

PHOTOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
~~Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma~~

REE, E.L.

INTERVIEW.

8692.

Field Worker's name Robert W. Small.

This report made on (date) September 23, 1937

1. Name E.L. Hembree.

2. Post Office Address Tonkawa, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 25 Year 1875

5. Place of birth Wright County, Missouri.

6. Name of Father E.L. Hembree Place of birth Kentucky

7. Name of Mother Emily Hibbs Hembree Place of birth Illinois

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: 6

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Robert Small.
Interviewer,
September 23, 1937.

An Interview with E.L. Hembree.
Tonkawa, Oklahoma.

In the fall of 1884, when I was nine years of age, I made my first visit to the Cherokee Outlet country on a hunting trip with others and older people. We crossed the Chikaskia River at Sand crossing which was about one mile above the present site of Blackwell, and the Salt Fork was forded at Yellow Bull Crossing. We traveled over much of the Cherokee Outlet, and I saw lots of deer, turkeys, prairie chickens and quail in the country.

Subsequent to this trip I often came down into the lands of Oklahoma Territory. At an early age I worked at different times in the country and at various kinds of work; one of my most exciting jobs was breaking horses for the Foss Ranch which was a horse ranch located north of the present site of Blackwell. It was customary for cowboys or other persons in going about over the country to stop at any ranch for their meals and horse feed if they were hungry or out of food. If no one was at the ranch the visitor would open the door, which was never locked, and go in and prepare his own meals from a stock of provisions that were

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always kept on hand and after eating his meal it was customary for the visitor to wash all the vessels he had used in preparing his meal and write a note stating his name and leave it on the table.

Money was not expected to be left for any meal or for horse feed that was used by any visiting cowboy or other person. Hospitality in its broadest sense was the unwritten law of the cowboy land. Seldom was it, that any visitor molested or made away with anything in the camp except what he cooked and ate; an infraction of this custom was looked upon with much disfavor.

It was a common thing for people living along the Kansas-Territory line to come down into the Cherokee Outlet after wood for fuel, and the soldiers in the neighborhood of Chilosee, where they had a camp or headquarters, would often catch wood haulers and make them take their load of wood to Chilosee and unload it and go home with an empty wagon.

Although I was not old enough to take a claim when the Cherokee Outlet was opened to settlement, I had become so familiar with the country that I entered the same with my

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father and Uncle and since I was riding a better horse than my Uncle I swapped horses with him after we had gone a few miles, which enabled my Uncle to overtake many who had left him somewhat in the rear. Father got a claim three miles northwest of Tonkawa.

In 1899, I filed on the southeast quarter of section 30, Township 21 North, Range 16 West, in what was then known as the Big Pasture, in Woods County, being the county seat or place of filing.

I built a dugout to live in on the claim, dug a well and built some sheds for stock, and not long afterward I put out a number of fruit trees, all of which thrived and bore fruit of fine flavor and generous size.

In 1900, I engaged in hunting game in the western part of Oklahoma Territory. From early youth I had handled guns and was an expert marksmen. There were many prairie chickens and quail in the country and a good demand for them in the markets of Eastern cities. Some large shippers would send out men to contract with settlers to hunt or kill game on contract, furnishing them with all the necessary ammunition for their guns and calling at certain intervals to take up the game that had been killed.

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I used two good bird dogs in most of my hunting, and since I was an excellent marksman to begin with I made an enviable record in the amount of game killed with a minimum of ammunition. I put in about three years hunting in the country and made good wages, in addition to having plenty of wild game for my own family use all the time. My wife was also a good marksman and often enjoyed a hunt with me.

When I came in from a hunt with a bag of quail it required some little work to prepare the birds properly; in the first place each day's kill had to be separate from the kill of the previous day or days for if they were mixed the entire lot would be lost. In addition to keeping each days kill separate and apart from all others, each bird had to be set with its breast down, or rather stood on its breast, so that after the flesh had become stiff and firm and the bird was ready for shipment, the bird would present a natural live appearance, and bring a better price on the markets. I received \$1.25 per dozen for quail and from \$ 3.00 to \$ 4.50 per dozen for prairie chickens.

I owned an organ in my home which was the only organ

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in the community and we enjoyed the frequent visits of our neighbors who came with other musical instruments and all together made many occasions fitting for stepping " the light fantastic" on the smooth wooden floor of our dugout home.

I had a baseball diamond on my place and took an active part in all ball games of the country. I also had race tracks for horses and usually kept one or more race animals on the farm and often great crowds would assemble for some rather spirited horse racing contests.

In the early days we held a community Christmas Tree in our home and put on a program of entertainment that all the neighbors enjoyed; in addition to this many neighbors exchanged gifts befitting the occasion.

Prior to my residence in Woods County when I was working over the Cherokee Outlet, I was with the Indians a great deal and learned to talk much of their language. ^{was} I/told by Grant Miles, Government Scout, of ^{his} being sent after an Indian man who had taken part in kidnaping an infant white baby. In later years he married the woman-the

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kidnaped baby.

I sold my stock and left the old homestead in 1920, although I still own the old farm which I rent out to tenant farmers.

I helped survey the town of Bartlesville and worked over the Osage Nation in early days and was on the present site of Blackwell when the first tent was erected on that townsite.