

ZEMP, JOSEPH

INTERVIEW

#8767

355

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

Field Worker's name Ida A Merwin.

This report made on (date) September 30, 1937. 1937

1. Name Joseph Zemp.
2. Post Office Address Route 1, Morrison, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) Twelve miles east-two south of Perry.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 25. Year 1864.
5. Place of birth Switzerland.

6. Name of Father Joseph Zemp, sr. Place of birth Switzerland.  
 Other information about father Never came to America

7. Name of Mother Catherine (Bordman) Zemp. Place of birth Switzerland.  
 Other information about mother Never came to America

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 5.

Ida Merwin,  
Field Worker.  
September 30, 1937.

An interview with Joseph Zemp,  
Route 1, Morrison, Oklahoma.

At the age of nineteen I came to America and shortly afterwards located in Kansas.

In 1893, I started with two other men to Oklahoma to enter the race in the Cherokee Strip opening; we had with us the horses we were going to ride in the run, and we used a spring wagon to carry our camping outfit.

I entered the race at a point near Chilocco, on the north line. When we registered to enter the race, we were given cards with markings on them.

About twenty minutes after the race began I set a stake and when I compared my card with the corner stone I found I was on land reserved for school land, this was on Bois d'arc Creek. There had been no plans made for the settlement of the school lands, and I knew I could not stay there and this caused me to delay in making the run and I failed to get land.

I returned to Kansas and in October, 1893, I came to Perry and found that I could buy rights in Section 34-21-2 East and this land cost me \$40.00. I made application

to file and November 9th, 1893, was the date set for my filing.

I proved up on this land and made our home there until 1935, when a mortgage company took it.

Soon after filing I bought some cottonwood lumber at a sawmill which was located on the Black Bear Creek and built a one-room 14 x 18 feet box-house.

My wife and seven boys came by train in January, 1894, and we lived in this one room house for three years; then I added another room and about 1903, I built the house that is there now.

Soon after I located on Black Bear Creek I lost my team and I had to hire the sod plowed; the first year I had about thirty acres turned and we planted castor beans and cotton; this was all planted by hand, and as crops planted on sod ground did not need much care or cultivation, I had time to work on the Santa Fe Railroad as a section man, and my wife and the boys cared for the farm. With the money earned from my work with the Santa Fe I managed to get another team and raised enough for us to live on until we could raise a crop.

ZEMP, JOSEPH.

INTERVIEW.

8767.

- 3 -

The second year, I hired more of the sod plowed and added Kaffir corn to the crops. My family did all the planting, using a hand or job planter as it was called in those days.

The castor beans proved the most profitable crop as they threshed themselves and we got good prices for them. We would scrape the ground and make a smooth clean place on which to pile them when we gathered them and after they were in a pile they would pop like dynamite; then we would sweep them up and clean them. The price at market was \$1.00 and \$1.25 a bushel.

Cotton brought from \$1.25 to \$1.40 a hundred pounds.

We also raised cane to make molasses.

We hauled our crops to market to Perry and while we were there we would purchase supplies.

We only had the necessary things for our home; bought them from Kansas with us.

The first few months I had to haul water about two and a half miles, while I was digging a well, but after this well was dug, it made good and provided plenty of water.

-4-

We used wood for fuel and I had to haul it from the Black Bear Creek; there was no timber on my land.

I did not deal in stock extensively, just kept what I needed to provide meats, milk and butter.

There were plenty of quail and prairie chickens, but I never killed them; I did not think it right to kill them; I never owned a gun.

During my second trip to Oklahoma, one night while in camp near the Otoe agency, an Indian came to our camp and after learning that we were trying to get land to make a home, he said to us, "No go west; go east; grass-wood-plenty".

Sam Stone, a cattleman who herded cattle from Texas to Emporia, Kansas, at one time, made the statement that the best grazing was in the Cherokee Strip.

In the fall of 1893, there was very little water; small creeks and ravines were dry and there were many days when stock did not have sufficient water.

During the first year after the opening we did not have a school in our community but the second year the District was organized and the school was taught by

-5-

Miss Adams. This school was conducted in a small house that had been built by Dan Nixon, a homesteader. He had returned to Kansas to spend the winter and allowed his house to be used for a school house while he was gone.

During the third year, the District was bonded for \$200.00 to purchase material for a frame building. This was about thirty feet square and the work was donated by the people. The seats were made of cotton-wood lumber, and during the winter dances and suppers were held to raise money to finish the inside. Mrs. Hall was the first teacher after the school house was built and was paid \$30.00 a month.

I was elected Director of the first school board. It was several years before any other building was built.

This is Windy Center District - Number 44.

There were social gatherings and church services held in the school house during the early days.