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BAIRD, A. L.

INTERVIEW

#9303

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Journalist, Elizabeth L. Duncan,  
November 11, 1937.  
Interview with A. L. Baird,  
Wichita, Kansas.

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On September 16, 1893 at 12 o'clock, we were off in the race for land in the Cherokee Strip. We started about three or four miles west of Hunnewell, Kansas. We had a wagon loaded with provisions and horse-feed, which my father and brother, Robert, followed in with, as Robert was not old enough to file until November. My other brother, Fred was still younger. He drove a wagon for some of the rest of the crowd.

There were thousands, both men and women, waiting on the State Line. Some in wagons, buggies, and carts. Quite a few took just the back wheels of their wagons and hitched teams to them but the majority were on horseback.

There were eighteen of us, old schoolmates and acquaintances, who started in together. I staked the SE Quarter of Section 34- two miles west of the four corners, which were then P, O, L and K Counties but are now Noble, Grant, Garfield and Kay Counties. There were only three besides myself who got claims who filed on them. The other three were John Corn,

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Ivan Hulbert, and Charley Harnden. There were five who staked on Section 33, which was a school section, just west of 34, on which I staked. Some of the others went only a few miles until they turned back and some of them I have never seen since we started.

It was not three o'clock and we had come thirty-three miles by corner-stones, not saying anything about how far we rode around to find crossing on streams, which were dry, except the Salt Fork and it had but little water in it.

Of course, to be sure that you would not have any trouble we had to have our stake, or flag, one-half mile from our neighbor to the east, west, north, and south. Just after I had put up my flag a man came by driving a team hitched to a cart made from the hind wheels of a wagon. He asked me if anyone had passed me. I told him everything was clear until he met them coming from the south. He said, "I will stake on that rise one-half-mile to the south." That was Phillip Steaber.

About the same time I put up my flag, I saw four men about one-half mile to the east. One of them had a jug, with a rope to it, over his shoulder. This was A. C. Davis, colored. One of them stopped and put up his flag. This proved to be a man I had

never seen before, Wallace Porter. The other two were his brothers, Findley and Dunk, who staked the next two claims south of Wallace Porter. Davis circled to the west and staked the claim south of Steaber's.

We put in the rest of the evening hunting corner-stones and getting acquainted with our neighbors. The corner between Wallace and Findley Porter's land, Phillip Steaber's land and mine was in a little draw, which had some grass for the horses, so the three Porter brothers, Davis and I slept there that night with our saddles for pillows and the horses tied to the saddle horns.

The next Spring everyone was busy breaking prairie and digging wells until harvest, when most of the men went to Kansas and other states to work during harvest.

Well I remember when Findley Porter and I were working on a well at Wallace Porter's place (Wallace had gone to Kansas) when two little girls, Luata and Carrie Davis, (colored) came running down the road one hot morning about ten o'clock and said that Clarence, their brother, had been bitten by a rattlesnake while herding cows. Clarence was about fourteen years old. He had his gun and shot the snake, but that did not help matters any so far as Clarence was concerned. He had on shoes but as it happened there was a hole in his shoe so, unfortunately, the

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snake hit through the hole. His father and older brother, Walter, were gone to Kansas.

All we knew was the old remedy, whiskey of which we had none. I went to one of the neighbors, who had a bottle but it was almost empty. We gave Clarence that, and Findley went after Dr. Brafford, down on Red Rock, who was the only doctor in the country. Findley found him; but he was so busy doctoring ague, poison ivy and malaria that he had no time to stop for snake bites but he gave Findley some more whiskey but by the time Findley got back it looked like whiskey would not save him. Mr. and Mrs. Ridenour came and they thought we had better sweat him. While his mother, Mrs. Ridenour and my wife, Luella, heated the water we went after our water jugs and fruit jars. We laid jugs and jars, filled with hot water, all around Clarence and covered him with blankets and comforts. The whiskey and hot water both soon took effect and it was not long until Clarence thought the cure was worse than the bite. So we never knew which cured--the whiskey or the hot water but we gave the hot water the credit for the cure.

As our crops were light and prices low we did not get much of an income for our labor. I remember hauling a load of wheat to Ponca City and getting 36 cents per bushel, which was not much over one cent per mile per bushel.

As I remember, some Arkansas City milling company leased some land I think something over eleven hundred acres over in the Indian country. Irwin Utterback, Mr. Burcham, Bob Kirkpatrick, Jim Thomas and my wife and I went from our neighborhood to plow. I think there were about one hundred men there with their teams and plows. We laid off our lands, which were one mile long. It was much harder breaking than we had been used to as it was mostly in the river bottoms. We lived in our wagons. My wife and I stayed twenty-six days and plowed twenty-six acres, receiving \$1.00 per acre.

A sad incident which I recall was the death of Ethel Long, who had been married to John Lamb. Having no Christian minister in our community and being acquainted with the Reverend Mr. Dunkleburger, a Christian preacher, they thought they would get him. He lived about fourteen miles away, south of Red Rock. I told them I would go after him. When I got there I met a family by the name of Beard who were from Tennessee. They told me that Mr. Dunkleburger was down on Black Bear, some twelve or fourteen miles farther on. They told me I had better leave my horse and take one of theirs, which I was glad to accept.