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WEICHOR, PETER, INTERVIEW

#4954

INTERVIEWER, NORA LOBRIN
Indian-Pioneer History S-149
July 20, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH PETER WEICHOR
419 South Evans,
El Reno, Oklahoma
Born January 7, 1867, Nattenheim Germany.

Father's name, Mathias Weichor
Born Germany.
Mother's name, Katherine (Gertin) Weichor
Born Germany.

Peter Weichor was born in Nattenheim, Germany,
January 7, 1867.

He came to America, when he was about 24 years
of age, on a ship called the "Westland". He had a ticket
direct from Germany to Wichita, Kansas. He landed in
New York in the winter time and the weather was so
bitterly cold that you couldn't stay out in it. The
snow was piled high in drifts. He went directly to
Wichita, Kansas.

He found things and conditions around Wichita
very prosperous. He worked for four years with the
various farmers around Wichita, saving up his money
to get a claim of his own, then he got on the train

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and went to the Cherokee strip or Cherokee Outlet, as it was then called, and moved onto a farm that the former resident had abandoned; it was located on Pond Creek in Grant county.

The man who had first filed on it had moved a small two room frame house from Kingman county, Kansas to the farm and then had become discouraged and gone off and left it. Mr. Weichor moved onto it and filed as soon as he got his naturalization papers in 1895. The strip was opened to settlement by registration on September 16, 1893.

It was an up-land farm and he tried to raise wheat, oats, some corn, hogs and cattle and other farm produce, but for the first four years they raised nothing. Everything just simply burned up.

Many of the neighbors did not have any money and they would move away and let their places go. He stuck it out and kept his place.

Mr. Weichor had saved his money when he worked in Kansas and he had that to live on and then from time to time when he was allowed time off the place he would get

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into a covered wagon and go back to Kansas and work some more; he earned enough in this way to keep them through the winters. He states that after four years "We raised a little bit of a crop, so we could stay there and make our living." In the beginning they were supposed to pay for those farms at the rate of from \$2.50 to \$1.50 and \$^{1.00}1.00 per acre according to the value of the land and he says that some of it bought \$3.00 and \$5.50 where it was extra good. Dennis Flynn introduced the Free Home Bill and it became a law on June 17, 1900. Peter Weichor obtained his final citizenship papers on May 2, 1904. He was married in 1901 while living on this claim. He and his wife had seven children, two boys and five girls. They used "corn husk" mattresses also "corn husk" pillows. They would make a bed tick, and then tear corn husks into strips to fill it with. It makes a very comfortable bed, except it is rather noisy when you turn over or move about. One gets used to it, however. For fuel they would go out and gather "cow chips," corn cobs and even sunflower stalks. Those who could afford it would go to the Black-Jack

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county and get Black-Jack wood; it would take them two days to go for the wood and two days to return.

Mr. Weichor tells me that there were about a million prairie dogs on his property, and that some people would eat them, but he thought the dogs were too fat to eat. He states that there were lots of wild ducks, geese, rabbits, coyotes, badgers, opossum, quail and prairie chickens.

He has killed lots of small game and still has the double barreled shot-gun that he used to kill them with.

They used to grind corn, and sometimes kaffir corn, in a coffee mill or grinder which was just a little hand affair. They used it for making corn bread and mush; many of the neighbors did the same thing. His farm was on the main line from Pond Creek to Jet, and his was the only frame house in a radius of ten miles.

The houses were either built of sod or were just dug-out, although all of the school houses and all of

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the churches in that neighborhood were made of sod.

There were four kinds of water in that vicinity; alkali, salt, gumbo, and good water. A well in gumbo land has a nasty taste. They would take a small well digger and dig test wells; that is they would dig down to water and taste it and if it was salt, alkali, or gumbo water they would dig somewhere else and would keep this digging up until they found water fit to drink. He says that the country was dotted with test holes as most of the water was bad. In the beginning Peter Weichor had the only good well of water there was in the neighborhood. Soon most everybody built cisterns in order to have soft water.

When he first came into that country there were no roads or bridges, and freight was hauled for sixty miles, taking three days to go and three days to come back. People would come from Alva to Pond Creek hauling freight.

Mr. Weichor sold his claim after he had lived on it twelve years. There were no good schools and he wanted to find a place where the children would have a better chance for an education.

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He bought a farm one half mile south of Okarche, in May of 1908. They lived on it until his wife died in 1920 and then moved to their present location in El Reno.

Mr. Weicher is one of seven children, three girls and four boys all born in Germany.

Mr. Weicher still has a trunk that he brought with him from the old country.