

~~TURNER, GOLDIE.~~

~~BLACKBURN.~~

7540.

Goldie Turner, Interviewer
September 16, 1937.

History of Blackburn

The material in this manuscript was gathered from a number of persons interviewed by Goldie Turner.

Blackburn, which was named for Senator Blackburn, was a government townsite and was laid out at the time that the government survey was made. The government soon sold it to the Blackburn Townsite Trustee Company. John Skinner then of hominy was at the head of this company. He bought a number of lots and established a general store.

~~The Indians for a long time called it Skinner's Town.~~

Mr. Skinner built a toll bridge across the Arkansas River and in this way a large trade from the Indians from across the river was built up.

At first a ferry was built and operated by Sam Sorensen and even after the bridge was built the ferry would operate at different times for every time there was high water a span or two of the bridge would wash out. Finally, four or five years later, the bridge was washed completely out and was not rebuilt for many years.

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In a short time after the opening there were in Blackburn two general stores, a hardware store, a sawmill, a flour mill and several saloons.

The flour mill did a good business for a year or two and then tried to use the soft wheat grown in the Blackburn vicinity. This proved unsuccessful for it not only ruined the flour but the trade as well. The people went broke and the mill was abandoned although the building, a little stone structure in the west edge of town, still stands.

The sawmill was established at the northwest edge of the town at the mouth of the creek which flowed in to the Arkansas River. This sawmill had a good business for there was a big demand for native lumber since other lumber had to be freighted in from Arkansas City, Red Rock or Perry.

The first summer after the opening a subscription school was started. Mr. Skinner and Mr. Sloan built a

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one room structure of native lumber and the parents paid a dollar a month per pupil. That fall the inside of the room was covered with building paper, windows were put in and regular district school was held. This first school building was in the east edge of Blackburn but about 1902 the present site on the west side was purchased and the stone building, which is still used for a grade school, was built.

At first Sunday School and Church were held in the school house, but in a year or two several different churches were built of stone, all of which are now standing although two are not now being used.

Mr. Skinner soon was able to get a post office established in his store and the mail was brought to Blackburn on what was called a Star route. The carrier, driving a hack, hauled the mail sacks to the post office but did not deliver mail along the way as is now done. This carrier also delivered the mail to Osage City on .

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the same route. Passengers were also taken on these trips. Each day a trip was made to these two towns from Pawnee.

Blackburn was twice surveyed for a railroad but none was ever built there. At one time the right of ways and the sidings were all staked out and it looked as though the M. K. & T. Railroad would be run through there but the people of Cleveland who also wanted the same road built there won out and the road was built through Cleveland instead of through Blackburn.

Right after the opening Blackburn grew very fast and at one time was incorporated but with the coming of the railroads on each side of it and the washing out of the bridge across the Arkansas River business began to fall away until at the present time there are only a few business buildings there and the population of Blackburn does not exceed four hundred inhabitants.