

HART, CHARLES.

INTERVIEW

10156

Ophelia Vestal,
Investigator,
March 3, 1938.

Interview with Charles Hart,
Lawton, Oklahoma.

I came to Lawton a few days after the opening on August 22, 1901. The farm drawing was still going on and the sale of lots which were going high. I wasn't lucky enough to draw anything even if I had gotten here in time to register, and I didn't have money enough to buy, so I had to find work.

I thought I'd better come here for my health, then send for my family if it proved satisfactory, which it did and upon moving my family here we have lived here since.

The opening of this country didn't suit the Indians very well. This being their land, they thought they should forever keep it.

In the early days and some few years later as our families were growing up, many of the young people would gather in the different homes at night singing, playing games and having a good time. We had good Sunday schools and pretty good schools. When a person attends the picnic of the pioneers

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which is held every Lawton's birthday, August 6th, they can see the faces of the old-time neighbors with their families, and their families growing fast, all happy and a home-loving people.

One time when I was batching in this country, I had been out working in the field and worked late that night. A young man had come through the country sometime before looking for work. As he hadn't found any he accepted the invitation of staying at my hut. When I finished the day's work and went to the house, I expected the new boy to have feed out for the horses, but there wasn't any. I fed the team and went to the house. He had gotten scared and hidden in a closet like of the one room hut, saying several Indians came up to the house with guns and kept looking in the windows. He became frightened of so many and hid. I only laughed at him. I started to fix supper and was making the bread when an Indian man came up to the window. Another came to the other window. I went on with my work, took my bread to the stove to put it in, reached carefully for my gun that was in the corner. The Indians wouldn't say anything just went from window to window looking in. I raised my gun to

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shoot and the Indians yelled and ran. I went out the door and they threw up their hands, one saying, "Don't shoot, Charlie, I just wanted to see if your neighbors brought you any beef, I wanted it; they killed a beef today." From that day as long as my neighbor Indians lived and were around there they never came around after night.

I have heard when big cowmen sent their cattle off to market they always told their help if they saw any of the Indians and thought there might be trouble to give them a few beeves and they would probably let them alone.

If Indians like a person, they would do anything for him; if not, it is best to let them alone. If a man lost his horse and went to an Indian and asked about it, if he had seen the stray horse, the Indian would nod 'yes'. After giving a good description he would nod 'yes'. Finally after a dozen questions were asked they would answer "no see him at all". Sometimes Indians have been known in the earlier days to take a horse from where campers had staked it and hidden it in thick brush. The owner would hunt for the horse until he gave up, then offer some Indian five dollars or some reward, and the Indian would go find the horse immediately.