

DODSON, M. D.

INTERVIEW

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W. T. Holland,
Investigator,
Dec. 28, 1937.

An Interview With M. D. Dodson,
Pioneer of Oklahoma.
1107 North Cincinnati, Tulsa.

My father and mother were natives of Tennessee. Wm. D. Dodson was my father's name and Mother's name was Lucinda Sparkman.

They came West before I was born, first stopping in Missouri. They lived in Missouri about one and a half years, then moved to Kansas, near Arkansas City, where I was born November 6, 1874. I remember making the run into Oklahoma Territory in 1889. I was "going on" fifteen then and noticed things that I wouldn't have had I been older.

Of course, there was a big crowd lined up on the Kansas and Oklahoma border all set to go, and awaiting the order. They were mostly in covered wagons and a great many had their families and belongings with them.

We, my father and I, came in a covered wagon, with feed and provisions, such as we needed, but we were not heavily loaded. We had to wait on the border until the day set by the Government, where we were met by a company of United States soldiers, and our journey south started, the soldiers

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leading the way, and our caravan strung out behind for a couple of miles or more.

Our first days journey took us to Willow Springs, southwest of where Newkirk now is. We struck camp here and the next days journey brought us to the Ponca Agency near Salt Creek River, where we were held up on account of high water. We were held up there some time and it looked like we would lose too much time and miss the "Run", so our Captain of the United States soldiers became restless and decided he would go up the river to White Eagle, a cattle shipping point on the Sante Fe Railway, where it crosses Salt Fork River, and see if the railroad officials would permit the people to use the railroad bridge to cross Salt Fork. The railroad officials refused permission but this didn't stop the captain. He told the railroad official, with an oath, that he would use the bridge and he did. He delegated some of our men to tear down the stockyard pens at White Eagle and lay a plank floor over the bridge between the steel rails. This they did with dispatch, the wagon train lining up on each side of the railroad. The double line reached more than a mile back from the river. When the floor was ready, the men would un-

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hitch a team, lead them across, and pull the wagon by hand. They would take a wagon on one side, the next on the other side of the track, and so on until all were safely over.

At the crossing, all waited until all the wagons were over. But while we were crossing over the bridge, and fixing the floor, another party was making their own arrangements. This was a group of six wagons from Kansas, but not belonging to our party. They had brought lumber with them, with which to build a boat, if needed. So, while the others were pondering their condition, and later flooring and crossing the bridge, the other men from Kansas were building a ferry boat, just below the bridge. I watched them build it. They built a good boat and when it was finished they rowed across taking a line with them which they made fast to a tree, then returned and began ferrying their wagons across.

They were making their last trip when a soldier spied them. He swam his horse across and corralled their six wagons, and held them until all the others were ready to cross over. They, of course, thought they would outwit us and get there first, but they had to trail our wagon train from there on.

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Ponca City was just Ponca Agency, an Indian Government agency. We were lined up northeast of Stillwater and from there made the Run, starting at noon April 22, 1889. My father's team was not so fast and he did not press them much, so we kept going, passing over the country already claimed by faster riders than we were and finally we stopped near Perkins, not having found a place to file on. Father gave up the chase, and sometime later returned to Kansas.

My parents moved back down into Oklahoma in 1892 and leased land from a Creek Indian, about nine miles from Cushing where we lived until the Strip Run, the next year. There were only thirty in our party in the Strip Run. We lined up on the bank of the Cimarron River. My father was familiar with the country this time, so went right to the place he wanted, which was nine miles northeast of Cushing, on the north bank of the Cimarron River. His tract was all timbered, so he began clearing and cutting logs to build a house. He built a double log house and rived boards with which to cover it. His land all being timbered, he had to rent other land to farm, which he did from year to year, all the time clearing more and more of his land.

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I used to run a freighter from Cushing to Sapulpa, in 1893. Sapulpa was the end of the road then, and merchants of Cushing had to have their goods hauled from Sapulpa or Guthrie. I hauled from both places and the round trips took five days and a half and we camped out; in fact, in my lifetime, I actually believe that I have slept out doors as much as I have inside a house. We hauled groceries, hardware, lumber, just any and everything needed by the merchants.

It was in 1893 that my mother died. Our doctor was Dr. J. W. C. Bland who at that time lived in Cushing. He had married a Creek Indian woman, and their allotment was given them near Cushing, so they had moved from Red Fork to Cushing.

My father was deputy sheriff in Payne County for a long time. He never had any very exciting experiences tho. However, about this time, 1893-96, outlaws spent several nights with a neighbor of ours, who lived about half a mile from us, on the Cimarron River. Bill Doolin, Tulsa Jack, George Newcomb, Bitterneck often came there. I would see them often, in fact almost everytime they came through our community.

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They never molested anybody or took anything in our neighborhood, and when they stopped they always paid their way, when they had the money or, if unable to do so, would return later and pay double. The man they stayed with was not connected in anyway with these outlaws, but knew them and could not very well refuse to let them stay.

We farmed a part of the old Turkey Track Ranch near Oilton. Payne, a white man, managed a good part of this ranch. This was after it had been cut up, or after the Sac and Fox and Iowa Reservation had been opened up. The old ranch house, a rambling log structure was down on the Cimarron River. The bunk houses, made of poles, was strung out down the hill from the main house.

I later, in 1900, went up into the Osage country, near Gray Horse, where I rented land and farmed. You could rent a farm then at so much per acre or for part of the crop. The land was cut up into farms, fenced with a four strand eight wire fence, and there was a box house and a barn on the place. I paid one third of my crop, usually.

People, prior to 1900, had leased tracts of this Osage country, for a period of five years and all they paid was

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to make the improvements on the land; then they in turn rented it out a year at a time at prices from \$2.00 to \$3.00 per acre, or for one third of all the crops, so they made a good profit in the five year period.

I was married to Ella McCracken, of Kansas, in 1902.

I moved to Bartlesville in 1910 and lived there until 1926. I've lived in Tulsa since 1931.