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BROOKS, O. M.

INTERVIEW

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Robert A. Boatman, Interviewer
October 13, 1937

Interview with O. M. Brooks,
Rural Route No. 4, Blanchard,
Oklahoma. Pioneer White man.

Following the Chisholm Trail across
the Territory.

I was born in Texas, March 29, 1866.

It was in 1886 that I first came to the Indian Territory. When I came to the territory it was a great country, filled with cattle and all kinds of wild game. Turkey and deer were plentiful and the Indian Territory was then the most ideal grazing country known to man.

There were very few people here when first I came here except Indians and Territory negroes, who had been brought from Mississippi with the Indians in the removal from that country. Almost all these negroes could speak the Indian language as well as any of the Indian tribes.

The people who were here did very little work. Small crops were raised; such as a patch of corn, consisting of from one to five acres. This was used for bread. Sometimes a small field of cotton or wheat was raised.

Cotton markets here were unknown so far as the

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selling of cotton was concerned. All of the cotton raised was used for clothing which was made by hand.

The principal food in those days was beef and wild game; such as deer, turkey and fish. The streams all had an abundance of practically all kinds of fish. It was a very common thing to see an Indian bring down a deer or turkey with a painted arrow and bow. After he had made his kill and taken it to the cabin, it was then left entirely up to the squaw to dress and prepare the food. Lots of venison was eaten raw, some was cooked by roasting.

There were a few old cow trails across the territory. One came from Abilene, Texas, through the territory and onto Huanewell, Kansas.

In 1892, I helped to drive a herd of cattle, consisting of two thousand head, across the territory over what was known as the old Chisholm Trail. This was known as the Coon herd and came from Texas, crossing the Red River at what was known as the old Fleetwood Crossing. All streams were forded then for there were no bridges. After crossing into the territory the cattle were driven

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north over the old trail crossing the Washita River at old Fred, a postoffice located on the Washita River some two miles east of where the town of Chickasha is now located. They then crossed the South Canadian River near where Tuttle now is, crossed the North Canadian one mile east of old Fort Reno, and the Cimarron River near Kingfisher. This was just before the opening of the Cherokee Strip, and as we entered into what then was known as the Cherokee Strip, a bunch of U. S. soldiers met us and guarded us across. No one was allowed to stop in there then, the soldiers were supposed to keep people out of the Strip until the time of the opening.

When the townsite for Chickasha was laid out and permanently established, old Fred was discontinued and a post office was established at Chickasha.

In the early '90's cattle in the territory sold at from \$6.00 to \$8.00 per head.

I have been an active worker in the development of this country, especially in the development of roads and routes, once being elected County Commissioner of McLain County.

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I now live at my home in the northwestern part of
McClain County.