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BUTLER, EDWARD O. INTERVIEW #7429

BUTLER, EDWARD O. INTERVIEW. 7429.

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Form A-(S-149)

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

Field Worker's name Lula Austin.

This report made on (date) August 31, 1937. 193

1. Name Mr. Edward O. Butler. (White)
2. Post Office Address Durant.
3. Residence address (or location) In country--northwest of town.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March. Day 4 Year 1865.
5. Place of birth Illinois.

6. Name of Father Orvile Butler. Place of birth Boston, Mass.

Other information about father

7. Name of Mother Amelia Butler. Place of birth Illinois.

Other information about mother First postmistress in Durant.

Met trains and carried mail in her apron to her home.

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 5.

BUTLER, EDWARD O. INTERVIEW. 7429.

Lula Austin,
Interviewer.
August 31, 1937.

An Interview With Edward O. Butler,
Durant, Oklahoma.

I came from Missouri to Denison, Texas, with my parents when I was a young boy. My father often told me I was bowlegged because on our trip I insisted on driving an ox team and standing up.

We remained in Denison two years. My father had a contract to build three miles of railroad. We then moved to Rock Springs where Bloomfield was later built. I remember there was an old treadmill there driven by oxen and we had our corn ground there.

There was only one store when we moved to Durant. It was operated by Dixon Durant.

Father Morris, as we called him, was our first minister. He was about seventy years old then. The missions back East would send them barrels of clothing to be distributed among the needy.

My mother taught the first school in a little log house where the Dyer Hotel is now. Wilson Jones was district trustee and Bennie Hunter was also a trustee.

The Indians came from forty miles around to enroll. As high as two hundred enrolled, at $2.00 a scholar. Some of them would never come back after enrolling.

Wilson Jones was handling the school funds and I would take the warrents to him to be signed every quarter. If he cashed them he would deduct ten per cent. Bennie Hunter would cash them for nothing. Caddo was where we went for our mail. I was young enough to ride for half fare, and I was usually sent for the mail, as railroad fare was five cents a mile. My mother would distribute the mail to the people, carrying it to the little school house in a cigar box. Later she received permission to have it thrown off here, offering her services free.

Fort Smith at that time was the only court that had jurisdiction. The deputy marshals would come out and round up wild Indians that had been killing settlers. It was dangerous unless there was enough whites to form camp, for if they were on the war path they were sure to get you. When they declared war they would paint up, put on their feathers and go on the war path.

When we passed through the Territory we would chain our horses to the wheels of our wagon at night to keep the Indians from stealing them.

One night we camped a short distance from the wild Indians not knowing we were so close until we heard the beating of drums about sundown. After dark my mother said to my older brother, "Let's investigate and see what they are doing". My brother said he was close enough. I was ten years old so my mother and I stole near the camp and could see them in their wigwams, stomping around the fire singing to the beat of the drum. We watched them as long as we dared, then stole back to our camp. The next morning the Chief came down and had breakfast with us. He could speak a little English and understood us. I asked him why the dance and music all night, he said, "Indian from sundown to sunup, worshipping Big Father heap".

The Sioux Indians would come to Caddo to get their pensions. The government tried to teach them to drive the government trains. They would lead the oxen instead of driving them, one walking by the side of the oxen and

punching it instead of beating it. When they arrived in Caddo, citizens of the town would give them beeves to see them kill them. They would get on their horse and shoot the beef with an arrow, then the squaw would dress them and they would eat the meat raw.

Buffalo were as common as cattle. I have seen them in herds of a thousand, and many times when we would drive the cattle in there would be fifteen or twenty buffalo calves among them.

My father had visitors from the East and they had planned to go on a buffalo hunt. I had been having chills and my father said I couldn't go, but before the ox wagons left I hid myself on the coupling pole. When I was discovered my father sent a runner back to let mother know where I was, and allowed me to continue the trip with them. I got fat on the trip, eating so much wild game. My job was to keep the mud off the wagon wheels; an ax was carried along for that purpose. The men from the East had brought rifles with them. They killed all the buffalo they wanted. The way they skinned the buffalo was to drive a post down, start at the hind feet, tie the oxen to them and then pull the skin off.

Joe Bryant was sheriff of Blue County. He would hold our cattle for us when we had more than the law allowed.

During the filing of the land, the grafters were here ready to lend assistance to the Indian, in order to have him file his best land as surplus, then try to obtain it from the Indian at appraised value, which was a very small amount.

I was a delegate in 1904 at the National Democratic Convention to Chicago. I have been chairman of the Congressional District over six counties. I have also served as postmast of Durant.