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Note by Supervisor

This Manuscript seems to contain several errors in regard to dates, places, and Indian tribes.

On a second interview, Mr. Callerman insisted that the facts given in the first interview were correct.

CALLERMAN, CHARLES. INTERVIEW.

Field Worker: Arnold N. Arnson

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BIOGRAPHY OF Mr. Charles Callerman  
2909 North Kelley  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

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Mr. Charles E. Callerman, born in what was a trading post called Bolls Mills, Missouri, January 4th, 1860; Mr. John Callerman, The father; His son, Charles; and bride, Elizabeth McCrumb; and Mrs. Callerman's mother, Marie McCrumb came to Oklahoma. They came to this territory in a covered wagon, and settled in the locality known at present as Britton, Oklahoma.

In looking for a claim, they found a piece of land occupied by a squatter. The squatter did not own the land but wished to sell his squatter rights. This individual was somewhat a vicious character according to Mr. Callerman's report. Callerman wanting the land, arranged to drive the squatter to Guthrie in order to purchase said rights. Having completed the transaction, the squatter relinquished his claim upon the land. Mrs. Callerman was anxious to get settled as she was soon to become a mother.

There was an Indian trail that led down the Canadian hills toward what is now Shawnee. The trading point at this location was a meeting place for all the Indians. The only trading post that was near the Callermans was Council Grove, called "Dead Man's Place. At this time it was necessary to have guns and ammunition. The Indians on

the other side of Council Grove were not very dangerous, but the white settlers frequently stole horses and cattle from the homesteaders at night.

Bill and John McClure, according to Callerman's report, disturbed the Indians and homesteaders a great deal. They engaged in cattle thievery. A Mr. Cunningham was killed by the brothers, who, also succeeded in taking his homestead. These brothers were called "Sooners" and were in this territory illegally. One morning the Indians hid in the brush and shot arrows at them. The McClures were driving stolen cattle down the trail. They were killed by a United States Marshall.

One day a report came that the Indians were mobilizing and preparing for a night attack. The Indians (Choctaw) were then 12 miles east of Original Oklahoma. Mr. Callerman and his wife were afraid. They locked themselves in their home, bolted their door and windows, however, no Indians appeared. The next morning these Chickasaws and Choctaws came to Council Grove, out on west 10th Street, Oklahoma City, about 15 miles south, to seek a peace treaty with the white people. Council was held with the Indian Governor of the Chickasaw and Choctaws. His name was Scott. Thus, goodwill was established between the Indians and whites.

Mr. Callerman hauled wood and corn to town to sell one

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day. Enroute to town he was assisted around a creek by a friendly Indian. Upon his arrival at the trading post, Callerman found so many people there with wood and corn that he stayed all day in an effort to sell it. A neighbor gave him 35 cents to purchase a bottle of Castoria for her sick child. Mr. Callerman traded his stove wood and corn for candy and oranges as it was Christman eve, and he wanted to have Christman for his family. He could not sell the load of wood for 25 cents nor the corn at 15 cents a bushel. He purchased some quinine for his wife. In those days, according to Mr. Callerman, a doctor did not have to know medicine or teachers did not have to graduate to teach.

Mr. Callerman stayed out many days in the black jacks chopping wood and then drove many miles to trading post with it. He chopped wood and gathered corn until his feet were swollen and bleeding, and could not sell a penny worth. He traded his wood and corn for things they needed most. They had plenty of rabbits to eat. He would go out and trap rabbits by the droves, and would pass these rabbits around to "good white folks and friendly Indian." One day Mr. Callerman succeeded in trading his stove wood to a fellow

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merchant for a plough, shoes and pants. "I felt myself going up and things looked better for us."

President McKinley signed the patent to Mr. Callerman's land, and he still retains President McKinley signature on the title.

There were no Indians on the northeast side of Britton, but a few miles west of Britton at a location now called Oklahoma City there were a few.

During the depression of 1892, President Cleveland Administration, Mr. Callerman raised a big crop of turnips, bought a wagon load to town and sold them for 15 cents a bushel and he only received 18 cents per bushel for corn. Game was plentiful such as deer, wild turkeys, quail, ducks, and prairie chickens. Mr. Callerman would kill a beef in the fall.

One day Mr. Callerman was riding in the open pasture, and heard his cattle making a noise and the dogs barking. He discovered that coyotes were attacking his stock, also large wolves. The wolves were as "large as some of his cows", according to Mr. Callerman's story. He returned to the house for his rifle and succeeded in killing the animals. The hides were sold and this aided the family financially. He lost some calves. The Cherokee Strip Livestock Association paid several dollars for wolf pelts. "Of course the bounty was better than losing

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cattle." Another night the family heard a noise, Mr. Callerman looked out the door and discovered a wild cat. He shot the animal and found that it was "as large as a good size dog." There were a lot of hoot owls around, and one imagined there were Indians approaching. The doors were kept bolted to the house.

Callerman had a nice garden, and a number of acres of corn. There were many rattlesnakes and sometimes one would come close to the house. They lost a lot of chickens by these snakes. Callerman had several hogs. He also gather a few eggs ever day. His wife was afraid to venture out for fear of snakes and wolves.

The Callerman children went to school during the Old Settler's subscription school, Callerman recalls that Madie Howlbeck was one of the teachers. Later the public schools came to each district. The United States Government paid for some of the schooling, separate schools for boys and girls.

Mr. Callerman still recalls the Uncle John Smith's Burial ground, 4 miles northeast of Britton, Oklahoma. Many Indians were laid to rest there, also, Although most of the Indians buried their loved one in their own yards.

Later, when Callermans became more prosperous they would have large gatherings, they had as many as 95 visit them. He



would give a barbecue and invite his friends, both Indians and whites. This was about the time of the opening of the Kickapoo reservation. Several cowpunchers would rope steers and shoot at a target and run, and jump. This was all free entertainment.

Ardmore was not opened then. Shawnee Town was the only trading post, east of the Meridan.

The Callermans delight was to trade with the Indians. They exchanged with the Indians for their blankets, pottery and baskets.

Hominy was an outstanding food in those days. The Indians told them how to prepare it. The Indians were artistic designers. They also made medicine from roots and herbs. When the Indian celebrated " they really put on the dog, they would paint up and make up on high gear, their tents and ponies were also painted for this event, especially when they would swap a horse for a girl or boy that was considered sacred, and closed with a celebration."

"The Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians were the most independent tribes of Indians I knew, they certainly did come in line with the whites, both were very peaceful and helped the white Settlers along, and helped lead the trails that went to Council Grove and Shawnee Town trading posts. The Indian children went

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to school, and they paid their own money to run these schools. Their schools were mostly boarding schools, the U.S. Government helped pay these school expenses for so many years at time."

Callerman still own his old homestead, his son lives there at present (1937)