

DRISKELL, FRANK E.

INTERVIEW

#4734

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

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KELL, FRANK E.

INTERVIEW.

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Worker's name Ethel V. Elder.

report made on (date) July 1, 1937

Name Frank E. Driskell

Post Office Address Waurika, Oklahoma.

Residence address (or location) North Meridian Street

DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 3 Year 1872

Place of birth Melbourne, IZARD County, Arkansas

Name of Father Alonzo S. Driskell Place of birth Indiana

Other information about father _____

Name of Mother Elizabeth Smith Place of birth Unknown.

Other information about mother _____

or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and
of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects
questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to
form. Number of sheets attached 11.

An Interview with Mr. Frank E. Driskell, Waurika.
By - Ethel V. Elder, Field Worker.
July 1, 1937.

I was born January 3, 1872, at Milburn, IZARD
County, Arkansas.

My father's name was Alonzo S. Driskell, born in
the state of Indiana. He died September 26, 1908, and is
buried at Morris, Oklahoma.

My mother's name was Elizabeth Smith. She died
November 6, 1876, and is buried at Spanish Fort, Texas.

My mother died when I was a small boy about four
years old and I do not remember anything about my
parents coming from Arkansas to Spanish Fort. My father
married again and moved over into the Indian Terri-
tory and settled at the place now called Courtney; we
called it then Courtney Flats; it was a very small place.

SCHOOL

The first school I remember was at Courtney Flats;
the building was made of split logs with puncheon floors,
and the benches we had to sit on were made of split logs
with four short pieces nailed on for the legs. We all

studied the old Blue Back Speller and the Friday evening Spelling Matches were more fun.

The teacher's name was Payne; he was an old man with a long white beard. I was rather fond of him and always tried to stay on the good side of him; always wanted to "chum" with him as he would give me tobacco to chew.

The next school I went to was in a box building and the teacher that came into the neighborhood was a very fine, handsome looking fellow. He went around and got subscriptions for the school, and was a very good teacher, but the funny thing was that he always would bring a double barrel shot gun to school with him, set it in the corner of the school room and then when he would start home in the evening he would carry his gun along with him. He never forgot that gun a single time. One day he asked all the pupils to tell their folks that when they all quit carrying their guns around with them that he would quit carrying his gun, too, and that almost scared all us kids to death,

for we did not know what was going to happen.

One night the school house burned down. No one knew anything about it until the next morning when we all went back to school and there was no building and no teacher and this man never has been heard of to this day. We thought he was some kind of an outlaw or desperado and was hiding there teaching school trying to keep away from the law.

MAIL ROUTE

In 1888 when I was sixteen years of age I started to carry the mail, horseback, from the old Spanish Fort to Erin Springs. The places along the way where I left mail were Brown, Evans and Wild Horse. These were along the river up to Lindsey. Some times it would take ten days to make the round trip. When the river would be "up" I would have to rest the horse from the heavy load and I would sleep on the bank of the river waiting for it to run down so I could cross. Many times I would have to swim the horse to get across Mad Creek it would

be so high and the water would be so swift. One time in the winter I started on the mail route and the Washita River was so high I waited a day for it to run down. It seemed that it never would go down enough to start across, so I rode off into the water loaded with all the heavy mail bags. The river was so swift that it washed the horse down stream about a half mile farther before I could find a place where the horse could try to get up the bank. He made several attempts to climb the bank and would slip back into the water; one time he went down and I thought I was gone too. I knew that if I ever got off the horse would drown and I would drown too, so I stayed with him and he finally "made" the bank.

I was almost frozen; I had on big boots and a long heavy overcoat and I was just as wet as I could be, so I pulled off my boots and poured the water out and built up a fire and tried to dry my clothes out a little and then started on my trip facing the strong North wind. This surely was a hard trip, but I knew that I had to get the mail to the different places.

OUTLAWS

My father had a man working for him who seemed to be a very good kind of a fellow. He had come along one day and wanted to work and as he did not have any place to stay or any work, Father hired him. This man was out in the woods a little ways from the house cutting wood with another man who was also working for my father. A man rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water and Father gave him the water and talked to him for a few minutes and he asked Father if he knew a man by a certain name and Father said, "Yes, he is working for me". The visitor said that he wanted to see this man a few minutes and Father told him where he was working, so the new-comer rode out there and called this man who, when he looked around, saw this fellow had a gun drawn on him. He did not say a word but turned around to run and the fellow shot him in the back and then turned and rode off through the timber. The news spread very quickly and a bunch of men in the neighborhood gathered and started looking for the mur-

derer; they traced him up Mud Creek but he escaped across Red River in a boat.

CATTLE RUSTLERS.

I was working for a man who always rode a mule everywhere he went. One day a bunch of the men and grown boys were out hunting for a gang of cattle rustlers who would go over the country and drive off any of the cattle that they wanted. The neighborhood men decided they would all go out and hunt for them, so they found them and got all their cattle back and then they hung three of the rustlers from the back of this old mule to trees, and drove the cattle on home just like nothing had happened. It was always my job to work this old mule; I could hardly do it for thinking about how many, many men had been hung from off his back.

UNITED STATES MARSHALS.

The nearest place to have court was at Fort Smith, Arkansas, nearest "law" center or prison in those

days. When my father would have to go to court as a witness on any crime, sometimes he would be gone for three months and longer, so if one knew anything about a crime that had been committed he always tried to keep quiet about it for nobody wanted to have to go to court.

When the United States Marshals found out anything about anyone they wanted for a crime, they would come around with two or three wagons and teams, always with a cook and a cook shack along and a guard or two. They would lead their saddle horses behind the wagons and their saddles and saddle blankets would always be in the wagon ready for use. When they got as far as they wanted to go they would stop and pitch camp, maybe close to some house.

They would stretch a large chain between two trees and lock the chain securely and then would take all the prisoners they had arrested and fasten them to this chain and leave them in care of the guards and the cook, and, saddling their horses, away they would go.

Sometimes they would be gone a week or two before they would come back, and when they did they would have a bunch with them that they had warrants for and they would load all of their prisoners in the wagons and away they would go to Fort Smith for court and the jail.

No one ever knew when there was a warrant for any one until the marshal would ride up for him. The marshals did not talk to anybody but would always find the party they were looking for.

FERRIES

There was the Yellow Bank ferry crossing; the ferry boat owned and operated by Uncle Ed Morris, that was just south of Grady.

Then Wilkes Johnson owned a ferry boat real close to this one and Jim Owens also ran a ferry boat close to this one. The Courtney Flats ferry boat was owned and operated by George Awalt. He had a ferry cable to run his boat across with, and one time the river was up and we had to go across the river to get

a doctor for some sick folks and the closest doctor was at Spanish Fort. It took us about two or three hours to get across as the water was so high and would wash the boat so that we would almost turn over.

One time there was a very wealthy cattleman who came down to this ferry and wanted to go across; the river was so high and swift that the ferry owner would not attempt to make the trip, so this man said to me that he would give me \$25.00 if I would take him across, so the ferry owner said if I wanted to risk it I could use the boat.

When we were out about half way across the cable broke with us and we just happened to catch one end of the cable as the boat swung around, so there we were out there washing around holding to this end for a long time. Then in some mysterious way we were washed back and we managed to get hold of the cable and tied the two ends back together and came on across.

FORDS

There were several places where the Red River was

forded; the Illinois Bands, Spanish Fort, Yellow Bank, Seay, Chisholm. All these were along below Fleetwood on Red River; most all the cattlemen drove their cattle across at these places.

OLD POST OFFICES (No longer in existence).

The old post offices at Courtney Flats, Peters - burg and Atlee are no longer in existence; they were once thriving little places.

FARMING.

Most all our farming was done with oxen and for all heavy hauling they were used. We went to Gainesville and Whitesboro, Texas, to do all our marketing and whatever cattle we wanted to sell and we bought all our provisions and supplies from there. Sometimes we would have to go to Spanish Fort, a distance of six miles, and when we got there we could not get the oxen across so we would have to build a raft and go across on that.

RELICS

I have my father's old froe that he used to split the logs with to build our house in the early days. It is shaped something like that we use today.

The best joke on me in my life was when I started to get my marriage license. I had it made out for A. L. Mitchell instead of Alice L. Mitchell. Those were her father's initials. We had a great time getting matters straightened out so that we could get married. After we were married we went to Courtney Flats and went to farming and stayed there several years and moved to Waurika where we now live.