

CARR, JOHN M.

INTERVIEW

1289

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION 1289
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Merrill A. Nelson

This report made on (date) April 14, 1937

1. Name Mr. John M. Carr.

2. Post Office Address Former Mayor of Enid.--. 501 N, Grand.

3. Residence address (or location) 501 N. Grand.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 31 Year 1866.

5. Place of birth Gallatin, Tennessee.

6. Name of Father Daniel M. Carr. Place of birth Sumner County, Tennessee.

Other information about father Farmer, served on Southern Side in the Civil War.

7. Name of Mother Nancy Dobbins. Place of birth Sumner County Tennessee.

Other information about mother Eleven children, ten raised; I was the seventh.

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 5.

Merrill A. Nelson,
Field Worker.

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An Interview With John M. Carr,
Former Mayor of Enid, Oklahoma.

MR. JOHN CARR'S STORY.

I left Tennessee for Butler County, Kansas, at the age of sixteen. I lived there several years and then went to Colorado where I stayed two years.

I returned to Kansas for the purpose of making the run into the Cherokee Strip when I was about twenty-five years of age.

I camped at Hunnewell, two miles north of the line, but I did not hear of the Hunnewell Trail. Here I stayed with thousands of others and registered, and when the day of the run came, I made the run on a horse shipped from Colorado. To prevent getting on school land, I sighted a tree some miles away and held to it with a compass.

I rode almost alone, but when I selected a claim three miles west and five miles north of Blackwell, I found myself in a group of cowboys.

I lived on the place seven years, taking advantage of the free homestead act. I had secured a good bottom farm and Blackwell was my trading post. Two other men ran near me, and one got a claim. He was Herbert Hamblet, and his claim was across the section line west. I had familiarized myself with the corner stones and

did not have to ask a surveyor to help me locate. Hamblet and I camped together after we located.

Soon afterwards we noticed three fellows cutting posts, near by. They would drive around my place and attempt to set these, so we waited till they had gone back for more posts, then we rushed after them, threw the reins over our horses' heads and I instructed Hamblet to search them while I held them up. I brought my forty-five into action and Hamblet took their guns and ammunition from them.

We started to march them off but I decided we had better let them go. I put the guns back in their wagon and as we were building a dugout out on my farm, we returned to work.

Next day a fellow came along on a twenty-five dollar pony with a cheap saddle with a warrant. He had no warrant for Hamblet, so I borrowed his horse to get my own swung around, threw up my hat and said, "Good bye, I'm going to Kansas". Of course I was just joking, and I got my horse and followed him. About a quarter of a mile away.

At that time Blackwell consisted of one little boarded up building, and all the rest of the city was of tents. I looked for a lawyer and finally found one by the name of Bob Neff. He was from Wichita, Kansas,

and he was experienced in police force work but knew less about legal procedure.

I had a twenty dollar bill and two dollars and a half in silver. He asked me twenty dollars. I said I couldn't pay that so finally he came down to ten dollars. "What are you going to plead?" he asked. "Guilty", I said. "If so, you need no lawyer", he said and I replied, "Well, I do not know legal customs, so I will plead 'not guilty'".

We went to court. Old man Blackwell was the judge and I did not expect any favors from what I had seen of him before. I do not know how he happened to be judge, and I had wanted a court of homesteaders. They took the evidence and then Neff spoke. The man who swore out the warrant left and I never saw him again during the trial. Neff argued the land had not been filed and was government land and that the men who attempted to jump my claim were working against the federal government, when they sawed down the logs. We won the case.

After seven years, as I said, on the claim, I moved to Frederick, Oklahoma. I was in the implement and hardware business, and was chosen mayor for two terms. As long as Oklahoma was a Territory we had saloons. I closed the saloons in Frederick; no easy matter to do in a frontier

town as the men were a little bit rough. From there also, I was chosen a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, and signed the document. C. N. Haskell, Bob Williams and others were among the members working on this state Constitution.

Frederick is fifty-four miles southwest of Lawton. The people wanted to get a new county and a new county seat there. In my position, in the convention, I used all the efforts I could to get on the boundary committee so I could have some say so as to the county boundaries. I was successful in getting Tillman County cut off from Comanche; in fact, I was allowed to name the county commissioner, the county, and the township. I named it Tillman after a United States Senator from Mississippi, whom I had learned to admire.

I lived there till 1916. Then I sold out and moved to Enid and I engaged here in the automobile business. Had the Chevrolet franchise here for twelve years, and later I sold to Weldon. In 1922, I was elected Mayor of Enid and reelected later. During my incumbency, we built the stock pavilion, and much paving was done. We opened a water field north of town, never paying more than one hundred dollars for the land where the well was dug. We got cheap water and some ends of the mains on the west

side of town were connected with wells we dug there. This was a great help to West Broadway and West Cherokee Streets.

There were some rough characters in those days in Enid. We helped to clean the town of such an element. There were three brothers who became bootleggers who were very obnoxious, and they created more disturbance than anyone else. They even fought among themselves, but I made it so hot for them that they left.

We have no children, but my wife is more interested in our home than in civic matters.

I spend my time looking after various business interests including apartments on North Grand, and several scattered farms.