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INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT B. STAFFORD

FIELD WORKER GERTIE GOODFOX.

3-9-37

My father, mother, brother, John W. sister, Dollie and myself moved from Texas to the state of Washington. We stayed in Washington until the year of the run in '93. We left Washington and came to Old Oklahoma, coming on the train and stopping in Stillwater. There were camps all over, so we camped and bought our span of mules, harness and a wagon. We camped in Stillwater for three weeks and every morning some of the campers would hitch up their teams and run them for five or six miles, increasing the miles each morning, practising for the run. Some ran as far as ten miles.

We made the run 14 miles south of Ingalls and reached Pawnee, September 16, 1893, at 2 o'clock. We each staked out our lot. We lived in tents, as there were few houses, just box houses. We had our tent right where the Stafford building is that was built in 1901. Later we built a box house, the lumber for which I hauled from Perry by wagon. We also hauled our water from the spring about a mile away.

Our post office was in Charles Vandervoort's trading post, across the "Bear" near the agency. It was west of the

Indian Mission near the Santa Fe tracks. My sister worked in the post office,. Later the Post Office was moved up here in town, where it occupied the building where Jay's drugstore is now located, only it was a frame building. Mr. Jacobs (first name forgotten) was our Post Master. Our mail came from Perry by way of the stage-coach.

The first bank we had in Pawnee, was right where the Masonic Temple now stands. It was in a frame building about 14'X 16'. Mr. C. L. Berry was the banker. He brought his safe with him from Kansas. He kept the safe locked and every hour for 15 or 20 minutes he opened the safe for the merchants to withdraw or make their deposits. The merchants knew just when the safe would be open. I was standing on the corner where Katz Corner is, and I could see across the street to the bank. I noticed five or six horses standing by the bank, and about three fellows on the horses. All at once out came the rest of the men dragging the banker Mr. Berry with them. It was the Doolin gang and they had robbed the bank, taking Berry with them and putting him on a horse back of one of the gang and rode off with him, they turned him loose after they had crossed the Blackbear but they took his hat with them.

They did not take much money as they had come to the bank when the safe was locked. Before they left the bank they fired into the air five or six times.

In the fall of '93 Charles Vandervoort started the building of the First National Bank. It was finished in the winter and spring of '94.

The first school we had was a subscription school. A Mr. Harndin taught the school. They started the first school building where the present Grade school building now stands. It was made of cheap brick, and was used four years and condemned. The present Grade School building was built in 1900.

We held court in a large tent right where the present court house now stands. Cleveland wanted to be the county seat, they nearly split the county, but the people got busy and started a subscription to build the court house here in Pawnee. All the material, lumber, window panes and doors was donated by the lumber yard here in Pawnee. My brother John and I dug the ditch for the court house. We worked ten hours a day and were paid a dollar a day. Mr. Frank Lake was our sheriff. In 1901, we started our building. That is, we built our building. It was first used as a Racket or dime store, later the Marx Brothers rented the building and had their

clothing store there. I started in with my show (moving pictures), about one of the first to run a show. The building is still used and now uses the lower part of the building for the Ritz Theater, the upper story of the building is used for offices for some of the lawyers.

My mother died 1st of February, 1937 at the age of 96.