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Chauncey O. Moore, Supervisor
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Research Field Worker

Interview: John Chouteau
Vinita, Okla.

My name is John Chouteau. I am a Shawnee Indian, born near Montecello and Chouteau Station, Johnson County, Kansas, in 1860, on the Santa Fe Railroad.

My father's name was William M. Chouteau and was of the same address. My mother was a Silverheel, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Moses Silverheel, from the same place in Kansas.

To this union five children were born, as follows:

Annie (Choteau) Singleton
John
Bennie F.
Edward
Julia (Chouteau) Pennington.

My father, with his entire family, came to the Indian Territory in 1868 and settled on Mud Creek, near Horse Shoe Lake, a few miles south of Chetopa, Kansas. With us came Moses Silverheel and wife, my grandparents, Randolph Wells and family and James Elliott and family, all Shawnees. My father took up a claim where he first settled and farmed for several years.

My mother died on our Mud Creek farm a few years after we settled there and was buried on the Moses Silverheel place in the Frank White Cemetery, seven miles south of Chetopa, Kansas, in the Indian Territory.

My father went back to Kansas in 1877 and was married there to Addie McFarland. He sent for us children and we went back to Chouteau Junction and lived several years, before we came back to the Indian Territory. My father owned 320 acres of land there and we farmed it. Four children were born to my father's second marriage. They were:

all of whom were living on March 26, 1937.

Several of the Silverheel girls, now married, live at Chetopa, Kansas. There were no sons among the younger generation that I know of.

I was married at Shawnee town, Kansas, to Nannie Roland and we began to make preparations to move back to the Territory.

Back to the Territory

The government had decreed that all Shawnees vacate the land owned by them in Kansas and remove to the Indian Territory where it was agreed that they should have an equal right with the Cherokees by paying into the Cherokee National Treasury the sum of \$287 per head. My father sold his 320 acre farm in Johnson County, Kansas for \$75.00 per acre and we moved back to his farm on Lad Creek, which he still owned. We farmed there two years and moved to Vinita, Indian Territory, in the early 80's. We bought the lots on North Scraper St. now occupied by the family of C. York, opposite the Moss Greenhouse. We also bought a grocery business from Jim Skinner, located the first door east of Skinner & Ratcliff, on East Illinois Avenue. The Skinner and Ratcliff store was located on the corner of Wilson & Illinois and overhead was the Indian Chief-tain office, next to the oldest paper in the Indian Territory. It was published weekly and there was not a daily paper published in the Territory. The first daily paper I remember to appear in the Territory was the Daily Oklahoman, well up in the 90's. We didn't think that a daily paper could survive in this new country at the time and was surprised when others began to spring up in different parts of the Territory.

We operated our grocery business on West Illinois for several years when a frame building occupied by A. C. Raymond, and in which he was conducting a furniture store caught fire and burned everything in the block, from the present Post Office site to the Skinner-Ratcliff store, wiping us out slick and clean.

My father had, before this time, bought some lots from Tom Bluejacket, on

East Illinois Ave., east of the M. K. & T. track, where he built a store and residence and we operated that store eleven years, selling out to Boss Blue-jacket. 49

Had Blind Brother

My brother, Edward, was blind and my father sent him to a blind school in Kansas, where he graduated. He also received his degree in music and learned the trade of making brooms. When he came home he went to making brooms and did well. He made a fine violinist and piano player but did not venture to teach for some time. He finally got tired of the broom making business and started in teaching violin and piano music. He could read music in the Brail system and teach it the same as one with two good eyes. He was very successful and soon had a music studio up town, where pupils would come and take their lessons. He lived 9 blocks from the business section and would walk to town unassisted, and any place else that he chose to go. He was playing for a dance one dark night, about fifteen blocks out from the business section. His piano player undertook to direct him back to town and got lost. My brother asked him if he had gone as far as he could and upon being told that he had, he said, "Well, just follow me and I will take you in", and he did.

My brother, Edward, married Myra Ware, a white woman, in the city of Vinita and raised two fine boys, Corbett and Byron. He and his two boys allotted 80 acres of land each and he had saved enough money to build himself a fine two story house on South Brewer Street in Vinita, where he lived until the time of his death. His wife died in Vinita several years later, I believe about 1935.

This generation of Chouteaus were grandsons of the late Perry Chouteau, the man who established the first trading post among the Cherokee at Salina, Indian Territory, My nephew, Corbett Chouteau, now of Oklahoma City, has a detailed report of our relation to Perry Chouteau and I will leave it to him

to give the details of his life.

Father Dies

After selling our store to Boss Bluejacket, on East Illinois in Vinita, my father and stepmother moved to Kansas City, where he died in 1905. My sister, who married Albert Loman, conducts a drug store in Kansas City and my stepmother, Addie Chouteau, lives with them.

I was in business with my father for 44 years. After selling out the store at that time to Boss Bluejacket, I worked as a salesman in various stores in Vinita but have been unemployed for the past eight years. I now live in my own home at 335 South Smith Street, Vinita, Oklahoma.