

WILCOX, JAMES.

INTERVIEW

10411

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

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Field Worker's name Linnaeus B. Ranck.

This report made on (date) March 28, 1938. 1938

1. Name James Wilcox.

2. Post Office Address Shattuck, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day _____ Year 1867.

5. Place of birth Illinois.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

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 _____.

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Linneaus B. Ranck,
Investigator,
March 28, 1938.

An Interview With James Wilcox.
Shattuck, Oklahoma.

I am a native of Illinois. In 1876 my parents migrated to Reno County, Kansas. In the fall of 1889 the Wilcox family drove through in covered wagons from Reno County, Kansas, to Kingfisher. I was then just old enough to homestead land and filed on a claim about twelve miles southeast of Kingfisher. There was still a lot of unpreempted land in "Old Oklahoma" as late as the fall of 1889.

The season of 1890 the settlers of the Kingfisher country undertook little farming. They were so poor they couldn't finance themselves. Harvest came and a great many of them went to the wheat fields of Kansas to work. Either the fall of 1890 or '91 the Rock Island Railroad furnished ten bushels of seed wheat to each of the settlers of that locality who wished to take it on the terms offered by the railroad company and sow it on their claims. Most of them took advantage of the offer-

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and planted the wheat. The railroad company took a note in the sum of ten dollars in settlement from each settler who received ten bushels of wheat. These notes were due the following harvest. The wheat did well and thereafter the country produced more and more of it.

Negotiations between the Government and the Cheyenne-Arapaho Indians for the opening of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation took place in Kingfisher. The parley went on over quite a period of time and involved some stormy sessions. I attended a number of the daily meetings and the dress of those Indians who took part in the negotiations and attended the meetings was, indeed, picturesque. They appeared bedecked in war paint, war bonnets, streaming cow-tails and feathers, with buffalo horns adorning their otherwise striking headdress. The elder tribesmen fought determinedly against ceding their lands and taking allotments. During the period the negotiations were in progress in Kingfisher more than the usual number of Indians visited the town. It was quite common for small groups to be seen about the streets of Kingfisher and especially in the vicinity of where the parley was going on, engaged in

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spirited discussions and harangues known to those who could understand them to concern the question of their ceding their lands to the Government. I was present at the time the treaty was signed and immediately preceding the actual signing a dispute between two Indians in their native language occurred on the floor of the room where the meeting was in session, which culminated in the younger of the two striking the elder chief in the mouth and knocking him to the floor.

The Indians from the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation used to pass through the Kingfisher country to visit their brethren in old Indian Territory. Many of the settlers still feared the red men. The soldiers from Fort Reno happened out on the rifle range for practice on a certain occasion and were doing a lot of shooting. Many of the people living in a small inland town between El Reno and Kingfisher at that time and a number of settlers from the community surrounding the village, hearing the fire of the soldiers on the rifle range, suspected it was trouble with the Indians and fled to the cotton gin in the little town for safety, where they barricaded themselves

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for what they feared was an imminent attack by the Indians.

When the Cheyenne-Arapaho country opened a man in Kingfisher with a strong team of oxen hauled a completed frame building all the way overland to the townsite of Watonga. With his ox-team and cargo he took his place on the line west of Kingfisher about a mile, along with the throng of other people waiting for the soldiers' signal to enter. To the Watonga townsite was a distance of about thirty miles. By about noon of the day following the opening this man had arrived at Watonga safely with his building.

In 1902 I came to Day County and homesteaded on a claim on the south side of the South Canadian River. Wilcox township in Roger Mills County is named for me.