

CATES, JOHN H.

INTERVIEW

#8308

**350.**

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

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Field Worker's name Maudie M. Fink.

This report made on, (date) August 12, 1937.

1. Name Mr. John H. Cates.

2. Post Office Address Weatherford, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 115 West Franklin Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: not December Day 6 Year 1857.

5. Place of birth Knoxville, Tennessee.

6. Name of Father John H. Cates. Place of birth Knoxville,  
Tennessee.

Other information about father Farmer.

7. Name of Mother Susan Cates. Place of birth Knoxville,  
Tennessee.

Other information about mother Housewife.

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 4.

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Maude M. Fink,  
Interviewer.  
August 12, 1937.

An interview with John Cates,  
Weatherford, Oklahoma.

Mr. Cates came to Oklahoma in 1898 and came to Auxier, five miles north of Colony. He came from Northern Missouri, on the train to El Reno.

Mr. Brooks, a brother-in-law of Mr. Cates, met the Cates family at El Reno and brought them out to Auxier in a wagon. The Cates family visited a while with the Brooks family and then filed on a claim. They finally went back to Missouri after their things and got ready to move. Mr. Cates was working for the railroad, in this way he got free transportation. When they returned from Missouri the Choctaw Railroad had just gotten through to Weatherford so the Cates family came all the way to Weatherford on the train.

The country was rough and all the good land was taken. The people had five years to prove up on a claim, they had to establish residence in six months, then stay on a claim for six months, but most of them just moved on and stayed on their claim.

Ch yenne and Arapaho reservations and the Colony school were already established and Colony was a little town.

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Some places on the Washita River were bridged, but mostly you had to ford the river. Down by Cloud Chief, fifteen miles northeast of Cordell, there was a bridge. Cloud Chief was the county seat of Washita County.

The political parties were the same as they are today. The Republican party was in power. The people all worked then, they did not wait for hand outs.

School was in a dugout which had a dirt floor. When they enlarged it they put in a plank floor. Mr. Cates served two years on the school board. High Point school first started in a dugout, now it is a one room frame building. Rosa Brooks taught the first school, she had a Third Grade certificate, which showed that she had gotten as high as the Eighth Grade, but could teach in any of the common schools. Miss Brooks got her education in Missouri. The seats in the school room were made out of lumber and were rudely constructed.

The Church of Christ was four miles south and three miles west of Weatherford, and John Hureld was the preacher. Some people had church in the dugout school house, but most of the people came to the church. People went to work and built the Bethel Baptist Church, six miles north of Colony, which is

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still in use. When the church was organized there were eighteen members, now they have a large organization.

The men of this community met and organized the Masonic Lodge. The lodge has been in existence now at Weatherford for thirty-five years. It had ~~about~~ twenty members when it was organized, now two or three thousand men belong to it. The masonic lodge is the oldest lodge there is.

Big Jake Crossing took its name because this crossing was on an Indian's place, who was called "Big Jake" ; he owned the allotment and they crossed at his place.

The stage coach ran from El Reno to Cloud Chief, through Colony, Bridgeport and on to El Reno. From El Reno to Arapaho; it came from El Reno, Bridgeport, across Deer Creek where hydro is now to mouth of little Deer Creek, went by old Weatherford two miles north of where Weatherford is now to Arapaho, Cheyenne, on to Canadian City, Texas, where it intersected the Santa Fe Railroad.

The Chisholm Trail came through from Texas, crossed the North Fork of Red River by Granite, crossed Elk Creek by Elk City and went on to Topeka, Kansas. Then there was a trail called Panhandle trail in Western Texas which started at Mobeetie,

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Texas, crossed Canadian River to Dodge City, Kansas.

Thousands of head of cattle were driven over this trail, longhorn cattle and other kinds.

The Indians made raids on the cattle. The cattle would be divided up between the cowboys. There would be two or three different divisions. Each division would have two or three thousand head of cattle. The Indians would make raids to get some of the cattle to eat.

The free grass people were supposed to be all out before the country was opened.

The railroad went only to El Reno and on out to Weatherford in 1898; it was the Choctaw Railroad and later the Rock Island bought them out.

The people lived in dugouts, some had two rooms, but mostly one room.

Indians put their dead in trees and old wagon boxes, then got to burying them in the regular way.