

ORSON, B. F.

INTERVIEW

#4861

268

Field Worker, Ida B. Lankford,
July 16, 1937.

Interview with B. F. Osborn,
Cordell, Okla.,
South Church,

Born October 25, 1869, Iowa.

Parents Henry Osborn,
Margaret Pierce

I am one who made the run and still have the place which I filed on, starting back a few years before the opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Nation for settlers. I landed in Wichita Falls, Texas, which at that time was a very small town with more saloons than any other line of business, but being a wet Democrat from a dry Republican state, the saloons did not bother me. I was taught never to sneak around to the back door, but to be a man and go to the front. Wichita, at that time, had one hotel, two rooming houses, one bank, three grocery stores, one drug store, two hardware stores, four saloons, two livery barns, three wagon yards, two lumber yards, one wood yard, and one gambling hall. All were doing a good business when I landed in Wichita Falls with my father, mother, sister,

and eldest brother, and his family. My oldest brother was in very poor health, and my father's means being very limited, we bought a fifty foot lot and erected a two-story box house on it. My brother became dissatisfied and wanted to go back home. I had one hundred dollars in my own name, and I cheerfully gave it to him. I knew that he was not long for this world. My brother, Jim, and I, who had come over from the Chickasaw Nation to see the folks, were walking down the street and a man stopped us and wanted to know if either wanted to work. I knew my brother pretty well, and his inclination for work, so I asked the man what kind of work. He said unloading some cars of lumber. I told him I had never done any of that kind of work, but I would do my best. So when we got the lumber unloaded I went in the office to get my pay. I told the manager where I lived, and if he had a job open any time to let me know. They had just started work on the mill and elevator so I struck the contractor for a job. He gave me a job helping to dig a pit. That was the hardest dirt I ever struck a pick into. I worked two days and a half and when I came home, my mother said the manager

of the lumber yard had been down to the house and left word for me to come down to the office, so I went down. One of their teamsters had quit and they were running three teams of their own. So I took the job as third teamster. They told me the team was balky and would run away if they got a chance, but they never got a chance while I drove them. In about two months or so I was head teamster and got paid extra for taking care of teams on Sundays. A little later my brother, Wilbur, came and I got him a job in the yard. The lumber company decided to dispose of their teams and have their lumber hauled by the thousand, so we got the manager to buy a small team of mules. We took the job, paying for ^{our} teams on the installment plan. As the time rolled around, and the talk of the opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho began, we decided to try and get a home. We told the manager our intentions. He said "All right, your job will be open for you when you get back." We tried to get some boys with whom we were acquainted to come with us, and we finally got a man by the name of Charley Crowley. We furnished the conveyance, team, covered wagon, walking plow, three

Indian saddle ponies, and one saddle. Crowley, being an old time cow-hand, had his own saddle but no horse, so that made two saddles and three of us.

Just as we were about to start for Oklahoma, we met a man by the name of Charley Lackey and his wife, and a friend of his and his wife, who were thinking about coming to Oklahoma. So we all came together. They had a team and wagon of their own. We crossed the Red River at Charley, Texas, and came across to Anadarko, went several miles down the Washita River, and crossed. Then we started toward Minco, but got only a few miles when we came to a creek known then as Stinking Creek, and it surely did. We decided to turn and go back up the Washita River. We forded the river five times, I think, coming from Anadarko. One night we went into camp and when we came up the river to the meal the ladies had prepared for us ready to sit down to, we noticed some Indians headed for our camp. Mr. Lackey being familiar with Indian ways and having been interpreter at Ft. Sill at one time, could talk Comanche. He told us to go ahead and eat, and he picked up a blanket and spread it down on the ground and

lay down. When the Indians came up they went up to him and spoke to him. He told them he was "heap sick", so they didn't ask for anything to eat, and soon left our camp.

We went in to camp just below the mouth of Oak Creek on the river. They kept gathering in there till there was quite a bunch camped there. On the morning of the 19th of April, 1892, we all began to prepare for the run. Some went to the County Seat to get town lots and some to get claims. Mr. Crowley, my brother and myself were after claims. The rest of our bunch were going to Cloud Chief. We left our mules, wagon, and chuck at camp, all except a little dutch oven, bread, and fried bacon which we took with us for dinner and supper. The hour to start was 12 o'clock noon. Soldiers were stationed along the south line, and they gave the signal by rifle fire. As we left camp, we rode west up the line until we got out on the open prairie, away from the river bluffs. As we rode up the line we saw one bunch break through. One of the soldiers said as we passed him that he guessed they were going to get something. And I guess they did, but not honestly.

When the signal was given we struck out in the northwest direction. The first creek we came to a deer came tearing out of it. Mr. Crowley saw it, grabbed his lariat and was going to give chase. Just about that time a fellow came chasing up, horse back, and shot it down. We rode on. As we rode out on the opening into section nine, my brother was about one-half mile north of Mr. Crowley and myself. He waved me down and I rode across to him. He said this looked good to him. I said that it also looked good to me, so we began to try and mark it. Mr. Crowley went one-half mile up the creek and staked his claim. After staking his claim, he came back to locate us. As it was getting late we rode back up the creek to Mr. Crowley's place, and went into camp. Our three ponies were staked out. The grass was six or eight inches high. They fared well, as did we, with a biscuit and a piece of bacon apiece, two saddles for our pillows, a blanket apiece for our bed and cover, and a big black walnut log for our fire. It was dandy: but we hadn't seen or heard any one else in our settlement, except the coyotes, prairie dogs, and rattle snakes. Being familiar

with them, we felt at ease. The next morning ^{Brother} ~~we~~ got up before day, saddled his pony and went back after ~~the~~ team and wagon. He said he would get back just as quickly as he could, and for us to see if we could find some people who had come in their wagon and get some things from them to eat, and so see if we could find some corner stones so we could locate our claims. We hadn't broken camp yet, when a fellow driving a very small mule and a tolerably large horse to an old rickety wagon came up. We told him our situation, so he invited us to partake of his hospitality, which we did and were very thankful. It consisted of corn pone, bacon and coffee. He told us he had located up the creek and his name was Sam Marcellus. We made our camp headquarters and started out to see if we could locate some corner stones, but failed.

Late that evening Brother ~~was~~ rolled in with our chuck wagon. The next day we took the mules and wagon, went over to where we had staked, took our walking plow and broke some sod. Yes, we ran one furrow, and we marked off four quarters in that section. But, of course,

276

didn't know the difference until we could locate some section lines. We kept hunting for corner rock. A few more dropped into our settlement. By the aid of a government map and the location of one corner stone, we began to locate ourselves. In the first section cornering with the corner stone south and east, northeast quarter was Sam Marcelus; the next section east, northwest quarter, Charley Crowley; northeast, Rube Shelton; next section on west, B. F. Osborn; northeast, W. A. Osborn. Across the section line north of my place was J. H. Rowland. West of him was Jeff White and north of Rowland was Mart Shelton. We decided to go to Oklahoma City to file, so we left camp and started out. The boys who had saddle-horses took the lead to pick out roads and places to cross the creeks. The first one to cross was a prong of Galvary, and the creek was just south of where Cordell is now located. They found a place where we could angle down the creek a little where we could get out, but the banks were pretty steep. I was in the lead and I made it all right. Mr. Marcelus was following me and he had no brakes on his wagon. He had to lock one wheel with chains to get down

and he had just a set of chain gear for harness. When he was nearly to the top of the bank I heard him holler "Who^o," and looking back I saw the little mule going over backwards. The big horse broke his hame string. The wagon was going back down into the creek but not the little mule, for he slipped collar and bridle off over his head; however, we got them back and he made it out all right. The next we crossed was the Washita River, but it wasn't so bad. Our road was pretty winding, but we finally landed in Oklahoma City and drove into a wagon yard. They charged us twenty-five cents yard fee for each team and gave us all the hay we wanted to feed. My brother and I had to sell one of our ponies to get money enough to pay our filing fee. We had to get in line to wait our turn to file, which we did. Then we left the bunch and headed back for Wichita Falls, Texas.