

MITCHELL, MARK

INTERVIEW

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Investigator, Ethel V. Elder,  
June 15, 1937.

Interview with Mark Mitchell, (negro)  
West B. Avenue,  
Waurika.

Born 1858, Jackson County,  
Alabama.

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I was born in 1858 in Jackson County, Alabama. My father and mother both died when I was a little boy, and I have lived with a lot of people and they never did tell me anything about my people.

I came to Oklahoma in October, 1874; the first place I stopped was on Mud Creek at the Suggs Ranch close to Nigger Springs. There was more than 610 acres in this one ranch. I crossed Red River at the old Spanish Fort at the place called Burlington. I was riding horseback, driving 480 head of cattle that I had bought in Texas. I sold these cattle to Barefoot and Boone who owned the I. B. Ranch. I lived on Mud Creek four years and then I moved on a reservation on Little Beaver in September, 1879. I worked for Arthur and Cal. Suggs on their large cattle ranch. They owned at this time 3,200 head of cattle which sold in Spring of 1880 to Press Adington.

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### TRAILS.

The old Chisholm Trail ran east and north of the place where the town of Waurika is now, it ran under the railroad along the creek called Cow Creek. I rode over this trail for many years herding cattle all over this part of Oklahoma.

### Steam Laundry.

When the first steam laundry was put up in Waurika, it was put in an old building at the present location of the laundry now and Mr. Henry C. Cutler installed the first steam engine to run the laundry with.

### Churches.

The first church was organized in 1882 by the white folks and I paid \$2.50 on that church building; it was used for a school house in the week days.

The place surely was a pretty place in a big grove with trees at that time. It was called Deer Grove on the Kelly place south of Waurika about one mile.

### Post Office.

The first post office was built in the year 1885 in April at the little place called Luper, about two miles from

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the place where Waurika is now. The first post office that was ever built in the town of Waurika was in a small one-room building and back of where the Waurika National Bank is now; there was a big frog pond in front that was all the time full of water and frogs. There was a tent used for a post office while they was building this building and it was on the place where Greshams Filling Station is now.

The first postmaster was named C. Lincoln McGuire. All the mail was carried from the town of Addington to this tent by Mr. Hays Dillard.

The first newspaper was established in a small frame building about 25 x 60 feet on the place where the Earl Morris Furniture Store is now located.

The first editor's name was Tom Pry and the first subscriber was Henry C. Cutler. The name of the paper was "The Waurika News."

#### Race Tracks.

The first race track was about a half mile south of town; they had horse races, pony races, foot races and all kinds of races and everybody would gamble on any kind of a race. At Christmas times everybody would have a big celebration, a big barbecue and a dinner at the tracks.

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## Cowboys.

On the Suggs Ranch there were about twenty-five hundred cowboys in the early days and some would come over from other ranches. I always had to see to the feeding of these cowboys, which was a big job. When the round-up time would come we always had to have more to help do all the cooking and to see that they all got everything they wanted to eat and they surely did eat, too. I worked on this ranch for about seventeen years altogether and I worked mostly with the cowboys.

We would have to go to Texas to get all our groceries from Gainsville and Henrietta. We would go in a wagon and drive horses and sometimes one of the horses would give out and we would have to stop and take him out of the harness and let him rest a day or two; sometimes it would take us a week to make the trip and sometimes it would be longer. We had to ford Red River at the Red River Station as they called the ford. It would be a hard job to get across the river and sometimes we would almost get off in the quicksand.

In 1884 when I lived on the Hill north of here, we could see the folks come from everywhere with big loads of buffalo heads and lots of hides. There were so many buffalo on the

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prairie then and everybody wanted the hides for tanning and to make many different things out of the hides. Everybody was trying to shoot as many buffalo as possible to get rid of them.

In 1885 I moved to the Keno Ranch at Addington and lived there for a long time and I wanted to get married so I had to have a bond made for my marriage license for \$500.00 and Bud Penninston at Addington signed my bond. I went to Ryan and got my license. I had to get a United States license then and Captain Brown, a United States man, married us. My wife's name was Maggie Strother; she is dead now, buried in Kansas City. She was born in Jefferson County. We had five children born to us, and only three living now.

Note: This aged negro is doubtless in error about the number of cowboys employed on the Suggs ranch; as to buffalo hunting in 1884; and as to amount of his marriage fee. He has been confined to his room for a year and is not as active in mind as formerly; however, he has had an interesting experience as a pioneer in Oklahoma. -Ed.