

SMITH, J. B.

INTERVIEW

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Interviewer, Ruth Kerbo,
May 25, 1937.

Interview with Mr. J. B. Smith,
Mangum, Oklahoma, Route 3.

Born October 21, 1868,
Jiles County, Tennessee.

Parents John S. Smith, Tennessee.
Aments Blent, Tennessee.

I, J. B. Smith, and wife, came to Greer County in 1897 from Denton County, Texas. My wife's parents and their family came with us. Each family traveled in a separate covered wagon, bringing with them enough supplies for the trip and a camping outfit. It was in December and the weather was cold and rainy. A blizzard struck us at ~~Moans~~ ~~Crossing~~ south of Altus on Red River and I thought we would freeze to death. We were eight days making the trip from Texas to Greer County.

When we left Denton County, Texas, everybody there told us that we would starve to death way out here in this wild plains country, but we wanted a home and decided we would try it here.

My wife's brother was corresponding with a man in

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Greer County, who insisted on our coming. He boasted the country so highly we decided we would have a better chance to get a home than we would have if we remained in Texas.

When we arrived at our destination, we stayed two or three days with Mr. Ernest Chaney and his mother. The Chaney family were killing hogs the day we arrived and they gave us some fresh meat for supper.

We homesteaded this place four miles east and five miles south of Mangum and have never moved off of it.

The first year we were here we rented some land from Dr. Cherry whose land joined mine on the southwest. There were no improvements on my place and I did not have any land broken either. Dr. Cherry had a house built on his place. He let us live in a part of his house and I farmed his land

the first year, made sixteen bales of cotton and received five cents a pound for it. I hauled a load to Quanah and received \$25.00 for it.

I made a half dugout to live in until we could make money enough to buy lumber for a house. The dugout was fourteen feet by sixteen feet with a plank roof and dirt on top of the planks. It had a dirt floor. Snakes and centipedes

were very numerous in our dugout. Sometimes a centipede would fall on the stove. We lived in this dugout for two years and then after making another good crop, I went to Quanah and hauled out the lumber for our house.

Feed made awfully good in the new ground, especially cane. The winters were mild and we would stack our feed out in low ricks and cover it with stalks.

We shipped our two cows and our furniture from Denton County, Texas, to Quanah and went in our wagons over to Quanah to bring them back.

We got most of our groceries from Mangum. Everything was awfully high though as they had to freight everything in wagons from Vernon and Quanah.

We soon got a start of chickens and had plenty of butter and eggs and chickens to eat. These helped out on our grocery bill.

We had to haul wood from the mountains near where Lugert is now. When as the country began to settle up, there were so many people going over there for wood that the wood began to get scarce. Then we had to go farther on into Indian Territory to get it. We would go thirty miles.

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I was terribly afraid of the Indians. I had heard so many stories of the mean things they would do that when I would go after wood, I would get out of their territory as quickly as possible. But on one occasion, Little Bow, an Indian Chief, caught a bunch of us with wood and made us pay off. He never put the money in his pockets while we were around, but held it in his hands. He had a Winchester handy. I was unarmed.

When we had to go thirty miles for wood it would take two days to make the trip.

Wild plums and wild grapes were the only fruit we could get in those early days, but we surely made good use of them.

We went to parties in buggies and candy breaking was a favorite entertainment and then sometimes a crowd of the settlers would go over west of Granite on picnics and would stay two or three days. Then we would go on fishing trips. There were lots of good fish in the streams especially in Turkey Creek. There were a few antelope here.

Coyotes were very numerous. They would catch our chickens in the day time, they had a trail across our place. Sometimes those big Loper wolves would run our dogs.

I rode on the first train on the new . . . rail-
road through the country to Wichita Falls, Texas. This was
a free trip for all Oklahomans to go and see the lake at
Wichita Falls.

Mr. Allard, Mr. Smith's father and I organized the
first Presbyterian church in the country. We first organized
at the center school house, one mile south of our place.
There were about twelve members to begin with but the membership
soon grew and we had to build a church house, one mile
north and one mile west of the school house. The school
house church continued, the building is still standing and
we have had a regular attendance at Sunday School since the
church was organized and have had a regular pastor most of
the time.

I still live on my farm and I have improved it until
I now have a beautiful home, a large barn and several other
improvements and a well, which I dug when I first settled
the place. This well affords plenty of water for stock and
has never been cleaned out because there is such a strong
stream of water that it has never been pumped dry. This
well is about twenty feet deep.