

VASEY, HENRY B.

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin,

This report made on (date) July 19, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mr. Henry B. Vasey,

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 200 $\frac{1}{2}$  North Bickford.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 30 Year 1865.

5. Place of birth Elgin, Illinois.

6. Name of Father \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

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 6.

Nora Lorrin,  
Interviewer.

Interview With Henry B. Vasey,  
200 $\frac{1}{2}$  North Bickford, El Reno, Okla.

Mr. Henry B. Vasey was born in Elgin, Illinois, on August 30, 1865.

He left Illinois and went to Kansas when he was twenty-one years of age, arriving in Wichita about twenty-four hours ahead of the grasshoppers, in 1886.

He pre-empted a homestead adjoining the city of Caldwell, Kansas and stayed on it from 1886 until the original Cheyenne and Arapaho opening, April 22, 1889.

He came to Kingfisher and made the run from there. He came to Oklahoma on horseback, with several other men, some of whom added themselves to the group. On the way, they circled the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation and came down on the west side, in order to avoid being considered a "Sooner", which would have been the case had they entered the reservation.

In the run his horse stepped into a prairie dog's hole and threw him, and it caused him to get behind, but as soon as he could get his horse calmed he resumed his race. He went on and got a very nice bottom land farm, but when the lines were run, he discovered that there were three men on the same quarter. One of the men said he had come from "No Man's

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Land" hoping to get a home, that he had a family and needed a home badly. Mr. Vasey told him if he had come that far, he could have his (Mr. Vasey's) part of it. The man immediately wrote a note in payment for Mr. Vasey's share. Mr. Vasey kept the note for two or three years and finally tore it up. He said that he didn't consider that he had anything to sell.

Vasey and his family came to Reno City in 1890-91. Reno City had eight hundred houses. The Rock Island Railroad missed Reno City, so they just moved, house and all, to El Reno. Among the houses that were moved was the large Caddo Hotel. Mr. Vasey then bought the Buckles' Grocery Store, that was located about where the Rector's Hardware Store is now located. The postoffice at that time was just next door. He ran this grocery business for about a year, and then sold it back to Mr. Buckles, the same man that he bought it from.

Among the Indians of the acquaintance of the Vasey family were Jake Zalliwagher, who was not an Indian himself but who had an Indian wife, whose name was "Weakah". Mr. and Mrs. Vasey were acquainted with Phil Block and his wife "Washee Block". The Blocks had two daughters, one "Muscogee" Block, who was an interpreter, and Glenna Block who lives in Kingfisher at the present time, also a son Johnny Block who lives at Kingfisher.

Mr. and Mrs. Vasey had an invitation, "special" to visit the home of "Washee Block" and eat puppy, "Washee Block" said, "I've got the nicest fat puppy, and I'm going to roast him in the oven. Needless to say Mr. and Mrs. Vasey found an excuse to decline the invitation.

Another prominent Indian woman was "Cheyenne Fanny". She was very prominent in her tribe, but the Vasey's do not know just why; she traded at the Vasey's store and brought them much business.

Mr. and Mrs. Vasey were here when the Government distributed \$250,000.00 dollars in silver to the Indians; it was divided according to the size of the Indian's family. The Indians spent their money like mad while it lasted, buying extravagantly of anything that happened to strike their fancy. They bought sugar by the 100 pound sack, coffee, baby buggies, blankets, shawls, anything and everything. It was certainly a windfall for the merchants when the Indians got their money. The Cheyenne and Arapaho country opened in 1892, and Mr. Vasey again made the run, this time in a "Democrat Wagon" not taking anymore chances of being thrown from a horse. He made the run from Reno City, passed the pump house, on to Calumet and to the claim, that was located about ten miles west of El Reno.

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He got a nice up-land farm, but when he went to file on it, he found that an old soldier had previously filed a declaratory claim on it. When the old soldier learned that Mr. Vasey had settled on the farm, he came to see Mr. Vasey, but was disappointed in the farm and so he sold his right to Mr. Vasey. This old soldier's name was Weaver, and Mr. Vasey says that he believes it was the same Mr. Weaver who was later postmaster in Oklahoma City. Mr. Vasey filed on that farm and kept it for several years, and finally sold it to a Mr. Steffin.

Mr. and Mrs. Vasey built a two room house with a lean-to kitchen, also a dugout and planted an orchard. It was at first, four miles to the nearest neighbor, whose name was Jake Zalliwagher, a squaw man. Mrs. Vasey was alone with her two little boys for six weeks at one time, when the nearest neighbor was four miles away. Mr. and Mrs. Vasey are the parents of four children, three boys and one girl. One of the boys became a commander in the United States Navy. He is now Commander Robert C. Vasey, living at Long Beach, California, and is retired from the Navy.

One son is a minister, and one was a clerk in the Rock Island Railroad offices until recently. He is now doing paperhanging and painting.

The daughter is the wife of a farmer. The names of some of the Indians Mr. Vasey knew who used to trade in his grocery store are, "Touch The Clouds" "Little Chief" "Red Cloud" "Yellow Woman". "Yellow Woman's" Indian name is "Auoba" which means yellow in Cheyenne, and is pronounced as though it were called thus "Ah-oo-ba".

"Black White man" is another Indian whom he remembers.

Mr. Vasey states that these Indians were good neighbors and that they never bothered anyone.

The wife of "Touch The Clouds" used to do Mrs. Vasey's washing for her sometimes, and one time she came and did it for her and the next day "Touch The Clouds" came over and told them that his squaw was sick. He said, "Heep sick" put his hand on the side of his back, bent on one side and moaned, then he would go through the same motion with the other side, trying to illustrate his wife's aching back. She had developed the lumbago from stooping over the tub, most likely. Mrs. Vasey fixed up a bottle of liniment for him to doctor her with, and she soon was all right again.

Mr. Vasey served as County Commissioner for four years from about 1892 to 1896. He was the second county commissioner in Canadian County. He states that his initials meant "Hard Boiled" that is what they used to call him when he was in office.

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"Red Rock" was the name of the school house where the Vasey family attended their entertainments and other social activities, when they were out on their claim.