

CRABTREE, HIRAM LEE. SECOND INTERVIEW 10138

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

CRABTREE, HIRAM LEE SECOND INTERVIEW #10138

Field Worker's name Bessie L. Thomas

This report made on (date) February 28, 1938 1938

1. Name Hiram Lee Crabtree

2. Post Office Address Cache

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 26 Year 1886

5. Place of birth Mason

6. Name of Father J. H. Crabtree Place of birth Missouri

7. Name of Mother Mary Crabtree Place of birth Missouri

Other information about mother Housewife

Father - Farmer and Stockman.

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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Bessie L. Thomas
Investigator
February 28, 1938.

Interview with Hiram Lee Crabtree,
Cache, Oklahoma.

I was born at Mason, Texas, July 26, 1886. Both my mother and father were born in Missouri. My mother's ancestors were Irish and Father was a fourth Cherokee.

This true story of my grandparents' migration from Missouri to Texas has been told to me over and over by my father, J. H. Crabtree. Father live in Missouri until he was ten years old, then migrated with his parents from Missouri to Texas to a place near where San Antonio is today. The trip was long, and fraught with many hardships and took months to make it. Snow, rain, cold, and storms held up wagon-trains, sometimes for weeks at a time, and the party would have to wait sometimes for a swollen river or creek to recede before a crossing could be made. There was always, too, the fear of being massacred by Indians. A scout on horseback would ride in advance of the wagons. The wagon train consisted of three covered wagons with four oxen yoked to each wagon. Father received his meager education in Missouri and Texas studying only the three R's and spelling. The Blue Back Speller was used during the three month terms. The school house was of logs and the benches of split logs.

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When the Civil War broke out Father was fourteen years old and he went to work, wrangling horses, for Creed Taylor a big land owner and the possessor of thousands of head of cattle and horses. In those days Texas was not cut up into many sections, and stockman had access to thousands of acres of grazing land. Mr. Taylor's ranch was the largest in Texas at this time. Father lived with and worked for Mr. Taylor until he was twenty-one.

On April 28, 1869, Mr. Taylor rounded up three thousand head of cattle and on May 18 started over the old Chisholm Trail for Dodge City, Kansas, where ^{the} cattle were to be sold. There were eighteen cowhands on this trip, a few of whom were Little Dave Peavyhouse, Riley Vandever, Little Joe Tucker and my father. The trail-boss was George Vandever. Each cowhand had charge of from six to eight horses. They crossed Red River at Ringgold, Texas, where the Chisholm Trail crossed it and after crossing Red River they went north for three days, in the Indian Territory. The herd moved slowly, traveling no more than eight or ten miles a day, the cattle being allowed to graze along the way, and after reaching Indian Territory the grass was abundant, tall and green.

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Near Ninnekah a bunch of twenty-five Indians were sighted, who proved later to be Comanches. They stopped for a while, watching the white man's cattle moving and grazing on their land. The Comanche Chief or leader rode out, making signs to the Trail-boss who rode up to meet him, Mr. Taylor going with him. Neither white man could talk the Indian language so sign language was used. The Indian Chief demanded twenty-five head of cattle as pay, which was refused by Mr. Taylor. The Indian rode back to his people, they bunched up and held a council, then began circling and shouting their war cry, getting in closer to the white men who had also been called together by Taylor. Soon the attack was made, the Indians using bows and arrows. The white men had cap and ball pistols and the fight lasted about one and one-half hours. Five Indians and one cowboy were killed and as soon as an Indian would fall, his comrades would rush in, grab up his body and carry it off. The cowboy was buried under a lone cottonwood tree that still stands today near Ninnekah. The comrades left after having buried their fallen friend.

The Washita River was crossed next after the battle was over. After crossing this river a great storm of wind, rain

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and lightning struck, causing the cattle to stampede. It took three days to round them up but no cattle were lost, and no one was hurt, or killed and the trek was resumed without further mishap, and the cattle were sold at Dodge City, Kansas, on July 2, 1869.

My father and Dave Peavyhouse returned to Texas over another route, the western route, through Cheyenne, bringing back saddle horses. After crossing Red River July 22, they camped for the night. The next morning while breakfast was being prepared ^{the} horses were heard to nicker as though something was wrong. Grabbing up pistols the two men rushed to the place where the hobbled horses were grazing and there were two Indians down on their knees, trying to cut loose the hobbles. The white men shot at them and one Indian jumped up yelling and shaking his hands, with blood streaming from them. This Indian left his knife which Father picked up and kept and since Father's death I have had it. The other Indian ran off too, as fast as he could go. Father and his comrades were twenty-eight days on the return trip and years afterward Father met the Indian whom he had shot in the hands and the Indian told him of this incident.

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For almost thirty years my father lived within three miles of the Parker family, relatives of Cynthia Ann Parker. He left Texas in 1895, when he was forty years old, and came to the Cheyenne-Arapaho country ^{with} three hundred and fifty head of horses, filing on a quarter section of land where Sentinel is now.

My grandfather built the first store in Sentinel. On January 25, 1895, one of the worst blizzards ever known, hit that part of the country and Dad lost a hundred and twenty ^{head} of horses which froze to death. He left there in 1896, came down through the country by Fort Sill, camped there for three nights, went on and settled fifteen miles east of Marlow on Rush Creek at Bailey, then moved to Cache in 1907. In 1921 Father left for Lawton, lived there a few months, then went to Shamrock where he died May 12, 1932, and where he was buried. My mother, Mrs. Mary Crabtree, lives in Shamrock with a son.