

WEBB, BYRON DICK.

INTERVIEW

#9384

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

Field Worker's name Linnaeus B. Rauck
This report made on (date) November 24, 1937.

1. Name Byron Dick Webb
2. Post Office Address Gage, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location)
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 30 Year 1872
5. Place of birth Bartlett, Iowa.
6. Name of Father E. B. Webb. Place of birth Kentucky
Other information about father. Old Frontiersman.
7. Name of Mother Place of birth
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 9.

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Linnaeus B. Ranck,
Investigator.
November 24, 1937.

Interview with Byron Dick Webb,
Gage, Oklahoma.
Father- E. B. Webb

Mr. Webb was born at Bartlett, Iowa, May 30,
1892.

Mr. Webb's father was a genuine old frontiers-
man. He freighted for the United States Government
over the Western Plains before the Civil War. He
was at Salt Lake City at the time the Government was
having serious trouble with the Mormons there.

When old Oklahoma opened for settlement in the
Fall of 1889, Mr. Webb came from a ranch northwest of
Dodge City, Kansas, to make the run with his father and
older brother. They entered the new country just
south of South Haven, Kansas. At that section of the
line a veritable multitude of people had gathered,
awaiting the signal to advance, and the throng ex-
tended as far east and west along the line as the eye
could observe.

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Mr. Webb's father and older brother were on the line, each with a covered wagon and four head of horses, their wagons loaded with a few pieces of furniture for the new homes which they hoped to get in Oklahoma, and each one had also ^a sod plow and a few chickens and pigs in crates wired to the outer sides of their wagons. Byron Dick Webb was on the line astride a swift and wiry range saddle horse. It was the plan of the Webbs that the one entering on horseback should speed forward with all possible haste and stake claims, one for each of the party of three. It seems their plan worked out well enough, too.

Byron Dick Webb, however, was not yet old enough nor otherwise qualified to legally file on land. I guess it was his plan to bluff through if he could, which, later, we will observe that he failed to accomplish.

When he, his brother and father were waiting on the line, the multitudes became the more restless and tense as the hour and minute for the dash over the

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line approached. The people more or less crowded and jammed one another for front rank place on the very line from which the advance was to be made; fairly good order prevailed, however. Not over two hundred yards to his east along the line, though, a cowpuncher mounted on a powerful and speedy horse broke over the line about thirty minutes before the signal and three United States Cavalry troopers pursued him desperately; as the chase progressed the cowpuncher was far in the lead and appeared to be gaining distance on the soldiers as they went out of sight.

When the signal to advance was given it was such a sight as one could not imagine. The first wave over the line had not advanced two hundred yards till the prairie country round about was a cloud of rolling dust. Chickens were fluttering everywhere, having been shaken out of the wagons. Many pigs were let loose and were trampled beneath a thousand hoofs. A mad deafening charge was on, wagons, carts, buggies

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clashed one with the other: wheels were splintered and their parts flew in every direction. Some wagons went down to the hubs but on charged the drivers.

Mr. Webb had grown up on the range, in the saddle, and knew his horses, too. He rode a good one that day and before sundown he had reached the townsite of Guthrie. A lot of tents were already up when he arrived. There were only two frame buildings, however; one was the Land Office constructed of rough pine boards a foot in width, and nailed hastily at two-foot intervals, in upright fashion, to a flimsy skeleton frame. The other frame building was a box car beside the railroad serving as a depot. But it appeared that tents went up that evening over the landscape of the townsite area in a manner likened to popcorn exploding in a popper. By night Guthrie was a tent city covering at least a section of land.

There was some trouble in the newly founded Guthrie that night and plenty of excitement. Mr. Webb slept

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under a wagon to the accompaniment of gunfire and bullets whistling through the air. During that first night in Guthrie thirty-four lives were snuffed out as the result of disputes, one kind and another.

The morning of the day following Mr. Webb mounted his horse and rode southwest about ten miles where he found desirable unclaimed land and staked claims, one each for his father, his older brother and himself.

The evening of the second day his father and brother arrived and took possession of the claims which he had staked for them. Young Byron Webb, however, was soon pried loose from his; a certain party agreeing to pay him a stipulated sum of cash for it which was never paid to him. The good saddle horse which he had ridden in the run he sold to an Indian doctor in Guthrie for \$22.50 and turned the money over to his father to pay the latter's filing fees. The elder Webb's first house was built of the native sod.

Those first few years were hard ones. Many people in that new country were rationed by the United States

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Government. During the first season following the Opening, the Webbs raised some Indian corn on sod which they had broken. The crop was inferior though; smutty and wormy. They fed it to their horses during the winter and seven of the horses died, Mr. Webb thought the trouble was due to the bad corn.

Kaffir corn and maize were unknown those days in old Oklahoma. The settlers raised corn, cotton and wheat. Hay from the native grass was put up and sold in Guthrie for about \$3.00 per ton. They would go to Kansas to harvest in the summer and Byron Webb worked on ranches in the adjoining Cherokee Strip country.

Webb's efforts to secure a claim in Oklahoma were rather singular inasmuch as he made three runs and did not get a claim. His first run was into old Oklahoma and he was not old enough to hold a claim. He tried again when the Strip opened and failed, and when the Kickapoo lands opened two years later he made the run for a claim and failed again.

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For the Strip Opening he registered at Hennessey and made the run from Orlando. He claims that there were more people ready and waiting to enter the eastern portion of the Strip than were on the lines for the first Opening of Oklahoma lands. According to his recollection many men were on the line to enter the Strip, riding high class race horses especially provided for the run.

Mr. Webb had been over much of the eastern portion of the Strip before it opened and consequently he had in mind the exact locality where he hoped to stake a claim. He went over the line at Orlando astride a powerful and seasoned saddle horse, carrying his Winchester, a feed of oats for his horse and a lunch for himself, and struck out in a northwest direction for Red Rock Creek and the vicinity of the old Pole Cat Ranch Springs. It was thirty-six miles to the place he had in mind for staking a claim and he covered the distance in two hours and ten minutes. The ride was so taxing on both him and his horse that when he reached the end

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of his journey both his nose and that of his mount were bleeding.

But the Sooners! It was irony to Webb to find all the land in the locality where he had hoped to find a claim already taken when he arrived that mid-afternoon of the day on which the Strip was opened. A number of men were already camped along the creek, who apparently had come in with ox teams. Others were there in horse drawn covered wagons. There was every evidence that some of them had been camped along Red Rock Creek for many days before the Opening. The ground was littered with the refuse of camp sites. Some had wells already dug. In a few instances dug-out houses had been started. This was all so exasperating and discouraging to Webb that he left the locality the next morning without looking elsewhere in the Strip for a claim.

As before stated, Webb made the run into the Kickapoo Country in 1895 on horse back but failed to get a homestead. In 1901 he came to this country in a covered,

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wagon, with his wife and two small children, and located on a homestead about fourteen miles southeast of the present town of Gage. In the course of time he established residence on his claim in a dugout. They subsisted on jackrabbits and cornbread for a good part of the time during the first year or two they were in this section.