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INTERVIEW WITH B. M. PALMER
L. W. Wilson, Field Worker
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Mr. Palmer's answers to the questions asked him were as follows:

I am sixty-three years old. I was born near Fort Smith, Arkansas, October 16, 1873, and came to Indian Territory along with my parents in 1886 and settled at what is now Cowlington, Oklahoma, LeFlore County and continued to live there until 1927 when I and my family moved to Muskogee, Oklahoma.

My father was a farmer and his motive for coming to the Indian Territory was that he felt there were greater opportunities in the new land than they were back in Arkansas, looking forward to the days that the country would be opened for settlement, so much talked of at that time. He had to pay a fee of one dollar a month for a long time to reside here and then finally nothing. He settled down and began to prosper, farming as he did together with cattle raising. He did not make the race in 1889. All the land he ever acquired or that I own was purchased.

LIFE AND CUSTOMS

The houses and schools were of log construction. There were some, however, which were built of native lumber.

The English language was taught in all the schools and

the Protestant faith was preached in all the churches.

We raised cotton and corn principally and of course we had our gardens.

All cotton gins as well as grist mills were operated by horse power. I do remember a water mill at one time near the present town of Poteau, on the Poteau River, but I cannot call the name of the owner.

There was plenty of wild berries, fruits and nuts such as dewberries blackberries, grapes, plums, strawberries, hickory nuts and walnuts.

Wild animals were plentiful. Deer, black bear, bobcat, panther, squirrel, turkey, o'possum, raccoon, fox, coyotes and quail. I have seen herds of deer in the Winding Stair and Kiamichi Mountains in the lower part of the present LeFlore County. There was some in the Sugar Loaf Mountains. We had venison and turkey just about so much we did not care for it.

There was wild hogs and wild horses, too. The neighbors usually got together in the late fall after the hogs were as fat as they would be, on the mass, and kill enough one day to supply all of them for the winter months. I never knew my father as long as he lived to fatten a hog on corn. The wild horses would range and graze in the valleys and

take refuge in the various mountains during the cold winter months.

FORDS AND FERRIES

I remember the Bob Vann Ferry across the Canadian River, about seven miles up stream from where it empties into the Arkansas River. This was the ferry used by the old stage line running between Webbers Falls, Indian Territory, and Fort Smith, Arkansas.

There was a ferry near the mouth of the Illinois River owned and operated by Bullett Foreman.

As to fords they were numerous at different points on the Poteau River but were of no particular name.

STEAMBOATS AND STEAM FERRIES

I did not mention the ferry across the Arkansas River near the present highway bridge at Webbers Falls, Oklahoma. This was first a pole ferry, then a cable, and last a steam ferry. This ferry was owned by Lynch and Campbell.

The steamboat landings were at Skullyville, Tamaha, Webbers Falls, and Nevins Ferry, Indian Territory. The Nevins Ferry was up at the mouth of the Grand and Verdigris Rivers. I never saw this ferry but I heard the old steamboat captain speak of it.

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When the boats whistled for the landing the whole village would turn out to meet and to greet it. They carried both passengers and freight. The merchants would cart their merchandise away from the landing about as fast as it was unloaded by the roust-a-bouts.

Some of these boats came from as far as New Orleans, Memphis, and Little Rock when the river was up, this being usually in the month of June. Most of the boats, however, from Little Rock and Fort Smith tried to run on a schedule of once a month. Sometimes some of these boats would steam on up the river as far as the Nevins Landing with merchandise for Fort Gibson and Muskogee, Indian Territory. If the river was so that the boats could not get up the river due to low water the freight was unloaded at Webbers Falls and then hauled by freight wagons to Fort Gibson and Muskogee. I can recall the names of the following boats and captains:

Steamer	Captain
Mary "D"	Blakely
Border City	Blakely
Lacy Walker	Joe Vann
Jennie Kay	Walter Huff
Memphis Packet	Unknown
Kaumelle	"
John Mathews	"

The Myrtle "B" was owned and operated by Captain Blakely. This boat I helped to build in the mouth of the Poteau River.

It had a stern wheel and two side wheels and was so built that it could land bow first or sidewise with ease.

The Lucy Walker, run by Joe Vann, had a boiler explosion. Two or three of the deck hands were killed and Captain Joe jumped into the river and was drowned.

The John Matthews, loaded with shelled corn from Webbers Falls, if I recall correctly, ran into the bridge piers at Van Buren, Arkansas. The impact cracked the hull and the boat and cargo was sunk. This was the only trip the John Matthews ever made up the river and it was the largest boat I ever saw come up the river.

RANCHES

I did some ranch work and worked on the Tandy Walker outfit. Fifteen years of my life were spent in the saddle, roping, riding, punching cattle and bronco busting. The ranch was known as the Star Bar Ranch. We handled around two thousand head each year. I mean by that that each year we would cut our herd to two thousand and the balance we would drive to Fort Smith, Arkansas. These were not Texas cattle as were some of the cattle farther over on the ranches to the west. We really raised our cattle. We usually would have roundup time in the fall after the steers were grass fat

and brand all the calves. All the calves which followed their mothers with our brand were put in our brand. Cattle of other brands which strayed into our herds were corraled and the owners notified. The cattle were all on open range. We would herd them onto the plains and prairies in the summer time and in the fall we gradually worked them back onto the mountain sides and into the canyons for the winter.

I spoke of wild horses. We boys would rope lots of them and ride them just for the fun of it but there was two roan stallions we tried to catch for months and finally got them. My first job after their capture was to ride them and I really had some fun. They eventually made good cow ponies and later, on account of ^{their} being so well matched for size and color, the boss of the ranch took them for a buggy team and after a length of time he traded them to an Indian for one hundred and fifty acres of land.

ROADS AND TRAILS

I knew of no particular road other than the mail route from Webbers Falls, Indian Territory, to Fort Smith, Arkansas. This road came out of Webbers Falls, Indian Territory, crossed the Canadian River on the Vann Ferry, and ran along about the

course of the Arkansas River to where the mouth of the Poteau River ran into the Arkansas River and then ferried to Fort Smith, Arkansas. In driving our cattle to market at Fort Smith we never used the ferry. We always swam the river with them.

RAILROADS

The K.C.S. railroad, formerly called the old Split Log, built through LeFlore County in 1894 and this was the beginning of opening up the immense coal fields in that section. Later, the F.T.S. & W. and the M.V. railroads built through in 1903 and 1904 and these roads traversed the coal field region length and crosswise which proved to be profitable and this is today a great industry in Haskell and LeFlore Counties. The Rock Island Railroad traversed the southern part of this county through the coal fields in that section, surrounding Wister, Oklahoma.

MISCELLANEOUS

The old steamboat landing at Skullyville passed away and back from the river on the railroad was built the present town of Spiro.

Panama was first called Ragtown. Ragtown was about

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four miles from the railroad and with the coming of the road Regtown passed away and thus the new town of Panama.

There was suitable clay in the Sugar Loaf and Winding Stair Mountains for the making of brick and lots of brick houses were finally made out of brick made by hand.

We bought all of our clothing at Fort Smith. For the oddity of the thing I once bought a fried bosom shirt. I mean just a bosom with a collar on it and you could fasten it around your neck and wear it for Sunday and be dressed up. I also had at one time a vest I could wear for every day and then turn it wrong side out and have a loud colored vest for Sunday.