

CHANCEY, H. L.

INTERVIEW

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

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CHANCEY, H. L.

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Field Worker's name Grace Kelley,

This report made on (date) July 23, 1937

1. Name H. L. Chancey,

2. Post Office Address Bryant, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) In north part of Bryant.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1861

5. Place of birth Alabama.

6. Name of Father Joseph Chancey Place of birth Alabama.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Samantha Galoway Place of birth Pensacola,

Florida.

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 Thirteen.

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Grace Kelley,
Interviewer.
July 23, 1937.Interview with H. L. Chancey,
Bryant, Oklahoma.

When I was eighteen years old I came to the Indian Territory with some other movers. There were three wagons with mule teams and horses. We located near Wallsville which was three or four miles from Hackett City in the Choctaw Nation. I worked on a farm for twelve dollars a month. I bought a horse for forty dollars and worked it out at twelve dollars a month. A young man couldn't get along without a horse in those days. Everybody wore six shooters and a number wore dirk knives stuck in their boot tops. They were not cowboys but farmers. I never saw any overalls but everyone wore boots. We raised corn and cotton. The closest railroad was at Fort Smith; it came there in 1875 or 1876. We hauled our cotton there and people from a hundred miles south of us did likewise. It took us two days to make the trip. It was considered^a healthful country though I chilled some.

Doctoring Chills.

I had been chilling for about a month. A man and his

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wife were passing and stayed all night with us. The next morning before leaving she gave me three pills she made by boiling down the May apple root. She told me to take one at a time but I was sick and thought she told me to take them all at a time. I never took a stronger purgative in my life. Everybody knew the different herbs and plants in the woods and made teas from them. The stores carried patent medicines, mostly pills but there weren't many doctors.

Wallsville.

There were not over twelve families living around Wallsville which was the name of one of the Indian families. There was one store and a blacksmith shop and that was all.

Hackett City.

Hackett City had a post office and the population was close to a thousand. It was an agricultural town, later a mining town.

There were no mail nor stage routes through there.

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Trail.

There was a road from Fort Smith south on or near the Arkansas and Indian Territory line into Texas but I don't recall its name.

Tolen Gap.

Fifty miles south of us (Wallsville) it was a mountainous country. In 1879 a private individual worked it out so people could get across. It was called Tolen Gap.

Law Officers.

The Indians had their own laws but the whole state was really under the Arkansas law. When a white man was caught he was taken to Fort Smith and tried and punished. There was one United States marshal, if I'm not mistaken, over the state and he had deputies under him and under the deputies were the possemen. They would start out from Fort Smith looking for a certain desperado. They had wagons, teams, tents and everything they would need for a long trip. They kept going until they got one or more prisoners and took them back to Fort Smith.

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Poney Cotton, Posseman.

Poney lives in Oklahoma three or four miles from Fort Smith.

One time they located where an outlaw lived. He had built a rock fort for protection and they saw him go out to the fort. They decided that they would all rush the fort and dismount and find protection if possible. To start firing on the fort and him if they could see him. When it was over they had killed his boy but he had gotten away. Poney Cotton had found a log to hide behind. The bridle reins had been shot off his horse.

Deputy United States Marshal Will.

(Can't remember last name.)

I can't think of Will's last name but he went out after a prisoner by himself. He was found dead fifteen or twenty miles from Fort Smith and they just guessed what had happened by the "sign", tracks and clues. He was bringing the prisoner back to Fort Smith and the prisoner's friends shot and killed him.

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I went back to Arkansas and married. In the winter of 1901 I brought my family back to Holdenville. We entered the Indian Territory at Fort Smith, crossed the Poteau River on a wagon bridge; the first town was Spiro, then we went twenty miles to a store (don't know name) then McAlester and on to the South Canadian River where Calvin is now; it was a ford, quickey and dangerous but we had no trouble. The railroad crossed there and on to Holdenville. It took us two weeks to make the trip. A blizzard came up and we had to rent a house and wait until it warmed up. We had to stop several times for it was an awful spell of cold weather. We had two wagons and made wagon sheet tents. We really suffered with the cold.

In 1901 I worked with teams and slips, plowed some on the grading of the Frisco at Holdenville. After working there a while we came on to Henryetta to widen the roadbed. The railroad was already in Henryetta. I left my family in Holdenville while I worked on that road.

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The Fort Smith and Western was going through where Dustin is now. Frew and Brambrick Construction Company was the main contractors for the grading. There was no town but later they started one and called it Spokogee. One sub-contractor would have one mile to grade and his crew lived in a huddle of tents, then another sub-contractor had the next mile and so on. There would be someone on all of the track bed. It took trained men to work on the railroad, not everyone could do that work, I guess you would call that a profession. There was a mixture of people, not any one nationality. There were a few negroes but they didn't work with the white men, their sub-contractors were negroes. Other places I have seen quite a lot of the Irish but in Oklahoma there were no more of them than others. Some Indians worked (Creeks) but not many.

Joe Watson Ferry.

Joe Watson was a Creek Indian who had a ferry close to where Dustin is now, on the North Canadian River.

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Watsonville.

Watsonville was on a mail route and had a post office, store and blacksmith shop. Dr. Ira Robertson was there, a very few whites and Indians. It was two miles north of Dustin.

Indian Homes..

The Indians (Creeks) lived closer together than they do now, a half dozen would live within a mile on streams where the land was good. Mostly kinsfolk lived in one bunch. They knew good land and wouldn't use any other; that's why they always had good crops but not always large crops. In 1901 they had more than one wife. The Government had a hard time stamping that out and they still do to a certain extent. Now they have separate homes and I know where they live in different towns. He goes to one place for a while and then is out of town a while at the other home.

Dustin Duel 1905.

Brooks had a ranch south of Dustin; he had a lot of

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cattle and horses. It was later sold out.

Riddle had a small ranch; we bought produce from him. For some reason they had a grudge and when they met on the street of Dustin the firing started. Riddle and a couple of Brooks were killed and several were crippled. Later on the remaining ones got on passing terms.

K. K. K. Falls.

North of Shawnee on the North Canadian River there was a town on the line of old Oklahoma. It had two or four stores and their main business was their saloons. Everyone who wanted whiskey from this part of the country went there.

In 1902 I went from there to Tecumseh, crossed the South Canadian at Johnson's Crossing south of Wanette (in old Oklahoma and on a Texas road like the Arkansas Line road), on to Pauls Valley which is a very old town. I had headed for the Comanche country because I had heard such glowing reports of the farming country. I put up in the wagon yard, for we didn't go to the hotel, until

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I could find a good location. Not finding one and it was so expensive to take my family with me, I put the boys and two teams to work on the Santa Fe from thirty miles south of Shawnee to Pauls Valley. I went to Wanette and met a man who was on a rented farm. I bought everything he had, crop, stock and implements and farmed there that year, 1902. When I sold out there I bought cattle and brought them to the neighborhood of Bryant.

The C on the left hip was my brand and still is; it's on record in Okmulgee now. I leased a farm a mile west of Bryant and lived there sixteen years; when the allottee died I bought the ground from his grandmother who I supposed would be the rightful heir to this land. Another man bought the same ground from the man who was supposed to be the father of the allottee. I lost in all courts besides the expense of the Indian witnesses I had to feed and room during the trial.

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I moved to Bryant but still had cattle on free range.

Indian Police Gathered Non-Citizen Cattle.

In 1906 the Indian Police (some of them were white) came through gathering the cattle that belonged to non-citizens that were running at large. There were five or six officers and as they drove the herd along they got all they saw. They got some of mine and I (and some others) followed and overtook them outside of Henryetta going south. They had Winchesters and six-shooters on. We wanted to know how we could get them back. They told us we would have to go to Weleetka where the man in charge was. They were taking the cattle to the Arkansas line and were going to turn them loose in Arkansas.

We went to Henryetta and called him. He told us he would meet us at Henryetta when the train came through. We waited but he didn't come. We went home but knew

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where the cattle stopped. The rest wanted to go after the cattle but I opposed because we would kill somebody and some of us would be killed. I over-persuaded them because we were up against the Government.

We went to Weleetka to see this man, Johnson; the Federal Government had sent him. He told us to make bond and put our cattle up. He gave us an order to get the cattle from the Indian police. I had told my boys to watch and see which way the cattle left in the morning. One came back to Bryant and phoned to Weleetka that they started from George Tiger's place and were going east. We took these written orders from this man and came to Tiger's place and followed the cattle tracks across the prairie; we located them that night at Dustin. We stayed all night and the next morning they gave us our cattle and we started home with them.

When we got to the North Canadian it was up and we had to swim them across. We had to rope some of them and pull them out of the river to save them. They were

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brought on home and put in pastures for three or four days, then turned out.

The big ranches had thousands of cattle and kept them in pastures they leased from Indians.

Small ranchers took advantage of free range. The full blood Indians didn't care but the white men who married Indians caused a lot of trouble. Lewis Gilbert, a white man, married Furr's widow and controlled the Furr allotments. I kept my cattle in Turkey Pen Hollow because every time they got on his land, or rather her children's land, he raised a fuss about it.

Old Indian School.

There was an old Indian school on my land made of split logs stood on end. I tore it down and made a crib for my corn out of it. It has fallen down but I think some of the legs are still there. It was on the Southeast Quarter of Section 31, Township 11, Range 12.

Hickory or Snake War.

The Snake uprising broke out in 1908. I lived about six miles west of Hickory Ground Town where they

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were congregated. Drove of Indians and negroes passed my place going back and forth from their town. One time I stopped plowing, got over the fence and walked quite a way trying to get information from them but couldn't get anything. It didn't alarm me so I went on with my work but it did alarm some other whites. The Government sent soldiers in and they went down and broke it up. Snake got away and nobody knows where he went to or what became of him. If he is dead they have kept it quiet.

Most every Indian has his own burial ground and Snake may be in some family burial ground. Barnetts' is on Bad Creek west of Bryant, a mile and a half. Ashberry's is a half mile south of Bryant.