

WEIFORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

12973

158

LEGEND & STORY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

159

WEIFORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

12973

Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns,

This report made on (date) February, 17 1938

1. This legend was secured from (name) James Weiford,

Address Post Office Box 224, Miami, Oklahoma.

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe \_\_\_\_\_

2. Origin and history of legend or story \_\_\_\_\_

From memory

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 11

WEIFORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

12973

Nannie Lee Burns,  
Investigator,  
February 17, 1938.

Interview with James Weiford,  
Post Office Box 224,  
Miami, Oklahoma.

My grandfather, James Weiford, was born in Germany and came when a young man to this country and settled in Chicago. He married here and being impressed with the opportunities offered in the undeveloped western country with his wife and young family came to Jasper County, Missouri. My father, James, born in 1832, was the oldest child. Father married Mary Lane of English descent; she was born in Indiana in 1842 and they continued to live in Jasper County, Missouri, two miles east and two miles south of Jasper City. Here I was born November 7, 1874. We lived here in Jasper County until 1893 when my parents and grandparents still called by the western fever sold their well improved homes and, equipped with good teams, young stock and good farming implements, decided to come to the Indian Country. After looking around they decided on the fertile, productive country two miles south of the present little town of Ottawa. My father leased the land

WEIFORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

12973

-2-

belonging to Dannie and Dossie Cook, both Ottawas.

#### The New Home.

At our claim near Ottawa we had only an old two room shack of native lumber and a straw barn. At that time not one fourth of the country had been broken out and we broke out the sod land for our first crop. In those days riding ploughs were seldom seen and I walked behind a pair of big mules while ploughing. We improved the house and made it comfortable for the family but could not afford to erect good buildings on leased land so our earnings were invested in calves at the weaning time. These we branded and turned on the open range and kept in touch with them by salting them frequently. When they were two or three years old we sold them.

#### Schools.

Then the only schools were Subscription schools except the two Mission Schools, one at or rather east of Quapaw and the other at Wyandotte for the Indian children. The school east of Quapaw was finally closed because of its unhealthy surroundings and most of the children were transferred.

WEIFORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

12973

-3-

to Wyandotte. There was much sickness there among the pupils. I had been kept in school and had already completed part of my training for a physician but after we came here and grew so busy and the country and its opportunities took hold of me I lost interest and failed to complete my course in medicine but through the years that have followed I have always taken an interest in scientific farming and have followed its principles on my farms. Even though I sold my farms years ago and now live in Miami, I still keep up this line of study.

#### Amusements.

The Friend's Church at Ottawa was built when we came here but the Baptist Church was built after we came for we could see them building the church from home. We took teams and helped haul the lumber from a saw-mill on Grand River. We had lots of neighborhood dances and as I played several instruments, I attended many of these dances and I still like to hear the old fiddler's music calling in the dark, across the hills. Also at night you could hear the coyotes from three directions and possibly as many packs

WEIFORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

12973

-4-

of hounds baying as they trailed coyotes and foxes. After the first few years hunting died out somewhat but during the World War the price of hides got so high that several of the people south of me took to trapping again and were successful in a small way. When we came here you seldom saw a deer this far north but wild turkeys, and prairie chickens were still plentiful. There were many cattle here on the range then and, of course, it was a matter of pride to be a good rider, a broncho buster, to be able to lariat and tie a steer in the shortest time and we still have one of our best broncho busters living near here. A good saddle horse was a young man's most cherished possession. In those days there were few buggies and if it was too far to walk you either went on horse-back or in the wagon with the family.

The Ottawas were friendly with the Peorias and the Quapaws and Joe King, one of the leading Ottawas, built a large arbor at his home near the big King Spring and I have seen them meet here, but whiskey grew to be so plentiful at the dances and then the missionaries kept

WEIFORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

12973

-5-

steadily at work among the Indians until the dances were discontinued and church and picnics were substituted here for the earlier dances. Today the only Indians who still hold their dances in this county are the Senecas and the Quapaws. However the members of the other tribes still will attend dances and some of them still like to take part even today.

One of the greatest enjoyments that we had then was the baseball team composed of the young Indians who had been away to school and on their return had organized this team which traveled to places, not to be reached by train, in two spring hacks and played matched games. They were called the Indians and often played as far away as Springfield, Missouri, the name attracting much attention to their playing.

#### Crazing and Roads.

In those days we had really no roads, only trails and these trails often through the rainy season got so bad that you would have to go on horseback. If the mud got too deep, you just tried to find a better way around and we had no

WEIFORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

12973

-6-

bridges and sometimes the water would get so high that you couldn't get to the ferry boats and even if you could have reached them it would have been unsafe to have crossed on the boats.

If during the rainy season a person was taken sick or died, the neighbors took care of the sick person as best they could and if the person died they even made the casket for the dead. The neighbors were always ready to do anything possible to help one another. If sickness or misfortune had prevented a neighbor from getting his ploughing done or his crops planted or harvested, his neighbors would just take a day off from their own work and do the work for the unfortunate one.

Every one provided his family with meat and the necessary things to eat and when we came to town we seldom bought anything but sugar, coffee, kerosene, matches and very few other things. Our clothes were not expensive and were chosen for service rather than style and those were happy days as we had no worries and had plenty to eat.

Many cattle grazed on the open range, some of them were owned by the more progressive Ottawas and some by outsiders



LEIFORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

1973

-7-

who paid a small sum yearly for the right to graze here. Near us Tom Griffith grazed a herd near his home. Ables and Milt Hayes from Baxter Springs, Kansas, also had herds here. Across the river south on the Cherokee side Frank Connor and Bill Howell had their herds. West of Afton, Uncle Dick Williams operated near his home and Courtney grazed mostly north of Afton. Besides there were smaller herds like our own which required the service of many cowboys to keep the cattle from straying into other herds.

#### Ottawa.

When we first came here, Madison Cole and his brother had a small general store on the east side of the road at Ottawa. Next came Mr. Burton he still operates a store there and later Mr. Pink opened a store and at one time it looked as though Ottawa might become quite a trading center. There were two general stores, a post office, a blacksmith shop, a school building and two churches but times have changed until today, Mr. Burton has rebuilt his store that burned with only a small building, the blacksmith shop has

WEINORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

12973.

-8-

been combined with a service station and the Rural Mail Service has done away with the post office and the other buildings have been moved except the two story frame school building and the two white churches that can be seen against the wooded background from many points over the county as they occupy the highest point in the county.

#### Unusual Characters.

Two men in this county who were considered bad men were Dan Clay and Bill West. In view of those days they were not such bad men but drifted and when the law sought to control them they felt that they were being imposed upon. Dan, an Ottawa lad, lived a neighbor to us on the north and I would say that he looked to be about a three-quarter Ottawa, was a good looking lad and well educated.

Only the day before he was killed, he was talking to me and told me that he was leaving the country. I was in Miami the night that he was shot on his way to Miami. He was brought to the office of Mr. McWilliams and that night on the way home I saw the blood in the road where he was

WELFORD, JAMES

INTERVIEW

12973

-9-

shot and for years never passed the place without recalling it. Another day I was at the river at the ferry at Miami when the water was freezing and I saw Bill West compel a man at the point of a gun to wade the freezing water across and back, of the Neosho River. It was his idea of fun.

George Emerity, a full blood Ottawa Indian, lived west of me. He lived alone in a one-room log cabin with a dirt floor. He never warmed and you could see him most any day around in the woods near his home with a pack of dogs numbering not less than four and sometimes maybe seven or eight. I often wondered how he lived

unless his dogs scared him up enough rabbits, and other small game to live upon. He lived here until he died and I never knew of his having any people.

A short distance east of me lived Judge Early, one of the Ottawa Councilmen, a shrewd man and a good farmer and who with Joseph and others made frequent trips to Washington, D. C. in the interest of the tribe.

East and north of me on the river was Moses Pooler who had for many years run the Pooler Ferry over the

WHELAN, JAMES

INTERVIEW

1973

-10-

Keosau river at that place on the old military trail but this ferry had been discontinued when the ferry was established at Miami. Coler had served as chief and had also proven a successful farmer and stockman and had built a large two story home and commodious out-buildings for his family. Three miles north of me at the King Springs Joseph Kim another prominent Ottawa had built a fine home including an elaborate marble fireplace.

#### Buy Our Home.

After the allotment to the Ottawas and when they were allowed to sell we began to buy the land that we had need so long. This I think was in either 1910 or 1911.

January 3, 1891 I married Mary Johnson, a full blood Osage, who had been born and raised in Missouri and though we had no children we began to build and improve our home and we spent \$10,000.00 for improvements alone on that one place. We also began to buy other lands until we owned five farms. My greatest interest was in fine dairy cattle and pure bred horses though with all my love for animals, I have never owned a dog. During the world war I was offered \$225.00 per acre for the home farm of two hundred and forty

LIPSON, JAMES

INTERVIEW

19973

-11-

eres but we were satisfied and happy and it was not until  
in 1925 that we decided to leave the farm and purchase the  
suburban home at the east end of Central Avenue here at  
Miami. Not having been so fortunate since, I now have a  
very small home here in Miami but often I recall those old  
hard-fought days when we and our neighbors were busy  
tilling the soil and sharing our problems.