

SHAMLEY, JOHN C.

INTERVIEW

9918

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BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

#9918

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Field Worker's name Bessie L. Thomas

This report made on (date) February 9, 1938

Name John C. Shamley

Post-Office Address Cache, Oklahoma.

Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 26 Year 1862

Place of birth Piercetown, Indiana.

Name of Father John Shamley

Place of birth N. Carolina.

Other information about father Farmer.

Name of Mother Ann Messinger

Place of birth Canton, Ohio

Other information about mother Housewife.

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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An Interview with John C. Shamley, Cache, Oklahoma.

By - Bessie L. Thomas, Investigator.

February 9, 1938.

I was born November 26, 1862, at Piercetown, Indiana, of Irish ancestors; my great-grandfather Shamley, was born in Ireland and migrated with his parents to America when very young, settling in North Carolina. Grandfather and Father were born in North Carolina and both were farmers. My parents are both buried in Missouri.

When I was four years old my parents left Indiana coming to Illinois traveling in a covered wagon, hitched to oxen. The trip was very tiresome, taking months to make, and many hardships were suffered from cold, heat, rain and the fear each day of possible attacks by the Indians. However, the trip was made in safety and my parents settled in Lawrence County where many many more hardships were suffered in making a clearing in the wilderness and in building a log home.

I received most of my schooling in Illinois in a little country school of from three to six months terms. The schoolhouse was built of logs, but the benches were of iron. I very seldom got to attend school until after Christmas as

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I had to husk corn and chop wood until then. The three "R's" were the principal subjects taught.

We left Illinois when I was twenty-one, to come to Stoddard County, Missouri, where we lived for six months. I came to Sumner County, Kansas, to visit a cousin and was there one month. My cousin told me about the "new country" to be opened soon, Oklahoma. They talked of nothing else. Being young and wanting a home of my own, and to strike out for myself, I decided to go to the opening and try my luck, but had no team or wagon for conveyance. There lived within two miles of my cousin, a family of fine people who were good neighbors, and with whom I had become acquainted while on this visit to Kansas, the Lillie family. In talking with them one day, I found that they were planning to go to the opening of Oklahoma - the first opening in 1889. So I made arrangements to go with them promising to do chores to pay for my passage on the trip and to share the expenses for food.

We left Kansas with two prairie schooners, with mules hitched to each. In the party were Mr. Lillie, the father, Albert and Gordon, two sons, John Conant, a brother-in-law

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of Mr. Lillie, and I. We camped out at night and it took three days to make the trip. There was not much of a road to travel by, just trails which in some places were hub-deep.

We had planned to cross the Ouiskaskia River but it was up too high to cross, so we had to go around it. We crossed the bridge at Drury, then swam Bluff Creek, about eight or nine miles from Caldwell, then came down the old Honeywell Trail to the old Chisholm Trail, about where Waukomis is today, then went west to Turkey Creek - went into Oklahoma through the west gate on the north line. We went down Turkey Creek eight miles. When we got to the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River we saw two or three thousand people waiting to cross. It was about sundown and we debated whether to cross or to wait till morning, leaving the final decision up to Mr. Conant who knew the crossing well as he had been over it before. He decided to cross at once, so we put the four mules to one wagon, strung them out so one team would be swimming part of the time, and the other on the sand-bar part of the time. Mr. Conant was our leader in this, so the rest of us felt safe over his decision.

After the mules were hitched to the wagon we plunged in, Mr. Conant, Gordon and I, but we had not gone very far till we began to think maybe the decision was not wise, as most of the time <sup>we</sup> could see only the heads and ears of the mules and we thought surely they would drown and the wagon would turn over, as water ran up to the tops of the sideboards. Had it not been for the encouraging words of our leader, I am afraid that Gordon and I would have plunged into the Arkansas River where we surely would have drowned in that swift water. After we reached the other bank a great cheer went up from that throng and then others made the crossing, but a very few as it was soon dark, and we did not get our other wagon across until next day, but we camped all night.

The next day we went to a place eight miles from the line, followed down Turkey Creek and settled on a claim. I went out scouting, went down the creek until about four in the evening, went back up to camp and hunted up the Lillies. They had found a section of land that looked good to them where Hennessey stands today.

We staked Section 4, Township 18, Range 7. Mr. Lillie

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took N. E.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Mr. Conant S. E.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Albert Lillie S. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and I took N. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ . I found out that Mr. E. G. Barnard, brother of the great sculptor, George Barnard, had staked the same quarter that I had, which he relinquished to me in full. Gordon left on foot next morning for Eastern Oklahoma. I went to Kingfisher May 1, 1889, and filed on May 6th. This land I filed on was five miles from Hennessey, which was our trading post. On July 3, 1874, a wagon train on the Chisholm Trail was attacked. Patrick Hennessey, the train master, was tied to a tree and burned and his three teamsters killed. This tragedy occurred a few miles north of the Cimarron crossing. Hennessey was buried near the spot where he met his tragic death. When Oklahoma was opened, a town was built nearby and appropriately named Hennessey. It is situated in the northern part of Kingfisher County.

I "batched" on my farm for two years, then I was married to Miss Dora B. Snider, November 26, 1891, at Hennessey; she was living on a farm southwest of town. I took my bride to the log home which I had built and we lived there thirteen years. The logs in this house were

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on end instead of being built the usual way and it was called a "picket" log house.

We farmed, raising mostly wheat and corn and the second year I put out sod corn and raised a fairly good crop. I broke forty acres the first year and in the Fall of '90 sowed twenty acres of wheat. We lived a half mile from Turkey Creek and we could catch a good mess of fish any time. This stream was full of fish; goggle-eye and sun-fish, some catfish and red-horse. I could see great herds of deer almost every day, but they were very wild and did not do much damage to crops. Prairie chickens would come in the yard and eat <sup>with</sup> our chickens. Most of the time we had enough to eat, but sometimes we would have flap-jacks made from ground kaffir corn. There were lots of buffalo bones scattered over the country.

There was a little Indian scare in '90 and the white people got ready for trouble but nothing came of it. In the summer of '90 the Rock Island Railroad built down through Hennessey which put the town on the boom.

In the Fall of 1895 I served on the first Grand Jury



ever held in Hennessey. Probably three or four miles south of town ran the old Chisholm Trail which crossed the Cimarron River eight miles south.

We lived in Hennessey one year where I ran a hardware store. The town was plenty tough in those days. The cow punchers would ride into the post office and ask for their mail. If the post master was a trifle slow in looking for it, he would be asked to hurry with a volley of shots. Many times I have seen cowboys shoot up the town.

On September 20, 1903, we moved to a farm in Comanche County, Section 29, T. N, R. 13, southeast of Cache. We lived on this farm seventeen years and had the usual farmer's luck. Some years we had plentiful crops, but other years were lean. The most exciting day on this place was the day when we saw a black bear going across the pasture and tried to sic a dog on it but the dog was so scared he ran in to the house and stayed under the bed the rest of the day. Here my family of children was raised. They are all married and now we have grand-children.

In 1920 we left our farm and moved to Cache, where we expect to spend our last days.