

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

366

COLLINS, J. B.

INTERVIEW

#10043

Field worker's name Robert H. Boatman

This report made on (date) February 16 1938

1. This legend was secured from (name) J. B. Collins

Address Lexington, Oklahoma.

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, 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 3

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Robert H. Boatman
Investigator
February 16, 1938.

Interview with J. B. Collins
Lexington, Oklahoma.

I was born in Tennessee, October 24, 1860, and remained in that state until I was thirty-four years old, at which time I came to the Indian Territory, in the year 1894.

I stayed for one year at Ardmore, then moved to Lexington in 1895, an inland town located near the east bank of the South Canadian River, about one mile east of Purcell. Lexington was known as a border town, of old Oklahoma proper and the Indian Territory.

In the '90's the little town of Lexington was composed of some three stores and five saloons and was a town of tough character. There were only a few established routes and the only means of transportation for Lexington was either by horseback or hack. There were no bridges on the Canadian River and this was a great hindrance to all transportation to the west, since the Canadian River had to be forded and oftentimes a wagon

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would be bogged in the sand and people would work for days to get out of the bog. Sometimes the family would have to walk out, leaving their possessions to be swallowed by the muddy waters of the Canadian River. Thousands of dollars in property and many lives have been lost in the bogs and swollen waters of this river before the erection of bridges in the Territory.

In 1896 an old wooden structure of bridge was erected across the Canadian River, known as a connecting point between Lexington and Purcell, after which a very progressive business began in our town. I established a mercantile business and set out to better the conditions of our town and have met with many disappointments, though I have always advocated the development of our country and town and after many years or such we of today should be proud of the development of our country from what was once a country of idle waste filled principally with roaming Indians and outlaws.

The enforcement of law was hardly recognizeable, as only a few United States Marshals with a few deputies were here and these refugees from justice usually knew about the times that

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the officers were to come through the country and they would generally be out of town, though sometimes a posse of officers would arrive at some point ahead of time and take some of them by surprise. In this way some of the worst criminals have been caught unaware and brought to justice.

I now live at Lexington where I have been actively engaged in the mercantile business for a period of forty-three years and I am proud of the town of 1,000 population as a business section that has developed from a town of border saloons to its present day conditions.