

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Published and unpublished materials may be protected by Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S. Code). Any copies of published and unpublished materials provided by the Western History Collections are for research, scholarship, and study purposes only.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For citations in published or unpublished papers, this repository should be listed as the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.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.

BRINGHAM, JOHN

INTERVIEW

10471

232

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

BRINGHAM, JOHN.

INTERVIEW.

10471.

Field Worker's name Nora Lorrin

This report made on (date) April 13, 1938. 1938

1. Name John Bringham.

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) General Delivery (Edge of town).

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 17 Year 1886.

5. Place of birth Topeka, Kansas.

6. Name of Father I. K. Bringham. Place of birth 1850.

Other information about father Died in 1913.

7. Name of Mother Katie (Houser) Bringham. Place of birth Maryland in 1863.

Other information about mother Died in January 4, 1938.

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 10.

BRINGHAM, JOHN.

INTERVIEW.

10471.

Nora Lorrin,
Investigator,
April 13, 1938.

An Interview With John Bringham,
El Reno, Oklahoma.

John Bringham was born March 17, 1886 in Topeka, Kansas, and is of English-Scotch-Irish descent. His father, I. K. Bringham, was born about 1850 and died in 1913. His mother, Mrs. Katie (Houser) Bringham, was born in 1863 and died January 4th, 1938. There were fifteen children, seven girls and eight boys, nine of whom grew to womanhood and manhood. The Bringhams came to Oklahoma because they wanted to come to a new country, thinking that there were more and better opportunities for getting ahead, so they came to Oklahoma in a covered wagon, bringing with them their belongings such as household goods, clothing, dishes etc. They had two buckskin ponies, and a black, bald-faced horse and there were two covered wagons as a neighbor accompanied them.

This was in 1891, and they came to Union City to stay with an uncle, who lived near there and in the early spring of '91, the father of the Bringham family returned

BRINGHAM, JOHN.

INTERVIEW.

10471.

-2-

to Kansas and a short time later he came back on a load of hay. They stayed with the uncle until the Cheyenne and Arapaho lands opened up on April 19th, 1892. His father made the Run and got a claim fifteen miles west and two miles north of El Reno. There was a deep canyon running along on one side of their claim and they set up a tent near it and lived in the tent for two years. A log house was then constructed, twenty-five by thirty feet. There were two rooms downstairs and one upstairs and they lived in it for seventeen years.

When they first came to that country there were plenty of deer, and numerous gray wolves as the terrain was such as to give shelter to these animals and Mr. Bringham has seen as high as eighteen gray wolves at one time in that canyon. The parents in that community were afraid to let their children go back and forth to the neighbors without older people along with them for fear that they would encounter the wolves and get killed.

They broke out their land and planted corn and kaffir corn. They also planted five long rows of sweet potatoes and the sweet potato patch had to be constantly watched

BRINGHAM, JOHN.

INTERVIEW.

10471.

-3-

to keep the deer from eating it up. This job fell to the lot of little John. Stakes were driven into the patch here and there and white rags were tied to them to help to scare the deer away. There were five of the children in the family who were of school age and they went to "Sunny Hill School" which at that time was held in a tent and was located about a half mile north and a quarter of a mile east of the Bringham claim. The teacher was Miss Nora Pauli. There was timber on their claim, oaks, elms, and cedar and there were a few straggling blackjack trees scattered around. They raised a lot of kaffir corn that first year and used it to make a barn. The barn was thirty feet long and about twenty feet wide. It was made with poles set in the ground and poles on top and the kaffir stocks were stood up thickly all around it and it was also covered with the kaffir corn stalks. Poles were cut to make corrals for the stock and they made one stake and rider fence. They dug a hole in the bottom of the canyon, to get water. They kept digging until they struck a good spring of water and kept walling it up until it was ten feet deep.

BRINGHAM, JOHN.

INTERVIEW.

10471.

-4-

There was a man who lived out round their neighborhood of the name of Riley Starra, who had a team of oxen. He would come to the Bringham claim and haul water and wood from their claim, often hauling wood for them also. The Bringham boys broke a team of oxen which were about six months old when they started on them, but they got the oxen broken until they could drive them as well as they could the horses. They raised corn, oats, kaffir, maize, and later wheat. The farm would raise most anything we wanted to plant and Mr. Bringham made a good living. The boys all liked to hunt, and there was always quail, rabbits, squirrels. It was necessary to build a bridge across the canyon on their claim, working a team of oxen in the process. John Bringham was too small to handle that team of oxen but his brother drove them and John sat or stood, on the bank and did the vocal driving, telling the oxen when to "gee" and when to "haw". He was a good driver and the oxen would obey him. They did much of their trading at a country store, run by a man of the name of Charles Kenney. He kept about everything in his store, groceries, dry goods, hardware, and

BRINGHAM, JOHN.

INTERVIEW.


10471.

-5-

notions; this store was located a mile north and a quarter of a mile east of their claim.

The Arapaho Indians used to hold their dances about two miles west of the Bringham homestead. Mr. Bringham has seen them dig a hole in the ground, about three or four feet square, build a fire in it and partially cover it up and then dance around it. They were always dressed, with plenty of beads, paint and feathers, as well as colorful blankets and shawls. They would holler "to beat the band" and while dancing all would be busy giving their own interpretation of the dance. They would often circle the fire and some would just dance in one spot.

Mr. Bringham knew an old Arapaho Indian. The only name he ever heard the Indian called was "One Arm". This old Indian had a lariat rope made of the long hair, taken from the heads of white women whom he had scalped. Mr. Bringham himself has seen the rope. It was about a half inch rope and possibly sixty feet long, and the hair of which it was composed was of about every shade of human hair, including red. The old Indian must have been, at one time, a pretty bad Indian and when Mr. Bringham knew him



BRINGHAM, JOHN.

INTERVIEW.

10471.

-6-

he was harmless enough. This Indian had one of his arms gone at the elbow. John Bringham asked him one day how he lost his arm. The Indian could understand but could not talk English, so he made a circular motion with his hand and ended it with the motion of a snake striking his arm. He then pantomimed the cutting off of his arm. Finally they asked him who amputated his arm, and he indicated that he did it himself. He had stopped right there and had cut his own arm off at the elbow with his knife, before the rattlesnake virus had had a chance to kill him. He was an excellent shot with the bow and arrow. Because his arm was gone he had to kneel and hold the bow between his knees. He would get anything he shot at providing it was standing still.

The Indians would go to town on pay day and get rousing drunk, and be ashamed of it later, very much like Pale Faces. They never harmed anyone and if they were treated decently would make good neighbors. They were honest and if they told you anything you could depend on it for it would be true. Mr. Bringham's father ran a post office on his claim; it was called the Kneho post

BRINCHAM, JOHN.

INTERVIEW.

10471.

-7-

office. The mail was carried in a mail or stage coach that was hauled by four horses. The men who carried the mail and drove the coach had a bunch of Indian ponies to choose their teams from. The mail was carried from El Reno to Hecely, to Eneho and on to Bridgeport. The drivers were Ed and Jack McCartney, one of those boys would drive in one direction and the other would drive back.

The mail coach was robbed several times and they had quite a time getting the robbers. The detective trapped the people whom he suspected, finally by sending marked goods through the mails, until this family got sore of it. Finally, a woman out near Eneho sent to a mail order house for a dress that came up missing, and the detective and authorities went to the home of the suspects, a family of the name of Robinson, and found the dress and other marked goods. One thing which they found were some gloves; before sending them, the detective had turned them wrong side out, put his name on the inside, and then turned them back on the right side. There was also a pair of marked boots, that were found in the possession of this

BRINGHAM, JOHN.

INTERVIEW.

10471.

-8-

Robinson family. Some of those people got ten years or so in the penitentiary for their misbehavior. Mr. Bringham's father was a witness at the trial and these thefts happened in about 1903.

The boys and girls used to go to dances and often went as far as sixteen miles to one. Not everyone had a house big enough to hold a dance and these dances were held wherever they could find a house big enough and a host big hearted enough to let the young folks dance. Usually there would be a fiddle and someone to call for the dances. Four couples would stand up facing each other from four sides. Then the caller would yell, "Join hands circle the ring, break, Alleman left, right and left right and left. All set, first couple balance and first couple swing down around the outside ring. Through the center, everybody swing. Alleman left, meet your partners and promenade". When they would get back to their own place, the second couple would be taken through the same rigamrole, until each couple had gone the rounds. This with hundreds of variations, constituted the old time square dance, and how those young folks did love it. Sometimes

BRINGHAM, JOEN.

INTERVIEW.

10471.

-9-

there would be a guitar accompaniment, and sometimes a
umbo fiddle and occasionally all three instruments.
There were not many amusements, not enough for them to
be surfeited and they were young, healthy and wild for
a good time and they had it.

When the harvest time came around, almost every
year, Mr. Bringham's father would go to the harvest
fields in Kansas, leaving his wife and boys to carry on
in his absence, in order to make more money for their
support. His family was large and it took a lot for
their care. Since the Bringham family left their farm
and it fell into other hands, it has run down badly. It
has eroded and has not been cared for and a great many
gulleys have been washed through the fields, that formerly
made good yields of farm products. Mr. Bringham has been
in El Reno for a long time, and has won the prize for
being the best "Bum" twice at the Pioneers Day Celebration
He represented a "prospector" with prospectors accoutre-
ment. He won \$5.00 one time and \$2.50 the other time.