

RICKER, WILLIAM A.

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name John C. Ferr

Report made on (date) Jun 17, 1937

Name Mr. William A. Ricker

Post Office Address Perry, Oklahoma

Residence address (or location) _____

DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

Place of birth _____

Mr. Ricker is 73 years old.

Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about mother _____

Give 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 3 pages

John C. Kerr,
Field Worker.
June 17, 1937

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Happenings of Cherokee Strip Days,
As Told by William A. "Bill" Ricker.

My name is William A. (Bill) Ricker. I was born and reared in Kansas, close to Fureka. I am seventy-three years old. I hunted and trapped as far north and west as Washington Territory, before it became a state. Oh! yes, sure, I was here when this Strip opened, and I got a farm eight miles south of Perry, Oklahoma. I was about thirty, I guess, when I made the run. I had an old Uncle who lived down in old Oklahoma, about a mile from the strip line. I came down through the Strip before it opened; drove through, coming down past the White Eagle Agency and crossing the Red Rock Creek on a government toll bridge. I located my uncle's farm and just moved in. I helped him farm the summer before the opening. You see I had a good team. Say, they were good ones, "great big loggy fellows." We went to Orlando and bought a new mower and rake, and I mowed hay all up and down Stillwater Creek, even in the Strip just before it opened. You know, I hauled that hay into Perry that winter and sold it for a dollar a bale. I rode one of my horses into the Strip and Uncle rode the other one. We took our time, you see the soldiers had burned most of the grass off and the country looked mighty bad. We got as far north as Red Rock. We saw plenty of Sooners.

Sooners were people who slipped in in the night or the day before the Opening. They used soap and water on their horses. This made a lather and looked like they had been run a long ways. We saw them coming out of creeks, canyons, and thickets and the horses weren't panting or blowing at all. They didn't fool Uncle and me at all.

I didn't like the looks of the country north of Red Rock, so we started back south. We jumped an antelope, and I ran him down and shot him with an old pistol I had with me. We camped in the creek bottom that night and I sold the antelope to some old fellow from farther back for \$3.00. The next day we returned home and a week later we rode up in the Strip and I staked my claim. I broke some of it up the next spring and put in some corn which did pretty well. But the next two years were bad. About all we raised was kaffir corn and turnips. We very nearly lived on them. We had kaffir corn, hot cakes, and boiled turnips, and also "turnip kraut". This was called Turnip Year.

You see it was awfully dry until fall and everyone planted late turnips, and they were plentiful. This was in 1894 and 1895.

I built a stone house on my farm. I used just old red clay mud to lay the rock in and this house is still standing. It is used for a chicken house now. I would cut a load of wood and haul it to Perry and get from a dollar to a dollar and a half, and I was as happy as a lark. I would get a sack of flour, a pound of Arbuckles Coffee, some sugar, and a chunk of salt pork, then drive out home and I felt like a king. I could go out and kill a few quail or a rabbit just any time I wanted them. I got tired of batching so I got married. Her name? oh, it was Miss Gowty. Later we moved to Perry where I worked.

Field Worker's Note: Mr. Ricker is a very interesting talker. He has served as sheriff for eight years, and served as a deputy here in Noble County, also a Game Ranger. He still fishes quite a lot. He owns his home on 8th and Holley in Perry, Oklahoma.