



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

DAY, W. H. INTERVIEW#.

1392

Field Worker's name Merrill A. Nelson

This report made on (date) October 19, 1937 1937

1. Name W. H. Day

2. Post Office Address Day Building Mid, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 928 North Independence

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 21, Year 1861

5. Place of birth Ohio

6. Name of Father Nathan Day Place of birth Pennsylvania

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Katherine Ellington Place of birth Pennsylvania

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 \_\_\_\_\_

DAY, W. H. INTERVIEW.

1392

Field Worker, Merrill A. Nelson,  
October 19, 1937.

Interview with W. H. Day,  
Enid, Oklahoma.

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My father was first a farmer, then a shoemaker, and finally a saloon keeper. My mother had ten children. There were two boys beside myself. Both of them were farmers. One died young. There were seven sisters. My parents were buried in Sumner County, Kansas, near Austin.

I came to the Strip first in 1876; we had come to Kansas in 1870. We settled in Township 36, Range 2, in Sumner County. I came down the old Chisholm Trail to Enid. There was no lake over at Government Springs, only a pool. There was not even a barrel there then. At that time, I was in Caldwell and had come down here to get work, bringing a bunch of cattle back up into Kansas. I met the outfit with whom I was to get employment one mile south of Government Springs; we were driving about ten thousand head. There were

DAY, W. H. INTERVIEW.

1392

-2-

perhaps twenty-five men or more in the outfit driving this large herd, also about fifty saddle horses and a cook wagon in our outfit going up the trail. This was about the only time I came so far down the trail, although I crossed the border into the Strip several times. When I first came, Pond Creek and Bull Foot were the only ranches. I recall several stage stations or places where the cattlemen would stop. There was Bull Foot Ranch near Dover. There was the Wild Horse Ranch which I think was near Kremlin. There was also a ranch near the present State Infirmary at Enid. I came in this country on horseback the first time, but when I moved here in 1897 the trail was practically closed. I forget the number of my place but it was about eight miles west and one mile south of town. I had tried to get into the Cherokee Strip as a Sooner but failed to make it. I had made several trips into the Strip before the opening. I used to haul wood from Shoo Fly Creek, near Hunnewell, and northeast of there nearly to the Kansas Line. I rode the Hunnewell Trail once after the Strip was opened. I also rode on the Arkansas City Trail. A great many people think that the numbers of cattle in this country were marvel-

DAY, W. H. INTERVIEW.

1392

-3-

ous but the truth is that there are more cattle in the country now than there were then. There should be a more careful study of the location of old trails.

The topography of the old trails was to keep on as high a ground as possible so they could see a little in all directions, possibly to avoid attacks.

There was one old buffalo in the county in 1877, and how the farmers and hunters chased after that old animal.

Outlaws rode up and down the trail. Personally, I am not so sure that Pat Hennessey was killed by the Indians. I understand he was driving Government mules. If the Indians had killed Bat the Government would have tried to get the mules back. I never heard of any such effort. Whites used to blame the Indians for many things they did not do.

There were no toll bridges to speak of in those earlier days. A real cowboy would have swum the river rather than pay a quarter toll. There was a toll bridge at Anaderko about 1886. Frank Case bought some horses

DAY, W. H. INTERVIEW.

1392

-4-

from me in Texas. They would not let my horses cross the bridge for fear of the vibration.

John Eden of Waynoka was one of the best riders I ever saw. He could not ride a horse without making its back sore. He would ride first on one side and then on the other. Sometimes he would ride into a bunch of cattle, throw his coat over his head and scare the cattle. If the owner of the cattle had known of this he would have killed Eden.

It was in 1877, south of Dodge City, that I went into cowboy work. As a cowboy I learned many lessons on how to care for a large number of cattle. In quelling a stampede, for instance, if you can get the cattle to circle you can often prevent trouble. They will then run round and round and wear themselves out. The object is to head off the leader. This is hard to do; hard on the men, hard on the horses.

John Eden worked for old Joe Miller, originator of the 101 Ranch whose ranch was located between Arkansas City and Winfield. He got in some kind of trouble with

DAY, W. H. INTERVIEW.

1392

-5-

the commissioners, then decided to start the 101 Ranch. He would get cattle from the stockyards at Kansas City and place them on his ranch to fatten. Later, he got a commission to provide cattle for the Indians. John Eden, Bill Colby and Sam Ridings were working for Joe Miller. When they were grazing cattle on consignment from Kansas City, sometimes the commission men or Government men there, who sent out the cattle, would send men to count them. When cattle were counted this way cattlemen would sometimes drive a herd from one place to another and thus the cattle were counted twice. One time a man did this to such an extent that when he sold some he still had more than when he started. Another fellow, later, with Eden, was sent to the penitentiary for stealing horses. There were twenty-five to thirty in the bunch stolen. In one case 600 head were counted to be as many as 1500 head by this moving of part of of the herd way over in another direction where a main division of the commission's or Government's Cattle were located.

DAY, W. H. INTERVIEW.

1392

-6-

The Chicago Cattle Company was one of the large companies which let out cattle on consignment this way.

I wanted a farm where the Pond Creek emptied into the Salt Fork. But though I got in ahead of time, there was already a fellow in there ploughing with a yoke of oxen. Near Belle Plaine it is said that some would pay Sooners to hold claims till they got there. These last could then swear that they did not come in till after the run. I was told that a fellow was paid \$500.00 in this way for holding the claim I wanted. It was claimed you could get in if you bribed a soldier by paying a few dollars.

The history of the Jonesville Addition was another kind of fraud. Even after the courts declared that Cook had a right to his homestead, it is stated that the Secretary of the Interior gave it to the squatters who had moved onto the claim.

In 1897 I got a relinquishment on a place eight miles west and one mile south of Amid and one mile



DAY, W. H. INTERVIEW.

1392

-7-

south of the Wilcox Post Office. I kept it two years. Barr was eight miles west and several miles south of my claim which was NW 1/4, Sec. 23, Twp. 23, Range 7. I lived in a sod house as did so many others on their farms. I got my farm for speculation. So I spent some of my time in Sumner County, Kansas, at my parents' place.

I recall the winter of 1885-86. John Wynn and Geo. Clark bought a large bunch <sup>of cattle</sup> and lost them all near Pond Creek. The cattle had nothing to eat and the creek froze over and when they went out on the ice to drink, they were drowned. One man had 2500 head of horses and lost all but 500 head; he also had 27,000 head of cattle and lost all but 500 head, but this was before the Strip opened. We traded at Wilcox and at Enid. I went through the experiences of the pioneers as did so many others there on that homestead but now I am interested in business, real estate, including the Day Building. I have three sons.

One of the earliest trails, and it is claimed a far more important trail, was the Western Trail whose

DAY, W. H. INTERVIEW.

1392

-9-

northern terminus was Oologah, which came to be quite a place in early days. The Union Pacific <sup>trail</sup> was opened in 1869 and this trail was forced to connect territory as far south as El Paso with this shipping point.

Jim Thralls was a sheriff near Caldwell. He said that if you had a hundred men, you could not catch a bad man west of Medford for it was as hard to get them there as in the Cookson Hills. A certain party became angry with the sheriff near Medford and shouted "Boys, let's get our winchesters," so they shot the officer dead, right in the main street of Caldwell. They then got on their horses and went west of Medford, and never were these men caught.

Jim Thralls, a sheriff, and a posse surrounded a fellow and his gang west of Medford. "Keep your head down," ordered the sheriff, warning an Easterner. The outlaw, Jim Talbot, or one of his men shot a bullet through this man's hat from his retreat and he kept a lower position after that. The sheriff and his men went into that canyon the next day, thinking they

DAY, W. H. INTERVIEW.

1392

-9-

would find the men as they had steep canyon walls on all sides. But by putting one man on top of the shoulders of another and still a third on top of him, who scrambled to the top and put a rope around a stump, the outlaws managed to get out and they were never seen in Indian Territory again.