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Interview with Mr. H. M. Thompson

By

H. L. Ramage, Field Worker

Mr. H. M. Thompson, 212½ E. Broadway, born Rochester, Indiana, January 27th, 1886. Age 71. (White)

My father's name was Harvy Thompson, born at Rochester, Indiana, in 1838, died in 1875. I was four years of age when my father died.

My mother, (don't remember date) was born in Pennsylvania, died at Rochester, Indiana, in 1873.

I was about six years of age, when I started to school at Rochester. I attended school three years.

After my father's death I was taken to Rossville to live with an aunt and uncle. I went to school there four years.

The fall of 1880 I went to Eastern Kansas and went to work for Felix Lynch on a farm. I helped around the house and did odd jobs on the farm, also attended school. My. Lynch payed me \$8.00 a month with board and room. He was getting ready to plant corn and I offered to assist him in planting the corn. He seemed to think I could not do the work but I told him I was sure I could do it, so when the day come for planting corn, Mr. Lynch told me

that I could drop the corn and that if I did the job well enough, that the corn could be plowed from both ways, I could have my pick of a pig from the whole bunch. I got the pig. Stayed with Mr. Lynch three years.

In 1884 I moved to Neosho Falls, Kansas. Went to work for Mr. McWilliams who owned a meat market. I also attended school while working for Mr. McWilliams. He gave me my board and room and paid me \$12.00 a month. I worked for him two years. I then went to work for the MK&T Railroad as section hand at Neosho Falls. I worked eight months and quit.

I went from Neosho Falls to my aunts at Seamon, Kansas. Had been there two or three days when I received a message from the Roadmaster whose name was F. F. King, asking me to take the section Foreman's job at Burlington, Kansas. I went to Parsons, received a pass to Burlington and took over the job. It was a very disgusting job. I only had two section men and could not keep the road bed in proper condition with only two men. I tried a number of times to resign but the Roadmaster would not accept my resignation. One morning while working everything seemed to go wrong. There was an extra freight due there just before noon and

about an hour before it was due I gave one of the men my watch and told him what time the freight was due and that it would stop to pick up some scrap iron and to get off the track and not get run over. Knowing the trainmaster was riding the train and would be at the station, which was about a quarter of a mile from where we were working, I walked to the station and wrote out my resignation and left before the train arrived, leaving word with the Operator to hold my check. That is the way I at last got away from the job.

I went to Claremore, Oklahoma in 1894 and opened a meat market. I did my own slaughtering. Went out early one morning and killed a beef and cut it up. When I took it back to the market I drove around to the back door to unload but had to go around through the front door in order to unlock the back door. When going from the back to the front, I had to go between two buildings which stood about eight feet apart. About three days before this Touie Bean had captured an outlaw. There was no jail so they had to keep the prisoner under constant guard. As I was going between the buildings carrying a Winchester rifle, which I used to kill the beef, just before I got to the front of the building, Deputy Bean passed, taking the prisoner to the boarding house for dinner. As there was talk of the prisoner's pals coming

to take him away from the law. Bean was pretty nervous and when he saw me approaching him from between the buildings and not being able to recognize me in the dark, but saw I was carrying a gun, he threw down on me with his Winchester and fired, just missing my head. I called him by name telling him who I was and at the same time dropping my gun. He then lowered his gun. The prisoner was charged with murdering the sheriff of Coosau District. When a gun was fired in Claremore there was almost sure to be a corpse. It was just another job for the undertaker.

In 1895 I went to Tulsa and opened a meat market. Tulsa at that time was just a wide place in the road. There were just a few stores but lots of tough fellows. There was a Chinese restaurant and it was kind of a hang-out for the boys at night. If a stranger should stop there at night he was more apt to be treated rough than nice. The outlaws or some cowboy would make him get up on the counter and dance. If they refused to dance, the outlaw or cowboy, which ever it might be, would pull his gun and start shooting at the stranger's feet, forcing him to dance. Have seen more than one man get shot in the foot. A stranger came in one night and was made to dance. The next night he came back and turned

the trick on the man. Then he entered the restaurant he pulled his gun and ordered the man to dance that made him dance. The man said he could not dance so the man that entered the restaurant started shooting at the others feet. The man who was ordered to dance pulled his gun and started shooting at the other, but missed. The other did not miss, shooting him through the lungs. The man then ran out of the front door and was never caught that I know of. I have seen Cherokee Bill, Dollon, the Dunn boys, Billie Creek and the Narrow Gauge Kid, in Tulsa a lot of times. The citizens never bothered the outlaws and they never bothered us.

In 1898 I went from Tulsa to Pawnee, went to work for Berry and Loughton who owned a meat market. Worked for them a short time and the building they used was sold and they had to move. When they moved I quit working for them. It was not long after they moved until they began to have trouble between themselves. Mr. Berry wanted me to buy Mr. Loughton out for \$500.00, and he would loan me the money. So he wrote me a check for \$500.00 and I gave the check to Mr. Loughton, closing the deal. I stood in good with the Pawnee Indians. When I went in with Berry their daily receipts run around \$8 to \$12 a day. In about four months after I went

in with Berry, our receipts run around \$150.00 a day. The Indians got payed by the Government twice a year. The Indian bought meat on credit for six months at a time. I never lost but one account and that was from a white man.

The way I succeeded in collecting from the Indians, there were four different tribes of the Pawnee Indian. Each tribe having its own chief. I would visit each Chief two or three weeks before the payment was made and tell the Chiefs to be sure and have the Indians pay their bill and I would give each Chief a beef on foot. By doing this, all bills were paid which amounted to a large sum each six months. On pay day Mr. Berry and I would place a table at the door. I would handle the bills and collect the money on one side of the table, and Mr. Berry sat on the other side of table with a big book. When one payed I gave Mr. Berry the Indians name and the amount he payed. Mr. Berry would then enter the name and amount payed in the big book.

I had been a partner with Mr. Berry about four months when the first payment was made. The day before the payment, I took an inventory of the merchandise in stock, also the number of livestock, then checked bills the Indians owed. Mr. Berry knew I had checked everything that day. That night he came to the hotel where I stayed to loaf awhile with me,

which he did real often. During our talk I asked him what he would take for his half interest in the business, which was worth \$500.00 four months previous to this night. I was only kidding him about the buying of his half interest but I offered him \$500.00. He thought for a minute then answered no. I then offered him \$1000.00. He answered no I will just stay and take the loss with you. I then told him the net profit for the four months we had been partners was \$3,812.00. I had a time proving it amounted to that much. Each Indian, when paying his bill, would be given eight pounds of beef free. When the Indian payed his bill he would say kesoskey wisket, (which was beef-hurry) he would take the free beef but would not buy any until I could wait on them.

Mr. Berry was a brother-in-law to J. Berry King.

Our market was two doors from a saloon. One evening about three o'clock, I heard a single shot, then two shots in the saloon. I started to go in and see who got killed but decided to wait and watch them carry the body out. Tom Taylor, a United States Marshal had arrested a 22 year old boy at a town several miles from Pawnee for selling whiskey. He placed another man in charge of the prisoner to take him back to Pawnee. As he (Tom) had to stay and get some papers on the prisoner. The deputy took the boy back to Pawnee and was

keeping him in the back of the saloon two doord from our market, until the deputy turned the prisoner over, saying he had to be getting back. Just after he left the marshal was looking the papers over, he had gotten on the prisoner, had them laying on a poker table and was not watching the prisoner very close. He saw the prisoner make a quick move. Just as he turned the prisoner said, "I am going to kill you, Tom," and shot him through the chest with a 45 six shooter. He fell to the floor, rolled over and shot twice at the boy as he run out the back door. Missed with both shots. In about five minutes the marshal was dead. A posse started after the boy, chased him all night and until the next evening, catching him on Black Bear Creek. The boy was given a prison sentence. Later they made up money in Pawnee for a new trial. I donated \$25.00 for the new trial. No one ever knew where the boy got the gun that he killed the marshal with.

In 1900 a store and post office, which was the only business house in Bliss, located on the 101 Ranch close to the Santa Fe Railroad between Perry and Ponca City.

One night after the store closed, Tom Cravens robbed and killed the young man who run the store. The next day two posses were gathered. One at Perry and one at Pawnee.

They started trailing the outlaw. It was three days before they cornered him at a farm house. Mr. John Rutter was sheriff and was heading the posse that cornered the outlaw. One in the posse named Tom Johnson, saw the outlaw through an opening in the house and told the sheriff who it was. Also told the sheriff he was well acquainted with the outlaw and would go to where Graves could see him and order him to surrender. As they were good friends he would not shoot him and in doing this no one would lose their lives. The sheriff consented. Mr. Johnson walked out to where the outlaw could see him, asking him to come out with his hands up and he would not shot. Instead of coming out when Mr. Johnson ordered, the outlaw shot Mr. Johnson, killing him instantly. The outlaw then run out the back door to a shed where his horse was saddled and waiting. He mounted the horse and made his getaway. He was not heard of until he was captured in Arizona a few years later. In 1934 some farm boys were playing on a hill not far from Hitchita, Oklahoma. They found a glass jar with about \$300.00 in it, part was money and part was checks, it was part of the loot taken in the hold-up at Bliss by Tom Cravins in 1900. It was identified by some checks issued by the Miller Brothers of the 101 Ranch in 1900.

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In 1901 I went to Bartlesville, went into the real estate business and was connected with the Bucher Brothers who run the First National Bank of Bartlesville. Bartlesville was not very big at that time. The population was about five hundred. Second street was the main street. The only news paper was owned by Mr. Haywood and published one paper a week. Name of the paper was the Bartlesville Magnet. Mr. Haywood contacted me in regard to building him a new brick building for a paper office. He wanted the building made fire proof, as he wanted to install a gasoline engine in the paper office. After I finished the structure and Mr. Haywood moved in he changed the name of the paper to the "Bartlesville Examiner."

I secured all the property I could get hold of as I knew there were going to be a boom here. I got some people at Kansas City interested enough to come to Bartlesville and look around. One in the party was Mr. Dennis Bowles, Mayor of Kansas City. I was showing him some property and showed him some lots located in the business section which he liked fine but said the price was too high. I told him that the price would go up \$500.00 with the sun next morning. Mr. Bowles left me and went to the bank to talk it over with the bankers. He told them that he wanted the

property but that I was too high on it. Also told them that I told him the price would go up \$500.00 tomorrow. The banker told him that he could depend on what I said even if I lost money. Mr. Bowles came back to where I was and asked me if I really intended to raise the price. I answered that at one minute after midnight the price would be \$500.00 more. Mr. Bowles said "Okay, lets go over to the bank and close the deal."

The first oil well in Oklahoma was located at Bartlesville. The well was owned by the Cudahy brothers. They had six sections of land leased around Bartlesville but was only allowed to keep one section which covered the ground where the business section of Bartlesville is now located. The boom lasted from 1902 until 1905.

I owned a race horse that I traded to the Crney Valley Oil and Gas Company for oil stock valued at \$250.00. A few months later the company sold out to another company and I was payed \$20,000.00 for the stock I traded the horse for.