

FELKNER, LONNIE

INTERVIEW

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Interview with Lonnie Felkner  
Interviewer - Ruby Wolfenbarger  
September 27, 1937

I came into Oklahoma with my parents in 1890. We located at Madill in the eastern part of the state and my father rented an Indian lease for two years. We lived in a double log house with a hall, which was made of oak lumber. The land was black, and when it rained it was black mud, for it was not very good soil.

In 1892 we decided to move to the Cheyenne-Arapaho country. Ten wagons made up the party and the Indians followed us all the way. One night we camped at Medicine Creek and when we made camp the Indians circled around us. We were on the Comanche Indian Reservation and just about dark a band of Indians came up. They had their faces painted and they were on the warpath. Big Tree, their chieftain, rode up around our camp fire and said. "White man no good, burn redman's grass, and kill redman." One man in our party with a little more nerve than the rest got his

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shot gun and started after Big Tree. Then all the Indians broke and ran just as fast as they could go.

We killed lots of wild game on the road such as deer, prairie chickens and quail. We saw lots of wolves, and had to keep a big fire going at night to keep the night animals away.

The next night we camped in Medicine Canyon, which was a deep gap between Mount Scott, near Lawton, and Fort Sill. There were lots of good springs in these mountains and there was also lots of timber. We had to stay here for two days because of bad weather, so we fished and the men and larger boys spent their time hunting.

We camped the first night in the western country with a man called Wilson, who lived in a half dugout but he made us welcome as best he could. The next day the settlers started out to look for a location. My father and brother hauled logs from the river and

made us a dugout. This was very small and disagreeable as we didn't have enough room, but it was the best that we could do at that time. I was too young to do much work but I helped by killing quail and prairie chickens for our meat.

My father went to Quanah, Texas after our groceries, clothes and farming implements. It took one week to make the trip. He had to cross four rivers, and there wasn't a bridge on any of these.

We hauled cotton stumps from the river and burned these for fuel and we also burned corn.

When we came here, the blue stem grass was as high as a man's head. The first week that we were here there came a big blizzard with ice and snow and the grass bent over as if it was loaded with gold. This made a very beautiful picture.

The first year we made a very good sod crop. We planted corn, tomatoes, beans, peas, sweet potatoes, cantaloupes and watermelons.

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We had several good milch cows which kept the family from going hungry in the early days. We didn't have any water for a long time until my father and the neighbor men dug eight feet and struck clay. Then they blasted seventy feet through the clay and never struck one drop of water. Sometime after that my father went to town and my cousin and I decided that we would try and dig a well. I took a spade and dug just as close to the house as I could. At sixteen feet we struck one of the finest streams of water; it was just as cold as ice and soft and clear. My mother was very proud of this because we didn't have enough water for our home use, and we had been hauling our water five miles.

I took sick the night after I dug the well and I was down all summer with typhoid fever, as we didn't have very good doctors or much medicine in that day.

We lived on this same place for thirty-five years. We sold out and divided up and I moved to Sentinel where I now live.