

SHAFFER, H. C.

INTERVIEW

12959

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

SHAFER, H. C.

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Field Worker's name Grace Kelley

This report made on (date) February 14, 1938

1. Name H. C. Shaffer.

2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Oklahoma, Route 2.

3. Residence address (or location) Just north of Liggit's Park.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month 5 Day 5 Year 1890

5. Place of birth Missouri

Name of Father Louis A. Shaffer Place of birth Indiana

Name of Mother Polly Ann Shaffer Place of birth Tennessee

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 6

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Grace Kelley
Investigator.
February 14, 1938.

Interview with H. C. Shaffer,
Henryetta, Oklahoma.

ROCK ISLAND RAILROAD AND McALESTER)

When the Rock Island Railroad came through Indian Territory it would have crossed North McAlester or Old Town but J. J. McAlester wanted the company to pay him \$40,000 for crossing his pastures. The railroad company would not pay, but just laid their line around a mountain and started South McAlester.

After the company had started the railroad around the mountain J. J. McAlester tried to pay them to go the way they had first planned but he was then too late, and did not make anything by being contrary.

There were five stores at Old McAlester when the Rock Island, (it was then called the Choctaw and Gulf) came. South McAlester took the trade from North McAlester and nearly everyone moved down there. The old whipping post between these two towns is still standing.

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* Fourth of July Celebration

When the miners had their celebrations the Indians attended in full force. They had their ball games and the counties played against each other in match games. Coal and Gaines Counties played against each other oftener than the others.

"Dad's" platform for dancing was about 30 or 40 feet square. It was large enough to run four sets of square dancers at the same time. Some of the mixed Indians danced with us but very few of the full bloods. We would give the platform over to the Indians for them to do their own kind of dancing. They would file up from each side. The two at the head of the lines would step out in the center and dance like the old Reel until they gave out and the next ones would take their place. It was interesting to watch them.

There was horse racing and pigeon shooting that both the whites and Indians took part in. Sometimes we would have a barbecue and other times just picnics. At these Fourth of July celebrations the Constitution of the United States was read and some of the most important people would make speeches.

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I remember Dick Coleman made a good one. He was a Confederate Veteran, a full blood Indian and a poet.

Confederate Reunions

The last Confederate Reunion that I knew about was held in 1882 but there had been others before that time. J. J. McAlester was Commander in Chief. Both the whites and Indians, also the colored veterans attended these meetings, which were held more for business than pleasure, although a free dinner was served to everyone.

Coke Ovens Started

After the No. 5 mines got to working the same company put in some coke ovens and that put lots of men to working. People came in there from everywhere but they paid more attention to their own business than they do now.

Buzzard War

The two opposing parties during the Buzzard War were the Buzzards and the Eagles. The Progressives were called Eagles and they wanted statehood while the others opposed it.

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John Simpson was the head of the Eagles and they won or got their way.

I was working on the ccke ovens when 500 came riding through Krebs. They had both guns and bows and arrows and were riding as to war. They didn't have a battle at that time though. When they were within a mile of the other side both sides stopped and sent one person from each side to the center. Whatever was said by these two kept them from fighting.

Several had been killed at Tuskahoma before they got to McAlester.

Coal Miner Indians

There were a few Indians who worked in the mines but they were the ones who were trying to be like the white folk. Pete Lowe was a Creek who worked with me but he wouldn't talk Creek at all. He was a great worker in the Odd Fellows lodge. They had a hall at Krebs that was called Cyclone Hall because a cyclone had blown it down at one time.

Lodges in the Indian Territory

The lodges started here about the time that the churches

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started. Mason No. 1 was at Eufaula. I believe it was started after the Civil War or before that time.

M.K.& T. Railroad and Quarry

The Government told the Frisco and Katy railroads that the first one to get their track to the Territory line could have a right-of-way free and they had quite a race. The Katy or M.K.& T. was the first one to the line so it was also the first railroad in the Indian Territory. It came from Kansas and for a long while the end of the line was at McAlester. In 1872 it was extended to our coal mines.

Years later the Katy opened a quarry at Limestone Gap for crushed rock to be used as ballast on the railroad beds. The quarry is still in operation and there are at least hundreds of miles of roadbed using this ballast.

The Osage company had to keep the five or six mile stretch of railroad in repair that was to the mines but it really belonged to the railroad company. When the mines were not running we would be put to repairing and fixing it up.

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Boiling Spring

On Gaines Creek in Gaines County, close to Featherston which is on the Fort Smith and Western railroad, northeast of Krebs, there was a spring that boiled up out of the ground. It was just plain hot water.

Sawmill at Canadian

There was a sawmill at Canadian, about the year 1890. Twenty men worked there but five of them were the ones who hauled the logs to the mill. The walnut logs were brought out of the South Canadian bottoms.