

Bolinger, Bradley, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History
May 4, 1937

An interview with Lemuel Ervin Lucas, 82 years of age, lives $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles North of Wilburton, Oklahoma.

My father and mother lived in Mississippi, where I was born. There were 8 boys and 2 girls in our family.

I decided to come west after my father and mother were dead, when I was 18 years of age. I joined up with a family who also were on their way west. I landed in this country at a place that is now Cameron, Oklahoma, and moved into the country that is now Latimer County on the banks of Fouchmoline Creek, long before the town of Wilburton was started.

There was a small trading Post along this creek which was the only place in 25 or 30 miles where supplies could be bought or traded for. Along about 1892, some men came through this now Latimer County and were hunting out coal out-croppings and it was found in places sticking out of the surface of the ground. Then there were many more came and they first just cleaned off the surface and started what they called "strip pits", gradually going down, following the coal.

Then the town of Wilburton came into existence just as a store at the beginning.

I used to go out in the timber which was plentiful in this country in those days and cut what is called props for the coal mine. This country was all outside and Indian land at that time, and no one cared how much you cut. The mine paid a good price for these props.

I and my son worked in the mines, furnishing them the props for a number of years until my son went into the mine to work. The mine was down 700 feet and had an explosion and cave-in which killed my son, with 90 other workers.

I came to this country with a family by the name of Potts, as best I remember, with a team of great oxen. The women and children road in the wagon and the men walked most of the way.