

SCHIFFRAUER, JOSEPH

INTERVIEW

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Interview with Robert Schiffbauer,
By Nannie Lee Burns, Interviewer,
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My father, Peter Joseph Schiffbauer, was born in Germany and came to this country in 1865.

My wife's grandfather, Jacob Whitecrow, was found by the Wyandotte tribe of Indians and adopted by them when small.

My wife's mother, Jane Whitecrow, ^{Robitaille} a Wyandotte, was born in eastern Kansas, about 1844.

My wife, Azilda Robitaille, was born in this country, here in what is now Wyandotte, October 7, 1874.

I was born just after my parents came to the Indian Territory.

My parents were married in Eastern Kansas, in 1869 and moved to the Wyandotte country in 1872.

My wife's mother's father when a small boy was found by the Wyandottes alone and crying on the bank of a river in Indiana. He was taken, cared for and adopted by these Indians and continued to live with them, marrying into the tribe, though he learned years after that his name was Nicely.

REMOVAL TO THE INDIAN TERRITORY.

Thinking that they could better their condition by

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coming to this country with these of the Wyandottes who had refused to be satisfied with the allotment in severalty in Indiana and because my mother's people were all coming, they assembled all of their goods and driving what stock they had, came with several other families and after looking around, my father took a claim three mile west of Seneca, Missouri, on Lost Creek.

THE NEW HOME.

There were practically no improvements on the piece, only a rude one-room-cabin made of logs, and here they lived till my father could erect the needed buildings. He soon built a two story frame house and a barn thirty feet by sixty of hewed timbers, adding other buildings as rapidly as possible. He was wise in his selection of a location as the valley land consisting of between a hundred and twenty-five and a hundred and fifty acres proved very productive in later years. The first house burned and father immediately built another house like the first, which is still in good condition. Jone Zeibert now lives on the place.

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Mary Zane's place, north and a little west of Wyandotte, is the oldest home in this country. Isaac Walker was one of our close neighbors. Other families living here in those days were the Johnsons, the Hobitailles, the Spybucks and the Fabers. John Sarrahas also lived near Seneca as did Dave Pushane. Father turned his attention to farming and for his thrifty ways and successful farming was referred to by his neighbors as "the Dutchman".

THE MODOC.

The Modocs, who had been brought to this country as prisoners of war from Oregon, and who had been settled just north of Seneca, Missouri, on the territory side did much work for my father.

These Modoc Indians had been brought in cattle cars to Baxter Springs, Kansas, and unloaded and put on the Modoc Reserve, where houses were built for them and where rations were issued to them every week. They were from the country of the lava beds and knew nothing of farming and in spite of their willingness to learn often ran out of supplies and then they would begin trading with those who lived around close.

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when they ran out of supplies they would bring green coffee and trade it to us. They would trade two cups of coffee for a chicken or a pint for a bucket of potatoes.

rather paid these Modocs fifty cents per day and gave them their board to work for him. He always had from five to ten acres of potatoes and the Modocs worked in the potatoes and picked them up and shucked corn.

They made baskets, too. One basket which they made would hold four bushels. This basket was made of reed or hemp grass and was large and wide across the top and tapered to a point so that when one sat down the lower edge would rest on the ground. This basket the Modocs carried by a strap that fitted the forehead and was attached to the top of the basket.

I knew all of these Modocs and they would talk to us of their homes in Oregon and they would tell us about the seize when they were resisting and living in the lava beds. The reason that they held out so long was that they had plenty of water there and because their scout would go out at night and get food.

There were not many able bodied men among them and most of those who were brought were scarred and had been captured. One of these men called "Scar face Charlie" had a cut that resembled sabre cut down his forehead and across his cheek.

Princess Mary, Captain Jack's sister, went back to Oregon, as have many others.

THE WYANDOTTE MISSION.

The Wyandotte Mission School, now the Seneca Indian School, was established on the north side of the hill by the Quakers or the society of friends. It was first established opposite the place where it now stands, and here most of the older people as well as many of our children started to school at Seneca Indian School.

According to my earliest memory Dr. Kirk was the physician and, assisted by his wife and by Lizzie West, he also taught the pupils.

Jerry Hubbard, who lived in a small house east of the mission, was the missionary. He held services at the school and preached at various places over this part of the state. When he came here there was no Indian marriage ceremony such as the white man has and as Mr. Hubbard preached to the Indians,

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he began to tell them that they should be married in the white man's way and many of the Indians, even those with grown children, began coming to him to be married. Once I remember, a couple started to his house to be married but the creek was "up" and they could not cross. Mr. Hubbard heard some one calling and went to the creek and the couple who wished to be married called across the creek and told him what they wanted and he called back, "Have thee a dollar?" and on being assured that the prospective bridegroom had, Mr. Hubbard told the man to throw his dollar across and he would marry them from his side. The marriage service was read, the responses made, the dollar was thrown across the creek and the newly married couple went on their way.

There were three frame wooden buildings at first at the Seneca Indian School, the boys' dormitory, the girls' dormitory and the school building which was really an ell built on to the boys' dormitory.

The boys' building contained two stories; the upper one was used for sleeping quarters, the lower floor contained play-room and school rooms. The upper story of the girls' building was for them and for the employees and on the lower floor was

the kitchen and dining room. The next building to be built was the laundry, which was a one-story building about forty feet square.

Later the buildings were wrecked after the government took charge and the buildings were built up on the hill where they now stand. One building was moved from the old Seneca Agency, it was a two story frame building. This is still standing and is now used for the employe's as a home. The girls' dormitory was built from the wreckage of the old buildings and north of the girls building they built a dormitory for the little boys. The boys' building was two story building. The school building was at first a one story building which was raised two years ago to a two story building and the laundry was replaced some few years ago with a modern brick building and during the past summer two beautiful brick dormitory buildings have replaced the old wooden buildings.

EARLY ROADS.

A ferry, south of Wyandotte at the mouth of Sycamore Creek connected the Vinita and Seneca road which passed along the ridge just south of the present town. Round Prairie was south of Wyandotte and

the Ridge road came through the Yankee Hill Prairie.

Mr. Audrain had a ferry across Grand River just west of town. The twin bridges across the Neosho and Spring rivers were built twenty-one years ago. The Spring River bridge was first. The wagon road followed the railroad before then.

Many years ago I saw two men drowned here at the railroad bridge over the Grand. They were riding the drift away from the bridge. They had a hang line attached to the river bridge.

To go to Miami in those early days you went south and west of Jim Ritter's place past the Maryland to the Hisenhammer ford which was about one and a half miles above the twin bridges where you crossed Spring River and you crossed the Neosho at Cooler's Ferry south and east of Miami.

MARRIAGE

I went to Vinita to get the license to marry and got it on the 2nd of December, 1893, but we were not married until the fifth. We owned a farm below the Lee Creek ferry where our children, ten of them, were born but some years ago we moved to our present home in Wyandotte.