

SMITH, GEORGE E.

INTERVIEW

#9334

LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

19

Field worker's name Louise S. Barnes,This report made on (date) November 26, 19371. This legend was secured from (name) George E. SmithAddress Geary, Oklahoma.This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe _____

2. Origin and history of legend or story Mr. George E. Smith, tellsof his first coming to Oklahoma City, and of "BreakingPrairie."3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 3

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Louise S. Barnes,
Investigator,
November 26, 1937.

Interview with George E. Smith
Geary, Oklahoma.

George E. Smith was born on November 3, 1865 at Hancock County, Illinois, and came to Oklahoma City on December 3, 1890, from Northeastern Kansas, (Jackson County) in a covered wagon driving a small mule team. It took me around two months to make the trip to Oklahoma because I camped out on the way and would spend several days in one place.

When I arrived in Oklahoma City, I had nothing to do and had to earn my way. I bought a sod plow that consisted of three rods and a shear; then, I went to work breaking prairie with my small mule team. It was a huge job and very hard work because all the open spaces were to be broken for crops. The prairie was covered with tall blue stem grass that grew from two to six feet tall. This grass had to be burnt off before my plowing could be started and this was done by burning small patches at a time to keep down destroying prairie fires.

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The plowing also was done in small ten to fifteen acre lands starting the plowing from the outside of the land and plowing toward the center. The plowing that could be done in a day was between one and a half to two acres and we received from \$1.00 to \$2.00 an acre for breaking prairie; this was not very high wages for the work was hard but a dollar was worth more than now.

I then broke prairie south of El Reno until the Cheyenne and Arapaho opening and made the run but I did not homestead until about a month after the race; then I filed claim on the North quarter of Section 3, Township 13, Range 11 making the trip in the same covered wagon in which I had driven from Kansas. I also had a "batching" outfit which I had when I came from Kansas, so I built a dugout and started living on my claim as soon as I filed. I had to buy all my supplies in El Reno and it was twenty-eight miles away so our trips to market were few. We built a house as soon as possible, after we had settled on the claim.

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I still broke prairie for a few months after I settled on my claim but after getting started on my own land I had little time for other work. My extra time was then spent in raising livestock and after a few years I purchased more land and have devoted the rest of my life since then to farming.