

VERNON, CLARENCE COLUMBUS. INTERVIEW 8793 326

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

327

8793

VERNON, CLARENCE COLUMBUS.

INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Elizabeth L. DuncanThis report made on (date) September 14, 19371. Name Clarence Columbus Vernon2. Post Office Address Medford, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) 6½ miles due west on Highway NO. 114. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 24 Year 18665. Place of birth Cologne, Missouri - Knox County.6. Name of Father Wayne Vernon Place of birth Tennessee.Other information about father Farmer.7. Name of Mother Annie Botts Place of birth Missouri.Other information about mother Housewife.

Notes 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 sheets attached .

An Interview with Mr. Clarence Columbus Vernon.

By - Elizabeth L. Duncan, Interviewer.

September 14, 1937.

Clarence Columbus Vernon was born in Knox County, Missouri, on January 24, 1866, where he spent a happy childhood until they moved down into Kansas.

In 1879, a man named David Payne was forming companies and these companies consisted of people seeking homes, but it seemed that the people who were so ready to come down into the Indian Territory hesitated when they reached the Oklahoma line as they were afraid of the Indians. Payne came through the neighborhood where Clarence's father and mother lived and tried to get them to join him, but his father refused to do so.

Mr. Vernon remembers well when the soldiers brought Payne out of the Indian Territory, with the people who followed him down into the Territory, but that did not dampen the spirit of his followers. Mr. Payne was a Christian man. He tried to exhort his followers to keep faith with God and they would come through all their troubles.

In 1884, David Payne was arrested and accused of

causing entirely too much disturbance in the Territory. After they tried to bring him to trial, a man named Foster who held a high office in the Kansas courts, came to David Payne's aid and showed the court that Payne was within his rights as that land was the open range of the United States and it was no crime to try to organize colonies to make homes in the Territory.

Later that Fall when he was trying to organize colonies to go down into the Territory, Payne died before his work was finished. - Another man was selected to carry on his work, but he was not as persistent as Payne.

On November 25, 1888, Clarence Vernon was married and he and his wife moved farther down into Kansas, close to the Oklahoma line, onto a farm. They farmed here until they heard that Oklahoma proper was to be opened to homesteaders.

On April 22, 1889, Oklahoma was thrown open to homesteading. Clarence made the Run but was unsuccessful in getting a homestead. He went back to Kansas to get his wife and they came down into Oklahoma to work. Clarence helped to break sod and killed prairie dogs.

There was still some land which had not been bought from the Indians. The tribes they had to buy from were the Cherokee, Iowa, Sac and Fox, Pottawatomie and Shawnee.

The President asked all of the Indians to select a hundred and sixty acres for the older ones and for the children, eighty acres apiece and sell the surplus. This was called "allotment". So, on the 22nd day of September, 1891, the second opening took place.

Mr. Vernon was among the great crowd who stood in line waiting for the signal to be given to start the people on their mad run for homes and he was determined not to fail this time.

Mr. and Mrs. Vernon were standing with their two children, some twelve or fifteen feet behind a large cottonwood tree. Mr. Vernon instructed his wife and children to run for the shelter of that tree as it would give them protection as the stampede rushed by and he was going to stake that farm. The signal was given and Mrs. Vernon and the children ran straight for the tree, getting be-

hind it to keep from getting run over. Mr. Vernon staked on the location which was the NW. $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 18, Deep Fork 5. They waited until the crowd had gone by before doing anything.

As soon as the crowd passed Mr. Vernon saw a surveyor talking to one of the soldiers who had helped to give the signal. He got him to survey the land right away, but upon surveying the south part of the land, they ran across five men who were claiming that they had staked first. The surveyor told them that they were staking on Mr. Vernon's place. Four of the men gave up like gentlemen, but the other one ~~said~~, "I am going to Guthrie to file". So he started out before Mr. Vernon had a chance to get away.

The surveyor told Mr. Vernon to get to Guthrie as soon as he could, but Mr. Vernon told the surveyor that he didn't have any way to go. The surveyor told him to take his horse and Clarence took it and started out for Guthrie as soon as he had provided a place for his family to stay until he got back. The following day Mr. Vernon was standing in line to file when the fellow who had said

he was going to file on the place came up and pushed in front of Mr. Vernon. When he did this, Mr. Vernon lost his temper and knocked the man down, then a fight started in which Mr. Vernon won out, but both men had their clothes almost torn off of them.

Mr. Vernon filed and went back to the homestead. He had enough money to build a plank shed to live in and enough food for a while. By November 30, the shed was built and he and Mrs. Vernon and their two children moved into it. The fall weather was getting pretty chilly.

That winter was terrible. Mr. Vernon worked for other people when he could. They could hardly keep warm.

They would take newspapers that the neighbors gave them and paste them on the wall to keep the cold out. Mrs. Vernon would take newspapers and put them between outing to make comforts and she took big ticks and stuffed them with prairie hay or with corn shucks for mattresses. Before spring the entire family had to wrap their feet in rags for shoes and wear gunny sacks for dresses. Clarence had no horses or plow so he borrowed horses and a plow from his neighbors to break sod.

The following year he built a log house. It was larger than the house he had built previously.

Mr. Vernon had to haul water on a make-shift wagon the first year and since he had no horses, he had to pull it himself.

The next year, the Sac and Fox Indians were very bitter because the white men had come in there. They gave the early settlers a lot of trouble. They would take things from them. The Cherokee Indians were the only ones that were really friendly toward the white people.

At the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1893, a number of people down in the Sac and Fox settlement came up into the Strip to homestead. They left there because the pioneers suffered so many hardships down there, more so than in Old Oklahoma or in the Cherokee Strip.

By the time the Cherokee Strip was ready for opening Clarence had saved enough from his work for other people to purchase a broken down team of horses and a red plow. He began to break sod and also purchased a couple of cows. Mr. Vernon broke sod for others and took corn, wheat and other things in exchange for his work.

In 1894 the winter was very severe. The Vernons had no one to turn to in Kansas so they just had to stick it out. It was heart sickening to see your children crying for something to eat and to know that you couldn't get it. Ground corn was cooked into mush without seasoning of any kind. The most of their food was corn mush and milk, and coffee was the greatest treat in the world to them. Once in a while they would have meat.

In the fall of 1894, Clarence had enough ground broken to plant a crop. In the spring he planted corn and wheat. The corn yield was fair and he had enough money to pay back what was loaned him and enough corn to plant some more. In the year 1895, the corn doubled what he put out but the wheat was very poor. They planted wheat and corn again. The wheat yield was very good, also the corn.

By this time Clarence had gathered together a few chickens, pigs, cows and horses. He also purchased a new wagon.

Early in the Fall of 1896 he sold his farm and came up into the Cherokee Strip, bringing what little furniture they had, four cows, three dozen chickens, five horses,

two pigs and one brood sow, a shepherd^{dog} and two small kittens. It took them seven days to get as far as Medford. Mr. Vernon inquired whether there was any farm land that could be purchased. A stranger walked up to him and said, "I think I know of a place, but it is school land". Mr. Vernon said he didn't care, so he moved on this farm which was located at the SW $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 16, 27N, 6W.

The man who had staked the claim had dug a well on the place and also had dug part of a dugout, so Mr. Vernon finished it up and lived in it until he built a sod house. The house was constructed by using sod that had been plowed by a walking plow. They would take the pieces of sod that were all together and smooth. They would cut them in lengths with a spade, clear the ground where they were going to build and lay the sod on the ground. Then they would build on up by over-lapping at each of the seams. They built the house up to the height they desired, then they would take a tree they had cut down, trim it and put it on top of the end walls. This was called a "Ridge log", with saplings laid from the center of the ridge to the outer wall with small brush put on top, then dirt, then brush. It was really a warm house.

VERNON, CLARENCE COLUHEUS.

INTERVIEW.

336
8793

9

Mr. Vernon has shared the hardships with the rest of the pioneers but has prospered while in this country.

Mr. Vernon is still living on this school land and has three more quarters of land.