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Opening Cherokee Strip
Living Conditions
Early School
Chikaskia River

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

Field Worker's name Robert W. Small.

This report made on (date) July 23, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mrs. C. M. Waggoner.

2. Post Office Address 101 North Barnes Street.

3. Residence address (or location) Tonkawa, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 22 Year 1863.

5. Place of birth Pike County, Illinois.

6. Name of Father J. J. W. Miller. Place of birth N. Carolina.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Lyda Waters Miller Place of birth Illinois.

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 8.

WAGGON R, MRS. C. M. INTERVIEW.

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Robert W. Small,
Interviewer.

An Interview With Mrs. C. M.
Waggoner, 101 North Barnes
Street, Tonkawa, Oklahoma.

Mrs. C. M. Waggoner, the widow of Charles W. Waggoner, deceased, was born in Pike County, Illinois, January 29, 1863.

Her husband was born March 4, 1860, in Illinois, and the couple were united in marriage April 13, 1884, in Illinois, but soon afterward they moved to a farm not distant from Winfield, Kansas, where they remained till the opening of the Cherokee Outlet, September 16, 1893.

Mr. Waggoner made the race that memorable day in September, 1893, starting from a point not far west of Arkansas City, Kansas and staked the Southwest quarter of Section 23, Township 26 North, Range 1 East, a distance of about twenty miles from the starting point, which distance he covered in a few minutes over one hour. He rode a good horse that had been trained for two or three weeks previous to the "run" and he carried with him a canteen of water and a sponge, and every little while he would pour water on the sponge and reach out and beat the his horse's nostrils as it

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galloped across the freshly burned and burning prairies; at one place where the prairie grass had not yet been burned he discovered in the distance a prairie fire sweeping toward him and he alighted, struck a match to the grass and burned off a piece of land which he could get onto and be protected from the heat of the onrushing fire.

On that eventful day many men and horses were scorched and badly burned in the prairie fires that had been set in some parts of the new country.

After staking his claim Mr. Waggoner spent that night at the corner stone of his claim, holding his horse's bridle reins in his hands as he lay upon the ground to rest.

Mr. Waggoner had several contesting claimants to the land but since he had witnesses to establish his priority rights they finally all abandoned the claim to him.

He broke a few acres of land and sowed it to wheat and in the spring following he broke other lands and planted to corn; the corn grew and looked strong and vigorous till it began to tassel when the weather began to get hot and dry. One day the hot winds cooked the corn so badly that it fell

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over on the ground and was about a complete failure; the wheat had made but little that year also and conditions did not seem very encouraging but the Waggoners who had moved to the claim in March, 1894, and had built a little house 16 x 20 feet in which they were living, held on with bulldog tenacity. They had brought with them when they moved to the claim, five head of cows, three hogs, six horses, six dozen hens and one hundred quarts of canned fruit; also two hundred bushels of corn and oats.

In the fall of 1894, Mr. Waggoner was cutting up some feed with a sled cutter when his foot got caught and severely cut; this injury caused him to go on crutches for a period of seven months.

In the fall of 1894, Mr. Waggoner borrowed wheat to sow from the Government, promising to repay it when they should harvest sufficient grain to do so. During the first few years they broke out all the land but fifty-three acres which was used for pasture and remains so to this day.

Mr. and Mrs. Waggoner put out an orchard of every variety of fruit and berries and a vineyard of grapes. The young orchard and vineyard flourished in this new land and

furnished them with abundant fruit in a few years.

In addition to her household duties, such as sewing and washing, cooking, milking, churning, etc., Mrs. Waggoner made a regular hand in the fields, having her own horse and plow and it was a familiar sight to see Mr. and Mrs. Waggoner plowing corn or some other crop each parent having one of their two young boys seated in front on the plow. The couple worked long hours, and often did their chores by lantern light. Mr. Waggoner would often market twenty pounds of butter and ten to fifteen dozen eggs per week at their trading point, Cross, now a part of Ponca City.

She also raised some turkeys but the coyotes were very fond of turkeys and they ate so many that she became discouraged with trying to raise turkeys.

Their first school building, as was the general custom throughout the country, was built by public donation; the first teacher was paid \$30.00 per month for a three months term, Mr. A. M. Burk, being their first teacher. Prior to the building of school house they held Sunday School in a barn on J. W. Lockhart's place, where they had planks

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to sit on. This was where Union Sunday School was held.

Preaching was occasionally held at some neighbor's house until the school building was built, then church and Sunday School were held there.

Mrs. Waggoner states that fishing parties and outings of different kinds were held frequently during the spring and summer months and everybody enjoyed such occasions immensely. They usually went to the groves along the Chikaskia River or to what was called "Round Grove".

The roads through the country were not on the section lines at that time but meandered here and there across the prairies. Mrs. Waggoner made her calico dresses and sunbonnets on her old Wilson sewing machine. For Sunday wear or special occasions her bonnets were starched heavily and ironed stiff; her everyday bonnets, the old split bonnet kind, were made by using strips of card board slipped between two layers of material that had been sewed with rows of stitches about an inch apart; about ten or twelve strips of cardboard being used for one bonnet and when it was desired to wash the bonnet, the cardboard/strips would be

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removed and after washing and ironing they would be replaced and the bonnet was ready for wear again. Mrs. Waggoner also spun the yarn and knit hose and gloves for family wear.

She states that at one period in the early days on their claim the family lived for almost one year with only fifty cents worth of sugar in the home during the time. Cake, therefore, was not plentiful.

Rattle snakes were numerous over most all sections of the country, and often were the cause of some "high steppin" or in the auto language of today "quick get away".

Mrs. Waggoner still has the "weights" her husband used in training his horse to be sure-footed, before the "race". She also states that it was common talk immediately after the "run", that a man who was riding a spirited horse, all lined up ready for the opening gun to be fired, was shot from his horse by soldiers when his horse suddenly broke away and dashed out across the prairie, and that the man fell dead from his horse, which went galloping on, and that later in the day a stake was driven in the ground through

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a pool of the man's life-blood and the land claimed for his widow.

Mrs. Waggoner can not praise too strongly the courage, vitality, energy and neighborly qualities of the early pioneers who settled this country and stuck it out through sorrow and adversity. They were truly pioneers in every sense. The best and the worst were unknown; they were all of one class--the good.

The Waggoners had some unpleasant experiences with a railroad that built through their farm some years after they first settled on it; finally having to move their barn and dig a new well on account of the railroad.

The Waggoners held their place free of any mortgage until their two sons were ready to send to college to complete their medical course, at which time they placed a mortgage upon the homestead to obtain money to send them to school, but after they had finished school the mortgage was repaid and today Mrs. Waggoner holds the ^{old} homestead free of all debt, and in addition to it she has a comfortable and commodious home at 101 North Barnes Street, Tonkawa and

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her two sons are prominent in the medical fraternity,
at Tonkawa and Stillwater, Oklahoma.

The Waggoners left the old homestead in 1930,
moving to Tonkawa, where Mr. Waggoner died on December
27, 1932, at the age of seventy-two years.