

CHAMBERS, O. L.

INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Biographical History Project

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Field Worker's name Robert W. SmallThis report made on (date) September 20. 193 81. Name O. L. Chambers2. Post Office Address Tonkawa, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 306 North 6th Street4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 29 Year 18615. Place of birth Indiana6. Name of Father Timothy Chambers Place of birth New Jersey7. Name of Mother Sarah Acet Chambers Place of birth Ohio.

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 7.

Robert W. Small
Investigator
September 20, 1937.

Interview with O. L. Chambers
306 N. 6th St. Tonkawa, Oklahoma.

I was born in Indiana; October 29, 1861 and in 1885
I moved to Hunnewell, Kansas.

On July 4, 1885, I came with my family, and a group
of neighboring families down to the Chikaskia River, one
mile west and one north of the present site of Eraman, to
spend the day outing in the timbered groves along the river's
bank. We came in wagons and buggies and brought our dinners,
prepared for eating. The day was spent picking wild sand
plums and loitering in the pleasant, shady groves; nearby
on the open prairies great herds of cattle were grazing
and in the distance a cowboy might be seen riding the line
fences.

In the winter of 1886, with two or three other men, I
made a hunting trip into Oklahoma Territory starting from Hunne-
well, Kansas we followed a trail to the Lige Stevens stage
ranch on Deer Creek about two miles above the present town
of Deer Creek, and crossed the Salt Fork River at a soldiers
camp known as Round Grove Pond which derived its name from

a low or sunken place in the earth that formed a reservoir or pond and was situated in the center of a round grove of timber. A few miles northwest of the present site of Knid we passed another stage ranch and farther on crossed Turkey Creek and into a blackjack timbered section of country where we found plenty of wild game; killing thirteen deer and a great many turkeys. We killed forty-nine turkeys in a single night from their roosts. Prairie chickens were numerous over the entire country and quail were also plentiful.

On this hunting trip the weather was severely cold and in many places on the prairies the cattle had drifted into corners of the pasture fences and ^{they} froze to death in great numbers. We used the old style squirrel rifles and shot guns in our hunting.

At another time I was with a party that had been hunting some when the soldiers took us in hand and took us to Round Pond camp, where we were given orders to get out of the country and were told that we had no right in there. The soldiers that took us were known as the "white horse gang" because all of the horses were white ones.

In the hunting trips that I made through the country at different times Indians were often seen in hunting camps. Beaver and otter were to be found in some streams in the western part of country.

The cowboys drove thousands of head of cattle from Texas up through the Indian country slowly grazing them and arrived at Hunnewell and other points near the Kansas line in the Fall when the cattle were shipped to the markets for beef.

Some neighbors and I put up five hundred tons of hay which we cut on the prairies north of the present site of Blackwell, for a ranchman and also cut two-hundred tons for ourselves which we hauled to our homes and sold what we didn't need for our own use.

The cowboys had dugout camps on most of the cattle ranches and some of the cowboys rode the pasture line fences every day to see that all fencing was up in good shape and to care for any cattle that were sick or crippled.

I have hauled lots of wood from the streams where timber grew in northern Oklahoma Territory to my place in Kansas to be used for fuel.

I made the Run from near Orlando in the Opening of Old Oklahoma lands on April 22, 1889, but failed to get any claim, as most all the good land seemed to have someone located on it when I got to it.

In the early days I sold corn to the Miller 101 Ranch the located at that time on/south side of Salt Fork River south of present site of Lamont, to which place my corn was hauled from my place near Hunnewell, Kansas.

Just prior to the Opening of the Cherokee Strip I spent two days and nights waiting in line to register, and on the day of the Opening I started in the race from the Greenway Stables near Hunnewell, Kansas, making the Run in a buggy from which I had removed the top and had wrapped the springs with baling wire from one end to the other to prevent delay on the road in case a spring would get broken, as the wire would still hold them together. The team used in the Run had been hitched up daily for two weeks prior to the race, and driven madly about the country several miles in order to get them toughened for the race. My claim was staked twenty-three miles south and one-half mile west of starting point, being the Southeast Quarter of Section 9, Township 25 North, Range 2 West. The time consumed in the Run was

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about two hours; I crossed the Salt Fork River at a cow trail.

A man with a wagon load of feed and provisions for me and several of my neighbors in the race was to follow the crowd and stop at a certain place where we could all find him after the Run and get feed for our horses and ourselves. This wagon also hauled a plow which I used the following day to plow a few furrows around my claim; the land was so dry and hard it was very difficult to turn any of the soil but I marked my boundary line the best I could do with the plow.

I had provided a cock shack formerly used with a threshing machine in Kansas, to live in and this was taken to my claim and my family moved down and we lived in it till I built a dugout.

A shallow well had been dug about four feet deep in the bed of a creek where water was obtained by going down steps dug out in the side of a bank. A dugout stable or shed for stock was also made.

The following Spring I planted twenty-five acres in corn and kaffir, the corn making about twenty-five bushel

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per acre and kaffir making a fair yield.

In the Fall of 1894 I sowed ten acres to wheat which made a yield of forty bushels per acre when threshed and tested sixty-three pounds per bushel. My land was all first and second bottom soil on my claim. One year I planted all the land I had broken up to wheat, about eighty-five acres, because I had studied Hicks Word and Works Almanac very closely and it predicted a dry year ahead. At threshing time I had 3,000 bushels of grain; this was in 1896.

I built good substantial buildings on my claim in a few years, my dwelling being built in 1897, and others later.

~~The first school taught in the community was held in~~
a dugout where the teacher lived but a schoolhouse was built in 1896, \$200.00 in bonds having been voted for that purpose. The bonds were traded to a lumber dealer in Ponca City for lumber and the patrons hauled the lumber out and put up the building. I was a member of the school board at the time.

In later years I leased my land for oil and gas and some producing wells were drilled on my land, one of which made about 10,000 barrel production and is still producing some oil today.



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I still own the old homestead and other farms in Oklahoma and some land in the Rio Grande Valley, besides a very comfortable home at 306 North 6th Street, Tonkawa, where I now reside.