

HICKS, JAMES A.

INTERVIEW

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

HICKS, JAMES A.

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Field Worker's name Robert W. Small,

This report made on (date) November 10, 1937

1. Name James A. Hicks,

2. Post Office Address Blackwell, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 201 West College Street,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 25 Year 1868

5. Place of birth Pennsylvania.

6. Name of Father R. J. Hicks, Place of birth Pennsylvania

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Mary Ritchey Hicks, Place of birth Pennsylvania

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 7.

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Robert W. Small,  
Interviewer,  
November 10, 1937.

An Interview with James A. Hicks,  
201 West College Street,  
Blackwell, Oklahoma.

I was born in Pennsylvania, on March 25, 1868. My great, great grandfather, Levi Hicks, emigrated from England in the latter part of the Eighteenth Century, settling in New Jersey, from which state his son, Levi Hicks, Jr., my great grandfather, emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1804, having obtained a land grant to 400 or 500 acres of land upon which is now located the town of Hicks Run, Pennsylvania. Securing the land grant, Levi Hicks, Jr., who was a surveyor, set out with his oldest son, John M. Hicks, my grandfather, and after reaching the lands in Pennsylvania, he surveyed the boundaries thereof and erected a house and left the son there while he returned to his old home for the remainder of his family, which he took up the Susquehannah River in canoes to their new home on the land grant. John M. Hicks lived all his life on the land grant premises but

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his son, R. S. Hicks, my father, moved to McPherson County, Kansas, in 1880.

In the early Winter of 1888, in company with several others, I set out upon a hunting trip into the Oklahoma lands; we took two wagons and four saddle horses with us; and came down by Caldwell, Kansas, and into the Oklahoma country south of Caldwell and on into the country near the present site of Guthrie, thence northeast, visiting the White Eagle Indian Agency on our return home. In our travels in Oklahoma we camped one night near a colony of Indians, who I think were of the Pawnee Tribe, and our company were invited to eat supper with the Indians. I watched them cook their bread which was made by mixing plain flour and water together and then cooking it in a skillet over an open fire; they had beef meat for supper, also, but I had seen some young Indian eating some of the raw beef and some of the intestines and I declined to eat any of the beef for supper but ate of the bread. They lived in tepees mostly although the Government was building houses for them, but they put their ponies in the houses

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and lived in the tepees. Most of them wore blankets and their persons were adorned with various ornaments.

We killed some antelope, turkeys, quail and prairie chickens and were out about six weeks on this trip. We had a dog who stood guard each night over our wagons and horses while in the Oklahoma country. The country was full of cattle everywhere we went and occasionally we stayed at cow camps where we were treated royally by the cowboys. We left many magazines with the cowboys at their camps which every cowboy read from cover to cover with much interest.

In 1889 I made another trip down into the country where Kingfisher and Hennessy are now located. This trip was made in late February or March of 1889 and the earth was soaked with water everywhere as it had been raining quite generally for some time. We were looking at the lands that were to be opened to settlement in a short time but the country we visited did not appeal to us so we returned home. On our return home we were frequently stopped by soldiers who questioned us as to our business

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and when they were satisfied of the truth of our statements the soldiers allowed us to proceed. The soldiers were looking for the followers of Captain Payne, as Payne and his colony had often been driven out of the country.

In the Spring of 1891 I went down the line of the Santa Fe Railroad to Orlando and thence west a short distance and then north to my home. At this time the country was the most beautiful of all countries I had ever seen in my life. I was very much impressed with its beauty on this trip.

When the Cherokee Outlet was opened to settlement I made the "Run" from two miles east of Hunnewell, Kansas, and staked as my claim the N.E.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 23, Twp 27 N. Rge. 2 west. I made the Run on horseback and when I reached Dough Creek I saw some men in the timber ahead of me on horses, apparently waiting for the leaders in the race to come into view when they started across the country on their horses which were seemingly fresh and they went on to the Salt Fork country to get their claims; they were Sooners who had been hiding in the timber till

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the advance runners came in sight. I filed on my claim without any successful contest being waged against me, although two attempts were made to beat me out of my claim by intruders. I built a small house and a sod barn and a sod chicken house and in February, 1894, I moved on the claim, bringing four horses, two hogs, some chickens but no cows to the claim. In the Spring of 1894 I planted twenty acres to corn which looked very promising until July 1st, when the dry hot weather set in and completely ruined it. In the Fall of '94 I planted sixty acres to wheat that made an average yield of three bushels per acre, I had some kaffir and cane that year that made fair yields. In the Fall of 1895 I planted one hundred acres to wheat that made from seven to eleven bushels per acre the following summer; this wheat was sold at 42 cents per bushel delivered at Hunnewell, Kansas, and Kildare, Oklahoma. In the Fall of 1896 I sowed two hundred and sixty acres to wheat on my own land and rented lands and in the harvest of that crop, in the Summer of 1897, I made from thirty to thirty-five bushels

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per acre yield, and sold most of my wheat rather early at 42 cents to 64 cents per bushel. In the summer of 1897 corn made from twenty to twenty-five bushels per acre and was worth 18 cents per bushel.

Our first school was held in a half dugout in the Fall of 1894, then in the Fall of 1895, we built a frame school building; the salary paid the first teacher was \$20.00 per month. Our first church and Sunday School were held in the schoolhouses. A church was built in 1900 and called the Tetts Church which is still being used at this time.

I raised lots of stock, such as horses, mules, and cattle; I raised stock of the best quality I could secure at all times and made a success of farming and stock raising. In 1897 I built good improvements on my farm that remain to this day. I planted a good orchard that made immense yields of fruit most every year.

The first house built on my claim was made from green native lumber, both sides and the roof, and after one Summer's sun had shone down on it, it began to twist and warp



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and the roof leaked so badly when it rained that we often had to hold an umbrella over us when we went to eat our meals. I hauled freight from Arkansas City, Winfield and Wellington to Blackwell for 20 cents per 100 pounds in the early days, and I worked single handed from early morn till late at night for 50 cents per day and was glad to get it.

Mrs. Hicks was the treasurer and assistant manager and she shares credit for the success we have made. Her labors were never ended; she made garments for the family wear, knitting socks and mittens and making all kinds of garments for the children's wear; she still keeps a pair of crochet moccasins she knit for her first child and other little garments.

I still own the claim I staked at the Opening and upon which no mortgage has ever been placed; in addition to my old home place that is now equipped with gas and electricity and every modern convenience. I own another fine quarter-section of land and some very valuable residence property in the city of Blackwell where my wife and I reside in the full enjoyment of our labors.