

Notice of Copyright

Published and unpublished materials may be protected by Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S. Code). Any copies of published and unpublished materials provided by the Western History Collections are for research, scholarship, and study purposes only.

Use of certain published materials and manuscripts is restricted by law, by reason of their origin, or by donor agreement. For the protection of its holdings, the Western History Collections also reserves the right to restrict the use of unprocessed materials, or books and documents of exceptional value and fragility. Use of any material is subject to the approval of the Curator.

Citing Resources from the Western History Collections

For citations in published or unpublished papers, this repository should be listed as the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

An example of a proper citation:

Oklahoma Federation of Labor Collection, M452, Box 5, Folder 2. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

BODENHAMER, JOSEPH H.

INTERVIEW

#4549

77

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

BODENHAMER, JOSEPH H.

INTERVIEW.

4549.

Field Worker's name Merrill A. Nelson.

This report made on (date) June 10, 1937. 193

1. Name Joseph H. Bodenhamer.

2. Post Office Address 444 E Oak, Enid, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Same.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 1 Year 1868.

5. Place of birth Green County, Missouri.

6. Name of Father Hiram Bodenhamer. Place of birth Near Raleigh, North Carolina.

Other information about father Blacksmith.

7. Name of Mother Katherine Tillion Place of birth North Carolina. 12/26/1826.

Other information about mother Housekeeper.

Plum gardener and chicken raiser (4 children lived).

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 5.

Merrill A. Nelson,
Field Worker,
Jns 19, 1937.

An Interview With Joseph H.
Bodenhamer, Enid, Oklahoma.

Before the strip opened we were living in Kansas.

One of our jobs was to haul powder from Kiowa, Kansas, to Quinlan when they were building the Santa Fe Railroad. They had a big job there - blasting out the canyons for the line. This was at least five or six years before the run. I do not know how the railroad secured the right to build through.

There were no highways then at all, only trails and the state was fenced up into big ranches and often we had to open gates. We crossed the Cimarron up by #21 crossing near Waynoka. The river was high and we doubled across - that is two teams from two wagons would pull one wagon across. We managed to 'keep our powder dry' however. The trains in those days had old fashioned high smoke stacks.

Another time we crossed the Salt Fork of the North Canadian near Mooreland. It was in the winter time. We were hauling a load of oats. After doubling across, and as we were unhitching, we heard a big noise and looking back we saw an ice jam sweeping down the river. By the time we

were ready to start it was all over. If we had been in the river at that time it would have broken our horses' legs and crushed our wagons.

We came to Kansas from Missouri in 1883. We settled first at Medicine Lodge. Our farm was eight miles southeast of that point. At the time of the Cherokee Strip run we came down to the state line near Kiowa. We made the run on an old plug pony. We started fifteen minutes before noon. They gave the signal but even before that some had started and some were already in the strip.

I made a run of about twelve miles. Urton and I staked together. Then Urton pulled up and I took his place. I had a contest on with some one then. I compromised. Then I secured a place six miles southeast of Kiowa, near my brother. It took me about a half an hour to make the run.

On Urton's place we first lived in what later became our chicken house. Later, we built a two-room house. We did not stay long there. We hauled posts southwest of Cleo Springs to fence our place. Most of this was timber that had fallen down.

When we moved nearer Kiowa we had plenty of water for our own use and for other people. Some settlers would put

-3-

up a sign, "No water here". We made one which read, "Water for stock, help yourself". This might not have been safe. People would inquire if we meant what we said.

My wife and I were married in January on the Urton place. After the compromise we moved, as I said, near Kiowa. We had three years of drought. There may have been some relief agency then but we did not know enough to ask for it. In Kansas in 1883-5, we planted three times a year for three years.

I used to help put up windmills; I would make towers out of four by fours. One time I made a home made wheel which worked well. It was constructed of straight boards about one foot wide set at an angle. The well was sixteen feet deep. I bought a crank and put the thing together.

One year we cut up a little fodder for the stock, from dried fodder here and there over the field, enough for the stock but no grain. We lived on prairie chickens, rabbits and fish. For social life we had Sunday School, literary societies, and church. At church the ladies wore white sun-bonnets. At barbecues we would kill five or six beeves.

-4-

There were buffalo wallows on our farm. We branded our stock JHB. Medicine Lodge was our trading point. In Kansas the old stage coaches would pass my wife's place. The driver asked my wife's mother to stand on the side where he was sitting and he would take her mail.

You could borrow more easily then, than now. People were more honest. A man's word was as good as secured paper is now.

I first used a horse power thresher. When cutting I would use a dropper in Kansas, which pushed the unbound grain off the harvester. It was then bound by hand. It took from twenty to twenty-five people to run an old thresher. I have also plowed with oxen there.

About 1900 I used to go from place to place as an oil field worked in Oklahoma. We had an over jet which made the wagon about five feet wide and twelve feet long. This over-jet was an extension on each side of the bed. We laid our springs crosswise and traveled with four children that way.

I have seen a fine field of grain spoiled in three days by dry weather. Our best crop was about thirty-five bushels to the acre.

-5-

I have a strange hobby for a man; I crochet beautiful bedspreads and table pieces.

We had two beds, a commode, home-made, and a water bucket table also home-made, a good table and four chairs in our first house in Oklahoma. Mrs. Bodenhamer sometimes had to stay alone, which made her afraid. One time there was a storm. She was always afraid of these. I was working. The storm came and killed forty chickens.

I was fond of base ball and sometimes left my wife at home plowing while I went away for a game. One time I caught a bull snake. There was a girl at a carnival who said she could handle any snake so I had the wife bring me the bull snake in a box. You can well believe she saw to it that the box was shut, as she was so afraid of snakes. One time when I was gone, she and her two sisters saw one and they did not attempt to kill it. Mrs. Bodenhamer just went right on with the milking.