



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

LAMBERT, JAMES IRWIN.

INTERVIEW.

6415.

Field Worker's name Bradley Bolinger.

This report made on (date) June 23, 1937.

1. Name James Irwin Lambert.
2. Post Office Address Red Oak, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) In the suburbs of Red Oak.
4. DATE OF BIRTH:    nth August   Day 5   Year 1846.
5. Place of birth Alabama.

6. Name of Father James Lambert.   Place of birth Georgia.  
     Other information about father Dead and buried in Mississippi.
7. Name of Mother Marilda Trust Lambert.   Place of birth Don't know.  
     Other information about mother Buried in Mississippi.

~~I do not remember the date of her death.~~

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 6.

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Bradley Bolinger,  
Field Worker,  
June 23, 1937.

An interview with James Irwin Lambert,  
Suburbs of Red Oak, Oklahoma.

My father's name was James Lambert. He was born in the state of Georgia. He was fifty-six years of age when he died and was buried in the state of Mississippi, where he had moved from Georgia.

I was raised in the south until I was grown and was inducted into the Confederate Army to a mounted regiment under Colonel James Livingston, our commander. I was discharged in 1865.

I met my wife in the state of Mississippi and we were married. Her name was Mary Jane Sandlin Lambert and we lived in Mississippi a while before we moved to the Indian Territory.

We moved to this country in the year of 1889. This country in those days was called Gaines County by the Choctaws. I settled about one and one-half miles south of what is now Red Oak. I received my permit very soon after I arrived in this country. At this time there was just one small store and trading post at what is now Red Oak. When I settled there, there was just two stores in the city of what is now Poteau.

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Most of the white settlers that did live in the Territory when they had to travel to some place to do some trading and buying supplies went to these two stores at Poteau. It was a distance of about twenty-five miles and we made this trip about twice a year for our trading. I would go there in the spring and trade for at least 1000 pounds of flour and other household necessities. There were ten members at that time in my family.

There were no roads in this country in those days and when we went any place we just started on what you might call just a trail and you had to do what traveling that was necessary when the streams were low because you was unable to ford them when they were up on account of rain.

My experience with the Choctaw Indians in this country was that they did not understand very/much the white settler and they did not visit around with them much. All the Choctaws were very slow in getting acquainted with the white man until he had proven himself a friend of the Choctaws.

When I settled on the place right close to the Red Oak location, I rented from an Indian. His name was Nicholas

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McCurtain, a full blood Choctaw. I rented a good sized farm. There was not much timber on this land to be cleared off and I made some pretty good crops.

The Indian sheriff in those days came around and for some reason decided that McCurtain and I were not doing the right thing with our rentals. He was about to go and file charges against the Indian McCurtain for some dishonesty in the Indian Court. McCurtain and I got on our horses and went to see the Indian District Judge; his name was Neil Nelson. I found him to be a pretty well educated Indian and he could speak some English. I explained to him and showed him how McCurtain and I had been handling our business and he promised us that there would be no more trouble.

When the other Choctaws of this country found out that I had taken the part of one of them in helping McCurtain to dodge a thrashing in the Indian Court they did not forget me. They all seemed more friendly and seemed to have lots more confidence in me as a white settler.

A few of us white settlers in this country raised some cotton in this early time; there was a kind of a cotton gin put up at where Red Oak is now located. It was a horse power

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affair. This one had four horses hooked to it for their power. These four horses were hooked two abreast to a large beam that ran straight through the turn table and was connected with it. This turn table was a round affair that gave the gin its power. This was a slow way of ginning in those days but it was the best there was to be had and there was not much cotton raised in the Choctaw Nation then. About three or four bales to be ginned in one day was all the work they could get out.

When I was a settler in this country the Indian Department would only allow the white settler to have ten head of cattle. Each year you must dispose of all of your livestock down to the ten head. However, some of the white settlers who came into this country to raise livestock would deal with some one of the Choctaw tribe for their mark and brand and pay him for the use of this brand and would raise lots of cattle in this country. All the land here then was on the outside. There were no fences then, only a small rail fence maybe to shelter a small corn field, and not many of them.

There was lots of game in this country in those days and many of the Choctaws used the hides of deer and fur bearing

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animals in the winter time to make their clothes and moccasins to wear.

When I came to this country, there was only one road that was built through this country; it was built in here by the soldiers of Fort Smith and ran from Fort Smith to the Texas border. There was a stage coach operated on this road that went through this country. At that time during the rainy season in the spring and winter this road got in very bad shape.

There was only one bridge on this road and it was located across the Fourche Maline Creek, about two miles east of where Wilburton is now located. The piers were built out of native stone and there was quite a bit of iron put in the framework of this old bridge. There is not a part of this old bridge left. The soldiers of Fort Smith built this road in order that they would have some way to come to the country of the Five Civilized Tribes and if necessary to protect them.

I believe there were two stage stops or maybe three in what is now this country. One was where Red Oak is now located at the old Indian courthouse, one was where Wilburton is now located and one on Mountain Station.

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When the Choctaw, Oklahoma & Gulf Railroad came through this country the town of Red Oak began to build and more white people began to come to this county. Then coal was found around Wilburton and the railroad also made it a thriving town.