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Research Field Worker,
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Interview with Sherman G. Pender
115 South Olympia Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma

I was born in Van Buren County, Iowa, on May 27, 1866.

My father, Thomas C. Pender, was born in Union County, Illinois, September 28, 1829. My mother, Ruth A. Houston, was born in Morgan County, Kentucky, August 14, 1831. My maternal grandfather was a first cousin of General Sam Houston.

In the early days, after their marriage, my parents moved to Iowa, where I was born.

In 1877, after hearing glowing tales of the wonderful lands and opportunities offered to settlers in Texas, twelve families of our community in Iowa decided to go to Texas, and my father decided to join them. His decision was partly due to the health of my mother, which was very bad at that time. Our doctor advised a warmer climate and travel as a probable help to her health. So, my parents joined them. This was a great trip, especially to me, a boy of eleven years of age. Each family loaded their covered wagons with provisions, such as they had to have, and such furniture as they could carry. I remember one piece of furniture we brought, and which is still in the family, was a handmade

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walnut dresser which my mother prized very highly. I remember mighty well the time we reached the Territory. This was south of Baxter Springs, Kansas. We met a tribe of Indians, I have forgotten their name, but it was not one of the five civilized tribes. These Indians had run "amuck," had been stealing cattle and horses and otherwise causing trouble, and had been herded up by U. S. Troops and brought to this reservation and were being guarded and fed by the soldiers. They were the blanket type of Indians, and of course a sight to me.

We all followed the government trail which ran parallel to the MK&T Railroad via Vinita, Muskogee, McAlester and into Texas at Denison. Vinita, at that time, was a pretty good town as was Muskogee. The larger streams had ferries and some of the smaller streams had bridges. These bridges were made by the settlers. The sills were made of long logs, hewed, and the floor of the bridges were made of poles, rough but substantial. These bridges were individually owned and a toll was charged for crossing. There were settlers along these routes, mostly along the streams. There were very few houses out in the plains. These houses were all log houses, some just round logs, and some had hewed the timber and made better homes. We

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traveled down into Texas, stopping about twenty miles northeast of Austin. We stayed in Texas for only two years, and in this time, my mother's health improved and finally she fully recovered, adding flesh until she was really whole and hearty.

We came back to Oklahoma in 1879, to Fort Gibson and from then on I was in northern Indian Territory. My parents later moved to up near Caney, Kansas, but I worked in the Osage Country practically all the time. I might add that the trip from Iowa to Texas took nine weeks.

I started to work on ranches along about 1881 when about fifteen years of age. I worked for years as a cowhand in the Osage Country. Most of the time I worked for Hewing and Titus who bought and grazed thousands of cattle. They would buy cattle driven in from Texas by others, and frequently send men to Texas to buy cattle for them. I was sent on one such mission, when at various points in Texas, I received sixteen thousand head of steers for the firm. These were all three years old or older. I got nine thousand of these at one point, Pierce's Station, Texas.

Mr. Pierce was one of the most extensive cattle dealers of Texas. All these were shipped by rail on the MK&T to the Osage Country. All were of the long-horn variety. In fact, that was the only kind to be had. Very few cattle could be shipped in a car, owing to their horns. About thirty to the car was the average, so you see it took several cars to ship sixteen thousand head. The chutes were not so wide and we often had to catch the steers and turn their heads sidewise so they could go through the chutes. Often their horns were so long that the spread was wider than the chutes.

The blue stem grass of the Osage Country was fine, it grew so tall I have often tied it over my head, standing erect. This is a pretty big tale, but the fact. Ranching had its bad features too. Not every year was a good year. However, I have see this firm ship out cattle in the fall to market every day, a constant string of cattle cars.

Hewing and Titus however, had a bad year in 1886. That winter was the most severe in my memory. They had a large number of cattle to carry over, as usual. The ground was covered with snow most of the time, so the cattle couldn't get any food and it was impossible to

to feed all of them, so they died by the thousands. They said, although I didn't see it, that you could walk for miles in dead cattle without stepping on the ground. I'm sure this was true, for I know the firm went broke due to their losses that winter. Of course the loss was a total loss. Except what they realized from the hides. They gave anyone one-half of all hides they took off. The carcasses remained on the prairies. That winter was the reason so many heads and horns could be seen years afterward, by travelers across the plains.

Hewing and Titus handled from five thousand to forty thousand head of cattle each year. They started in business again, after their great loss in 1886 and did well. They shipped their cattle mostly from Elgin, Kansas, to Kansas City and St. Louis and Chicago.

I made the run into Oklahoma Territory as well as the run into the Strip. I didn't get there in time, as the "Sooners" had me beat, and others as well. I remember the run into the "Strip." I was told to go to a certain locality where I would find good land, so I made the race to this section as fast as possible but when I got there I found people already there. Had been log houses and when I asked them how long they had been there they said, "Oh, about thirty minutes."

They were sure enough "Sooners." They had probably been out, but they had come back to their houses, built by them before the run, and too before the day appointed.

I ranched until 1898 when I came to Tulsa. I took part in an election that year and have been active in politics ever since. I have served as a peace officer practically all the time since 1898 or thirty-nine years. In the early days of Tulsa, an officer served in more than one office. I, at one time was town marshal, tax collector and street commissioner, this was in 1903. George Mowbray was Mayor at that time and he too, served as Judge, Jury and Court. All cases were tried before him. I would take all prisoners to him for disposition. I forgot, I was jailer too. Took care of and fed the prisoners.

I had very little real trouble enforcing the law then, not as much as now, as he had very few laws to enforce. While there was a law against "toting" six-shooters, still everybody carried guns, and I didn't try to prevent it, unless a fellow got drunk and tried to shoot up the town, I would take him in then. I remember one half-breed, a pretty bad man that we had trouble with. The U. S. Marshal came for him, and they

had Charley Robertson, the blacksmith, rivet the shackles on this man at the blacksmith shop before taking him to Fort Smith.

The cowhands would have what they called a good time, often. They would shoot their guns off up in the air. Especially when they would ride out of town, they would fill the air with bullets.

My father was a Justice of the Peace in my early years and from the age of sixteen I became familiar with courts and the duties of a Peace Officer.

In 1904 I was married to Eulah Eaton. We had to go over into Oklahoma ~~Indian~~ Territory, to get legally married. We were married at Chandler by the Judge, after getting a certificate. This court was a court of record and marriages were recorded there.

We have had three children, now all educated and married, and doing well.

The record of my birth is in our family Bible which I now have and which is over one hundred years old.