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BURLESON, J. R. INTERVIEW.

Thad Smith, Jr., Field Worker
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J. R. Burleson of Rush Springs,
Oklahoma.

J.R. Burleson was born August 19, 1866. Father was J. M. Burleson, born in Tennessee, buried in Texas; Mother was Beckie Gibson, born in Arkansas, buried in Texas.

I came from Texas to the Choctaw Nation, near Washita, in 1887, in a covered wagon.

There were lots of post oak and white oak trees there, and my first job was making rails. These rails were used to fence farms. I usually cut down trees out of which I could make twelve eight foot rails. I averaged making two hundred rails a day which sold very readily for one dollar a hundred.

On trees that only made twelve rails, I didn't use anything but my axe, but on larger trees, I used a wedge to split the trees.

The house I lived in was made of logs, and covered with clapboards. I didn't have any screen doors or window screens, as they weren't available then. The flies and mosquitoes were awfully bad, and nearly ate me up. I, as well as all of my neighbors, had chills and fever. I took Groves Chill tonic for these ailments.

Sam Davis ran the one store at Washita. I think he freighted his goods from Gainesville, Texas.

Near Washita, there was a log school house; roof made of clapboards, which had a big fireplace in one end of the building. On Sunday this building was used to hold church and Sunday School in. The school was a subscription school.

In 1890, I broke land that was covered with sumac as high as my head. I did the plowing with a prairie queen plow. This plow had a twenty inch steel mould board, a wooden beam, and had trucks on the back, which made it unnecessary to hold to the plow handles. This plow would cover up the sumac but we always raked the sumac with a hay rake into big piles and burned it. The land was then planted with corn, by using a two row check row planter and putting four to five grains to the hill. The corn wasn't ever thinned and it made from eighty to a hundred bushels to the acre.

The corn was sold to beef feeders for ten cents per bushel.

The cattle feeders always built their feed pens on the bank of a river or creek, as that was the only water available for stock use at that time.

There were lots of wild horses in the country that weren't branded. The horses were pretty well-bred horses. It was told that a good many years before, a thoroughbred stallion had gotten away from someone passing through the country, and joined the wild bunch. Occasionally gentle horses and mules would get with them, and they were awfully hard to get back. Sometimes we would station cowboys at different places and run the horses in relays until the horses were tired. Then some good roper on a fresh horse would dash out and rope the horses wanted.

The grass in some places was as high as my head, sitting on a horse. Some of the ranchers had foot feed hay balers and would cut hay in the summer and bale for winter use. Hay meadows were never fenced, as there was plenty of grass, and hay could be cut anywhere.

On the fourth day of July, 1838, we celebrated by having a beef barbecue dinner. We had a platform that was big enough to accommodate four sets of square dancers. The people danced all day and all night. We also had rifle shooting matches, and horse racing.

There would always be a whiskey peddler somewhere near the celebration to furnish the men with whiskey.

Heck Thomas was one of the deputy United States Marshals then. Some of the Marshals were tricky, and would plant a bottle of whiskey in some man's wagon and then arrest him, and take him to Ft. Smith to be tried. I think this was done in order to collect mileage for transporting prisoners. The United States Marshals had chuck wagons to use in moving their prisoners. The prisoners were chained together in day time and at night were locked to the wagon wheels.

About 1891 I went to work for a big cattleman named Matt Wolfe. He branded L O E N on the left side. The cattle were very plain, fine bone, long-horn mixed colored cattle, and the cows were hearty and raised a calf every year.

There were a few Indians near where I lived, but I was afraid of them, and never did associate with them.

I never made any of the runs into opened territories, but I did register for the drawing when the Caddo, Kiowa and Comanche Country was opened. However, I failed to draw a claim.