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BROWN, VANCE

INTERVIEW

#8077

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

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BROWN, VANCE. INTERVIEW. 8077

Field Worker's name Ira A. Morris

This report made on (date) July 27, 1937

1. Name Vance Brown

2. Post Office Address Billings, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Route 1. 2 1/2 mi. East

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 22 Year 1860

5. Place of birth Brook County, North Carolina

6. Name of Father Daniel E. Brown Place of birth North Carolina
1819

Other information about father Ancestors were Mayflower people.

7. Name of Mother Lydia M. Harris Brown Place of birth North Carolina

Other information about mother 1830

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 _____

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Ida A. Merwin
Field Worker
July 27, 1937

Interview with Vance Brown
Billings, Oklahoma

My parents were Daniel W. and Lydia Harria Brown.
I was born in Brook County, North Carolina, April 22,
1860.

When I was six years old my parents moved from
North Carolina to Kansas, traveling in a covered wagon
pulled by a team of oxes. We located near Augusta
where I grew to manhood.

In the winter of 1882-83, I joined the David L.
Payne colony. In February, 1883, we gathered at
Arkansas City for the purpose of going south into the
Government lands of Indian Territory. Mr. Payne was
president of the colony, W. F. Bless was secretary and
Captain ~~Bill~~ Crouch was scout or guide, called wagon
boss by the colony. He picked out the trails and camp
sites.

When we left Arkansas City there were approximately
one hundred wagons and teams with some of the members
riding horseback. Payne did not think it best to tres-
pass on the Indian reservations, and we went west to

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Runnewell, then south, crossing the Chikaskia River at a ford known as Rock Falls. We then traveled almost due south to the North Canadian River at a place east of Oklahoma City, which was then a tent town.

One of the teams of this train was an ox team and could only make about twenty miles a day. This team was in the rear and would always be late in arriving in camp.

In crossing Red Rock Creek, near where the town of Billings is now, we encountered some very steep banks. We had to put two teams on each wagon, then tie a rope to the end of the tongue and the men would pull by the rope to help the teams climb the banks. In this manner we succeeded in getting the wagons across.

On the Deep Fork Creek, southeast of Guthrie, we bridged a crossing by cutting long poles and placing them from bank to bank and putting cross poles with brush and dirt sufficient to let the teams and wagons pass over.

When we were in camp west of Edmond for dinner a Lieutenant with six negro soldiers came to the camp and

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attempted to stop our move. Payne gave orders that a small group like that could not stop the colony and we moved on. One of the soldiers was sent as a messenger for reinforcements. When we were in camp for the night on the North Canadian River, east of Oklahoma City, about one hundred negro soldiers with the white officers arrived and placed us under guard for two days. We were then given the privilege of returning to the state from whence we had come or to be taken to Fort Reno.

I, with a few of the other members, sold my provisions, except what would be needed on our return trip, and started north. In a few days we arrived in Arkansas City, Kansas. From there I returned to my home at Augusta, Kansas.

There were three men in charge of one wagon in the colony. This wagon was loaded with liquors and was pulled by a large mule team. It was financed by Jim Pearson of Augusta, Kansas. John Rife was the main one in charge of this wagon. He was quite an orator and often times when in camp he would make

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speeches. Lon Cameron was an attorney and acted as attorney for the colony. I can't recall the name of the third man who was in charge of this wagon.

Oftentimes while we were in camp, Mr. Payne would make speeches and explain his views and try to show the rest of us why we should proceed on the trip.

In 1889 I returned to Indian Territory and made the race in the opening of Old Oklahoma, starting at a line east of Oklahoma City. I failed to secure a claim and returned to Kansas.

In 1891 I moved to Oklahoma County, locating on a farm.

I made the race when the Sac and Fox lands were opened to settlement. I staked a claim but traded my rights the next day for a horse.

Three days later I entered a foot race for a lot in the townsite of Chandler, landing on which were two others. We came to an agreement of give or take and I received two dollars for my right.

In September, 1893, I entered the race in the opening of the Cherokee Strip, starting at a point

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near Orlando. I had been in camp at Orlando one week previous to the opening. I staked a claim northeast of where the town of Billings is now, but failed to file by the required time and lost my rights. I then returned to my home in Oklahoma County.

In 1895 I made a run in the Kickapoo Indian reservation but failed to secure a claim there. Later, I moved to Noble County and bought the farm on which I now reside.

Our first home on this farm was a 12x14 feet box house, unfurnished on the inside. In the fall of 1897 I built a three room house and ten years later I added to this to make the house as it is today.

When we first located on this farm, we traded at a small place called White Rock, located about five miles southeast of where the town of Billings is now. White Rock consisted of three stores, in one of which was a post office. These stores carried a line of groceries, merchandise, hardware and lumber.

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The closest railroad was at Red Rock or Bliss, now Marland. After Billings was established in 1899, these stores were moved to Billings.

Later, a railroad spur was built from Enid and after the development of oil in the northern part of Noble County this was extended on through Three Sands to Tonkawa and Blackwell.

While farming both in Oklahoma County and Noble County, I raised real good crops, but did not receive good prices for what I had to sell.

My first crop in Noble County was corn, which I fed to hogs and sold the hogs for two dollars and two-ten per hundred. Later, I farmed wheat.

When I had products for the market I hauled them to Bliss and Red Rock, sometimes to Perry.