

WESSEL, R. H. INTERVIEW.

#1311

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

Field worker's name Ruth Lee Gamblin

This report made on (date) April 29 1937

1. This legend was  
 secured from (name) R. H. Wessel

Address Frederick, Oklahoma

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

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

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

He is an old settler of this country and has

made a study of the history of this part of Oklahoma

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

There was a lively interest throughout Oklahoma in the last opening of land to settlement in the Territory, which took place the latter part of the summer in 1906. The bill providing for the sale of Indian pasture reserves became a law in just a few days after this, but as it allowed six months within which to issue the proclamation by the President opening the land it was not for sale until October. The main body of land opened was the big pasture which was five miles east of Frederick.

Oklahoma had had up to this time six land openings and in addition there were two acquisitions to territory. The openings of land were, Old Oklahoma, April 22, 1889; Iowa-Sac and Fox, September, 1891; Cheyenne and Arapaho, April 18, 1892; Cherokee Strip, September, 1893; and the Kikapoo, 1895. The Kiowa, Comanche and Cadde generally known as No-Man's-Land were added in 1896 as Beaver County and in 1896 Greer county, formerly claimed by Texas, became a part of Oklahoma.

The first reservations were opened by proclamation of the President and were settled by the

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ones first to squat upon a claim, after remaining outside the boundary until a given hour on a given day. The term "sooner" originated from being applied to persons who had stolen into the territory before the time set for the grand rush. You could find many of this class in the first five openings. Some of them were convicted of perjury but half of them were able to prove that they were not soonerers, at least by witnesses.

Another system adopted in the opening of the big pasture and the wood reserve to settlement, was that each quarter section was for one man, in other words, no man was permitted to take more. This was sold to the highest bidder, and sealed bids were asked. This was decided by Secretary Hitchcock. At the time of making a bid one-half purchase price had to be paid down and the remainder was paid in four equal installments. After a settler secured a tract of land he had to comply with the homestead laws of the United States. The person who bid, but did not secure a homestead had the one-fifth purchase price restored to him. In adopting this

plan I believe the Governor used the system as  
the  
did/Oklahoma School Land Leasing Board in 1901,  
when it leased the school land in the Kiowa and  
Comanche county. The minimum price per acre fixed  
by Congress was five dollars per acre.