

WALKER, J. A.

INTERVIEW

8810

359

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

Field Worker's name Virgil Courcy

This report made on (date) 10-4 1937

1. Name Mr. J. A. Walker

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 807 East Broadway

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day Year 1874

5. Place of birth Texas

6. Name of Father W. A. Walker Place of birth Georgia

Other information about father

7. Name of Mother - Davis Place of birth Texas

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 .

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Virgil Coursey
October 4, 1937
Interviewer.

Interview with J. A. Walker
807 East Broadway
Altus, Oklahoma

After graduating from college in 1891, I secured a position as salesman with the Brown Tobacco Company and my territory included the Indian Territory through which I have often ridden all day without seeing a dugout. In that way I became familiar with that part of Oklahoma. I later went into the hardware business in Montague County, Texas, and finally decided that the Indian Territory offered possibilities for one engaged in the hardware business. I believed that Indian Territory was destined for a future, and as the country settled up there would be an ever increasing demand for my line of merchandise. So reasoning I decided to move my business to Ryan, Indian Territory, a court town of some three or four hundred population. Although there was some farming around Ryan, most of the country was ranch land on which thousands and thousands of heads of cattle grazed. Bill Washington had an extensive ranch on Mud Creek, and the Suggses had most of the land leased from the 98th meridian to Cache Creek.

Ryan was the county seat of the Chickasaw Nation* and was, as I had anticipated, a good place in which to run a hardware business. I began this business in 1897, and had good business from the very start. I had a stock worth from \$20,000 to \$25,000, a large amount of

MAKER, J. A.

INTERVIEW

8810

-2-

which were ranch supplies. A considerable portion of my sales were windmills and harness. Good wagons sold for around \$65.00 and good binders for \$125.00. A team of mules also sold for about \$125.00.

There were very few houses in the India Territory at that time. People lived in dugouts which were rather crudely made, but I remember seeing one which had four rooms. The walls were plastered and the house furnished with expensive furniture, including a piano, which looked very odd in this setting. Those were the days when a man's latch string was on the outside and everyone was welcome to his home. If no one was there a traveler felt free to go in and make himself at home. There were no roads, no bridges and travelers had to follow trails and ford the rivers.

I naturally had considerable contact with the Indians and came to understand them quite well. Quannah Parker was a good friend of mine, and used to make his summer camp west of Ryan. I sold one whole carload of wire to Bill Washington for his own use, but before many years the country began to settle up and free range disappeared. I then began carrying a larger stock of farm equipment. The Rock Island built into Ryan in 1889 or 1890 and aided in the development of the country. I married in 1898 and moved to Altus in 1904. I am still engaged in the hardware business.

*In 1897 Ryan was the county seat of Dickens County in the Chickasaw Nation. It was the court town of the southern district of that nation under jurisdiction of Judge Townsend. -investigator.