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Biography of Alfred Smith (Negro)

1021 N.E. 27th Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Born March 1852 in Calhoun, Georgia

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Alfred Smith, a negro, was born in Calhoun, Georgia March 1852. His mother died when a small child. His father a slave on a plantation many miles from where he was. He only saw his father few times during his life, who is now dead. Alfred Smith was taken to Chatanooga, Tennessee, with two other negro boys and sold at public auction from court house yard, when 9 years old. His boss died shortly after that time and he was again sold at public auction in country. After negroes were freed, he took boat at Clarksville, Tennessee, to Cairo, Illinois. Then later went to St. Louis, then to Kansas City. He took a train to Topeka, Kansas and landed there March 1881. Secured a job on a sheep ranch for \$20.00 a month. Later bought Indian Trust Land from government at Council Grove, Kansas for \$1.25 per acre where he lived till spring of 1889. He then came by covered wagon and team by way of Independence and Coffeerville, Kansas to Tulsa, Oklahoma. Crossed river by ~~Ferry~~ taking first team across and then the wagon was assisted by some Indians in crossing river. Indians wore red handkerchiefs across their forehead. Does not recall fee for crossing river but thinks it was 75 cents.

Individuals in charge of ferry were Indians with Negro blood, but only a Negro could tell that they had Indian blood. After crossing river he drove to Sulphur, Oklahoma and there had his horses shod at Blacksmith shop. This was end of railroad at that time. He then continued on his journey through Sax and Fox Agency and from there to Oklahoma City. He took claim of 160 acres east of what is now Fair-ground Park, Oklahoma City. After improving on the claim he returned to Council Grove, Kansas to get his family, and went by way of Guthrie and Arkansas City, Kansas. On his farm Alfred Smith lived until few years ago. He retired to City and lives off of accumulations and oil profits of his farm. Mr. McClure a cattle man filed on a claim that is now Styles Park, Oklahoma City. He had several boys whom Alfred Smith had many occasions to meet, as they rode the territory in search for cattle. Mr. Smith lived in a dug-out and stated people at that time would go into their house by sundown and remain there till sunrise, if not they were apt to get their head shot off. He stated if Canadian River were able to talk some terrible tales of death and crime could be told of early territorial days. Some homesteaders were killed by others and their property filed upon. What is now Styles Park there was a 4th of July celebration there, when property belonged to McClure. There were large bleachers built for crowd. Bleachers fell and about 15 people were killed that day. He recalls that an individual by the name of Shelton who lived neighbor to him came to see him in regard to rustling cattle, but he refused proposition and told Shelton

he could do as he pleased. He says herds of cattle would be grazed on one spot at day and driven off at night and another herd would be in their place by next morning. Cattle rustlers move their cattle at night and graze during day, until they could get them into their own herd and branded. He states people were different in those days, and each carried his gun and attended to his own business if not he knew what would happen to him. People would not ask foolish questions; they, strangers, would probably ask where certain trail was but would go on and keep eye on you as far as could see you, with gun over shoulder as they rode away. As many could shoot almost as accurate that way as facing you. He recalls a stranger once rode up to his gate and said, those are fine horses you have there and he replied that he also had some fine guns in his house thereby warning the stranger that there might be individuals inside who had their guns on him. The stranger asked directions about trail and drove on. People in those days were directed by trails. He recalls witnessing an individual meeting one of McClure's cow-boys, he was ordered to take his hand off of gun and he refused and was shot in right arm so he could not raise gun. But after being shot in right arm he put gun in his left hand and began to fire when cow-boy shot him above temple and killed the man in defense of his own life. Indians in those days would come to City and camp at edge of City for several days at a time. They would ride up to tree and throw their rope over dead branches of tree and several Indians would get hold of rope and break branch down for fire wood.

Indians were suspicious of strangers around their women folks. He stated if men called at Indian home, Chief would come out and ask what they wanted. But if men called with their women folks, this was an indication to Indian chief that they wished to be sociable, and chief would say come in. Within tents Indians would build in the center a fire. Beds would be made on floor around the fire. Cooking would be done in one pot over the fire. If you visited and chief began to eat, you were not invited to eat, but you were supposed to go up around the pot and get something to eat the same as the family did. If you did not eat with him you were called a high hat and no good. Most Indians had interpreters with them. Mr. Alfred Smith is now Deacon of Negro Baptist Church.