

COLBERT, DIXIE H.

INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma
COLBERT, DIXIE H. INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name John F. Daugherty.

This report made on (date) May 24, 1937. 193

1. Name Dixie H. Colbert.

2. Post Office Address Sulphur, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 16 Year 1863.

5. Place of birth Tishomingo, Indian Territory.

Chickasaw Nation.

6. Name of Father Henry Colbert. Place of birth Mississippi.

Other information about father Farmer - Stockman.

7. Name of Mother Lou Humphrey Colbert. Place of birth Tishomingo.

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 7.

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John F. Daugherty,
Field Worker,
May 24, 1937.

An interview Dixie H. Colbert,
Sulphur, Oklahoma.

My father was Henry Colbert, born in Mississippi in 1838. He was a farmer and stockman. My mother was Lou Humphrey Colbert, born at Tishomingo, Indian Territory, in 1839.

Father came to the Territory when he was a child. There were five children in our family. I was born at Tishomingo, June 16, 1863. I was born in an old log cabin with no windows and with a puncheon floor. When I was very small we moved to Fort Arbuckle in Tishomingo County, Chickasaw Nation, on the Washita River and I was reared here.

My first schooling was in a log house. The second year I went to live with an uncle east of Berwyn and attended a neighborhood school taught by my uncle. We lived at his house. He lived in a log house with a dirt floor. There was a fireplace across one side of the room.

Each night they would spread some quilts down in front of this fireplace, for the pupils to sleep on. That was the only bed we had during the term of school, which lasted about

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three or four months. There were six boys in attendance. I then went to Spencer Academy for Chickasaw Indian boys, between Tishomingo and Wapanucka, for two years. It was finally called Harly institute, and after the building burned it was never rebuilt.

I decided that I was tired of going to school and when I was seventeen years old I went to work on the Long O Ranch on the Little Washita, southwest of Chickasha, near the Chickasaw and Comanche line.

In the spring of 1882 we started on a general round-up. It was in April and I was very excited over going so far to round up cattle. Each of us had three mounts beside the horse which he rode. The chuck wagon went with us. The first night we camped on Hell Roaring Creek. The next morning when we awoke we were buried in snow. We got up, ate our breakfast and traveled on to the Suggs Ranch on Red River. Here we met hands from other ranches. Each spring every ranch owner would send some boys out to round-up the cattle which had strayed to other ranches during the winter. There were no fences and many of the cattle would get by the line riders. There was a round-up at each ranch, and the boys from each of the ranches would cut out the cattle belonging to their ranch.

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Then we would drive these cattle on to the next ranch, where we would have another round-up and get some more cattle to add to our bunch. It was customary to drive in cattle belonging to neighboring ranches, and return them to their owners. We went down on Mud and Cow Creeks and Red River and returned with a large herd on the 15th of June. I was glad to get back to our ranch. The ranch house on the Long O Ranch was a double log cabin with a side room. All the hands slept in one of the log rooms. We had an old rail fence corral.

In 1883 the Chickasaw Legislature passed a law that the ranch owners would have to have Indian boys for their hands or move. Many white ranchers beat this law by having Indians claim ownership of their cattle. They paid a permit of 10 cents for each head of cattle they owned to graze.

In 1883 we moved the ranch. We hit the old cow trail with three thousand steers. Our bosses made arrangements for grazing in the Cheyenne. Arapaho Reservations near Fort Reno. Our line ran to where Oklahoma City is now. I was a line rider, at this time and I ate dinner every day at our line tent on this line. We had a negro cook, and the food he prepared

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for us was splendid. We certainly did relish every bite. We had navy beans, beef, bacon, biscuits, coffee and molasses.

This negro cooked in a Dutch oven and skillet and lid. At the ranch house our cook used the same cooking utensils in a large fireplace.

The wolves caught many of the young calves. We put strychnine on fresh beef and laid it out to poison them. One of our great sports was roping these wolves. When one was roped he would frantically endeavor to free himself and to us this was great fun. Then we would run our horse and drag the wolf to death. It was considered very difficult to rope wolves, and only the best ropers could succeed.

There were thousands of acres of Prairie Dogs, and it was dangerous to ride through these towns. Many a good horse fell and crippled himself and his rider by stepping into one of these holes. We always tried to avoid Prairie Dog towns when rounding up cattle. Prairie dogs are very hard to kill. They are so quick to get into their holes that one can hardly hit them. We shot them with forty-four Winchesters. Every cowboy had one of these Winchesters strapped to his saddle, and a large six-shooter on a belt around his waist. This was the style, and we all wore boots and large hats.

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I quit the ranch in 1884 and went home to Fort Arbuckle to live with my parents again. We got our mail at the fort from Caddo. It came on a stage twice a week. I enjoyed seeing the stage come in. The stage driver drove four bob-tailed horses and blew a large tin horn to announce his arrival. The driver sat on top and the passengers sat inside. There were two seats facing each other and a door on each side.

I was married to Nettie Barton in 1889. I paid fifty dollars for my marriage license. Judge Levirs, County Judge of Pickins County, married us in Madill and I went into the mercantile business with my brother-in-law at Lone Grove, northwest of Ardmore.

The old whiskey trail went near our place. It began at Fort Arbuckle, and went through the mountain to the west side of the Washita River near Davis. It wound through the mountains on to Gainesville, Texas. It ran west of what is now Highway 77, and came out of the mountains a mile or so below old Woodford. It went west of Ardmore and crossed Red River at Preston Bend, thence into Gainesville, Texas.

The peddlers bought their whiskey in Texas and brought it back over this trail. They always rode one horse and led

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another with a saddle on. They would buy four one gallon kegs of whiskey and fasten two on each side of the extra horse to his saddle so they couldn't slip. They would throw old blankets over these kegs. If the Lighthorsemen got after them they could run into the timber and hide. This trail was very narrow and dangerous to travel, as many outlaws and thieves had hideouts in the mountains. It was the only road through the mountains and so anyone wishing to cross the mountains must do so on the old Whiskey Trail. It ran along the river north to Old Cherokee Town and then spread out in every direction.

Dixon Thomas, a Chickasaw Indian, was a neighbor of ours and a horsethief. The Indians were very truthful and honest and seldom stole, but this Indian did steal. He was taken to Tishomingo and given twenty-five stripes on his bare back with a hickory switch. He came home and it wasn't long before he was stealing horses again. They caught him and took him to Tishomingo once more. This time he received fifty stripes. He was a good Indian for some time after this, but finally he got to stealing horses again. They caught him and gave him one hundred stripes. This was the last chance. Had he stolen

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any more horses he would have been hung. He quit stealing, however. They hung a murderer whom they caught.

Governor Guy started a boarding school for Chickasaw boys and girls in Sulphur about 1899. He was Superintendent of this school for two or three years. Then I was appointed Superintendent under Governor Johnson. We boarded and taught about thirty-five pupils. We received \$10.00 per month from the Chickasaw Government for each child.

We had farms on which we kept cows which furnished milk, butter, and beef for the students. We killed our own hogs and raised gardens from which we obtained our vegetables. We had charge of this school for five or six years. It was located about where the Murray County Court House now stands.

I dug the first artesian well in Sulphur with an old two horse drill. I was drilling a well in my hog pasture to get water for my hogs and one day the water shot out of this well about twenty-five feet into the air. I lost it before I could get a casing in it.

I am the father of five children; four of whom are living. My son Holmes is an attorney in Sulphur.

My parents are buried in Davis.