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Interview with John F. Stark.  
Wynona, Oklahoma.  
By Leone Bryan, Field Worker.

April 27, 1937.

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I came to Oklahoma in 1888. I was twenty five years old at the time and came here from Elk City, Kansas. I took a contract to improve a place for a Cherokee citizen on Brush Creek about half way between Bartlesville and Caney, Kansas. One year later, I sold the improvements to him and moved one mile east of Bartlesville on a rented place, on the east side of the river and stayed there a year. I then took a contract to make improvements on a place for some Cherokee heirs by the name of Davis. I was under their guardians, R. P. Tyler and Ben Edwards. I was to make the place for \$2700.00, and was to pay \$300.00 per year for the place till I got my money in cash or rent. I had about two hundred acres under this contract and I bought another two hundred acre contract that expired about the same time making four hundred acres in all.

I raised horses, mules, cows, and hogs. The principle crops were corn, wheat, and hay. I made a specialty of raising hogs, raising from one to two hundred head of hogs a year. I raised wheat in the early nineties and hauled it to market fifteen miles, and sold it for thirty-five cents per bushel and it weighed 32 pounds to the bushel. My rough feed I sold to ranch men to feed their cattle. At times I also sold corn. I raised my hogs in the timber and didn't feed much corn. They ran in the timber till the corn was matured and then they ran in the field till planting time next spring. Then they were shut out until late summer again.

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I stayed on this place about seven years and got sick and sold my contract to the man who allotted the land. I then moved to the Government Townsite of Ramona, and was there until statehood.

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I made the run in 1889, and landed in Oklahoma City. I staked out two lots and got a title to them and sold them the next year. I was with

E. N. Horton, James Hutchison, and Charles Bossie. We went in wagons and camped the first two nights on Deep Fork, about seven miles from the east line. Next day we went in to Oklahoma City.

I was married in March, 1890, and went to housekeeping in a little two room box like house that was about to fall apart and that belonged to an Indian. I brought a cook stove down from Kansas and my wife's father fitted us out with furniture, a cupboard, table, bedstead and chairs. I still have the table. We had well water to use and drew it with an old oaken bucket. We burned wood. The other conveniences were mighty scarce.

My first business was farming and raising hogs and rough feed, corn and wheat. I was limited the first two years for implements, they consisted of; a wagon, buggy, harness, one walking plow, and one cultivator. After I took the contract to make the place for the Cherokees, I fitted myself out with such implements as I needed.

My supplies I bought from Bartlesville and

Nowata. I received my mail at Sequoyah, which was about two miles south of the little inland town of Oglesby and about six miles northeast of Ramona.

My early day experiences with the Indians dates back to when I was a child of four years. We settled in Kansas among the Osages in 1868, and I have been among them more or less ever since. When I moved to the Indian Territory and settled among them I found all kinds, some good, some bad, I have had some mighty good friends among the full bloods. I don't know that I ever had a real enemy among any of them, though there were some that I left alone because I didn't approve of the way they did. I will name a few of the full blood Indian friends; R. B. Tyner, John Halock, Arthur Armstrong, Dan Anderson, John Sarcoxie, Sam Whiteturkey, Dutch Whiteturkey, were all my friends.

We had plenty to eat. We raised good gardens, had wheat bread, and corn bread, honey, and sorghum, rabbits, squirrels, and wild duck.

We also raised lots of tame chickens. We raised most of our food and about all we needed to buy was sugar, salt and pepper, occasionally, we bought a little dried fruit.

There was plenty of wild game, lots of duck and geese in the spring and fall. There were prairie chicken, some turkey and deer, lots of coyotes, opossum and coons, rabbits and quail, but they are mighty scarce now.

There were lots of fish in the lakes and streams.

There were no bridges or toll bridges, nor were there any ferry boats in the part of the country where I lived.

The roads were wagon roads. There was a trail that ran from Tulsa east of Ramona. The old Box Ranch was on Double Creek, now at the south end of Washington County.

We had some pretty good ranch houses in that part of the country. The ranchers there had no particular salt grounds but placed salt barrels at various places on the range to salt their cattle. Most of the cattle were shipped

to Kansas City, Mo. The prices of cattle fluctuated, Johnson and Keeler, ranchers, made twenty thousand dollars one year and lost thirty thousand dollars the next year, however, they stayed in the cattle business.

There were no church buildings in that vicinity until 1900. We had services occasionally at the schoolhouses but not regularly. There was a Delaware Baptist Church at Silver Lake, but I do not know what year it was built. This church was about six miles south of Bartlesville. There was an old Quaker Mission, called the Old Hillside Mission, on Bird Creek, about twenty miles north of Tulsa. There was also a Quaker School there and an old burial ground. Many of the Cherokees, Delawares, and Whites, from Tulsa to the Kansas line got their education at this school. These people would be around forty-five years old now.

The Cherokee Indians were the only citizens here. There were lots of white settlers here, but they were not citizens and lived here by

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permit. The Cherokees lived under Cherokee Law, the Whites under the Arkansas Law.

When I first came to this country we had to go to Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Court. Later we had Court at Vinita and Muskogee. That was United States Court. This practice was continued until Statehood.

The only law enforcement that we had was the Deputy United States Marshals. There were lots of them but not as many as we needed.

There was no electricity, so we used kerosene lamps or lanterns. If we ran out of kerosene, we either did without, or made grease wicks until more could be secured.

When a new settler came into the country, he was usually asked the following questions;

"Where did you come from?" and "What had you done that you had to leave there?" (I do not know whether this was a brand of humor or whether the people resented new-comers.)

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There were no fairs at this time.

There were a great many family cemeteries.

The farmers and merchants were financed by the banks when they needed aid.



At the little town of Ringo, no longer in existence, people came in every Saturday during the summer for the horse racing. There was a **straight** track there about one-half mile long where the races were held. The Beal Bros. , Duck Johnston, and others were interested in this sport.

Lots of people who came in here were intruders. They claimed to be Cherokees and were not. They took land and improved it and used it until allotment. Then the Government paid them for the improvements at the time of allotment, if they could not prove they were Cherokees.

Most of the livestock raised for market was shipped to Kansas City. Most of the crops raised for market were sold to cattle men for feed. Corn sold from ten to twenty-five cents per bushel. Wheat from thirty-five cents to one dollar per bushel. Hogs sold from two dollars and twenty-five cents to ten dollars per hundred.

All merchandising was done by the Cherokee citizens. It all had to be done in a Cherokee's name.

I have taken eggs to town and sold them for three cents per dozen, and bought calico for three cents per yard.

We had doctors over the country and a few drug stores where we could buy medicines. My wife's father, Dr. T. A. Stuart, put in the first drug store in Bartlesville, Indian Territory. Later, he sold to John Finley and the last I heard of him he was still there. You could buy all staple medicines at grocery stores.

#### MIGRATION.

Lots of people left the eastern part and went to the western part of the state when the land there was opened for settlement.

There were no minerals in the country at that time except some coal mining around Oolagah. There was no other developement in minerals until around statehood, when oil was discovered.

There was one mound in the vicinity called Blue Mound. It was up at the head of Coon Creek about eighteen miles north east of Bartlesville.

The first newspaper published in Bartlesville, was published in 1896., by Harry Jennings, later U. S. Commissioner at Claremore. I do not remember the name of the paper. Jennings was a Republican, and he published a "Bryan" paper, or a Democratic newspaper, when William Jennings Bryan ran for President.

The first producing oil well drilled in Oklahoma, was drilled at Bartlesville sometime in the nineties.

There was a Star Mail Route from Coffeyville, Kansas, to Bartlesville, and they made that seventy mile trip every day unless the weather was so bad that they could not get through. They drove a hack and also hauled passengers. There was also a Star Mail Route from Ringo to Talala.

All transportation was done by horses and mules.

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