

ROBERTS, FRANK.

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Augusta H. CusterThis report made on (date) November 10, 19371. Name Frank Roberts2. Post Office Address Geary, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) Two miles south and one mile east4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 1 Year 18645. Place of birth Illinois6. Name of Father Richard Roberts Place of birth KentuckyOther information about father Farmer7. Name of Mother Mary Jane Roberts Place of birth Illinois

Other information about mother _____

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 6.

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Augusta H. Custer,
Investigator,
November 10, 1937.

An interview with Mr. Frank Roberts,
Two miles south and one mile east,
Geary, Oklahoma.

Frank Roberts made the run when the Cheyenne and Arapaho country opened. Got a claim and proved up. Has lived here ever since. He took one trip to the Rio Grand Valley and on into Old Mexico. He also went to Illinois one trip but with exception of these two trips he has been right here on the farm for forty-five years. He has been quite a successful farmer, and they are quite comfortable in their six-room frame house, good barn for the cows as they do not keep a team at this time. This is his story:

I left Brown County, Kansas, on the train going to Okarche. It cost me \$10.00 to get on down to El Reno, where I stayed about a month. Then when it was time for the opening I went with some other men to where Bridgeport is today. We were accompanied by Government men and were scattered out in groups along the border line. At the fixing of the pistol we all started and some were in buggies, some on steers, some on horseback and some on foot like

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myself. A man named Lyman and I stayed together. We walked and walked. Finally we found the two claims that we later proved up on. We hunted up the corner stones and placed a stake on the land with our names on the stake. There were stone, corner stones, that told us where the Indians allotments were. The Government also furnished us maps of the country.

I thought that I wanted a claim with timber on, as I had lived in that section of Kansas where there were no trees and timber looked good to me. I suppose that I could have had one of these farms down near the river if I had gone on.

We built a campfire and stayed all night in the canyon just out there in the pasture. We stayed around here all the day to show anyone coming by that we had decided to locate on these two places. We were getting out of food and decided to go to Darlington. We just headed across the country in that direction. We got as far as Dutch Jake's dugout and here we got something to eat.

I went to El Reno and found that I could not file at that time as there were so many contesting claims and too

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many ahead of me. I went back to Kansas and loaded some farm implements, household goods, chickens, and lumber to make a shack and brought these on an emigrant car to Okarche. There I loaded my lumber on the wagon and with my mules hitched to it went to the claim and built a small room. My neighbor Layman did this also. After the survey of the section lines I found that I had placed my one-room in the middle of the section line. With some help of neighbors I hitched a team of horses on to it and moved it over west on my own land. This was after my wife and baby had come down from Kansas in September.

The next year we decided to dig a dugout and move the frame room again nearer the dugout and so we did. This same year we dug a well forty feet deep. It was only sheet water but was soft. We had a rope and bucket to draw the water from the well.

The first year I broke fifteen acres of sod with a sod plow and my team of mules, planted kaffir corn and corn. I raised some feed and corn.

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When we first came and located here there was only one house between here and El Reno and an Indian family lived in that. Bill Cash was one of the early settlers and he went with me when I went to Okarche to meet my wife. By the next Fall there were plenty of settlers and their families. The Huffs were in the valley where Geary is today at the edge of town and the Gillroys.

Just on the east of this house where the County line is now was an old fence that was a drift fence for the cattlemen. This fence was a landmark and many rode along the trail by the fence. Along this fence was tall blue stem grass. This was so coarse that stock would not eat it except in the spring when it was tender. The Indians were always setting out prairie fires in the spring and we were afraid of these fires.

I plowed furrows around all of my feed and around the barn lot and house. It did not take much of a strip of plowed ground to turn a prairie fire. One night we went to bed and the next morning we awoke and a fire had burned

off all the grass just to the east of the fence or trail which ran so near our house. We had slept through the night and never smelled the smoke or been awakened by the light of the fire. It was rather a shock to see the black line of the prairie fire so near our house.

I have gone out many a time in those early days and shot wild turkey. They used to come to the field to eat kaffir corn. I have seen some white tail deer but never killed but one. I went hunting with a party of men one time and one man kept telling how he was going to kill the first deer he saw. We left him just outside the timber and walked slowly through the blackjacks. After awhile we heard some deer going through the trees and thought they would probably appear about where he was located. Soon we heard him calling, "Shoot him, shoot the darned thing." He had thrown his gun down and was standing there calling for someone else to shoot. You never can tell how the sight of a deer is going to effect any of these new hunters.

There was one blizzard here a few years after we

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came, the cattle drifted up from Gillroy's place and found protection from the snow and wind in the little canyon just to the west of our house and some of them drifted down on Thunder's place. That is the Indian allotment adjoining me on the south. The cattle were in there three days before they were taken out by the owner.

We did not have a milch cow for a year after we came here, then I bought a little blue and white brindle longhorned cow. My wife would shake the cream in a fruit jar to churn when there was not much cream.

The Government furnished seed to some of the farmers if they would go to the county seat and make affidavit that they were unable to buy and not able to work. These seeds were wheat, cotton, corn, seed potatoes, and garden seed. I never felt that I was entitled to any of these as I have always been able to work.

We have seen the time when our supplies were short and there were many things which we call necessities that we got along without.