

NASH, JOHN WILLIAM.

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Ethel B. Tackitt

This report made on (date) February 24 1938

1. Name Mr. John William Nash

2. Post Office Address Hobart, Kiowa County

3. Residence address (or location) 303 South Randalett Street

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 14 Year 1875

5. Place of birth Brazos County, Texas

6. Name of Father William Payton Nash Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about father Came to Texas 1851

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Prastridge Nash Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about mother Moved with her people to Texas in 1872

Notes or expl to 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 _____

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Ethel B. Tackitt
Investigator
February 24, 1938

Interview with Mr. John William Nash,
303 South Randalett Street, Hobart,
Who relates his memories of a buffalo
hunt in the Indian Territory in the Fall
of 1885.

I was born in Brazos County, Texas, March 14, 1875.
My father, William Payton Nash, was a native of Tennessee
and my mother, Elizabeth Prestridge Nash, was a native of
Mississippi. Father's people came to Texas and settled
in Brazos County in 1851; Father grew up there and follow-
ed the cattle business all the years that that business
was profitable and at this time is yet living in the same
locality.

My mother moved to Texas with her parents in 1872,
also settling in Brazos County. I was born and reared on
a cow ranch and as is the case with children of those
days I was taught to ride and to help about the ranch
from the time I was big enough to understand anything.
My parents had a friend, W. W. Parker, who was also a
cowman and had a ranch neighboring us; I was very much
attached to this man and he to me. I helped him with

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anything a boy could do, and there was always a good deal to do about a ranch and as no top cow hand liked to do day herd a boy was useful about the ranch, in herding small bunches of cattle, driving up the saddle horses, locating young calves, shutting gates and doing many other odd jobs that required riding and attention, but little work, and it was my delight to do these things for Mr. Parker and he humored me in doing them. I had perfect confidence in him and was positive that anything he might say was exactly that way.

Having grown past my tenth birthday this way, in the summer of 1885 Mr. Parker and some friends of his who were buffalo hunters all through the years of the buffalo slaughter, began to plan a hunt for the coming fall. I was beside myself to go with them and so began to beg Mr. Parker to take me along. At last I gained his consent and he asked my parents to permit me to go with him on the buffalo hunt. That has been the thrill of my lifetime. Mr. Parker took charge of the arrangements and was the captain of the outfit. There were sixteen white men, a negro man who did the cooking and I, then just a boy.

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They had two big ox wagons of the heavy home-made type and two yoke of oxen to each wagon. The chuck box was fitted in the back of each and each man furnished his part of the food and bedding. They also had tents along and tarpaulins as well as wagon sheets. They had a great quantity of ammunition and much of it was powder and lead, for they all had the long ranged muzzle loading buffalo guns that were expected to kill at the distance of a thousand yards.

In 1885 the buffalo had become very scarce so these men started for the Indian Territory; Brazos County is quite far down in Texas and traveling by ox team was slow and twelve miles a day was pretty good speed but there were fairly good roads through Texas to Henrietta in Clay County. We crossed Red River north of Henrietta by fording and from there were without any roads at all for we were then in the Comanche Indian territory. For days we saw nothing but tall grass, heavy timber on the creeks and hundreds of head of cattle. Deer, wild turkey and all kinds of game were to be seen in every direction but these men only killed enough game for food.

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We continued in a northwest direction and one day when passing through the Wichita Mountains we saw a band of some fifty Indians riding toward us. They lined themselves up across our path and indicated that we were to stop. Some of the men wanted to begin shooting at them without delay with their long buffalo guns. The negro cook was frightened almost to death and wanted to run, and almost all the men thought we were in for trouble, but Mr. Parker calmly took charge, ordered the men to be quiet and told us there was nothing to fear, that these Indians only wanted to know who we were, where we were going and what we wanted, and it was their right to know. Mr. Parker took a white flag in his hand and with this raised walked toward them and the Chief came to meet him. He told them that we wanted to hunt buffalo in their country and told him where we came from and who he was. They talked for some time and all soon saw that Mr. Parker was right. The other men went up and the Indians also and all talked together as many could speak broken English and make themselves understood by sighs. At last the Chief told Mr. Parker that he would send a guide with us,

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who would take us to a good camping place where we might be able to get some buffalo.

The men had brought along a lot of things to be given to the Indians and at this time they brought them out, and distributed them. There were pieces of calico, tobacco, matches and food of different kinds, especially onions, of which they were very fond. The Indians went on their way and the young Indian who had been appointed our guide rode out in front of us indicating that we were to follow. He could talk broken English. Indians differ much in appearance now from those, as the life and food of those days caused them to be hard of muscle with no surplus flesh; they had long braided hair, breech-cloths, and blankets or skins, feathers and paint. The Indians were also much more erect in carriage then.

We followed this young Indian across the country for there was no sign of a road and traveling slowly as we did it took some time, but at last we reached a wonderfully fine camping place with plenty of wood and water and shelter, and here this young Indian indicated that we

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were to camp. This place is on Elk Creek a few miles above the point where it empties into the North Fork of Red River, south of the present town of Hobart in Kiowa County.

He then left us and we remained at this place and the men made camp putting up their tents and otherwise making things comfortable. The negro did the cooking and each one did his part of camp duties. I was not permitted to go out with the hunters as they walked out in groups of three or four. One never went alone, they would be gone sometimes days at a time and at night around the campfire they would melt the lead and mould the balls and talk about their hunting. These guns shot lead bigger than bullets.

They succeeded in finding some buffalo but it was a hard matter to creep up on them as they had been chased so much they were wary. I remember quite clearly of hearing them talk over what came near being a very serious accident. One group of men had located a bunch of buffalo and were creeping up on the side of them as they had to exercise great care to keep the wind from taking their scent to the animals. Another group of hunters had seen the same bunch of buffalo and were slipping up on the other side with the same caution.

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One group fired into the bunch and the buffalo took to flight right in the direction of these other men. There was no time to waste and to be run down by a herd of frightened buffalo was not a small matter, so the hunters took to their heels and ran up on the side of a small mountain as the buffalo lumbered past them.

The hunters succeeded in killing several buffalo at this time and as the buffalo hides were the main object they were brought to camp. Hides were bringing much more money at this time than they had done some years earlier. The men hunted in this region for a month and they only moved camp once and then it was only three miles on Elk Creek. There was much more water in Elk Creek then than now and there was also much more timber on the banks. When they had killed enough buffalo to load the two wagons we started back to Texas; I do not remember what month it was but the weather had become cold enough for us to take some buffalo meat home with us. Meat would keep much longer then than it does now without spoiling.

In the month we were camped on Elk Creek, we never saw but two or three white men and they were cowboys looking

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after cattle. There was a ranch somewhere north of us owned by Dave Connell, also another ranch on Elk Creek, but there were no settlers of any kind in the country and we did not meet anybody at all on the way. This is the happiest memory of my life and of the many years which I have spent in Oklahoma none can compare with it.

Our Oklahoma histories tell us the buffalo was extinct in Oklahoma by 1878, having been killed by the thousands in the years just preceding 1878. A lonely old bull, the last wild buffalo in Oklahoma, was killed in what is now Cimarron County in 1890. --Ed.