

MAY, A. A.

INTERVIEW

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Virgil Coursey, Investigator  
October 10, 1937

An Interview with A. A. May,  
Altus, Oklahoma.

I was born in Tennessee and remained there until I was sixteen years of age, at which time we moved to Hill County, Texas.

In July, 1891, I came to this part of Oklahoma to establish a home. I left my family in Texas and stayed for a while with my father-in-law, W. H. Funderburk, who settled here in 1888. I bought a claim from J. E. Julian, a prominent merchant here and paid him \$150.00 for it. Mr. Julian had previously traded some farm implements for the farm and was looking for a chance to liquidate for cash.

After getting everything in readiness, I returned to Texas for my family and what little household goods we had were shipped to Vernon. Mr. Funderburk met us at Vernon with a wagon and moved our furniture to our new home six miles southwest of Altus. I still have a churn sixty years old which we moved from Texas.

Our first home was a dugout and we underwent about the same hardships that befell the average pioneer. Some of our trading was done at Quanah and Vernon, but the town of Altus

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was moved from the old-Frazier location in 1891 and we enjoyed a market nearer home.

Our first crop here was fair; the next one not so good, and in the years 1893 to 1895 we had complete crop failures. Many people who were not able to finance themselves or who were easily discouraged, left here. Those who stayed and endured the hardships of those few years have been amply repaid.

I lived on my place some twenty-nine years. After I had proved my claim I had to wait three years to get title. I originally claimed a whole section but after the decision of the Supreme Court, I was allowed to homestead one-quarter section with the privilege of purchasing an additional quarter for \$1.00 an acre to be paid for in five equal annual payments.

During the early days I sold wheat for 25 cents a bushel. Millet seed brought 12½ cents and sorghum seed, 15 cents a bushel.

On the other hand, commodities one needed could be purchased for a very nominal sum. For instance, flour usually cost about 50 cents a sack. Ten pounds of coffee could be bought for a dollar.

In the early 90's good horses sold for around \$50.00 and good yearlings brought \$25.00. During droughty years

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I have known of horses being shot to save the grass.

In addition to our farm produce, we had cattle to sell. There were two large ranches in this country, the Herring Ranch and the Waggoner Ranch. These ranches of course shipped cattle in large quantities and drove thousands of head of cattle to market each year.

We farmers made no attempt to market our cattle direct, but sold a yearling now and then to Herring or Waggoner.

I was sitting on the jury at Mangum, the county seat of old Greer, when the Supreme Court decision was handed down. The court ruled that Greer County was not a part of Texas, thus settling a long drawn out controversy. A telegram containing the decision was sent to Vernon and was relayed by messenger to Mangum.

Judge Brown, upon receiving the message, immediately dismissed court.