

INDEX CARDS

Openings--Cherokee Strip
Pioneer life--Oklahoma Territory
Schools--Oklahoma Territory
Churches--Oklahoma Territory
Freighting
Pawnees

INTERVIEW WITH MR. GEORGE STAPLETON

FIELD WORKER, GOLDIE TURNER.

Mr. Stapleton was born in 1868 in Missouri and came to Oklahoma in 1893.

I first came to Perry when the Strip opened in 1893 but failing to get a claim there, I heard that there were claims not yet taken near Pawnee so four days after the opening, I came to Pawnee and gave \$15. to a Locater to tell me where I could find a claim no one had filed on. He told me about the farm about six miles north of Pawnee. I filed on it and went there to live.

The first thing I did was to build in a low place a dirt wall with four sides, covering it with limbs and dirt and my dug-out was ready to live in. I spent the first winter there alone. In the spring after planting my crop I went back to Missouri to get my wife and daughter. We came back in a covered wagon, the trip taking several weeks. We lived in a dug-out for several years, then about 1899, we built a frame dwelling containing two rooms closer to the road.

The first school in that neighborhood was in a dug-out but in a couple of years we freighted lumber down from Perry to build a little frame building about 14' X 16' and hired a Mr. Paxton to

teach the three month school for \$20. a month. In 1893 the building was erected which it now stands. The men of the neighborhood quarried out rocks and donated their time to building it and the lumber ^{that} was used was paid for by the men of the neighborhood, freighting lumber for the lumber yard from Perry.

The Church, although a frame building, was erected in the same way. The women in the neighborhood sold chickens to pay for the furniture and paint for it. The church was about a mile from the school house.

A cemetery was established in 1896 or 1897. It was about a half mile from where the school house now stands.

I did a lot of freighting when I first came here. Three or four wagons would go at a time and it was not unusual for three teams to have to be hitched on to a load to pull it out of a mud hole or to ford a stream for there were no roads, only trails.

The Indians, while not very friendly, were not hard to get along with.

In 1910 I with my family moved to another farm about seven miles south of Pawnee. There was an Indian mud lodge

3

about a mile west of us. The Indians frequently came to our house to buy meats, eggs and chickens.