

HANNAH, JOSEPH.

INTERVIEW

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Interviewer,
Amelia Harris

Indian-Pioneer History,
April 24, 1937

Interview with
Joseph Hannah
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

We moved from Hancock County, Indiana, to a farm near Coffeyville, Kansas. We read and read about and discussed the opening of Oklahoma and the more we read the more enthused we became; so Father and two neighbors in Kansas decided to go to Oklahoma about April 1, 1889, to hunt and fish.

There was fine hunting at that time, game of most every kind being abundant. Incidentally, they expected to spot some good land. The neighbors were Jim Couch and Mr. Cunningham and they and Father fitted out two wagons with a camping outfit and supplies sufficient to last them for a month. They each located 160 acres to be claimed in the opening, on April 22nd.

When the United States Cavalry men fired their guns and the mad crowd rushed across the border in haste to secure a homestead, these three men, Cunningham, Couch and Dad, were leading the crowd and rushed to the tracts they had selected. Father filed near Mungar, now Spencer.

Each of these claims was contested and the contestants claimed Father, Couch and Cunningham had entered up on these claims before the gun was fired. They had a trial and Father asked to be tried separately.

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Cunningham and Couch were tried first and they entered a plea of not guilty, saying they had not been on the land or near it before April 22nd at noon. It was proven they were and they were sentenced to ten years in prison for perjury. Father pleaded his own case. He said he was guilty of entering on, but not occupying the land. Father said "Judge, the law plainly reads to 'enter there-upon and occupy'. I entered there upon the land but did not occupy". The Judges read the law and to their surprise saw he was right and rendered a verdict of not guilty and gave him possession of the 160 acres.

Father returned to Kansas for mother and they packed their things in two wagons and led two milch cows and two extra horses and came to Manger or Spencer. They lived in a big tent and father broke out some land and did some grubbing and that fall he sold his claim and stock; and bought the Columbia Hotel on the southeast corner of 1st and Grand, just across from the Lawrence Hotel they lived in, and ran the Hotel for two years; then sold for a good price and went back to Kansas. Later he returned to Oklahoma and bought a farm at Luther and lived there until he passed away.