

HOBBS, FLORENCE J.

Biography of BENJAMIN J. HOBBS,
(Deceased)

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#8437

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HOBBS, FLORENCE

INTERVIEW

Form A-(S-149) 8437.

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

Worker's name Robert W. Small,

report made on (date) August 27, 1937 193 7

Name Benjamin J. Hobbs, dec'd- Biography furnished by his widow,
Florence Hobbs,

Post Office Address Tonkawa, Oklahoma

Residence address (or location) 401 North Jenkins St.

DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 13 Year 1853

Place of birth New York

Name of Father Benjamin Hobbs Place of birth New York

Other information about father _____

Name of Mother Polly Hobbs, Place of birth New York

Other information about mother _____

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
pages attached 4

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Robert H. Small,
Interviewer,
August 27, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Florence Hobbs,
Tonkawa, Oklahoma.

Benjamin J. Hobbs, born in New York in 1853, married in Iowa, in 1876; moved to Udall, Kansas, in 1887; came to Oklahoma at opening of Cherokee Outlet, made the "run" from near Arkansas City, Kansas, on horseback, leading an extra horse for use in case the one he was riding gave out or became disabled for any reason.

Mr. Hobbs was unfortunate in securing a claim as the land on which he drove his claim stake proved to be school land which was reserved from homestead entry. He immediately went to the townsite of Newkirk and bought a lot that had been staked in the "run" by some man who was willing to sell. He set to work building a residence upon the lot and it was one of the first houses completed in the new town which was also the county seat of Kay County. After the house was completed Mrs. Hobbs kept boarders. One of her boarders was Lincoln McKinley, who

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established the first newspaper in the town of Newkirk, called "The Newkirk Republican". P.W. Smith was another boarder, and he established the first bank in the town; this bank later became the First National.

In the spring of 1894, Mr. Hobbs bought eighty acres of land a mile west of Newkirk, built a house on it and moved his family there. In this move Mrs. Hobbs took along a hen that was setting on nest eggs. The hen did not seem to be at all disturbed.

Mr. Hobbs was a lover of fine cattle and on his new farm he began to raise some choice animals. He sold considerable milk to residents of the new town.

In 1899, Mr. Hobbs, Dan Bane, S. P. Smith and others organized the first fair in Kay County. This fair was well attended by people from over the county and a surprising number of fine horses, cattle, hogs, and other farm animals were placed on exhibition, as well as many fine specimens of the different breeds of chickens, turkeys and other fowls. The women displayed crocheted

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articles and other fancy work of various patterns and designs.

There were no cash prizes or awards offered for any entry in the fair. Everyone who was entitled to a first prize was awarded a blue ribbon. There were no buildings on the grounds to house any exhibits; everything was out in the open; stock was placed in pens or corrals; poultry was in coops or boxes, grain and other farm products were displayed by tying bundles on large boards or by laying them upon tables. Needlework done by the women was fastened to a large board which was put up edgewise. Everybody was enthused and well pleased with the fair.

Mr. Hobbs entered some fine Shorthorn cattle in the fair, some of which took first prize and his daughter, Charlotte, then a girl of fifteen years, won first prize for crochet work.

Mr. Hobbs' interest in fine cattle let him to go to Ellis County, in 1901, where he bought three quarter sections of land. Land was cheap at that time and he

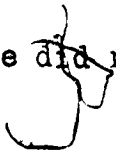
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began to raise thoroughbred Shorthorn cattle. He went to Kansas City and bought a pedigreed bull for his herd, for which he paid the sum of \$500.00 besides the expense of shipping the animal to his home. \$500. was considered a big price for a single animal at that time but Mr. Hobbs was so intent upon getting the best he could secure in the way of thoroughbred stock that he did not hesitate to pay the price when he saw the animal and read his pedigree.

In addition to his farming and stock raising, Mr. Hobbs took an active interest in politics usually working to help some friend, but after the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Indian Reservations had been made available for entry or settlement through the "drawing" method, he was appointed as the first Sheriff of Kiowa County, under the administration of President McKinley and served in that capacity for one year, returning to his farm and ranch in Ellis County.

In later years Mr. Hobbs met with some financial loss through low prices of cattle and he turned a part of his attention to growing alfalfa for seed, but on account of the drouth in that part of the country for many seasons this new venture did not prove highly



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successful.

In 1922, when he was almost seventy years old, Mr. Walter retired from farm and ranch life and came to his old county of Kay and took up his residence in Tonkawa.

In 1894, when digging a well on his farm near Newkirk, there was a heavy storm and his well was completely filled with snow; he had not yet found water in the well but had dug it down several feet so he took the snow out and melted it for water for the stock.

The first person to die in the town of Newkirk after it was settled was a lady. The town had made no provisions for a cemetery, neither was there any cemetery in the surrounding neighborhood, so the lady was buried by the side of the road at Newkirk until at a later time when the town had provided a cemetery, when her remains were exhumed and buried in the town cemetery.