

HENDERSON, O. A.

INTERVIEW

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Jasper H. Mead, Investigator
November 26, 1937

Interview with O. A. Henderson,
Chickasha, Oklahoma

O. A. Henderson's father was R. J. Henderson who was born in Arkansas and who died at the age of 45; and his mother was Lizabell Gipson of Arkansas, who died at the age of 57.

O. A. Henderson was born in the Indian Territory on the 11th day of October, 1892, at Pauls Valley, forty-five years ago.

When I first began to remember things Pauls Valley was a very small place. It had a post office, a blacksmith shop and one grocery store with mighty few dwelling houses, all of which were frame box houses.

There wasn't enough of Pauls Valley to have any plank sidewalks and Main Street was just a road. There was plenty of wild game around there, deer, turkey and prairie chickens by the thousands, and the whole country was ranch land covered with cattle and tall grass. Most of this grass was as tall as a horse's back; grown people, lots of times, if they didn't know the country very well, could get lost in this grass.

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Pauls Valley was named after an Indian named Paul.* They put the word valley onto the name because the town is located in a valley and is one of the richest farming districts that there is up and down the Washita River.

There were lots of Indians around Pauls Valley; they were the Chickasaws and Choctaws. I have been to lots of their dances when they had real dances, dressed in their native garb and they would wear these costumes for several days after the dance. At some of these dances the Indians would kill a beef or two and cut it up and just barely hold it over a fire and eat it. All the Indians I have ever seen eat never did use any bread.

The main water supply came from springs and dug wells. These wells were very shallow, twenty-five to thirty feet deep. All of the old ranchers used the Washita River to water their cattle. The Washita River then was just about half as big as it is now and used to be lots clearer. I have seen the time when you could jump across the Washita River most any place you wanted to. It also used to be a real fishing stream; when it would get "up" and back out into the lowlands you could stretch a piece of hog wire

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across a slue and catch fish by the thousands of pounds.

Pauls Valley is just a short distance east of a small place named Whitebead, one of the oldest little places in the state. This place was named after an old Indian Chief named Whitebead and this is the place where the Indians would always pitch their tents when they were moving from one place to another.

I don't remember the date when the Reformatory was built but I do remember that I did several hard days' work out there. It is located straight south of the place where Pauls Valley is now.

I have lived in Chickasha about twenty years and am a concrete contractor by trade. I have laid many a square foot of concrete in Chickasha.

*Note:

Pauls Valley was named for Smith Paul, an early settler, white man.