

WHITE, ALBERT H.

INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

WHITE, ALBERT H.

INTERVIEW.

#4634.

Field Worker's name Anna R. Barry,This report made on (date) June 23, 1937

1. Name Albert H. White,
2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) 105 South N. Street,
4. DATE OF BIRTH Month December Day 12 Year 1875.
5. Place of birth Racine, Wisconsin.
6. Name of Father George W. White Place of birth New York.  
Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_
7. Name of Mother Helen White Place of birth Scotland  
Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

Notes for 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 Seven.

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Anna R. Barry,  
Field Worker.  
June 23, 1937.

Interview with Albert H. White,  
105 South N Street, El Reno, Oklahoma,

I was born at Racine, Wisconsin, December 12, 1875.

When I was quite small my parents moved to Shelby, Nebraska.

In the spring of 1889 my father and brother started  
for ~~Oklahoma~~ in a covered wagon to make the run in 1889.  
They made this trip in about two weeks and staked a claim  
eleven miles southeast of Okarche, April 22, 1889. In the  
early fall of 1889 they wrote my mother telling her to  
charter a car on one of the immigrant trains coming into  
the Territory. So in December, 1889, we loaded our car  
with five cows, four horses, implements, household goods.  
We then took oats and shelled corn and just threw it in the  
car among all the other things. It took six or seven days  
for this train to come to Oklahoma; it cost us \$85.00 to  
charter this car. On this trip my brother was allowed to  
ride free of charge so as to care for the stock. I was  
just a lad, fourteen years of age, and very anxious to  
come to the new country. I had heard so much about,

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therefore, I hid myself in this train car. After we had traveled some two days, a brakeman caught me and was ready to put me off the train. My brother told him not to, that he would make it right with him so he gave him \$2.00 to let me ride the rest of the trip to Oklahoma.

When we arrived in Kingfisher we thought that was as far as we could go on the railroad but the railroad was just nearing completion and a construction train pushed our car from Kingfisher into Okarche. We were then eleven miles from home.

After we arrived in Okarche we unloaded our car, hitched our team to the wagon, loaded in our few household goods and farm implements and started out to find our father's claim. We stopped at the "dream town" of Rock Island, a country store in the northern part of the county. The merchant in charge was a fine looking man, Dave Bothell. Mr. Bothell explained that his "town" was on the survey of the Rock Island Railroad and was destined to be a splendid little city.

We traveled over the prairie most of the day, sometimes just a mere trail to follow. It was almost sundown

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when we found our father's claim, eleven miles southeast of Okarche. Our first home was a little frame shack, twelve by fourteen feet, with one window, one door and a dirt floor. My father had plowed some ten acres of sod; this land seemed to be a red clay land but we raised good crops on it.

The farms in this community were classed as the poorer farms in the county; on each claim was fenced small fields, commonly from five to ten acres. These had to be securely fenced for all the cattle ran at large. In such fields we raised crops of corn, some oats, turnips, beans, melons and a few potatoes. Corn was the staple article of food among the earlier settlers. In preparing this nourishing cereal for use the green corn was roasted or cooked on the cob, the ripened grain ground into meal at a small mill; this was made into the simple "hoe cake" or "pone bread". The various forms of hominy were made by boiling the grain in a solution of lye which was extracted from wood ashes. We also prepared corn for use on long hunting trips or journeys. This was made by

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being carefully parched and then ground (usually through an old coffee mill) into a fine powder which was called "cold flour". A quart of this food could be carried by a hunter in his belt pouch. A tablespoonful of this "cold flour" in a pint of water would satisfy the hunger for one meal when no other food could be had. Meat was plentiful and cheap. Most every farm had some kind of a little house for their meat. Some families had just a meat barrel. Wild game was abundant. This included prairie chickens, wild ducks, rabbits and a few wild turkey and several kinds of fish in every stream.

Prairie dogs were very common in our neighborhood. They lived in holes in the ground. The barking of these little animals of the prairies was quite annoying sometimes. Snakes were a very common thing in the early days and rattlesnakes were often found around old haystacks.

The first winter I went to a sod schoolhouse about a mile from our home. My sister taught at this school the first year free of charge. The term lasted five months during the fall and winter. We had cottonwood

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slabs nailed around each side of the wall to sit on.

One negro boy went to this school. There were thirty pupils and each child brought the books from home, regardless if they suited his grade or not. No two pupils had the same kind of books. This was in 1891. Church and Sunday School were held in this little schoolhouse for two years.

People at this period would assemble together on Sunday or holidays in groups and talk and joke. The children would engage in sports of many kinds. Horse racing was a very important amusement among the older girls and boys.

I can remember several reports of Indian scares. My brother filed on a claim adjoining that of my father. Here we had a little frame house and my brother and I lived at home but slept on this claim to hold it. One night brother and I were awakened by my father pounding on the door. He told us to get up and dress in a hurry as the Indians were coming. He then jumped on a horse

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and rode two miles to a dance to tell the people there. This was the first time my father was ever known to ride a horse. All night long you could hear the rattle of wagons - people going to the schoolhouse. Some had come as far as ten or twelve miles. I can remember the men loading shells all night. They brought pitchforks and every kind of a gun. In later years I have thought about what would have happened if some Indians had accidentally passed through this neighborhood that night.

In later years we lived close to several Indian families. These Indians had no regular meal time, they ate when they were hungry. If that happened to be in the middle of the night they would eat. When hunting, these Indians arose at the break of day and were out hunting as soon as it was possible to see to shoot. They endured the most extreme hardships without complaint. It is true the Indian women performed the greater part of the menial labor.

When we first came to Canadian County Kingfisher was our nearest trading point but we later did most of our



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trading in Reno City. In 1892 we hauled lumber from Edmond and built a two story frame house, eighteen by twenty-four feet. This is believed to be one of the oldest houses still standing in Canadian County.

Some of the more progressive farmers planted small orchards of well selected fruit trees. Seedling apples and peach trees were by no means uncommon and wild fruits of several varieties were found, wild plums, blackberries and grapes. Good nurseries have been established in the leading counties so that no fruit grower need go outside the Territory to buy his trees.

Some of the settlers absented themselves from their homesteads during the first two years, usually during the fall and winter in order to find work in some of the neighboring states. Some sold relinquishments to their claims and left the country, little if any, better off than they were when they made the race. Others, who have stayed on their claims, today feel proud of their farms, and most of them today have a comfortable home.