STAPLES, H. L. INTERVIEW. #12026

Interview with H. L. Staples
13th and Wyandotte, McAlester.

Field Worker - Charline M. Culbertson
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149
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I was born in 1868, in Boone County, Arkansas, seven miles from the Harrison County Seat, on Crooked Creek.

My parents were Benjamin Franklin and Martha Levinie Staples. Both are buried on the old Bond place, three or four miles from Haywood.

I came with my parents and Uncle Joe Walltrip to the Indian Territory, when I was eleven years of age. We came in a covered wagon and first located three miles south of Kiowa, on the Tom Thompson place, where we stayed one year and my father made a crop.

We were on our way to Texas but as Father had a sister and a brother here in the Territory, we stopped here. They lived over in Bryce Valley, southwest of Pittsburg.

Our first home was a little one-room box house.

After living here one year, Father moved his family to Savanna, where we had lots of Indian friends

such as Alvin Lewis, Res Chunn and Hagen Anderson.

It was here in Savanna that I went to my first school. The box house school building was located east of the main street, on the hillside. Indians and whites both attended. The school teacher was a man by the name of Kilegore. The Indian children were taught English. We didn't use the Blue-back speller but had more up-to-date books. We had long desks with three or four scholars in each seat. We did our work on the black board, not on paper.

Our first home at Savanna was a double log house, a little southeast of Savanna. It had a fireplace at one end with a chink and daub chimney made of sticks and clay. The floors were rough lumber and the roof was board. There were thirty-five acres with the place and father planted it all in corn.

I loaded and hauled coal from the first mine in Savanna to the railroad switch. It was one mile to the switch. Father later got the timber contract and I drove a team for him.

There were many deer and wolves. I have seen as many as fifteen or twenty wild turkeys in a flock.

At this time we used what we called the cap and ball rifle; I have my father's that he brought with him to the Territory. I killed my first deer and turkey with it.

I stayed occasionally with an Indian family by the name of Anderson. In the evenings after supper they would sit around the fireplace. They never talked much, just sat and looked at me.

I recall a few United States Marshals such as George Pounds and Baz Reeves. There were lots of United States Marshals in the Territory, as this seemed to be a hiding place for the outlaws. The prisoners were carried in wagons. There were always five or six deputies and their cook.

I have attended several Indian camp meetings and also, their rough ball games. Often a player would be killed.

We did most of our trading at Stringtown; we also took our corn there to be ground.

Our community church house was located on the hill east of the main street.

I recall several cattle ranches such as the Hill Ranch near Brewer, which handled about nine hundred head. The Dr. Harris' Ranch was near Boggy and handled about eight hundred head. The Sloan Ranch at Big Prairie handled about one thousand head as did the Cob-Barnett Ranch. I worked on the Hill Ranch for a short while.