

HIGGINS, LEONARD ELMER

INTERVIEW

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HIGGINS, LEONARD ELMER. INTERVIEW BIOGRAPHY FORM

Form A-(S-149)

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WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Ethel B. Tackitt

This report made on (date) May 24 1937

1. Name Leonard Elmer Higgins

2. Post Office Address Lone Wolf, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Lone Wolf, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November, Day 16 Year 1884

5. Place of birth Sumner County, Kansas

Near line of Indian Territory

6. Name of Father Samuel Essley Higgins Place of birth Doniphan Co., Kansas

Other information about father Made run of 1889 and 1893.

7. Name of Mother Amanda Brothers Place of birth Kansas

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 5.

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Ethel B. Tackitt
Field Worker
5-24-37

Leonard Elmer Higgins, Lone Wolf, Oklahoma.
Gives detailed account of opening of the
Cherokee Strip, September 16, 1893.

I remember, perfectly, the manner in which my father, Samuel Essley Higgins, and the other people in our community made ready for the run. I was a boy and it was wonderful to me.

Each man got the best horse he could find and for at least six weeks before the date the men would gather and train these horses. They would make them stand, then the horses would be run. The preparations were continued every day.

Father went to register, which was required at this run to keep out the sooners, and he often told how he took his grub and blanket and remained in line all night to hold his place for registration.

When time came for the run Father went the day before and got his place in line. Each man had on his saddle a canteen of water, a sack of food for himself and horse, a hatchet and a sack of pegs to stake his claim.

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On the morning of the day of the run, my uncle, Leonard Cowger, took his wagon, his family and my mother with my sister and myself and drove up as close to Father as he could get, so that we could see the run close up.

There was a line of people as far as I could see, both east and west. Everything was perfectly quiet and the soldiers stationed along the line would call out every fifteen minutes. just how many more minutes we had to wait or how long it was until the race would start.

There was a man on the line right near us who was mounted on a large red roan, bob tailed horse; I suppose it must have been a race horse from the fact that the man could not or did not keep it quiet and it bolted across the line several times. The soldiers at last warned him not to let the horse cross the line again. The time was called, "Fifteen minutes until time to start!" The roan horse bolted across the line. There was a shot. The man riding the roan was dead. He was killed by a soldier.

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The race started pretty soon at a given signal and it was a sight to be remembered. People ran on horseback, in wagons, buggies and I remember one ox team. Some people ran on foot. Father got a claim but another man insisted that he got there first, so Father let him have this claim and we moved six miles northwest of Blackwell and bought a place.

We had a one room plank shack and plenty of water and that was all we did have plenty of.

We had one cow and a good team. The cold weather was coming on and all the fuel to be had was green cottonwood trees. These cottonwood trees had to be hauled from the creeks and cut up and placed in the oven of the cook stove to dry before they could be burned. We would chop and haul wood one day, then drive fourteen miles north to the Kansas line on the next day to haul a load of straw, as that was all the feed we had for our stock.

We plowed the ground and planted crops, but nothing grew. It was three years before we had rain enough to raise anything.

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People in our community were very poor, and many of them had to leave their claims and go where they could make a living.

Father worked at his trade (he was a carpenter and brick mason) but he had to take his pay in provisions or anything the neighbors could spare as nobody had any money.

We lived on beans and wore what clothes we could get. I remember one day we were at dinner and we looked out and saw Uncle Leonard Cowger's folks coming and mother said, "Now children, don't eat any more of the beans or we won't have any for company". That has been a family joke ever since.

A schoolhouse was soon built of dugout and sod. That is the turf was turned with a breaking plow, then with a spade the sod was cut into lengths twenty four by twelve inches. These were placed like brick around a dugout in the ground which was about five feet deep. The sod was laid up two feet, leaving windows and a door in the wall. A dirt roof was placed over it, with dirt floor, homemade board seats and a blackboard.

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That was the schoolhouse and there were about twenty pupils in the district and the first teacher was Miss Grace Blanchard.

The people of this section experienced a very hard time on account of so many dry years as they were poor when they came and had to depend upon farming.

We lived in Kay County until 1902. Then came to Lone Wolf in Kiowa County which has since been our home.