

SITTEL, FRITZ

INTERVIEW

7318

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

SITTEL, FRITZ.

INTERVIEW

#7318\*

Field Worker's name Charline M. CulbertsonThis report made on (date) August 23, 19371. Name Fritz Sittel2. Post Office Address McAlester, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) South E Street4. DATE OF BIRTH:      nth      Day      Year    18635. Place of birth Hanover, GermanyCame to United States when he was six months old.

6. Name of Father \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of mother \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

Notes or complete 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 Four sheets.

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Charline M. Culbertson,  
Field Worker.  
August 23, 1937.

An interview with Fritz Sittel,  
McAlester, Oklahoma.

I was born at Hanover, Germany, in 1863. I came to the United States when I was six months old. My parents came to Baltimore, Maryland. In 1871 we came to the Indian Territory, Choctaw Nation, and located at McAlester or what is now North McAlester.

Father built the first house there of boxes, and the roof was of brush. It was located north of the present J. J. McAlester home. When it rained mother and I would stand up in this little house and become soaked.

There was nothing in McAlester then but tents, occupied by the work crew who were laying the M. K. & T. railroad, that first ran to Stringtown and back to St. Louis, Missouri.

I remember how my mother used to wish that she was back in Maryland, as she was the first white woman to live in McAlester.

Father was a butcher and sold meat to the railroad crew. He would buy his beef and pork from the Indians for very little. Our supplies were shipped in on the "Katy." Father built rooms to our house, until he made a hotel of it, and called it the Elk House.

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Father furnished the lot and donated \$200.00 for the first school and church and it stood where the old Baptist Church is now located. There were no desks but only benches to sit on, and we had only one book, the Blue Back Speller. The children were taught the same things, such as Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. The first teacher was a Mr. Trensherd. However, before there was a school in McAlester, I went to school near Krebs, at what we call Number Five today. Mrs Reams was the teacher there.

Father often traveled to buy cattle. He would go on horseback and often carry on his person, as much as \$2,000.00 in gold and silver.

People didn't suffer for anything in those days. They had their little comfortable log houses and cattle and hogs ran wild. They raised little Tom Fuller patches and were happy.

Few crimes were committed. Punishment was by whipping. For the first offense a man was given thirty-nine lashes; for the second, sixty or seventy lashes; and for the third, death---the criminal was tied to a tree and shot. The whipping and shooting were done by the sheriff and his deputies.

There is an old Indian cemetery located at Double Springs,

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west of McAlester. We also held our summer campmeetings at Double Springs and High Hill.

There was also a line of battle formed at the Springs between the Jackson and Wilson sides, when these two men were running for governor of the Choctaw Nation. The United States soldiers were called out and trouble was stopped before a battle ever got started.

I am in possession of a buckskin shirt, which is about forty-five or fifty years old and was made by a fullblood Choctaw. I also have some Indian ballsticks used in the last game played between Coal and Gaines Counties. I have my grandfather's German pipe, which is about one hundred and fifty years old.

At the time they wanted to put a railroad through McAlester east and west to cut across the M.K. & T. right-of-way \$4,000,000 was asked as a price to come through North McAlester. At that time I owned the land at what is now South McAlester, and I allowed them to come through there and this was what started South McAlester. My little house was where the County Court-house is today. There was also a fine spring there. This

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railroad was called the Choctaw Railway Company and was later sold to the Rock Island.

Where Chadwick Park is today, on Third street, at that time was all a lake and owned by a Mr. Chadwick.