

CULWELL, JOHNATHAN GANO

INTERVIEW

#4846

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Form A-(S-149)

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

Ethel B. Tackitt

Field Worker's name

August 19,

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This report made on (date)

193

Lone Wolf Oklahoma, Kiowa County.

Johnathan Gano Culwell

1. Name

Jester, Greer County, Oklahoma

2. Post Office Address

Jester Village.

3. Residence address (or location)

March

26

1864

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month

Day

Year

Springtown, Parker County, Texas

5. Place of birth

Johnathan J. Culwell

Arkansas

6. Name of Father

Place of birth

Texas Ranger during Civil War.

Other information about father

Mary Oxford, Culwell

Texas. Erath Co.

7. Name of Mother

Place of birth

Member of a Texas Pioneer Family.

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

FIELD WORKER ETHEL B. TACKITT  
Indian-Pioneer History B-149  
August 19, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH JOHNATHAN GANO CULWELL  
Jester, Greer County, Oklahoma

My father served with the Texas Rangers during the Civil War and after the close of the war he continued to serve in the protection of the frontier. My earliest memory is that of listening to the story as told in our family, of the killing and scalping of Uncle Jack, Father's brother, Andrew Jackson Culwell, who was cut off from the band of Rangers by a war party of Comanche Indians, near the family home in Parker County, just a few days after he had been mustered out of the Confederate Army.

Father served under General Gano, for whom he named me and in boyhood I was very proud of the nick-name, General.

My father served as a Star Route Mail-carrier out of Weatherford, Texas, for a number of years.

Having the blood of pioneers in my veins, I grew tired of raising cotton and corn in Parker County,

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so in May, 1892, with my wife and baby daughter, Bessie, I started to Old Greer County, then called Texas.

We were accompanied by two families who had been our neighbors and who like us wanted to go West and secure homes, for everybody felt sure that no matter which should gain in the celebrated lawsuit, about Greer County, Texas or The United States Government, the country would be made into homesteads for the settlers.

The two other families who went with us were those of Ned Frazier and Dolph Moore. Each family brought a few cattle as well as their wagons and teams. I had nothing but my wagon and team and a few household goods.

Captain James G. Tackitt, whose wife was my father's sister, Nancy E. Culwell Tackitt, owned a ranch, thirteen miles west and twelve miles north of Mangum and he had encouraged me to make the move, so I went to his home. We were on the road two weeks for traveling was slow as the roads were not of the

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worked kind which now exist between Springtown,  
Texas, and Jester.

Uncle Jim and his son, my cousin, Tom Tackitt,  
had under fence the present section thirty four Town-  
ship seven. North, Range Twenty-four West, Greer County.  
Uncle Jim claimed the North half and Tom claimed the  
South half. At that time the valley was covered with  
grass and bird-peas as high as a man's waist and the  
little creek which flows through it never went dry.  
The West quarter of the section was a hay meadow of  
native Blue-stem sage grass. I tell this because  
at this time it is all plowed up and one can hardly  
believe that such abundant verdure could ever have  
existed on this valley. The Blue-stem grass and the  
Bird peas are gone.

I went to work on the Ranch, the brands were  
CD (Slipper) CDT = (Slipper T.) and CLO  
=( C L O ).

There were few people in this part of the  
country as most of it was in the pasture .

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We men who worked on the cow-range had to leave our families much alone and for that reason it was decided that I should have a place to live near, so that my wife Ada could be near my Aunt Nan Tackitt and my cousin, Tom Tackitt's wife Lillie, The three women could be company and protection for one another when we men were away.

My cousin Tom Tackitt allowed me to claim the South East Quarter of his half of the section.

In the bank of the little branch or creek on this quarter section and about two hundred yards from Tom's one room box house with a shed room, I dug a hole in the bank about eighteen feet long and fifteen feet wide, and about four feet deep and then under the experienced direction of my few neighbors, I went over on Deer Creek and cut logs and poles. With logs I built the walls up high enough that a man could easily walk under the poles which reached to each side from the larger ridge pole which extended down the middle of the dugout, supported by forks which raised it higher than the walls and gave slope

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to the poles which I covered with bark and prairie hay, then I shoveled on dirt, until the dirt roof was completed. There was a homemade door in the east end and an opening left in both the north and south sides in the logs. These windows had homemade wooden shutters, which we could use if we wanted them.

We moved into this dugout and were at home on our claim.

We soon needed more room and I built another dugout like the first and we used it for kitchen and dining room. Then we needed a chicken house and I dug a smaller dugout for the chickens.

The dugouts did pretty well until the rains began to fall; then it seemed that all the dirt was going to come through on to the dirt floor. That was not all that happened; a hen began to set and a nest was made in the new dugout and one day an awful commotion took place and my wife found that a big black snake had swallowed all of her eggs.

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Because we were so near the creek, the snakes almost took possession of our dugouts. They would stretch themselves along the ridge pole and blink at us when we were in bed. To stop this, my wife took bed sheets and lined the top of our sleeping dugout and we would watch for snakes day and night. The most common varieties of snakes were the prairie-runners, bull-snakes, blacksnakes and rattlesnakes.

For fuel we hauled mesquite roots from the Hay-stack Creek Valley five miles to the north. Many of the roots at that time were very large and many were so deep in the ground that they had to be dug up with pick and spade. The indications were that Hay-stack valley had at one time been covered with a heavy growth of mesquite trees.

Blizzards used to roll up in big black clouds. Tom Tackitt and I had one day gone to Haystack for wood, the sun was shining and it was not very cold, but we saw the blizzard rolling up in the North just

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about the time our wagons were loaded with mesquite roots and we made haste as well as we could over the prairie without any road, but the blizzard caught us before we reached home. The temperature must have been zero and the wind was a gale. When we reached home our hats were frozen to our hair and the cold was fierce, but we drove the wagons up by the side of Tom's house, unhitched the horses and let them run for the high grass which covered the brakes and protected them from the wind and we piled into the sheet iron stove which heated the small boxed room

ne big root after another until when the blizzard blew itself out after three days our wood was all gone. Our families were comfortable but numbers of stock and a few people froze to death in that blizzard.

One Spring and Summer soon after I began work on the ranch some kind of animal began to kill our small stock and there was not a colt left on our range. The chickens and turkeys had all been taken.

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A hunt for the "varmints" was planned and a pack of hounds which Uncle Bob Ferel had brought from Rusk, Texas, to the Figure Four Ranch were brought over to our ranch and the cowboys gathered from the ranches around.

About two o'clock in the morning the lead hound was turned loose and the pack started across the brakes to the North. The hounds picked up the trail right away but it seemed that the "varmint" could not be found. The next day about ten o'clock the hounds came to bay at a large tree in the Deer Creek brakes and it was found to be a large panther high up on a branch. Some one shot the beast but it fell to the ground and killed one of the best dogs before it could be disposed of. This panther measured nine feet from tip to tip.

When the days of the cowboy passed away I began to farm and settled on a claim one mile east of the first claim and built a good house with a fine farm around it. I sold this and went West, but in a few months returned to Old Community in Greer County

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where I have raised a family of four boys and two girls.

My wife and I yet live in the community to which we came forty-five years ago.