

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

9332

GUMMOW, A. J.

INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Robert W. SmallThis report made on (date) November 27, 1937.1. Name A. J. Gummow2. Post Office Address Blackwell, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) 609 West Padon Avenue.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 29 Year 18685. Place of birth Illinois6. Name of Father Harry Gummow Place of birth Cornwall, England.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Mary Champion Gummow Place of birth Lancashire England.

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 8.

An Interview with Mr. A. J. Gummow, Blackwell.

By - Robert W. Small, Investigator.

November 27, 1937.

Mr. A. J. Gummow was born in the state of Illinois on September 29, 1858. His parents were both born in England.

In 1885 Mr. Gummow came to Osage County, Kansas.

In February, 1891, he came to Oklahoma on a sight seeing trip from Arkansas City, Kansas. He followed a trail that led across the country in a southwest direction to the Yellow Bull Crossing on the Salt Fork River; thence he followed a southeast course to Red Rock Creek and then he went back north toward Arkansas City for several miles, and then turned west till he came to the Hunnewell trail, and he went down that and crossed the Salt Fork River near the present site of Lamont, and after crossing the river there he looked around some and returned home. He made other trips down into the Cherokee Outlet Country, looking it over with the view of being prepared to take a claim in some good section of country when it was opened to settlement.

On one trip he went to the Tonkawa Indian Agency

on the Chikaskia River where he ran out of bread to eat. He went to the Agency to see if he could buy some bread but they had none; the Agent of the Tonkawas told him to go to a girl at the Agency Residence and ask her to cook him some bread, which he did, and after she cooked him bread she refused to accept any pay for it.

While camped at the Tonkawa Agency a number of Indians came around and asked for something to eat but he was forced to deny them any food as he was short himself. Mr. Gummow saw much fine country in his travels over this section of the Cherokee Outlet and he was very much impressed with the idea of securing a home there when the land should be opened to settlement.

When the country was opened to settlement Mr. Gummow went to the registration booths to register and found a line two miles long and he was compelled to stand in line for two days and nights before he could register. All kinds of people were there and at night some would be singing and dancing and some selling muddy and sandy water at 5¢ a cup, and some would be selling food. It was a motley crowd of humanity out on the open

prairies; but all seemed to be jovial and to be enjoying the occasion because of many mirth-making incidents that occurred.

After most all the people had lain down to rest and sleep one night a few fellows tied a long rope to the spring seat of a wagon and started through the crowd of sleepers hollering "Whoa!, Whoa!", and the people lying down thought that a team was running away and people began to jump and scatter in all directions, some half clad but all running for dear life. Pranks of various kinds were played continually while the hosts were assembled waiting to get registered for the run.

On the opening day he used the sun as a guide in running across the prairies; he started in the race from near Hunnewell, and in one hour and four minutes staked the Northwest quarter of Section 9, Township 26 North, Range 1 West, a distance of seventeen miles from the starting point.

Mr. Gummow's first improvement on his claim was a half dugout made in a bank, with a roof made of poles.

This was not a very substantial dugout but served for a while. He built a barn a little later with room for eight head of horses. The following March he moved his family to the claim; they arrived in a snow storm of unusual severity; they unloaded their furniture in the barn; hung up home made carpets and wagon covers to keep out the cold wind. Two of the children had whooping cough and they had a dreadful time for a few days, but when it warmed up Mr. Gummow went to Hunnewell, Kansas, and bought lumber and put up a four room house - two rooms on ~~the~~ first floor and two above and they moved into it. This house became a landmark in that section of the country because of its height and because the walls of the barn were twelve feet in height which was a little unusual at that time.

Mr. Gummow brought down to the claim thirteen head of horses, two cows, and about fifty Leghorn chickens; as he was hauling hay from Kansas down to the claim he put the chickens on the wagon with a load of hay and before he reached home it got dark and he couldn't tell

just where the crossing was on the Chikaskia River as he was driving over the prairie with no road and before he knew it one of his horses slipped off the river bank and pulled the other horse and wagon with it and all went into the river. Mr. Gummow got his team out and left everything else and went to his home for the remainder of the night. The next morning he returned to the upset wagon and found that his hay was about all gone but his wagon was still in the river, and his chickens had gone to a claimant's place not far distant. He gathered up most all his chickens and got his wagon out and proceeded home, remembering the location of that crossing for a long time.

He hauled straw from Kansas for two winters after the Opening - taking two days to make the trip and often the wind blew so hard that he didn't get home with much straw as none of it was baled at that time.

Mr. Gummow's crops, the first year or two, were almost failures on account of dry weather; in 1896 he had over a hundred acres in wheat that made six and a

half bushels per acre and he sold a load for sixty-eight cents a bushel and got more money than he had had for some time. He felt like he was rich.

In the Fall of 1896 he sowed two hundred and twenty acres of wheat and it made an average of thirty-five bushels per acre and he sold it from 80¢ to \$1.00 per bushel. He bought eighty acres more land out of the price for that wheat crop and had money left. He paid \$16.00 for the eighty acres; prior to that year, land could be bought for a very few dollars per acre. Good land was not worth over \$10.00 per acre, but from 1897 the land soared in value with each succeeding crop until it reached around \$25,000.00 to \$32,000.00 per quarter section for well improved land of the best quality.

In 1897 Mr. Gummow went to Kansas and bought a number of young mules and during the Spanish-American War he sold those mules for \$200.00 per head, making a nice sum of money on them.

Mr. Gummow raised and handled lots of hogs and stock of other kinds; he has sold as much as \$4,000.00 worth of hogs in one year from his farm.

In 1910 Mr. Gummow built the first modern farm home in the country; his residence consisted of eleven rooms with every modern convenience installed, a barn forty-eight by sixty in floor space with rooms for hay, grain and stock; a machine shed thirty-two by thirty-six; a blacksmith shop twelve by eighteen, a granary, twenty-four by twenty-four feet, that would hold lots of wheat and other grain; a chicken house twenty by forty feet, built of brick; a fine storm cellar; milk houses; two good large cisterns, silos, windmills and other smaller improvements.

This was one of the best equipped homes in the country anywhere.

Mr. Gummow has bought five other farms besides his original homestead and several city properties in the city of Blackwell, in which he now resides at 609 West Padon Avenue.

Mr. Gummow has been a hard worker all his life and a very successful farmer. In later years since he left the old farm he has spent much time in travelling over different sections of the United States .

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Mrs. Gummow is in possession of two candle stick holders, a hundred and fifty or two hundred years old, as well as some silver and copper spoons of great antiquity and other articles of rare design and great age.