

RUTHERFORD, GROVER. INTERVIEW 9610

256

BIOGRAPHIC WORKS
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

RUTHERFORD, GROVER.

INTERVIEW.

9610.

Field Worker's name Ethel B. Tackitt.

This report made on (date) December 23, 1937. 193

1. Name Grover Rutherford.

2. Post Office Address Holdenville, Hughes County.

3. Residence address (or location) Route 4.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 20 Year 1885.

5. Place of birth Sullivan County, Missouri.

6. Name of father George Rutherford. Place of birth Iowa.

7. Name of mother Joan Smith Rutherford. Place of birth Missouri.

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 _____

RUTHERFORD, GROVER.

INTERVIEW.

9610.

Ethel B. Tackitt,
Investigator,
Dec. 23, 1937.

An Interview With Grover Rutherford,
Holdenville, Oklahoma.

Relates his memories of Pioneer
Living in the Pottawatomie Indian
country, 1896-1937. Lumberman.

I was born in Sullivan County, Missouri, January 20, 1865. My father, George Rutherford, was a native of Iowa. Her served with the Union Army in the Civil War. My mother was Joan Smith Rutherford born in Missouri. My father owned a lumber mill in Sullivan County and also farmed. My half-brother, W. E. Rutherford, who was several years my senior, homesteaded a place, five miles east and seven miles north of the present town of Shawnee, at the opening of the Iowa, Sac and Fox territory in 1891, and made his home there. In 1896 he insisted that Father move near him as there was some acreage there which he could get.

Mother and I came through on the train and my first sight of Indians was at Arkansas City, when the coach began to be filled with Kickapoo Indians in paint,

RUTHERFORD, GROVER.

INTERVIEW.

9610.

-2-

feathers and full Indian dress and I, a boy, was badly frightened for I had heard all kinds of Indian stories. Mother sat next the window and I was near the aisle of the coach. I had thought myself quite a man going West, but these Kickapoos were too much for me. I asked mother to move over and let me sit next the window and I was surprised when the Kickapoos did not seem to want to kill me.

The tract of land which father got was a fine valley in the second bench of the North Canadian River. The timber was large and the earth was very fertile. Father had brought his small sawmill along and soon had it in operation on his claim. He cut the cottonwood logs off the land and sawed them into lumber with the small steam engine, Rumbley make, and the circular saw. He soon made enough lumber to build our house.

While the work was in progress we lived at the home of my brother, short distance away, and one day my mother and sister came down to the place and dug some flower beds around the house. Everybody quit and went to dinner at Brothers, and when we returned, fifteen or twenty deer

RUTHERFORD, GROVER.

INTERVIEW.

9810.

-3-

had completely trampled the flower beds all to pieces and we were soon to learn that they had eaten our crops so badly that we had to drive them out of the fields. When we went to gather the corn, which was the finest I have ever seen, we found that the deer had crept in from the woods, and eaten all the ears out of the shucks in such a manner that it was not noticeable until gathering time. This eaten strip went several yards into the field. Wild turkeys also swarmed in the woods.

We could make two or three thousand feet of native lumber in a day and there was a very good sale for it but nobody had any money. It sold for \$10.00 per thousand feet and there was no money for that price.

Father drew a pension from the Federal Government as a Civil War Veteran and on that we could live well. Everything was cheap but there was no place near to buy things. Shawnee was a town of only a few shacks and they were southwest of the railroad track which was known then as the Choctaw Line. That was before it had been purchased by the Rock Island Company. Tecumseh was

RUTHERFORD, GROVER.

INTERVIEW.

9610.

-4-

the county seat of Pottawatomie County; then. We had only three white neighbors, they were John Baner, Sam Musson and William Worley.

There were numbers of Indians; there was William Little Ax and Doctor Rock who was a typical Sac and Fox doctor and wore long hair suit of buckskin and all the trappings of a full blood, but he doctored the Indians and whites alike. His home was eight miles northeast of Shawnee and he lived to be very old, passing away only eleven years ago.

The Indians could get clothing, cloth and most all kinds of necessities at any time by drawing on their Allotment Fund at the Indian Agency which was then northeast of Shawnee near the present town of Strand. The Indians would sell many of these things to the whites for pumpkins, melons and different kinds of food. John Nashie who lived two miles north and three east of Shawnee traded with my people a great deal. I owned a large mongrel dog of which I was very fond and I kept him very fat and sleek. The Indians wanted this dog very much, and many offered good prices for him. At last

RUTHERFORD, GROVER.

INTERVIEW.

9610.

-5-

they offered Mother a whole bolt of calico for him and she insisted that I sell him to them. I consented, thinking that the Indians loved dogs. But to my horror, they killed my dog and ate him. I have not recovered from the shock yet.

Through the years that followed the opening of this country, there were many gruesome deeds committed by both whites and Indians.

In 1898, two Indian boys, who lived near the present town of Maud went to the home of a white woman who lived near Earlsboro, to borrow a saddle. She would not lend it to them, and later she with her baby was found murdered. The whole country became excited, and there was much talk of war between the whites and Indians. Some white men captured the two boys and burned them at the stake. The spot on which this occurred is located three miles west of Maud and is enclosed in a board fence. Some of these men were sentenced by the courts to a ten year term in prison at Leavenworth, Kansas. Two of these men were brothers and were named Mathis and another was a preacher named Holt. It was learned later that the two

RUTHERFORD, GROVER.

INTERVIEW.

9610.

-6-

Indian boys who were so cruelly punished, with the guilty parties and both the whites and Indians learned a lesson about the mob method of the handling of crime.

The law by taking charge, had averted a war between the Indians and whites but each race feared and mistrusted the other, which caused a bad condition to exist.

In 1899, two Seminole Indians, brothers, Famoska and Hallie Holatha, caused another great excitement. A group of the Bowlers family, six members in all, living one half mile north of the present town of Bowlers, on the east side of the road, were all murdered in their beds as they slept, by these brothers who thought the whole family was dead. One little girl revived and told who had committed the deed. Frank and Hallie Holatha were captured by the law and served fifteen years of a twenty year sentence at Leavenworth prison. They returned and now live not a great way from my home.

I have lived in Oklahoma forty-one years and have continued to follow the occupations of my father, farming and operating a sawmill. My farm home is in Hughes County

RUTHERFORD, GROVER.

INTERVIEW.

9610.

-7-

and my sawmill is twenty miles north of Coalgate in
Coal County.