



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

HUTSLER, J. S. INTERVIEW.

#8781

Field Worker's name Robert W. Small

This report made on (date) September 30, 1937

1. Name J. S. Hutsler

2. Post Office Address Tonkawa, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 412 N. Main St,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 28 Year 1854

5. Place of birth Benton County, Missouri.

6. Name of Father J. G. Hutsler Place of birth Virginia

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Perlina Williams Hutsler Place of birth Kentucky.

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

FIELD WORKER ROBERT W. SMALL  
Indian-Pioneer History S-149  
September 30, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH J. S. HUTSLER  
412 N. Main Street  
Tonkawa, Oklahoma.  
Born January 28, 1854.  
Benton County, Missouri.

FATHER'S name Hutsler, born Virginia.  
MOTHER'S name Berlina Williams Hutsler  
Born Kentucky. ♪

Mr. Hutsler, was born in Benton County, Missouri, January 28, 1854, and lived there until he moved to Woodward County, in 1894. At this time he had taken a subcontract to carry the United States on three routes in that section of country the contractor furnishing eleven head of horses for the work. Mr. Hutsler brought these horses through from Nevada, Missouri and distributed them on the three routes over which the mail was to be carried. The longest route over which mail was carried by Mr. Hutsler and his son covered a distance of sixty miles from Woodward to Curtis; this entire route was traversed each day by a round trip; Mr. Hutsler carried the

2

mail one way and his son carried it the other way.

The mail was carried in a two seated hack which also carried passengers. The contractor was to pay Mr. Hutsler the sum of \$2.50 for his services <sup>and</sup> for the services of his son for each day's work in carrying the mail in addition to paying the expenses of feed for the teams and the other necessary equipment and upkeep of the same; for the first few months the contractor paid him regularly each month, but later he quit sending pay and Mr. Hutsler, thinking the contractor would send the money each month, kept on working till the contractor was in debt to him \$200.00 and he was forced to stop work and the contractor never did pay him.

During the last few months Mr. Hutsler worked for the contractor he filed on a quarter section of land in Woodward County and when he was forced to quit work on the mail route because he could not get his pay, he decided to move onto his claim and try to improve it some way. He loaded his household

## 3

possessions into a wagon, together with his family, and drove out to his claim on the bare open prairie without a house in sight and unloaded his wagon and put up a little tent and began to dig a well. This was the first thing he did; his son helped him in the work. He dug and dug till he had gone to a depth of a hundred feet before he struck water but it was excellent water and there was plenty of it when he finally got to it. He then began to build a half dugout which he plastered inside with gypsum that he obtained from a gypsum bed a few miles from his claim; this made a smooth plasterlike surface to the wells and looked very neat.

As new claimants came in to settle around Mr. Hutsler, they all hauled water from his well. Mr. Hutsler put out a young orchard on the claim later on and broke out twenty acres which he planted to kaffir; the kaffir made

4

only a fair yield.

Mr. Hutsler had to depend on his labor for the support of his family while making the improvements on his claim and since there was no one near him he had to go some distance to find work. He often could not get work anywhere. He got acquainted with some cowboys in the country and since he was a good fiddler the cowboys often came after him to play for dances several miles distant and paid him for \$2.00 to \$2.50 a night to play the violin and in addition to the money paid him, they often brought him a quart of beer for which they never made any charge.

Mr. Hutsler would often take his team and wagon and go to the cedar canyons a few miles distant and cut up the tops of cedar trees that had been left by men who cut the timber for post; these tops were cut into wood for cook stoves and Mr. Hutsler would haul a load of this cedar wood<sup>to</sup> Woodward, a distance of thirteen miles and sell it

for \$2.50 a load. He says that he often found the timber in deep narrow canyons and was compelled to take one horse and drag the timber down the canyon to a place where he could pull it out and then he would cut it up and haul it away.

If it had not been for the cedar timber which Mr. Hutsler cut and sold and his old violin he could not have made a living nor have stayed on his claim.

On one occasion when the family larder was bare, Mr. Hutsler set out on foot for Mooreland, a distance of nine miles to get some groceries; starting from home in the afternoon he did not get back home before dark and after dark his wife lit a lamp and put it in the window of the dugout so he could see the light across the prairies and know the location of his dugout; he saw the light some distance away but in a few minutes it disappeared; he never thought much about the matter at that time but went on until he thought he was almost home when he discovered that he was lost and he wandered over the prairies for

several hours, finally coming onto a trail that he recognized. He then realized that he was going in the opposite direction from his home and he reversed his steps and reached home about midnight, after the coyotes had chased and howled after him for several miles as they smelled some bacon which he had in a sack of groceries swung over his shoulders. He learned that his wife became frightened at something after dark and took the light out of the window thus causing him to lose his sense of direction.

There were no school nor church houses in the community where Mr. Hutsler lived and no other family except his own for miles around until some time after he moved onto his claim, and the country was an open prairie with no fences or roads or other houses in sight of his claim when he first moved there.

In 1899 he sold his farm for \$800.00 and since he had not lived on it the full five years he had to pay it out at \$1.25 per acre; this left him with only

\$600.00, none of which he got in cash.

He then moved to Kansas and lived a short time and came back to Oklahoma again, moving to the town of Tonkawa, about fifteen years ago, since which time he has lived there and now resides at 412 North Main Street.

On several occasions while living on his claim Mr. Hutsler has looked out of the window at night when the moon was shining and has seen wild cats walking around his dugout.

One winter the snow was two feet deep on a level and the deep canyons were filled with snow up to and level with the snow banks and it was very dangerous to go near the usually perpendicular banks because a person could have dropped for a hundred feet through the snow in many places along the edges of the canyons.

The prairie chickens were so numerous that they often destroyed a large part of the grain on his Kaffir in the fields and quail were also very plentiful.