

HEPNER, CHARLES - CLIFFORD, CLARA

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Alene D. McDowell

This report made on (date) September 11, 1937

Name Charles Hepner and Mrs. Clara Clifford (twins)  
 Post Office Address General Delivery, Dewey, Oklahoma  
 Residence address (or location) South edge of Dewey, Oklahoma  
 DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 23 Year 1856  
 Place of birth Cedar County, Iowa

Name of Father John Hepner Place of birth New Jersey  
 Other information about father buried near Tyro, Kansas  
 Name of Mother Betsy E. Batdorff-Hepner Place of birth Pennsylvania  
 Other information about mother Buried in Oregon

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 11.

Alene D. McDowell  
Research Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149  
September 11, 1937

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Interview with  
Twins { Mr. Charlie Hepner  
and  
Mrs. Clara Clifford  
General Delivery  
Dewey, Oklahoma

Mr. Charlie Hepner and Mrs. Clara Clifford were born May 23, 1856, in Cedar County, Iowa.

Father - John Hepner was born in New Jersey and is buried in the Blackjack Cemetery, between Tyro and Pleasant Hill, Kansas.

Mother - Betsy Elizabeth Batdorff-Hepner was born in Pennsylvania and is buried in Oregon.

When Mr. Hepner and Mrs. Clifford were five years of age, they removed with their parents from Cedar County, Iowa, to Starr County, Indiana, in a covered wagon. They spent their early childhood in Indiana, then removed to Douglas County, Kansas.

Mrs. Clifford relates their early day entertainment, and tells of how they always jig danced at all entertainments when they were 8 years old.

Mrs. Clifford has a tin type picture,

taken of them at the age of 8 years. In this picture they wore clothes made of homespun. Her dress was made of checked material, ankle length and real full. She wore hoops to make her dress stand out. Mr. Hepner wore a homespun suit with a short cut away coat and long trousers.

Mr. Hepner came to the Indian Territory in 1880, from Elk County, Kansas, to work for Jake Burtles on his farm northwest of Bartlesville in the Forks of Caney. He only stayed here a short while, then returned to Kansas. He moved with his family to the Indian Territory in 1888, and settled on Cotton Creek on the George Falleaf place near Copan, Indian Territory. Their first home was a two room house, one room of log and one of rough lumber. There was a fireplace in the log room which was used for heat. They cooked on a stove. Their water supply was secured from a dug well. Their nearest trading post was Caney, Kansas, located about ten miles North.

Mr. Smith drove the mail hack from Coffeyville, Kansas, to Bartlesville, Indian Territory. Mr. Graham, father of Griff Graham, ex-sheriff of Washington County, run the postoffice on the old trail 1 mile South and 1 mile West of Mann. This office was on the Bob Mann place, just East of the present town of Mann.

There was a subscription school taught in a log school house on Cotton Creek three months a year. There were few church activities in the Indian Territory then. Mr. Ellis, a preacher from Montgomery County, Kansas, held meetings in the log school house once a month. Later a Baptist church was built where preaching was held. This was the Pooler Creek Baptist Church.

There were no roads and everybody traveled by trails. A new ~~road~~ trail was made after each rain. There was no road from Mann to Bartlesville, and when making this trip we cut across the country, fording the creeks and river at the shallow places,

for there were no bridges. We did part of our trading at Bartlesville with George Keeler and William Johnstone, and Frank Overlees on the South side of the river, and Jake Bartles on the North side. Charlie Taylor ran a store at Ringo.

Cattle raising and agriculture was the chief industry in our vicinity and the chief crops were corn and wheat. There were many cattle ranches in this section of the Indian Territory.

RANCHES: The OH Ranch was located about 3 miles Southwest of Mann. This was a big outfit and Mr. Boggs was the Superintendent.

Hosslers Ranch was between Lenapah and Vinita; their range was in both Nowata and Craig Counties.

The Owens Ranch was owned and operated by Robert L. Owens, United States Senator from Oklahoma. This ranch was located South of Caney, in the Indian Territory.

The cattlemen of this vicinity shipped from Caney, Goffeyville and Elgin, Kansas. On account of the quarantine, a long run-way was built at the Elgin stock yards where the cattle were loaded. This eliminated the quarantine.

Fords: The George Falkeaf Ford was across Cotton Creek in the Indian Territory, south of Tyro, Kansas.

The Busby Ford was across Cotton Creek, located about half way between Bartlesville, Indian Territory, and Caney, Kansas.

Caney Ford was across the Caney River below the dam at the North end of Delaware avenue at Bartlesville.

Day Ford was over the Caney River south of Bartlesville, located between what is now United States Highway #75 and State Highway #23. There was a toll bridge built at this place later.

There was a toll bridge over the Illinois River near Tahlequah. It cost 15¢ to cross this bridge.

FERRIES Cary's Ferry was owned and operated by Ed Cary. This ferry boat landing was located on Grand River where Cowskin Creek empties into the river. Later a toll bridge was built just west of Grove.

When the Santa Fe Railroad was built from Caney, Kansas, to Collinsville, Indian Territory, in the late 90's, Mr. Hepner lived one-fourth mile north of Cochelata on the Jacob Dick place. The railroad camp was in his pasture and he hauled water to the camp. He also hauled powder for the railroad company. Mr. Hepner does not remember the contractor's name on this section of the work, but the foreman was "Shorty" McGuire. This railroad was started from Caney by Jake Bartles who later sold out to the Santa Fe Railroad.

The Delaware Indians received their payment East of Old Coody's Bluff, on Lightning Creek, on the Journeyoake place about one-half mile from the Journeyoake residence.



The Government would not pay the Delawares until they were married according to the Cherokee laws, for many of them were not married. George Falleaf and his wife, Delawares, who lived in our vicinity were remarried, as many of the others were.

When a Delaware girl reached the age of 16 years she was taken into the woods where she stayed hidden for many days and nights to abandon her childhood. Her food was carried to the woods and placed where she could find it.

Some of the old timers who lived on Cotton Creek in the 80's were George Falleaf, a Delaware, Frank Don Carlos, descendent of the Spanish Don Carlos family of Mexico, his wife was 1/8 th Cherokee, Bill Clay, Frank Herring, Marion Coons, Dr. Phillips, Al Truskett, Joe Marshall, Uncle John Kenney, George "Coony" Wilson, Uncle Billy McGuire, and the McElwain family.

Sam Russel, a Cherokee, who acted as interpreter for the government, preached to his people in a church near Spavinaw. Mr. Hepner attended this church several times and tells of the Cherokee choir at this church, and how they enjoyed this part of the service. They did not sing the words, but sang the notes.

Mr. Russel and Charles Tehee, also of Cherokee extraction, were Union soldiers during the Civil War and were in the battle at Pea Ridge, Arkansas.

Mr. Hepner sold Crown organs and sewing machines for the Crown Manufacturing Company for 14 years. His headquarters was at Maysville, in Garvin County. His territory covered the entire Indian Territory. The Cherokee Indians were great musicians and his largest sale was to these Indians.

He worked in Mayes and Delaware Counties for two years before the Strip payment in 1894, and lost only \$32 in the two years. The Cherokees were honest and dependable.

Mr. Hepner and Miss Ada Stonebreaker were united in marriage at Ottawa, Kansas, in 1876. They were the parents of six children, 4 boys and 2 girls. Mrs. Hepner is buried at Pleasant Hill, Kansas.

Mrs. Clara Clifford, twin sister of Mr. Hepner, came to the Indian Territory from Caney, Kansas, in 1885. They made the trip in a covered wagon and brought their horses, cattle, hogs and chickens. Their first home was on a farm near Dewey, situated on the prairie and not a tree within three miles of the house. They had a one room box house and a tent for the boys to sleep in. In the summer they cooked and ate in the tent. After two years Mr. Clifford built a kitchen and bed room. Their chief crop was wheat. The nearest white neighbor lived three miles away. The children were afraid of the Indians and when one came to the house they hid under the bed.

Mrs. Clifford married Dick Clifford in September, 1874, at Blackjack, Douglas County, Kansas. They were the parents of 9 children, of which there are two girls and four boys living. Mr. Clifford died in 1913 and is buried in the Dewey Cemetery 2 miles North of Dewey.

Some of the United States Deputy Marshals they knew were, Bud Heady, Al Landers, Bud Ledbetter and Bob Dalton.

Mrs. Clifford has lived in the same block in Dewey for 32 years and in the same house for 23 years. Her son, L.H. Clifford and family make their home with her.

COMMENTS: Mr. Hepner and Mrs. Clifford are very interesting to talk with and enjoy relating their pioneer experiences. Mr. Hepner credits his good health to exercise. He informed the interviewer he could walk from Bartlesville, to Dewey, a distance of four miles, and would not be tired, because he walks a great deal.

They are now 81 years old and have never been separated for very long at a time.

They celebrate each year with a family reunion, which is widely known in and around Dewey.

Mrs. Clifford states she is not as active for her years as Mr. Hepner, because she has worked harder than he has. Mr. Hepner had a cataract removed from each of his eyes when he was 12 years old, which impaired his eyesight through life. On this account he could not do heavy labor.