

RIPLEY, RICHARD BERRY

INTERVIEW

#8747

Form A-(S-149)

BIOGRAPHY FOR  
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Elizabeth L. DuncanThis report made on (date) September 16, 1937.

1. Name Richard Berry Riley
2. Post office Address 216 W. Cherokee, Medford, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) 28 W. Main St. Medford, Okla-  
homa.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 12 Year 1861
5. Place of birth Springfield, Missouri.
6. Name of Father Thomas Miles Riley Place of birth Hagartown,  
Maryland.  
Other information about father Plasterer.
7. Name of Mother Emilie Brumfield Place of birth Kentucky  
Other information about mother Housewife.

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached \_\_\_\_\_

JOURNALIST, ELIZABETH L. DUNCAN  
Indian-Pioneer History S-149  
September 16, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD BERRY RILEY  
Medford, Oklahoma.

Richard Berry Riley was born at Springfield, Missouri, in 1861.

In 1885, Richard with his father, Thomas Riley, came down into Old Oklahoma. Richard accompanied his father to help with the plastering and building at this time. There was quite a bit of uneasiness among the cattlemen as Payne had been down here previously trying to form companies of people, but David Payne had died before he saw the opening of the land for homesteading.

At the same time the Government was turning all of the "would be settlers" back and telling them that this was to be Indian land and telling all cattlemen to get out, too. At first cattlemen figured they were just issuing that statement to keep the settlers out, but they soon found out the Government meant business. The Government also

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asked all workers to leave as the Indians were getting pretty well stirred up about the cattlemen, so Thomas Riley and son left, going back to Kansas to work.

In 1888 a bill was put before Congress to open that land for homesteading. It was a fierce fight, but it was declared that they would open the land up for homesteading on March 23rd, 1889. It did not open until April 22nd, 1889.

Thomas Riley and son thought they would make the run, so they came down to the line with thousands of other people. There were people who came down to make the run who had come down with Payne. The run was really a sight; there were people on foot as well as on horseback or in buggies. Mr. Riley did not get a homestead but they stayed a while looking around to see if they could find a place; but they did not. They returned to Kansas where they lived and started out doing plastering.

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Plaster work was beginning to become pretty scarce, so they headed back down in to Old Oklahoma proper and the Cherokee Strip. In Old Oklahoma there was quite a bit of building, so they had plenty of work. They made many friends among the Indians. The Indians called Thomas Riley "white mud dauber."

In May of 1890 Thomas and son, Richard, went back to Dodge City, Kansas, and moved the family to Hutchinson and then they went back down in to Oklahoma and into Texas and worked and then they heard the Cherokee Strip was to be opened for homesteading. They went back to Hutchinson to prepare to come down to make the run.

On September 14, 1893, Mr. Thomas Riley and sons, Richard and John, came down to Manchester which was then known as Cameron. The people who gathered to make the run were from all walks of life. Some miners, farmers, business men; a rough class of people for everybody was for himself.

On September 15, 1893, Thomas Riley and sons stood in line waiting to register from four o'clock until twelve o'clock. The line was moving so slowly that Richard thought he would go get something to eat. While he was eating, he was drinking beer and on his way back to the line he stopped at the Bar to get some whiskey to drink. This made him feel pretty important, so he went on out to the line, made them stand back, and got to register sooner than they would have if he had just stood in line waiting. It was two o'clock when they registered.

On September 16, 1893, at twelve o'clock noon, the signals were given. Mr. Thomas Riley and sons made the run in a spring wagon. They had a ten-gallon keg of water, feed for the horses, a walking plow, also enough bedding and food to last for some time.

On the way down they saw quite a number of horses which had been killed in the run. Most of the riders would stop right where the horse dropped and stake

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homesteads. Some would take the saddle from the horse and walk on.

Mr. Riley and his sons went on down to Pond Creek and camped all night as they did not find a place to homestead. Sunday morning they came back up in here and took homesteads, Richard the northeast quarter 24-27-7. Mr. Riley took the northwest quarter 24-27-7;

Father took NW $\frac{1}{4}$  24-27-7;  
Brother John took SW $\frac{1}{4}$  24-27-7; 160 acres in each farm. That day when they staked, they plowed twice around the farms.

The following day the Riley family went to Government Springs to file. This filing usually took at least two months. So Mr. Riley went back up to Kansas and stayed until December then returned to Government Springs to file but his number had already been passed and he had to stay for seven weeks before he could file. He also worked

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three or four days out of the week. After Richard had filed he then went back to the homestead and built a frame shack twelve by fourteen feet. It was not plastered or boxed inside.

Richard came back and forth so as to keep things up, bringing down with him the horses and cattle.

In April the family came down from Hutchinson to the homestead. They had very little household furniture. The cookstove was very old and it would not heat; they had to patch it up to hold together. That spring they broke out some sod and during the Summer built a makeshift shed for the horses and cows. That Fall they dug a cave half down into the ground, half on top of the ground; it was built out of sod. They moved into the sod house and that Fall Richard began to dig wells for water. After digging six wells, that were dry, the seventh one had water but it was not very good.

After digging the wells Richard broke out more sod and in the Spring of 1895 he put out corn and



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Waffix corn but it burned up. That Fall they plowed some more sod also planted some wheat and in the following Spring, the Spring of 1896, the wheat turned out to be very good, the best it had been since the opening. The farmers built homes and bought farming implements. The next year produced another bumper crop.

The first store that was put up in Medford was put up by a man named Robertson, the second by Dan Cline, the third by Moothart and then Roff & Brown built a new store.

Some of the years that have followed have been lean but there have been some prosperous years too.

Mr. Richard Riley lives in Medford.