

LAMB, ALVIN B. INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Merrill A. Nelson.

This report made on (date) September 16, 1937. 1937

1. Name Alvin B. Lamb.

2. Post Office Address 401 North Independence.

3. Residence address (or location) Enid, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 11 Year 1866.

5. Place of birth Kendall County, Illinois.

6. Name of Father Cornelius Lamb. Place of birth North Carolina.

Other information about father Carried a mail-first routes from Hennessey, 1907.

7. Name of Mother Christine E. Munsell. Place of birth Ohio.

Other information about mother Church worker.

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 11.

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Merrill A. Nelson,
Investigator,
Sept. 16, 1937.

An Interview With Alvin B. Lamb,
Enid, Oklahoma.

We moved into old Oklahoma in June, 1889. We had been here shortly before that but not on the very opening date, looking for a place. We found that one had been overlooked. People would get a little money for telling where claims were but some one told us of this one without any charge. Our claim was in a timber country which was considered good. Most of those people who came first, however, filed on the prairie. The later settlers in this country filed on the timber.

We came in from Winfield, Kansas. It was about the 10th of May, 1889, when Father made his preliminary trip. I was born in Illinois, and my parents had moved to Missouri and later westward into Kansas. We had been living in Winfield several years. At last we were on our way to our new home. Meadowlarks were singing; deer were in the woods by the hundreds; along the streams, the blackjacks were turning green as the new leaves burst through the buds. It looked like a wonderful country that we were coming to.

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There was a little rough land around Guthrie but most of the country looked attractive. We traveled in a schooner wagon. When we reached our section of the country, we found the place we had picked out at first. It was the southwest quarter of Section 7, Township 18, Range 6, and was fourteen miles north of Kingfisher.

A brother, Charles, had come with us the first time and when we came down the old Chisholm Trail, they were just building the Rock Island Railroad. There were workmen all along the right-of-way. However, the old stage coach was still running. Hennessey, or rather Baker, was the stage station. The stage was usually so crowded that some of the passengers would ride on top with the baggage. Many of the passengers were going clear through to Texas.

On the second trip when we came in with our families, we would often get stuck on account of the heavy load and the muddy roads or high water but there was always some one who would help us out. We had all we could haul the second time. We went by Guthrie and Kingfisher this second time.

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When we were between Stillwater and Guthrie or between Guthrie and Kingfisher, some men came up on both sides of us. They were heavily armed. When we went fast, they went fast; when we went slow, they went slow. As people were frequently robbed along the highway in those days, we were alarmed. My father had my brother give him the old 'fusee'. "I might see some turkeys", he said. These men caused no further trouble, but we had a feeling that if we had not shown we meant business, they might have harmed us. We had only our filing money with us. On this second trip, we took all we could haul. We were five or six days on making the second trip. One night we were in a cloud burst where the creek circled a high place where we were camping. We had left the mules on the opposite side of the creek. In the night the water had risen and we had a hard time getting to our mules. Some one offered to help us and we finally got across. There were two families of us, my wife and I who were just married, my parents and six other children. When we reached the homestead, we started to dig a well at once. It was a pretty location in the timber, not a great way from the

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Gimarron River. The deer would come right up to the house. We would often see their tracks in the morning. They were probably looking for salt. Once we saw a large herd of ^{them} crossing our land.

We first lived in a tent and in the schooner wagon. We lived in the tent until fall. We started grubbing the timber on the land at once. There was a small open space of not more than an acre of ground near the house. This we cultivated the first summer. The next summer we put in some corn and sorghum. The sorghum was for our sweetening. Out of it, we made syrup, sugar and just plain sorghum. Corn bread and gravy was our usual fare but we had white bread almost as often.

Once in a while a scare would pass, as a rumor from house to house, that the Indians were on the warpath and were coming our way. The Cheyennes near us never offered to harm us however. We were more in danger from outlaws of white people. One day one of the outlaws in our section, it may have been that odd character "Ranicky Bill" or Dick Yeager, stopped at our house with some men. They wanted something to eat. My wife offered to feed them but she

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said that supper had already been eaten and they would have to eat scraps or wait till she fixed something better. They decided to go on, as it was not quite dark. They did not care to be seen. However, they did go to the neighbor's house and eat there. It was darker then. They would not come into the house, however, but ate out in their two wheeled cart. The officers were after them then and caught them in about a week.

After a while we helped Father build a log cabin. It was a two room affair. The lumber was rough; unbarked and unhewn blackjack. We commenced it in August. It was 16 x 18 feet (two rooms). Finishing this, we built a 12 x 12 cabin in the same way. It was large enough for two even if it was a one room affair. As for furniture, we used boxes for cupboards and brought a cookstove with us and a dresser. The stove was a four lidded affair. Father's land was the Northeast quarter of Section 7, Township 18, Range 6 across the section from mine as stated.

We went back again for some of the stuff we had left in Winfield. By this time, they had laid the rails for the Rock Island but there were no crossings and we had a

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time getting across the tracks. They put those railroad irons down in a hurry. I had worked on the railroad in Kansas. We could earn \$1.10 a day for ten hours of work and work six days a week. One of our jobs was to take out sixty pound of pig iron rails and replace them with steel, one hundred and twenty pound rails. Sometimes there was such a crew that they would cut in a thousand feet of rails in between trains. In the winter of 1889 we sowed rye. The next spring, Father harvested this with a cradle scythe. This was only a small patch for as I said, having taken what was left after the run, we did not secure a very large patch of cultivable land. There were quite a few saloons in Hennessey in those days. However, as soon as the town became organized, some saloons were found too close to the churches and these were closed. Carrie Nation used to speak in Hennessey, but it has always been due to the effect of liquor upon Indians that Oklahoma has remained as dry as it has.

They used to have camp meetings down in the timber every year. There was a good deal of shouting as the people were fervent in their religious worship. They came

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in later days and camped on the meeting grounds but they did not do this at first. Services were sometimes held in a brush arbor, three miles northeast. After about six months, when the families had moved onto their claims to meet the requirements of the law, a subscription school was started by Mrs. Tip Cox. A little later a Sunday School, a union affair, was organized in the neighborhood. The women used to try to get together for quiltings but they found their houses actually too small. There were quite a few debating and literary societies in the schools which afforded social contacts. The young folks would go to dances.

After a while we built up a small herd of cattle, especially after we succeeded in securing grazing land along the Cimarron River. We took the cattle there in the summer time. The people were friendly and as soon as our responsibility was known, the banks would extend us credit. We were about nine miles from the Cimarron River but though we lived so close, we never went fishing there. The hard work of starting a place may have had something to do with this. Others, however, did go, as there was

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an abundance of fish there in those days. Our post offices were often in our homes, but we secured our mail at the Baker State Station near Hennessey. Captain Jinks was the postmaster. L. Smith was the first postmaster at Hennessey after the stage coach and station were abandoned. At Baker State Station, four and one-half miles from Hennessey between Doyer and Hennessey, there was a little town. Captain Jinks attempted to get it for a Territorial Capital when it was discussed where to locate the capital. Captain Jinks went to Guthrie to see about it and came back with glowing reports. "We are going to get the Territorial Capital at Baker's Stage Station", he declared, on his return. However, when this failed to materialize, he sold out and left the country.

We raised a good many pie melons on our place. The Cheyennes who always lived around Kingfisher, would visit the Osages and the Osages would return the compliment. They would never disturb us at the house but sometimes in passing through this field of melons they would stop and take one. Imagine their surprise on opening them to find what poor eating they were. Occasionally an Indian would

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ask for a drink of water, too, but they were always courteous and friendly and never tried to harm us. Like a good many others, while we did not participate we did see the Cherokee Opening. It was something I shall never forget how they ran! In the afternoon, we came on up to Enid. On all sides were signs of the haste with which some had tried to make that trip. Broken harness, dying horses and abandoned carts, and overturned wagons were everywhere in evidence. Excitement ran high when there was a political campaign on. I remember a Mrs. Lease, a Populist from Kansas. She held forth at Hennessey. Lee Grey introduced her. He was a lawyer and an '89er. In those days meetings of this kind were not always quiet. Sometimes a person in the audience would hurl questions at the speaker. If the meetings were held at night gasoline flares would cast a lurid glare over the scene. At home we used kerosene for lighting. Among our neighbors was Parson Barnard, the author. He lived three miles west of us. Another was Sam Kennett, who came later and Allen Knox, another old timer, who still lives down that way. Farther to the north and west of us, the country was rougher.

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In the canyons there were wild animals such as coyotes, of which there was a plenty everywhere, wolves and wild-cats. There were also a few wild turkeys in our section. Hunters came in from Kansas the first winter to hunt them as well as prairie chickens. Up in the gypsum canyons west of us, there were also some outlaws. They enjoyed this rough country with its cedars which were ideal for concealment and caves whose location was perhaps known only to themselves. Our parents were buried in Hennessey. There was also an old country graveyard near Oak View School, two miles from Father's place. The graveyard is still there but is not being used. There were seven of my parents' children who came to Oklahoma. Three of these died here. My brother William runs the elevator at the First National Bank. A younger sister died in Missouri. Mrs. William Lamb's brother secured land in the Caddo country opening in 1901. Later he moved to Enid and lives on Fourth Street.

We had six children of our own. We lost two. Paul and Clara are preachers. Ruth works in the Baptist Hospital. She went to Business College and is a bookkeeper

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at the hospital. Dorothy is in Lawrence, Kansas, studying for a Bachelor of Science degree. She taught school in the business college.

About the only reminder we have of the old days is an old clock; a Seth Thomas. It is sixty-seven years old. My brother, William's wife, Annie, also has an old dresser which we had when we came here.

We lived on the old homestead until 1926. Here all our children grew up and went to school. After the subscription school I mentioned, they had a log school. Later a frame and now a brick. The school is about three miles south of Hennessey. We came to Enid in 1926.