

HICKMAN, B. E.

INTERVIEW

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Interviewer, Florence Duke,
July 16, 1937.

Interview with B. E. Hickman,
Stigler, Oklahoma.

My father, W. P. Hickman of English descent, was born October 2, 1848, in Neshoba County, Mississippi, near the town of Meridian, Mississippi.

My mother, A. J. Lee Hickman of English descent, was born June 15, 1851,, Neshoba County, Mississippi; also near the town of Meridian, Mississippi. She died and was buried in Stigler, Oklahoma, on March 25, 1922.

Father died and was buried in the Stigler Cemetery the 28th day of November, 1908.

Father left Mississippi in the year of 1870, coming to the Indian Territory to join his parents who came over in 1868 with his brothers, driving ox wagons. When Father came over he came by train to Little Rock, Arkansas, taking a boat there, coming to Fort Smith, Arkansas. After arriving in Fort Smith he came by coach to the Indian Territory. Here they settled at old Skalleyville County.

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It was here that he saw his first Indians, and from one of them he leased land. After clearing the land and building log cabins to live in, Father then put in a crop of corn and cotton. After staying here for two years, father then went back to Mississippi.

He was married to Miss A. J. Lee, whose father was a cousin of Robert E. Lee. They were married at the post-office which was known as North Bend, in Neshoba County, Mississippi, in the year of 1863. Father and Mother then came back to the Indian Territory, Choctaw Nation, the year of 1875. Later, they settled in Bosola Territory, five miles southeast of Skalleyville near the Potom River. He then rented more land from the Indians and built a home for his family. We made this our own home for the next twelve years. We then came to Haskell County, which before Statehood was known as Skalleyville County.

I can remember when all of us children were yet small our parents would take us to the Indian camp meetings where they would camp for weeks at a time, holding their church services. We also attended the Indian Gries. They would go to where their loved ones were buried and pray and cry over

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their graves for hours at a time. After they got through praying, they held church service there.

At the time my parents came to the Indian Territory, there was a permit that had to be paid to the Indians in order to live in the Territory. At first the charge was twenty-five dollars, later it came down to five dollars.

My mother was a member of the Missionary Baptist Church of Skelleyville, later changing her membership to Stigler before her death in 1922. Father belonged to the Christian Church of Stigler, Oklahoma, at the time of his death.

I was born March 31, 1878, in the Indian Territory in the Choctaw Nation. The first and only school that I attended was made of logs and was just one room. We used logs for desks and seats. We would go to school only four months out of the year, two months in the summer and two in the winter time. While we boys weren't in school we would help our father on the farm.

Before Statehood I served on the United States Marshal's force under Henry Davidson, Pine Hughes

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and Pete Robinson. During these days when they transported their prisoners to Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Federal Court they would take them in wagons, using long chains to chain them to keep them from getting away. At night when they would camp they chained them to trees. In the year of 1908, a year after Statehood, I was elected constable of Haskell County, serving for three years. At this time Luke Allen was the first sheriff of Haskell County using C. E. Winn as his under sheriff and Mart Hickman as his jailor. Two years before this the city of Stigler had built a new jail which is now standing.

Before the town of Stigler was built the people of this settlement received their mail from a post office by the name of Newman, which stood where Stigler is located at this time. Mr. Stigler was the post master at this time. The first school house that was built in and around Stigler was built between Newman and the old iron bridge. The people of this settlement all went together in cutting logs and building their homes. Mr. Jackson

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and I took our teams and wagons to Fort Smith to haul windows and doors for the school building. The mail was carried by horseback during those days and it took a week to receive mail from Fort Smith, Arkansas.

In the year of 1916 I was elected by the people of Haskell County as their county commissioner and served until 1922. During this time I helped to build the bridge across the Canadian River north of Whitefield, Oklahoma. After my time expired as county commissioner I was under-sheriff under E. E. England, who was elected sheriff of Haskell County in 1924. After my first term was up, I was employed by the State Highway Department until 1929. I then served as guard at the State Penitentiary until 1931 when I went back to work with the Highway Department until 1936. I then returned to Stigler to make my home and the town of Stigler hired me as city marshal.