

SHORT, Z. M.

INTERVIEW

#8595

48

Interviewer, Ethel Mae Yates,  
September 20, 1937.

Interview with Z. M. Short, Elk City, Oklahoma,  
8th and Walker Streets.

Born March 30, 1854, Mississippi.

Parents Jonathan Short, Mississippi  
Cenetha Short.

I, J. M. Short, was born in Mississippi in 1854 and came to Clark, Arkansas, with my parents in 1860. In 1862, my father enlisted in the Civil War but wasn't there long until he became ill from measles and died in a hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas.

We came from Texas to the Indian Territory in 1894; crossed Red River at Gainesville, camped out at night, slept on the ground and cooked on a camp fire. But we didn't work oxen this time as I had gotten a team of horses. We came down the Santa Fe Railroad track but since there were scarcely any roads we just had to travel the best way we could.

We came to Davis down near old Mill Creek, three miles north of Sulphur, in the Chickasaw Nation and took a seven-year lease from an Indian named Will Saxon. I built a two-

-2-

room log house with a fireplace, windows with wooden shutters, and we still cooked on a fireplace; in fact, I cannot remember when we got our first cook stove. I stayed there for six years, then drifted west to Roger Mills County.

"Herd Law" Johnson helped me to locate a place, so I went to Berlin and filed on a claim one-half mile north of Merritt Switch's and five miles west and two miles south of where Elk City now is.

We set to work and made a dugout and hauled shingles from Granite to cover it. We lived on a dirt floor and had board window shutters.

The stock had to find shelter in the shinnery. We had to haul all our supplies from Granite. There was a post office here called Port, which was in a dugout. Some years later our first school was taught in a dugout.

Circuit riders would come through and preach in this dugout once a month.

We surely had trouble getting fuel during the first few years we were here.

We would dig up "shinnery" roots and go down on Sand Stone for some wood and haul some coal from Granite. We

-8-

started in farming but the drouths hit us so we did not make scarcely anything for several years.

When we came to the Chickawaw Nation I brought my team and wagon and drove several head of cattle through.

We came for the free range. We brought four horses and two wagons and several cattle to Roger Mills County with us. There was lot of wild fruit, such as grapes, plums and currants. When we first came here there were plenty of coyotes and rattlesnakes. Two rattlesnakes got in our dugout one night and almost scared the children to death before we got them killed. My wife and I were sleeping in the yard one night and next morning we woke up and found a large ring-rattler coiled just a few feet away from our bed.

Mother came to the Territory before we did. She died in the year of 1889 and is buried in a little graveyard east of Wynnewood.

Mother was a woman who was unlearned as far as books were concerned but she was a good nurse and doctor. e had lots of sickness in the early days and Mother was the only doctor we ever had.