

LEY, GRACE

INTERVIEW

13839

22

Charline M. Culbertson,  
Investigator  
April 25th, 1938

Interview with Mrs. Grace Ley,  
West Stonewall, North McAlester,  
Oklahoma.

I was born in Sharon, Pennsylvania, in the year of 1875.

My parents were Mr. and Mrs. Robert Booth; both were born in England and came to the United States three months before I was born.

My parents and I came direct from the state of Iowa to Arkansas, then traveling on to the Indian Territory in 1895. Our transportation here was on the Frisco Railroad from Fort Smith, Arkansas to Wister, Indian Territory; then we changed to the Choctaw Railroad from Wister to McAlester, Indian Territory.

We first located at Hartshorne, however, fourteen miles east of McAlester, where my father was employed in the mines there.

On account of the strikes in the Arkansas mines my father decided to leave Arkansas and come to the Indian Territory. He worked here eighteen months, then returned to Arkansas because the mines here were so full of gas he became afraid.

LEY, GRACE.

INTERVIEW.

13839

2

However, I remained here and worked at any odd jobs I could get for room and board. When the first telephone exchange was installed at Hartshorne I was employed there as the first night operator.

Our first home here at Hartshorne belonged to the Coal company and was a four room house with hall between and with a fireplace in one of the rooms.

The following stores comprised the business houses of Hartshorne when we came here. These buildings were located where the main street of Hartshorne is today. There was the Baker Reed store, Grand Leader, Batmons Grocery, John Reynolds Hardware, Chastain Grocery, Wilcox Meat Market and the Grady Trading Company for the miners. The Coal office was located where the Rock Island Coal office is today.

There was a school at Hartshorne, located one block south of the main street. It was a four-room frame building.

There was a Methodist and Baptist church, both being located where they are today.

There was also an opera house and hotel located on Main Street. The opera house was about the only amusement

LEY, GRACE.

INTERVIEW.

13839

3

we had and we attended it only three or four times a year.

The little mining town of Dow, located ten miles east of McAlester at this date, was only what we called a tent town. The only store was operated by Mr. Lake. Those people occupying the tents were workers in the mines.

The full blood Choctaws lived in the surrounding vicinity of Hartshorne and not in the town.