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BINGHAM, RILEY, INTERVIEW.

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Investigator, Nannie Lee Burns,
November 3, 1937.

Interview with Riley Bingham,
Quapaw, Okla.

I was born November 16, 1862, in Clark County, Illinois, and when about twenty-five years of age I married Annie E. Aikens, who was born and raised in Kansas but I do not remember the date of her birth. She died ten years ago and my sister Mrs. Both, has lived with me since and now keeps house for me. My wife and I had no children of our own but have raised three girls.

Life in the Indian Territory.

George Bingham, an uncle of mine, had come to the Quapaw Nation after the repeated efforts of A. W. Abrams to attract farmers to come here and improve the Quapaw Lands for the Quapaws, so after my uncle had been in Quapaw a year or two I came down here to put up hay one summer. At that time the nearest railroad point was Baxter Springs, Kansas, about eight miles from here.

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hile here, I leased a piece of land three miles due east of the present town of Quapaw and next leased land two miles due south of here for a year. Next, I moved southwest of here till I purchased land, which was after the allotment, in 1896.

Early Life Here.

When we came here, most of the Quapaws were living in the eastern part of their Nation along Spring River where most of them had selected forty acres as homes and the remaining two hundred acres of their land was out on the prairie west of there. This was at this time covered with a tall growth of prairie grass and so far, except for the grazing of the herds of the cattlemen, was untouched. This was the land that they had to lease to people who came here and it was up to us new-comers to put our own buildings up, to break our ground, to do our fencing, etc.

The Railroad.

As soon as the allotment was agreed upon, the officials of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad decided to extend their road from Baxter Springs south to the small village of Miami and they agreed with the Quapaws

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for the privilege of building through their nation to establish a station at the present site of Quapaw and to provide siding sufficient for the loading of their hay and grain.

The Quapaws were very poor and had been forbidden to sell anything or even to have a load of wood taken from their nation. This had produced such hardships among them that many of them had gone to their friends, the Osages, to stay, but, with the opportunity to get tenants who were able to improve their lands for them most of the Quapaws had returned and were living in the wooded section along Spring River and were glad to lease the prairie section of their nation for fifty cents per acre at this time though years before they had been leasing their grazing land to the cattlemen for the small sum of ten cents per acre.

They had before this been reduced to such straits that they would skin the dead cattle that they found on the range. My uncle had cattle but I cared more for farming and have in my younger days farmed on a large scale, besides being an extensive shipper of prairie hay.

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Schools.

At the time we came here the only school here was the Quapaw Mission School for the Indian children.

After the railroad became a certainty the neighbors living near got together and built a small frame building for the children of the community. Those on the board or committee were, . . . B. Bingham, F. B. Edgington, Sam Apple, Boss McGinnis and myself. We hired a teacher and the board assured her a salary of \$30.00 per month and then we had to collect this \$30.00 from the persons living in the community.

This little school building was two and a half miles south of Quapaw. I have been on the school board continuously ever since and have been the President of the school board here in Quapaw ever since we had a school and have seen the little school in the rural district south of here grow to be the present Quapaw School with its modern brick buildings which have now more than a thousand students.

The Quapaw Mission.

When the Government ordered the Quapaw Mission closed and the buildings sold, in 1896, I purchased three of the buildings. The girls' dormitory was a two-story, frame

building. The main building was about 20 x 70 feet and the two wings were each about 20 x 40 feet and the other was a residence. All of these buildings were of pine and these buildings really started the town of Dupaw. From the dormitory, I built a hotel building and two store buildings and the balance of the lumber went into residence buildings. Only one of the original buildings is still standing and that is the residence of Lew Harlin, which is a four-room house.

Hay and Grain.

In 1897, I shipped the first carload of hay from here to Kansas City over the new railroad. The hay business increased and I built hay barns here at Miami and also one at Baxter Springs, Kansas. My largest barn was in Dupaw and held a thousand tons of hay.

I have shipped two train-loads of hay in a single day.

In that same year, 1897, I also bought a hundred and forty-four carloads of corn. I had no shelter for it and I had it piled in great piles right out here on the prairie, with sometimes a thousand bushels in a single pile.

I was also farming on a big scale then and that year I raised seven thousand bushels of corn and kept it all winter

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and the following spring I sold my corn for thirty-three cents per bushel.

I have shipped ten carloads of flax at one time and I have shipped great quantities of oats.

R. N. Edgington had the first store here in Quapaw in his scale office. I bought him out and then in addition I ran an elevator. The first year I ran the elevator I took in \$175,000.00 and the next year \$168,000.00.

To these activities I added the sale of commercial fertilizer. The first year I only sold one carload and had hard work to do that and to get my friends to try it for they were afraid it would burn up their land. The next year I sold nine carloads of it. Some folks say that the land wears out but my land is still good and productive today. I have always kept it built up but I have never used as much fertilizer as most people do.

Hardman was one of our first station agents but I do not remember whether he was the first one or not.

early buildings..

Bob Mellon had two farm houses near where the station was built and my cousin, W. I. Lingham, and I built the next

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houses. His was a one and a half story house with five rooms downstairs and I built a five room house and within the next two years, six or seven more families came to Quapaw.

The Mission buildings that I mentioned were also a part of the first building.

The Douthitts, who had also come from Miami County, Kansas, had been adopted by the Quapaws and had settled here the Admiralty Mines are now. Here there was a tar spring and we used to dip up the tar and use it to grease harness, etc. That is how Tar Creek got its name because of the tar deposits near it.

Other Early Towns.

Sunnyside was the first of the mining towns. It was south of the present Sunnyside School house and south ofaxter Springs, Kansas. They discovered ore here and people flocked here and built houses and even a hotel and put down shafts. The boom did not last long for soon they had the shallow ore and they did not believe there was any use to go deeper to look for more ore.

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Now all that is left of the place is a few maple trees and some old shaft holes.

Lincolnvile was another mining town. They found shallow ore there and when I was living on the farm it was a growing town. There were a thousand people in Lincolnvile at one time.

Once, they were having an election there and a neighbor said to me "Let's go to Lincolnvile." I went and we went into a pool hall and while I never liked beer, Murphy and I split a bottle and were standing there and a dispute came up between two of the men and one drew a gun and they began shooting. The room was full but you never saw men get out of sight as quickly as those men did. I see who could not get to the doors ducked under and behind things. I said, "Let's get out of here."

After the shallow deposits of ore were exhausted, the town of Lincolnvile slowed down and is today just a few old, frame buildings. The Catholic Mission is being torn down, most of the buildings have been moved away and the school building there now is not the same one but some of the old chat piles and shaft holes remain to tell the story.

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Peoria had its mining boom about 1890 or '91.

Miami, when we came here, was very small but it had saloons then and two stores and the first time that I went there, there was to be a base ball game. We had no roads or rather if trails could be called roads they were poor ones as there were no bridges across the streams and you just took your direction and angled across the prairie.

I also remember the starting of Mattenville, now Commerce. I have bought hay from the ground where the city is now, and before ore was dreamed of there I had a chance to get in on the ground floor there as my nephew was drilling for a farmer at Commerce and on his road home one night stopped at my house and told me what he had found and showed me some cuttings from the drill that day. The cuttings did not look good to me but when he washed them out and showed them to me later they looked better.

The hundred and sixty acres on which Quapaw is located belonged to Julia Shapp and I had it leased from her for some years. Her husband did not like to work and they were always coming to me and getting a little money on the

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lease and finally I was about fifty dollars ahead when I grew tired and told them that I was going to turn her back her land.

The little schoolhouse that I mentioned as the first one is now on the farm of a man named Davis. He lived in it. The first bridge that I recall in this county was the first bridge built across the Neosho at Miami which must have been built about 1900.

CO. MINUTE

Mr. Riley Bingham is still actively engaged in farming and in the grocery business in Quapaw where he has lived for the last thirty-seven years.

---Investigator.