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

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora LorrinThis report made on (date) May 27, 19371. Name Mr. A. G. Burger.2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) 500 East Wade.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 3 Year 1866.5. Place of birth On a farm in Pennsylvania.6. Name of Father John Burger Place of birth Blair County, Pennsylvania.Other information about father Died April 26, 1913.7. Name of Mother Susan Burger Place of birth Pennsylvania.Other information about mother Died December 22, (Year unknown).

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.

Mrs. Lora Lorrin,
Field Worker.

An Interview with Mr. A. G. Burger,
500 East Wade, El Reno, Oklahoma.

A. G. Burger was born in Pennsylvania, seventy-one years ago, on February 3, 1866. His father was a farmer and he was born on a farm.

He came to El Reno, June 17, 1901, and was here for the drawing when the Kiowa and Comanche country was opened for settlement. Like so many others, he was attracted to this country on account of the possibility of drawing a claim. He was unsuccessful, however, drawing a number that he said was some odd hundred: 76,000 and he has forgotten the exact number.

In describing the train he came in on, he stated that there wasn't any standing room in the aisles, on the platform or on the roof of the train, and that trainload after trainload arrived, crowded to the limit.

He was successful in getting work at the Jackson Bakery, which was located in the 100 block on Rock Island Street, about where the south half of the Citizens National Bank is now located.

His wife and children came from Olathe, Kansas, their former home, and joined him in August. They obtained two rooms in the 100 block on North Hoff Street. The rooms were

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small and inconvenient, and the rental price was \$8.00 per month. They had brought some of their own furniture so they were better off than many who came and could find no place to live other than camping out in the open. The Burgers rented their rooms from a Mrs. Perry. While living there a hard rain came up and simply drenched their kitchen. He said there was a wild scramble to get the furniture in places that were dry enough so that it would not be ruined. After paying their rent and expenses of arrival, they just had \$30.00 left to go on.

and gambling joints.
Mr. Burger stated there were eating joints/all over the place, running full blast. There was one eating place at the corner of Russell and Rock Island Street, that sold fried chicken. It was a covered wagon that had been turned into a restaurant. They fastened the wagon cover up on one side, had a stove in it and would fry the chicken and pass it out at the side of the wagon. They would allow one slice of bread with one quarter of a chicken for thirty ^{five} cents and they did a "land office" business as they would sell these small portions of fried chicken as fast as they could hand them out.

Mr. Burger said that he was luckier than most of the other bakers along about that time, as some of them did not have any rooms to sleep in and had to sleep in the yard of

the old Irving school house, where the drawing was held.

He also stated that when you lay down to sleep and failed to put your hat on your chest and put your hand on it and keep it there, you'd wake up without any hat, as the light fingered gentry was present along with more honest pioneers.

Often they worked all night long at the bakery, during the time of the drawings, and when morning came there would not be a loaf of bread or anything else to show for their hard night's work, everything being sold out slick and clean. At the Jackson's Bakery they had a pie baker who always marked his pies with the big "T M" on top of them. When asked what it meant he replied that it meant "Tis Mince" or "Taint Mince". An episode occurred that illustrated the idea very nicely that T. M. might be either "Tis Mince" or "Taint Mince". A big Indian came in one day and walked up to the pie counter and said, "I want um pie". The clerk or baker asked him what kind of pie he wanted, and he said, "Me want um mince". Then he said, "Me eat um here", indicating that he wanted to eat in the bakery but they would not let him do that as it was against their policy to let the shop be used as an eating place. They gave him one of the pies marked "T. M." and put it in a sack for him. He went just outside the door,

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pulled it out of the sack, and took a big bite out of it. It was a juicy cherry pie. He came back in and said, "Mince pie! Hell!", and slammed it down on the floor, and turned and started out, leaving them to clean up the awful mess of the 'Tis mince' or 'Taint mince pie'.

Mr. Burger said that you could sell anything that was eatable. Nobody was at all fastidious.

~~Mr.~~ Cerrer, of Cerrer's Bakery, ordered fifteen hundred loaves of bread from the Smith Bake Shop of Kansas City and when this order came it was not good and Mr. Cerrer turned it down. Mr. Jackson then bought seven hundred loaves of it and the Rock Island Express put the rest of it on a new rack and drove up Rock Island Street, down Hickford Street, and then went part of the way down on Choctaw, selling it for five cents a loaf, (they had no ten cent bread then, and before they got to the end of Choctaw Street it was all gone. Mr. Jackson had no trouble selling his seven hundred loaves, it was gone almost before they knew it. The last loaf of it had better reached Flat, so that it was only about an inch or two thick. A man came in the bakery and called to buy a loaf of bread. Mr. Jackson reached up and got that mashed loaf (it was the only bread in the bakery then) of bread and slammed it on

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the counter and said, "There you are". The man turned up his nose at it and said, "I don't want that". Mr. Jackson said, "All right, somebody else will", and he slammed it back on the shelf. Just at that instant a man rushed in and said, "Give me that bread", and so the sale was over.

In the 100 block there is a well that you can't pump dry, and during the drawing they sold water from this well for stock at ten cents a bucket.

The Post Office was located at that time on Rock Island Street, in the 100 block. There were booths to take care of the mail of the thousands of people who were here for the drawing. Mr. Burger said that there were four and sometimes five long lines of people waiting constantly for their turn to get their mail. The Post Office was kept open all night long, never closed during the rush. The people would get tired standing in line and would sit down on the edge of the curbing, lie back on the sidewalk and go to sleep, sometimes losing their place in the line.

There were no trees then except the few that grew along the Canadian River. El Reno's beautiful trees have all been planted since its founding.

Mr. Burger says that the crowd was as peaceful during the opening as any crowd he ever saw of that size. Even so there were pickpockets present and some of the stands were high jacked.

Mr. Burger worked on salary until he purchased the Gerrer's Bakery in 1913. He did not purchase the building it was housed in until 1919. It has since been known as the Burgers Bakery. His son, Charles G. Burger, bought his father's interest in the bakery in July, 1931. They call their bread "Mothers Bread". It was originally called "Ko-Malt", but the name was changed by his two boys, Charles and Chet Burger.

Mr. Burger said that he never made any personal friends among the Indians but that they were always good customers in those early days, as well as at the present time. His Indian customers were mostly among the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians, that being the tribes that are cared for at the Concho Agency, but of course there were others.