

MERRICK, M. E. (Mrs.)

INTERVIEW

4589

204

· BIOGRAPHY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION 4589
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Inez A. Merrick

This report made on (date) June 23 1937

1. Name Mrs. M. E. Merrick

2. Post Office Address Randlett, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) General Delivery

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 8 Year 1878

5. Place of birth Wheeling, West Virginia

6. Name of Father George W. Hercules Place of birth Pennsylvania

Other information about father Civil War Veteran, Union Army

7. Name of Mother Mary Ann Marsh Place of birth Marshall

Other information about mother County, West Virginia

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggestions on subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 6

Inez A. Merrick
Interviewer
June 23, 1937

Interview with
Mrs. M. E. Merrick
Bardlett, Oklahoma

With my husband, Richard Merrick, and son, Roland, aged two years, I came to the Big Pasture in the latter part of February, 1907. We homesteaded on the south half of the southeast quarter of section twenty-five, township four south, range twelve west.

We had been farming an Indian lease at Mounds, Indian Territory, previous to that time. We came by train to Temple, and shipped our stock and implements by freight. We lived in a tent which we had brought with us until Mr. Merrick could haul lumber from Temple and build a house. Temple was twenty miles to the northeast. Rattle snakes would get into the tent and occasionally we found them in our beds.

When Mr. Merrick was hauling lumber for our house and had to be gone overnight, I would be left alone with my small son. The wolves would come up close round the tent and howl. I expected them to attack us. My husband sent to Mounds, and had our dog shipped to us and after that I

- 2 -

felt more secure. The dog also prevented the wolves from getting our chickens.

We had wanted a larger farm, but the one we drew was only eighty acres. We made bids on several larger farms but other settlers had made higher bids than ours. Half of the quarter section we were on was sold for town lots.

The farms were offered for sale in 1906. Settlers who wanted to bid on them sent their cash bids in to the United States land office and each quarter section was "knocked off" to the highest bidder. The Government gave each purchaser five years to complete the payment at a small rate of interest, after a small percent of the purchase price had been paid down. Later, the time in which the homesteaders were allowed to complete the payment was extended to ten years.

Settlers commenced to come onto the homesteads in February, 1907, but all homesteaders were given six months in which to move onto the homesteads and build houses. Some people built the chicken house first and lived in that.

This country was known as the "Big Pasture", and was "raw" land from two miles west of Temple to the county line on the west. The land belonged to the Kiowa - Comanche Indians and

- 3 -

had been set aside by the government as a reservation. Cattlemen had leased the land from the Indians for many years to graze their herds on. From this it derived its name, "Big Pasture".

Before this land was offered for sale through the Land Office, the Indians belonging to the Kiowa-Comanche tribes were given one quarter section of land each and a man was chosen who knew the value of land to select their farms. In this way all of the best land went to the Indians. A certain amount was set aside and held in reserve for the yet unborn Indian children.

When we reached our new home there were only three or four other tents in sight but within a week there were a hundred or more tents on the townsite.

The townsite contained four hundred acres in lots, blocks, and streets. It was laid out by the United States Government as trustee for the Indian Funds.

By act of Congress, 1906, the trustees for Indian funds were empowered to offer that four hundred acres of town lots to the highest bidder and these lots were offered for sale, beginning on May 5th, 1907.

Lots were sold from ten dollars a lot to two hundred

- 4 -

and fifty and three hundred. One lot sold for fourteen hundred dollars.

The lots were paid for, one half cash down and purchasers were given six months to complete the payment without interest. When Randlett was eight months old it had a population of one thousand.

A cattle trail which was originally a buffalo trail and in all probability was either the Ozark Trail or an old Spanish Trail, ^{and} ran diagonally across the farms from the Bark Burnett ford of Red River and extended northeast toward Fort Sill, and in a southwesterly direction toward Wichita Falls, which was a cattle market at that time. It is certain that it had at one time been a buffalo trail for buffalo horns were found along the trail by early inhabitants of Randlett, and it is a known fact that in the old days when cattle were driven to market, buffalo trails were followed as much as possible, for they led to water. The trail probably extended from Mexico City in a northeasterly direction through Wichita Falls, Texas, crossing the Bark Burnett Ford, through Randlett, and continuing on to Caldwell, Kansas, and to Kansas City, both of which towns were then the main cattle markets of

- 5 -

this part of the country.

Cotton county is crossed diagonally by Cache Creek which runs from northwest to southeast. Cache is a Spanish word which means hiding place for a treasure, and was probably the name given to this creek by the Spaniards when they rode the old trail through here and hid their gold and other treasures, when fearing attack, along the banks of Cache Creek.

Randlett was the temporary county seat of Cotton County for one month, but upon the division of Cotton County from Comanche County, a vote was taken and it was decided to have the county seat at Walters which was nearer the center of the county.

Randlett has not grown with the years but we have excellent schools and churches and are near larger towns. I am proud to call this my home and to feel that I have had a hand in the developing of its natural resources.