

VINES, W. A.

INTERVIEW

#7837

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Interviewer, Johnson H. Hampton,  
October 12th, 1937.

Interview with W. A. Vines, a pioneer,  
Snow, Oklahoma.

Born January 9, 1870.  
Texas.

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I was a small boy when my father and mother moved from Texas and came to the Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory.

Just our family came over. We had two covered wagons, one drawn by mule team and the other by ox team. We had lots of trouble selecting a place to live. We had heard of the good grass and good country in the Chickasaw Nation so Father decided to move and we did and located near what is now Davis, although at that time there was no Davis.

In fact the Santa Fe Railroad was just being built and when we landed at this place we put up our tent for there were no houses in the country that we could rent and Father went to work on the railroad. This was in the year 1887.

When we landed in that part of the country there were no white people to be seen except those who were working on the railroad.

There were no farms at that time. It was a good cattle country and full of cattle as there were no fences to be seen

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and the country was all open so that the stock ranged any where they wanted to and were not molested by anyone but "rustlers" at that time.

When we moved to this country we had some cattle that we drove through by land to the place where we located. Father worked on the railroad for a while, then he quit working and we rented land from a white man who had married an Indian woman, whom we used to call the naturalized Indian.

He owned a large tract of land so we rented from him and went to farming. We raised lots of corn and cotton as the bottom land on the Washita River was fine at that time, and we had a little more than fifty acres of land in cultivation and we raised good crops of corn.

We lived in a log house for a while a year and then put up a box house made of cotton-wood lumber. We lived on this place for about twenty years.

#### Nation

We paid our permit to the Chickasaw every year. It cost us 5.00 a year but by doing this we could raise all the cattle we wanted and let them run out on the range just the same as one of the citizens of the Chickasaw Nation did.

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We had our cotton ginned at a gin owned by a man named Al Taylor whose gin was run by water power. He had a dam built on the river with a gate so that when he got ready to run his gin he would open the gate and then when the water began to run it would turn the big wheel and set the machinery to going.

I had a press in which a man had to stay and press the line with his feet and put a little water on it so it would stay in place. When the man got a bale in the press he would hook a mule to the end of a rope and then the mule would go, about one hundred feet from the press, pulling the rope so that it would press the cotton.

It took several hours to gin a bale of cotton, but at that time this press was sufficient to gin all the cotton that was brought there for there were not many farmers at that time.

Al Taylor had two gin stands at this place and several years after that there was a steam engine put up at Davis, which was the first steam gin I ever saw. We used to take our cotton to Davis to have it ginned.

When we lived near what is now Davis, there were no towns nearer than Gainesville, Texas, about one hundred miles

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from where we lived. I think that every body who lived in that part of the country did their trading at Gainesville.

At that time Ardmore was just a little village with one little store and a post office.

We got our mail at Ardmore, which was the nearest post office, which was about thirty miles from where we lived.

All that country was open and only a few people lived in there. There were some Indians who lived in there but they were far apart from one another.

At the time we located there, there were lots of wild game, deer, turkeys, and lots of fish on the river and the prairie was full of prairie chickens. It was no trouble to get a deer or turkey or go down to the river and catch all the fish we wanted in a little while.

Years after we had lived there some people came in and fenced an area twenty miles square, taking in all the good water and the old settlers had cowboys to ride the fences

day and night. These new settlers were stealing cattle from the cattlemen and farmers and putting them in this pasture and they would not let anyone get into the pasture to look for their cattle. They were doing a land office business in

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cattle. They killed several people who went into this pasture looking for cattle that had strayed off from their herds and finally the old settlers got together one night and cut the fence down from one end to the other and gave these new-comers notice to leave and not to show up there any more. These cattle thieves never did come back and never put their fences up any more.

I remember when the Miller boys were roaming that country; they were big cattle men and had plenty of money and did just what they wanted to do. They would steal cattle; they would kill men. It seemed that the law could not handle them for what they did for the "laws" did not do anything with them, but they got so bad that finally something had to be done. So, one day, just about the time of statehood, they were arrested for killing a man, and the people knowing that they had been getting out of the clutches of the law so long finally took the law into their own hands and went to Ada, where the Miller boys were in jail and got them out and hung them in an old barn. I was well acquainted with the Miller boys.

We were not in the run of '89 but we went to a drawing at Fort Sill and made a draw but we did not get any land. When

we came back, we left the Chickasaw Nation and came to the Choctaw Nation and located near Miller, just before statehood, sometime in 1904 or 1905.

We brought all of our cattle and mules that we had raised with us and rented land from an Indian and built a box house and we lived there until Father and Mother both died. Then we boys left the place and moved out northwest of Antlers, where we have lived ever since.

I have lived with two tribes of Indians, the Chickasaws and the Choctaws and I want to say that there are no finer people anywhere than these Indians. They are all my friends and I have had no trouble with them. They are just as honest as anyone can be. Of course, they would fight and kill one another but they never bothered the white people that I know of and I have lived among them ever since I came here, when I was a small boy.