. The committee was to consist of one man elected by rising vote from each state and territory represented. This plan was adopted and we found that the committee elected consisted of fourteen members, there being that many states and territories represented. This committee settled all disputes of the question of rights to lots.

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when a lot owner was issued a certificate of ownership he went to the land office and paid \$1.00 to the committee and filed his certificate as owner. This \$1.00 for each lot paid expenses of surveyor and committee.

It looked like life was too short to attempt to build a city without a great many years of effort so with many others I moved away and left our lots.

I returned to Texas. Later learning of the probable opening of the Kiowa-Comanche-Caddo Indian reservation under the homestead law, I took it upon myself to visit and fish in the streams of Comanche County and learn of the agricultural possibilities and probable value of land to be opened to settlement.

At that time Suggs, Barnett, and Waggoner, cattlemen, had leases on all of the southern part of Comanche reservation. While visiting here, I was informed that the Rock Island Railroad had a contract with the government to survey into townships, sections and quarter sections this Comanche Indian reservation, the consideration for such service being fifty thousand dollars.

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Having faith in the agricultural possibilities of this country, I came here in the run of August 6, 1901, and decided to locate at a little government townsite known as McKnight, now Walters, Oklahoma. I built a large one room house and rented it out as a school house. Later I built more rooms to it and in December moved my family here.

During the thirty-six years I have lived in Oklahoma I have been a building contractor and cotton buyer.