

JORDAN, THOMAS H.

INTERVIEW

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Charline M. Culbertson
Investigator
January 1, 1938.

Interview with Thomas H. Jordan
South Main Street
McAlester, Oklahoma

I was born in New York State in the year of 1851. My parents were Mr. and Mrs. T. H. Jordan. Mother died when I was six months of age and I never knew her name. Father was buried in Cass County, Michigan.

I came to the Choctaw Nation direct from the state of Michigan by train to Kansas City, Missouri, in 1877. There I bought team and covered wagon and came from Missouri to the Territory. After I arrived at Fort Towson, Indian Territory, I then decided to go to Texas. I sold my team and wagon and bought a riding horse and saddle and rode horseback into Texas.

I then returned to the Territory to the Opening in 1889. On my return trip we had difficulty in crossing the rivers and the soldiers who were stationed at the North Canadian River put up a pontoon bridge to cross on and charged 10 cents for people on horse-

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back and 25 cents for horses and wagon.

At this date Oklahoma City was divided into North town and South town. Broadway was on the section line. There were two sets of officers for North town and South town. I took a lot in South town but soon sold it. I would say that about ten thousand people gathered here for the Opening.

No buildings had been constructed at this date other than the old section house. It was necessary for these ten thousand people to put up tents for their families. It was a damp and swampy place where the tents were put up as the river had been up and had left big holes of water standing after the over-flow and this caused lots of sickness and many deaths from malaria fever.

Our water came from a well where we bought it for 10 cents a bucket. The only lights were from torches. Nothing very rough went on except there was plenty of gambling.

The first car load of lumber brought into Oklahoma City cost \$6.00 a hundred. It had been shipped

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from Texas. Everyone was rushing for it. Some began to build houses while others put board frames over the their tents. They soon began to ship white pine from Wisconsin.

I helped to construct the first store building in Oklahoma City. The first stores were six stores on the north side of Broadway and two on the south side of Broadway. They were frame buildings and some were two stories high. I recall the names of the operators of two of the places which were Killabrew and Patterson. The workers were paid \$2.75 a day to construct these buildings.

A year after the Opening they had a big celebration on the fourth day of July. They had built a large grandstand and under this were small gambling stalls. During this celebration the grandstand fell and injured and killed lots of people.

I later went to Minco and to Union City where I continued to follow the carpenters' trade. A dispute arose among the Chickasaw Indians as to whether the railroad would come through Minco or Union City.

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It was finally settled by the ranchmen around Minceo who said that they would ship so many car loads of cattle over the Rock Island Railroad if it would come through there or else they would drive their cattle to market.