



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

365

OWEN, J. D. E.

INTERVIEW.

8236.

Field Worker's name Ida A. Merwin,

This report made on (date) August 17, 1937

1. Name J. D. E. Owen,

2. Post Office Address Rt. 1. Morrison, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 3 miles west on Highway 64,

1 1/2 miles north

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Da 11 Year 1862.

5. Place of birth Orange County, Indiana

6. Name of Father Andrew J. Owen Place of birth Kentucky

July 15, 1832.

7. Name of Mother Azada (Dickerson) Owen, Place of birth Kentucky

September 1834.

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

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 seven sheets.

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8236.

Ida A. Merwin,  
Field Worker,  
August 17, 1937

Interview with J. D. E. Owen,  
Morrison, Oklahoma.

I am J. D. E. Owen (often called alphabet Owen), the son of Andrew J. and Azada Owen. I was born in Orange County, Indiana, December 11, 1862, and when a small lad my parents moved to Fullerton, Nebraska where I was raised and educated.

In June 1889 I came to Oklahoma locating at Stillwater. At that time Stillwater had about fifty inhabitants and the business houses consisted of two or three grocery and general stores, one hardware store, and one lumber yard.

Soon afterward the Post Office was established and Robert (Bob) Lowry was the first Postmaster. The mail was carried from Guthrie by a mail hack. The supplies were freighted by wagon from Winfield, Kansas and from the flag station or section house called Horton, which was located about three miles south of where the town of Perry is now located. Freight was unloaded here and the trains could be flagged for passengers.

I drove a freight wagon and often hauled supplies from this place, it being the closest point for a railroad from

OWEN, J. D. E.

INTERVIEW.

8236.

- 2 -

Stillwater. Harry Bullen was the manager of the lumber yard and most of the lumber that was used in the first buildings was shipped to Horton and I hauled or freighted it by wagon for the lumber yard.

In making trips to Winfield, Kansas, I followed the "Payne Trail" - this was a trail from Arkansas City to the Payne Boomer Colony in Payne County, on the Boomer Creek, near the mouth of the creek. This trail was first marked by Payne's Colony plowing a furrow across the country.

In crossing the Salt Fork River near White Eagle Indian Agency, I would ford the river unless high waters prevented, in that case I would use the ferry.

Over the Red Rock Creek at the Otoe Indian Agency in Noble County was a toll bridge run by Gus La Due, a French Indian, sometimes called a aquaw man. The fee to cross this bridge was fifty cents, and if loose horses were following the charge on them would be one cent each, but if tied to the wagon or led it would be more. I have paid ten cents a head for some I had tied to the wagon.

Before the opening of Old Oklahoma in April, 1889, the people who had gathered on the north line were permitted to

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OWEN, J. D. E.

INTERVIEW.

8236.

- 3 -

cross the Salt Fork River to the south bank. The water was quite high and this was thought to be a better plan to allow them to cross before the race. In making this crossing the railroad bridge near White Eagle Agency was planked so wagons and teams could cross on it, trains being held in waiting until the people could cross.

At the time I came to Stillwater the north line of Payne County was three miles from the town site, later a strip six miles wide was added on the north. Representative Gardenhire (Payne County's first representative) after a meeting in Guthrie, reported to the citizens that an A. and M. College would be located in Stillwater if the citizens wanted it. Frank Wykoff and Robert Lowry, both lawyers, were two of the main ones in securing the A. and M. College.

I hauled the tin roof that is on the Old Central building from the Horton station on the Santa Fe railroad to Stillwater. J. E. Sater was Payne County's first Surveyor. Robert Lowry was United States Commissioner at one time as well as postmaster.

In 1890 there were very few crops raised as this was an

OWEN, J. D. E.

INTERVIEW.

8236.

- 4 -

extremely dry year until fall, when some fall crops were raised especially a bumper turnip crop. This was known as "turnip year"; the turnips were used for food and also for stock feed.

Previous to the opening of the Cherokee Strip resident Cleveland issued orders no one be allowed on the land or reservation therefore the freighting from Winfield, Kansas, was discontinued. I secured work on the Whistler ranch on the North Canadian River; this was a large cattle ranch operated by a man named Whistler, a white man who had married an Indian woman.

In September, 1893, I entered the race in the opening of the Cherokee Strip, starting at a point on the south line, just north of Stillwater. I made the race on horseback in about forty eight minutes and staked a claim on the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of 11-21-2E. My wife, baby and three other women (wives of men in the race) followed with supplies in a wagon. After staking our claims we sent one of the company back as a messenger to guide the women - they were following the Old Payne trail and he met them at the crossing at Long Branch Creek, and guided them to the land we had staked about five or six miles

- 5 -

farther north - we set camp and stayed on the land that night.

I went to Perry to file and help to organize the filing system, which was done by groups. By being one of the helpers I got to file in group one; after this I returned to Stillwater and in February, 1894, I bought a box house, 8 x 12 that was on wheels, moved this to the land and located there.

I got our mail from Stillwater until the mail route was established from Perry to Pawnee; this was called the Star Route. A mail hack went on the trail one mile north of where Highway 64 is now and left mail at a small place called Sumner which was located on the farm known now as the Brown farm. Later after the railroad was built it was moved north, near the railroad. This then went on to the east to the town of Autry (now Morrison). At this place the horses were changed and then the hack proceeded on to Pawnee. The teams were changed at Autry on the return trip. The driver of this hack permitted the people who lived on this route to put up boxes and he would leave their mail for them there; by so doing I received the mail

- 6 -

at the house long before the Rural Route system began. After the Frisco Railroad was built in 1903 this route was discontinued and I got my mail at Morrison.

My first crops were kaffir, broom corn and castor beans, I had a home made thresher, operated by horse power that I used to thresh the broom corn, after which I baled it, and later I established a broom factory in Stillwater, hiring two men to operate it and I sold the brooms, traveling by wagon, I established a route to Perkins, Stroud, Perry, Red Rock, Ponca City, Cleveland and other near towns making the broom corn bring me a fair price. I sold the castor beans in Perry on an average of 2.50 per cwt. Later I raised wheat and corn, one year had a good crop of corn which sold for thirteen cents per bushel. Hogs sold for two and two and a half cents a pound, poultry brought on an average of two-fifty to three dollars a dozen for large hens; eggs were from three to six cents per dozen.

Our neighborhood consisted of several denominations of churches. I was instrumental in organizing a Union Sunday School, of which I was superintendent and my wife was in charge of the choir. We had no building but the neigh-



OWEN, J. D. E.

INTERVIEW.

8236.

372

- 7 -

borhood gathered together and built a brush arbor where the Oak Grove school house is now located and that is where we held Sunday School during the summer. In 1896 I added another room to our home and we used this for church services. Reverend Rucker, a South Methodist minister, came to us as a minister.

Our first School was taught by Frank Milliken, one of the homesteaders; this was conducted in the home of A. C. Hall. After two years the Oak Grove School House was built by donations from the district.