

SIMS, JAMES S.

INTERVIEW

8627

463

SIMS, JAMES S.

- 8 -
INTERVIEW

Form A-(S-149)

8627
464

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

Field Worker's name Ida B. Lankford

This report made on (date) September 13 193

1. Name James S. Sims

2. Post Office Address Cordell, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 215 W. 1st St.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 11 Year 1859

5. Place of birth Red River County, Texas

6. Name of Father John Sims Place of birth Georgia

Other information about father farmer

7. Name of Mother Mary Elson Place of birth Georgia

Other information about mother Housekeeper

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 4

SIMS, JAMES S.

INTERVIEW, 8627

Ida B. Lankford,
Interviewer,
September 13, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. James S. Sims,
Cordell, Oklahoma.

I came from Prairie Grove, Arkansas, to the Pottawatomie Reservation. I was in the old Oklahoma run in 1889, and filed on land.

The first house I had was a tent. Later, I built a half dugout and then in 1905 I built a four room house. When we had been on this place eight years, we were hauled out two years straight.

We then left the farm and went to Hobart. We traded the farm for a school lease in Kiowa County, but they appraised the school lease so high I let them take it back and we came back to Cordell and have been here every since.

I remember well one time when a crowd of us were in covered wagons down at Sacred Heart Mission. The boys all went hunting and were to be gone one hour. We all got lost and the last one got in about eleven o'clock at night, not one of us got a deer.

SIMS, JAMES S.

INTERVIEW.

8027.

- 2 -

We went to Pauls Valley in the winter of 1888 and stayed there until April 22, 1889. We drove to the Canadian River. It was up and when we drove in the water it came up in our wagons. The river was a quarter of a mile wide. Our team was a yoke of oxen.

In 1898, we went to Cloud Chief and were quarantined for smallpox. The smallpox was so bad that the people would suffer and roll around and if they would happen to fall off the bed onto the floor, the flesh would sometimes fall off. If they died, people would wrap them in a sheet and bury them.

After they quarantined us, they told us to go to Charlie Maddox's farm, north of Cloud Chief, and stretch our tent. We had a loose colt and after we went to bed, the colt pawed and kicked the fire and set our tent on fire. When we woke up everything we had was on fire. I burned my hands until my hands are still crippled.

There were no roads, we just had to travel Indian trails. Once when we started across a branch my team jumped and out I went and landed in a mud hole with my wife on top of me and the baby on top of her.

SIMS, JAMES S.

INTERVIEW.

8327.

- 3 -

One time we met some Indians. One of the Big Chiefs had a six shooter. He put the point of the gun in another Indians mouth and said, "Drink it down". The Indian just raised back and threw the pistol back in our wagon and 'bang' went the gun, right by my head. These men were Cherokee and Negro mixed, the meanest Indians, even today.

Another day I was driving a pair of big long horn oxen and my wife was driving a pair of horses behind me. We met about four hundred Indians. They never would offer to give any of the trail so I played like I was asleep and drove on and did not give them the road. The Indians ran into my oxen but I paid no attention to them. The tongue of the wagon went straight into the air, and finally the Indians pulled out of the road, but they were sure mad.

I operated a grocery store here in Cordell several years until I got too old. I credited the people and lost so much it left me without anything.

SIMS, JAMES S.

INTERVIEW.

8627.

- 4 -

I was up on Cob Creek and a big Indian squaw was in the creek, so I stopped. Seeing me she said, "White man come in this water and I'll give you the worst whipping you ever got". I didn't go in .

Later, as the Indians became more civilized they were our friends.

We sure did have hard times in the early days. Everything was cheap, but no one had money to buy with. However, we were all happier than we are now.