

SOMERS, A. L.

INTERVIEW

9843

418

BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

SOMERS, A. L.

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Field Worker's name Robert W. Small.

This report made on (date) January 17, 1958. 193  

1. Name A. L. Somers.

2. Post Office Address Nardin, Oklahoma, R.F.D. #1.

3. Residence address (or location) 3 miles south of Nardin, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 5 Year 1872.

5. Place of birth Indiana.

6. Name of Father Chas. Somers. Place of birth Ohio.

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

7. Name of Mother Esther Davis Somers. Place of birth Indiana.

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

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Robert W. Small,  
Investigator,  
Jan. 17, 1938.

An Interview With A. L. Somers,  
Nardin, Oklahoma.

I was born August 5, 1872, in Indiana, and came to Kansas with my parents in 1878. In 1891, my brother-in-law and I set out on a move with wagon and team to Cushing. Leaving Hunnewell, Kansas, we followed a trail to Rice's Store, thence to Stillwater and on to Cushing, which at that time was merely a trading post with a post office. The old trading post of the Sac and Fox Agency had been moved to Cushing because of an epidemic of small-pox that had gotten among the Indians of the agency reservation and had depleted their numbers alarmingly and had upset them in various ways and the trading post was moved to Cushing. Here I engaged in blacksmith and horseshoeing work and I have shod the horses of such notorious characters as Bill Doolin, Tulsa Jack, Bill Dalton and their associates who frequented that section of country at that time.

No railroad was built into Cushing at that time and freight was hauled in by wagons over the rough trails of

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the country; the Turkey Track Trail ran through Guthrie, which was the principal shipping point for numerous small towns and trading posts throughout that section of the country.

At the opening of the Cherokee Strip to settlement I made the "Run" on horseback from Hunnewell, Kansas, and drove my stake on the northeast quarter of Section 17, Township 26 North, Range 2 West. After securing my claim without any contest I built a sod house and a small wooden structure for a blacksmith shop and made other minor improvements, including the breaking of a few acres of sod, which I had my neighbor claimants to do in exchange for blacksmith work I did for them. In the spring of 1894 I sowed a few acres to oats, which made excellent pasture but made no grain. I had also sown one acre to wheat, which was about a complete failure.

I got a permit for leave of absence for one year and went to Perry and worked in the blacksmith work for that length of time to enable me to stay on my claim and continue my efforts at farming and trying to make a living on it.

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After returning to my claim from Perry I planted several acres to castor beans and kaffir and at harvest time I had a fair yield of the beans, as well as some feed from the kaffir. Castor beans brought me in a little money that was badly needed. Mrs. Somers, being a very industrious lady, carried on her part of the work in a small but very successful way with chickens and a few years later her work with poultry had become somewhat of an institution. She kept a record of her receipts from the sale of chickens and eggs for a period of eleven years during which time her total receipts reached the sum of \$5,340.00; she would also hitch up her horse and buggy and take her eggs or chicks to market without my assistance.

Our first schoolhouse was built by public donation, although the first school taught in the district was held in a dugout.

I raised horses, mules, cattle and hogs on the farm and have found horses and mules to be the most profitable stock to raise in the early days in this country. I have worked hard and managed well all of my life and Mrs. Somers

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has been no less active in her every duty to make and save and build up her home and assist in every worthy neighborhood achievement.

We have no children and we spend much of our time in traveling to different sections of the United States, Canada and Mexico. Many years ago, I assisted in taking the first automobile to the summit of Pike's Peak in Colorado; it was a task that required considerable time and patience at that time.

I was the first farmer in this section of country to abandon horse power on the farm for motor power, and I have remained steadfast in my belief that motor power is the most economical on the farm.

I came to my claim penniless and have worked here and there through the trying years to make enough to keep soul and body together. After the first few crops raised on the farm of any consequence at all we began to invest every spare dollar in stock and we took good care of our stock and looked after it closely. We worked early and late in the fields during the busy growing seasons

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and we have prospered in no small way. I own 480 acres of rich land, all of which is free and clear of any incumbrance and my home is modern with every convenience and luxury of modern day living.

Our post office in the early days was Osborn, long since discontinued. I have suffered quite a loss from cyclones and wind storms during the year I have lived on my farm; at one time my dwelling was moved from its foundation and my large barn was completely demolished; at other times I have suffered minor losses from windstorms. My wife is our bookkeeper; she keeps accurate records of our receipts and expenditures for the purpose of making income tax reports as well as to know our exact condition or standing at any and all times.