

Notice of Copyright

Published and unpublished materials may be protected by Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S. Code). Any copies of published and unpublished materials provided by the Western History Collections are for research, scholarship, and study purposes only.

Use of certain published materials and manuscripts is restricted by law, by reason of their origin, or by donor agreement. For the protection of its holdings, the Western History Collections also reserves the right to restrict the use of unprocessed materials, or books and documents of exceptional value and fragility. Use of any material is subject to the approval of the Curator.

Citing Resources from the Western History Collections

For citations in published or unpublished papers, this repository should be listed as the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

An example of a proper citation:

Oklahoma Federation of Labor Collection, M452, Box 5, Folder 2. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

ARTERBURN, ELZY WATKINS

INTERVIEW

7318

Charline M. Culbertson,
Field Worker,
Aug. 15, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. Elzy Watkins Arterburn,
3 miles north of Kiowa.

I was born in Barren County, Kentucky, in 1864. My brother and I came to the Indian Territory in 1885 from Texas, driving forty head of cattle. We also had our chuck wagon. I also drove twenty head of cattle from Texas into the Territory for a friend of mine and as I was crossing Red River at dusk and was about half way across the river, the sheriff from Texas shouted for me to stop with the cattle but I did not and crossed over and was in the Territory and he could not bother me after I crossed the line. I later learned that the cattle which I was driving were mortgaged but I was unaware of this fact when I started.

We located ten miles northeast of Ardmore in the Arbuckle Mountains in the Chickasaw Nation. My brother and I took a lease on some Indian land.

In 1887 I was married to Ora Hartsell; we had one son and two years later wife died and then I married her

ARTERBURN, ELZY WATKINS

INTERVIEW

7313

- 2 -

sister, Hattie C. Hartsell.

We always carried our guns to church and I have seen as many as twenty-five or thirty guns standing in the corner of the church. We would go home by the light of the pistols.

Two weeks after I married my second wife I was hired to take a wagon load to Boggy Depot. On the return home there were four wagons in a group and we had planned to camp for the night at the foot of a hill on a little island surrounded by a creek. When we reached the hill we were warned not to camp and were told that the night before four men had been killed at this spot, their wagons burned and their horses stolen by some Chickasaw Indians.

We went on down to the camping spot and tied our wagon tongues to the ends of the other wagons making a circle and then we put our horses in the center tied together. Each man made his bunk at one of the four corners. After we had settled for the night we heard someone coming and we had agreed that at the first noise we heard we would fire two shots each as we each had a Winchester and a pistol, so we

ARTERBURN, ELZY WATKINS

INTERVIEW

7313

- 3 -

fired the shots and scared them away and they did not return.

Very little sleeping was done the remainder of the night.

Our first home in the Territory was a two-room box house. We had no fireplace as most of the houses did but had a flue and a heating stove. We bought our furnishings at Ardmore. There was one store there operated by John Smith and only two or three box houses and the rest were tents. The bank was in a tent for some time.

A two-room box house on a clear lot in Ardmore was offered me at this time for \$200.00, a few years later it sold for \$10,000.00.

We lived here ten years and sold out and went to Texas in the fall and contracted for a farm and were to be back in October of the next year but returned two weeks too late and this farm had been sold. Then I rented one hundred acres and bought feed, two cows and some meat for \$400.00. I planted fifty acres in cotton and the other fifty in corn. The hot winds struck my crops and the corn I gathered off the fifty acres would hardly cover the bottom of the wagon and I got one bale of cotton off the other fifty acres. I had

ARTERBURN, ELZY WATKINS

INTERVIEW

7313

- 4 -

left my binder in the Territory so returned to the Chickasaw Nation in June and with one hired man we cut grain and made \$200.00.

We moved about the district, being given shelter and our meals and our horses were fed at the homes where we were cutting grain. While I was away we had had a rain and I had a good top crop which I sold for a new wagon and again returned to the Territory where I traded it for a cow, four hogs, twenty bushels of corn, a mule, one dozen hens and a big patch of turnips. I sold the mule for \$50.00 and settled down to farming which I did up until the last few years.