



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

Field Worker's name Ruth E. Moon

This report made on (date) November 3 1937

1. Name Charley Kiper
2. Post Office Address Guthrie, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) Masonic Home for Aged
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 18 Year 1861
5. Place of birth Grayson County, Kentucky

6. Name of Father William Kiper Place of birth _____
7. Name of Mother Mary Bates Place of birth Kentucky

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 4.

KIPER, CHARLEY.

INTERVIEW

#9184

Ruth E. Moon
Investigator
November 3, 1937.

Interview with Charley Kiper,
Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Mr. Kiper was born in Grayson County, Kentucky, and lived there until he was about twelve. He got little schooling as the nearest school was three miles away, and a stream had to be crossed on a foot log, so when the weather was bad his parents would not let him go. He thinks he went in nice weather for two years. Home work was done by a grease lamp.

The family then spent about two years in Indiana and two in Kansas before they settled close to Tahlequah in 1877.

The country above them on Spavinaw Creek was wild country in those days. There were no settlements and the game was so tame it would come almost to a person. They lived in the Cherokee Nation which was governed by Cherokee laws. The Indian officers could not arrest a white person. White people had to be arrested by a white officer sent out from Fort Smith, Arkansas, and tried before the court there. Every white man who worked there had to pay \$1 per month to the Indian court for a work permit.

Most of the time Mr. Kiper farmed, renting or leasing from the Indians. He helped cattlemen with the spring round-

KIPER, CHARLEY.

INTERVIEW

#9184

-2-

ups for about two weeks each year but never worked full time as a cowboy. His first experience in round-up work was for Jim Hull, a big cowman of Vinita. W. C. Patten and a man named Mayes were other cattlemen who went in with Hull on the round-ups.

Mr. Kiper says that he used to camp at the spring where Tulsa is now located, while he was out on these round-ups. There was not even a trading post there, it was just a favorite camp ground because of the spring there.

One of the cattle trails went close to Vinita, where they traded, so he saw lots of cattle drives, and pony drives, but he never took any part in one of these. You could buy a pony at your own price.

That was a good country for cattle. Tall grass, killed by the frost, would fall over, and protect the shorter grass which would stay fresh and green, making fine winter pasture for the cattle. In the spring they burned the range, but never in the Fall.

At first there were no schools except for the Cherokees and Delawares, and no churches except for them. His brother had two small children who did not get to attend school. The

KIPER, CHARLEY

INTERVIEW

#9184

-3-

family just had to teach them as best they could at home. Mr. Kiper tried going to a Delaware church the first four or five Sundays, but says the Indians didn't seem to want him, so he quit trying to go to church, and "did just like the rest of the boys around there, paid no attention to Sunday".

After two or three years Methodist and Baptist Circuit Riders began to come that way, and preach in the Indian school house.

The Indians lived in little log houses. The door was on the back of the house, and on the front was a little peep-hole so they could see who was coming. Few of the Indians could speak English at this time. Mr. Kiper learned enough Cherokee to make him in demand as a clerk in ^{the} stores for he could hold the Cherokee trade. He worked several years as a clerk in Tahlequah.

He says that he didn't hear anything about the Republican and Democratic parties when he was growing up. In the Cherokee Nation they were called the Downing and the National Parties.

Most of the time he farmed in summer and worked in the sawmills in the winter. The mill there on Spavinaw Creek was

KIPER, CHARLEY

INTERVIEW

#9184

-4-

owned by Sam Fields, close to the present town of Eucha.

Lumber was hauled from there to Vinita, Wagoner, or wherever needed. Most of this work was by the piece. A man could make from \$1 to \$2.50 a day, according to how fast he worked.

Times were better than they are now, he thinks, for he could borrow \$50.00 or \$60.00 any day from any of his cattlemen neighbors, just by saying he needed it.

He laughs about how every man went armed all the time. They always carried a gun on the wagon while hauling lumber, and says he would not have felt dressed without a gun on his hip. ~~But in all these years of carrying one, he never need-~~
ed to use it.