

WHITCOMB, SYLVESTER COLE (DR.) INTERVIEW 1065677

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

WHITCOMB, SYLVESTER COLE (DR.) INTERVIEW #10656

Field Worker's name Ethel V. Elder

This report made on (date) May 7 1938

1. Name Dr. Sylvester Cole Whitcomb
2. Post Office Address Hastings, Oklahoma, Route # 2
3. Residence address (or location) 1½ Miles east of Hastings.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 18 Year 1848
5. Place of birth Oxford, Henry County, Illinois.

6. Name of Father Henry Whitcomb Place of birth New York

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Fallie Woodman Place of birth Hamilton,

Other information about mother Madison County, New York.

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 8

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Ethel V. Elder  
Investigator  
May 7, 1938.

Interview with Dr. Sylvester Cole Whitcomb  
Route 2, Hastings, Oklahoma.

My Grandfather on my mother's side was named Sylvester Woodman, and he was born March 24, 1760, died August 23, 1836. He is buried at Hamilton, Madison County, New York.

My Grandfather on my father's side was named Luther Whitcomb. He was born July 9, 1778, died in 1847 and is buried at Oxford, Henry County, Illinois.

My Grandmother on my father's side was named Ruth Beebe. She was born December 6, 1784, in the state of Connecticut and died October 16, 1871, being buried in Caney, Montgomery County, Kansas.

My father was Henry Whitcomb, born December 23, 1806, in the state of New York; he died in 1892 and is buried at Caney, Montgomery County Kansas.

My mother was Fallie Woodman, born April 14, 1806, in Hamilton, Madison County, New York. She died in 1882 and is buried at Caney, Montgomery County, Kansas.

I was born January 18, 1848 at Oxford, Henry County, Illinois.

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After my mother and father married they moved to Antwerp, New York, where they lived one year, moving from there to Hamilton, New York. A few years later they moved to the state of Illinois, and there were born most of the children which numbered eight, five boys and three girls. My father was a farmer and all we children were reared on the farm.

My grandfather, Sylvester Woodman, enlisted May 15, 1777, for six years and one month as a private in the Captain Stephen Olney Company, with Colonel Angel and Colonel Jeremiah Olney. He was in the battle of Springfield at Red Bend, Fort Monmouth, Rhode Island.

I was six years of age when I first started to school at Oxford, Illinois. My grandfather taught me to read in the first reader and I could count to one hundred and knew all the alphabet when I started to school. This was just a little country village school. We had a lady named Mrs. Hall for our teacher, and she had false teeth, and to the children that seemed real amusing, I was always wanting to know all about everything and always into something, so the kids boosted me up to ask her to take her teeth out and let us see what they

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looked like and how any one would look without any teeth.

So I asked her and she thought it real funny and so she let us see her teeth. The next teacher was a young lady, Miss Emery who taught two or three years after which then we had a man named James M. Sherburne. He taught a subscription school two winters. The last teacher we had at that school was a man named Sweeney, who taught the District school winter and summer session. My parents then sent me to graded school one year after they moved to Altona, Illinois.

After I thought that I had attended school long enough I was about eighteen years old and I decided that I wanted to start out in life for myself, so the first step that I took was to enlist in the Civil War. I was only in the service six months and the war was over. While in the army I was so young they did not put me in regular service, I did the clerical work for my uncle who held one of the high official positions. I was sick for over a year after the war was over; had the chills and fever caused by sleeping on the wet ground so much; we would put our blankets down and maybe it would rain on us before we could get to any dry place, then we would have <sup>to</sup> use those wet blankets to sleep on.

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I went back to Oxford after I was out of the army and stayed there one year and then went to Altona where my parents lived, in company with one of the Lieutenants that was in my army. He had a son that was telegraph operator for the Railroad Company at Altona. The son taught me the work and after I learned I was on the job as Operator and Station Agent for six months. I then was given the place of operator and Clerk on the road for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad running out of Chicago. I worked there twenty years, and in the time that I was operator I taught twenty-five men and boys the telegraph work and railroad book-keeping; then they went to work.

I decided then that I wanted to study Dentistry, so I studied for about six months but was not so very much interested in this profession so I changed to the study of medicine, I attended Hammon Medical College, at Chicago for five years and completed the required course to get my certificate to practice. I went back to Illinois and hung out my shingle and lived there twenty years following my profession.

I met my wife while living in Illinois and we married in 1891. Her name was Franconia Otis and she was a school teacher

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for seventeen years. After we married we lived in Oneida, Illinois, then moved to Kewanee, where after a while we decided to come west.

When the time came for the registering of the people that wanted to try for the drawing of the land in Old Oklahoma, I registered and drew one of the lucky numbers for a quarter section that is now one and one-half miles southeast of Hastings, and I came out here in September, put up a tent on my land and started to put it in shape to cultivate. My wife and I have surely endured some of the hardships of the pioneers trying to get a start. The first morning that we stayed out here in our tent we did not feel very safe listening to the cries of the panthers and the howl of the wolves, and the owl's Hoo' Hoo'. We got up rather early, about day light and the first sound that we heard was a rooster crowing about a mile away down at the place of Jess Marley, so we then knew that some one else civilized lived close to us. They were the first people that we met after coming here.

I started to farming that year and raised some stock, having had about forty head of cattle and about twenty head of

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horses and colts and after a time had everything running along very nicely. I did not practice my profession very much after coming out here since I was tired of that public life. I have enjoyed the farm life much better.

I was extra mail carrier for about one year out here and after that time was on a regular route for nine years on Route One. Have had some various experiences in by gone days. Sometimes then the snow would be so high in banks and drifts that the horses could not stand up and when it would rain the mud would be so bad one horse could not hardly get along the road.

My mother-in-law came out to live with us and after a few years she died here. My wife also died in 1918. Each was taken back to Caney, Kansas, for burial in the old family cemetery.

After my wife died, a niece came home with me to keep house for me and she has remained with me.

At the age of eighty-two years I became a Christian and joined the Methodist Church at Hastings, Oklahoma, and am trying in my last years to live a true christian life, which I should have done many, many years ago.



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## Toll Bridges.

There is a toll bridge about twelve miles from here south west across Red River that was built by the men of that part of Texas and Oklahoma. I have crossed it many, many times going to Texas and each time it cost \$1.00 to cross and come back the same day but if you waited to come back the next day you had to pay the extra dollar.

## Buffalo.

When I was first plowing up my land here after I settled on it, I plowed up a buffalo horn that <sup>is</sup> said to be over fifty years old. They were very plentiful then over the prairie in some parts, there were not very many through here; however we had plenty of wolves and coyotes.

## Ranches.

The Suggs Brothers owned and operated the largest cattle ranch around here at that time. They used to drive some of their cattle across my land every morning to Cache Creek to water them and then in the late afternoon they would start back with them.

There were also large leases on East Beaver Creek and also on the North Fork.

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There were about five thousand head of cattle around Addington and north of there. The large cattle companies would buy up cattle and hire the cowboys in great numbers to keep the cattle rounded up while getting ready to ship. Most <sup>shipping of</sup> of the livestock and marketing of crops was done at Addington, which at that time was the largest shipping point for stock close around.

#### Old Timers.

Some of the old timers that I knew were J. T. Mayfield, Tom Mitchell, Elmer Payne, E. W. Clements, Jess Marley, Bebee and Hooper.

#### Heirlooms.

My wife's mother inherited a cup and saucer manufactured in England, from her ancestors in England, that has been kept in the Otis Family for over three hundred years. They have the old style shape, white with delicate blue raised flowers on them. I am sending them now to the Historical Building to become the property of the state of Oklahoma, along with other heirlooms.