

DOWDY, J. C.

INTERVIEW

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LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field worker's name Robert H. Batman,

This report made on (date) February 17, 1938

1. This legend was secured from (name) Mr. J. C. Dowdy

Address Lexington, Oklahoma

This person is (male or female) ~~female~~ White, ~~European~~, ~~Indian~~,

If Indian, give tribe _____

2. Origin and history of legend or story _____

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 4

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Robert H. Boatman,
Investigator,
February 17, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. J. C. Dowdy,
Lexington, Oklahoma.

I was born May 1, 1861, in Alabama and grew up there living my life as a tiller of the soil, being actively engaged in the business of agriculture.

In 1889 I set out to seek my fortune and when I settled down for business it was in the Choctaw Nation, some few miles from Fort Smith, Arkansas.

After erecting a home which consisted of a small one-room structure, I completed preparations and put in a small store in 1889. The business of a merchant of 1889 can hardly be compared with the same business of today for a pioneer merchant had in store very little merchandise. Comparatively speaking, people bought only actual necessities and that wasn't so very much for they lived largely on corn bread, beef and wild game, of which there was an abundance; turkeys and deer roamed the prairie.

It was a very common thing to see an Indian, for there were many coming across the prairie with their bow and arrow in hand and perhaps a deer strapped across their back.

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It was the duty of the Indian man to supply the meat and the squaw supplied bread which was made from corn grown in patches known as Tom Fuller corn. This corn was planted and worked entirely by the women. In the same year, 1889, came the Opening of old Oklahoma which cannot be fully described; people came by the hundreds and in every conceivable way even some on foot with their few possessions in a pack swung across their shoulder. Those who staked claims began erection of homes and the breaking of land and the cattlemen's haven began to give place to other purposes.

After four years of the mercantile business in the Choctaw Nation near Fort Smith, I decided to move, which I did, five miles north of Lexington, in what is now known as Cleveland County, and began farming. The conditions of a farmer were very bad as there were few roads and no bridges and markets for farm products were poor and the products had to be hauled for several miles. However, the soil was very productive and a good yield of farm products could be grown from a smaller amount of acreage. I farmed here for a period of three years when I again moved, this time into the

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little town of Lexington, which was at that time a rough and tough town. I entered into the mercantile business here and began trying to cooperate with Purcell, then only a very small town, to build a bridge across the Canadian River, which was very badly needed. An agreement was finally reached and an old wooden bridge was built which connected the sister towns of old Oklahoma and the Territory. This bridge was of poor structure but with many repairs it served the people as a means of crossing the river until a new steel bridge took its place in 1911, since which time both the towns of Purcell and Lexington have continued to grow and prosper. As the country developed so did business in general.