

MEACHAN, DEXTER

INTERVIEW

#8043

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

Field Worker's name Louise S. Barnes

This report made on (date) July 26, 1937

1. Name Dexter Meachan

2. Post Office Address Kingfisher, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Meachan Studio

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 22 Year 1882

5. Place of birth Assum, Indiana

6. Name of Father Thadius Meachan Place of birth West Virginia

Other information about father Was in the Civil War

7. Name of Mother Cynthia Davis Place of birth Ohio

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 8.

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Personal interview with
Dexter Meachan at the Meachan
Studio, Kingfisher, Oklahoma.

Mr. Dexter Meachan was born in Indiana. He moved with his parents to Nebraska in 1868. His father was one of the first to enlist for the Civil War. He remained in the war as long as his service was needed. He could not go to the front because he was sick for sometime and then the doctor gave him some poisoned medicine by mistake. After this he was never well enough to go to the front so worked around the hospitals.

In 1870, he drove cattle from Texas on the Chisholm Trail. He says there were so many branches of the Chisholm Trail he could not give all the locations.

In 1888, before he made the run in Old Oklahoma he went to a roping match. On the way the team ran away and he received a dislocated hip. In 1889, April 22, he came to make the run on crutches, from the West Panhandle, Texas, into Old Oklahoma. Mr. Meachan was going to ride a mule in the race, bareback, and a friendly man loaned him a saddle because he was crippled, then the man rode on a comfort. He returned the saddle at Kingfisher the next day after the opening.

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It was his misfortune not to get a claim. He had staked a claim and was waiting until morning to file. While sleeping that night in camp someone ran his mule away. He spent the next day looking for him and during that time another man filed the claim.

He then traded for a claim, but he had quite an unusual experience. The man wanted to trade his claim for a mule because he was very discouraged, the weather being so dry. By the time he went home to get the mule it began raining. This fellow then backed out. He did this twice, but the second time Mr. Meachan would not give up. His claim was the SE4, Section 11, Township 15, Range 7.

He broke up thirty acres of sod and planted pumpkins and squash for feed. He had over one hundred tons of hay this same year and sold it to the railroad company for three dollars a ton. They were putting the first railroad through at this time. This money made it easier for him to live for awhile.

In those days people traveled great distances to work and left all their belongings in camp but things were always safe and it remained that way for sometime.

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Mr. Meachan brought four cows, two horses, six shoats, three mules and one covered wagon. They had brought five hundred pounds of musty flour. He said it was not good and they could hardly eat it, but could not do without flour and had no money to buy other flour with, so had to use it. He said, "I shall never forget how bad that flour tasted." There was plenty of wild game for meat, such as, rabbits, quail, and prairie chickens.

They built a log house the first year with a dirt roof and floor. It was 20' x 14'. At this time it was not uncommon to see snakes crawl around the wall.

In 1889, he and neighbors built a sod school house. This was done by plowing the sod and then piling the strips. They put a board floor in the school house, paying for it by having dances, two to pay for the floor and one to pay for the music. The school house was 40' x 25'.

They had a three-months' school and the teacher's salary was thirty dollars per month and her board and room was seven dollars a month. In 1892, they built the frame school house called Victor that still remains on the

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SE4, Section 2, Township 15, Range 7.

There were no sidewalks in Kingfisher from 1889 to 1892 and it was very dusty in these times. The restaurants were so dusty you could write your name in the dust at your place before your order was ready. Meats, bread and gravy, sometimes potatoes, were the foods most commonly served.

In 1890, as Mr. Meachan was walking past a cafe some stranger walked up beside him and asked if he did not want to buy eight head of two year old calves, Mr. Meachan explained he would like to have the calves but had no money to pay for them, because all he had was thirty dollars and a gold watch. The fellow said he would trade. He got the eight calves and sold them for thirty dollars each.

Mr. Meachan sold the grocery man a horse and it was eighty dollars. He decided he would trade it out in groceries and this lasted them for groceries over a year and a half.

In those days the methods they used for doctoring were not very helpful; at least it happened that way

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for Mr. Meachan. He had a good many chills and decided he would see the doctor. The doctor gave him some pills and said he was sure those would cure him. After taking them for several weeks he found out they were made from soap, but he still lives.

Mr. Meachan is still residing in Kingfisher.