

WILLIAMS, W. O.

INTERVIEW

5696

5696

Field Worker: Grace Kelley  
May 10, 1937

Interview with W. O. Williams

40 Years in Henryetta and Vicinity.

My father was working for a contractor, Furno, making ties for the Frisco in Missouri. Furno got the contract for making the ties for the railroad through Henryetta, Oklahoma, in 1897. He gathered a bunch of men and the railroad gave them the transportation here to get them to come and make these ties. Father and the two oldest sons, O. C. and Orville, came to the Indian Territory. We had a nice home in Missouri, so the rest of us stayed there until 1900, when he came home and got us. There were twelve of us children. We came on the train to Holdenville. That was as far as the train ran.

In 1900 we lived in a tent, framed up, on the creek bank between where the cotton gin and the K. O. G. depot of Henryetta is now. There were twenty-five tents in that camp.

-2-

5696

## SMALL POX EPIDEMIC.

Everybody took the small pox and almost every family buried one or more. We were lucky as none of us died but we were all sick at the same time. It was terrible; we weren't hardly able to wait on each other and the housework had to go undone. We were quarantined in as there was a doctor in Henryetta who put us under quarantine, but I don't remember his name, either Dr. W. C. Sanderson of Henryetta or L. H. Geer now dead. My brother was well of the small pox about the time the blackberries were getting ripe. There were some berry bushes down the creek and women would come down there to pick them. He would see them coming and would slip down there; they would see him and run for dear life. He'd get the berries.

In 1901 we lived in the same tent, but it had moved right in the middle of the old Henryetta Lake, two miles south of Henryetta, but there wasn't a lake there then. It was made later. It then was a valley with hills, covered with trees all around it. The men made ties and hunted deer, turkey and squirrel; there was plenty of wild game here then.

-3-

5696

## MALARIA.

Malaria seemed to affect the Northern people worse than the ones from the south, or the Indians. We were up and down with it until 1912 when we quit having it. I guess it took that long for us to get used to this country.

## OLD INDIAN TRAIL.

There was an old Indian Trail from Arbeca to Henryetta, by the old reservoir, past the Hugh Henry place on First Street, and into town. We used this trail, and made a road of it, to take our ties into town. Some of the ties were made at and around Arbeca and hauled to Henryetta by Ox wagons.

We would stay at one place till the timber was cut out, six or eight weeks and then move to a better place. Willie Henderson and Cass Compton are the only ones I remember that worked with us and they are both dead. Mrs. Cass Compton was a Riding Doctor.

We moved back to town, east of Jim Whitstone's place, the Dr. W. C. Sanderson place now, on the bank of Coal Creek. One day an awful rain came. Dad went to the White Hardware store and got a wheelbarrow and moved us to the Whitstone place, which is on a little knoll.

-4-

5896

That night it rained all night and you could swim a horse where we had been camped, clear to the Whithead mine No. 2, two and a half blocks east. There is nothing at the mines now but the dump and there won't be a dump long for the shale is being put on the roads and sidewalks are being made of it.

In May or June we moved to the oldest or first log house of Henryetta. It was torn down last fall. It was on Corporation Street between Ninth and Tenth Streets, but outside of the Corporation or City Limits as it was on the South side of the street. Jim Merrill's father lived there before we did. Dad worked for C. E. White at his hardware store. It burned down in 1912 and he had the job of cleaning it up, and hauling the rubbish away.

In 1903 we moved northwest of here about four miles to the Tallie Maussie Gum Spring, which is on 15-13-12. Tallie Maussie was Cussote Yahola's brother; Cussote died this fall at Weleetka. (Mr. Williams insists that this was not Cussetah Yahola nor the Talimachussie Springs. I have spelled the names as he pronounced them as he couldn't spell them. G.K.) We lived there for fifteen years and I've lived in the same neighborhood ever since.

HOW OUR TENT HOMES WERE HEATED.

Two tents would be put up with their ends together, a hole was cut through both tents large enough for a fireplace. Then a double fire place was built between them; this saved fuel and was easier to make than two separate fireplaces.

The way we happened to be in Missouri in the first place was this way: My mother's mother, my grandmother, was a full blood Cherokee from the east. She was with a bunch who were headed toward Oklahoma but they got lost and landed in Missouri instead. They were scattered all over, and that's how we were in Missouri.

CHITO HARJO.

Chito Harjo was camped south of the Old Kusa Smelter, at the foot of Bald Hill. It is getting undergrowth on it now, but it was really bald then. His intentions were to kill every white citizen of Henryetta. The Secretary of the Interior came and talked with Chito and told him that if they had to send the troops, the troops would kill every one of his people.

Old man Morey was the Deputy Marshal of McIntosh County, and he claimed that a thousand pounds of

-6-

5696

smoked meat had been stolen from Morey Springs, which is one mile east and a quarter south of Hutchachuppa church in section 13-10-12.

Chito Harjo was having Council when Morey came to search for the smoked meat. A committee went to see what Morey wanted and when he told them, they went back and told Chito and he asked Morey, through the committee, to wait until after Council, not to disturb the Council. (That will be explained later.) He didn't wait that way, but went back and deputized every man he could find and came back. He didn't have a search warrant for they hardly ever used one in those days. When they rode up, the firing started.

There used to be an old rock building on the corner of 4th and Main, where the Morgan building is now. It was condemned and torn down. As it was the only stone building in Henryetta, the women and children were gathered there and the men kept guard outside with guns, when Chito Harjo was camped outside of town.

#### FIRST PURE FOOD INSPECTION.

In 1907 there was a working man in San Francisco, who found a piece of gold dog collar in his potted meat sandwich. It was part of some wealthy woman's dog. That stirred the people up and the government sent inspectors

-7-

5696

around checking up on what was being sold to the public. Old man Morgan had shelves and shelves of meat that had been put up by the same company, in cans smaller at the top than at the bottom. He had to hire wagons to haul it out and bury it as the inspector condemned it.

HENRYETTA AS I FIRST SAW IT.

Henryetta was a tent town except for two frame or box houses, one on the spot where the postoffice is now, a large house that might have been a rooming house, I don't know. The other was owned by Barclay Morgan's father. A commissary was in that little old framehouse across from the Elaine Theater on Third and Main. It was built in 1899 and is still standing, I don't think they have added any to it.

They got their water out of Coal Creek as they had no water department.

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