

Field Worker: Virgil Coursey
June 10, 1937.

Interview with Stanton Starus
621 East Broadway,
Altus, Okla.
Born January 1, 1878, Tenn.

Parents Henry Starus, father, Tenn.
Marcis Johns, mother.

Although I am not one of the first settlers, I have seen a great number of changes and quite a bit of progress made since I came to Oklahoma.

I was a young man when I decided to try my luck in this country. I was born in Tennessee and later moved to Texas. In 1900, I landed at Hobart, Oklahoma.

I was a good carpenter, and the town was just beginning to build. In August of that year the town was surveyed and laid off in lots. These lots were auctioned off to the highest bidder. Immediately after this, stores began to spring up around the town square and for several years building was fairly brisk.

In addition to the lots in town being surveyed and offered for sale, every inducement was made to settle up the surrounding country. Section lines were laid off, and anyone finding a quarter section of land could build

his home there and farm the land. In other words, one could take his pick of the available land and claim it for his own, but, of course, not receiving title to it until he had lived there five or more years.

It was quite some time before there was a railroad reaching Hobart from the south. In 1900 the Rock Island ran from Mangum into Chickasha.

In the early days at Hobart, I have seen people standing in line for two or three blocks waiting for the mail. This was especially true on Sundays. Dozens of times, I have seen a salesman or business man from out of town leave his place way down the line and offer a man near the window two or three dollars to exchange places.

In many instances this was money well spent, because there was only one train a day. A delay meant lost customers and added expense to the salesman and business man. There were often real estate men in there looking around for relinquished claims they could pick up cheap for their clients. Many of the earliest settlers became discouraged and sold their claims for ridiculously low prices. Those who plodded along and stuck it out were those who profited.

I helped build the first fire-proof hotel in this part of the country at Hobart. It cost about \$50,000. Not long after it was completed it was subjected to test. A man registered at the hotel, went to his room, locked the door and got on a drunk. In some way he overturned an oil stove. His eyes were burned out, and some of his fingers burned off. He was so badly burned that he later died. The building stood the test, nothing but the furniture and the woodwork in it were burned.

Building became slack along about 1906, and I went over near Mountain Park to help grade a railroad into Snyder. I was in that vicinity when the big cyclone hit Snyder, killing over one hundred persons. It was a terrible sight. I went over and helped pick up the dead.

I have never had many deals with Indians, other than selling them merchandise in a store. I never found it safe to let an Indian get in debt. Nine out of ten would never pay. I think the most peculiar thing I ever noticed, relative to an Indian's business transaction, was

his method of paying. No matter how many articles he intended to buy, he never bought but one article at the time, and paid for it before purchasing another. White people sometimes went over into the Territory and traded with the Indians. They sold commodities issued to them by the government. They sold good work-shoes, men's coats and other apparel for a very nominal sum, but one rarely induced an Indian to part with a blanket.

In 1900, I came to Altus and went into the grocery business. I have remained here ever since. I am still selling groceries.