

SOUTHWICK, THEODORE.

INTERVIEW
CHEROKEE STRIP.

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CHEROKEE STRIP

An interview with Theodore Southwick,
age 51, Okemah, Oklahoma

Billie Byrd, Field Worker
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I was eight years old when my father made the run in the Cherokee Strip for settlement. It was in what is now Kay County, Oklahoma, that he made his claim. He filed his claim at Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Our first home was a dug out and was so, until my father obtained some lumber to construct a better building to call a house. That was just enough lumber to make only a house and there were no other outhouses or barn. A barn was fixed out of nothing else but baled hay. There was no sort of support in the baled hay barn, but it served as shelter for horses as it was made in such a way to keep its shape. This shelter stood until it rotted down.

Soon after we settled there on our place, a well driller of six foot auger drill came and drilled a well and found water at thirty feet. We had already

begun farming. The farm products, feed and vegetables were nearly the same as we have now. Wheat then cost thirty-two cents a bushel. There were all kinds of berries. Deer, prairie Chickens, squirrels and other game was plentiful. But the king of the game, the buffalo, had gone long before the run in the Strip. Tracks and Wallows were the only signs that the buffalo left, and, probably, you might say a picture, as numerous buffalo heads were scattered here and there.

Sooners was the name given to the people staking their claims too soon or before the run was made and was not a legal claim. They were in the Strip before the opening, but were ordered out prior to the run although some sooners did slip back into the Strip to stake claims. Such sooners were forced off of the claims they had staked and were forced to make a run to some other place.

There was one instance when one Sooner could not be put off of a claim. This Sooner had plowed and planted twenty acres of corn all in one day. The name of this Sooner was Clarence Brown.