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BLAND, OWEN L.

FIRST INTERVIEW

6941

443

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

444

BLAND, OWEN L. FIRST INTERVIEW. #6941.

Field Worker's name Mary D. Dorward

This report made on (date) July 29, 1937

1. Name Owen L. Bland,

2. Post Office Address 3614 S. 29th W. Avenue, Red Fork, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 3614 S. 29th W. Avenue.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 29 Year 1862

5. Place of birth Iowa.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about mother _____

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 Seven.

BLAND, OWEN L.

FIRST INTERVIEW.

#8941

Mary D. Dorward,
Field Worker.
July 28, 1937.

Interview with Owen L. Bland,
3614 S. 29th W. Ave., Red Fork, Oklahoma.

Owen L. Bland, brother of Dr. J. O. W. Bland, came to Tulsa, Indian Territory, from his home in Illinois in 1887.

Making the Run.

I made the run into western Oklahoma in 1889. I had no desire to try for a claim, just wanted to go for the fun of it, so I joined up with two United States deputy marshals and went as a posse man. All I took with me was my blanket, gun, frying pan, and some meal. We didn't need any money. As a marshal's assistant I could come and go at will among the "Sooners" encamped along the way. We passed many a one who had already picked out his claim, each of them prepared to swear he had not entered before opening time. Some had been encamped a week or more.

Since I had no intention of trying to get a claim I did not want to make trouble for anyone by reporting him. But once or twice I was almost drawn into it against my will. In one case, the morning of the day the land was to be opened (the official opening was set for twelve

BLAND, OWEN L.

FIRST INTERVIEW.

#6941.

2

o'clock noon) I came upon a man who had made his camp and put up a pair of crossed sticks to mark his claim. Another man came along and made some remark about his being there too soon and called my attention to it. I went on and forgot about the matter, but a year or two later, after I had returned from a trip to Seattle, Washington, the second man looked me up one day. He said he was contesting the first man's claim and wanted me as a witness.

After the run into western Oklahoma we went on toward Guthrie, where another opening was to take place within a short time. In the afternoon of that opening day, about two hours after the land was opened, we came upon a man who had staked his claim, had his oxen, plow, and other equipment there and had already plowed three furrows around a good sized plot of ground, work that he couldn't have done with those oxen in less than a day, and yet he swore he had done it all besides making the run with those slow-moving oxen since twelve o'clock. While we were still talking to him another man galloped up on a race horse, both of them panting. The rider talked to the man at the plow who again

BLAND, OWEN L.

FIRST INTERVIEW.

#6941

3

swore he had done it all since twelve o'clock. Finally the man on the horse offered to buy the oxen at a good price. Upon being asked why, he said,

"Well, I raced my horse as fast as he could go to get here first, yet those oxen beat me. I'm in the racing business and I want to put those oxen in the race. They can beat any horse I ever saw."

Trading Posts

Jim Parkinson once had a licensed trading post in Red Fork. He later moved to Okmulgee.

Courts

The Light Horse courts were the police force or peace officers of the Indians. They had jurisdiction only over Indians. There was no particular place for holding court, it being held at any place designated by the judge.

At one time an Indian named Mittel Oakie, father of Robert Fry, of Tulsa, was killed by an Indian named Wesley Barnett. Wallis Menack was judge of the Light Horse court. Judge Menack sent the Light Horse to get Barnett, saying if they didn't get him, Menack would go himself. The Light Horse failed so Menack had to go. Stand Watie and Bob

BLAND, OWEN-L.

FIRST INTERVIEW.

#6941.

4

Childers were also on the court and tried to get Menack to give it up, saying, "He'll trap you," but Menack went ahead. He hid himself in a little gap under the fence near a cottage where he knew Barnett to be hiding. When Barnett appeared, Menack told that he called to Barnett, "Throw up your hands," and when Barnett did not do so, shot him. But it was pretty well understood that Menack shot first and called "Hands up" afterward. That was a sample of Light Horse justice.

Ferries

Bob Childers used to run the ferry across the Arkansas between Tulsa and Red Fork. At one time just before one of the land openings there were five hundred wagons, on the way to make the run, backed up waiting to be ferried across the river. Bob decided he would make a little money so he put the price up to five dollars per wagon, but Legus Perryman, who was chief of the Creeks, made him put it down to the regular fare, two dollars.

Bob Childers was the ugliest man I ever saw. He was so ugly the children were afraid of him. He was a great hulk of a man, bow-legged, with big feet and with hands so

BLAND, OWEN L.

FIRST INTERVIEW.

#6941.

5

big and thick that my hand would scarcely stretch across his palm. One day a young man was crossing the ferry with Childers when he began laughing. He said to Childers, "No offense, mister, but I was just thinking how d---- ugly you are."

When they reached the other side of the river the young man asked the price of the trip. Childers replied,

"Usually it is two dollars but since I am so ugly you can keep it and when you find someone as ugly as I am, give it to him."

Two years later the man came back. He said to Childers,

"I've been all over the country since I was here and I have never found anyone as ugly as you are, so you had better take the money."

Old Trails

The old trail through Coffeyville, Joplin, and Vinita down to Texas came through Red Fork, although all trace of it has disappeared. At Red Fork the trail divided, one route going to Texas, the other following the Cimarron, or Red Fork of the Arkansas. The water in the stream is red. That is how Red Fork got its name, so I was told by a

BLAND, OWEN L. FIRST INTERVIEW.

#6941.

6

squaw of the Delawares in '87.

Outlaws

I knew the Daltons personally. Emmett I didn't like. He was a sneaking sort of fellow, and then I didn't like his commercializing and glorifying the experiences of the boys. Grant was a bluffer. Bob was the only one who was at all honest and upright. When I went to the opening of old Oklahoma I stayed all night at Pawhuska at Bob's camp. He was then United States marshal.

Some time after that a man was shot in Arkansas City and the Daltons were suspected of the killing. Bob then gave up his job as United States marshal. Just about that time I was starting for Seattle, Washington, and met Bob at the station in Tulsa. I said to him, "Come on and go with us to Seattle."

"I believe I will," he replied, "but I haven't any money now. I'll meet you tomorrow in Wichita." But he didn't show up at Wichita. The next I heard of him was after the Coffeyville raid in which he was killed. He had borrowed my six-shooter and I never did get it back.

BLAND, OWEN L. FIRST INTERVIEW.

#6941.

7

Politics

Indians had a different system of counting votes from the white man's system. Elections would be held simultaneously in all the towns in one Nation. Instead of counting the ballots they counted the Indians present. This procedure insured against anyone voting in more than one town at the same election.

The word town meant the same as township. Thus Tulsey Town meant not just the town itself but the surrounding country of which Tulsey was the center.