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An Interview with Mr. Charles Edward Smith, Muskogee
By Jas S. Buchanan - Field Worker.
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I was born March 19, 1854, at St. Louis, Missouri. My parents were Stephen and Cathrie Smith. They were among the old settlers of that place, moving there in the summer of 1838, when it was a small French village bearing the name of Vide Push, which means "empty pocket". Father was a native of Virginia and mother was a native of Missouri.

I was reared and educated in the vicinity of my birth place. In 1879 I left St. Louis for the South; Hot Springs, Arkansas, was my first stop, where I stayed several days. Leaving there I went to Little Rock, and later to Pott's Station, Arkansas, where I lived until I came to the Oklahoma Territory in March, 1890, stopping at Edmond, where I remained about two months. Leaving Edmond I went to Arcadia, Oklahoma Territory, where I established a blacksmith shop, which business I conducted until after the land opening of the Iowa, Sac, Fox and Pottawatomie reservations for settlement, in which run I

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participated on September 23rd, 1893. The day before the run, eight men, including myself, left Arcadia for a point on the Deep Fork River in the Kickapoo reservation from which place the big run was to take place. We rode all day and night, finally arriving at the starting place just before dawn the next morning. There we found about 500 men, women and children with vehicles of every description assembled to take part in the run.

The river had to be crossed at the beginning of the run and we looked over the situation and came to the conclusion that the point at the camp site was not a good place to cross the river, due to the high banks on each side and the narrow crossing which would be jammed when the run started, so we moved up the river a distance where we waited until noon when a U. S. Marshal would give the signal to start the run. Just before noon we saddled our horses and sat in the saddles until we heard the shot that was the

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signal that started us in a mad dash across the river and the line, a mob of whooping men, snorting horses, crying children and yelling women, helter skelter without regard of life or limb, a mass of wild people with only one thought and that was to win a home for themselves and family.

According to our expectation, the catastrophe occurred at the trail crossing of the river when the run started, which we were fortunate to avoid by crossing the river above the regular ford. It is impossible for me to describe the havoc of the melee in the awful rush that occurred at that narrow ford of the river when they all tried to cross at the same time, or each trying to cross ahead of the other. There were horses and vehicles of all descriptions, men, women and children all jammed in the narrow passage of the river which took several hours to clear the crossing. Wagons were smashed and broken and horses crippled, but fortunately no lives were lost. The

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most serious accident was to a horse ridden by a lady which stumbled and fell on her, breaking her leg. All others were minor injuries.

As to my companions and myself, we were in our saddles and waiting for the signal at the place we had selected as a favorable and safe place to cross the river. When the signal shot was fired we all put spurs to our horses and plunged into the river and the experience of the next few moments lingers vividly in my memory and is most impossible for me to describe. Instead of the river bed being of average firmness and a favorable crossing as we expected, to our surprise, we discovered we had plunged into a quagmire of mud and water. All of my companions were riding large, strong horses, and soon got out of the mud to firm ground, while I was riding a small red mare and she got down in the mud and for a while I thought I was going to lose her, but by staying with her, pulling on the reins and

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coaxing her, I finally got her out of the mud, but we were a sight to behold. The little mare and I were mud all over. I stripped and washed the mud off myself and washed my clothes the best I could, then washed the mud off my little mare and by that time everyone had passed out of sight in the mad rush for land that was probably better further on. I took a survey of my situation and decided that they had, in their mad rush, run past as good land as there was to run for, and as no one had stopped to stake the land I was standing on I had as well stake my claim where I was, so it was there I established my claim and the extent of my participation in the run was plunging into that mud mire and getting myself and the little mare out and across the river. I immediately got busy and complied with the government requirements as to establishing a residence by placing logs together to form a foundation for a house, digging a hole in the ground for the purpose of a well and putting up signs on the

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trees to establish my right to make this claim as my home. I then started out in the direction my companions went and when we all got together, we started for Guthrie, about fifty miles distant, to file on our respective claims. We rode all night and arrived in Guthrie about 8 the next morning, where we found a filing line about one mile long and I remember my number in that line was 1400, which meant that I would not be able to file for at least three or four days. Fortunately, the officials discovered a racket that was being worked on the homesteaders by "dummies" in the line and selling their numbers or places as high as three and four hundred dollars, and some of the homes seekers were buying them for the reason that the sooner you filed the less chance there was of someone contesting your claim. So that line was immediately busted or disposed of and a new line formed to weed out the dummies, or racketeers and a new line found me with a number in the 100 block. The United States marshals began searching out the dummies in the new line and

when they finished I found my number advanced to 60,
then I was not long in filing my claim and was homeward
bound which was another ride of more than fifty miles.

I was thoroughly worn out and ready for a good rest.

Soon afterward I proceeded to improve my claim
and establish my new home by erecting a log cabin six-
teen feet square, and digging a well. This place was
located two and one half miles west and one half mile
south of where the town of Chandler was later built
and now stands.

I lived on this place for eleven years and farmed
and four of our children were born in that log cabin.

That was a great country in those days as wild
game was plentiful, such as deer and wild turkey.

Cured meat was a rare thing to have on our table, as
we always had wild meat when we wanted it.. The only
things we had to buy for the table were flour, coffee,
sugar and salt.

December 20, 1883, I was married to Sarah Adaline

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Weaver, daughter of Samuel and Lydia Weaver of Atkins, Arkansas. Nine children were born to us, five living at the time of this writing.

During the early days on the homestead, ready cash was not available at all times, therefore I recall a little incident that happened there shortly after the town of Chandler was started. One day my wife informed me that we were out of flour. I told her that I would get some flour and she asked me how I was going to get it without money. I said to her; "Let's go fishing", and she said that she did not see how going fishing had anything to do with getting a sack of flour. I told her to take the children and go by the way of the path down to Deep Fork Creek, which was only a short distance, and I would take my gun and the dog and take a circle over the hill and meet them at the creek and perhaps kill some squirrels on my way. I had gone only a short distance when my dog treed a young squirrel. I climbed the tree and

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found it was only a shell, a very large hollow in it. I told one of the boys to go to the house and get me the ax, which he did, and I cut the tree down and captured three young squirrels. My wife asked me what I was going to do with the baby squirrels after I captured them, and jokingly, I told her; "Here is where I get a sack of flour". Let me state here that unfortunately I had no horse at that time, so I walked to Chandler with my three young squirrels in a sack. I knew a saloon man in Chandler by the name of Mat Reeves, so I went to him first in an effort to sell my squirrels and he bawled me out saying; "Everybody comes to me when they have something to sell", while we were talking, in came one of his small boys, and I suggested he buy the squirrels for the boy, and of course the boy did not prove any obstruction to the deal, and at last Mat Reeves consented to the deal and asked me how much I wanted for the squirrels, and I told him I wanted a fifty pound sack of flour. So Mat walked with me into the nearby grocery

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store and bought me a fifty pound sack of flour,
and in due time I walked into our little log cabin
with the flour on my shoulder. And that was only
one instance of the many when we were compelled to
scheme for the necessities of life in the early days
of the Territory.