

INDEX CARDS

Openings--Cherokee Strip
Perry
Springs--Oklahoma Territory
Pioneer Life--Oklahoma Territory
Hospitality--Pioneer
Outlaws--Oklahoma Territory
Pawnees

INTERVIEW WITH MR. A. N. NELSON
PAWNEE, OKLAFIELD WORKER GOLLIE TURNER
May 19, 1937

Mr. Nelson was born in Missouri in 1865 and came to Oklahoma in the spring of 1893.

I made the run from near Stillwater. I stood in line from ten o'clock one day till twelve o'clock the next day. The line was about two miles long from each registration booth. I rode a horse and made eleven miles in forty five minutes. I staked my claim about six miles west of Pawnee. A friend of mine staked the claim west of mine. I had no gun with me and after I had staked my claim I saw two Indian men coming toward me with guns. They told me I had staked an Indian allotment (there was no way to tell whether it was an allotment without a map) and for me to move on. I told them I would wait and be sure first, but they kept following me about as I busied myself about the various duties I had to do. Soon my friend who had been over to his claim came back to where I was. He asked me why the Indian men were following me about. I told him. He had a gun and told them to get going or he would take a shot at them and they went away. Later I found that a white man had offered those Indians ten dollars to get me off my claim. I put up my stake, built a foundation around

it and put my name on the stake. This would hold any claim for ninety days. I stayed till midnight then my friend and I started back to the line where my mother and family were.

My mother registered and while she was waiting on the line the soldier on the line who was to fire the starting gun gave her a stake and showed her a claim just across the starting line. He told her to watch him (he was to fire the shot about a half mile away) and when he fired the starting gun, she could put her stake down, this she did and my wife and two children stayed with her. I didn't get any sleep that night for when I got back to the claim which my mother staked I started building her a foundation for her house. The man who had been with me got his map of the country which he had forgotten to take with him and looked up our claims. He found that while mine was all right, his was an Indian allotment. My mother who had not filed on her claim yet gave it to him and came with me and my family to our claim.

I had to make six trips to Perry before I had a chance to file on my claim. You couldn't get any closer with a

horse or team than two miles to the place where we had to file and since there was no place to tie horses, we had to pay fifty cents to get some one to hold a horse for five minutes. After the first trip I would take my family and camp as close as I could, leave my wife in charge of the team and walk the two miles to the filing place. We would go, stay all day, then come back in the night. This wasn't an easy thing to do either for the trails were very faint if there were any at all, and it was very easy to get lost.

Perry was then a city of tents, each lot was roped off with a tent on it. Even the streets and alleys were roped which made it hard to get about. The owners hardly dared go to sleep for if they did they were often lifted with their cots and placed in the alley and some one else took possession of their lot.

I chose a claim that had two good water springs on it so had a good water supply. Then I built a dugout sixteen feet square in the side of a hill. It was real comfortable for I walled it up with stone. It faced the south which was the only open side. I built a stone chimney and fireplace. I cut logs and made a bed in one corner of the dug

out. It was eight feet square. Over this framework rough board slats were laid and over this a hay mattress was placed making a bed big enough for my wife and ^{me} and two children. My mother slept all winter on a large dry goods box in the other corner.

The next spring I bought logs of the Indians and built a log room over the dug out. It had a door even with the ground on top of the hill then I put floors in both the rooms. This gave us plenty of room then.

One night, soon after we had begun living in the dug-out, a man came there and asked if he might stay all night. He said he tried to sleep out on the prairie but that the coyotes were so thick he couldn't sleep for their howling. I told him that we had no accommodations but he could stay if he wanted to. He did and we put a straw mattress on the dirt floor for his bed. He said the next morning that he had never had such a good night's sleep before.

There were so many outlaws in the country that the Indians were afraid to live on their allotments, and stayed in camps most of the time. One of my horses was stolen a couple of weeks after we got to our claim and for a year and

half I had to get along with one horse.

I was more fortunate than some of the people for I would work for the Indians. They were good to pay and paid in food, money, calico, or meat. I could always get along with the Indians. One time an Indian gave me \$15 to put in his crop. When he told me what he wanted done he got on his pony and said "You fix um" and rode away, not coming back for a long time.

The Indians were treated mean by many of the white men. One Indian man by the name of George Crow told me he had a fine race horse. A white man came along with a little pony not much good and says "Let's trade horses" The Indian said "Me No swap". The white man pulled out a gun, pointed it at him and said "Let's swap". They swapped.

After a year and a half with one horse I managed to get me a little mule team. A man offered me twenty dollars to plow twenty two acres of sod for him. I went to Pawnee to see about getting me a sod plow. They wanted nine dollars for one but I didn't have the money. I offered to mortgage my team for it but they wouldn't let me have it. I went back to the man and told him I couldn't get a plow.

He told me he would buy it for me and did.

The first crop I put in I would plow a day or two for myself, then work for the Indians a few days to get food for us. My wife would take the two little children out to the field, build a little tepee of three poles and cover it making a shelter for them, then take our hand drill and would plant kafir corn in hills in the land I had plowed. I dont remember how many acres of Kafir corn we planted this way but we raised about 800 bushels of kafir, besides the castor beans. I sold the kafir corn in the head to the neighbors for eight cents a bushel. I hauled the castor beans to Perry to sell them.

At first the Indians were mean especially when they were drunk. I never kept a gun because I didnt want to hurt anyone. One time seven drunk Indians came in my dug-out and told me to get supper for them. They all had guns but I told them to get out that I wouldnt cook them anything. When they saw I meant it they got out and didnt fire a shot.

Another time I was shocking kafir corn when I heard a shot and my wife scream. I looked up and saw two Indian men on horses in the yard. -One of them was putting his gun

in its sheath, then they rode away. He had shot our dog which stood between my wife and baby. I went down to the camp to find out who it was for I didn't know one Indian from another then. I asked an Indian there who it was but he said he didn't know anything about it, as did several others. I started back and happened to see a little speckled dog. This dog had been with the two Indians who had shot my dog. I went out where some Indian men were stacking hay. I asked one of them whom I later knew as Mose Platt, if he was the owner of the speckled dog. He said he was. I asked him if he was the one who killed my dog. He said "no" but that he was with the one who did and told me where to find the one who did. I went back to the camp and found it was the first one I had talked to. He told me he would give me his Winchester if I wouldn't have him arrested. I wouldn't take his gun and decided not to have him arrested although he had been getting drunk and killing off other dogs in the neighborhood. Later he shot and killed an Indian boy, then took his Winchester to the boy's father and asked him to kill him with it. The father refused and went to have him arrested instead. He had been taught by his father never to let a white man arrest him so he

tried to borrow enough shells to kill the officers. Failing in this he took his two remaining shells and killed himself, using both shells.

Ben Craven, the outlaw, was often in the neighborhood where we lived. He would stay at Dollarhides, a white family, most of the time when he was in that part of the country. One time he robbed the Red Rock bank of about \$3,000 and killed a man. He then came to the home of Isom Cunningham, one of our neighbors. He told Isom that if he told anyone of his being there that he (Isom) would be shot. The next day another man and I were coming from a sale and rode through Cunningham's yard. We saw an extra horse there and a heavy-set man standing in the door. We asked Cunningham who it was but he said it was a friend from the Osage country. It was Craven. The officers were notified by someone (I never knew who), and they reluctantly came out to get him. Seven men hid behind the cellar in the tall grass but were afraid to go to the house for Craven was an expert shot. About that time Craven went to the door and saw Johnson, a deputy sheriff, but who had once been an outlaw with Craven, riding up with several other men. He shot Johnson who died that night; also John Crisman, another deputy, then got away. The seven men behind the cellar never

made an effort to do anything for they were afraid of him. After Craven got away, these men then got Cunningham and mauled and mistreated him because Craven had been there.

After a few years in the dug-out I built a log house a little distance from it. Later I sold it and bought the place where I now live, about a mile north of it.