



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

458

LAWRANCE, OSCAR K.

INTERVIEW

8075

Field Worker's name John R. Daugherty,This report made on (date) July 27, 193 7

1. Name Oscar K. Lawrence,
2. Post Office Address Sulphur, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) Route No. 3.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 17 Year 1883
5. Place of birth "Boiling Springs" place southeast of Sulphur,  
Murray County.
6. Name of Father Willis B. Lawrence Place of birth Tennessee  
Other information about father stockman
7. Name of Mother Mary Fletcher Place of birth Indian Terri-  
tory  
Other information about mother 1/8 Chickasaw

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 7.

LAWRANCE, OSCAR K. INTERVIEW

8075

John F. Daugherty,  
Interviewer,  
July 27, 1937.

Interview with Oscar K. Lawrance,  
Route No. 3,  
Sulphur, Oklahoma.

My father was Willis Burgess Lawrance, born August 26, 1830, in Tennessee. Mother was Mary Fletcher, born in the Indian Territory near the mouth of the Washita River, exact place and date unknown. Father was a farmer and stockman. He was a Confederate soldier during the Civil War. He was so religious he wouldn't carry a gun so his Captain kept his gun during the entire time he was in service. His company was moved to Fort Smith, and they passed through the Choctaw Nation. It was then that he decided to locate here when the War was ended, if he survived. He went back to Texas, married and lived there until 1876.

He then moved to the Indian Territory near Stringtown. He came in a covered wagon and always stopped over Sunday where they camped the night before. He said that he noticed that the people who passed him on Sunday were

LAWRANCE, OSCAR K.

INTERVIEW

8075

-2-

always passed by him during the week. He always kept Sunday as a day of rest. He bought the "Boiling Springs" place near Buckhorn, in the Chickasaw Nation, in 1877. That same year he married a Chickasaw Indian girl, his first wife having died. This Indian girl was my mother.

Father built a stately home in this wilderness in the nineties, a few years after my birth. The doors were always open to travelers, as was the custom in those early days. This was especially true of the home of the minister. Although Father was not a minister, he organized a small band who worshipped under the trees on his place, and our home was an open house for travelers. Our place was a good day's drive from Ardmore in those early days, but was, as stated, the resting place for many a weary traveler. Father never turned anyone away from his door.

I was born on this place southeast of Sulphur, January 17, 1883, in a double log house. It was a few years later that the colonial type home was built.

Father was arrested and put in jail at Tishomingo regularly once a year, because he was holding two places,

LAWRANCE, OSCAR K.

INTERVIEW

8075

-3-

the one at Boiling Springs where he lived and another in the same vicinity were some renters lived. They also charged him with holding cattle for non-residents. When my brother and I got large enough we put a stop to that. Father was guilty of nothing, but he held so much land and refused to pay permits for his renters so they were trying to get him to move. But he refused to do so. He said he had come to stay, which he did until his death. There was a secret organization in those days among the Indians which killed men whom they considered undesirable citizens. They would meet in council, decide whom they wished to kill, draw straws to see who would do the killing and the deed was done. Usually the person to be killed was waylaid and shot from ambush. Nobody ever heard of him again. This was done to help rid the Territory of cattle thieves and outlaws. Indians hated thieves and murderers. They were a very honest people, and didn't learn to steal until the white man taught them. The Indians had the best law I have ever known for the punishment of thieves. The first offense was punished by

LAWRANCE, OSCAR K.

INTERVIEW

8075

-4-

fifty stripes across the bare back. The second offense was punished by one hundred stripes and the third offense carried a penalty of death. The Indians felt free to come and eat with us at any time. Father never passed an Indian's home without being invited in to eat. They always kept Tomfuller and Pashofa and if one refused to eat with them it was an insult.

I rode after cattle from the time I could sit on a horse. The Texas ranchmen used to drive their cattle in here as far north as the Canadian River in the fall, and turn them loose on free range. They would drift back toward Texas, and our cattle would fall in with them and it was necessary each spring to round them up and return them to their own range. This was my job each spring.

Father was married under the Chickasaw Indian law the second time to become an intermarried citizen and have the right to hold land, and help make the tribal laws. He paid a fee of fifty dollars for this privilege. He obtained a license and he and Mother were married by an Indian minister. In later years they disfranchised the

LAWRANCE, OSCAR K.

INTERVIEW

8075

-5-

intermarried citizens from Chickasaw politics during Governor Byrd's Administration and the marriage license fee advanced to a thousand and forty dollars, which was the value of each Indian allotment. There were fewer marriages under the Indian law after this law became effective.

Boys were permitted to vote under the Chickasaw law when they became eighteen years old.

Heck Thomas, United States Marshal, had a long range gun with a long range sight, and he killed many a man who was stealing cattle with this gun.

The old stage line from Caddo to Fort Sill ran across Father's land on the north and the old Whiskey Trail coming from Gainesville, Texas, ran by our lake on the south side. I remember when I was a small lad Father and my older brother had gone on a roundup, and some strangers came to our house for the night. Mother was worried about what we would eat. In those days, meat was an essential part of the meal, and we had no meat. She prepared corn bread and fried sweet potatoes and we had sweet milk and

LAWRANCE, OSCAR K.

INTERVIEW

8075

-6-

plenty of butter. When we started to eat I picked up the sweet potatoes and said, "Have some of the fry." This caused a laugh and nobody missed the meat.

I married Mattie Sapp in 1905. We are the parents of five boys and one girl. I have served three terms in the State Legislature as a Representative from Murray County, and one term as a senator.

I enjoy riding wild horses and roping cattle. I am the first white man to bulldog a steer for exhibition in Oklahoma. I didn't know I was going to do this. It happened in Ardmore. I was helping a mulatto negro. He was to do the bulldogging and when the time came, he failed to get off his horse and attack the steer, so I did when I saw he was going to let the steer escape. I won the five hundred dollar gold belt and saddle in a bulldogging contest in Canada in 1912.

I remember when there was no Sulphur. There was just an old gum spring which boiled up through a hollow log, placed there by cattlemen who watered their cattle there. The water ran off down a creek and there was only a "bog hole" around the spring, which was made by the numerous



LAWRANCE, OSCAR K. INTERVIEW

8075

-7-

cattle coming here to drink. The springs on our place flow a thousand gallons per minute, and flow away down Buckhorn Creek. I live in the colonial home built by my father at the head of Buckhorn Creek.

---