

SEARCY, BEN

INTERVIEW

8559

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Worker's name

Thad Smith Jr.

Report made on (date)

9-16

193

7

are

Ben Searcy

Post Office Address

Residence address (or location)

Chickasha

Route 1

DATE OF BIRTH: Month

Day

Year

September

4

1872

Place of birth

Missouri

Name of Father

Place of birth

Frank M. Searcy

Missouri

Other information about father

Name of Mother

Buried in Missouri

Place of birth

Susan A. Barton

Missouri

Other information about mother

Buried in Missouri

For complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Write on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of pages attached _____.

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My wife and I landed in the Indian Territory in February, 1904.

After looking around for a few days in the Caddo country, I ran across a fellow who had filed on an eighty acre tract, twelve miles northwest of Chickasha, who wanted to sell his relinquishment. After coming to terms we made the deal.

The eighty we bought was on a little creek with about half of the land on a hillside. The land on the hillside had been broken up, and the grass on the creek near the improvements was waist high.

The improvement we got with the place was a dugout with a box room sitting over it.

The first year, in 1904, I planted thirty acres of cotton on the broken out hillside land and gathered thirty bales of cotton that fall. I sold twenty-five bales for nine cents per pound and held five bales until next spring and had to sell it for six cents per pound.

The neighbors told us when we came that it was impossible to raise a garden here but we planted anyway. I planted one acre of potatoes on the creek, which yielded one hundred bushels of potatoes. The other

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garden stuff did equally as well. That fall Chickasha had a street fair. The display of products were put in the middle of Main Street on a long narrow bench with a canvas shade over them. The variety of garden products was very small and I won first prize on my potatoes that I had entered. The prizes were given by the local merchants. The prize I won, and my wife got, was a lady's coat.

The principal farm products displayed at the fair were corn, alfalfa, cotton, wheat and oats.

In addition to the exhibit, horse races were run on the north edge of town.

The first winter we spent here there were lots of geese and ducks but no crows. The only thing that bothered our crops was the jackrabbit. There were so many of them they would make big trails through our wheat and oats, knocking the grain down.

We were from Missouri where we had jersey cows and I put in two months trying to find a jersey milk cow. Nearly all of the cows in the country were range cattle, and I finally had to buy a red cow but she turned out to be a good one.

In the spring of 1905, I hauled some lumber to build a house. I had just hauled one load and I thought

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it would be a good idea to burn the grass off my place so that there wouldn't be any danger of my house being burned down. Early one morning I struck out with a pocket full of matches and got the wind in my favor so the grass would burn fast but there was so much dew on the grass the blaze would go out. My neighbor, James Davis, saw me and rode over horseback. He had been in the country for forty-four years. He said I had better make a back-fire first to stop my fire, if I intended to burn my grass. I did and was very thankful that I did because the fire moved as fast as a horse or a gallop when I did set it off. Of course, the grass had dried and the wind was up but nevertheless I learned something about prairie fires. I saw several after that that had not caught accidentally and it was almost impossible for any number of men to extinguish them.

I got our house built and on the fourth day of June, 1900, about six thirty in the evening we saw a cyclone coming from the northwest. There were three funnel shaped twisters that merged into one big black cloud at the top. We ran for the dugout and hadn't been in very long when we heard something like a train

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pass over our dugout. It roared for several minutes and when we came out our house and our buildings were gone and I had five hundred chickens, that were scattered around dead. They were hanging in trees and on the fence.

The cyclone started in the Dutton community, about eight miles northwest of me and broke up east of Chickasha, about three miles. It ran a course of about twenty-five miles and was about a half a mile wide. It destroyed seventeen homes.

We rebuilt our home and are still living in it. We have been on the same place thirty-three years and think it grand.

We haven't any children.