

WANTLAND, LEWIS CASS.

INTERVIEW

10150

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

#10150

WANTLAND, LEWIS CASS. INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Mildred B. McFarland

This report made on (date) March 1, 1938

1. Name Lewis Cass Wantland

2. Post Office Address Purcell, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) General Delivery.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 7 Year 1853

5. Place of birth Sherman, Texas.

6. Name of ~~Father~~ Charles F. Wantland Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about father _____

7. Name of mother Lucy Jennings. Place of birth Missouri.

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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An Interview with Lewis Cass Wantland, Purcell.
By - Mildred B. McFarland, Investigator.
March 1, 1938.

My parents lived on a large ranch in Texas. My father was dissatisfied there, so when I was sixteen years of age, he and I came to Oklahoma. That was in 1870. We secured jobs from Mr. Paul of what is known as Pauls Valley. We plowed, cultivated and planted several hundred acres of corn for him. We used three sod plows drawn by fourteen oxen. I devised an extra seat on the plows and dropped the corn in the rows. I received enough money at this job to start in the cattle business for myself.

I banked this money and went back to Bonham, Texas, and attended school for two years. In 1873 I went to the mouth of the Brazos River and bought my first thousand head of steers. One other man and I brought these steers through without losing a single head. We took turns riding herd and that is where I first started chewing tobacco. I would chew tobacco and then wipe it in my eyes to keep awake.

We brought the steers back via the Old Chisholm Trail which crosses almost directly across my ranch at the mouth

of Crutch Creek. I have always preserved the old trail and it is still there. My brand was the emblem of a crutch and an O. (Crutch O). I established Crutch Ranch in 1878. Captain David L. Payne and W. L. Couch had their troops stationed just across the creek and I became well acquainted with them. They ordered me to vacate but I never went. They would send a scout across the creek with a note telling me they had orders from El Reno to make me later move on. They became quite friendly/ and never urged me to go then.

When I was herding cattle one night, my buddy and I were hunting for a camp site. He went one way and I went another, and each was to fire a shot when a suitable place was found. My companion fired his gun and I proceeded to go to him. He said he had found a desirable place in a dry creek bed. I asked him to describe the creek to me and he said, "It is dry as a bone and crooked as lightning". I replied, "From now on it shall be called Lightning Creek", and it always kept that name.

I dug the first well, which is located in what is now the Oklahoma City fair grounds. It is still there today

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and I think is still in use. The little town of Whitehead was not far from my ranch. It was named after an old Indian squaw. When she died the tribe killed about one hundred white ponies and buried them with her. There is nothing left of the town now except the cemetery.

When I moved to Purcell, my brother, John Wantland, built the first house there. I maintained the first grocery store there in a tent until a building could be erected. I was President of the Chickasaw National Bank for some time and also helped to build the first toll bridge across the South Canadian River into Purcell. It was washed out just one year to the day that it was completed. The people of the community almost starved to death one winter and the Government issued beans to them and with the rabbits which they caught they managed to keep alive.

I was quite friendly with all tribes of Indians. They would come after me to hunt with them. They were not good shots. They would say "White man kill 'um". I used to take horses and trade them to the Seminoles for yearlings.

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We could always tell who the Indian Chief was while quite a distance away. He was always riding the finest horse and we could tell him by his head-gear and beads.

I never killed a buffalo in my life. I would just as soon kill a milk cow. There were quite a lot of wild horses running in the hills. I have roped and tamed many of them. My impressions of earlier day Indians were the same as now. If they were treated friendly they would do the same by you. The Five Civilized Tribes were the finest of people.

I used to freight with my father from El Reno to Fort Sill with a crude wagon drawn by six oxen. I was interpreter for the Comanche, Caddo and Kiowa Indians. The Kickapoo tribe was very friendly also. Joe Colbert, a Chickasaw Indian, is the oldest settler now in Purcell. He is my closest friend.

I have always tried to be honest with everyone. One day I took a large herd of cattle to Caldwell, Kansas. After selling the cattle I had started back when I found that the man who had bought the cattle had over-paid me \$1,000.

I hired a horse from a livery stable and took the \$1,000 back. The man never even thanked me or offered to pay for the hire of the horse.

Old Choteau was located where the little town of Lexington now is, just across the river from Purcell.

In 1886 millions of passenger pigeons passed over the land. The air was black with them. So many would light in the trees that great limbs were broken off. They were supposed to come from Pennsylvania. People would follow along and gather up the young squabs. They sold them to hotels and at the Fort. There is not a trace of passenger pigeons in this country now.

Cherokee Town was a small place five miles northwest of Wynnewood. There was just a little grocery store, a blacksmith shop and a post office there. Dr. Shirley was the first white man to live there. He was adopted by the Cherokee Tribe. This village was already here before my coming. It was founded in 1869.

Some of the greatest dangers of earlier days were prairie fires, cattle stampedes and cyclones. My wife and

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I raised eight girls and two boys. My son, Charles, was the first white boy born in Purcell. I have twenty-three grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren. I lived so far from a school that I hired a teacher to stay in our home. Many of the neighbors' children attended school in our home, too.

I feel that my life has been well-spent. I am too old now to ride a horse, but often long for a horse and the wide open prairie.