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

Field Worker's name Jerome M. Emmons

This report made on (date) June 16 1937

1. Name Bill Hart

2. Post Office Address Okmulgee, Okla.

3. Residence address (or location) 108 1/2 S. Seminole st.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1876

5. Place of birth Northern Texas.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth Indiana

Other information about father Buried in Comanche, Texas. He moved to Texas soon after the Civil War.

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth Collett, Co., Texas.

Other information about mother Buried in Whitesburg, Texas.

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 _____.

INTERVIEW WITH BILL HART
BY
Jerome M. Emmons, Field Worker

Mr. Bill Hart, a cattleman, lives at 108½ South Seminole St., in Okmulgee, Okla.

I came to Okmulgee, I. T., in 1891, to go to work for Capt. Severs on the F. S. Ranch at Bald Hill. I had visited the Indian Territory in 1886 or '87 with my father, an uncle and a man named Anderson. My uncle, a rancher, had some business in Chickasha.

I went to Missouri to attend school from Texas, passing through Muskogee on the way. I then returned to Bald Hill to go to work.

My brother, Ed Hart, is eight or ten years older than I. He had come up here to go to work a few years before.

SEVERS RANCHES

Severs owned the Half Circle S and the F. S. Ranches. The former east of Mounds, Okla., and the latter northeast of Okmulgee.

We stayed in the ranch house at the S. F., which consisted of ten or twelve rooms. The house was built in 1871 of white pine freighted down, before the MKT was built through the Territory.

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My brother was foreman of this ranch for about 15 years. Since then, he has been in the cattle business for himself.

Severs had two stores, one in Okmulgee and one in Muskogee. The roustabouts of the ranch would ride into Okmulgee for food. It consisted of: canned corn, beans, tomatoes, bacon, coffee and sugar. Beef was killed on the ranch for meat. We never barbecued any. The beef was just cooked in a large skillet.

Wells and cisterns at the house and a creek provided water for the ranch.

We didn't raise crops for the livestock on the place, except a little corn for the saddle horses. It was, of course, all just open range.

Severs kept about eight horses per man and had usually about 15 riders. He first bought horses in Texas, then got to raising his own. His horse ranch was about where Morris, Okla., is now. The busters would break about 50 horses a year.

The largest number of cattle we ever had at one time was 20,000. We had one pasture twenty miles long and six miles wide, south of Bald Hill.

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We would have to cut back our cattle to keep them out of the Wagoner herd, when he was driving cattle up into the Osage country. Also, when he or others were driving herds through to markets. These big herds were trailed about five miles apart. The Texas Livestock Association would have an inspector to cut back cattle that didn't belong to the trail herd, according to the brands.

OTHER RANCHES

Bill Halsell and R. S. Brown were two others who owned large ranches in this section.

C. W. Turner, Muskogee merchant and cowman, with his associates undertook to fence in a 30 by 10 mile pasture, for Wagoner, on the eastern side of the Creek Nation, adjoining the Sac & Fox country.

It was a violation of tribal laws to build fences with wire and too expensive to build with rails.

Isparhecher and his followers cut this fence between every post, which was a loss to Turner and Co. of several thousands of dollars.

In 1891-92, W. T. Wagoner had a ranch in Texas which covered three counties. The counties were Ford, Archer and Wilbarger. Electra was a town on this ranch. He expanded

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into the Comanche country, but didn't have enough room so moved to the Osage country, driving 12,000 head of steers there. They swam the rivers as they came to them on the way up and crossed the Arkansas at Red Fork.

John R. Blocker, a Texas cattleman and fancy roper, had his shipping headquarters at Chimney mountain, seven miles south of Muskogee. He ran about 20,000 cattle a year. The Blocker loop was named for him.

Henry May of the May Bros. Ranch shipped about the same number each year.

Ranches in the Sac-Fox country shipped from Red Fork the same as we did.

Wagoner's DDD men used to kill several cattle for beef, as they were fat and the trail herd, poor. This was customary in the cattle country.

INDIANS

The Creek rolls were purged of those not entitled to be on it, in 1898-99. In 1866, they had what were known as dumb rolls.

When allotments were made later, negro freedmen were allowed land the same as the tribesmen.

The Creeks had been getting annuity payments for land

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given up in Alabama and Georgia. Sometime in the '80's the Creeks and Seminoles sold their western lands in old Okla. Payments were made to the Creeks until 1891.

I knew David and Solomon Anderson; Richard Bruner; Bob Stewart, of Holdenville. The two last named were Carlisle men. I knew Pleasant Porter and Buford Miller, a part Indian rancher. All the above mentioned are Creeks.

Jesse Allen, of Slick, Okla., a Euchee Indian, was also my friend. Allen is now well-to-do. He made money from cattle and oil, which was later found on his property. He was a good cowman for an Indian, usually having about a thousand head of stock. We used to help him roundup his cattle, when gathering our own. He is the most reliable Indian I ever knew.

The Eucheas are a part of the Creek Tribe, usually fair with blue or grey eyes.

The Concharty mountains, which are west of here, near the river, were the site of an old Indian stomp ground.

Arch Youngpeck, who had an allotment up near Bartlesville, and some of his friends were in a saloon in Muskogee drinking. They stayed around all day, telling about fights they had been in and how tough they were. Finally, a small

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squint-eyed Indian, with a big hat and small boots, had stood it as long as he could. He took off his hat and threw it onto the sawdust floor of the saloon, and said "I whip a big man myself one time." This was told to me by a bartender.

CIVIL WAR

During the Civil War, Fort Gibson was fortified. Major Blunt marched out from there on some Confederates camped nearby. Capt. F. B. Severs was in command and M. P. Blackson was one of his officers in the Confederate side. When Major Blunt started firing with his heavy artillery, Capt. Severs lost his command, which consisted mostly of Indians. They hadn't seen many of these large arms. Blackson said his male started to run away and he didn't try to stop him.

My uncle was fitted out by his sisters to go fight in the Civil War. He didn't care particularly about fighting, however. So, he went up to my grandfather's ranch and stayed during that period.

TRAILS

The Old Texas Trail started at a place called Preston, later Dennison, and followed the route taken by the Katy

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R. R. later. It went through Boggy Depot, and Fort Gibson, north into Baxter Springs, Kansas.

There used to be a trail from Fort Gibson to El Reno. Ardmore was the biggest town in the I. T. Muskogee grew quickly because of the government work centered there.

The most important stores on the Chisholm Trail were Duncan's, where Duncan, Okla., is now located and Cook's, where Chickasha is now.

Honey Springs (Oktaha), on Elk creek, was a place on the Old Texas Trail. It is located between Checotah and Muskogee.

TRADING POSTS

There were stores at Red Fork and Sapulpa. Tom Scales ran a store at Wetumka. A man named Davis ran a store at Arbeka, west of Holdenville. I believe he was at one time a chief.

White Bead Hill was once settled by Chickasaws and a few white traders. It is located five miles up the river from Paul's Valley. This is one place I never hear mentioned much.

OUTLAWS

The two Cook boys, who later got in with Cherokee Bill,

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worked for Capt. Severs on one of his ranches for a while.

Thurman Baldwin, who we called Skeeter, worked with us, also. He became quite an outlaw. Before coming to work here, he had worked for the old Turkey Track ranch in the Sac-Fox country.

We had trouble with the 'Buck gang' out on the S. F. one time and they were going to kill us all. Three of us went over to Muskogee and brought back three rifles apiece. These were for the Cowboys to carry for protection.

U. S. MARSHALS

Mark Moore was Marshal here between 1892 and 1897, during Cleveland's second administration. He was, later, a Chief of Police in Okmulgee.

Jesse Allen and Bud Ledbetter were the two most feared men in the Indian Territory. Allen was sort of a self-appointed vigilante and Ledbetter is widely known for his courage as an officer.

BEER

Al Belt, who ran the House of Lords saloon in Fort Smith, asked Judge Bryant at Paris, Texas, how he could make some money. The Judge said 'why don't you sell beer to the Indians? There isn't any law against it.' He sold it here, for three months, in 1892. I bought it in Red Fork.

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When Congress found out about it they wrote into the law a provision prohibiting beer also.

I had been in the drug business for myself and had worked for various firms as a bookkeeper, when Al Simco, a former gambler, wanted me to keep books for his company.

Mead is a drink, made by fermenting water and honey.

Mr. Simco, though, was selling beer, which he called Simco Mead, in wholesale lots to merchants in the Indian Territory. It was Hines Beer from Kansas City. He would buy it for \$729.00 and sell for \$1100.00 and was shipping it all over the Territory.

He paid me \$150.00 a month to keep the books. It was an easy job, taking only about 20 or 30 minutes a day, owing to the fact it was wholesale business.

Mr. Simco said to me, 'Now Mr. Hart when I have made \$100,000.00 let me know, and I'm going to quit business. That's just what he did too. When he accumulated that amount he moved to Arkansas and bought a home.

FERRY

Nevin's Ferry, which ran between Fort Gibson and Muskogee near where Hyde Park is now, was called Three Rivers.

There the Grand, Verdigris and Arkansas rivers met.

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GAME

Deer, turkey, prairie chickens were plentiful when I came here. The Boomers and early settlers killed them out quickly.

Wolves would attack the cattle, mostly at calving time, when they were weak and slow to get up and defend themselves.

HART, CHARLES.

INTERVIEW

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